

Hello National Museum of Australia Review Secretariat,

A recent mailing from the Friends of the NMA reminded me to send my contribution to the review process. A copy is also being directed to them, as they have requested.

Like many other people, I am aware of the review process, and I am aware of some details and concerns that have been expressed in the print and broadcast media. I thank the review committee for the opportunity to participate in this process.

I respectfully submit the following comments:

The general tone, direction and scope of the museum's exhibits are very encouraging. I have seen many museums and other curated collections in many parts of the world. The NMA's exhibits display a reasonable maturity for such a young organisation.

There may need to be more attention paid to the balance between innovative display styles and what the public is seeking. There may be a problem when exhibition planners design for an audience of other exhibition planners rather than for the people who support the museum. Leading approaches are only valuable as long as they guide people to consider new perspectives and do not leave the thinking public behind. Exhibition planning should not become an *avant garde* art form unto itself.

The controversy about the portrayal of Indigenous Australians requires a comment. The public exchange of viewpoints has been healthy [from the perspective of an informed observer, who does not consider himself to be a direct participant of the debate]. My comment is in the vein of the preceding remarks: rather than presenting a "clean" portrayal of history, to assist the viewing public to think independently, I received the impression that I was being "corrected" into seeing a new truth. This was attempted by a quasi affirmative action model whereby a clean, balanced presentation of facts – including disputed facts being laid-out as unresolved and left for the public to ponder – was sacrificed in an effort to atone for more traditional [one-sided] exhibitions.

Regrettably, this was a strong example of what was seen in some other exhibits: the medium blocked the message. In general, I am well satisfied with the fresh and open approach taken by the museum, and sincerely support the present professional staff and management team.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.

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