



**University  
of Southampton**

**Department of  
Archaeology**

**Professor Clive Gamble,  
FBA,MA,PhD,FSA,MIFA  
Research Professor**

Director:  
Centre for the  
Archaeology of  
Human  
Origins

*University of Southampton  
Avenue Campus  
Highfield  
Southampton  
SO17 1BF*

*Direct: + 44 (0)23 8059 2297  
Fax: + 44 (0)23 8059 3032  
E-Mail: csg@soton.ac.uk*

The Rt.Hon. Anthony Staley  
Chairman of Council  
National Museum of Australia  
Canberra  
ACT 2601

29 January 2003

Dear Tony Staley

### **Prehistory and history at the National Museum of Australia**

I am writing to congratulate the NMA, its Director and Research Staff, on the excellent conference it organised two weeks ago week on *23<sup>o</sup> South: Archaeology and Environmental History of Southern Deserts*. The conference confirmed the dynamic and innovative approach that the Museum has taken to issues of international concern, in this instance the long-term process of desertification and the fate of desert peoples. The exhibition, which is planned for next year, could not have had a better academic start.

While visiting the permanent galleries I was also much impressed by the honest and pioneering treatment of Aboriginal history. In particular I was impressed by those issues, which are also of international concern, namely the stolen generation and the impact of colonialism on Australia's indigenous peoples. It was therefore with some dismay that I learnt of opposition to these displays and the intellectual direction of the NMA which some members of its Council have made public. If a review is to take place, as has been suggested, then it must be broadly based and independent of an interest group, which to an outsider, looks too closely linked to government. Your current Director deserves her Council's full support in continuing to shape this new institution as a world leader. I urge you to re-confirm her position and with it the integrity of the institution she leads.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Clive Gamble FBA

Cc Ms Dawn Casey, Director NMA