

To: The Review Panel

1 I have been a member of the Friends of the National Museum Of Australia (Inc) since its very early days, and was later elected to membership of its management Committee. I was then elected Vice-President of the Friends in 1995, and retained this office till November 2001, when I retired from it. I had the honour to serve in this office under the presidency of Mrs Winnifred Rosser, who did so much to help bring the Museum to a living reality.

2 I have no wish to trouble the Review Panel with the history of the development of the Museum over the critical five or six years up to its opening in March 2001. It is enough to say that the experience of being so closely involved in that history gives me confidence to emphasise the enormous public enthusiasm that existed in the community both in the ACT and across Australia for the conception of the Museum that was evolved and for the ultimate result that we have had before us since its opening. That confidence is testimony to its success.

3 I have had the opportunity to see in draft the submission that is being lodged with the Review Panel by the Friends and I am content to say that I heartily endorse its contents.

4 I would only add one comment. I strongly endorse the Friends' submission when it supports the view that, especially in relation to the Gallery of First Australians, there can be no hard and fast conclusion about any particular aspect of the story of Aboriginal Australia. No one school of thought can claim a monopoly of 'correctness' about any one issue. What is critically important is that the issues be brought out and placed before the people, which for most of my life-time they have not. Now at last we can face up to our past with hope for the future. In so doing the National Museum helps us along the way.

5 This issue of course is not confined to the Gallery of First Australians. There are aspects of certain exhibits in other parts of the Museum that I find troublesome or incomplete, and it is open to me to raise these with the Museum staff, who are dedicated and highly skilled, and are always ready to discuss any problems that may be perceived. The administration of the Museum is greatly admired, not least because of the magnificent work done by the Director, Ms Dawn Casey in both the development of the Museum and in its continuing progress. The prime point is that it is all to the good that difficult issues have been placed before the people, who, whether expert or not, are free to express their views.

I wish the Review Panel well.

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