



# WALKING TOGETHER

## LANE COVE RESIDENTS FOR RECONCILIATION

NMA Review Secretariat  
Dept of Communications,  
Information Technology & the Arts  
GPO Box 2154  
Canberra ACT 2601

25 March 2003

Dear Sir / Madam,

As members of both the general public and of Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation, we write in support of the hugely successful National Museum of Australia, the 'Indigenous Australia' display and the crucial work of the Museum's innovative Director, Ms Dawn Casey.

We are shocked and dismayed that Ms Casey's contract has been renewed for one year only and question a decision which deprives the Museum of the very person who has been integral to its success! Where is the transparency and public accountability for this decision which flies in the face of Ms Casey's acclaimed achievements?

We have only now become aware that the deadline for Public Submissions to the Review Panel was 7 March but understand that late submissions are being accepted, which is much appreciated.

Reconciliation has been called the defining issue of our nation. The core value of Reconciliation is understanding and responding to our shared history. Difficult, as Indigenous / non-Indigenous history has not been taught in our schools until very recent times and even now is far from universal. If it is a truism that victors write the text books – this is compounded when the minority culture is traditionally oral as with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Of course the flood of published historical research of recent decades is invaluable in raising awareness of the truths of our history and promoting informed discussion. However, a centuries old gap in understanding makes for very slow closure: the gap promotes and maintains ignorance, prejudice and gross inequality.

For these and many other reasons, it was a most progressive and illuminating event to have that shared history displayed and explored in a vivid and challenging way in the National Museum, in the heart of our capital city.

It may well be that the Director's background and experiences enhanced the displays with special insights and fresh perspectives on hard truths, long experienced by Indigenous Australians but new to, or ignored or denied by, some of the wider public. It is essential to Reconciliation that non-Indigenous Australians can share experiences in understanding what it means to be the beneficiaries of the invasion and the dispossession of the First Australians.

We trust that Ms Casey's work, through its very excellence has not proved too challenging, indeed confronting to those in high and perhaps political places. Visitors to the National Museum of Australia and the taxpaying public which funds it, deserve not only such excellence but also its continuation.

Yours sincerely,

Kerrie McKenzie, Convenor  
For Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation