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Western Australia
3 March 2003

NMA Review Secretariat
Department of Communications
Information Technology and the Arts
GPO Box 2154 Canberra
ACT 2601

Submission from Alasdair Wardle and Sue Grey-Smith

We wish to make a number of points in regard to the current review.

Having visited the museum we are in strong position to comment on the displays, the focus and the way it has been presented. The museum is very accessible and an important addition to cultural life in Australia. It has already made a strong impact and has generated considerable discussion and debate. This is what modern cultural institutions should be doing. Passive, safe and conventional institutions will not make a difference to the cultural life of a country. We want the museum to present ideas and views of Australia that may not always be comfortable.

No doubt this current review has been instigated by concerns that the museum has a strong focus on the history of Australia's indigenous people. It is highly appropriate when many people in Australia are becoming more aware of Australia's first people. One of the most important things a government could do would be to support any initiatives that encourage understanding of Australia's indigenous people, how they lived and how they interacted with European settlers. For too long they have been exploited, ignored, misunderstood and treated as less than human. We are fortunate that indigenous and other writers are telling the stories that we should hear, even though we might find them uncomfortable.

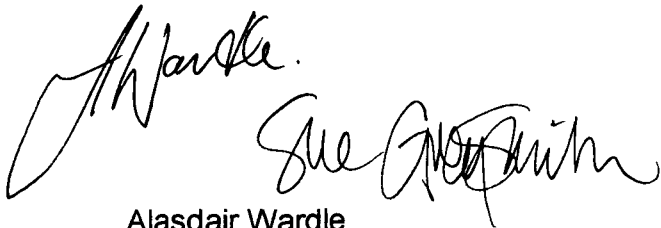
If the museum has presented a view of Australia that has a strong focus on indigenous people, we should be accepting that and recognising it as a mature response to our history. Many Australians are very 'European centric' and it is easy for us to relate to the institutions, events and achievements of the dominant white culture. Governments have a responsibility to encourage another view,

that Australian indigenous history has a much longer and is equally as complex richness as European history.

If the museum is to genuinely represent the whole of the last 100,000 years, then the real focus deserves to be on indigenous history and not the past 300 or 400 years.

As taxpayers we are very happy with results of our money being spent on this museum. The Government does not fund it, the people of Australia fund it and that means Sue and me.

Yours sincerely

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature, on the left, is 'Alasdair Wardle' written in a cursive style. The second signature, on the right, is 'Sue Grey-Smith' also written in a cursive style.

Alasdair Wardle
Sue Grey-Smith