



**The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP**

Deputy Prime Minister

Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development

**Senator Hollie Hughes**

Senator for New South Wales



**The Hon Paul Toole MP**

New South Wales Deputy Premier

**The Hon Ben Franklin MP**

New South Wales Minister for the Arts

**MEDIA RELEASE**

Friday, 28 January 2022

**NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY EXPANSION SET TO BEGIN AFTER FUNDING INJECTION**

The Australian and New South Wales governments are providing \$10 million to make the expansion of Newcastle Art Gallery a reality, securing the future of this important cultural institution.

Construction on the much-anticipated upgrades will begin almost immediately, with the Federal and New South Wales governments each committing \$5 million toward the almost \$40 million project.

The expansion will add 1,600 square metres of exhibition space, allowing more iconic works to be on permanent display and further elevating Newcastle Art Gallery as a leading cultural destination.

This is expected to attract an additional 14,000 tourists each year, providing a boost for tourism operators and creating more economic opportunities in Newcastle and the Hunter region.

The economic benefits of the project will be felt well before the gallery reopens to visitors, with the expansion creating more than 150 construction jobs and providing opportunities for local suppliers.

Once complete, the gallery's expanded operations will support an additional 18 jobs.

Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce said the Federal Liberal and Nationals Government is focused on funding projects that underpin the economic growth of regional areas.

"Our Government wants regional Australian towns to be the best places to live, work and visit," the Deputy Prime Minister said.

"That's why we're funding the expansion of Newcastle Art Gallery, to ensure that Newcastle has the infrastructure and attractions needed to entice greater numbers of visitors here.

“More visitors means greater economic activity in the area, which benefits tourism operators and local businesses, supports and creates jobs, and helps the economy grow.

“It’s also about providing opportunities for locals and limiting the need for them to travel to a capital city to experience iconic pieces of Australian and international art.”

New South Wales Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW Paul Toole said the expansion of the state’s second largest art gallery would continue to position Newcastle and the Hunter region as a top tourism destination.

“Newcastle is known for its beautiful beaches, ocean baths and coastal walks, but the art gallery’s expansion will ensure it remains a premier cultural destination as well, giving tourists even more reasons to visit,” the Deputy Premier said.

“It will create a world class facility for the community to see important works of art right here in the Hunter.”

Senator for New South Wales Hollie Hughes said she had advocated strongly for this important funding for the Newcastle Art Gallery which will benefit the entire Hunter region.

“An upgraded gallery is great for locals as well as a timely boost for the tourism sector and this funding is further recognition of the Federal Government’s commitment to working with our state counterparts to deliver for our regions,” Senator Hughes said.

New South Wales Minister for the Arts Ben Franklin said the \$10 million injection by the Australian and New South Wales governments was fantastic news for Newcastle and the arts community.

“Home to the most valuable collection in regional Australia, I am genuinely excited that this wonderful community asset will be expanded so that more works of this very special collection can be displayed and there are increased opportunities for the community to enjoy them,” Mr Franklin said.

“This investment is part of the Government’s commitment to delivering certainty, and supporting a vibrant and sustainable arts sector.”

City of Newcastle Mayor Nuatali Nemes said the Newcastle Art Gallery expansion would attract 87,000 additional local and tourist visitors each year.

“The Newcastle Art Gallery is a major cultural asset for Australia and has a nationally significant collection of art, so I am thrilled by this investment in our iconic attraction,” Mayor Nemes said.

“This builds on council’s commitment of \$16.5 million for an expanded and upgraded gallery, which will support increased exhibition and community engagement and offer cultural opportunities.

“This will consolidate the Hunter’s reputation as an active and vibrant centre for the arts and culture, and deliver a gallery of international standing.”

Newcastle Art Gallery boasts the most valuable art collection in regional Australia, housing over 7,000 works of art valued at \$115 million. Due to the current, limited size of the gallery, only a very small percentage of the collection can be displayed at any one time.

Construction work will commence on Monday and is expected to take two years. During construction, the gallery will close to the public and some of its famous works will tour Australia.

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