

## National Centre for History Education

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### **The National Museum of Australia Review**

The National Centre for History Education (NCHE) is a component of the National History Project (NHP). The NHP is a Commonwealth Government initiative funded through the Department of Education, Science and Training to improve the teaching and learning of history in Australian schools.

As Director of the NCHE, I am pleased to submit a brief report on our relationship with the National Museum of Australia (NMA) during the period 2001-2003. These comments refer to the schools and public programs role of the NMA.

The NCHE has been involved with the NMA in three main areas. They are, first, the NHP National Seminar 2001, second, the launching of the Rigby "Our Voices" primary education publishing project and third, liaison and correspondence regarding the improvement of school history generally.

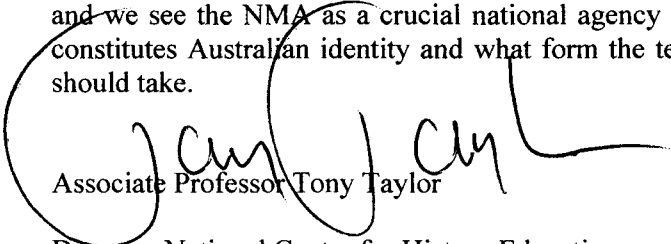
In the first case, the NMA hosted the two-day NHP National Seminar on the teaching and learning of Australian history. This occasion drew academic historians such as Dr John Hirst, Professor Jill Roe and Professor Stuart Macintyre into detailed discussion with teachers of history, education system officials and history educators. The NMA's hosting of the National Seminar was exemplary in its attention to organisational detail and its capacity to provide national and local publicity for this important event. The conclusion of an overwhelming number of the delegates was that the choice of the NMA as a venue had been inspirational in establishing a positive and constructive rapport between sections of the education community who, although engaged on similar tasks, were rarely in face-to-face communication.

As far as the Rigby "Our Voices" project is concerned, the NCHE sees this as a key publishing initiative which will enhance the teaching and learning of history in primary schools across Australia. In cooperating with the Rigby team, the NMA officials of the Schools Programs Division have taken a creative and innovative lead in providing school students in all jurisdictions with access to the resources of the NMA. Thanks to "Our Voices", school students, wherever they are, will be able to make a direct connection between documentary and visual evidence on the page – and historical artefacts which actually exist in a museum in the nation's capital. This is a major breakthrough in creating a sense of national identity and in establishing a connection between thinking about history and understanding the reality of historical evidence.

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Finally, during the period 2001-2003, the Manager of the Schools Program Division has been in close consultation with the NCHE on several matters including the teacher fellowship program, attendance at key conferences and possible links with the NCHE website.

In summary, the NCHE's dealings with the staff of the NMA have been very positive and constructive and we see the NMA as a crucial national agency for the continuing debate and discussion about what constitutes Australian identity and what form the teaching and learning of Australian history in schools should take.



Associate Professor Tony Taylor

Director, National Centre for History Education

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