

28 January 2022

The Hon Paul Fletcher MP
Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

National Museum of Australia – Statement of Intent for 2021-22

Dear Minister

Thank you for your letter of 21 November 2021 outlining your expectations of the National Museum of Australia for 2021-22. On behalf of the Museum's Council, I am pleased to respond to your Statement of Expectations with this Statement of Intent.

As you know, this past year the National Museum has celebrated twenty years since the opening of its fine building on the Acton Peninsula in Canberra. It is therefore timely to turn our minds to the next stage of the Museum's development as a major national cultural institution that brings to life the story of our nation. No other national institution has the breadth and dimension that the Museum brings to the grand story of Australia. It is a story that connects the long history of the First Peoples of this land to the remarkable record of making the modern Australian nation. A story for our nation and the world.

The experiences of the past two years have been like nothing else in our recent history. Yet never has the story of our nation been more important to us than at this time of great challenge, as we continue the work of recovery from the bushfires of 2019/20 and the coronavirus pandemic. To that end, we are determined to play our part in the creation of the recently announced Ngurra: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Precinct in the parliamentary triangle. We are committed to assisting our colleagues at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and to contributing our collections and expertise to the work of building this new institution honoring the First Peoples of Australia.

At the same time, we are focused on the next stage of our development at Acton, specifically on realizing the value of the Commonwealth's investment in the National Museum. The anticipated move of AIATSIS to the new national cultural precinct presents an opportunity for the expansion of the Museum's galleries for the public and hence improving access to more of the National Historical Collection, in a way that was always anticipated by the original project. We stand ready with the support of Government to create an additional 5000m² of display space for public use and achieve a critical mass commensurate with expectations of a major museum devoted to the national story.

Moreover, the Museum's connection to the Australian National University and the Canberra City Centre should be improved to enable better public access to our site. In particular, the Museum will work with the National Capital Authority to create seamless pedestrian access that connects us to the boardwalk at West Basin that is currently under construction. Removal of some elements of

the ageing hospital buildings on our site would also improve public access. At the same time, there is clear need to improve arrangements for car parking on site to enable ongoing investment and amenity as our visitor numbers continue to grow. Our view is that, in common with other major public sites, the Museum should have responsibility for developing and maintaining parking on site.

The Museum is well-placed to represent the leadership and service of Government to the national community. It is intent upon widening the scope of its work with other government agencies across the breadth of the Commonwealth. Our forthcoming exhibition on the history of the Australian Signals Directorate, the result of a funding partnership with that agency, indicates an area for future growth in the Museum's operations and programming. We believe there are great opportunities to work with other agencies and bring public attention to their work, through partnerships which connect our collections and expertise with their interests and financial support.

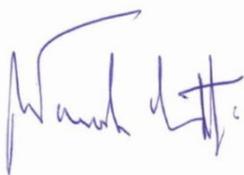
As you are aware, the Museum continues to face significant challenges regarding its ongoing sustainability. In particular, the current financial circumstances of the Museum have been exacerbated by COVID-19. We therefore welcome the pricing review of the Museum and other national collecting institutions being undertaken by the portfolio Department in conjunction with the Department of Finance. Our own review of our financial circumstances, undertaken by Callida Consulting in 2021, showed that the Museum requires additional annual funding of \$15 million over the next four years to ensure it can meet the terms of its legislative obligations.

In addition to financial sustainability, the other critical issue that the Museum faces is the state of its collection storage arrangements. We fully support the work done by the Office of the Arts to examine options to address the collective storage needs of NCIs. However, should this lead to a more detailed business case and subsequent funding for a new facility, we understand that occupancy would not occur until 2026-27 at the earliest. As a result, the Museum faces a pressing need to improve and expand its storage facilities and safeguard the National Historical Collection from loss. Specifically, there is a need for an investment of \$6.2 million in the next financial year to allow us to acquire a new leasehold property as a near-term solution.

With additional budget support to reflect the significant impacts on the Museum's finances over the last year, the Museum considers it will be able to deliver the activities outlined in its Corporate Plan for 2021-22 and this Statement of Intent. The attachment highlights Museum activities over the coming year in support of your Statement of Expectations, including digital platforms and programming, maintaining our reach to remote and regional Australia, and providing an enriching experience at our main site in Canberra. Your Statement of Expectations and this Statement of Intent will be published on the Museum's website shortly.

We will continue to work with you, the Department, cultural institutions across the sector and other Australian Government agencies to achieve the expectations set out in your statement. As always, we will keep you informed about significant issues relating to our activities.

Yours sincerely



The Hon Warwick Smith AO
Chair of Council

ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF MINISTER'S STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS FOR 2021-22

The Museum will undertake a range of activities in support of your Statement of Expectations.

Provide leadership and foster collaboration within national and international museum sectors as they recover from the effects of COVID-19

- The Museum has a range of key domestic partnerships with other cultural organisations that focus on collaboration within the sector. This includes long-term Memoranda of Understanding with State-based museums and galleries, such as the Western Australian Museum and the South Australian Museum. These arrangements provide the foundations for a number of potential future projects that will stimulate activity in the sector and allow organisations to share their expertise, knowledge and collections.
- As part of an ongoing partnership with the National Art Museum of China that began in 2010, the Museum opened *Red Heart: Art from Australia* in Beijing on 31 July 2021. The reciprocal exhibit– *Sculpting the Soul* - features three stunning sculptures created by famous artists Liu Kaiqu, Xiong Bingming and Wu Weishan that celebrate China's cultural richness and will be on display from 29 October 2021 to 1 March 2022.
- *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters*, the Museum's showcase international touring exhibition, opened at The Box, Plymouth, UK on 21 October 2021 as part of the UK/AU Season of Culture. Subsequent international venues include the Humboldt Forum, Berlin in 2022 and the Musee d'Quai Branly in 2023 with other European venues being negotiated.

Contribute to Australian economic and cultural activity as restrictions ease, institutions reopen to the public and tourism resumes

- Our major exhibition over summer, *Ancient Greeks: Athletes, Warriors and Heroes*, will be on display from 16 December 2021 to 1 May 2022. This is the third in the series of major exhibitions from the British Museum and will be supported by programs ranging from a Greek cultural festival showcasing traditional food, music and dancers, to pop up poetry, talks, and hands-on workshops for families. The Museum has high hopes that it will attract up to 100,000 visits and bring increased economic activity to the Canberra region.
- In partnership with the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD), the Museum is producing an exhibition to commemorate ASD's 75th anniversary. *Decoded: Inside 75 years of the Australian Signals Directorate* serves as a tribute to the people who have worked at ASD and their achievements. The exhibition will present the history of the organisation including its origins in the Second World War and subsequent evolution. It will be on display in Canberra from 31 March to 24 July 2022.
- The Museum will present an innovative light and sound multimedia experience developed by Grande Exhibitions, creators of the internationally acclaimed *Van Gogh Alive* show. The show is based on Australian Indigenous content and is expected to be a popular attraction during its premiere season in Canberra commencing on 8 June 2022.

Support recovery in regional, remote and outer metropolitan areas through collection touring, exhibitions and outreach activities

The Museum's domestic touring program continues to bring Australian stories to a broad cross-section of the community in venues and locations across the country. Our remote installation and de-installation process, created by necessity as a result of COVID-19 travel restrictions, has ensured that we are able to continue touring throughout the pandemic.

The Museum will continue its active touring exhibition program with seven exhibitions touring to Western Australia, NSW, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania. Highlights include:

- Two new touring products specifically designed for remote and regional Australia, the *Walking Through a Songline* digital immersive experience and the *Defining the Symbols of Australia* graphic panel exhibition. The Museum acknowledges the importance of funding from the Office for the Arts, through its Visions of Australia and National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach Program, in developing those exhibitions.
- Several new educational outreach activities developed as a result of COVID-19. Last financial year, the *Museum in the Classroom* program offered ACT schools an in-school experience with Museum education staff visiting schools with a variety of objects to run curriculum-aligned inquiry learning programs, and in 2021-22 the Museum will expand this program to remote and regional areas.
- *Australian of the Year 2021* travelled to venues in Western Australia and Tasmania, fulfilling the Museum's ambition to tour to each State and Territory at least once every 2 years. Planning has commenced for *Australian of the Year 2022* with venues being negotiated.
- *A Portrait of Australia (APOA)*, a 'print and display' photographic exhibition developed in conjunction with Australian Geographic, has appeared in a smaller museums and galleries in remote and regional areas across South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. The flexible, low-cost nature of this exhibition has made it particularly easy for regional galleries to access, install and schedule.
- *The Love Tokens Touring showcase* involves a touring exhibition of convict love tokens, supported by a new website to allow for further digital engagement and outreach activities. We are grateful for funding received through the National Collecting Institutions Touring Outreach program to enable this exhibition to be delivered.

Promoting inclusion, diversity and social cohesion by providing greater opportunities for all Australians to access arts and culture, including through digital channels

- The *Momentous: Sharing Bushfire and Pandemic Stories* will continue to be developed and provide a platform for Australians to share their stories of dealing with the dual crises of bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years.
- The Museum will continue to develop its online Collection Explorer, allowing Australians greater access to those parts of the Museum's collection which are not on display via a user-friendly search of digital records.
- *Australian Perspectives 2022: First Nations, Gender, Migration* is a teacher professional learning program, which will launch on 24 January 2022. It aims to address what an inclusive classroom looks like in the 21st century, how teachers can incorporate multiple perspectives into their teaching of Australian history, and how they can build students' empathy, intercultural understanding and respect for viewpoints other than their own.
- The Museum has developed digital excursions from students ranging from pre-school to year 12, focusing on a range of Australian Curriculum-aligned learning topics. These digital excursions are being delivered to thousands of students across Australia. Topics include: Indigenous Rights and Freedoms, The Australian Nation and The Endeavour Voyage: Untold Stories of Cook and the First Australians (which by popular demand has continued as a digital excursion long after the related exhibition ended.)
- Australia's Defining Moments Digital Classroom website, which was launched last year, is a major online education platform aligned to the national curriculum for primary and secondary students. It provides digital teaching and learning resources, games and interactives, competitions and teacher professional development. The website helps students better understand Australian history by making links to key 'defining moments' within their own family history and that of their local area, fostering a strong sense of community, personal identity and social inclusion.
- In a new initiative, the National Australia Day Council is being supported by the Museum to present an enhanced program for Australia Day 2022 in Canberra and for the associated national broadcasts. Wesley Enoch, celebrated director and playwright, has been appointed as the Artistic Director of the program. There will be a series of events including a 24hr ceremonial fire by Lake Burley Griffin; the Citizenship and Flag Raising Ceremonies; and an activation around Lake Burley Griffin.

Continue to foster appreciation and understanding of Indigenous arts, culture and knowledge systems, and contribute to a professional, viable and ethical Indigenous arts sector

- *Walking Through a Songline* – an innovative ‘pop-up’ immersive digital experience based on part of the *Songlines* exhibition –will travel to galleries, museums and cultural centres in Queensland, New South Wales and the Northern Territory in 2021-22. The experience, developed with funding from the Office for the Arts through its Visions of Australia program, has generated major interest from venues across the country with tour dates proposed to 2024.
- *Inbetween: Cultural Connections* through design, is an exhibition developed with the Australian Institute of Architects featuring architectural projects that enable cross cultural exchange with Indigenous communities and knowledges. Originally conceived for the entry in the Australian Exhibit for the 17th International Architecture Exhibition La Biennale Di Venezia, it has been reimaged as an immersive large scale video work and a series of panels documenting more than 20 architectural projects. Presented under the Swain Fellowship, the Museum has worked with the creative directors Jefa Greenaway and Tristan Wong to bring this new exhibition to fruition. The exhibition is on show at the Museum from 29 October 2021 – 12 June 2022.
- The Museum is supporting a 6-book ‘First Knowledges’ partnership with publishers Thames & Hudson. The third title in the series, *Country: Future Fire, Future Farming* by Bill Gammage and Bruce Pascoe, was released on 26 October 2021. The fourth title, *Astronomy: Sky Country* by Krystal De Napoli and Karlie Noon, is scheduled for publication in the first half of 2022.
- The Encounters Fellowship program, made possible by the support of our donors, allows First Nations future cultural leaders to hone their skills in museology by providing the opportunity to work alongside experts both at the Museum and other Australian and international cultural institutions.

Continue to engage in activities to enrich arts and cultural education at all levels

- In this financial year, the Museum will open to the public two major new galleries, the *Great Southern Land* gallery of environmental history, and the Tim and Gina Fairfax Discovery Centre for families with young children.
- *Great Southern Land* is the National Museum of Australia’s most significant gallery redevelopment since its opening in 2001 and will invite visitors to reimagine their relationship to this vast, vibrant land.
- The Tim and Gina Fairfax Discovery Centre, opening early in 2022, will be a fun, immersive play space for young children, their families and their carers, providing a new space for these audiences that will allow them to better engage with the Australian story. The Discovery Centre will be a place where our youngest visitors can meet a series of iconic Australian animals and landscapes, and explore their stories through play-based, hands-on experiences.
- The Museum will present *Australia Speaks*, a series of addresses by influential Australians on matters of national significance, support by the Thyne Reid Foundation. The series fulfils the Museum’s responsibility to support discussion and debate about the big ideas about the future of our country, especially those that emerge from a consideration of our history as a nation.

Maintain and strengthen the financial sustainability of the Museum by increasing own-source revenue, philanthropy and private-sector support

- The Museum is seeking to increase onsite visitation through its new permanent gallery offerings, *Great Southern Land* and the new Discovery Centre, with research demonstrating a clear correlation between visitation and revenue. Relationships with major philanthropists have been integral to the Museum's activity with a major gift by Mr Tim Fairfax AC and Mrs Gina Fairfax supporting the Tim and Gina Fairfax Discovery Centre.
- The temporary *Ancient Greeks* exhibition and the Indigenous-themed Grande experience will also increase visitation to the Acton site. These temporary exhibitions are paid experiences, as are selected public programs.
- The Museum has secured significant corporate support for the exhibition *Ancient Greeks: Athletes, Warriors and Heroes* involving a mix of cash and in-kind contributions.
- The Museum will continue its successful program of donation campaigns, including a campaign for our 20th birthday, and targeted campaigns such as the Ancient Greeks Ambassadors program, Encounters Fellowships Appeal, and Care for a Car Appeal.
- Though the Museum's commercial activities have been significantly affected by reduced visitation to the Museum's Acton site due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seeing growth through diversifying our revenue streams via online and wholesale sales.