

To whom it may concern.

In the early 1980.s it came to my notice that there were preparations being made for the breaking up of the proposed NMA collection with the Aboriginal collection probably going to Adelaide. It seemed essential that this not happen and that the collection remain intact and in Canberra where it could be owned by ALL AUSTRALIANS and used to tell our story warts and all. To this end a group of us (Jack Thompson. Carol Serventy. Julie Duncan and myself) formed the Friends of the (then non existent) NMA to alert people to this terrible proposal. It is a matter of history now that at our first open day at Yarramundi organised by Friends and Museum staff over 8000 people attended. The Govt of the day quietly dropped all plans at breaking up collections etc.

The reason for this email is that I sense that the Museum could now once again be under threat and its ideals about to be compromised by political considerations. It is critical that this not happen and that it remain true to its role of informing us ALL about who we are and where we came from. History is subjective ... there will always be different interpretations of events...it was always intended by those of us who fought so hard to have it established that the National Museum would be an institution where rigorous debate was encouraged .

Of course rigorous debate is not comfortable and sometimes raises issues that we may prefer stay hidden but it is surely part of the Museums charter and an essential tenet of democracy that the stories be told from ALL perspectives in order that we as a people learn and grow. The NMA has I believe been fulfilling this role brilliantly up till now and we as a confident people are able to cope with difficult issues it sometimes raises.

I was a very close observer of the political manouverings re. the NMA in the 80.s being married to a Federal MinisterI have a very uneasy feeling that history may be repeating itself. I only hope I am wrong and that the review will result in an empowered and relevant NMA which takes its place on the world stage and makes us all proud. I would like to see its funding increased and somehow the whole situation kept at arms length from Government so that it becomes truly independent.

Yours sincerely Judy Holding. holdon1@bigpond.com