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## REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA'S EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS

The TERMS OF REFERENCE aim to examine the aims and content of the Museum's exhibitions, both permanent and temporary, and schools and public programs.

I believe that the National Museum of Australian has been proven to be of major importance in the maintenance and community knowledge of Australia's cultural history.

Australia's history has been virtually ignored in the past by educators, politicians and the community at large as it was considered to be largely insignificant in the scheme of things due to our short span of time as a developing country, compared to the rest of the western world.

In the past the culture of the western world was focused on "development" and civilisations that existed for many thousands of years were not focused on, as "development" and the future were the trend.

Fortunately, this does not happen any more, but we Australian's have a lot of catch up to do as we have until recently ignored or fantasised about Australia's historical background.

We do need to recognise our Aboriginal history and the wonders of their lifestyle, art and culture as well as their struggle to "assimilate" into the society of their western invaders.

We do need to recognise the hardships suffered by the "westerners" arriving in this undeveloped country with not a house or road or water tank in sight. These people mainly came from a section of their community that suffered deeply from poverty. For many of the convicts their only crime was to pinch a bit of stale bread to keep them alive. For many they were the wife and children of these people. Others were tossed out of their country as they were the poor and the "potatoes" couldn't be wasted on them. And others paid their way and came to make a better life because they could only just survive and wanted a better life for their families.

We also need to recognise the children who were herded like cattle onto ships and sent to Australia after being told their families were dead. Many of these children were later brutalised in Australia.

We need to now that thousands of Australian babies were taken by force from their mothers at birth.

We also need to know that the standards of the Australian society and indeed the society of many other countries in the world were different back then. And we need to know that a good society does learn from its mistakes and grows as we have done to a society that has the best integration record in the history of the world.

Australia is a special country and does have a wonderful story to tell. We have a very long history through the many unique aboriginal societies. We have wonderful plants and animals that are not found anywhere else on earth. We have an amazing landscape that is so sensitive we need to be forever vigilant and we have a definite developing country cultural history that we can still save in detail if we have the right tools to do it.

The hardships that were suffered by the “Australian” people in our early days of development into a “western society” were unique, and there are many stories to be told. But these hardships are what have made us into a Nation that is respected, admired and even envied by the rest of the world.

We need to keep our history alive, as our past and indeed our present will blend to make our future. To do this we need to keep the National Museum of Australia alive and if anything expand it to reach all the corners of Australia.

Yes we do need to maintain the development of permanent and temporary exhibitions and schools and public programs.

The people of Australia need not only to maintain, but to improve the development of the National Museum of Australia as their safe little treasure chest of Australia’s memories to show their children and grandchildren and as their memories grow dim look at them as a reminder of their life and to bring those wonderful memories back into the present.

The National Museum of Australia is the storehouse of our foundations for our future and must be treasured.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Bryant  
A friend