

REVIEW

National Museum of Australia

Exhibitions and Programs

2003

Review of the National Museum of Australia Its Exhibitions and Public Programs

A Report to the Council of the National Museum of Australia

July 2003

Disclaimer

This report was developed for the National Museum of Australia by a Panel appointed to review its Exhibitions and Public Programs. It draws on information, opinions and advice provided by a variety of individuals and organisations during the Review. This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the Commonwealth or the National Museum of Australia or indicate commitment to a particular course of action.

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*National Museum of Australia
Review of Exhibitions and Programs*

July 2003

The Hon Tony Staley
Chairman of Council
National Museum of Australia
GPO Box 1901
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Staley

On 3 January 2003 you announced the terms of reference for a review into the exhibitions and public programs of the National Museum of Australia. It is our pleasure to present the report of the Panel appointed to undertake this review.

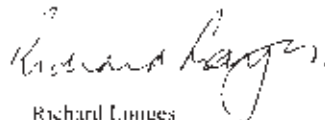
The Panel determined that its assessment of the Museum's exhibitions and programs would be informed by briefings by the Museum's Director, senior staff and curators; written submissions; oral consultations; inspections of selected other cultural institutions; and research papers on particular issues of interest.

We wish to express our appreciation for the opportunity to undertake this review.

Yours sincerely



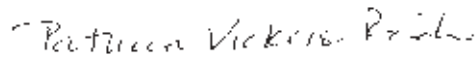
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REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

i) PREAMBLE

The National Museum of Australia is the product of two distinct periods. There was a long gestation phase from the 1975 *Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections* (Pigott Report), which recommended the establishment of a ‘Museum of Australia’ in Canberra, to the Government’s final go-ahead decision to build a permanent home for the Museum in 1996. This period was marked by the contribution of extensive and impressive intellectual capital on the form a national museum should take, and by a series of government initiatives—notably the *National Museum of Australia Act 1980* (the Act). The second period, from 1997 to the opening of the National Museum of Australia (NMA) in March 2001, was one of intense and extremely pressured construction—of the building; of the staffing and administration; of programs for temporary exhibitions, research, conferences, events; and above all the galleries themselves—including the myriad complexities of curating and design involved in selecting objects and displaying them with labels, lighting and audio-visual effects.

The Panel regards the NMA of 2003, two years after opening, given the velocity of its final evolution, as an extraordinary achievement. Our own experience of the Museum, reinforced by many of the written and oral submissions that we have received, is of an attractive place with appealing spaces and a cheerful ambience. Most visitors enjoy it. It is presented and maintained with professional élan and efficiency. The Panel was impressed by the dynamism of the organisation, and the high morale of the staff.

As a consequence, this Report treats the NMA as a ‘work-in-progress’, at the transition point from a frenetic, deadline-driven foundation stage, to a more mature one. The Report opens—in Part 2—by surveying different philosophies and perspectives on the role of a national museum in the contemporary world, and in particular in Australia. Through reflecting on these various perspectives, themes and dichotomies it develops its vision for the National Museum of Australia. Using the vision as reference point it then proceeds—in Parts 3, 4 and 5—to review the foundation period, which is complete, and to map out future directions. It concludes by spelling out fundamental changes that the Panel sees as necessary to develop the Museum into an institution of the first rank.

The Panel’s brief was twofold. It was to examine whether the NMA has met the expectations enunciated in the Act, and expanded upon by subsequent statements about the vision for the

NMA's permanent and temporary exhibitions, and schools and public programs. It was then to make recommendations about the future development of the NMA. We have taken this brief, in the main but not exclusively, to refer to the way the permanent exhibitions tell the Australian story, in its many facets. We have assumed that grand narratives are part of such a story, but so too is diversity, and a complex mosaic of social experience.

The Panel considers that a national museum should have some sections that are simply outstanding, definitive in what they do, telling stories and displaying objects with a seriousness and gravity that evokes the response from visitors: 'You have got to go there!' Without enchantment there will no true engagement. The NMA will only earn a deserved reputation as one of the world's great museums by meeting this benchmark. Australians set such standards for their sportsmen and women. Our view is that major cultural institutions should not be measured by weaker criteria.

In our judgment the full achievement of such a high benchmark will take time—great institutions are not built in a day. This is a matter of decades rather than years. Indeed, a number of those consulted, including Professor John Mulvaney, one of the authors of the Pigott Report, told the Panel that they took a very long-term view.

The Panel would like to record its gratitude to the many individuals and groups who provided written submissions, and to those who were interviewed in person. They have played a significant role in framing this Report. The Panel would also like to record its gratitude to the National Museum of Australia—to its Director, Dawn Casey, and the senior staff—for their unstinting help with briefings and the provision of documentation. We are particularly appreciative of the generous spirit in which this assistance was provided.

ii) METHODOLOGY

The Chairman of the Museum Council announced the Review of Exhibitions and Public Programs on 3 January 2003. The Council developed Terms of Reference (Appendix i) and nominated a Panel of four members (biographical details at Appendix ii). The expectation was that the Panel would report to the Council in four to six months, following wide consultation to elicit a broad spectrum of opinion on existing exhibitions and programs, and to identify the key issues that should shape the NMA's future direction.

The Panel decided that its assessment of the NMA's exhibitions and programs would be informed by its own consideration of the NMA's content and programs, supported by briefings by the Museum's Director, senior staff and curators; research, incorporating visits to other cultural institutions and background papers on relevant topics provided by the Secretariat; as well as a consultation process incorporating written submissions and interviews. It also familiarised itself

with the historical and policy background associated with the development of the NMA, and drew on information provided in preceding reviews. Source documents are listed at Appendix iii.

Consultation formed an integral part of the review process. Written submissions were called for by way of an advertisement in *The Australian* on 15, 19 and 21 February (Appendix iv). The advertisement was also placed on the websites of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and the NMA, and listed on relevant industry websites—Australian Museums and Galleries Online and Museums Australia.

The Panel received 105 written submissions. In addition, it held 40 interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including museum specialists, heads of related institutions, social commentators, industry and user groups, and specialists in the following disciplines: acoustics, architecture, exhibition design, multimedia, audience research, history, science and education. The oral contributors to be directly consulted were identified on the basis of:

- background documents relating to the NMA, from the development of exhibitions and content;
- the Panel's knowledge of their respective fields;
- research into NMA users and stakeholders;
- analysis of public debate about the NMA;
- consultations with the NMA; and
- written submissions.

All who provided oral and written contributions are listed at Appendix v.

The Panel's meetings were used to conduct consultations; to visit the Museum's exhibitions, programs and facilities; to receive briefings from NMA staff; to synthesise its views about the NMA's exhibitions and public programs; and to consider various drafts of the report. The Panel met with the Museum's Council once during the Review.

REVIEW

2. REFLECTIONS AND VISION

2. REFLECTIONS AND VISION

i) REFLECTIONS

The National Museum of Australia may only be reviewed after taking cognisance of different conceptions of the role of a national museum within its society. Not only have perceptions changed over the last century, but a consensus has given way to competing and sometimes incompatible views. The Panel is sensitive to the fact that the NMA, in its establishment phase, has had to steer a difficult passage through these choppy waters.

The main change in recent decades is towards a conception of a national museum as an institution that somehow projects a society's sense of itself, its major and defining traits. Its focus has increasingly become national identity.

The changing role of national museums is summarised in the conclusion to Dr James Gore's submission to the Panel, an extract from his doctoral thesis:

National museums find themselves in conflict. On the one hand, new interpretations of history have shown that there is no longer one national story for a museum to tell. Museums need to contribute to an understanding of the many different pasts and histories that exist, and only then can a national identity, or more importantly national identities, be realistically discussed. Yet, the national museum exists primarily to tell the story of a nation, and in order to properly understand the story the museum inevitably needs to retain some kind of coherent narrative, to show the nation's progress and to hold all the other stories together.

Contrasting the old and the new may serve to highlight the change. The traditional museum—say the British Museum, or the earlier modes of the Smithsonian in Washington—was formed under a civilisational ideal. Its task was to enlighten and to educate by means of collecting objects of high cultural significance, often from around the world—building a sort of cultural treasure-house. The authority here was the humanist principle of studying the range of human achievement, including the sciences and their objects of investigation. The museum was one type of Encyclopaedia. More specialised natural history, ethnographic and technological museums extended the reach. A key subtext was the celebration of enlightenment and progress in the

particular nation—Britain, France, Germany, the United States, Australia and elsewhere—and collectively under the canopy of European civilisation and its diaspora.

A focus on national identity is not entirely new. The Australian War Memorial has taken our nation's most potent story, and, over more than half a century, developed its projections in a thoroughly effective manner. This has been a relatively straightforward task, given the single and narrow focus on war, and the intellectual direction provided by C E W Bean's canonical history of the Anzac tradition, initiated at Gallipoli.

There has been some expectation that the National Museum should provide parallel inspiration in displaying other significant areas of national life. And indeed, to tell the 'Australian story' would seem to require this. Then follows the challenge of making judgments about what are its leading and distinctive features, and how they might be translated into museum practice.

A related issue is that of balancing grand narratives with diverse and more modest stories. It is stories that engage people. Museums of their essence work, at least in part, by displaying objects which are compelling in themselves—in their significance, their beauty, their antiquity—ones that can stand alone, like illuminated icons. Yet even here an accompanying or assumed narrative is usually necessary in order to make sense of the object—the Elgin marbles are confusing fragments without some awareness of classical Athens; or, exhibiting Judy Garland's shoes from *The Wizard of Oz* depends on visitor knowledge of the film, and the Garland legend. It is extremely rare for an object to work on its own—perhaps the painted bust of Queen Nefertiti in Berlin is an instance, the object so stunningly beautiful as not to need interpretation, and the same might even be claimed for Phar Lap in Melbourne.

Museum exhibits that do not work by means of an enchanting focal object are all the more dependent on generating engaging narratives. Any move to rely in exhibitions on symbols on their own—for instance, symbols of national identity such as the Hills Hoist, the FJ Holden or the meat pie—will fail, unless the symbol is drawn out by means of a narrative that provides context and perspective. There was overwhelming consensus among those consulted by the Panel about the centrality of narrative as the necessary method of museum presentation.

While extraordinary historical episodes and heroes form an essential part of a nation's story, so too do the myriad more ordinary lives and events which comprise a society. A museum today must also evoke some of the detailed tapestry of everyday life. It must give some sense of the diversity of views, customs and beliefs that occupy the shared cultural space that is modern Australia.

The risk here is of presenting an assembly of ill-coordinated fragments, merely serving to confuse the visitor. The Pigott Report warned against museums that are 'cluttered with a mass of objects without any consistent theme'. However, in the Australian case, there is the opportunity to have a special unifying theme. The land provides a cue for one of the national traits, that it is not characterised by single dramatic formations—those who go looking for great inland seas will not

discover them, but may find themselves taught, and harshly, about a different type of search. An aspect of the national character lies in a respect for the elusive, the out-of-the-way, the self-deprecating, and alerting quirks in the midst of the ordinary.

Accordingly, the challenge to a museum here is more in the nature of art than science: to present the ordinary and the everyday in order to open up and reveal the national trait. For instance, Patrick White, in his novel *Riders in the Chariot*, set in a fringe suburb, has one of the leading characters lament when a snake is killed by her housekeeper, that she always put milk out for it, sometimes it would let her stand by, but she never quite succeeded in winning its confidence.

Graeme Davison, Professor of History at Monash University—who has written extensively on museums in general, and the NMA in particular—argues, in a submission to the Review, that what he terms ‘interpretative pluralism’ is the only viable philosophy in the current Australian climate. He is at pains to stress that his is not a post-modernist position—he believes that there are historical truths, and some interpretations of them are more persuasive than others. He puts it that:

Rather than suppressing difference by imposing a single authorial voice, or brokering an institutional consensus, the NMA might better begin with the assumption that the imagined community we call the nation is by its very nature plural and in flux. In practice the degree of difference should not be exaggerated; there are many topics of high interest on which there is a substantial consensus of opinion. A national museum might then expect to play host to several interpretations of the national past, stirringly patriotic as well as critical, educationally demanding as well as entertaining.

While this view is forceful, the Panel is inclined to read more consensus than plurality at the core of the national collective conscience. The concept of nations as ‘imagined communities’, which is drawn from Benedict Anderson’s book of that title, implies that national character is a sort of fictitious construct, fluid and subject to rapid change, and therefore ephemeral. This view underestimates the deeper continuities in culture—for instance, the degree to which the portrait of the courageous warrior hero developed in Homer’s *Iliad* three millennia ago has shaped later images and stories, including, in the 20th century, both the Australian Anzac legend and the American Western film genre.

The difference between the Panel’s view and Professor Davison’s is one of emphasis, and will not lead us to apply a notably different series of judgments in reviewing the NMA.

The NMA has been conceived, in the main, as a social history museum. Such a designation makes sense as a loose canopy term which encompasses the history of ideas, and the social effects which science and the environment have exerted upon Australians. Accordingly, the NMA’s

multi-disciplinary brief includes palaeontology and geography, anthropology and archaeology, sociology and the history of science. It is clear that ‘social history’, linked by means of environmental relationships to the history and culture of the First Australians, offers a useful formula.

What are the significant areas of Australian life that ought to be covered in the National Museum? The Panel consulted widely on what achievements, prominent episodes and character traits are vital to the Australian story—and written submissions to the Panel provided another extensive source of argument and opinion.

There is the achievement category. Professor Geoffrey Blainey, historian of Australia, contributor over many years to the intellectual formation of the NMA, including as a co-author of the Pigott Report, provided his own list. It included national productivity, and especially in the primary sector, a capacity to feed and clothe millions of non-Australians; pioneer of democracy, especially in relation to women’s rights; innovation, usually out of adversity; mining; migration, especially between 1945 and 1975; the Australian city; and sport, including its social links to nationalism and pioneering revaluations of leisure.

A submission to the Panel from the Friends of the National Museum of Australia suggested that the current NMA is weak at representing business, sporting and scientific achievement—a view repeated by a number of those consulted by the Panel.

Then there are the more traditional themes of European discovery, exploration, convicts, settlement of the land, bushrangers, wool and wheat, fire and drought, and so forth.

Perhaps the greatest achievement, viewed from the contemporary perspective, and in the context of realistic historical comparisons with other tribes, communities and nations is the society itself. This is the establishment of a notably stable, efficiently managed, prosperous democracy, with very low levels of institutional corruption, with relatively low social inequality and a largely inclusive ethos, which has integrated immigrant peoples from hundreds of other places with reasonable success. Emblematic was the success of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, as acknowledged by much of the rest of the world. Tied in here are character traits of inclusiveness, a ‘fair-go’ ethos, a distrust of extremisms and civic common sense.

One third of the permanent exhibition space of the Museum is devoted to *First Australians*—the Aboriginal history gallery conceived by the Pigott Report. The story of the human occupation of the continent is largely an indigenous one. That story was to be complemented by a broad and concentrated representation of indigenous life, perhaps more anthropological than historical in its disciplinary underpinnings. While the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia was imagined as largely self-contained, and necessarily so given its focus, there were to be interconnections with the other two main galleries—and their themes of environment and the history of European Australia.

Dr Tom Griffiths, Senior Fellow in History at the Australian National University (ANU), argued in a submission to the Review that ‘environmental history’ should be strengthened at the NMA, as a means of better linking a social history focus in with ‘deep time’. The Pigott Report had spelt out ‘the theme of the museum to be the history of man and nature in this continent, their linked roles and their interactions’.

The Panel considers that *country*, which has arisen from Aboriginal relationships with the land, is an idea of great potential for the Museum—one that needs developing carefully, and at length, before its relevance to the NMA exhibitions might be properly assessed.

The NMA is charged with telling the Australian story in order to reflect on it, and to celebrate it. Equally, it has an obligation to cover darker episodes, and with a gravity that opens the possibility of collective self-accounting. The Australian War Memorial gains *gravitas* through recalling tragedy—its task is much easier here, in that the tragedy is supportive of national mythology, not at odds with it. A national museum today has a vital role to play in a mature society, in helping it to examine its own past fully—with truthfulness, sobriety and balance.

A national museum cannot do everything. The range of the cultural territory it needs to cover is so broad that there will be major areas in which it can only sketch and suggest. An astute strategy of interleaving temporary exhibitions with permanent ones can help achieve a balanced coverage.

It must also try to address the many expectations of visitors. Dr Linda Young, Senior Lecturer in Cultural Heritage Management at the University of Canberra, argued in a submission, that occasional visitors need to be distinguished from frequent visitors. A museum should cater to both sets. Occasional visitors are more likely to be disoriented, not knowing what to expect in a museum—they need stories that are familiar to them to make them feel more at home. It is ‘important to allow people to make connections from their own experiences—if there are no connections, there is confusion’. Frequent visitors, by contrast, are more likely to seek surprise and challenge. The Panel also noted that, in taking further account of the range of its audience, a national museum needs to recognise overseas tourists, and that they usually seek the new and the exotic—although fewer than ten per cent of NMA visitors, to date, are from other countries.

A museum also needs to present its material in a way that is appealing to the times—in order to attract new generations, new audiences. This will mean, in part, the creation of more dramatic forms of story-telling. One example from an earlier period is the popularity and effectiveness of the dioramas at the Australian War Memorial—which continue to enchant and to educate. The Director of the War Memorial, Major-General Steve Gower, remarked during consultation that his staff were developing an ‘object theatre’—a sound-and-light recreation of a World War II bombing raid over Berlin, centred on ‘G for George’, the actual Lancaster bomber that took part in the raid. He added that surveys show that visitors are drawn by—and love—such displays.

At the same time, a national museum will need to balance dramatic modes of presentation with the more traditional methods of combining objects to develop themes. There is some analogy here with the fact that Opera Australia is forced every season to include a staple of proven popular works—including *La Bohème*, *Carmen* and the Mozart favourites—in order to draw large audiences, which in turn allows it scope to experiment with lesser known operas.

It is in the nature of Australia's federalist constitution that a national institution based in Canberra should assume cross-continent leadership. What forms should this take—especially in relation to much older, well-established State museums with their own large collections? The NMA will likely become first among equals in the middle-to-long-term—not the least because the Commonwealth Government seems able to provide more resources than the States for funding cultural bodies.

The NMA has a recognised role in initiating and coordinating travelling exhibitions. It also has a parallel role in initiating research, and collaboration in research projects. The Panel received various submissions that recommended that the NMA also play a leadership role in the Australian museum industry. One theme was that the NMA should take chief responsibility for training skilled staff and initiating outreach programs for institutions in regional and remote areas.

The NMA has now taken its place among a select group of national cultural institutions. It will need to develop its own reciprocal relationships, in collaboration with such institutions as the Australian National Maritime Museum, the Australian War Memorial, the National Archives of Australia, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Library of Australia, and ScreenSound Australia: the National Screen and Sound Archives.

In contemporary Australia, a national museum, now that one has been founded, is duty bound to establish itself as a pivotal cultural institution. It must gain its own integrity—which means authority. Only then will it win a credible place in the Australian imagination, to the degree that it is seen as an essential part of the nation's sense of itself.

Such authority will depend on three things. Firstly and most importantly, there is the power and quality of its displays. This involves the judicious choice of themes and stories, and the success with which they are then projected. Outstanding displays depend on following the museological principles of good communication and design to express content.

Secondly, the NMA needs its own outstanding collection of objects—which will take time to build. A number of submissions to the Panel supported this need. For example, Linda Young holds that: '...collections and the knowledge they contain constitute the capital of museums...; they are the intellectual and social capital which guarantees museum authority and credibility'. Graeme Davison stated that: 'A museum needs a good collection of its own to become a serious player in the international collaboration that is now such a marked feature of the museum world, and its staff need to develop the curatorial, conservation and interpretative skills that can only come

through developing its own collection'. Collection policy will need to be guided to a significant degree by the main story-lines chosen for the permanent exhibitions.

Thirdly, the NMA needs to generate, or collaborate in, research of the highest academic and museological calibre. This research needs to be related to its own collection of objects, and geared to future exhibitions. Only when these three bases of museum authority are firmly established will the NMA truly be able to fulfil its functions.

ii) VISION FOR THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

'[The NMA's] establishment will fill a gap in the array of institutions charged with the preservation of our cultural heritage and will demonstrate to the world the pride that we have in our country.'

The Hon R J Ellicott QC, Minister for Home Affairs and the Capital Territory, second reading speech introducing the Museum of Australia Bill 1980 to Parliament.

'The true importance... is to provide the nation with a museum that for the first time tells accurately, entertainingly and educationally a history of Aboriginal and European society in Australia and the interaction of both with the unique Australian environment.'

The Hon Barry Cohen, in reply to Minister Ellicott.

'[The Museum will be] a place of animate display where the public mind and heart could be stimulated.'

W E H Stanner, Anthropologist, *Canberra Times*, 13 February, 1965.

'This is an exciting development for Canberra and the whole country. It's time that we had a National Museum of Australia where all the stories of our nation are told and our unique cultural mix is explored.'

'[The Museum will provide] a facility to reflect on and celebrate our journey as a nation.'

Senator the Hon Richard Alston, Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 1996 and 1998 media releases announcing Parliamentary approval for the construction of the NMA at Acton Peninsula.

These thoughts and ministerial statements, supported by a range of consulted expert advice that contributed to the foundation of the NMA—and in particular the 1975 Pigott Report—indicate that governments have wanted the NMA to tell the Australian story, and by means of generating consistent themes articulating objects, and thereby to inspire, to satisfy curiosity, to educate and to entertain. The Museum was to centre around three distinct but inter-related main galleries—of

permanent exhibitions—devoted respectively to environment, and especially human interaction with the environment; the history of modern Australia since the arrival of the British; and Aboriginal Australia. The Museum was to serve the national interest.

In particular, the opening exhibitions in the social history spaces were to celebrate the Centenary of Federation and the key themes of Australian society, to reflect on and celebrate our journey as a nation.

The Museum was also conceived as an institution combining the best contemporary techniques with new media technologies, in order to offer a range of experiences of wide appeal. The Museum was to establish partnerships with state, regional and international cultural institutions, in order to draw from the diversity of heritage collections existing throughout Australia, and to develop an active schedule of changing exhibitions including travelling exhibitions and blockbusters. It was envisaged that research facilities, and the collections, would be accessible to scholars, students and communities, for research and re-interpretation.

Drawing on these requirements, and on its reflections as delineated above, the Panel identified nine criteria which will have to be met for the National Museum of Australia to become a first-rank institution of international standing. The crux is that, for this goal to be realised, all criteria must be met to the highest level. In Parts 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Report, the Panel will employ these criteria in reviewing the Museum.

The first six of the nine criteria address the all-important primary foundation of museum authority—the power and quality of its displays. They encompass the range of themes and narratives the Museum should cover, and indicate more effective methods of story-telling—so as to draw in visitors and better engage them in the substance of the exhibits.

The Panel recognises that the Museum has made a start in meeting many of the criteria, and that it is regularly introducing changes to its exhibitions and activities. Where the NMA is failing to meet the criteria, the Panel will proceed to recommend some fundamental changes in direction.

The criteria require the NMA to:

- Tell the Australian story—and by means of compelling narratives, where possible focussed on enthralling, significant objects. Its aim is to inspire, to arouse and satisfy curiosity, to educate and to entertain.
- Present the primary themes and narratives of Australia since the arrival of the British, through the building of the nation to the country's place in the contemporary world. This includes evoking national character traits; detailing exemplary individual, group and institutional achievements; and charting the singular qualities of the nation.

- Present the history of the indigenous peoples of the continent. This includes a broad representation of indigenous life and culture, in its regional diversity, and in a manner that enables deeper understanding.
- Convey the history of the continent, in deep time, including its flora and fauna, and how it influences human interaction with the unique Australian environment—past, present and future.
- Convey a sense of the mosaic of everyday life and its more ordinary stories; of the diversity of its peoples and their customs and beliefs; and of the extraordinary in the ordinary. This includes sketching the society’s migrant history and identity.
- Cover darker historical episodes, and with a gravity that opens the possibility of collective self-accounting. The role here is in helping the nation to examine fully its own past, and the dynamic of its history—with truthfulness, sobriety and balance. This extends into covering present-day controversial issues.
- Build an outstanding national collection, geared to future exhibition objectives and informed by first-rank research.
- Assume a cross-continent museum collaboration and leadership role, especially in generating and facilitating travelling exhibitions, and developing curatorial research.
- Provide national access to a range of relevant public and schools programs, taking advantage of new technology where possible.

REVIEW

3. THE EXHIBITIONS

3. THE EXHIBITIONS

In Part 2 the Panel reflected on philosophies, themes and dichotomies—the nature and role of a national museum in the contemporary world, and in particular, in Australia. It proceeded to draw out its criteria for the NMA. We now move into consideration of the exhibitions mapped against the criteria. Where appropriate, we make suggestions as to how some stories might be more effectively presented. We start with consideration of how the visitor is oriented to the galleries, then address the primary themes and narratives vital to the Australian story, before going on to consider diversity and balance, the courtyard, the temporary and travelling exhibitions, and some of the physical attributes of the galleries.

The Pigott Report recommended that the Museum be based on three themes or sections—environment, history since European arrival, and a Gallery of Aboriginal Australia. The NMA has adapted the categories to ‘Land, Nation, People’. While the original trilogy broadly describes the current Museum layout, we consider there is merit in the NMA’s strategy of running simultaneously the tripartite Land-Nation-People motif across the top of the exhibitions. The risk of confusion is outweighed by the potential for the generation of a creative frisson.

In the light of the Part 2 discussion, we consider that the tri-gallery form provided a wise basis for structuring the NMA, given its challenge to tell the Australian story in a manner that speaks to the times. We also consider that the NMA has ably put this structure into practice.

The *First Australians* Gallery is set apart with its own distinct spaces, much as the Pigott Report envisaged for a Gallery of Aboriginal Australia. We observe that this contributes to a cohesiveness, in theme and ambience, that the other permanent galleries, in the main, struggle to achieve, and at times lack altogether. Visitors to *First Australians* automatically gain a sense of the gallery they have entered, its direction and the range of its content.

Environment, and human interaction with the environment, is mainly concentrated in *Tangled Destinies*. This gallery is pivotal, as it is the first entered by the visitor. We consider the gallery a good basis for extension of the land theme and will discuss this in Part 3ii(d). We were impressed by the curatorial philosophy shaping it, as we were by many of its exhibits. It is consistent with this Report’s fourth criterion for presenting ‘the history of the continent’, and ‘the story of human interaction with the unique Australian environment’.

On one front, we envisage a closer thematic connection between *Tangled Destinies* and the *Garden of Australian Dreams*. This will allow greater opportunity to represent environmental history, and in particular the prehistory of the continent—geology, flora and fauna—extensively

and systematically (see Part 3iv below). On a second front, we envisage it as a signalling device for the larger role that the under-developed theme of Country might play in *First Australians*.

The history of modern Australia since the arrival of the British is presented in three galleries—*Horizons*, *Nation* and *Eternity*. This three-way split has merit. *Eternity* is a distinct module that allows versatile presentation of individual life stories—an allusion to the general theme of Australia's national identity through the 'people'. *Nation* has the potential to represent key individuals, groups and institutions, as well as events and national characteristics—opening with Federation in 1901. *Horizons*, in its current form, suffers from some confusion of identity—its vague title symptomatic. We consider, though not unanimously, that it should refocus more explicitly on the European discovery-until-Federation period.

i) ORIENTATION

A tour of the NMA starts from the Great Hall, following a designated path into the permanent exhibition galleries, via the *Circa* cinema. This gives the NMA the opportunity to influence every visitor's first impressions. The visit then opens for most with a 12-minute session in *Circa*, which rotates, broken into three segments of multimedia presentation. This experience, seated in the dark with a maximum number of 28 others, might successfully transfer the visitor from the outside world into that of the Museum. Potentially, it enables a sort of transition of consciousness, with analogies to a rite of passage.

Circa could thus serve as a compelling introduction to the museum proper, focusing the visitor on what is to come, providing cues and a sense of direction. It largely fails to achieve this—because of problems with content and multimedia execution.

The main problem, and in all three segments, is with content and lack of coherence. The NMA's intention of providing a sort of impression-lounge for Australia does not work. There is little narrative thread connecting a staccato of images, and snapshots of people who deliver their own fragment of opinion. This is in the tradition of the television sports show that splices together 30-second takes from a dozen different sports, breaking the viewer's attention whenever it becomes engaged with a particular event. The effect is one of disjointed arbitrariness. Where the Museum's permanent exhibition galleries suffer from a recurring weakness, it is this same one.

The selection of people and their opinions, in the third segment of *Circa*, seems random. It sends the message that this museum is not concerned with the difficult business of telling the Australian story—which requires the art of judging essences of national character, significant episodes and events, and causal chains. It rather suggests that every opinion is equally truthful and insightful, irrespective of how informed and considered. Moreover, it assumes, falsely, that a

pot-pourri of one-line opinions necessarily makes a coherent whole. The NMA has also used *Circa* to fill gaps that are not covered in the permanent exhibitions. The Panel does not consider this appropriate here.

Circa is weak in its use of multimedia techniques—and, in this, it is out of step with much of the NMA, which innovates at times with striking effect. The modern cinema, a single medium using a similar setting, has the power to capture an audience in an opening 12-minute sequence and engage it in the story to follow. *Circa's* use of separate moving video screens is gimmicky; its imagery lacks force; and its wire dummies already look dated.

Circa has the potential to offer an especially effective entry transition into the Museum. The Panel recommends that its content be completely rethought. It should welcome visitors, seize their attention—as if they are entering a new enchanting domain, which will illuminate their understanding of Australia—then provide them with clear directions as to what is to follow in the Museum proper. It is an orientation space, and a means for signalling the vocabulary of the Museum. There is a case for changing its content from time to time.

Conclusion:

- *Circa* must introduce the Museum in a way that vitally engages the visitor, focusing on what is to come in the exhibitions, providing a sense of orientation and direction and acting as a transition from the outside world into the galleries.
- It should use up-to-date multimedia techniques as a showcase for the NMA.

Here are two possible ways in which the role of *Circa* might be enhanced—using the existing rotating theatre and its three segments to present three scenes. In the first, the Panel suggests use of the first-person perspective in order to maximise the visitor experience and to create a feeling of transition out of the everyday, and into the permanent exhibitions. The second involves *Circa* dealing more explicitly with the three elements of the Land, Nation and People. The Panel is not presuming here to take on the role of exhibition design, but merely to sketch out potential narrative forms.

Suggestion

Scene 1: Botany Bay, 1770. The audience is cast as sailors on Captain Cook's longboat approaching the shore for the first time. They look through telescopes at this new, alien land and its inhabitants. The idea is to create a sense of discovery and trepidation for the visitor about the immensity of this moment—which is both historic and ordinary—seeing this 'New World' through fresh eyes. The scene should make reference to how long the journey has taken, given the technologically primitive construction of the *Endeavour*, and

Cook's extraordinary navigational feat. The important theme of scientific enquiry into this new land should also be introduced, through Joseph Banks. There is potential to incorporate a broad-brush portrayal of the Australian continent—sketching its size, aridity and geological forms, its strange flora and exotic animals. The scene might end with telescopic focus on the inhabitants uneasily waiting on the shore.

Scene 2: Botany Bay, 1770. The same scene in reverse, from the Aboriginal perspective on the shore. An attempt to make sense of the approaching longboat and its weird-looking occupants through *Dreaming* stories might be incorporated. The scene could then take the visitor through some of the history to come—future encounters with these intruders and their alien customs, tools and institutions. The transformation to the land should be highlighted. (Film director, Peter Weir's two-way focus in *The Last Wave*, switching from European to Aboriginal and back, is suggestive, and as a technique for inducing mystery to evoke deeper themes.)

Scene 3: The modern Australian city. The audience is moved into a contemporary setting, juxtaposed with what has preceded, to convey a sense of vast change in two centuries. The urban backdrop allows reference to the 2000 Olympics and a sense of national identity and diversity. The five permanent galleries of the Museum are then introduced, each in turn with its own narrative thread.

Suggestion

The Land element might incorporate some dramatic contemporary satellite imagery of a storm rolling across the country, leading into Cyclone Tracy or the ravaging of drought, to remind the visitor firstly of the land's power. Stocker's 1930s Central Australian films, depicting Aboriginal people at ease with the land and oblivious to the European presence, might set the scene for images of settler society, as contained in extracts from early films such as *On Our Selection*. The use of sound, particularly to evoke moments of stillness, could be employed to convey the dawn sounds at a waterhole, a creaking cart along a bush track, the distant echo of a 1940s Arnhem Land ceremonial performance, reminding the visitor of the way in which the land has accommodated its human history. Other footage, of rabbit plagues, of desert crossings, of historic bushfires, Antarctic science, could be combined with objects relating to these themes currently on display, or envisaged for future displays.

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The Nation element might work chronologically also, but extending back in time from the present. Again, historic footage of important events, such as the bombing of Darwin, the east-west railway, the Federation story, the Overland Telegraph, can all be employed.

The chronology would reverse again in the People element, so that key objects juxtaposed and combined with footage of particular sites in the landscape are those which evoke the earliest achievements of Aboriginal people. The arrival of explorers, and convicts, then settlers, provoking frontier violence, accommodation and a bush culture should be dealt with through relevant artefacts, but also through the use of feature film—*For the Term of his Natural Life*, *The Kelly Gang*, *Jedda*, and *Back of Beyond*. A panoply of Australian characters, scenes, inventions and objects might follow, so that even the Hills Hoist and the barbecue take their place, together with Edna Everage.

Perhaps all these elements of an Australian identity might be swept up together in a storm or a tumbleweed which rolls across the landscape, completing the production and ending as dramatically as it began, ‘spilling’ the visitor out into the exhibition space.

ii) PRIMARY THEMES AND NARRATIVES

The Museum’s authority will stand principally on the power and quality of its displays. Central to this is the choice of themes and narratives that are of vital significance to the society, to its people’s self-understanding. Those themes and narratives form the indispensable core to the permanent exhibitions. Equally important is the effectiveness with which they are presented—the quality of the Museum’s story-telling. In this section, the Panel considers the themes and narratives that are fundamental to the Australian story.

a) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

The Panel’s first criterion for the Museum stresses the need to tell the Australian story, ‘and by means of compelling narratives, where possible focussed on enthralling, significant objects’.

The part of the NMA that achieves this most successfully is *First Australians: Gallery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. It does present ‘the history of the indigenous peoples of the continent’. It does include ‘a broad representation of indigenous life and culture, in its regional diversity’ and it does so ‘in a manner that enables deeper understanding’. Throughout the written submissions to the Review there was overwhelming consensus about the positive achievement of *First Australians*. It was echoed by many of those consulted by the Panel.

First Australians contains displays which successfully address both the classical Aboriginal past (and its connections to the present) on one hand, and contemporary Aboriginal Australia (and

its links back through the colonial era), on the other. This approach effectively breaks down the traditional barriers between culture and history, which Aboriginal people themselves often criticise.

The wide and complex coverage of cultural and historical themes involves significant variation in content, mood and style throughout the gallery. That variability works well for the range of visitors, catering to different tastes, backgrounds and age groups.

Between the entrance to *First Australians* and the gallery proper is a long, self-contained Welcome Hall. This successfully marks, aurally and visually, the transition from the rest of the museum into a different kind of cultural space—which one enters with anticipation. It is common to observe visitors slow down and become more attentive, alerted and newly focussed. They pass around a diaphanous veil suggestive of wind, and mystery, and enter a generous space vibrant with contemporary music. Dance video frescoes enliven the walls. A dark, low tent-like ceiling, punctuated by pin-lighting to evoke the Milky Way, acts as a thread drawing visitors slowly towards the main exhibition gallery. The Welcome Hall provides an excellent reorientation—unique in the NMA—towards what is to follow.

What does follow is the upper gallery of *First Australians*. It is conceptually forceful and coherent—indicating a firm curatorial hand. It excels at representing some of the regional and lifestyle diversity of Aboriginal culture. It is lit in cheerfully bright and warm colours. A simulated snake hung under the ceiling acts as a visual cue drawing the visitor along the length of the gallery, its gesture also serving to link the discrete exhibit modules. Overall, there is a harmony of lighting, space and well-balanced and focussed modules that is both uplifting to the visitor's spirits, and conducive to study and reflection—despite some loud and conflicting audio-visual elements.

The upper floor of *First Australians* contains a high proportion of well-chosen objects, appropriately reflecting the collection's strengths. The series of regional studies provides fine examples of coherent and engaging exhibits, containing suites of objects which tell unified stories linked to the audio-visual elements and to strong background graphics.

The Wik/Apelech module, with its dramatic carvings which comprise outstanding elements of the collection, exerts a strong effect, drawing the visitor in with enchantment, and thereby encouragement to pause, concentrate here, and to engage with the exhibits. It provides a cogent reminder of the way in which strong curatorial vision and aesthetic flair and an informed selection of powerful objects and images, can produce exhibits that are both edifying and beautiful.

As noted, the *First Australians* Gallery achieves a good balance between classical and contemporary Aboriginal society. It does this on the upper level by means of regional case-studies and by an object-rich exploration of Aboriginal technologies, including stone tool technology. On the lower level of *First Australians*, the perspective shifts to an examination of those social and political issues which have affected and formed contemporary Aboriginal society.

The Panel's one thematic criticism of this section concerns an under-representation of Land/Country—which, while currently implicit in several exhibits, could be drawn out and explored. This subject may have been taken for granted by curators, but as the outstanding feature of Aboriginal religious belief, social structure and political practice, Country should emerge more strongly as a key theme. This would also enable the visitor to make a clearer connection between *First Australians* and the *Tangled Destinies* Gallery, in particular. The stronger and more natural that connection appears, the more likely it is that visitors will carry away an integrated vision of the NMA, and of an Australia, many of whose people, share a deep attachment to Country.

The Panel was also persuaded by a suggestion made to it by Dr Gaye Sculthorpe, Director of the Indigenous Cultures Program at the Melbourne Museum, that the NMA might extend its coverage of the history and anthropology of specific cultural groups. The Museum's Focus Gallery represents a considerable opportunity for it to present exhibitions on particular groups.

This Report has sketched in very broad terms here what it sees as major strengths of *First Australians*. This gallery serves as a model for much that should be aimed at in some other parts of the NMA.

b) European discovery to Federation

An Australian National Museum needs to concentrate, in one of its galleries, on the primary themes in the period from European discovery to Federation—discovery and exploration; European settlement including convicts, pastoralists, bushrangers and the interface with indigenous peoples; and civic foundations. These are significant historical moments, ones that are also familiar to many visitors, and likely subjects of their curiosity. The NMA deals currently with some of these themes, but in different galleries, which brings confusion to all but the most conscientious visitor. This is a case in which the NMA's observation of its brief to show interactions between the three domains of environment, European history and Aboriginal history, has led to incoherence in practice. Also some primary themes are absent or not given sufficient attention. The Panel considers that the *Horizons* Gallery is the best place to address the European discovery to Federation period.

Horizons currently follows the important theme in Australian history of 'Peopling of Australia since 1788'—above all, the major role that migration has played in the development of this country. Peopling is also a strong undercurrent in *Eternity* and has a presence in *Nation*. This theme may also lend itself to temporary exhibitions, especially given the strength of the NMA's collection relating to migration and the experiences of ethnic groups in Australia.

The present execution in *Horizons* is ill-focussed and confused, and it fails to generate convincing stories. It projects little sense of 'exemplary individual, group and institutional achievements'. A

notable cross-section of those consulted by the Panel expressed dissatisfaction with *Horizons*. These problems are compounded for the visitor, who on entering a gallery with exhibits about Captain Cook and convicts, expects to see other primary themes from the first century of European settlement represented.

The Panel considers that the peopling theme should be limited in *Horizons*, and presented in combination with key episodes in the first century of European settlement. These episodes should be underpinned with a strong chronological thread. There are a number of themes that stand out as significant. The Panel considers three of them essential to the Museum—European Discovery, Exploration, and Arrivals in Australia between 1788 and Federation. This is a necessary rather than sufficient list—it is far from exhaustive. Other important themes, perhaps more suited to temporary exhibitions, include the background geo-political philosophy of Empire—which is included currently as one of the introductions to *Horizons*—the gold rushes, civic development, and ‘tyranny of distance’, all of which are currently addressed to some extent in *Nation* and *Tangled Destinies*. Later aspects of the peopling of Australia, some of which are now in *Horizons*, should continue to be picked up in biographies in *Eternity*, and be taken up in *Nation* in such topics as national development.

This section of the Report will suggest how *Horizons* might be refocussed to reflect the primary themes from European settlement to Federation.

- i) **Discovery by Europeans** The current *Horizons* opens with some Cook exhibits. The first reference is to Disaster Bay, which the *Endeavour* passed on its way up the coast to the first landing, at Botany Bay. This inclusion risks insinuation of the subtext that European arrival was a disaster for the continent. This is an inappropriate opening message in the gallery, followed by the equally inappropriate, and prominent signage: ‘Terra Nullius’. Cook is linked—pejoratively and unfairly—in an opening reference, to a debate that would arise two centuries later. If these concepts belong anywhere, it is in the downstairs part of *First Australians*.

James Cook should be a significant presence in the National Museum of Australia. His story is an easy one to tell, brimming over with dramatic and extraordinary elements—of the man who was arguably the greatest navigator of the 18th century, whose pioneering choice of provisions for his ship, and strict cleanliness regime, protected his sailors from endemic diseases like scurvy, whose humane leadership forbade sailors with venereal disease going ashore in Polynesia, and who, in sum, is celebrated in the Maritime Museum in Greenwich as: ‘Mild, just, but exact in discipline: he was a father to his people who were attached to him from affection and obedient from confidence’. If modern Australia has a foundation myth, it surely involves somewhere at its heart the figure of Captain James Cook.

Matthew Flinders—the other early navigator distinguished by exceptional achievement—might be linked in parallel. Reference to Dutch and French discovery is also essential.

- ii) **Exploration** Space and economy probably limits the Museum to telling one explorer story well. The Burke and Wills saga recommends itself in terms of several of the Panel's criteria. It is the most familiar to contemporary Australians. It carries mythic force in the national imagination. Professor Tim Bonyhady, Research Fellow at the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies at the Australian National University, writes: 'No other colonial figures except for Ned Kelly have loomed so large in the culture'. Also, this story invites telling through one powerful and quintessential moment—death at Cooper's Creek—and is thereby most likely to satisfy the 'compelling narrative' criterion.

Such an exhibition is dependent on significant objects. Tim Bonyhady's 2002 exhibition, *Burke and Wills: From Melbourne to Myth*, mounted for the National Library of Australia, shows how it is possible to gather material culture, by acquisition and borrowing, for such an exhibition. Here too is an opportunity for entertainment linked to education, arousing and satisfying curiosity in an inspiring module.

Suggestion

Invoke the scene of the failed meeting place—the archetypal theme of a misunderstood message on a tree. Work in some larger Australian narratives, for instance of the European move inland, attempting to master a vast, uncharted and arid continent; heroic and not-so-heroic failure; and a comedy of errors that turns to tragedy. If Discovery is to be marked in the NMA by achievement, Exploration marked by poignant failure would serve as fruitful counter-balance.

Readings from Patrick White's *Voss* might be voiced over the scene—passages that evoke the solitary European explorer's attempt to wrestle with this vast and alien land, to tame it imaginatively through a battle of the mind to win understanding. The aim is to stimulate in the non-indigenous visitor the enduring struggle to feel at home in Australian landscape. This story also invites parallel telling of Aboriginal engagement with the land—given Burke and Wills' fatal refusal to learn from generous local Aborigines about food readily available to them.

- iii) **Arrivals in Australia** The range of possible stories that might be told here includes convicts, pioneer bush settlers, pastoralists, gold rushes, formative institution building, early towns (perhaps Adelaide or Perth with their unique foundation stories) and the interface between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples—just to list the more obvious. Whichever are chosen, they need to be presented thoroughly and coherently enough to engage the visitor in the narrative.

Horizons includes a large section devoted to Convicts. It occupies a well-delineated space and provides a good basis for developing a more effective display. The current design is fragmentary, requiring some work on the part of the visitor to perceive the various components. A paucity of original documents or objects means that the multiple cases used fail to build an engaging historical narrative.

The Panel's criteria that are satisfied by an evocatively told early-explorer story, are equally germane to *bushrangers*. The NMA is addressing this theme through its forthcoming *Outlaws* exhibition. In the longer term, for the same reasons that Burke-and-Wills offers itself as principal candidate for the explorer story, Ned Kelly does for bushrangers—familiarity, mythic force, and entertainment linked to education. The Kelly legend also hinges on one epic moment—the siege at Glenrowan. Moreover, as the State Library of Victoria's 2003 exhibition—*Kelly Culture, Reconstructing Ned Kelly*—showed, this legend has generated a long and enduring series of retellings, especially in cinema, novel and the visual arts. It continues to do so. The Kelly legend is a sizeable, living part of the Australian story.

Kelly also provides an opportunity for the NMA to introduce the theme of the Irish in Australia—one that is conspicuously lacking in current exhibitions. The Irish contribution to the institutional fabric of Australia, its national traits and customs, its popular culture, and indeed much of its vernacular tone, is second only to the Anglomorph one. This contribution ranges from the tenor of *The Wild Colonial Boy* to the aesthetics of the suburban pub, and includes as different presences as Archbishop Daniel Mannix and former Prime Minister Paul Keating.

Dr Patrick Greene, Director of Museum Victoria, reflected, during a consultation with the Panel, that there are local stories—Kelly was the example cited—that become national stories. At this point, both national and relevant state museums have a duty to represent them. As the key objects are almost all in the possession of Melbourne institutions, some collaboration would be necessary, and a temporary exhibition may be more practicable.

The story of the peopling of the country is in part one of migration, of the arrival of waves of people from different cultures—with varying motives and backgrounds. They settled in different ways and with different degrees of success. The National Museum must convey some sense of the kaleidoscope of experience and contributions of those immigrants occupying this 'New World'.

Currently the NMA takes up this challenge with a sequence of modules and exhibits in *Horizons*, which focus on the process of immigration. Individual biographies are also presented in *Eternity*, a gallery that is particularly suited in its conception to evoking a kaleidoscope of 'peopling' experience.

Minority Opinion on Part 3, section ii(b)

The majority view in this Report proposes a tighter definition for the *Horizons* and *Nation* galleries, suggesting that *Horizons* accommodate pre-Federation European history as well as its existing 'Peopling Australia' theme, and that the *Nation* Gallery be restricted, chronologically, to post-Federation history. My own view differs.

I consider that the National Museum's adoption of the three flexible thematic categories, Land, Nation and People, currently allows for a creative meshing of themes and for the interpenetration of indigenous and European cultural and social histories from the pre-contact period until the present. While this approach carries risks in terms of coherent museological presentation, it also allows the Museum to move away from more traditional, chronologically ordered exhibits. It would, I think, be a pity for the Museum to return to a more constrained approach in this area. The *Gallery of First Australians* and the *Tangled Destinies* and *Eternity* Galleries are unconfined by chronological limits, and I consider that the *Nation* and *Horizons* Galleries will work best if they continue on the same basis.

I would therefore support a broad definition of *Nation* as a frame for accommodating the full range of historical events and forces contributing to the formation of Australian identity since European arrival. I would also support a broad definition of *Horizons* along its present lines, developing the theme of Peopling Australia from ancient times into the present, and surveying the perspectives, skills and experiences which different peoples have brought, and continue to bring, to this country.

Dr Philip Jones

c) Federation to contemporary Australia

The gallery that focuses on this historical period—*Nation*—is designed to work through major themes and symbols. It has some ambitious and impressive displays. The Panel is in accord with the NMA's choice of title—it is simple, direct and accurate. It was impressed by the interactive map, 'Imagining the Country', which provides crucial information on discovery, exploration and settlement, as well as themes relating to indigenous Australia. The Panel agrees with the Museum's own claim in a submission to the Review, that:

It is a sophisticated sequence of statistics, information, stories and images projected on to a large map of Australia which grabs and holds the attention of all visitors, many of whom spend a substantial

amount of time drilling down through the many layers of information about Australia and its history. It is an excellent example of the ability of information and communication technologies to provide information to a depth impossible in traditional object and text bound museum displays.

However, *Nation* suffers currently from a systemic weakness—it is not good at generating compelling narratives. It is hampered by a failure to provide clearly articulated stories around its objects, making it difficult for the visitor to become deeply engaged in a theme, and thereby linger and reflect rather than lightly browse. Nor is *Nation* good at establishing priorities—that is, giving more prominence and focus to important themes over lesser ones.

While the Panel stresses the centrality of narrative method, it does acknowledge that the current *Nation* strategy of opening with a suite of evocative national icons might be made to work—as a one-off strategy to create an awe-inspiring entrance domain. This would hinge on objects of Phar Lap luminescence in themselves, all tightly coordinated.

- i) **Federation** The *Nation* Gallery opens with a Federation arch. The concept is valid but the object, a scaled-down replica, is huge, and cramped in a space that is too small, set at an awkward angle, so that the impression of a grand monument, symbolising the birth of a nation, is lost. Also, an opportunity is missed to draw on the initiation motif symbolised in the original arches—to pass through was to enter nationhood, the infant colonies and their peoples having now come of age, a rite-of-passage theme to be transported into the Anzac legend.

There is an issue as to whether the Federation story belongs in the NMA. The Panel concluded that the story of Federation should be told properly somewhere in the national capital. Dr John Hirst, Reader in History at La Trobe University and historian of Federation, put it during consultation: ‘Federation may not be a dramatic enough story to suit a museum’.

- ii) **Anzac** The Anzac theme is marked in *Nation* by the presence of a post-World War I memorial statue of a Digger. A number of those consulted by the Panel saw this as tokenism, arguing that the Australians-at-war story should be left to the Australian War Memorial. Others argued that Australia could not have a national museum that did not include some reference to this major national theme. The suggestion was also put that the Museum might deal with the social effects of war. The Panel concluded that all three perspectives have merit. At the least, if the Museum is going to include a memorial statue of a Digger, it should draw the story out more effectively, providing a context for the visitor who is unfamiliar with the Anzac legend.

iii) **National Development** A number of those consulted by the Panel observed that the cluster of themes around the topic of developing the nation—including business enterprise, labour history, mining, and the Snowy Mountains Scheme—are under-represented in the NMA. *Nation* does include various exhibits, but in a piecemeal fashion. Gold, for instance, is represented, but tucked away at the back of the gallery. It would be more historically consistent to include the gold rushes in *Horizons*.

This section of the Museum is of particular educative importance in projecting institutional achievement, and linked with national traits. To work effectively it needs to tell one story in as large and extensive manner as to engage the visitor imaginatively in the massive and lengthy collective enterprise of developing the nation.

The Panel suggests that the NMA make a concerted attempt to mount a major development exhibit. The Panel accepts Geoffrey Blainey's suggestion, during consultation, that Broken Hill is arguably the most suitable subject for this purpose. Themes that might be conjoined with a Broken Hill mine are geological exploration, the birth of the steel industry, trade unions, the significance of iron ore, and technological innovation. The current *Nation* Gallery includes an exhibit on Essington Lewis, the founder of BHP—this would neatly link in here to explore the story of the entrepreneur and the development of the business corporation.

iv) **Communications and Transport** The current *Nation* Gallery devotes generous space to both themes. It uses powerful objects. The Panel's only review comment is its systemic one in relation to *Nation*—that wider contexts need to be provided by means of coherent narrative, giving the visitor a broader historical sense of the theme in the evolution of the nation.

v) **Science and Technology** Science is almost entirely neglected by the NMA. It is a major theme, both at the level of institutional achievement—led by the CSIRO and medical research bodies like the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research—and individual achievement, led by Nobel prize-winners. The National Museum has a responsibility to educate its visitors about significant accomplishment here, including the role that technological invention has played in the country's economic progress.

Robyn Williams, Presenter, ABC Radio National Science Show, pointed out to the Panel, during consultation, that science stories leave younger generations cold unless they are communicated via nodes of dynamic contemporary relevance. Accordingly, one suggestion for the NMA, perhaps more suited to a temporary exhibit, would be to open with a sports drug testing module, and from there develop a chain of history-of-science links, including decisive laboratory experiments, back to a pre-eminent scientist—say Nobel Laureate, Howard Florey. An interactive component might be included. It is also the case that the Florey penicillin story is worth presenting in its own right (while Florey has been covered in *Eternity*, his remarkable scientific achievement has received little more than a passing mention).

vi) ***Sport, Leisure and the Arts*** As the submission from the Friends of the National Museum, amongst others, points out, sport is weakly represented in the NMA. Sport holds central attention in the social life and culture of Australia. It has influenced the layout of cities—in, for instance, the space in each inner suburb of the major cities given over to large football and cricket grounds; it has helped shape feelings of nationalism and the ethos of the ‘fair go’; and it has guided patterns of work and leisure. Indeed the important theme of leisure in the life of the nation might be tied in here—perhaps by representing that symbolically charged but ambiguous space, the beach.

The current *Nation* Gallery includes leisure, in part through exhibiting a caravan, which also gestures to the transport theme, and the sociology of getting to know the continent by touring around it. The Panel agrees that this is a potentially fertile cluster.

Australia has a remarkably long and broad record of achievement in the arts, performing and other. It has achieved international standing, to list some areas, in film, ballet and opera; in some of the visual arts including cartoons; in poetry and the novel; and in the circus. The Panel recommends that one section of *Nation* be devoted to the arts—it is a domain in which significant objects, from costumes to manuscripts, can be collected or borrowed with relative ease. An arts section is also likely to address the need in many visitors for exhibits that contain the familiar—and in a potentially entertaining environment.

Sport invites representation through a paradigmatic moment, illuminated by significant objects.

Suggestion

Scene: Melbourne Cricket Ground, Australia versus West Indies Second Test Match, 1960–61 tour.

The Joe Solomon Cap Incident—as told in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s television series, *Calypso Summer*. Visitors enter an enclosed space. Simulate being present among 70,000 spectators at the MCG—capturing the distinctive atmosphere and flavour of the large Australian crowd at a major sporting event—orderly as it is, in spite of high emotional voltage.

Richie Benaud, the Australian captain, recounts in his own self-deprecating way, how he appealed when Joe Solomon’s cap fell on the stumps dislodging a bail. Solomon was given out, correctly, for the rules are the rules. Benaud continues with wry amusement that there were only eleven people present at the ground that day who did not boo him.

Rich cultural traits resonate here, as the people educate their Test Captain in their view of good sportsmanship, the importance of the spirit of the game, and their hostility to letter-of-the-law bureaucratic controls. The tone in which Benaud recalls the incident indicates that he took the lesson to heart—Benaud’s voice in itself, with inimitable cadences and laconic intonations, captures an Australian moment.

Such an exhibit is dependent on collecting or borrowing the significant objects, most notably Joe Solomon’s cap itself, but also Richie Benaud’s cap, or some equivalent—they are the vital centrepieces. In general, the collection needs the sort of objects that will enable such stories to be generated from within the NMA.

Alternatively, this module might portray Evonne Goolagong on Centre Court in the Wimbledon Final—her titles either of 1971, or 1980 defeating Chris Evert. Or it could evoke the atmosphere of the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, the ‘friendly games’, through focussing on one of Dawn Fraser’s swimming triumphs. In the longer term, the NMA might present all three episodes.

It is also important, the Panel suggests, to represent the darker side of Australia’s sporting engagement, one emanating from ruthless and, at times, ignominious competitiveness. Here is one opportunity for satisfying the criterion of ‘collective self-accounting’.

vii) ***Cities and Towns*** The city, as the central habitat in which the majority of Australians dwell and experience life, demands some sort of panoramic coverage in the Museum. This requires the construction of two defining axes. One is historical, delineating changes over time to a particular city—depicting, say, snapshots of the same streets, lanes, buildings and neighbourhoods in different decades. The other is sociological, showing the range and diversity of metropolitan experience in one era. Significant historical episodes like the Great Depression might be worked in.

Nation currently aims at projecting urban life, particularly through two large exhibits. One gestures towards the suburban garden, using Hills Hoists and Victa lawnmowers as nodal objects. The other recreates a 1950s kitchen. The Panel agrees with the choice of topics, but regards the execution as flawed. There is also, located on its own in *Tangled Destinies*, an exhibit related to city planning.

If a 1950s suburban backyard is to be represented, then an experience of what it was like to enter one must be reconstructed. To offer symbols without interpretation—here the Hills Hoist and the Victa lawnmower—can make little sense to those unfamiliar with the environment, whether they are overseas tourists or younger generation Australians. The visitor needs to *enter* imaginatively into the backyard. The BBQ currently on display might be retained, perhaps together with visuals of a lawn being mowed, and with characteristic noise,

neighbourly gossip or a dispute. Such an exhibit needs ethnographic flair to give it integrity and engaging vitality. Australian artists have demonstrated remarkable talent for constructing precisely this type of evocation—above all Barry Humphries, and Rob Sitch, director of the film, *The Castle*.

The same applies to the 1950s kitchen. Once again, this type of exhibit is dependent on a gifted curatorial hand shaping it.

d) Land

The Panel's fourth criterion requires the Museum to present 'the history of the continent, in deep time, including its flora and fauna, and how it influences the story of human interaction with the unique Australian environment'. While this relates mainly to *Tangled Destinies*, there is potential for the primary theme of Land to be carried through all of the galleries, as a unifying feature in the human history of Australia.

Tom Griffiths wrote in a submission:

Environmental history remains undeveloped [in Australian museums], and its potential to work creatively across Aboriginal and immigrant cultures also remains relatively unexplored. And it has remained undeveloped partly because [social history and Aboriginal history]...are currently neglectful of, or antagonistic to, deep time.

He added: 'The *Tangled Destinies* Gallery has made a wonderful beginning in this task, and has been the subject of widespread scholarly appreciation'. The Panel agrees with this comment—each of the modules in this gallery covers the subject matter in an interesting manner, with relevant objects. However, the problem here is one of narrative—the individual units appear as disparate, unconnected elements rather than being linked together as chapters in the same story.

Of all the continents of the world, Australia's history is unique—its mobility and varied liaisons have shaped the development of its unusual fauna and flora, the productivity of its land, and the presence of its vast mineral resource base. These qualities have, in turn, influenced the national character, from the time humans first set foot here.

Each of the permanent galleries in the NMA has an opportunity to explore the concept of land and its influence—on the composition of the unique fauna and flora (in *Tangled Destinies*), on so many aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life including art, religion and family relationships (in *First Australians*), and on the development of a national identity, including areas of national achievement such as agriculture and mining (in *Nation*). This 'land-link' could serve as a coherent thread that leads the visitor from one section of the NMA to another, and could help the visitor understand the singular nature of the continent.

The Panel found that the concept of ‘deep time’—the history of the origins and evolution of Earth and its inhabitants—is not adequately explored in *Tangled Destinies*. There is potential for this gallery to extend its coverage of deep time, to focus on the dynamic evolution of the Australian continent and its effect on all humans who have occupied it, from the first indigenous inhabitants to contemporary Australians. This would allow a connection to issues of current interest such as environmental change, land degradation, and salinity. If there were a coherent thread running through the gallery, the relevance of the current modules addressing deep time within the larger Australian story would be more accessible.

In Part 3iv below the Panel offers suggestions for extending the Land theme into the Courtyard.

Conclusion

- *Horizons* should focus on the period of the history of Europeans in Australia before Federation, with a core of three areas that are covered well—European Discovery, Exploration, and Arrivals in Australia. Significant objects should be used as often as possible.
 - *Nation* should be reworked to provide compelling narratives, giving priority to primary national themes. It needs to generate a broader historical sense of how individual stories fit into the evolution of the nation. It needs to draw out the objects exhibited by depicting their context.
 - *Tangled Destinies* should present a chronological thread linking all modules together. Its coverage of deep time should be extended.
 - The concept of Land should be expanded in all galleries, to explore how it has influenced Australia’s development and the people’s relationship with it, and to provide a macro-theme interlinking the permanent exhibitions.
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iii) DIVERSITY

a) Plurality and mosaic of everyday life

The Panel’s fifth criterion requires: ‘Conveying a sense of the mosaic of everyday life and its more ordinary stories; of the diversity of its peoples and their customs and beliefs; and of the extraordinary in the ordinary’.

This applies in two opposite directions. In part, it is a question of detailing the impact of grander historical episodes on the groups and individuals caught up in them. In part, it is a question of taking a range of individual stories and drawing grander, extraordinary themes out of them. This is one of the effective means of telling a captivating story.

Individual stories are handled adroitly by the NMA in its *Eternity* Gallery. In relation to the grander themes, and their impact on groups and individuals, the challenge is to build an episode—say, a national development one like Broken Hill, or the Snowy Mountains Scheme. The episode should incorporate the particular stories of the people who contributed, in the Snowy Mountains case many of them migrants, including their backgrounds, the impact they made on the project and later on the country, and, in reverse, the impact the project and the country had on their lives. Portraits of typical families, over generations, and perhaps between town and bush, would help fill out the picture.

The Panel received submissions that argued in favour of a strong immigration and ethnicity component for the NMA—a case put notably by Jerzy Zubrzycki, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the Australian National University. The migration experience is currently taken up in *Horizons*, under the rubric of ‘peopling’, and in *Eternity* within a spectrum of Australian biographies. The Panel considers that more could be done to address the concern that the NMA should represent the impact of migrant cultures on Australian ways and customs—from food, to architecture, to café streetscapes, and to footballers hugging in public.

The *Eternity* Gallery is where, in the main, the Museum has set about presenting the mosaic of everyday lives and the diversity of the people. It tells stories of individual Australians with the help of multimedia. They are grouped in clusters, a different emotive theme defining each cluster. There is periodical changeover of the individuals included. The biographies range from the famous and historically significant to the notorious, and from the controversial to the ordinary members of everyday society. A number of migrant stories are included.

In the Panel’s view, reflected in many submissions it received, this gallery is a remarkable achievement. It shows a strong curatorial vision, which is executed with consistency and flair. In its overarching concept it is original, which may contribute to the liveliness of its presentations. Its use of interactive multimedia helps visitors to select stories that might be of interest, and then to engage them in the fabric of the particular life. It is good at modulating stories and their presentation, with thought given to sequencing, and varying dramatic presentation styles from one story to the next. A separate interactive module allows visitors to compose their own stories. *Eternity* is popular, in terms of the numbers who visit it, and the time they spend there.

The Panel considers *Eternity* successful at combining the criteria functions of arousing and satisfying curiosity, education and entertainment.

Providing the more attentive visitor with detailed biographies would enhance *Eternity*. The Panel recommends that a computer facility be provided in the gallery where full biographies may be accessed, including bibliographies, and with a link to the thousands of biographies of prominent Australians to be contained in the web version of the Australian Dictionary of Biography. This would enable the NMA to link *Eternity* biographies to national themes, so that the visitor perceives the way such themes can become evident in ‘ordinary lives’.

The NMA has also shown that it can present diversity well in *First Australians*, where at many stages it introduces individual, personal stories of contemporary Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

b) Balance of views

The Panel's sixth criterion specifies that the NMA should 'cover darker historical episodes, and with a gravity that opens the possibility of collective self-accounting. The role here is in helping the nation to examine fully its own past, and the dynamic of its history—with truthfulness, sobriety and balance. This extends into covering present-day controversial issues'.

There will be both past historical episodes and current controversies that merit coverage. The theme of Aboriginal/European frontier relations—specifically, the implication that Aboriginal people were significantly mistreated on the frontier and the consequences of this mistreatment—has lain at the base of a succession of contested issues which unfolded during the decade preceding the NMA's opening, and which continue to resonate. They include Aboriginal land rights and the native title issue, Aboriginal deaths in custody, and the Stolen Generations.

The NMA has taken up several of these issues. It has addressed the frontier conflict controversy—in 'Contested Frontiers', a module situated downstairs in the *First Australians*. This exhibit presents an issue which goes to the heart of one of the key themes of the NMA, relating to the interaction between Aboriginal and European cultures, against the background of the Australian environment. In response to criticism of the module as biased, the NMA hosted a conference entitled *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*. It led to a book of that title based on the proceedings.

The Panel regards the NMA's method in relation to this issue, in both the overall conception of the exhibition and the scholarly conference that followed, as a model for approaching such controversies. The Museum will no doubt focus periodically on quite different areas of historical and social life—for instance, the issue of sustainable population size in the context of competing national responsibilities to people on the one side, and land on the other. There are also areas of scientific controversy, past and present, suitable to museum presentation—ones, for instance, to do with the ethics of some types of experiment or other research. To a degree, prominent issues of the day will determine the Museum's choice of exhibition—permanent or temporary—in this thematic domain.

While acknowledging the value of 'Contested Frontiers', the Panel has a range of detailed criticisms of the module, ones which it hopes will be generically useful to the strategic planning of future exhibitions on contentious topics.

Because of the background to 'Contested Frontiers', and the likelihood that the exhibit would attract significant attention from critics, the visitor might expect it to contain a selection of

carefully researched themes, and well-chosen graphics and objects reflecting the subject matter. In the Panel's view this expectation has not been met.

In an era of rising scepticism about the veracity of various forms of media, museums have established themselves as authentic sources of knowledge. This authenticity is founded upon the perception that the objects they contain are not only real, but are connected directly to the events or processes that they represent. The curatorial onus on museums to deliver authentic objects, text and graphics, tightly connected both to each other and to the exhibition theme, is obviously greater when that theme is controversial. In 'Contested Frontiers' neither the objects, text, nor graphics provide the level of authenticity demanded by this weighty and complex subject.

While this exhibit contains more than 40 artefacts, only two of these can be said to have an authentic connection with the subject of frontier violence. These two objects are handcuffs and chains used in the restraint of Aboriginal prisoners. None of the guns or swords included, nor any of the Aboriginal spears, clubs and shields, has apparent connection with any situation of frontier violence.

There are a number of well-documented 'frontier collisions' and massacres of Aboriginal people on the Australian frontier. The NMA has chosen to focus on two events that have assumed an importance in the oral record, but for which there is very little in the way of tangible evidence. It has a duty to present an exhibit that deals with an occurrence about which there is not such historical uncertainty. Several events in which Aboriginal people lost their lives have material culture items associated with them. Those objects have an immense evocative power; indeed, a single object with an association of that kind probably has greater resonance than the sum of objects presented currently in this module. Primary examples are the Coniston Massacre of 1928 or the Barrow Creek Massacre of 1874. Artefacts associated with the first do likely exist; documents associated with both events could be borrowed. This is not to deny oral evidence as a basis for exhibits in the Museum. However, where an issue is likely to attract such public debate and scrutiny, the NMA should be careful to ensure that it is backed by a wider range of sources.

In reworking this crucial exhibit, attention should be paid to a considered analysis of the reasons for much frontier conflict—the 'dynamic' which caused situations of potential conflict between Aboriginal people and Europeans to escalate on the colonial frontier. Such an analysis should take account of the fact that massacres or killings of Aboriginal people were often the end result of a multi-stage set of events. The precipitating event was rarely an unprovoked act, but generally stemmed from unfounded cultural assumptions on both sides. Aboriginal 'wrong-doers' were usually acting in retaliation against Europeans who were judged to have infringed Aboriginal rights, by misusing water resources, trespassing on sacred ground, or abusing Aboriginal women.

The exhibit should also refer to the collision, not just of two monolithic 'peoples' (which tends to feed notions of racism) but of two world views, two systems of culture, and of justice. Aboriginal abhorrence of the British regime of punishment of convicts at Port Jackson in 1788 is certainly

relevant here; as are those cases, while rare, in which European frontier protagonists showed themselves capable of employing restraint in response to violent Aboriginal retaliation against perceived wrongs.

In summary, the Panel concludes that a series of principles should guide exhibitions covering controversial issues. The Museum's approach should be governed by scholarship and research; space should be given to different schools of credible thought; exhibits, whether permanent or temporary, should display real objects, and preferably some of powerful significance; debate and analysis should be encouraged through conferences, publications and the website. The NMA could also use technology to provide extended access to the debate.

The Panel received a number of submissions charging the NMA with systematic political bias—some were carefully argued. In a nutshell, they contend that the Museum glamorises Aboriginal life to the point of caricature, contrasting with a one-sided denigration of European culture and the nation it built. Rob Foot put it that:

The NMA is an institution that projects itself as unafraid of controversy and which seeks to present challenging and divergent opinion. But challenging for whom? There is nothing in the various galleries that would remotely 'challenge' people who grew up with the portfolio of left-wing ideas that hallmarked 1970s and early 1980s suburban Australia.

The Panel carefully examined these charges and came to the conclusion that political or cultural bias is not a systemic problem at the NMA. Rather, it exists in pockets, which may be fairly easily remedied.

There are certainly some elements in the exhibitions that, when combined and taken cumulatively, create the effect of characterising the Europeans as unwelcome invaders, bringing pests with them. The Disaster Bay link with Captain Cook has already been discussed. The insinuation was until recently inflated by having nearby the voice of Captain Collins opening *Horizons*—he was given a pompous windbag intonation that left the impression that British colonisation was a frivolous, undignified affair, based on empty legalism, and that, by implication, the society it seeded is illegitimate. This component now appears to have been removed.

Horizons also contains a module corner devoted to quarantine of immigrants. It implants the sub-textual inference that Australians, once in the country, have, via their institutions, concertedly made laws and erected barriers designed to keep others out. The picture is unbalanced, especially given the presiding fact that Australia has been a successful migrant society, arguably without peer at reasonably tolerant and liberal assimilation, and especially in the period from 1945 till 1975.

In summary, there are major problems with choice of narrative and museological presentation in the European history parts of the Museum—as discussed in 3ii(b) and 3ii(c) above—but they are not chiefly due to lack of balance. Where there is imbalance, it is not in grappling with the interface between Aboriginal and European cultures, but rather, and only in pockets, in representing the nature of European civilisation in Australia.

Conclusion

- In presenting some of the primary historical themes in the Australian story there is opportunity to draw out their impact on the diversity of individuals and groups who participated—and, in particular, on migrants.
 - *Eternity* should provide visitors with the opportunity to delve more deeply into the biographies it presents, through the use of multi-media technology. It should also enable the visitor to perceive the connection between the quiriness and apparent superficiality of an ‘ordinary life’ and the deeper currents of national history.
 - The Museum’s approach to controversial issues should be informed by scholarship and research; it should give time and space to alternative views where credible, avoiding bias; it should ensure that associated exhibits, be they permanent or temporary, display relevant objects connected with the subject; and it should encourage debate and analysis by making information about the topic widely available through its many resources.
 - The NMA must be careful to avoid cultural or political bias in its exhibitions, by selecting and presenting stories in a balanced manner, even if this balance may only, in some instances, be achieved at a broader, gallery-wide level.
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iv) COURTYARD—GARDEN OF AUSTRALIAN DREAMS

The Museum building surrounds an outdoor courtyard—titled *Garden of Australian Dreams*. Incorporated in the concrete surface are such concepts as the Mercator Grid, parts of Horton’s Map of the linguistic boundaries of indigenous Australia, the Dingo Fence, the Pope’s Line, explorers’ tracks, a fibreglass pool representing a suburban swimming pool, a map of Gallipoli, graphics common to roads, and signatures or imprinted names of historical identities. There are encoded references to such things as the paintings of Jeffrey Smart.

The Panel observed that there is little that is explained clearly to visitors unless they have a brochure in hand or a knowledgeable museum guide to lead them through the intricacies of this space. Visitors are unlikely, for example, to decipher the significance of Horton’s map, which derived from Norman B Tindale’s remarkable map produced from 50 years’ research and fieldwork. As was noted by many who presented submissions or were interviewed, because visitors do not understand the symbols, they find the expanse of concrete overwhelming.

The *Garden* has great potential as an inviting and educational domain—one which draws people into an area where they can sit or stroll, enjoy a meal or drink, in both summer and winter. It needs to be a place where visitors can reflect quietly. More vegetation and shaded seating would make this space welcoming—a real garden. It should be a space that is self-explanatory.

Importantly, this area offers great opportunity for extending the coverage of some of the topics related to the land that were noted in Part 3ii(d) above—that is to give a view of deep time and of the unique nature of the Australian biota. It is an opportunity for getting across some notion of Country, and acknowledging that this concept is beginning to modify metropolitan notions of Australian-ness.

The Panel recommends that a specialist advisory group be put together by the NMA to examine other uses for the *Garden*, complementary with *Tangled Destinies*, with particular focus on the way Australia developed over the billions of years. The group should include, at least, a geologist, an ethno-botanist, an archaeologist, a palaeontologist, a specialist in soils, an Indigenous Australian, and a ‘deep time’ environmental historian.

The poetic title, *Garden of Australian Dreams*, is full of evocative potential. This space could greatly enhance the welcoming nature of the NMA and, at the same time, provide a context for landscape imaginings, linked performances, and deep time education.

Conclusion

The Panel considers that:

- The *Garden* space could be made both inviting and educational.
- The Museum should investigate opportunities to extend the theme of *Tangled Destinies* into the *Garden*.
- Cross-disciplinary advice will be needed to realise the potential of the space.

The Panel offers the following conceptual *suggestion* for the area.

Suggestion

Add a number of large rocks that trace the geological history of the continent. Begin with a block of Banded Iron Formation from Tom Price in Western Australia, followed by a number of blocks representing different times in Australia’s history. Add planting of vegetation typical of Australia’s past and present—for example, the pond and surrounds could support some of the most primitive of Australia’s flora. Other time periods, such as the Mesozoic and Cenozoic, could be represented in discrete areas. These could be labelled, and the story of the development of the continent’s unique flora—including how it is a hybrid of the past and the present—could be told.

The planting of ethno-botanically significant trees would complement stories within the Museum, such as the Bean-tree—a source of wood for containers and shields, and also used for fire-making; the south-eastern She-oak with its mythological associations; or the desert Mulga—a national symbol in its own right.

A sundial might be added, with an explanation of how it works to help people place Australia geographically. Explanations of the tilt of the earth's axis and its effect on Australia's seasonal climate could be explored here, given the sunshine that pours into the courtyard.

Well-produced representations of Aboriginal rock art might modify the alienating effect of Braille embellishments on the building's surfaces.

Adding more lawn, so that people could comfortably sit in this area, and lowering, or possibly removing, the hill in the middle would enhance comfort and safety.

v) TRAVELLING AND TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

Exhibiting or making available the national collection and disseminating information, either alone or in collaboration with others, in Australia or overseas, are all functions that are specified in the Act. The Panel's eighth criterion interprets this as including 'a cross-continent museum collaboration and leadership role, especially in generating and facilitating travelling exhibitions'.

The NMA has already gone some way in assuming this role and is taking seriously its responsibility to provide access to its collection and exhibitions. Since opening it has toured 'blockbusters' and smaller temporary exhibitions to around seventeen venues, ranging from major State centres to regional and remote areas. Some of these exhibitions were developed in-house, some in collaboration with others, and some were produced externally. Temporary exhibits also provide the Museum with the opportunity to display objects from its collection that do not fit in the permanent exhibitions.

The Museum's opening series of major temporary exhibitions ('blockbusters')—*Gold and Civilisation; Australia's Lost Kingdoms* and *To Mars and Beyond: Search for the Origins of Life*—were developed externally, the first and third by Art Exhibitions Australia, and the second by the Australian Museum as its gift for the opening of the NMA. At the time they were commissioned, the NMA's construction was in full swing, and the Museum lacked both the human resources and infrastructure to develop large temporary exhibitions. The NMA is now moving towards in-house development of significant temporary exhibitions. The Panel was singularly impressed by *Rare Trades: Making Things by Hand in the Digital Age*, which is on tour in 2003.

The NMA's effort in developing and touring more modest travelling exhibitions is also notable. Smaller exhibitions, such as *Bush Toys*, toured to remote locations in the Northern Territory as well as metropolitan centres, in conjunction with ArtBack NT Arts Touring. The NMA has also mounted an international exhibition—*Stories from Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, which toured the Guanzhou Museum of Art in China. These efforts represent an impressive start.

One possibility that might be considered by the NMA in generating temporary exhibitions is the use of a modular design approach. Exhibits could be constructed in modules that would lend themselves to travelling, to exhibition in the NMA itself, and eventually to storage. New exhibitions to be displayed in the permanent galleries could also be constructed in this way, so that they could later be used in a travelling exhibition if required. This approach would be an efficient use of skills and resources and would enable the Museum to tell more Australian stories. It was suggested to the Panel that more could have been made of the exhibition that was prepared for the Guanzhou Museum by having it also travel in Australia.

While it is recognised that the Museum must sometimes take advantage of *ad hoc* opportunities, the development of temporary exhibits should, in general, fit within the overall longer-term planning of the Museum. They should form a component of a strategic planning process which includes permanent exhibitions, research, and collection development.

The *Open Collection* in the Museum acts as an extra temporary exhibition space. In it, the impressive array of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material culture displayed in the various elements of the *First Australians* is augmented. Several hundred artefacts are arranged on shelves behind glass. This exhibit enables the visitor to muse over objects themselves, unmediated by interpretative texts or multimedia. The variation in object types, and in materials comprising them, delivers strong and compelling messages about the richness and diversity of Australia's indigenous material culture.

The visitor needs a little more guidance in discerning the main object types that are displayed in *Open Collection*, and this could be delivered easily by adding basic labels to mark these separations. Additional and much richer context, relating to the precise details of provenance, materials, originating cultures and collectors' details, could be supplied through a simple but elegant interactive database, extending the cursory information already available to visitors through the SAMI (Station to Access Museum Information) interactive kiosks placed at various points throughout the NMA. This database would provide a means of explaining to the visitor how the NMA's collection is documented and might also provide links to relevant research projects involving the collection. It could be available through dedicated computer terminals, so that the *Open Collection* space might serve as a quiet study centre for those curious about issues raised in *First Australians*, and for those seeking more information about particular artefacts.

A feature of this centre might be its links to the online data resources provided by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies library next door. The Institute is the NMA's most proximate sister institution and yet its presence, and the relevance of its collections, is barely noted in the NMA's displays.

At present the *Open Collection* area is poorly signposted and only open for ten minutes of each hour, hardly sufficient for the serious visitor to come to terms with it. Even without an expanded role as a study centre, the Panel considers that it should be open for longer periods.

Conclusion

The Panel commends the Museum's commitment to temporary and travelling exhibitions and makes the following observations:

- Sustainable budgeting is essential and will require imaginative and innovative approaches to developing these exhibitions.
 - Future success will depend, in part, on the NMA carefully analysing the strengths and weaknesses of previous exhibitions.
 - The Museum needs to encourage a diversity of collaborative and private sponsorship arrangements, securing sufficient funding for an exhibition and to cover costs during the touring period.
 - The NMA must also continue developing links with other institutions, thus facilitating access to significant objects that are not part of the collection and, if necessary, skills that are available outside the NMA.
 - The *Open Collection* should be more accessible to visitors, and accompanied by a database providing visitors with deeper levels of information on the objects displayed.
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vi) SIGNAGE AND ACOUSTICS

One of the great challenges any modern museum faces is that it must meet the diverse needs of its visitors, who bring very different life experiences and expectations, and different abilities to comprehend the exhibits. In the case of the NMA, it must engage and inform the family group making its occasional visit to the national attractions of Canberra; it must do likewise for the international tourist who wants to learn about Australia in a short visit; and it must provide a depth of information for those, including students, who want to come often in order to understand more about particular subjects. If the Museum is to inspire, arouse and satisfy curiosity, educate and entertain, exhibits must tell a coherent story and present information clearly.

a) Signage

The Panel found that signage at all levels—from navigation in the Museum, to labels on particular exhibits—was a significant problem. Many visitors do not find the Museum’s brochure helpful as a navigational aid. Clear and succinct signposts and text panels are needed throughout the Museum to position visitors, and to assure them that they are progressing through the Museum as intended. Tools, or experiential cues, such as a change in floor surfaces, colours, lighting or objects, could be employed. At present many miss parts of the Museum as a result of inadequate signage.

On entering the Great Hall there is virtually nothing to indicate that the visitor is in a museum. The placement of a significant object from the NMA’s collection near the entrance would provide a signal, one to be changed from time to time—for example, the *Hong Hai*, on which 38 Vietnamese refugees arrived in Darwin Harbour in 1978 (if it is not too large), or Sir Robert Menzies’ Daimler. Something of high impact would serve to focus the mind of both the first time visitor and regulars alike.

Then, each gallery needs a ‘front page’ to explain its aim. By way of example, the title of the first gallery encountered by the visitor—*Tangled Destinies*—leaves little direction about the gallery’s subject matter because of its non-specific associations—what sort of destinies? This would not be such a problem were there clear visual cues at the entrance. The Panel considers that this gallery should be sub-titled, providing descriptive reference to its main theme. It might also work better were one of the gallery’s significant objects placed in the entrance as an opening feature, a numinous jewel to entice visitors, focus their minds, and act as a signal as to what is to follow.

Throughout the exhibitions, the themes and links need to be explicit so that all visitors can quickly pick up the key ideas. Where there is intended to be a physical progression through the exhibit, this needs to be clear. Sometimes it is a matter of signage, sometimes it is an issue of how objects are displayed. In *Nation*, visitors are left to their own devices to work out the significance of the particular symbols. A visitor unfamiliar with a 1950s Australian kitchen might well think that this is meant to be a typical Australian kitchen of today. In *Horizons*, a visitor needs to delve deeply to understand when the convict era occurred.

In *Tangled Destinies*, a contrasting duality of fire and water is set up, giving major attention to both. These are vital themes, but they could be presented more cohesively. Above all, the exhibits linked to water are poorly related to each other—indeed it remains obscure that water is the connecting theme. The section needs to open with a defined entrance experience and a distinctive visual cue—perhaps a simulation of water. A strong narrative thread should lead through the separate exhibits, with dynamic extension from particular exhibits into the different roles that water has played in the national story. For instance, the link of the *Diprotodon* to a wetter past in the prehistory of the continent needs to be clear and explicit.

And, as with some other parts of the Museum, there is little differentiation in the object density of many exhibits, with too few cues as to which objects are of particular note and worth pausing to examine.

The Panel also observed a need for consistency in labels and text—poorly located, insufficient, or absent labels were the subject of recurring criticism in oral and written submissions. There were suggestions that the size of the text within exhibits should be increased to make it easily readable. There was also concern that in many areas, ensembles of labels make it difficult to sort information and to understand priorities. The gist of the criticism was ‘...we found some displays disjointed, difficult to follow and ultimately incoherent...’ (History Trust of South Australia).

The Convicts module of *Horizons* is useful in illustrating the point. When the Panel visited the Museum, the introductory text was tucked away behind a dividing wall, and inadequate. ‘Prison without Walls’ serves as the title for the entire section—cryptic, it assumes too much knowledge. The visitor must deduce what this exhibit is about, by approaching it at the level of secondary text and the smaller subtitles, such as ‘Life and Work in Convict Society’. Captions did not make clear which objects are replicas and which are original.

These problems seriously detract from the quality of some of the permanent galleries and the complete visitor experience. They require a museum-wide examination and the development of standards for signage, exhibition text and labelling.

Conclusion

The Panel makes the following observations:

- Clear and succinct signposts and text labels are necessary throughout the Museum to position the visitor.
- The Museum would be enhanced by the placement of a significant object in the Hall, to be changed from time to time.
- Each gallery needs a ‘front page’ to explain its aim.
- It is essential that the layout and exhibits of each gallery present a coherent and accessible story.
- Within galleries, and at the exhibit level, a consistent approach to signage and textual interpretation is needed.
- All objects should be clearly visible and accompanying text should be legible.

b) Acoustics

It is evident that the design of the NMA's building poses acoustic challenges—hard surfaces and open gallery spaces being just some of the structural issues. On top of this, many of the visitors are young, frequently in groups, and less 'hushed' in their behaviour than earlier generations of museum-goers.

The Panel received widespread criticism of the NMA's acoustics. The building lacks coherent interaction between its design and sound—resulting in a distracting cacophony that is evident on entry into the Hall and which continues throughout the permanent exhibition galleries. Many of these problems, while exacerbated by the building's characteristics, appear to relate to exhibition design and infrastructure.

Sound spill and coordination of audio content are problems in most public spaces. The noise overlap between modules and galleries is at times unbearable and in numerous cases detracts from, rather than enhances, visitors' enjoyment of displays. For example, the Convicts module of *Horizons*, in which there is no sound component, is filled with sound from *Tangled Destinies* and *Nation* below, and other modules of the *Horizons* Gallery.

There is a similar effect in *Eternity*, where numerous audio components, projected loudly towards visitors through perspex hemispheres, combine with surrounding hard surfaces to create a high-frequency sound and a stressful atmosphere.

In order to evaluate these concerns, the Panel consulted two acoustic specialists—Jonathan Mills, composer and former Artistic Director of the Melbourne Festival, and Dr Neville Fletcher, Visiting Fellow at the ANU Research School of Physical Sciences and Engineering, and former Director of the CSIRO Institute of Physical Sciences. Multimedia designer and producer, Gary Warner, also provided a briefing. The following assessment is based largely on their analysis.

All agreed that there should be aural variety to each gallery, providing a sound 'experience', within harmonious orchestration—hushed, reverential spaces interspersed with greater intensity sound environments. Each gallery should ideally have its own sound contour. Sound can also be used as an orientation tool to supplement visual cues, and especially signage.

It is important that visitors are given contemplative spaces free of noise sources—areas of repose in which to take time out from the displays. One of the contributors remarked in a submission, that she 'enjoyed the *Eternity* exhibition tremendously through reading a book on it on the couch in perfect quiet in the sales area!' The Panel understands that the NMA is addressing this issue by developing centralised controls for audio components so that volume of audio displays can be raised on busy days and lowered when the galleries are quiet.

Audio content needs to be coordinated with the visual components of displays. Looping and volume should be calculated to take into account the time visitors need to read labels and view objects, so that they are not forced to listen to the same audio component multiple times.

Some acoustic problems could be addressed with the installation of movement sensors so that audio components are activated only when required—which also has the advantage of giving visitors the intimate impression that an exhibit is for them personally.

The quality of sound is, on the whole, poor. This is an infrastructure problem—inferior sound systems, a lack of digital enhancement or baffling and thin, panelled walls. As a result, sound does not cover a sufficient spectrum—high frequency sounds predominate, and there is little voice clarity or *gravitas*.

Conclusion

The Panel considers that these issues can be ameliorated within the existing infrastructure in the shorter term by employing relatively minor and cost-effective measures. Dedicated solutions will be needed to address the problems in the longer term. The result would substantially improve the visitor experience in the permanent spaces.

Measures that could be employed in the shorter term by the NMA are:

- Radically reducing the number of noise sources, relocating speakers and coordinating them;
- Providing gaps between replays to allow some quiet time; and
- Altering the volume of some audio components to reduce sound spill, as a part of a recalibration of sound levels, exhibit by exhibit.

Longer-term measures recommended by the Panel are:

- Treating exposed walls and ceilings with sound-absorbing foam baffles;
- Building modular booths to isolate sounds in some areas;
- Introducing movement-sensitive audio systems that are activated when people approach; and
- Developing an acoustic master-plan for the Museum.

REVIEW

4. BEHIND THE SCENES

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i) NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA ACT 1980

The Terms of Reference for the Review required the Panel to consider the continuing relevance of the *National Museum of Australia Act 1980* (the Act), in the development of permanent and temporary exhibitions and schools and public programs. The Panel has concluded that none of the issues it identified as needing attention arose because of constraints or other matters arising from the Act.

While the Act reflects the milieu and needs of its time, nearly a quarter of a century on it encapsulates principles that are still relevant. The Panel considered the Act to be broad in its scope, and did not find any aspect that was potentially an impediment to the Museum's provision of the highest quality exhibits and public programs, both now and in the future. By the same token, it did not identify any issue that should be added to the Act to ensure the provision of more effective exhibits and public programs. The Museum itself stated in its submission that:

The Museum's Director and staff consider that the functions of the Museum as defined in the Act continue to be relevant and are the foundation to the continuing successful and effective operation of the museum. In their view they do not require amendment.

The Friends of the National Museum expressed similar sentiments. A joint submission from the Central Land Council and the Northern Land Council argued strenuously against any proposal that the Act be amended in a manner that would diminish the presence of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their diverse histories and cultures. The Panel supports these views.

ii) RESEARCH

A review of the exhibitions and public programs of the National Museum of Australia would, in the Panel's view, be incomplete without looking at the necessary connections between the exhibits and programs, the NMA's research activities, its collection, and its collaborative projects. The Panel's seventh criterion charges the Museum with building 'an outstanding national collection geared to future exhibition objectives and informed by first-rank research'. The eighth criterion requires the NMA to 'assume a cross-continent museum collaborative and leadership role...[in]

developing curatorial research'. It is the Panel's view that the Museum's exhibits and programs will only achieve coherence and *gravitas* with a close and interdependent relationship between research, the collection and collaboration.

The National Museum, in its Research Policy, recognises research: 'not as a privilege or an option, but as a requirement and obligation of the institution and therefore of its staff'. The Policy makes it plain that it is not only the exhibitions and publications which will be supported by high levels of scholarship and research, but that 'the associated processes of acquisition, documentation, conservation, interpretation and use of the collection are equally the subject of well developed research skills'. For a new national museum, recently joining the ranks of Australian museums which share a pedigree of impressive research across the linked fields of history, anthropology, and environmental and natural history, this is a notable commitment.

It is apparent that the term 'research' has taken on, for the NMA, a wide range of meanings and has applicability in several contexts. In embracing such a broad definition, however, and in applying the research requirement to almost all of its diverse activities, the Panel considers the NMA may run a significant risk—that the particular, curatorial, collection-based research which defines a museum's growth and progress, in distinction to other cultural or education institutions, may lose its relative priority.

There is some evidence that this is happening and that curatorial, collection-based research is being overshadowed within the NMA, having to take its place in a list of market research and other public program-oriented activities. The impressive list of 'Research Highlights' in the NMA's submission to the Panel contains no sub-category relating to the collection, nor is such a connection evident. The exception might be a current research project on appropriate engine oils for heritage machinery that arose from the collection, and has direct relevance to it. The listed collaborative projects relating to the Murray-Darling, World War II internment, colonial administration collecting, cultural history of weather and visual culture may all have strong research links to the collection, developed by the relevant curators, but these links were not evident to the Panel. If the link does exist, it should be highlighted, for this research will be crucial to the Museum's development. If the link is tenuous, or barely developed, then the NMA should address this lack.

With limited curatorial research resources, the NMA should be ensuring that each research project has clear benefits for its collection and exhibitions, and that these are expressed in integrated Research and Collection Policies—and with appropriate planning and assessment structures in place to achieve this.

Soon the NMA must face the challenge of developing a second round of permanent exhibitions. To fulfil the Panel's criteria for the Museum, the exhibitions must reflect the coherency which a curatorial team can project, when it is empowered to develop and express its close understanding of the collections in its care. In anticipation of subsequent renewal of some of the permanent

exhibitions' content, the NMA's operational plans should include the development of a five-year integrated set of projects relating to existing or projected elements of its collection, and resulting in a series of exhibitions and publications.

The Panel considers the NMA should grasp the opportunity to become a leader in the particular branch of research which distinguishes museums—that of material culture research. It is curatorial ability and curatorial insight into the objects' past lives and context which supply the spark for successful exhibitions, and which bring visitors back to museums. That curatorial insight is based upon research. The NMA's stated intent to elevate research necessitates it reflecting this within its management structures, with the primary aim of facilitating the creative relationship between its collection, its curators and the public who are drawn to museums to view the results of that collaboration.

A strong commitment to research in the areas of collections, publications and exhibitions should enable the NMA to balance its success as a venue for public programs, with the more fundamental development—as a museum of substance and scholarship.

Conclusion

The Panel recommends that the NMA:

- Ensure each research project feeds directly into its future direction, and in particular, provides clear benefits for the NMA's collections and exhibitions programs.
 - Develop a five-year integrated set of projects, each relating to an existing or planned element of the national collection, and resulting in a series of exhibitions and publications.
 - Grasp the opportunity to become a leader in material culture research.
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iii) THE COLLECTION

The Panel considered the collection, and the policy that is driving it, to determine to what extent it meets the Panel's criterion that the NMA build an outstanding collection.

a) The Museum's collection

The NMA's collection was born as an amalgamation of a number of disparate collections developed throughout the early to mid-20th century for other purposes, which were transferred to the NMA shortly after its establishment in 1980. These were, principally, the collection of the Institute of Anatomy, including the National Ethnographic Collection, and the collection of the Institute of Aboriginal Studies. As a result, the collection contains many objects which came to the Museum by default, through the historical circumstances underpinning its foundation. It now numbers around 190,000 objects, ranging from a sizeable collection of stone tools and ethnographic objects through to large technology items, such as vehicles, aeroplanes and boats.

Based on information provided by Museum staff and its own observations, the Panel considers that the key areas of the Museum's collection are:

Aboriginal Australia—a well-documented collection of stone tools, the country's most significant collection of bark paintings (in fact, the largest in the world), an historically significant collection of Cape York sculptural objects, an outstanding collection of Aboriginal breast-plates documenting the contact period, and a good material culture collection from localities across the country. It can be favourably noted that the *First Australians* Gallery relies upon the collection for almost all of its exhibits, and that a number of these exhibits are significant attractions in their own right.

Prime Ministerial collection—including objects of major significance, such as Sir Robert Menzies' Daimler.

Multicultural collection—a diverse but well-documented collection relating to migration, the experiences of ethnic groups in Australia, and their influence on Australian society, including a number of smaller thematic collections, as well as stand-alone objects such as the Vietnamese boat, the *Hong Hai*.

The collection's weaknesses are evident in those galleries where only a proportion of the exhibits come from the collection—the Convicts module of *Horizons* was a striking example—it seems that fewer than one in five objects used in that module, derive from the NMA's collection.

In addition to gaps, the collection may contain superfluous objects, ones which have proven largely irrelevant to the subject matter of the Museum's collection, or to the NMA's evolving sense of exhibition and research purpose. Where deaccession might result in significant savings in

collection storage, conservation requirements or collection maintenance, without compromising the NMA's role as custodian of the collection, the Panel recommends that such a course of action should be considered.

The Panel considers that the Museum's collection, although immature, nonetheless provides the basis for attracting visitors, a foundation for research and programs, and a potential form of currency with which to negotiate loans from other institutions. However, the Panel recommends that the NMA should set targets of five and ten years to refine the concept and reality of the collection, so that after a decade it might genuinely reflect the expectations associated with it. This process may involve the deaccessioning or transfer of particular parts, the curtailment of collecting in certain areas of acknowledged strength, and targeted collecting policies through field-collecting, or purchase, in other areas. These targets should be matched with research and exhibition objectives, so that at the end of ten years the NMA will not only have acquired a well-documented set of objects relating to priority areas, but will have undertaken research into these objects and will have exhibited them.

b) Collections policy

While the Act requires the NMA to develop and maintain a national collection of historical material, statements from government have envisaged the NMA being less collection driven than other museums, developing partnerships to draw from existing collections around Australia. The Pigott Report suggested that the NMA should avoid unnecessary duplication of State museum collections.

These views raise the issue of whether there is a basic conflict between a restrained role as a collecting institution, the Act, and the NMA's commitment to the development and growth of its collection, as expressed in its collections policy.

While the view was put to the Panel in several submissions that the NMA ought not to develop into a collecting institution, the Panel also heard well-argued cases to the contrary. The Panel inclines strongly to the view that the NMA must, through its very identity as a national museum, define itself through its collection—one that is strategically linked to its needs. To neglect that responsibility, in the words of Graeme Davison, 'entails a departure from the founding principles of the museum, denies the expectations of visitors, and fails the long-term interests of the nation.'

The Panel recognises that formulating a durable and visionary collections policy is a difficult task, involving a concerted exercise in constructing a clear hierarchy of objectives and requirements, with matching strategies and priorities. The current NMA collections policy should be regarded as a starting point for a more considered document. The policy now encompasses the gamut of Australian cultural life, and as such must be questioned. It is of unrestricted scope. No museum has the capacity to embrace all aspects of Australian cultural life in its collection.

The Panel concluded that, while the concept of a national collection is not at odds with the restraints envisaged by the Government, Pigott and the Museum's enabling legislation, the selection and subsequent setting of priorities in establishing future collecting strategies are critical decisions for the NMA. Guiding principles should be considered carefully before proceeding further. The current policy should be refined to address existing collection strengths and potential areas of duplication with other institutions, and to establish a clear set of collecting priorities for the immediate, medium and long-term future.

If the NMA can continue to acquire such resonant objects as Chifley's desk, Mulvaney's Lake Mungo suitcase or a Depression pram, and to ensure that the stories of these objects are told through exhibitions, then it can gradually accumulate a store of national treasures, so that in, say, ten years it will be emitting its own lighthouse beam, illuminating Australian culture as powerfully as its visitors expect.

Conclusion

The NMA should :

- Set goals to be achieved in five and ten years, to refine its collection. This will mean, in part, targeted acquisition. It may also require rationalisation of the collection—for example, by deaccession or transfer of superfluous objects or collections—as well as curtailment of collecting in certain areas.
 - Rework its collections policy, to establish a hierarchy of objectives and to correlate with research and exhibition objectives, so that at the end of ten years the NMA will have acquired a well-documented set of objects relating to priority areas, as well as having published research on these objects and exhibited them.
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iv) COLLABORATION

Collaboration with other cultural and academic institutions, and stakeholders, in the form of partnerships, loan agreements, skills sharing and joint ventures, is imperative for the NMA, because it does not have a large collection, does not have a large budget for research or acquisitions, and because of various leadership expectations of a national institution. Government statements have envisaged the NMA would establish partnerships through its activities in collections and exhibition development, information and communication technology, multimedia and research.

The NMA has been actively pursuing collaboration in most of its operational areas, and to date it has established some highly fruitful partnerships. Their number and scope impressed the Panel. They span a wide variety of organisations, and cover many of the NMA's operational fields. Projects are relevant and are often complementary—for example, two conferences—one on the topic of gold in 2000, hosted by the Humanities Research Centre at ANU in which the NMA participated, and *23° South: Archaeology and Environmental History of the Southern Deserts* in early 2003, hosted by the NMA—were, or are, to be followed by major temporary exhibitions on the same topic.

The NMA's record in attracting research funding in collaboration with other institutions is also impressive, especially for such a young institution. However, a question arises as to whether there is a direct link between the outcome of these collaborations and the Museum's core activity—its exhibits and programs.

Submissions were largely positive in relation to the NMA's collaborative projects. The Australian Curriculum Studies Association and the National Capital Education Project both remarked that the NMA has been proactive in involving other organisations in innovative educational programs. Submissions also show that the NMA has actively developed collaborative projects in the local community—such as a partnership with the National Folk Festival.

The Panel considers that the NMA's significant efforts in this area need to be underpinned by explicit long-term objectives. This will not only strengthen linkages between those Museum activities made possible by collaboration, but also make it clear to would-be collaborators what the Museum is trying to achieve. This should not preclude the NMA taking advantage of *ad hoc* opportunities as they arise, but would give confidence that the available resources are being well directed. The NMA's submission to the Panel indicates that the impetus for its collaborative projects derives from various sources, and they are therefore often difficult to plan for in advance, or to predict. There must be capacity to examine each project on its merits, and against the merits of other competing demands for funding, when opportunities show themselves. The Panel recommends that a statement of collaborative objectives would provide a framework within which the NMA could assess opportunities and by which it could coordinate its efforts.

Conclusion

- The NMA should develop collaboration objectives, setting long-term goals and priorities, without precluding it from taking advantage of *ad hoc* opportunities as they arise. This should include a process by which collaborative opportunities can be assessed.
- Collaboration should focus on:
 - ~ Aligning collaborative activities with research and collecting objectives.
 - ~ Maximising resources, by seeking opportunities, particularly with other national collecting institutions, to share, develop and exchange skills—curatorial and technical—in relevant areas such as exhibitions, research and collection development.
 - ~ Using existing skills—such as the NMA's success in obtaining research funding—to develop ongoing strategic relationships with international, State, regional and remote organisations.

REVIEW

5. PROGRAMS

5. PROGRAMS

The Panel's ninth criterion is that the Museum will 'provide national access to a range of relevant public and schools programs, taking advantage of new technology where possible'. In fact, the Museum has achieved a great deal in this respect. It offers a range of programs directed to different audiences, including school groups, and the virtual visitor can obtain information through the website. In this part of the Report, the Panel will review the public and school programs and look at how the Museum is obtaining feedback on its exhibitions and programs.

i) PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Public programs have taken the form of lectures, seminars, conferences, workshops and presentations. They have provided the opportunity to share research and scholarship; to enhance exhibitions; and to provide information that, for a range of reasons, cannot be covered in the exhibition galleries. Some of these programs are targeted at particular segments of the population, for instance family groups or young people.

The Panel was impressed with the volume, depth and range of the public programs. In a short time the Museum has established a reputation that enables it to attract highly qualified participants. These programs have included single lectures given by scholars and museum specialists—to name just two, Geoffrey Blainey lectured on *Gold! Gold! Gold!* and Elaine Gurian, internationally recognised museums' consultant, delivered a lecture for museum specialists. Programs have extended to the hosting of conferences on topical and sometimes controversial issues—for instance, *Frontier Conflict* and *23° South: The Archaeology and Environmental History of the Southern Deserts*. The conferences have attracted leading Australian and international scholars and the discussion at these events has contributed to wider public consideration of the issues. The papers have been collected in significant publications making topical debates more widely accessible. Professor Clive Gamble, Director, Centre for the Archaeology of Human Origins, University of Southampton, commented:

The Conference [23° South: Archaeology and Environmental History of the Southern Deserts] confirmed the dynamic and innovative approach that the Museum has taken to issues of international concern...

The Panel was particularly impressed with the facilities created for children and young people. These ranged from specifically written texts, and programs aimed to encourage self-directed exploration of the NMA, to opportunities to interact with exhibition content, visiting personalities, writers, storytellers and performers. Highlights were storytelling programs in general, and *Our Place* in particular—which provides cubbies for children to explore, ones with educational outcomes. A number of adult submission writers commented that they wished comparable interactive facilities were available for them.

From the Panel's observations, more could be made of *K-Space*. It allows young visitors to interact with technology to create the sort of house and vehicle they would like to own themselves. While it attracts many young people and entertains them with an apparently high level of interactivity and satisfaction, it could be used to engage them on issues that will face Australia in the future—for example, sustainable development. The software could be more thought-provoking than it is, using Australian images—for example, the way Glen Murcutt has addressed environmental and architectural challenges—to stimulate and educate.

The Museum's use of the Internet adds another dimension to public access to the Museum. It is a means by which information can be conveyed and shared, and affords almost limitless possibilities for making available a depth of information associated with the Museum's exhibitions and programs.

The Museum has effectively used the Internet to link people into its activities. By way of example, the 'online muster' in 2002 was part of the Year of the Outback activities and involved 60 youth groups from all states and territories. Margaret Birtley, Senior Lecturer, Museum Studies, Deakin University and Vice-President Museums Australia, commented:

[The NMA has demonstrated an] approach to 'outreach' (via use of the internet, webcasts and broadcasts) that has been at the cutting-edge of technology applications in Australian museum practice... An example... is the NMA's involvement in the webcasting of sessions of [the conference] 'Bridging the Boundaries' held in Kalgoorlie in late October 2001, with video and audio input from Launceston and Townsville, which I was able to watch in Melbourne.

The Panel found Graeme Davison's comments useful in terms of looking forward:

Most exhibitions rest upon much more substantial research than can be summarised in 50 or so words of an exhibition's label. Many visitors... would like to know more than the labels tell them... [M]uch more could be done to provide ancillary material either in printed form or on its website answering the kinds of detailed questions that visitors are likely to ask about its exhibitions. Websites are now

becoming the most obligatory gateway to museums. Many visitors consult them before they visit, or after they leave. Many others are only 'virtual visitors' who consult the museum's website, often from overseas even though they may never come in person. By the standards of other Australian museums, the NMA website is creditable; but it falls short of the most outstanding international ones.

Altogether, the Panel was impressed that the Museum has progressed a considerable way towards realising the public programs criterion. It was evident that the Museum's use of the Internet, and its website in particular, has been an important source of information for many people and an invaluable source of materials for schools. However, public expectations about obtaining information are advancing at a rapid pace, and competition to supply that information is fierce. If the Museum is to build a national and international reputation for education, research and the promotion of public discussion—fostered through the schools and public programs, and the website—it will need to use its resources judiciously to marshal creativity and innovation.

Conclusion

The Panel notes favourably that:

- Most public programs have a direct link to the permanent exhibitions and are designed to inform and inspire learning, scholarship and debate.
 - Programs offered to the general public are topical, challenging and innovative, and some are available online.
 - Some programs are intended for a national audience, while others have a more local focus.
 - Activities for children are innovative, but in the example of *K-Space*, would be enhanced with the use of more educational Australian content.
 - 'Outreach' activities have been a success, but to position itself as a source of information for a wider audience of students and researchers, resources should be assigned, when priorities allow, to achieving 'depth' in the website.
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ii) PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOLS

Schools programs include activities held within the Museum for visiting groups; events and activities specifically directed to school students; publications to reach national schools' audiences; and web-based resources for schools and programs available in the school holidays. Programs in the Museum are available to preschool, primary and secondary students. They have been designed to suit a broad range of school curricula, particularly those for the states of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Some programs are provided free of charge, and for others there is some cost recovery. Some curriculum-based materials are available on the Museum's website.

The Museum has funded, and its staff have developed, many of the programs and resources, and some have involved collaborations—for instance, the award-winning *Australia 2030: The Facts of Immigration* program funded by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, which assists students to address issues relating to immigration to Australia. Innovative use has been made of new technologies, perhaps most notably with *Talkback Classroom*. This program is recorded in the Museum's broadcast studio before an audience of secondary-school students, and it provides an opportunity for students to discuss issues of interest with prominent public figures. The ABC broadcasts the program.

Comments received by the Panel about the schools programs were consistently strong in their praise. By way of example, Rosalie Triolo, Lecturer-in-charge, Methods and Practice of Teaching History, Faculty of Education, Monash University, commented that:

The on-site activities and diverse print and electronic educational resources of the Schools Programs section demonstrate current best practice in the teaching of History to a standard rarely seen in cultural institutions....

The NMA Schools Programs print and electronic educational resources, including those that cater for teachers and students who cannot visit Canberra, are of such a high quality in terms of historical/contemporary society' content, appropriate pedagogy and visual presentation that I regularly use such resources with my student-teachers as exemplars of best practice in the teaching of History.

In a similar vein, Professor Tony Taylor, Director, National Centre for History Education, Monash University commented that:

Thanks to [resources the Museum has produced] 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 the 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.

Altogether, the Panel was impressed by what the Museum has achieved in terms of making known and available high quality resources for teachers and students who visit the Museum, or who want published and online resources.

Conclusion

The Panel notes favourably that:

- School programs are designed to inform and inspire learning, scholarship and debate.
 - High quality school programs and resources are available to those who both can and cannot visit Canberra.
 - Programs offered to schools use leading methods and media—including *Talkback Classroom* in collaboration with the ABC.
 - Schools programs fit with State and Territory curricula and have potential to influence curriculum development.
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iii) AUDIENCE SURVEYS

Since opening, the Museum has attracted a larger number of visitors than it expected—1,084,759 visitors in the twelve months after opening in March 2001 (comprising permanent exhibitions—740,050; temporary and travelling exhibitions—205,965; schools and public programs—103,509; and events—57,626), and 858,131 visitors in the twelve months following March 2002 (permanent exhibitions—526,156; temporary and travelling exhibitions—187,665; schools and public programs—132,837; and events—60,714). The Museum acknowledges that it would receive a higher ‘honeymoon’ first year attendance which would then drop. It is too early to assess the all-important rate of repeat visitations—initial figures show that in 2002, 28 per cent of visitors were not visiting for the first time.

Data has been collected about demographics (age, gender, origin, occupation), opinions (of the Museum in general, exhibitions, café services, shop) and behaviour (time and money spent, areas visited). In addition, the Museum has surveyed particular segments of its visitors and potential visitors—for example, older visitors, teachers, schools, young people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. It has carried out audience research as part of planning for particular exhibitions and surveyed visitors to temporary exhibitions.

The Panel considers that much of the Museum’s general visitor evaluation effort through exit polling is misdirected. There is too much focus on success in marketing terms—measures of how good visitors felt about the product and what they liked and disliked about ancillary things such as the building—rather than how well its serious role as the National Museum is being addressed, gallery by gallery.

The Panel consulted Dr David de Vaus, Associate Professor of Sociology at La Trobe University, and an international specialist in social survey research methods. He noted two weaknesses in the NMA’s exit polling that render it ineffectual.

Firstly, in using as its key measure the question as to whether visitors were ‘satisfied’ by the Museum, the NMA is employing a weak approval indicator. Moreover, the current practice is to poll visitors person-to-person as they leave, which means that, for politeness reasons, they are likely to answer ‘yes’ to such an unchallenging question. The bias is even greater for a museum that is free—tapping into the natural human reserve about criticising something that has not cost anything.

David de Vaus recommended, as more useful indicators, such qualitative measures as asking visitors whether they were excited, inspired, or challenged; or alternatively mildly interested, confused or bored. Visitors should be asked whether they would recommend the NMA to others, and in what terms—very strongly, strongly, moderately, weakly, or not at all.

The second critical weakness in the exit polling is a lack of detailed questioning about content. There is only one statement relating to what visitors have learned, out of 34 questions in the 2001 Survey, and out of 20 in the 2002–03 Survey: ‘I learned something interesting about Australian history which I didn’t know before’. The visitor is asked to agree or disagree. The NMA is not obtaining any indication of what people are learning or what is stimulating them, if anything, nor in the later survey is it receiving information on reactions to particular galleries. The question about what has been learnt could be turned into the more testing: ‘Nominate something new you have learnt about Australian history’.

The NMA’s current exit polling is uninformative. It risks sending the signal that the NMA is not much interested in its serious exhibition content.

Conclusion

- The Panel considers that the NMA’s exit polling needs to be re-directed to focus on the exhibits and reactions to them in qualitative terms.

REVIEW

6. CONCLUSION

6. CONCLUSION

The Panel has taken as the future standard for the National Museum of Australia that it should develop into one of the world's great museums, a cultural institution with authority, and one which can become, in time, an essential part of Australia's sense of itself. This will depend upon a strong relationship between exhibitions of powerfully vivid, significant objects from the Museum's own collection; a well researched understanding of them; and an ability to present them to the visitor by means of engaging narratives, set in richly and clearly detailed contexts.

The Review confirmed the Panel's initial observation that much has been achieved in the foundation period. In a remarkably short period—now little more than two years after opening—an organisation has been established; galleries built, exhibitions—permanent and temporary—curated, designed and fitted; extensive public programs mounted; and research initiated. The Museum has established itself as a popular and significant attraction in the National Capital—a part of Canberra life. It has also generated a warmly propitious aura that should stand it in good stead for the longer-term goal of gaining the confidence of the nation. It has continued to enjoy the support of a large and active body of 'Friends'.

Notwithstanding these achievements, the Panel concluded that if the Museum is to fulfil its potential, and reach the standard required of it, a number of changes are needed in overall direction. In this concluding part of its Report, the Panel will:

- identify necessary changes in direction; and
- assign priority to the particular tasks and actions required to implement these changes.

i) FINDINGS

To undertake the Review, the Panel established criteria that when achieved at the highest level, would characterise a museum of authority and distinction. It has used these criteria to assess the exhibitions and programs of the NMA of 2003, and to propose future directions. The criteria require that the NMA:

- Tell the Australian story—and by means of compelling narratives, where possible focussed on enthralling, significant objects. Its aim is to inspire, to arouse and satisfy curiosity, to educate and to entertain.

- Present the fundamental themes and narratives of Australia since the arrival of the British, through the building of the nation to the country's place in the contemporary world. This includes evoking national character traits; detailing exemplary individual, group and institutional achievements; and charting the singular qualities of the nation.
- Present the history of the indigenous peoples of the continent. This includes a broad representation of indigenous life and culture, in its regional diversity, and in a manner that enables deeper understanding.
- Convey the history of the continent, in deep time, including its flora and fauna, and how it influences human interaction with the unique Australian environment—past, present and future.
- Convey a sense of the mosaic of everyday life and its more ordinary stories; of the diversity of its peoples and their customs and beliefs; and of the extraordinary in the ordinary. This includes sketching the society's migrant history and identity.
- Cover darker historical episodes, and with a gravity that opens the possibility of collective self-accounting. The role here is in helping the nation to examine its own past, and the dynamic of its history, fully—with truthfulness, sobriety and balance. This extends into covering present-day controversial issues.
- Build an outstanding national collection, geared to future exhibition objectives and informed by first-rank research.
- Assume a cross-continent museum collaboration and leadership role, especially in generating and facilitating travelling exhibitions, and developing curatorial research.
- Provide national access to a range of relevant public and schools programs, taking advantage of new technology where possible.

The Panel found that, to varying degrees, a start has been made in meeting these criteria. The Museum's permanent exhibition structure, with the *Gallery of First Australians, Tangled Destinies* and the tripartite split of the history of modern Australia since the arrival of the British into *Horizons, Nation* and *Eternity*, provides a viable base for further development. This structure should stand the test of time, as should its translation obliquely into the NMA's three-way division of driving themes—Land, Nation, and People.

The Panel's criterion that the National Museum **should present a sense of the mosaic of everyday life and its more ordinary stories** has been largely realised. So too has the Museum presented with some success **the history of the indigenous peoples** in the *Gallery of First Australians*. In both cases, the Museum has rightly earned the praise of the general public, and of academic and museum specialists.

The need to **convey the history of the continent, and human interaction with the unique Australian environment** has also been partly satisfied, in the sense of laying a broad and coherent groundwork for future development, and creating some engaging and educative exhibits.

The NMA has been prepared to **cover darker historical episodes**, and contentious ones, and has done so with balance, and by effectively combining exhibitions, conferences and publications.

The programs and resources available to schools have been successful, receiving widespread acclaim for their content and methods of delivery. The public programs have attracted the participation of leading scholars and the papers arising from them have made topical debate accessible. Travelling exhibitions have made the Museum's resources available to a wider audience.

On the other hand, the Museum's principal weakness is its story-telling—the NMA is short on compelling narratives, engagingly presented dramatic realisations of important events and themes in the Australian story. And there are too few focal objects, radiant and numinous enough to generate memorable vignettes, or to be drawn out into fundamental moments. This is, in part, a problem of translation of narrative into museum practice. It has led to some incoherence—an undifferentiated profusion of objects, their blanket density tending to ward off concentrated examination. Bewilderment makes it nearly impossible for curiosity to be aroused and satisfied. Without engagement, there is little likelihood of inspiration, reflection or education.

The sections that suffer most acutely from this failing are those devoted to the post-European arrival parts of the Australian story. That failing has combined in the *Horizons* Gallery, dedicated in the main to the peopling of Australia since 1788, with an absence of **detailing exemplary individual, group and institutional achievements**—a necessary part of the Panel's second criterion, to present the fundamental themes and narratives of Australia.

In the *Nation* Gallery, largely devoted to the period from Federation to the present, the problem has partly come from presenting symbols on their own, without much interpretation, or narrative to provide context. In this gallery both choice of theme, and execution are problematic.

The NMA has difficulties with signage, exhibit lighting and acoustics—ones which are pervasive and serious. Signage between and within exhibits is, in places, confusing, inconsistent and at times uninformative. Acoustic problems to the point of cacophony, through much of the public space, arise because of poor design and application, and inferior quality equipment.

There is also some evidence of a lack of coordination and strategic direction between research, collection policy and collaboration.

ii) THE FUTURE

If the Museum is to build successfully on its achievements, it must address its weaknesses, and to do so will require some fundamental changes. More than anything else, changes are needed to strengthen the Museum’s story-telling capability, and to base this on focal objects.

In broad terms, the Review has pointed to the need to make changes so that the Museum:

- **Presents narratives, throughout its exhibitions, in a vital and engaging way—with clarity, cogency and meaningful context.**
- **Includes primary themes of Australian history, some of which are currently absent or given insufficient priority, especially in the *Horizons* and *Nation* galleries.**
- **Celebrates the achievements in Australian history of both indigenous and non-indigenous civilisations.**
- **Gives greater prominence to the nexus between Land (or Country) and People—working it up into a leading motif connecting the permanent galleries.**
- **Makes the Museum coherent for visitors through better flow, consistent signage, improved exhibit lighting and redesigned acoustics.**
- **Gears research and collection policy to future exhibitions and programs to ensure that the Museum gains a rounded authority.**

In order to bring about these changes, issues of content and presentation, and of infrastructure, will need to be addressed. Some may be dealt with in the shorter term, some are relatively straightforward to implement, and others are for the longer term and involve significant restructuring. Some are more pressing than others.

Shorter term:

- Reconsider the selection of themes and narratives for both *Horizons* and *Nation*—as recommended in Part 3ii—to develop galleries that address the primary themes in the Australian story; present the stories in a coherent, clear and engaging way, backed up by rigorous scholarship; and with objects that inspire and absorb. Establish a plan for stage-by-stage implementation.
- Address curatorial issues raised throughout the Report—with objects displayed informatively, coherently, visibly and with integrity.
- Redevelop *Circa* so that the theatre provides a compelling introduction to the Museum, and a clear orientation to the permanent exhibitions.

- Prepare and implement a master plan for signposting and signage—taking account of Part 3vi—to assist visitors to find their way through the Museum, and to interpret the exhibits.
- Implement shorter-term recommendations to improve the acoustics—detailed in Part 3vi—removing some of the present impediments to enjoyment of the Museum.
- Develop a targeted collection policy, with some priority given to materials for *Horizons* and *Nation* exhibits. In the meantime, endeavour to borrow objects to fill gaps in the collection and ensure object-rich displays.
- Plan a research program on the collection, linked to proposed exhibitions and with related public programs and publications, with five and ten year goals.
- Develop a collaboration strategy giving voice to longer-term goals and priorities, while recognising that within this strategy the NMA should take advantage of opportunities as they arise which will strengthen the Museum’s exhibitions and programs.
- Transform audience surveys to gain information specific to the design of future exhibits and programs—in relation to both content and mode of presentation.

Longer term:

- Continue the implementation of the first of the shorter-term priorities.
- Investigate other uses of the *Garden of Australian Dreams*—as recommended in Part 3iv—to make it a versatile and inviting space, including the extension of the Land theme from *Tangled Destinies*.
- Develop a plan to work Land/Country into a macro-theme interlinking the permanent exhibitions.
- Implement longer-term recommendations to improve acoustics detailed in Part 3vi.
- Rationalise the collection to focus on the requirements of the permanent galleries, deaccessioning superfluous objects and collections.
- Develop a cross-continent leadership role in the staging of temporary and travelling exhibitions, and the promotion of curatorial research.

How might successful implementation of this Report be gauged? The Panel closes by sketching its ideal for a tour of the Museum in ten years time. It envisages entering an institution—real or virtual—that immediately transports the visitor out of the ordinary and the everyday into a series of experiences that bring to imaginative life the Australian story in its different facets. It envisages epic and grave, even dark moments; light and humorous ones; intense and enchanting ones; broad brush-stroke, mellow and even diversionary ones. It envisages the balancing of grand cultural themes with intimate microcosms; single interpretations with diversely shaded ones; the simple and beautiful exhibit with the densely meshed one. It envisages a contour of experience between and within galleries, with clear directions from one cleanly delineated exhibit to the next—exhibits that bear the imprint of cogent background research and scholarly debate. The visitor, on exiting, feels awed and stunned, and reflective; more engaged than ever before by the Australian story; better understanding some of its main themes and traits, and the characteristics of the people; more respectful and curious about the past, and more thoughtful about the future. The visitor feels impelled to tell others: ‘You have got to go there!’

REVIEW

APPENDICES

Appendix i

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Examine the aims and content of the Museum's exhibitions, both permanent and temporary, and schools and public programs. The examination will include the following:
 - (i) whether the Museum has complied with its role and functions as set out in the *National Museum of Australia Act 1980*, its Charter and other relevant documents; and
 - (ii) whether the Government's vision in approving funding for the development of the Museum has been realised.
2. Consider and make recommendations on the future priorities to be addressed by the Museum, including the continuing relevance of its Act, in the development of permanent and temporary exhibitions and schools and public programs.

Appendix ii

PANEL BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Dr John Carroll (Chairman)

Dr John Carroll is the Reader in Sociology at La Trobe University in Melbourne. He holds a degree in Mathematics from the University of Melbourne, as well as a degree in Economics, and a PhD in Sociology and the History of Ideas from Cambridge University, the latter of which was completed under the supervision of George Steiner. His primary research area is in the sociology of culture.

His recent books include *Terror—a Meditation on the Meaning of September 11* (2002), *The Western Dreaming* (2001), *Ego and Soul—the Modern West in Search of Meaning* (1998), and *Humanism—the Wreck of Western Culture* (1993). He has edited *Intruders in the Bush—the Australian Quest for Identity* (1982, 1992) and together with Robert Manne, *Shutdown—the Failure of Economic Rationalism* (1992).

John Carroll is also a frequent writer of essays and newspaper articles. In 2001, he delivered one of the Alfred Deakin Federation Lectures, entitled *The Blessed Country: Australian Dreaming 1901–2001*. His work focuses on modern Western society, and in particular on the nature of culture—the vital role it plays in the way people understand themselves and their individual lives, the form their institutions take, and the collective well-being of the society they inhabit.

Richard Longes

Mr Richard Longes holds degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws and a Master of Business Administration. He is currently a director of a number of public companies including Deputy Chairman of Lend Lease Corporation and Chairman of General Property Trust. He holds, or has held, positions with Government advisory boards, including the Funds Management Committee for the Innovation Investment Fund program and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Leadership Group, as well as significant non-profit organisations, including Bangarra Dance and National Institute of Dramatic Art. He is currently heading the Indigenous Business Review.

Mr Longes is an executive director of Investec Bank (Australia) Limited. He was previously a principal of Wentworth Associates for 11 years and a partner of the legal firm Freehills for more than 15 years.

Dr Philip Jones

Dr Philip Jones is Senior Curator in Anthropology at the South Australian Museum, where he has curated anthropology and social history exhibitions since 1984. He produced the concept brief for the Australian Aboriginal Cultures Gallery which opened in March 2000, and has recently curated *The Art of Avoidance: Shields of Aboriginal Australia* (2000), *Master Blackburn's Whip: Ambiguities of a First Fleet Weapon* (2000–01), *The Art of Arnhem Land: Paintings on Bark and Wood collected by C.P. Mountford* (2002–03) and *Images of the Interior: Seven Photographers and the Australian Frontier, 1890s–1930s*. (2002–03).

Philip Jones holds a law degree and a PhD in history, both from the University of Adelaide. His doctoral thesis concerned the history of collecting and recording Aboriginal ethnographic material. His forthcoming book, *Ochre and Rust*, contains essays on this subject, set against the background of frontier conflict and accommodation. He has published widely on the history of Australian anthropology and on the role of cultural brokers (black and white) in the colonial period. In addition, during 2001, as a Churchill Fellow, Dr Jones undertook a detailed survey of Aboriginal collections in nine European museums.

Dr Jones serves as Chair of the National Cultural Heritage Committee, an advisory committee in the Environment and Heritage portfolio.

Professor Patricia Vickers-Rich

Professor Patricia Vickers-Rich is a geologist, palaeobiologist and author, and holds a Personal Chair in Palaeontology at Monash University, School of Geosciences, in Melbourne. She is founding Director of the Monash Science Centre, in operation since 1993. She is a consultant to Museum Victoria.

Her main research interests are in the late Mesozoic fauna and flora of Gondwana and the early evolution of life and animals (the Precambrian). She holds a PhD from Columbia University, New York, in Geology, for which her thesis addressed the origin of Australasia's avifauna. She has supervised postgraduate students in a diverse range of topics—from palaeobiology to history of science and palaeoenvironmental/palaeoclimatic change. She, together with colleague Thomas H Rich, has discovered and opened up fossils fields in Australasia, the South Pacific, North America and Patagonia.

Professor Vickers-Rich has written technical and popular books (including two Eureka-award-winning books, *Wildlife of Gondwana* and *Dinosaurs of Darkness*) and articles on several areas of palaeobiology and history of science, as well as a number of children's books on how science

works. She has worked on a number of documentaries (with the BBC, National Geographic, and the ABC) and has had long-term support from the National Geographic Society Research Committee. She has worked in museums around the world (including the American Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Palaeontology, University of California, Berkeley) first as a preparator, then a curator, science educator and currently as director. She has organised and funded several international travelling exhibitions (for example: *The Great Russian Dinosaurs* from 1993–98, a joint effort between the Russian Academy of Science and Australian/United States museums).

Appendix iii

SOURCE DOCUMENTS

Museums in Australia, Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections including the Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, (Pigott Report), (Australian Government Publishing Service; Canberra, 1975).

National Museum of Australia Act 1980.

The Hon R J Ellicott QC, Minister for Home Affairs and the Capital Territory, second reading speech, Museum of Australia Bill 1980.

The Plan for the Development of the Museum of Australia: Report of the Interim Council—including the Museum Charter, (Museum of Australia; Canberra, 1982).

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Report by the Advisory Committee on New Facilities for the National Museum of Australia and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, (Department of Communications and the Arts; Canberra, 1996).

Media Release, 'Parliament approves construction of new facilities for the National Museum of Australia and the AIATSIS in Canberra', Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, July 1998.

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Negotiating Histories, Darryl McIntyre & Kirsten Wehner (eds.), (National Museum of Australia; Canberra, 2001).

The National Museum of Australia: Tangled Destinies, Dimity Reed (ed.), (The Images Publishing Group; Victoria, 2002).

Energised, Engaged, Everywhere: Older Australians and Museums, (Australian Museum and National Museum of Australia; Sydney, 2002).

Education at the National Museum of Australia, collection of resources and brochures, (National Museum of Australia; Canberra, 2003).

National Museum of Australia Annual Reports, 1996–2003.

In addition to these publicly available documents, the NMA provided the Review Panel with a number of internal documents, upon which it also based its findings.

Appendix iv

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS



**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA
REVIEW OF EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS
CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

A major review is being undertaken into the exhibitions and public programs of the National Museum of Australia. The Review Panel is now seeking submissions from interested members of the public addressing the issues raised in the Review's Terms of Reference.

Terms of Reference:

1. Examine the aims and content of the Museum's exhibitions, both permanent and temporary, and schools and public programs. The examination will include the following:
 - (i) whether the Museum has complied with its role and functions as set out in the *National Museum of Australia Act 1980*, its Charter and other relevant documents; and
 - (ii) whether the Government's vision in approving funding for the development of the Museum has been realised.
2. Consider and make recommendations on the future priorities to be addressed by the Museum, including the continuing relevance of its Act, in the development of permanent and temporary exhibitions and schools and public programs.

The deadline for submissions is COB Friday 7 March 2003. It should be noted that submissions may be quoted in whole or in part in the report and/or made available to the public.

Submissions addressing the Terms of Reference can be lodged, preferably by email, at reviewnmasec@dcita.gov.au or by mail to:

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

The *National Museum of Australia Act 1980* can be accessed at: <http://scaleplus.law.gov.au/html/pasteact/6/470/pdf/NMA80.pdf> and further information is available on the NMA Review website: www.dcita.gov.au or from the NMA Review Secretariat - telephone (02) 6271 1432.

Appendix v

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