

**MUSEUMS  
IN  
AUSTRALIA  
1975**

**Report of the  
Committee of Inquiry  
on Museums and  
National Collections  
including  
the Report of the  
Planning Committee  
on the Gallery of  
Aboriginal Australia**

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Committee of Inquiry on Museums  
and National Collections  
Canberra, A.C.T. 2600

Senator the Hon. Douglas McClelland  
Special Minister of State  
Parliament House  
Canberra, A.C.T.

Dear Mr Minister,

The Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections has completed its inquiries into the matters assigned to it.

We have pleasure in forwarding our report which includes the Report of the separate Planning Committee - on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia. The Planning Committee reported to your Committee of Inquiry in accordance with the arrangements set out in the statement of the Special Minister of State in the House of Representatives on 10 April 1974 and the Committee's comments on the proposals of the Planning Committee are set out in our Report.

Yours sincerely,  
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## **Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia**

# 1 Introduction

1.1 The establishment of the Committee was announced on 10 April 1974, and the Committee met for the first time on 7 May of that year.

1.2 The terms of reference given to the Committee were as follows:

- (i) to advise on the scope, objectives and functions of an Australia Institute to develop, co-ordinate and foster collections, research and displays of historical, cultural and scientific material of national significance, giving particular attention to its relationship with Government and other institutions.
- (ii) to recommend steps to establish such an institute;
- (iii) in relation to the Australian Government's direct field of responsibility and interest, to recommend measures which should be taken in the immediate future to:
  - (a) improve collection and conservation facilities for national material, with particular attention to research needs and training;
  - (b) ensure effective co-ordination of the Australian Government's activities in this field;
  - (c) institute new developments and institutions, with particular attention to the establishment of a national museum of history in Canberra;
- (iv) to recommend longer-term measures in the field of museums and collections, with particular attention to the Australian Government's role in relation to state, local government, and institutional authorities.

1.3 Soon after its first meeting, the Committee arranged for notices to be published in the national press throughout Australia inviting interested organisations, persons and groups to make written submissions to the Committee. In the public notice the Committee stated that it did not see museums as simply buildings where ancient objects are preserved and displayed. It saw museums as vital places of education, entertainment and research where facets of the daily life of past generations of Australians can be seen and where our heritage of old trades, crafts and skills can be displayed and practised.

More than 400 written submissions were made to the Committee, including detailed papers from most of the major museum authorities in the States. In addition, Australian Government Departments and Authorities were asked to inform the Committee whether they had in their custody any material or items which were regarded as being of historical or cultural significance.

1.4 Appendix 1 analyses the submissions received, and classifies them into various categories. While many of the submissions were in the nature of requests for financial assistance, they did serve to give a more comprehensive view to the Committee of regional museums existing in Australia today, and of the plans for future development or new initiatives.

1.5 With the co-operation of State Governments and the Directors concerned, the Committee visited the major museums in all States and a miscellany of other museums, in order to inspect their facilities and collections; and the Committee was accorded the advantage of meeting with many of the Boards of Trustees and museum staff for detailed discussions on problems experienced in museum administration. A listing of museums visited by the Committee is at Appendix 11.

1.6 Because of the multiplicity of smaller or newer museums outside the metropolitan areas, the Committee engaged consultants to report on museums in selected regions. These reports formed a valuable addition to the Committee's knowledge of museums

and the importance of the collections which they house. A comprehensive report on all museums in Australia and their collections would require a costly and substantial effort over several years, and the Committee took the view that a representative sampling of museums would be sufficient to obtain essential information on regional museums.

1.7 When the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections was established, the Special Minister of State and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announced that a separate committee, including representatives of the Aboriginal people, would examine and report on the possibility of establishing a Gallery of Aboriginal Australia. This separate committee was to report to the main Committee, and Professor Mulvaney by his membership of both Committees, would provide the appropriate linking of the separate committee's work. The Report of the Planning Committee on The Gallery of Aboriginal Australia has now been received, and is attached to the main report. The recommendations of that Committee are also considered in Chapter 12, when a museum of national history in the A.C.T. is discussed.

1.8 Four members of the Committee travelled overseas during January and February 1975 to examine museum developments in particular countries. During the six weeks in Europe and America, they inspected, more than 40 museums in 9 countries. The main objectives of the visit were to obtain first-hand knowledge about:

- the organisational structure of museums and any developments towards the framing of national policies and programs for museums and national collections;
- museums which have been established in more recent years, and the approaches adopted in way of museum siting, design, facilities and display;
- facilities for the conservation of collections, and arrangements for the training of conservators;
- the funding arrangements for museums;
- the use of museums and their collections for research and education;
- particular types of museums which might stimulate or guide new initiatives in Australia, e.g. maritime, aviation, technology and national history museums.

1.9 Many of these issues were pertinent to the development of a museum of national history in the A.C.T. Through the support of Mr A. Powell, Commissioner, National Capital Development Commission, a First Assistant Commissioner of that authority accompanied the Committee members on most of the museum visits in other countries.

The Committee members who did not travel overseas at this time had recently visited a wide range of museums in many countries in the course of journeys made in private and official capacities. The accumulated experiences of the Committee members therefore included some knowledge of a wide cross-section of the major museums of the world.

1.10 During the course of its inquiries, the Committee has had the advantage of close consultation with the Interim Committee on the National Estate, particularly through the Chairman of that Committee. Mr D. Yericken, and senior officers of the Department of Urban and Regional Development, The Committee of Inquiry has been invited to comment on various proposals to the National Estate Committee for assistance grants which concern the development of museums or the use of material in collections, and there has been consultation between both Committees to overcome the inherent problem of overlapping interests and responsibilities between 'national heritage' and 'national collections'. These issues are referred to later in Chapter 7.

# 2 Major Recommendations

2.1 The Committee of Inquiry, in the course of the following chapters, sets out many conclusions and recommendations, major and minor, about museums and collections in Australia. The main recommendations can be briefly summarised as follows.

2.2 To assist in co-ordinating federal expenditure on museums and art galleries, and to foster the development of museums generally in Australia, we recommend the creation of an Australian Museums Commission, a statutory authority employing its own small staff and enlisting, whenever possible, the advice and specialised services of other government agencies.

2.3 For the purposes of defining the level and range of government financial support, we recommend that the Australian Museums Commission divide museums into the categories of major museums, associated museums and local museums. For local museums, government support can be given most efficiently if the museums form themselves into regional networks or associations.

2.4 As museums have unique advantages as a means of education, and as a large proportion of school children rarely visit them, or visit them without adequate preparation or proper briefing, museums should be used more as a source of formal education and by universities. If necessary, this development should be funded at the expense of certain other facets of the Australian Government's education program.

2.5 As rational acquisition and preservation represents a vital function of museums, and as Australian museums are often outbid by overseas buyers for objects of unique importance to this country, we recommend that a national fund should be set up to facilitate emergency acquisitions of collections in history, the fine arts, sciences and other areas of strong Australian interest.

2.6 As public funds can easily be squandered on ineffective museums, and as requests by museums for finance are multiplying, we recommend that public funds not be used unless the museums will meet a community need, will use a building suitable as a museum, will adequately display and catalogue and conserve their collections, and will hold collections of historic significance.

2.7 As many agencies of the Australian Government at present assist museums, we recommend that this funding be co-ordinated and conform to agreed principles; we recommend that funds not be granted to museums which are so strongly directed towards tourism and entertainment that their standards of historical accuracy are violated.

2.8 We recommend that responsibility for all the Australian Government's own museums should be placed under one Ministerial portfolio and that these museums, while receiving their basic funding from that Ministry, should have the same access as State or municipal museums to the special assistance programs of the Australian Museums Commission.

2.9 As the deterioration of valuable collections in Australian museums, great and small has reached the proportion of a crisis, conservation should have high priority when additional funds are provided by the Australian Government. We recommend the creation of a Cultural Materials Conservation Institute to study - and disseminate - ways of preventing deterioration of fragile and perishable museum objects, especially under Australian climatic and other conditions.

2.10 We recommend the establishing of a post-graduate course to train professional conservators at a degree-granting institution, a system of training technical staff for museums on an apprenticeship basis, and special training programs in those aspects of

Australian social economic and technological history which are increasingly central to museum collections and displays.

2.11 We recommend that a Museum of Australia be established in Canberra and that its board of trustees be charged by Act of Parliament with the collecting, preserving, study and display of materials related to the history of man in Australia and the interaction between man and the Australian environment. The new national museum should not attempt to imitate or duplicate those fields in which the older Australian museums are strong, but should concentrate on three main themes or galleries: Aboriginal man in Australia; European man in Australia; and the Australian environment and its interaction with the two-named themes.

2.12 While many proposals were put to this Committee for the creation of a variety of specialist national museums, we recommend that no more than three themes merit special museums. We recommend that early priority be given to a national maritime museum in Sydney and to a national aviation museum at a growth centre such as Albury-Wodonga, and that later consideration be given to locating a Gallery or Museum of Australian Biography within the Parliamentary Triangle in Canberra.

2.13 We recommend that those Australian universities which operate museums or hold important collections should either safeguard those collections adequately or with the co-operation of the Australian Universities and the Australian Museums Commissions, or arrange to transfer them on long-term loan to major museums.

2.14 In view of the indiscriminate looting of historic shipwrecks along the Australian coast, and the danger to historic sites on land, we recommend that protective legislation be drawn up and enacted. While the protection of historic sites on land and sea is at present even more important than application of archaeology to those sites, the Australian Museums Commission should encourage marine and historical archaeology, and provide special help to the pioneering work of the Maritime Museum at Fremantle.

2.15 To retain rare Australian cultural material, we recommend that the Australian Government introduce specific legislation to regulate or prohibit the export of particular items or categories of items. We recommend that the protection of cultural relics would be furthered if Australia ratified and implemented the UNESCO Convention of 1970 on the Means of Prohibiting, and Preventing, the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

2.16 To assist in the conservation, display, study and the retention within Australia of museum objects of national significance, we recommend that a National Register be compiled.

2.17 We recommend that consideration be given to changing legislation in order to provide tax incentives to those who donate valuable items of national significance to public museums, libraries and archival authorities in Australia; an independent board, we recommend, should be set up to assess gifts, and decide whether they merit a tax rebate on the grounds of their national, historic and cultural and scientific importance.

# 3 What is a Museum?

3.1 We think it wise to define a museum, though a museum is more easily described than defined. *Museion*, in Greek, was the sanctuary devoted to the muses of mythology. The same word was used nearly, three centuries before Christ, to denote that part of the Egyptian palace which housed the library of Alexander the Great. A museum began to take on more its present meaning during the Italian Renaissance when it was applied to the room or study where the nobles housed their treasures. While the bronzes and carvings and other precious artefacts were displayed in the *museo*, the paintings and sculpture held in Italian palaces in the sixteenth century were displayed in the long *galleria* or gallery which served also as an indoor place of exercise.

## Gallery Versus Museum

3.2 These Italian rooms which housed private collections were the forerunners of the modern art museum. For reasons which are obscure, the English-speaking world tends to retain the old verbal distinction between an art gallery and a museum. In Australia the phrase 'art gallery' is the common name for an art museum, while the word 'museum' is reserved for collections in natural history, science and technology, anthropology and ethnology, and many facets of human history.

Somehow the word 'museum' has a musty effect, in contrast the word 'gallery' sounds more spacious and luxurious and glamorous. The respective connotations of these words possibly reflect the fact that in Australia in the last generation, visual art has been more fashionable and has enjoyed an increasing share of public funds in comparison to those museums which house more mundane objects.

3.3 The Committee, for the purposes of this inquiry, has viewed institutions which house art collections as essentially museums. While the report, for the sake of simplicity, usually refers to these collections as 'art galleries', we see them as essentially carrying out the functions of museums. This interpretation is reinforced by our terms of reference, which refer specifically to 'collections, research and displays of historical, cultural and scientific material'. Furthermore, several of the larger museums in Australia have long combined, in the one institution and under the one roof, collections of art, the sciences, and human history. The two largest museums in Tasmania display this combination. Similarly several of the larger so-called art galleries in Australia employ a wide definition of art that spreads their interests into facets of anthropology, technology and the European history of Australia.

3.4 The border between the themes of an art museum and a general museum is often blurred. Moreover the spirit and atmosphere of an art museum is no longer so inimical to the spirit of a museum of natural history or technology. In the nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth century, a symbolic gulf had existed between art collections and scientific collections, and the public was often lost in that gulf. At that time the message of the science museums was dogmatic and fervent. The objects on display were heavily labelled and meticulously arranged so that the message of evolution and progress might be hammered home. The natural science museums tended to be impersonal: the category and the classification of the objects were all-important. Curiously Aboriginal art had long been displayed impersonally in natural science museums in Australia but only when Aboriginal art was 'discovered' by art galleries did the artists become known as people rather than as nameless cyphers. The now-narrower gulf between the aims of the art and science and history museums encourages us to see these institutions as variations of the one species.

3.5 In the last quarter-century art museums in Australia have been more favoured by governments; and the two great building programs for museums both centre on art museums—at Melbourne and Canberra. Science late in the nineteenth century was



reverenced by many as the new religion and so science museums were housed in monumental buildings. Today, in influential quarters, art is the new religion and so an art museum is more likely to be housed in a new parthenon. Nonetheless, the art museums have nearly all of the troubles and the unanswered challenges facing other kinds of museums.

### **The Aims of Museums**

3.6 Museums have a variety of aims, and few museums achieve those aims. The aims require such knowledge, such skills, such equipment, such dedication, and such a level of government and popular co-operation that the performance often lags behind the goal. In Australia, governments too often accept museums as institutions where the second-best will suffice. There is justification, therefore, in setting high aims.

Museums, in our opinion, should attempt to satisfy the following aims:

- Museums should preserve those objects which merit safekeeping for aesthetic, scientific or historical reasons.
- Museums should classify and arrange their exhibits with boldness and caution, conscious that a way of arranging knowledge can be illuminating in one era and stultifying in another era.
- Museums should satisfy curiosity and arouse curiosity.
- Museums should educate formally and informally.
- Museums should extend the front-lines of knowledge.
- Museums should enable curious spectators to visit those front-lines and understand how some of the battles to extend knowledge are fought.
- Museums should give play to the magic provided by the rare or unique object - a watercolour or a mineral specimen of beauty, the skin of an extinct animal species, the compass of a famous navigator, or the simple possessions of a race which has vanished from the earth.
- Museums should harness the skills of all the relevant arts and crafts and sciences in conserving those rare objects for generations to come.
- Museums should be both art-form and theatre, attempting to improve the quality and variety of messages which that art-form is most fitted to send forth.
- Museums should entertain people of all ages.

### **Museums: A Definition**

3.7 Today the best-known definition of a museum is that formulated by the International Council of Museums (ICOM):

*Article 3*—‘A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution, in the services of society and of its development, and open to the public which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of man and his environment.

*Article 4*—‘In addition to museums designated as such, ICOM recognise that the following comply with the above definition:

- (a) Conservation institutes and exhibition galleries permanently maintained by libraries and archive centres,
- (b) Natural, archaeological and ethnographic monuments and sites and historical monuments and sites of a museum nature, for their acquisition, conservation and communication activities;
- (c) Institutions displaying live specimens, such as botanical and zoological gardens aquaria, vivaria etc.,
- (d) Nature reserves.
- (e) Science centres and planetariums.’

The ICOM definition sets out an ideal. One could well argue that, because it sees the conservation of objects as a prime function of museums, certain famous museums in Europe and North America are not really museums: too many of their treasures are quietly decaying in their galleries and store rooms. If the ICOM definition were to be applied rigidly in Australia, perhaps no more than thirty institutions would qualify as museums. Most of the regional and nearly all the local museums in Australia would fall outside the ICOM definition on the grounds that they do not adequately carry out research even when acquiring and describing and displaying objects. Their collections and displays, therefore, are often a slight or dubious aid to research.

3.8 In many of the local and folk museums in Australia, however, the collections are of sufficient merit to support historical research. If such museums could afford to employ even one trained curator, or to become part of a national consulting and assistance plan, their standards could be quickly raised to the level stipulated by the ICOM definition. One of the recommendations of this Committee is that local museums, where possible, should be helped and stimulated. In isolated regions these local museums have great potential for education and entertainment. Throughout Australia they have already added much to our knowledge of the nation's history.

### **Three Grades of Museums**

3.9 For the purposes of this report we use the term 'museum' in a wide sense, spanning science and history museums and art galleries, and occasionally including the smaller folk and local museums which at present might knock in vain at ICOM's door. In discussing such a range of museums, however, classification is useful. Moreover when the Australian Government initiates a policy of support for deserving museums, a system of grading museums is essential if the funds are to be allocated to the more important or deserving museums.

3.10 We *recommend* that the museums be classified into three grades,

- *Major Museums*: these would embrace the main government-supported museums, both State and Federal. Not more than 25 Australian museums would come within this grading in the near future and most already conform to the ICOM definition of a museum. These major museums are discussed in Chapter 4.
- *Associated Museums*: this grade would embrace perhaps forty or fifty museums, holding collections deemed to be of national importance and requiring certain government support or services in order to lift them to, or keep them within, the ICOM definition of a museum. The associated museums would include many provincial art galleries, certain university museums, and several large open-air and folk museums. They are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.
- *Local Museums*: small, local museums, mostly opened in the last fifteen years, they collectively hold collections of importance, especially in Australian history. While most of these museums can never meet the ICOM or any other rigid definition of a museum, they serve the public, provide entertainment for tourists, and can raise their standards and effectiveness with discreet aid from governments. These local museums, forming the bulk of museums in this country, are discussed in Chapter 5.

3.11 The difference between a major museum in Melbourne and Sydney and a small museum in three rented rooms on the inland plains is so great that it is difficult to describe them with the same word. While discussion of the major museums of art and science and history dominates this report, the role and deficiencies of the smaller museums are discussed from time to time. Both kinds of institutions, despite their vast differences in scope or budgets or research, are trying to fulfil many of the same functions and are suffering at present from many of the same weaknesses.

# 4 The Major Museums— Their Aims and Deficiencies

4.1 Most of the important collections in Australia are held in about twenty museums. The research and scholarship in Australian museums is concentrated heavily in these large traditional institutions. They also attract the majority of museum visitors in Australia today.

Each Australian State has at least two of these major institutions, usually an art museum and a general museum oriented to natural history. In addition, Victoria and New South Wales support large museums of applied science. All these institutions were founded in the nineteenth century, and are still financed almost entirely by the State governments. The Australian Government at present has only two comparable museums—the Australian War Memorial and the Australian Institute of Anatomy—both of which were opened in Canberra in the twentieth century. A few provincial museums could also qualify as major museums.

These museums are open to the public and have enough in common to be discussed as a group. If existing Australian museums are to enjoy a blood transfusion, these museums will probably be the main recipients. Their statistics are appended to this report at Appendix III. Their aims merit discussion, for the aims are a vital guide in assessing the performance of museums.

## **Preservation is Vital**

4.2 A nation gains in a variety of ways from the efficient preservation of objects in museums. Certain of the gains are not easily measured: the satisfaction of curiosity about the past; the keeping alive of national or individual achievements and failures; and the dissemination of tastes and skills which merit emulation. Other gains from a well-run system of national collections are more utilitarian; for instance, the collections aid the tapping of natural resources, underpin research which might combat disease or pollution, promote the breeding of useful plants and animals, and facilitate an understanding of those past events and experiences which shaped the nation's history.

Irrespective of whether a museum collects paintings, mineral specimens, archaeological relics, early printing machines or butterflies, its first duty is to preserve them. Some categories of objects are preserved because they are rare or will ultimately become rare. Some categories are preserved because they are typical and representative.

4.3 Most of the major museums in Australia cannot adequately preserve their collections until they acquire larger storage areas. Some collections are jammed like cargo in a ship's hold. When every attic, corridor and cellar has been filled, temporary outside accommodation is often sought. At best, these overflow stores are warehouses; at worst, galvanised-iron sheds.

4.4 The collections in major museums are also exposed to theft and, occasionally to vandalism. Understandably, museums try to avoid publicising thefts, sometimes because they are partly to blame for the inadequate security but more often because they do not wish to proclaim how easily their collections can be robbed. We did not try to collect information systematically on losses through theft, but became increasingly aware that valuable mineral specimens on display in museums were highly vulnerable. This is one reason why the collections of gold nuggets and of gold-studded quartz are so disappointing in many Australian museums. In the last half-century at least one major Australian collection has also been pilfered by an employee. We cannot say how regularly a stock-taking occurs of the valuable, saleable items in the average museum department. Obviously security services—whether internal audits or the provision of guards and burglar alarms—are expensive. So long as major museums lack funds, security will not meet reasonable specifications.

4.5 Collections in major museums have also been harmed when moved to other buildings; priceless objects were damaged by untrained staff or by cramped storage conditions. Valuable exhibits disappeared when run-down museums could no longer afford to employ a trained curator.

More damaging and less visible is the slow deterioration of museum collections. Many collections are increasingly endangered by their own immediate environment: by the temperature, by the light; by dust or fumes in the atmosphere; by humidity; by vermin and fungi; or even by vibrations. Some collections are rotting in the museums, turning these institutions literally into cemeteries of dead objects. Of the major governmental museums in Australia, only four have effective control over temperature and humidity. Even in these favoured museums, some collections are stored in an uncontrolled atmosphere.

4.6 Aboriginal manufactures made of feathers, hair, wood, resin, blood, ochre and other fragile materials, and carried carefully to the coast by a collector or explorer a century ago and lodged in the safety of a museum, are slowly disintegrating. In the sequence of events which brought these irreplaceable objects to a museum, many accidents and hazards were somehow averted. Now the gravest hazard is that they are lying in an unsuitable museum. Similarly, medieval European manuscripts which somehow survived fires, vermin, floods and warfare are now slowly endangered because they lie in a building whose climate is unsatisfactory and highly erratic. A long list of precious objects, which are extremely vulnerable in their present place of 'safe-keeping', could be compiled.

Even when curators report with confidence that their particular collections are safeguarded, the potential casualty list is ominous. Robert Edwards, reporting\* in 1968 on the wonderful Aboriginal collections at the South Australian Museum, noted that, all in all, they were in a remarkably good state of preservation'. But most of those relics of a vanished way of living were only 50 or 100 years old. Their life had barely begun. How long, he inquired, would they be able to show future generations the tribal way of life. Already many wooden objects had deteriorated through variations in storage temperatures, while other objects were imperilled. Amongst the imperilled objects was a collection of 326 unique, irreplaceable works of art from northern South Australia, Central Australia, and Arnhem Land. All were made from wood, feathers and other fragile materials.

'They are under the best storage conditions we can provide at present—crowded into a basement storeroom equipped with a ventilation system to control periodic circulation of air. These conditions are inadequate. Their safety is imperative as it is the largest collection of its kind anywhere in the world. Extensive collections sent to Germany by early Lutheran Missionaries were destroyed by bombing during World War 11.'

The South Australian Museum still lacks the facilities and the skills with which to arrest or repair damage which has already occurred in some of its fragile collections.

4.7 The silent, scarcely visible damage to items in Australian museums probably exceeds, at present prices, one million dollars a year. As the damage takes place in basements or in locked storehouses, out of sight, the public pressure to take remedial action is slight. Curators themselves are not always alert to the damage. In many museum departments those curators who observe the decay of items in their care are unable to obtain money. Even if they could obtain money for conservation they could not find trained staff. Here is a crisis on a massive scale. It will be discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

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\*Robert Edwards, 'The South Australian Ethnographic Collection', *Mankind*, 1968, Vol. 6, pp. 673-675.

### Policy on Acquisitions

4.8 As the collections are the heart of a museum, an effective policy towards acquiring objects is vital. Undoubtedly the old State museums have been highly successful as collectors at certain periods of their history. By 1914 the Australian museums of all categories held collections which, measured by the small population of the country and the short time available for systematic collecting, were remarkably large and diverse. Moreover, the larger museums had been very alert in those Australian fields where the approaching extinction of ways of life or even of forms of life called for quick collection. It is easy now to point to gaps—gaps never to be filled—in anthropology and ethnology and zoology and other collections, but the achievement of the major museums commands admiration.

4.9 In the first half of this century, however, many of the museums of natural history were unable to build on the earlier achievement. The spacious buildings erected for their galleries and collections were, mostly, now full. The State governments, understandably seeing these buildings as temples of science, were more influenced by the symbolic exterior than by the increasingly cramped basements. Most museums lacked the money to mount collecting expeditions into the field. The first flush of excitement for studying the natural history of a new continent was paling. The decline of the outback mining industry, the breakdown of traditional Aboriginal life, the decline of official exploring expeditions, removed some of the easier acquisition sources for museums. Few had funds for acquiring collections which came onto the market. Many museums could no longer afford to implement a moderate policy of acquiring and cataloguing and storing material.

4.10 Many museums came to depend on random gifts. The gaps in collections multiplied. As shortage of staff often led to long delays in the making of catalogues and indexes, and as storage space became scarce, the museums had small incentive to seek more objects.

Obviously a museum can be healthy only if every part of its organisation is healthy. A deliberate, considered policy on acquisitions is not feasible if the museum lacks adequate funds for research and curatorial staff, for trained assistants, for field-work and for storage.

Today the degree of financial hardship in the traditional museums varies greatly. While some museums, through field-work, have implemented their acquisitions policies with relative success—increasing their collections in natural history, for instance, by perhaps an annual 10 per cent—others are missing opportunities.

4.11 In many fields of collecting, a satisfactory acquisitions policy now requires access at short notice to large sums of money. Art museums have long been accustomed to this method of acquisition. Many of the most prized exhibits in Australian art galleries were bought at auction. For many years one Australian art gallery was spending more money on the purchase of paintings than all the museums of Australia added together were spending on acquisitions. The high bidding by the National Gallery of Victoria was for long envied by museum officials in Great Britain. Dr D. E. Owen, Treasurer of the Museums Association of Britain from 1951 to 1961 lamented in *Chamber's Encyclopaedia* that the great British art galleries lacked the purchasing funds necessary to compete with a few wealthy overseas bidders. The great bidders, he added, are 'United States museums and the National Gallery of Victoria at Melbourne'\*. The bequest by Alfred Felton, a Melbourne merchant, had enabled the National Gallery in Melbourne to spend generously on works of art. That bequest has now been eroded by

\*D. E. Owen. *Museums*, in *Chamber's Encyclopaedia*, 1969. Vol. 9, P. 601.

inflation. The Australian Government in recent years has bid heavily for works of art for its planned gallery in Canberra. Most of the other Australian art museums have only small acquisition funds, though welcome help has come from the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council. Small as they are, the acquisition funds of art galleries usually far exceed those of the general museums.

4.12 Museums require funds in order to buy important collections which come onto the market. These range from Aboriginal artefacts and Australian minerals to vintage aircraft and Chinese porcelain. The owners of these collections, or their inheritors, are often people of middle income who cannot afford to donate the collections to museums though some might gladly accept a sum which is less than the collections' market value. More gifts would come to museums if Australian tax laws—discussed in Chapter 16—were more sympathetic.

The main science and natural history museums can rarely afford to buy collections. When valuable objects are offered, the boards of trustees frequently have to watch them pass to an overseas buyer. The recent action by the Australian Government in prohibiting the export of items of historical and cultural importance is a useful step, but public institutions must be placed in a position to acquire these items for Australia. An acquisitions fund for a wide range of museums is essential. Equally essential is a rational system of purchasing. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.

As the cost of maintaining large collections is astronomical, the director or curator who collects wisely is a national asset. Adequate acquisitions funds must be controlled by talented staff. There are high national gains from a director whose collection policy, in the long term, proves to have been perceptive. These gains—or losses—come to public notice more often in the purchase of paintings than in the collecting of marine life, but they are just as crucial in natural history as in art, and highly skilled executives are more important for a major museum than is at present realised.

### **Research and Scholarship**

4.13 A museum cannot live without scholarship. Deprived of scholarship it can become a huckster's supermarket. Without the guidance of scholars, the collecting, the classifying and indexing, the storing, displaying and conserving of objects will each suffer.

Any museum worth the name is engaged in the difficult search for new knowledge. Truth is elusive in most of the natural sciences, social sciences and those disciplines for which museums specially cater. For that reason the accurate documenting of a research collection in, say, marine biology or ethnology is vital. Collections have to be carefully preserved so that later scholars can re-examine the evidence on which earlier theories or observations were based.

'Systematic biology', writes E. L. Yochelson\* of the U.S. Geological Survey, 'is an additive science and does not make great strides forward to major unifying natural laws'. Systematic biology is not characterised by the 'great leaps forward that have characterised the history of the physical sciences'. Palaeontology, he added, advances at a crawl, 'building its monumental truths a dust particle at a time'. Occasionally it moves backwards or comes to a halt. And the fossil evidence in museum collections is then inspected again, and sometimes reinterpreted, and so the advance is resumed. The collections underwrite many important additions to knowledge. Without scholarship to guide every stage from collecting to indexing, the museum collections could never have served as foundations for the enormous platforms of knowledge they now support.

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\*E. L. Yochelson, 'Fossils - the How and Why of Collecting and Storing', *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*, Nov. 1969, Vol. 82, p. 593.

4.14 As resource centres for research in Australia, the major museums are rivalled only by the libraries in importance. The museums have long had a special capacity to gather collections and to conduct research in the natural sciences. In Australia the State museums and the CSIRO's research collections have dominated the study of taxonomy and systematics. Those collections are still indispensable for gaining an understanding of ecosystems. Likewise, the journals published by the larger museums have, in some decades, been a crucial outlet for the dissemination of research findings. In several disciplines—for instance, zoology and anthropology—Australia's most important libraries until recent years were gathered within museums.

Natural history has been the main theme of research in Australian museums; here were great opportunities for studying unique antipodean facets of zoology, geology and related sciences. In anthropology and ethnology the museums were active as research bases long before universities entered the field. In the other social sciences, research within museums has been sparse, with the possible exception of military history. In the art museums, research belongs more to the post-war era.

4.15 While it is possible for small regional museums to be effective even though their staff carry out no research or token research, a large museum is likely to be effective only if many senior members of staff have recently engaged in research. Skill in research is usually a prerequisite for the effective collecting of museum specimens, and for the documenting and displaying of the collection.

4.16 The universities and major museums and art galleries would gain if research and teaching links between them were strengthened. In several North American cities these links are often strong. In Australia they are now almost invariably weak; many members of staff in universities often feel a sense of superiority towards museum staff. In the last 15 or 20 years the growing universities and tertiary institutions—with their relatively favourable salaries, sabbatical leave, opportunities for research, and greater job prestige—have tended to place many museums in a shadow. A scholar who works for a museum soon learns that other educational institutions are, generally, more attractive. *We recommend* that urgent consideration be given to equating the salaries of museum staff with university staff and to expediting the flow and exchange of scholars between these institutions.

### **Museums as Educators**

4.17 As places of education, museums have unusual but rarely defined advantages. Firstly, they are capable, in favourable conditions, of instructing and entertaining people from every occupational group and age-group in the same Gallery. Secondly, their collections of particular objects often provide an immediacy, stimulate a sense of wonder, and instil an understanding, which makes the same message on radio and television or in lectures, and books and films seem remote and secondhand. Thirdly, a museum can often dispense with those layers of interpretation which, in most media, separate an object or evidence from the audience: for instance, a gold nugget found at Ballarat in 1860 or a 'Tasmanian Tiger' trapped in 1900 will be lacquered less with layers of interpretation in a museum hall than in a film, history book, television documentary, photographs or song. Fourthly, a museum enables visitors to take their own time, to contemplate or stare, without being hustled by the assembly-line pressure of television or other recent methods of communication. To halt and to dawdle is a rare advantage.

The advantages of museums are formidable in education but at present those advantages are used erratically. Although statistics are not available, it is reasonable to estimate that, of the 14-year-old children in Australia, at least 10 per cent have not even entered a museum and that at least 50 per cent have so far gained no educational stimulus

from museums. And yet Australia, by western European or North American standards, is advanced rather than backward in fostering and organising school visits to museums. Furthermore, many of the major State museums and art galleries in Australia have full-time teachers on their staff, and their liaison with schools seems effective.

4.18 In our view, the relationships between museums and primary and secondary school-children has reached a turning point. Many of the major museums in the capital cities can no longer cater adequately for the class-room visits during the week. Some museums are booked out nearly a year in advance. The school-children who cannot book on the organised tours of the museum, therefore, make their own desultory tour. They are accompanied by a teacher who has come mentally unprepared, or are unaccompanied and so turn the visit into a helter-skelter or a stampede.

4.19 The inability of museums to cater for such a heavy educational demand impairs the appeal to other visitors. During weekdays some museums are invaded and captured by school-children, and in turn the rowdiness repels those adults who come in the hope of quietly looking at displays. Indirectly, tertiary students are also repelled. In many western countries the pronounced alienation of tertiary students from general museums may be partly due to their mental recollection of museums as scenes of dreary, noisy school visits.

We are not convinced that we should always build great multi-purpose galleries which try to offer something to people of every age and every level of education. That kind of museum can easily produce something for everybody and nothing much for anybody. The museum is probably the only remaining educational agency which still tries to teach everybody in the same class-room. This is economy—children during the week, families at the weekend—but it can be a false economy.

4.20 Noisy museums which repel serious visitors are often ineffective, educationally, for children. Chaos is usually a sign that teachers have no real plan for the visit and that, above all, the children come unprepared. We commend several useful but expensive ideas:

- The Deutsches Museum in Munich gives many school-teachers a week's free holiday in Munich so that they can master the museum and, therefore, harness it to their own students' interests.
- The Anthropology Museum in Mexico City runs courses for teachers, and only when teachers have their qualifying certificate can they escort students to the museum. Incidentally, no adult could reasonably complain about schoolchildren's behaviour in that museum.
- There are strong gains from those methods (carpets, compulsory bookings for schools, junior museums, or guide-tour earphones) which help to heighten the relevance of a visit and to lower the unnecessary noise.
- Teacher Training Colleges should have links with the nearest museums. To use a museum as a teaching aid for different age-groups requires probably more knowledge and skill than to use films as a teaching aid.
- An experimental junior museum should be set up in a middle or outer suburb of several of the largest Australian cities. Geographically, the concept of the one grand central museum is much more suited to a city of 200,000 than to a city of two million. Educationally, the grand central museum is more appropriate for the set, unchanging school-syllabus of 1900 than the quick-changing and numerous curricula of 1975.

4.21 In higher education, the influence of museums is still regimented by the march of science in the nineteenth century. Museums were then temples of science, and so were



filled with the incense of certainty. Their emphasis on objects increased the likelihood that their message would be emphatic and clear-cut. As museums had so often led the way in classifying specimens in new fields of knowledge, especially in the natural history in Australia, the concept of classification often ruled their decisions on exhibitions and what should be displayed. The educational role of museums is predominantly in areas of certainty. Museums perform a remarkably effective service in teaching people to classify and identify flora, fauna and minerals. They are equally effective in explaining sequential operations in physical and biological sciences. But there is also great scope in the controversial areas of physical, biological and social sciences.

4.22 Museums would enhance their educational value if from time to time they set out displays showing both sides of unresolved issues. Continental Drift, for instance, was more suited to a museum display when the concept was heresy than when, today, the concept is widely favoured. It is doubtful whether any museum in the world displayed the concept between 1912 (when Wegener put forward the idea) and the 1960s when it gained massive support. And yet the major museums have a rare but untapped ability to promote an understanding of many speculative issues. Here they have advantages which no film, book or cassette can quite emulate. Major museums could become more influential in tertiary education if they displayed controversies or issues of uncertainty, but their officials will justifiably point out that such displays cost money.

### **Display**

4.23 Major museums should be in the forefront in disseminating knowledge but in many departments even national museums are as up-to-date as an encyclopaedia of 1920 or 1954. It is difficult to justify the argument that museums must conduct both research and display if the results of the research—or of research elsewhere—do not overflow into the display galleries. In major museums in Europe, North America and Australia outmoded intellectual concepts and overthrown evidence are frequently displayed as dogma. The curators of such departments would not dream of publishing in a book many of the assumptions or pieces of evidence which their own museum's display. And yet their own gallery reaches every week an audience which a readable book would be unlikely to reach in the course of its life.

The out-of-date museum display is easy to find, here and overseas. For example, in any museum of mankind in the Americas, the dominant question is, 'When did the human race first move into America?' Museums themselves have invested heavily in archaeological expeditions which try to answer this question. But a museum's public gallery would probably be the most unreliable place in which to seek a date for the arrival of man in America. Thus, the Smithsonian emphasises in a new archaeological gallery that man arrived in the Americas more than 10,000 Years ago. However, books available in the Smithsonian's own bookshop reveal that, even a decade ago, the coming of man could be safely dated back beyond 20,000 years.

4.24 If the Australian Government is to invest substantially in museums, it should expect high standards and indeed be willing to set standards which sometimes exceed those ruling in major overseas museums. In Australian anthropology, prehistory, social history and economic and other areas of the social sciences, knowledge is quickly overthrown at present. Nor is knowledge static in the physical and biological sciences. In any changing intellectual discipline, a fossilised museum display is harmful as well as slovenly.

In some museums the personal research activities of curators seem to have taken too much precedence over other duties, especially the display galleries. Dedicated research

over a period of twenty years has been accompanied by unchanging, inaccurate display galleries. In effect the present achievements in research in several museums are at the expense of their effectiveness in general education. According to one museum director, a scientist acquires little prestige if he is skilled in the arts of display, but great prestige if his research is impressive.

### **The Need for Market Research**

4.25 It is not easy to measure the effectiveness of museums but attempts at measurement are desirable. At present a museum's ineffectiveness is often misted over by its monopoly position. Each Australian or European museum tends to have a monopoly in its own region: a city rarely possesses more than one art gallery and rarely more than one natural history or technology museum. The monopoly protects museums from visible failure. Even if the gallery or museum is in a dreary phase its attendances can still rise progressively through tourism. In North America and parts of Europe annual attendance figures are widely quoted as the test of a museum's success but these figures are often based on guesswork. Even if they were accurate they would not reveal whether people gained, or what they gained, by visiting the museum. While the U.S.A. is very advanced in market research, the museums there—with one or two exceptions—seem to ignore such research.

Market research is also vital before museums try new methods of display. Significantly, three new science museums, visited by members of this Committee on their overseas inspection, had carried out no research on the effectiveness of their methods. They believed their display methods were far more successful than those of traditional museums. Several senior members of their staff denied that any market research was necessary to vindicate their faith. Commonsense suggested that their faith was sometimes misplaced.

It would be foolish to initiate heavy investment on the display side of Australian museums without a prior study of alternative techniques of display and their effects on varying Australian age groups. It is also vital to attempt to estimate the educational effectiveness of museums compared to the class-room or laboratory teaching of certain concepts or events. If research shows that museums are vital for certain kinds of teaching, certain educational funds should go to smaller specialised museums as well as other forms of school expenditure.

4.26 *We recommend* that an early grant be made to promote market research in the major State museums. The findings would be valuable for those who plan a national museum as well as for the proposed Museums Commission.

### **The Partial Divorce Between Museums and Man**

4.27 White Australians are heir to the cultural traditions of Britain and continental Europe. Within only two centuries the impact of European colonists on the Australian landscape and, in reverse, the colonists' responses to challenges posed by this environment, produced a vibrant new society. So far few of our major museums have attempted to preserve Australia's European heritage and its fascinating local adaptations. The art museums have been much more interested than the comprehensive museums in this heritage. Outside the fine arts and science-technology, the major museums have not studied or displayed much of this European heritage.

There is no major institution which could be termed in any sense, an integrated Museum of Australian History. It is probably that only five institutions across the continent have curators for whom the title 'of history' is appropriate. Instructions in the materials of Australian technological and social history, or in historical and industrial archaeology, are also absent from academic curricula. The universities and their history

departments should accept more blame than the museums for neglecting an important part of Australian history.

4.28 In many countries the officials of major museums agree that they have virtually no contact with university teachers of history or other social sciences and humanities. Even museums with vast collections of historical objects, or skilful re-creations of facets of the past, have little contact with universities and their students. Professional historians write books on a particular topic but shun even an hour's visit to the nearby art gallery or general museum which holds objects which could sharpen their understanding and knowledge. The main exceptions to this divorce are archaeologists and historians of art, both of whom realise the importance of objects for purposes of study. Ultimately, a strong link between Australian social scientists and the major museums is vital for the health of both.

4.29 While the major museums, with certain notable exceptions, have not been strongly interested in the European influences on Australia, they have long been interested in the Aboriginal history. Australia owes a debt to those museum trustees and directors who tried to preserve as many artefacts as possible of the Aboriginals' varied ways of life. If Aboriginal ethnology had not been seen as a branch of the natural sciences, these great collections would not have been gathered by the old State museums. At the same time, the equation of Aboriginals with natural history had unfortunate consequences.

The directors of the early natural history museums in Australia were mostly biologists or geologists. As these museums were launched during the first flush of interest in the idea of biological evolution, they were particularly interested in the early development of man as well as other species. Aboriginals were, therefore, hailed as examples of arrested development, as living exemplars of one of the earliest stages in the evolution of mankind. Their social customs and material culture were deemed an appropriate subject for museums which were fascinated by evolution. This attitude meant, however, that Aboriginals were automatically but erroneously assumed to have been backward in all the material and social facets that constituted civilisation.

The status of Aboriginals in nature and their scientific segregation from modern man were posed in 1927 by Professor Baldwin Spencer, a biologist and museum director who, unlike most colleagues, also worked amongst Aboriginals:

'Australia is the present home and refuge of creatures, often crude and quaint, that have elsewhere passed away and given place to higher forms. This applies equally to the aboriginal as to the platypus and kangaroo. Just as the platypus, laying its eggs and feebly suckling its young reveals a mammal in the making, so does the aboriginal show us, at least in broad outline, what early man must have been like before he learned to read and write, domesticate animals, cultivate crops and use a metal tool. It has been possible to study in Australia human beings that still remain on the culture level of men of the Stone Age.'\*

In the light of this belief Aboriginals were treated as living fossils. Most museums displayed Aboriginal objects, sacred and profane, in taxonomic classification comparable to fossils or fauna until recently when Aboriginal protests forced museums to declassify the Aboriginals. Only recently have they been seen by museums as people rather than fauna.

Not that Australian museums were alone in this attitude to indigenous peoples. British and French museums exemplified it. In Washington, too, the Smithsonian Institute still places all native races, including the American, in the National Museum of Natural History rather than in the adjacent National Museum of History and Technology.

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\*B. Spencer and F. D. Gillen. *The Arunta*. 1927. Vol. 1, p. VII.

4.30 One effect of the divorce of Aboriginals and other nomadic peoples from museums of technology and human history is that the technological triumphs of Aboriginals are either ignored or seen out of perspective. Likewise, the values of their civilisation are, by implication, dismissed as totally irrelevant, or totally inferior, to the values of our civilisation. One of the strongest arguments we offer in Chapter 12 for a new national museum in Australia is the belief that there both the Aboriginal and European histories of Australia can be seen in a wider and fairer perspective.

### **Museums' Changing Functions**

4.31 The functions most usefully served by major museums are always changing. Thus, museum displays of contemporary technology served a stronger need 1875 than in 1975. A century ago, up-to-date museums of technology were seen as a vital means of inspiring and instructing mechanics, artisans, engineers, inventors and as an essential step in the advance of local manufacturing and mining. To a considerable degree the informal training offered by these museums has been succeeded by formal courses in technical colleges and institutes. More important, the museum display, as a method of teaching technology, has been supplemented and even replaced by specialised text books, films and transparencies. The older museums of technology increasingly became museums of the history of technology. And so museums in Australia, and many other countries, came to display the history of technology long before they displayed the history of a variety of other activities which were equally appropriate for museums.

Before the end of the century some functions at present carried out by museums may well be served more effectively by other institutions or by new forms of communication. Likewise, new needs, at present ignored, may be satisfied best by museums. The Australian Museums Commission, which is recommended in Chapter 10, should be alert to trends and developments in education and communication, thereby assisting museums generally to concentrate on those fields of display suited to the peculiar strengths and capacities of museums.

### **Main Recommendations on the Major Museums**

4.32 *We recommend that:*

- As the major museums of Australia now face a conservation crisis on a massive scale, protective measures be adopted as soon as possible to preserve their perishable collections against further deterioration. The protective measures are outlined in Chapter 11. For the precious Aboriginal collections the measures of preservation and restoration are urgent.
- As the major museums in recent decades have been unable to buy collections of national importance which come onto the local sales market, and as the sale of many of those collections to overseas buyers deprives Australia of an important part of its prehistory and history, a national source of funds for emergency acquisitions in history, the sciences and the fine arts is essential. That fund is discussed in detail in Chapter 10.
- As the major museums have, with perhaps only two exceptions, had impressive achievements in research over a long period of time, and as their effectiveness as research institutions is usually essential to their general role in general education, some strengthening of their research function is desirable. We believe that universities and the major museums and art galleries would gain if they were linked more in research and in teaching. Greater mobility of staff between museums and universities is highly desirable, and ultimately the two sets of salary structures should be dovetailed.

- In primary and secondary education, the major museums can offer, and often do offer, such unusual advantages that greater use should be made of museums for formal and informal instruction. Greater use, however, calls for an expansion of museums' display staff and teaching staff and a closer liaison with schools authorities. Experiments in decentralised educational museums are now highly desirable. If the Australian Government cannot afford to provide the funds directly for an expansion of the museums' role in education, the necessary funds should be diverted from the Government's existing vote to Australian schools. The educational efficacy of major museums, both here and overseas, is gravely impaired by out-of-date displays. Too many museum galleries resemble second hand-encyclopaedias. Although a good museum, for certain kinds of teaching, has advantages which no other medium can equal, those advantages can only be used if money and imagination and high standards are applied to displays in museums.
- Market research in the major museums should be initiated as soon as possible in order to test the effectiveness of various forms and techniques of display for Australian audiences.
- In view of the huge sums of money spent annually by Federal and State governments on class-room education, on libraries and books, on museums, on educational films and television, on many kinds of laboratories, and on other forms of instruction and communication, it is vital that the particular merits and defects of each form of communication should be closely studied so that each can be used in the most appropriate ways. The peculiar strengths and weaknesses of museums call urgently for study and for effective utilisation. One function of the proposed Australian Museums Commission, discussed in Chapter 10, should be to study educational fields and techniques where museum displays are most effective.
- In reporting on what, in our view, are the main deficiencies of the major State museums, we do not wish to denigrate the State governments' performance in order to praise that of the Australian Government. Generally, the many State museums compare more than favourably with the few Federal museums, though the latter have the advantage of relative youth. The wide publicity given recently to the generous expenditure by the Australian Government on the rising building for the National Gallery and on the Gallery's collections of fine art should not be allowed to obscure the fact that in recent years the Victorian Government has financed and completed one of the world's most impressive art museums and that the Western Australian Government, for example, has financed impressive museum buildings in Perth and Fremantle. In recommending that the Australian Government should offer financial help to the major State museums, we do not recommend that the State governments should thereby retreat as backers of museums.

# 5 Local and Provincial Museums

5.1 How many museums exist in Australia today? Nobody knows. There is no register of museums and no statistician has tried to list or count the museums operating in Australia today. We estimate that more than 1,000 Institutions call themselves museums, even if only part of their premises are given over to museum activities.

This Chapter discusses a variety of local museums: the provincial and suburban art galleries, of which several hold line collections that are envied by the art museums in the capital cities; the string of small local institutions which provide nearly ninety per cent of the self-styled museums; the large 'living history' or open-air folk museums, and, finally, the privately owned museums.

## Provincial and Suburban Galleries

5.2 While each capital city has a government-financed museum of art, scores of other art galleries exist in the suburbs and provincial cities and towns. Most of the smaller art museums depend on municipal finance with supplementary support from State governments. Their collections come mainly from private gifts. Their annual budget is usually tiny, and incapable of maintaining a major collection.

Much has been written in praise of some of the smaller art museums. Even in 1933, when S. F. Markham and H. C. Richards wrote a now-forgotten *Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of Australia*,\* several small-town galleries in Australia were impressive by international standards. Markham and Richards, inspecting the new art gallery in the Victorian town of Castlemaine, concluded that, with one exception, 'this small town had probably a better art gallery than any comparable town in the British Empire'. Today many Australian towns with only ten or twenty thousand people, support public art collections.

5.3 If it is decided to follow this Committee's formula and to designate a small number of Australian museums as major museums, several of the provincial art galleries would almost certainly qualify. Some might be ranked well above several State galleries in the capital cities. The Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, for example, holds a collection of Australian art which is surpassed by only three or four other collections in Australia. It is also described by some art specialists as the only art gallery in Australia to have had a succession of 'three excellent directors'. The Newcastle City Art Gallery is also distinguished by outstanding staff and courageous municipal support though its audiences, in proportion to the region's population, are small. Understandably, the audiences are small in many of the provincial art galleries.

Victoria is recognised as the leader in provincial art galleries. Three or four of the provincial art collections in Victoria would be regarded as respectable even if held by a larger, older and wealthier provincial city of England. The provincial galleries in Victoria belong to the Regional Galleries Association of Victoria, which was formed in 1957 and flourishes with generous and enlightened support from the State Government. We are informed that the Victorian Government does not interfere in the policies of the provincial galleries, nor control their staff. Its main annual contribution is a grant (at present \$189,000) which funds special projects and enables the Regional Galleries Association to employ a permanent executive officer. This regional approach has clear advantages.

5.4 We *recommend* that any federal aid to provincial museums, whether art or other museums, should be channelled when possible through regional networks and associations.

5.5 Most of the art galleries in provincial cities and towns cannot afford to employ qualified directors. In the absence of qualified staff or able advisers, artistic decisions are

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\*Report published by The Museums Association, London, 1933, p. 63.

sometimes taken by municipal officers. Inevitably decisions of an artistic nature will also be influenced by the trustees, many of whom freely admit that they are much more experienced in the selection of a prize ram than of a prize sculpture. The inability of provincial galleries to find ready advice on acquisitions, display and conservation and other vital issues is one of the main arguments for encouraging regional associations.

5.6 At the request of this Committee twelve local or special art museums were selected and inspected by Mrs Nancy Underhill, Senior Lecturer in Fine Arts at the University of Queensland, and a council member of both the Art Association and the Art Galleries Association. The twelve ranged from Rockhampton (Queensland) to Hamilton (Victoria); they included university as well as municipal galleries. Mrs Underhill spoke with staff and trustees, and gathered information about the museums' aims, strengths and weaknesses. 'Perhaps the most telling result of the whole exercise', she concluded, 'was that only two galleries could quickly obtain the information' which her questionnaire had sought. Documentation of many of the collections was sparse. Several collections lacked even a simple catalogue, and several of the curators seemed to have a disappointing knowledge of what their collections contained. In two of the twelve galleries, moreover, there was faint sign of any desire to improve. On the other hand, five of the twelve had well-qualified staff who were thoroughly professional in their work, though the storage and display areas for their collections were cramped and unsatisfactory.

Ballarat, with collections and staff of high calibre, gives perhaps the gravest cause for concern. The building is old and inadequate, the staff is overworked, the main storage areas are unsatisfactory and the storehouse-loft is dangerous. There is no acquisitions fund and no catalogue. As Ballarat has only 60,000 people, as the municipal funds spent on the gallery are small, and as Ballarat alone cannot hope to monopolise the State Government's generous funding of the provincial galleries, the only remaining source of help is the Australian Government.

The local communities which support these art galleries often believe that the galleries have adequate funds and that every care is taken of valuable objects. The boards of trustees are often the first to deny that their galleries have deficiencies. Art is glamorous, and the glamour obscures the defects. Mrs Underhill noted the following defects in the collections which she visited.

- one gallery stores at least 50 objects, including Rembrandt etchings, in a damp loft which is entered by a hazardous ladder;
- one famous collection is hung in corridors, in alphabetical order;
- some respected collections have no staff and no insurance cover;
- one caretaker hangs rare etchings with the aid of sticky-tape and drawing pins;
- one gallery built in 1974 has no storage area for that part of the collection which cannot be crowded into the display galleries;
- for one fine collection there is not even a handlist, let alone a catalogue;
- several elected officials insisted that their collections were in fine condition, oblivious of the fact that dead flies were trapped behind the glass of two pictures and that fresh mould was visible on others.

5.7 What do the provincial galleries need first? It is usual to clamour simply for more money but the quick spending of money may aggravate many difficulties. The first priority is staff, trained staff who are capable of diagnosing needs, of spending money for the maximum benefit and of caring adequately for the existing collections. Mrs Underhill concludes: 'The prime task that the Federal Government and all other bodies must set themselves is the provision of enlightened staff.'

It is in the field of conservation that trained staff are most urgently required. Conservation and training are discussed in Chapter 11.

### **Local Museums**

5.8 In the last fifteen years hundreds of small museums have been founded as a result of the quickening interest in Australian history. This has been primarily a grass-roots movement, one of the most unexpected and vigorous cultural movements in Australia in this century. Its strength lies outside the capital cities. Indeed, the birth of so many museums in the provinces—and their ability to attract hundreds of thousands of visitors annually from the capital cities—must be interpreted partly as a sign of the straight-jacket imposed on several of the major State museums by scarcity of money and by cautious Trustees.

Museums seem likely to cater increasingly for this curiosity about Australian history and especially about everyday life in the past. Much of this curiosity centres on old objects (farm machinery, camp ovens, sarsparilla bottles, cigarette papers, etc.), and here it is still possible to collect many such objects. In many facets of social history, museums can certainly play an exciting role. Folk museums or folk departments tend to be emphasised more in Scandinavia than in other parts of Europe where the history of power—royal or ecclesiastical or military—and its trappings permeates a large proportion of the best-known museums. The nature of Australian history and its relatively long democratic tradition suggests that folk museums might eventually occupy a role as important as that occupied by natural history in our museums in the nineteenth century.

5.9 In Australia in the last decade the provincial and local museums have also increasingly served tourism. The role of these museums in tourism comes partly from the rapid increase of travel within Australia; it also reflects the relative dearth in rural Australia of cathedrals, old country houses, castles, battlefields, romantic ruins and other historic sites. Accordingly, in many Australian districts a brave raggle-taggle little museum can dominate tourism because of lack of serious competitors. In one sense it is a tourist-minding centre; the tour operator or bus-driver can unload his passengers at the museum door and relax for an hour. And yet these small-town museums stimulate or satisfy tourists' curiosity about history. They appeal to many tourists for whom history usually is an unexciting word and for whom national museums, being so large, are numbing. The growth in the number of local museums in Australia has not reached the American average of one new museum every day, but the growth here—in proportion to population—is more rapid than in the U.S.A.

5.10 The Committee visited many local museums and also engaged five private experts to report on local museums in various regions:

*Darling Downs area, Queensland*

Dr D. J. Robinson (Curator of History and Technology, Queensland Museum)

*Adelaide Hills, Murray Bridge and the Barossa Valley area of South Australia*

Mr R. N. Gibbs (Wattle Park Teachers' Centre, South Australia)

*Southern half of South Australia and western Victoria*

Dr M. Richmond (Assistant Archivist, University of Melbourne)

*Albury and Wodonga area, New South Wales and Victoria*

Mr F. Strahan (Archivist, University of Melbourne)

*Bathurst and Orange area, New South Wales*

Miss A. Bickford (University of Sydney)

While the reports make a variety of comments on more than a hundred individual museums in the countryside of four States, they are consistent in their comments on the



difficulties faced by the enthusiasts in the local museums. Their buildings are usually inadequate; they mostly lack professional staff and access to professional advice. The reports note the deterioration of many exhibits within these museums; the sameness of displays even where the opportunity for a distinctive theme is present; the scarcity of storage space; the absence of conservation facilities; the weak precautions against fire and dust and burglary and damp; and the unsatisfactory documentation of items in the collections.

### **Authentication**

5.11 Perhaps the greatest weaknesses of the hundreds of local museums is their frequent inability to authenticate or document the historical items in their collections. Their collections often lack an inventory or catalogue, so increasing the hazard of loss and jeopardising research. In many museums the only information about exhibits is on the display label, and is sparse. If the handwritten label should disappear or be mistakenly placed alongside another object, much of the knowledge about the historical exhibit will have vanished and will possibly not be accurately replaced. The information on the labels is usually supplied by the donor and therefore myth and confusion sometimes appears on the label. In a large east-coast region not one of the museums 'had access to the type, of library needed for identification and dating of cultural material'. Generally, any item manufactured locally is well-documented, but many items made in other towns or other lands in the nineteenth century are inaccurately documented and labelled. Misleading documentation obviously impairs historical research, and it might have been better if some items—faith fully preserved but accompanied by spurious information—had not been preserved.

A few local museums are meticulous and enterprising in their attention to the origins and subsequent history of the items in their care. Thus, the manager of the agricultural museum at Warracknabeal writes to many parts of the world for information that could ensure the genuine restoration of farm machinery. More often the source of the information is a mixture of memory and hearsay. As one museum caretaker confided, 'if the oldest identity knows what it is, then we're o.k.'. In the Land of O.K., the old identity is king.

Here is a sample of vague or misleading labels from a typical country museum:

- 'Old bell from the railway station'
- A little display of minerals with no labels
- 'Aboriginal crushing stone' (no place or date)
- 'Native weapon'
- Haig and Haig 'Scotch Whiskey Bottle of 1679'

Of the ancient whiskey bottle one consultant commented: 'If that bottle is 1679, then I'm 1010.'

5.12 It is not the fault of the local museum officials that accurate information is elusive. It is more, perhaps, the result of the backwardness of Australian governments, major museums and the history departments at universities in recognising the need to acquire and disseminate knowledge about the artefacts of Australian social and economic history.

5.13 Nobody would dream of setting up a natural history museum with knowledge as limited as that available to the brave promoters of some of the new Australian folk museums. One early task of the new Museums Commission should be to consider sponsoring a training program, perhaps along the lines of Cooperstown (New York State) where one post-graduate course is conducted in American social, folk, and technological history and another course mixes history and conservation and museology.

Both courses result in an M.A.: upper-level bachelor's degrees are a prerequisite for the courses.

Even more important, in the short-term, than training courses in museology, are field surveys of many categories of objects already held in museums. Knowledge of objects in Australian social and economic history is urgently required. The staff of historical museums cannot make valid judgements about acquisition, preservation, display and storage unless they have access to knowledge of historical objects, but the knowledge cannot be obtained in a course in any tertiary institute in Australia. A prerequisite for any such course is a survey of objects in existing museums. It is almost as if, in human history as in natural history, the reference standards have to be selected, described and classified, using a common terminology. Whether the article is a stock-whip or a beer-bottle of the colonial era, it has to be carefully studied and described before the normal and the abnormal bottle, and the local variations or innovations, can be understood. Without that understanding a museum display has no assurance of historical relevance and accuracy.

5.14 Historical archaeology should prove a vital aid in providing firm evidence about everyday historical objects of the colonial era. The investigation of a ship wrecked on the Tasmanian coast in 1842 can provide, through the remains of the cargo or crew's possessions, dates and details about a variety of items ranging from crockery to lamps. An excavation, by trained industrial archaeologists, of part of the site of a prison of the 1830s or a flour mill of the 1860s can provide valuable evidence for the specialists in historical objects. For this reason the Australian Government should direct any financial support for historical archaeology primarily through the proposed Australian Museums Commission.

5.15 In land and especially marine archaeology, the help of the Australian Government is vital, and is discussed in detail in Chapter 14. The support of State governments, especially, in legislating to protect sites and relies in historical archaeology, is also vital.

### **The Advantages of Regional Networks**

5.16 The local museums have a variety of owners and sources of finance. Of the 23 museums visited in the Albury-Wodonga district, eight are owned privately, six are owned by local government authorities, four are owned by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), two are owned by a combination of historical societies and local government, and one belongs to the Government of New South Wales. All but two museums in this region have been opened since 1960. With such a variety of sponsors, financiers and supporters, these museums would not fit easily into any national plan of assistance.

Apart from providing specialised knowledge and advice, the Australian Government cannot conceivably give financial support to more than a tiny selection of the provincial, folk and local museums. In selecting such museums, preference obviously should be given to museums holding collections of importance.

5.17 There will be substantial advantages, however, in the Australian Government joining willing State governments in fostering the formation of regional networks of museums. The concept of regional associations of museums has been applied tentatively in England; it would be even more useful in Australia where a regional approach could eliminate some of the heavy costs of distance. If New South Wales, for instance, could be divided into seven or eight regions, and if the museums within each region could become members of a regional association or network, some government aid could be funnelled effectively through that association.

5.18 If the continent were divided into no more than forty regional associations of museums, a professional curator or full-time consultant could be provided at government expense for each association. Such an appointment would seem the simplest and cheapest way of giving small museums the asset which few at present possess: sound professional advice. The formation of regional associations would have other advantages. The associations could disseminate conservation procedures. They could use more effectively the knowledge and skills present in every region but often tapped by only one local museum. If a small town has a capable amateur restorer of leatherwork or an expert on the history of farming machinery, his advice should, if possible, be harnessed by the whole region.

A regional association would not only become a source of scarce skills and knowledge but a forum for rationalising the museum activities within a region. Undoubtedly, many small museums in country towns will decay in the next twenty years; and a regional association could assist in amalgamating redundant museums or caring for collections which would otherwise fall into complete neglect. A regional association might also, in favourable conditions, concentrate most of their collections in three or four strong special museums which would provide entertainment and education of a quality that the present clusters of small museums can rarely provide. Since regions are strongly interested in museums as a magnet for tourism, they should be encouraged to weigh carefully the advantages of a co-operative approach.

5.19 While this Committee sees defects in so many of the small country museums, it recognises their remarkable achievements in recent years. It hopes that new government policies do not defuse the local enthusiasm which launched these museums and do not impair the willingness of people to donate collections to these museums. Undoubtedly, the country museums fulfil an important need in the local community. They draw people together; they give scope to the old and to the imaginative; they are a bay window of local pride, especially when town or district is declining in population. The small-town museum is rarely a supplicant for government funds and is usually a focus for those who humbly and generously give their best to keep the museum alive. Accordingly, any bureaucratic plan to centralise local museums into a grand regional museum is likely to harm the communities which museums are intended primarily to serve.

5.20 Government policy, we *recommend*, should encourage local museums to concentrate on their own history. At present the regional differences are not adequately reflected in regional and local museums. One consultant, commenting on ten country museums in South Australia, noted the sameness of their folk displays: 'Far too little attempt is made to concentrate on that which is unique to the town and district. Perhaps this comes partly from a failure to realise exactly what is unique and a failure to work in with other museums. In each town it was possible to find a local subject that should have been strongly developed in the museum.' Regional networks or associations could encourage local museums to specialise and could help arrange inter-town loans or exchanges of those objects appropriate for specialised museums.

5.21 Irrespective of whether regular and formal aid is to be given to local museums, certain measures should be taken as soon as possible. Local museums should be encouraged to vest their building and collections in a local government authority. (Already the complete contents of several local museums have been auctioned in capital cities, auctions which could not have occurred if collections were vested in municipal authorities.) Many towns which employ a salaried librarian could usefully assign her services, for a few hours each week, to the task of assisting the cataloguing or indexing of local museum collections. As most of the local museums own books, business

records, diaries, and old newspapers, these materials provide an additional reason for liaison between museums and libraries in many towns. In the interests of conservation it is also vital that museum officials should not use rare machinery or vehicles for demonstrations. Only duplicate or model machines or vehicles should be set to work, for the first function of a museum should be preservation.

### **A Register of Rarities**

5.22 Many items of national significance are displayed or hidden away in these provincial and local museums. In Ballarat, for instance, a skilfully conducted private museum holds a rare collection of colonial military uniforms. In Toowoomba, in a museum owned by a transport company, stands a horse-drawn coach which was used on the last route conducted by Cobb & Co. in Australia. Not far away, in the small museum at Chinchilla, is the first ticket issued by Qantas; it marks a flight between Longreach and Cloncurry in 1922. In western Victoria the agricultural machinery museum at Warracknabeal holds an impressive collection of machinery—much of it invented by Australians—which was important in opening the dry wheatlands. Louis Buvelot's painting, 'Waterpool at Coleraine', which a quarter of a century ago was one of the two or three popular classics of Australian art, is to be found not in a major gallery but in the, small art gallery at Warrnambool. Ultimately, a national register should be made of significant items and collections—and their state of preservation—in the provincial and local museums.

We *recommend* that the register be one of the functions of the proposed Australian Museums Commission. The register of museum exhibits should be linked with the Heritage Commission's register of sites.

### **'Living History' or Open-Air Museums**

5.23 Four of the most popular folk museums in Australia are large open-air museums which set out to re-create segments of Australia's past. Three—Swan Hill, Ballarat's Sovereign Hill and the Lachlan Vintage Village at Forbes—have been initiated and strongly backed by inland communities. The fourth—Old Sydney Town, near Gosford—is more the result of an imaginative venture by business interests than a reflection of a town's pride in its history. Moreover, in historical accuracy, Old Sydney Town is probably the least successful of the four. Old Sydney Town has also been the largest beneficiary of direct and indirect federal support. In providing this money and in promising more, the Australian Government appears to have made its decisions without seeking sufficient independent advice on the historical authenticity of Old Sydney Town. It is said that the Australian Government's investment—equity and loans—in Old Sydney Town by 1978 is likely to exceed \$4 million, but we have no exact information on the sums involved.

Swan Hill's open-air museum is on the banks of the Murray River and Ballarat's recreation of the 1850's gold-rush stands on a hillside once stripped by gold-diggers and then penetrated by company workings. These two museums were pioneer ventures—and cultural landmarks—in Australia. Their managing committees of the 1960s were courageous. They faced research problems which are now more easily tackled by their imitators. Measured by historical authenticity or by the museum standards of the great Scandinavian folk museums, they made mistakes, some of which they have remedied. Their enterprise has smoothed the way for Old Sydney Town and the Lachlan Vintage Village, which were officially opened in 1975. These two new ventures are grandiose and therefore will be a much more persistent pleader for government aid than the pioneering ventures.

5.24 The Committee engaged outside consultants to report on the four large open-air museums. On Ballarat and Swan Hill, reports were commissioned from Dr F. J. Allen

and Mr R. H. Reece of the Australian National University. Of Ballarat's Sovereign Hill, they reported that 'the management is seriously concerned with historical accuracy', and that the depictions of the gold-mining techniques of the 1850s and some of the shop displays are strikingly effective. While the Ballarat venture is more a reconstruction, Swan Hill depends more on the relocation of some of the district's old buildings on a new river-side site. Swan Hill is more of a miscellany, though the unsystematic approach and the original buildings provide their own rewards: 'There is a certain atmosphere, probably not unlike that of a Victorian country town of, say, 1914.' Unfortunately segments of the display in each museum are disasters in historical terms: the joss-house at Ballarat and the Aboriginal camp at Swan Hill. Moreover, authentic objects in both museums are not always documented carefully and conserved.

These museums might perturb orthodox history and museum curators but they 'do bring an awareness of the past to many thousands who would never enter a conventional museum or read an historical book'. In the year ending 30 June 1975, nearly 500,000 visitors paid to see Sovereign Hill and nearly 200,000 paid to see Swan Hill. If, only fifteen years ago, a commentator had predicted that such a huge number of people would gladly pay high admission fees to look at museums outside the capital cities, he would have been treated as insane.

5.25 On Lachlan Vintage Village and Old Sydney Town the Committee commissioned reports from Arm Bickford, a professional museologist and one of Australia's few specialists in the artefacts of colonial history. As her reports cover the more recent and ambitious ventures, and as these ventures at present are pressing the Australian Government heavily for sums of a magnitude which could transform several old and famous Australian museums, extracts from her report are given below:

'Both the Lachlan and Old Sydney claim to be more than simply open-air entertainments or amusement parks. They claim to have a higher purpose—to present authentic re-creations—of our Colonial past. It is on this claim that they must be judged and where they fall down. A visit to them is an interesting and entertaining way to spend a day. It is also educational. One can watch the blacksmith methodically going about his work shaping red hot iron with his traditional tools, talk to the carpenter about sources of Australian cedar, or to the bullocky about training his bullocks. But it is always clear that these are workers in the present dressed in new clothes which look like 19th century clothes, and using tools similar to those used by our forebears. There is no sense that I or other "visitors really experience the true felling, and life-style known to Australia's earliest pioneers".'

'This is brought out most clearly at the Old Sydney Town floggings where small children laughed and members of the public volunteered to be flogged. The reality of convict floggings is horrific to read, and no one would have volunteered for the ordeal in 1810. Again at Old Sydney Town people were playing at flogging each other outside the goal, while others were photographed locked in the stocks.'

The authenticity of the buildings and furnishings, reports Ann Bickford, also falls below expectations:

'Our information about building construction and household furniture is much more detailed for the second half of the 19th century (Lachlan Village period) than for Sydney in 1810, when we have little information apart from the contemporary engravings. Nevertheless, neither village is historically accurate. In the 19th century much of the housing and furniture was built of cabbage tree palm', which is now impossible to procure, so substitute timber has been used. Where wooden dowels or wire would have been used to secure timbers together, nails have been sometimes used instead, and these are modern rather than hand-forged. All timber would have been pit-sawn, split, or adzed, but on many buildings circular saw marks are visible. The public are influenced by the repeated claims for authenticity and I noticed people looking at the details to see

just how houses were built in the past—and what they are learning is distorted.

‘It seems to me that, if traditional materials are impossible to procure and substitutes are used, the public should be Informed of this fact. In the same way, if it is riot clear which materials were used in the construction of a certain house, Information on alternatives should be given, and an explanation as to why the material used was chosen. In this way the viewer would be involved in thinking about the process of reconstruction, and in learning, rather than being presented with a fait accompli.

The information available about artefacts is as limited. The problem is more acute for Old Sydney Town as there is little available from the first decades of the 19th century to give an idea of what settlers and convicts would have used. Most of the artefacts I saw in the houses at Old Sydney Town, e.g. pots, irons, kettles, pottery, etc, in William and Mary Bryant’s house and Rosetta Stabler’s Eating House were of the second half of the 14th century or later. The whip used in the floggings is a stockwhip rather than the authentic cat-o-nine-tails.

‘The general public would not know these things, so perhaps one could say it doesn’t matter, but surely anyone could, see that the double-ended, whaleboat-shaped, white fibreglass boat with strips of bark stuck on it, slung from the roof of Bennelong’s hut is not an historically accurate representation of an Aboriginal bark canoe. Again, only an authority would know that the Governor’s Portable House made of prefabricated timber at Old Sydney Town is a flaw in scholarship, and that in fact at that date the house would have been made of canvas. Nevertheless, evidence like this Rives the lie to the oft-used justifications for the special significance of these villages—that they are “authentic recreations”—“living replicas” of vanished ways of life. “We believe that this adhesion to authenticity is the lifeblood of the Lachlan Vintage Village”, etc.

‘...The Lachlan Village is not open to such severe criticism as it covers a period from 1860 to 1900 for which we have more evidence. Nevertheless, many of the artefacts on display, in the shop of about 1861 for instance, were turn of the century or later. The houses were far more sparsely furnished than would have been the case, and some of the farm equipment was made in the 20th century.’

Miss Bickford noted that a day at these living-history museums was intensely enjoyable. As a museologist, however, she thought the museums were too ambitious, their plans were ‘bizarre’:

‘There is a phenomenon often referred to in the museological literature called museum fatigue. The visitor after a few hours gets hungry, tired, his feet hurt, he can’t take in much more. The initiators of these programs betray their lack of awareness of this effect, and museological literature in general, by expecting the visitor to take in, in one day, or even a few days, all that is going on in these “vast activated museums”. I spent one day at each place and was unable to inspect everything, yet only 31 of the 86 buildings at Old Sydney Town have been completed, and only Stage I of the 9-Stage plan at the Lachlan. I can see no good reason for fulfilling these plans.’

5.26 ‘Living history’ museums can have legitimate claims for support from the proposed Australian Museums Commission. But no support can be justified if they do not conform in essence to the authenticity expected of museums. There is no reason, however, why they cannot be effective both as fun parlours and as living history.

When government priorities on museum expenditure are eventually decided, these ‘living history’ museums cannot possibly receive the high priority which Old Sydney Town, for instance, is at present demanding and apparently receiving. The nation’s valuable collections should have first claim, and probably will always have first claim on funds.

### **Privately Owned Museums**

5.27 Several hundred privately owned museums are open to the public in Australia. Most of these museums are in country towns or on the main highways. A few hold items

of national importance, and indeed might be found to hold a large number of important items if only authentication were possible.

5.28 We *recommend* that no government funds be granted to privately owned museums. Occasionally, however, a government loan could be justified if the collections were of great importance. If any government loan is provided, one clause should stipulate that the Australian Government have first option to buy the collection at fair valuation should the museum-owner decide to sell out.

The proposed Australian Museums Commission should, in its enabling legislation, be empowered to declare that certain items in private hands are objects of 'national importance' and are not to be exported without permission. These objects should be conserved under suitable conditions while in private hands. If they are not adequately conserved the proposed Commission should preferably acquire them at a price to be fixed by independent valuation. The Public Records Office Act (Victoria 1973) sets out a method of 'declaration' and 'valuation' which merits careful study.

### **Main Recommendations on the Local Museums**

5.29 We *recommend*:

- As the rise of the local and living-history museums forms one of the most vigorous cultural movement's in Australia in recent times, the movement receive support, and guidance.
- Individual local museums be eligible to apply for assistance to the proposed Australian Museums Commission. Several will probably achieve the grading of major or associated museums, but most of the local museums can expect support only through a regional arrangement.
- The formation of regional associations or networks of local museums would provide a useful and economical channel, through which federal aid and technical help could be provided, and each voluntary network be provided with a professional curator or full-time consultant at the Australian Government's expense. Each network should also operate an advisory service in conservation.
- As the main defect of most local museums is lack of that historical knowledge whereby they can date, describe and classify their exhibits, and as there is not yet an adequate source of such knowledge in Australia, the proposed Australian Museums Commission promote training programs or a post-graduate course in those facets of Australian folk, technological, economic and. social history which are most relevant to museums. Field surveys of objects already collected in museums are also urgently needed in order to harness and index the present knowledge.
- The items and collections already held in the local museums are collectively of such variety and such importance that they could form together ten or more major museums. A register of the more important items be compiled as an aid to the adequate preservation of these items, the arranging of exchanges and loans, and the informing of tourists and research students.
- Any federal grants or loans to local or living history museums be given only on condition that qualified historians, archaeologists, curators and other specialists are engaged as advisers.
- Museums which are primarily fun parlours be forced to justify themselves by the standards of the entertainment industry. If they do not entertain enough people to earn the revenue to pay their expenses, they should be allowed to die. Any further government support to this kind of museum be made only after careful assessment of their prospects of becoming self-supporting, and of their authenticity as history displays.

- Privately owned museums riot be eligible for direct grants from a government but, on occasions, a government loan could be justified if the private museums' collections were of great importance.
- Multiple funding of museums by various departments and authorities of the Australian Government either cease or be closely screened by a co-ordinating committee.



# 6 University Museums

6.1 Many Australian universities own museums. Several sent submissions which outlined the importance of their collections, the deficiencies of the buildings which held them, and the financial gaps.

The museums in universities are surprisingly diverse. The University of Melbourne illustrates the wide range of collections found in older Australian universities. Thus, the Percy Grainger Museum, founded by the Australian-born composer, holds an internationally important collection of musical scores, musical instruments, letters written by Delius and Grieg and other famous composers, and musical miscellanea. The University also has collections of Australian art—especially the Australian impressionists and Norman Lindsay—in two galleries which are open to students and the general public. In the main library is the valuable Poynton collection of prints, so far uncatalogued. Two priceless collections of Aboriginal artefacts and art are held by the University, and one of these collections (made by the late Professor Donald Thomson) has recently been loaned to the National Museum of Victoria. In the University's medical school is a small museum of medical history: though Australian scientists have made many innovations in medicine, the history of medicine has no interest for most of the major Australian museums. The University's archives hold possibly the most important collection of business-history correspondence in the British Commonwealth; and the reputation of the archives has drawn to its custody a variety of confidential records ranging from those of political parties to those of major inventors, making it a 'national collection' in the widest sense of the word. In addition, geology and various other departments of the University hold teaching or research collections of importance.

6.2 If there were space for an exhaustive survey of the museums and collections in all Australian universities and the older schools of mines and tertiary institutes, the list would be impressive. Perhaps anthropology and geology are the intellectual arenas where collections in universities are most common. Both are fields which offered distinct advantages to Australian collectors and researchers: moreover, the objects lend themselves to display. Indeed, one of the most stimulating and imaginative museums visited in Australia by the Committee was the new anthropology museum at the University of Queensland.

## **Origins of University Museums**

6.3 The museums in Australian universities arose less from a conscious policy by governing bodies than from the enthusiasms of individual professors. Many of the collections were personal research collections which remained with the university after the founder retired or died. Some collections were bequests from graduates and rich friends of the universities. Certain collections, especially in geology, sprang partly from the necessity to acquaint undergraduates with objects. Geography also influenced university museums. As the South Australian Museum was adjacent to the University of Adelaide, and as the National Museum of Victoria was actually in the grounds of the University of Melbourne and directed by university professors for four decades, the collections held by the State museums and the university departments in Adelaide and Melbourne tended to dovetail with each other. Duplication was usually avoided.

In Sydney, in contrast, the long distance separating the Australian Museum and the University of Sydney—and a personal dispute in the late nineteenth century—encouraged the early development of separate museums within the University. There, two valuable collections have long been open to the general public: the Nicholson Museum of Antiquities; and the Macleay Museum of Natural History.

## **The Care of Collections**

6.4 The care of collections in many universities has waxed and waned, varying

according to the enthusiasm and research interests of the head of the relevant department and the changing financial mood of the university itself. Some collections deteriorated physically during periods of neglect. Parts of certain collections were borrowed and not returned, or were thrown out by intention or accident, or were divorced permanently from their vital label or catalogue number. The Macleay collection was one of the world's greatest private collections of zoological material when it was bequeathed in 1888 to the University of Sydney, but in 1917 the University took over the museum building for other purposes and the collection ceased to be adequately cared for, and many of the rare specimens—including holotypes—vanished or slowly decayed. As the running of a museum or the keeping of collections is usually seen within universities as less important than teaching and current research, the neglect is not unexpected. In the last decade, however, articulate groups within universities have often been the leaders of the reviving interest in preserving landscapes, landmarks, species and artefacts of Australia's earlier history. Many old collections within universities have gained from this new interest and new collections have been commenced.

6.5 The paying of federal grants to universities since 1951 had enabled some universities, when they so chose, to care for their collections more effectively or to enlarge them and even to rehouse them. No figures are available on the federal funds which have gone directly or indirectly into university museums and collections since the inauguration of direct grants by the Australian Government in 1951. Undoubtedly, several of the finest collections in the universities would not have existed and others would have been poorer but for the injection of money by the Australian Government in the last two decades. If these additional funds had not reached universities, their particular collections of national importance might have been in even worse condition today than those in the more-starved sections of the major State museums.

As a result of federal aid, the new anthropology museum at the University of Queensland possesses what older museums in other universities lack. The building is air-conditioned. Elaborate precautions have been taken to avoid the damaging ultra-violet light: the display cases are lit by special fluorescent tubes, the many outer windows of the building are double-glazed; and the storage and exhibition areas have no windows. The museum has a fairly sophisticated system for extinguishing fires, and even the stores are guarded against burglars by ultrasonic alarms. As an additional safeguard—and an aid to research—the new catalogue includes photographs of artefacts. The collection of about 17,000 objects—mainly from Australia and Papua New Guinea—was valued in 1973 at \$2,000,000. Even more valuable collections, however, are held in several other Australian universities without the benefit of air-conditioning, adequate alarms against fire and burglary, protection against ultra-violet light, and without even the benefit of adequate cataloguing.

6.6 The Australian Universities Commission (AUC) is now the main source of finance for museums and collections within universities. In its latest report (June 1975) the AUC reveals some reluctance to finance those areas and activities which fall more within the sphere of other agencies of the Australian Government. Thus, in response to the request for a building grant for a new archives at the University of Melbourne, the AUC suggested that the major archival collections at Melbourne and at the Australian National University should perhaps be assisted, not by the AUC but, rather, by the proposed new Australian archives authority. This is a suggestion, not a direction. It would seem consistent with this suggestion if most research collections and museums in Universities were also to be supported primarily by the proposed Australian Museums Commission. Certainly the respective areas of responsibility call for careful defining.

## **Recommendations on Museums in Universities**

### *6.7 We recommend*

- If the Australian Universities Commission agrees that museums have a vital educational role universities, we recommend that it take appropriate steps to ensure that the educationally valuable collections within universities have adequate buildings and storage space and trained curators.
- If the Australian Universities Commission, however, decides that most or all university museums fall outside its province, we recommend that the proposed Australian Museums Commission accept responsibility for safeguarding those collections which are deemed to be nationally important.
- Irrespective of which federal commission or agency concerns itself with university museums, the universities themselves should review carefully the advantages and disadvantages of holding collections and administering museums. We recommend that, if universities cannot care adequately for important collections, and cannot make them reasonably accessible to scholars, they—in the interests of scholarship—transfer them to a major museum. The recent transfer of the Donald Thomson collection of Aboriginal material from the University of Melbourne to the National Museum of Victoria, on long-term loan, is a useful precedent. A welcome precedent in the natural sciences is the transfer of the valuable holotypes from the Macleay Museum at the University of Sydney to major collections in Sydney and Canberra.
- If universities should decide to continue to maintain certain museums, irrespective of whether they receive support from the Australian Universities Commission, those museums should be eligible to apply to the proposed Australian Museums Commission for consulting and technical services. We recommend that the proposed Australian Museums Commission, in determining whether to support such museums, take into account the same factors applicable to requests from provincial and local museums: the audiences they serve; the importance and condition of their collections, the availability of alternative museums in the same district; and other relevant criteria.

# 7 The Parameters of the Inquiry— What is a ‘National’ Collection?

7.1 The Committee’s terms of reference make mention of ‘national collections’, ‘national material’ and ‘collections of national significance’. It was necessary for us to define these expressions in order to build a framework for our inquiries and report. We then had to decide whether certain issues and activities were marginal to or outside our field.

## **National Collections**

7.2 Any collections of merit which is funded predominantly from public funds—federal or State or municipal—should be regarded as a national collection. We put this view dispassionately and not to be provocative. The relevance of an important collection—and the institution which maintains it—is not confined to any one State. Regardless of questions of legal ownership or official responsibility, every important collection in a public museum serves education and scholarship far beyond the enclosing state or municipal boundaries.

## **Collections of National Significance**

7.3 Our terms of reference also require us to advise ‘on the scope, objectives and functions of an Australia Institute to develop, co-ordinate and foster collections, research and displays of historical, cultural and scientific material of ‘national significance’. Clearly a collection of ‘national significance’ is not always a ‘national’ or publicly owned collection. Much material of national significance is also owned privately. Many of these great private collections, however, may eventually find their way to public institutions, particularly if governments set aside greater resources to enable public museums to buy private collections.

While many private collections, being collections of ‘national significance’, come within the terms of our inquiry, we found it impossible to report adequately on the main private collections, their whereabouts, their state of preservation, their present availability to, scholars, and—when the present owner dies—their future as a collection. Moreover, our terms of reference were so wide that we were forced sometimes to limit our inquiries. Some information on the material in private ownership did come to us in written submissions, and members individually inspected several private collections. The Committee also received reports on a dozen or more local museums and their privately owned collections.

In an earlier chapter (Chapter 5) the Committee briefly sets out restraints and conditions which should mark governmental assistance to privately owned museums and collections. In later chapters of the report, the Committee discusses several other matters relevant to privately owned material: the regulation of the export of such material, and the granting of income tax concessions in order to encourage private collectors to donate important material to public institutions.

7.4 While the private collections of ‘national significance’ are therefore touched on only briefly in this report, their importance is beyond question. As they are indirectly a national resource and asset, their adequate care is vital. Their owners, it could be said, have a duty to the nation to safeguard that material and to protect it from deterioration. Ultimately the Australian Government may well have to seek the co-operation of private owners in making a national register of the private holdings of significance. Selected articles or collections listed in such a register might then be eligible for assistance from governmental conservation laboratories. Similarly, with the aid of a national register, the export of important cultural items and collections could be regulated in the nation’s interest.

### **National Material**

7.5 Our terms of reference also called for advice in relation to the Australian Government's direct field of responsibility and interest. We were requested to recommend what measures should be taken in the immediate future to:

- (a) collection and conservation facilities for 'national material', with particular attention to research needs and training;
- (b) ensure effective co-ordination of the Australian Government's activities in this field;
- (c) institute new developments and institutions, with particular attention to the establishment of a national museum of history in Canberra.

These terms of reference imply no restriction on the nature of the 'national material' to be included in the Committee's examination. We have made our inquiries accordingly. Our report attempts to embrace all the 'national material' which is held by various departments and authorities of the Australian Government, including the scientific collections, held by various Divisions of the CSIRO. To avoid any confusion with the broader expression 'national collections', we usually use the phrase, 'Australian Government Collections', when we describe briefly the range of federal materials and collections in the next Chapter.

### **Libraries and Archives**

7.6 In reporting on a wide range of collections, institutions and governmental and semi-governmental agencies, we encountered several issues where a limit to our investigations seemed desirable. We did not see fit to comment comprehensively on libraries and archives nor on the national estate and its historic building and sites.

7.7 When the Special Minister of State set up this Committee of Inquiry his statement in explanation was directed more to the aims and needs of museums than to libraries and other collecting institutions. Further, during the course of our inquiry, the Australian Government announced the appointment of the Committee of Inquiry into Libraries with the following terms of reference:

- '(a) to inquire into and report upon the current role and effectiveness of State, regional and municipal libraries in serving the information and recreation needs of the community including the limitations imposed by existing methods and levels of financing and staffing.
- (b) to report upon the desirable future roles for, and development of, State, regional and municipal library services, including priorities of need for these libraries: interaction with, or dependence on developments in related fields; likely costs, manpower and training requirements; requirements for specialised library services, the need, and possible mechanisms, for the provision of Australian Government assistance.
- (c) to recommend measures necessary to give effect to these developments and means whereby these measures might be implemented.'

While we received submissions from some libraries and archives and visited several for inspection and discussion, our main aim was to consider the policies adopted by libraries as collectors of rare historical material, and to determine whether libraries and archives had certain problems in common with museums.

7.8 The National Library, the various State libraries and State archives, and the two main archives in universities hold collections of great national significance. Their diaries and letters, prints, documents, photographs and rare books are cultural property of the greatest importance, requiring sound conservation and storage practices. It is in this field of conservation that libraries, archives and museums share a major problem. In Chapter

11 we offer arguments for a greater national effort in conservation and the training of conservators.

7.9 We recommend that State libraries and archives, and those municipal and university authorities which are responsible for material deemed to be of national significance, should have access to a national aid program for the conservation and storage of that material.

7.10 We also recommend that library authorities and archives be eligible for assistance grants to acquire, at short notice, material of historic or cultural importance. The need for such an assistance scheme was emphasised by the auction—advertised for October 1975—of about 1,000 items from the collection of Dr Clifford Craig of Launceston. Dr Craig had collected a unique record of early Tasmanian history, including original documents, old newspapers and government reports, rare books in many languages, maps and paintings. The State Library of Tasmania sought assistance from this Committee in the hope of bidding for the Craig collection. The opportunity of acquiring such a rare collection occurs infrequently. There is a strong possibility that the collection will be dispersed with some rare items passing to overseas purchasers. The question of the Australian Government assisting the State Library of Tasmania to acquire the Craig collection had not been resolved when this report was completed, but we mention this episode to illustrate the need for a national program for the acquisition of material if our public institutions are to be expected to preserve the records of the nation.

7.11 As collectors, the museums on the one hand, and libraries and archives on the other, occasionally compete with one another. At the State level the collecting roles of museums and libraries rarely appear to overlap, though more overlap can be expected when State museums eventually move into the research and display of Australian economic and social history: then the State museums will probably wish to build up specialist libraries, including rare books and letters. Federally, the collecting aims and responsibilities of the national authorities for libraries, archives and museums require clearer definition; and suggestions are offered in the following chapter.

### **Cultural Property and the ‘National Estate’**

7.12 The boundaries of our inquiry were also limited by the report in 1974 of the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate. That Committee defined the National Estate as not only a material but also a cultural environment. That environment consisted of those areas and objects which are:

- ‘(a) of such outstanding world significance that they need to be conserved, managed and presented as part of the heritage of the world;
- (b) of such outstanding national value that they need to be conserved, managed and presented as part of the heritage of the nation as a whole;
- (c) of such aesthetic, historical, scientific, social, cultural, ecological or other special value to the nation or any part of it, including a region or locality, that they should be conserved, managed and presented for the benefit of the community as a whole.’ \*

The Report proceeds to elaborate on the natural and cultural environment of the National Estate. The natural environment, it argues, includes national parks, nature reserves, and inland rivers, lakes and other wetlands. The man-made or cultural environment includes buildings and structures and urban conservation areas which should be conserved for historical, architectural or social reasons; it also includes archaeological sites—Aboriginal sites and historic sites—and relics. In addition the

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\*Report of the National Estate, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1974, p. 35.

cultural environment embraces museum collections, industrial artefacts, archives, Aboriginal artefacts, and maritime relics.

The aptness of this definition of the ‘national estate’ is not questioned. Clearly, cultural property should be included, and the Report of the Committee of Inquiry on the National Estate refers to such property as ‘the chattels of the National Estate’.

7.13 Following the report on the National Estate, the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975*, established an authority whose functions include advising the responsible Minister on national estate matters and the preparation of a register of, places included in the national estate. The Act of 1975 defines the ‘national estate’, as follows:

- ‘4(I) For the purposes of this Act, the national estate consists of those places, being components of the natural environment of Australia or the cultural environment of Australia, that have aesthetic, historic, scientific or social significance or other special value for future generations as well as for the present community.
- 4(2) For the purposes of this section, Australia includes the territorial sea of Australia and the continental shelf of Australia. A ‘place’ is defined as including:
  - (a) a site, area or region;
  - (b) a building or other structure or a group of buildings or other structures (which may include equipment, furniture, fittings and articles associated with or connected with such buildings or structures).’

There are obvious difficulties in defining the boundaries of the legitimate interest of the Australian Heritage Commission in cultural property—in accordance with the definitions referred to above—and the interests of other federal institutions and authorities which have cultural responsibilities.

7.14 In examining the action taken by other countries to protect their cultural property, the Committee noted that their legislation usually attempted to protect monuments and buildings of historic importance. It is considered that, if a similar approach had been adopted in Australian legislation, some of the imminent problems of definition and of administrative overlap might have been averted. In addition, this approach would have given the Australian Government, if it so desired, a more positive and direct role in issues affecting the cultural heritage.

The Committee, in view of the legislative charter given to the Australian Heritage Commission, can now only offer observations and recommendations which might avoid the problem of overlapping interests. In this respect we acknowledge and appreciate the interest of the Chairman (Mr D. Yericken) and other members of the Interim Committee on the National Estate (ICONE) in seeking discussions on these issues, and in referring, for advice and comments, those grant applications which involved museums and cultural collections.

Several applications, under the national estate program, sought funds for the preservation of a building of historic or architectural importance in the hope that the building could be then used as a local or regional museum. We have already commented in Chapter 5 on the proliferation of local history museums.

7.15 We *recommend* that public funds should not be used to encourage the establishment or development of a museum unless:

- it will meet a community need;
- the collection to be housed in the museum is of local historic significance;
- the material will be properly catalogued and conserved;
- the museum has access to expertise for arranging and interpreting the display of material;
- the building is suitable for use as a museum.

Requests to preserve a building, with the intention of developing a local museum, are likely to be frequent. Similarly many local groups will seek funds from the Australian Heritage Commission in order to preserve an historic building which, already housing furniture and other period pieces, will be virtually a museum when it is finally opened to the public.

7.16 It is therefore *recommended* that administrative arrangements be established for consultation between the Australian Heritage Commission and the proposed Museums Commission, in order to ensure that a rational and economic policy is pursued. There is a quickening interest in preserving buildings of local historic importance, and this interest has been spurred by the funding programs of the Australian Heritage Commission. Our concern is that the funding should always include provision for the proper documentation, care and conservation of the relics within these buildings.

7.17 We *recommend* that advice and assistance on documenting, curating and the conserving, of relics within historic buildings be available to non-profit organisations as part of any national program of museum assistance.



# 8 The Australian Government Collections

8.1 The Committee has been asked to recommend measures which should be taken to ensure the early and effective co-ordination of the Australian Government's activities in the field of collections. In scope and variety these collections are surprising, we set out the details at the end of this Chapter.

8.2 Some are unofficial in that there is no statutory or functional responsibility to develop them; examples are the collections held by the Department of Transport and the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Others are official, reflecting the organisations' need to develop and preserve particular collections in order to fulfil their functions. The collections of CSIRO and the National Library fit this category.

8.3 Unofficial collections are no less important than official collections but their future is less certain and they are not always cared for adequately. The foresight and zeal of the dedicated few who have preserved material of historical significance deserves commendation. Without their efforts much of the material would have been neglected, sold or destroyed. The collecting, however, has been piecemeal and dependent upon the availability of interested persons and upon the time they can devote to this task. Written material probably is fairly well preserved, but other material tends to be disregarded unless it is of obvious historical importance or because of a particular interest to an individual. Much of the material in the 'unofficial collections' would be suitable for display or research in an appropriate national institution. The former Australian Post Office (now the separate Postal and Telecommunications Commissions) has collections recording the development of the national postal and telecommunications services. Held in different centres, they constitute in total a national collection of significance but a national museum devoted solely, for example, to the history of Australian posts and telegraphs should have a low priority, having regard to the lack of national museums in other areas.

8.4 It is *recommended* that the Postal and Telecommunications Commissions be encouraged to bring together their several collections to establish the nucleus of a permanent collection which might, initially, be available for legitimate research rather than public display.

Similarly, the collections of the Australian Broadcasting Commission are important, but we do not see a need for a national museum of radio. Rather, this collection belongs more to a display showing the development of communications generally.

8.5 A firm government direction would assist departments and authorities in deciding their responsibilities for preserving items of present or future historic value. Through the co-operation of the Minister for Manufacturing Industry, arrangements have been made to seek this Committee's advice on any government property intended for disposal. This is a temporary measure. A continuing committee should advise on such issues.

8.6 It is *recommended* that a committee of officials representing departments and authorities with functional interests in the retention or disposal of government property be appointed to advise on the preservation of items of possible historic interest. The committee would also consult and liaise with national, state and municipal authorities in the disposal of such material. Liaison is the key issue. We urge the establishment of complementary committees in the States so that this vital but frequently overlooked source of national collections is fully utilised.

8.7 The second step is the conservation of these collections. This step is rarely taken. It is difficult to give priority to the storage and care of obsolete equipment when funds are insufficient for current operations. All the collections should be brought together in one adequate storage area where conservation work can be carried out. Pending the

establishment of the national museum, the material would be available for temporary displays and loans, but only under stringent conditions should material of historical importance be used as part of the decor of office or public buildings.

8.8 It is recommended that consideration be given to the acquisition or construction of appropriate environmentally controlled buildings for the storage of material of historical importance owned by the Australian Government.

### **The Official Collections**

8.9 There are three national institutions where responsibility for collections is defined by the statutes establishing those institutions:

- The Australian War Memorial.
- The National Gallery.
- The National Library.

*The Australian War Memorial* is administered by a Board whose functions include the following:

- (a) to control and preserve the war relics of Australia and to arrange, so far as the Board considers desirable, for their public display,
- (b) to carry out, and assist other persons in carrying out, research in connection with any war or warlike operations in which Australians have been on active service, and
- (c) to disseminate information relating to the Memorial or any war or warlike operations in which Australians have been on active service.

As defined by the *National Gallery, Act 1975*, the functions of the National Gallery are:

- (a) to develop and maintain a national collection of works of art; and
- (b) to exhibit, or to make available for exhibition by others, works of art from the national collection.

The Act then enjoins the Gallery to ‘use every endeavour to make the most advantageous use of the national collection in the national Interest’. In its collecting policy the Gallery has adopted the broad interpretation of a ‘work of art’; thus, an elaborate costume may be treated as a work of art. While this does lead to a more comprehensive presentation of art, it also raises the possibility of overlap when the Museum of Australia is established.

Under the *National Library Act 1960-73*, the National Library must:

‘... maintain and develop a national collection of library material, including a comprehensive collection of library material relating to Australia and the Australian people.’

‘Library material’ is defined as including:

‘... books, periodicals, newspapers, manuscripts, films, sound recordings, musical scores, maps, plans, pictures, photographs, prints and other recorded material, whether in writing or some other form.’

An *Australian Archives* organisation was also foreshadowed by the Special Minister of State, in his statement in the Parliament on 7 March 1974:

‘The legislation will provide that the Australian Archives have as its broad aim the development of a national archives system which, in co-operation with the States and other organisations, will ensure the preservation of archival resources which document the history of the Australian nation and which are of national significance, research value or of general public interest. It will also provide for Australian Government agencies advice and assistance for the efficient administration of archives, provide and maintain the public right of access in accordance with Government access policy, and

promote the utilisation of archival resources for informational, research, education, cultural and other purposes.’

### **The Government’s Art Collections**

8.10 Major art collections are in the custody not only of the National Gallery but also the National Library and the Australian War Memorial. It may come as a surprise to some to learn that the National Library holds more than 25,000 paintings, drawings and prints, while the Australian War Memorial’s collection numbers more than 12,000-art works. In addition, the Australian Institute of Anatomy houses a world-class collection of Aboriginal art acquired by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. Also in this category is the collection of portraits and other paintings, stored or displayed in the National Parliament; this collection comes under the jurisdiction of the Historic Memorials Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister. Neither the Institute nor the Historic Memorials Committee has a statutory responsibility to collect works of art.

Our immediate reaction is that too many authorities collect works of art. There is a danger of unnecessary duplication and overlap. A degree of specialisation, however, limits this possibility. Thus, the Australian War Memorial is clearly restricted to representations of war or warlike activities involving Australians. The functions of the Historic Memorials Committee are to commission, or otherwise acquire, portraits of public figures in Australia, although this collection in fact is not confined to portraits.

The functions of the National Library and the National Gallery are stated, by necessity, in more general terms. The National Library collects paintings, prints and other materials which record Australian history; the National Gallery 15 accumulating a representative collection which includes, but is not confined to, Australian art. In answer to a question on notice in the House of Representatives, reported in *Hansard* on 8 April 1975, the Prime Minister gave details of Australian art purchased by the National Gallery. The acquisitions included a significant number of works which, as we understand it, might also have been purchased by the National Library under its acquisition program. Overlap is also visible in ethnographic material. Thus, the collections of Oceanic and Australian art held at the Institute of Anatomy building would partly fall into a field of interest charted also by the National Gallery.

8.11 The Committee has commented on the various art collections to highlight the possibility of competition and unnecessary overlap, especially in historical and ethnographic art. We are assured that there is informal co-ordination between the various bodies but we believe that, in this field of high expenditure, the government has a responsibility to ensure that channels of communication remain open.

8.12 We also *recommend* the creation of a central register of the nation’s art collections. In the meantime, formal liaison machinery should link the relevant collecting authorities.

### **The Government’s Collections of Historical Material**

8.13 Apart from the Australian War Memorial, whose responsibility for collecting historical relics is clear, the other repositories of historical material are the National Library and the National Archives.

The National Archives are the repository for State papers and documents for the official historical records of the country. But there is a ‘grey’ line dividing the interests of archival collections and other institutions such as libraries and national history museums. The collection role of each authority is blurred when endowments or gifts of material are made by a private donor to the institution of his choice. Sometimes public institutions compete for records and historic material from private citizens, thus obscuring the essential differences between the role of each authority, and dispersing

historical records amongst a range of public Institutions. In Australia this confusion could increase if and when a museum of national history is established in Canberra. That museum will need a specialised but substantial library. It will also legitimately, acquire rare manuscripts, documents, working drawings, and prints of historical importance.

Besides the collections of paintings and prints, the collections of the National Library, include more than 283,000 maps and over 115,000 photographs. The National Library, in the absence of other national historical institutions, has played a vital role in the acquisition and preservation of films, photographs, manuscripts and a wide range of historical material. It has been well-endowed and well-administered. Eventually, however, competition in historical collecting will come from the revitalised National Archives and from the proposed museum of national history, and each authority will sometimes encroach upon another's terrain.

Guidelines must be drawn up to mark the respective responsibilities of each authority for acquisitions and collections. A retreat to legal definitions in statutes is no answer, as these may spark disputes about interpretation.

8.14 We *recommend* that those responsible for the National Library, the National Archives and, later, a museum of national history be directed to draw up, in consultation with the proposed Australian Museums Commission, guidelines for the acquisition and preservation of historical documentation, after taking into account formal responsibilities of their respective authorities and Australia's overall needs.

8.15 We *recommend* also that the implementation of these guidelines be supervised by a small committee representing each organisation and chaired by a member of the proposed Australian Museums Commission.

The National Library also holds memorabilia and other items of historical importance which might more appropriately form part of the national museum. In its submission to the Committee, the National Library envisages a close relationship with the proposed national museum, including the exchange of material on loan. We endorse this gesture. Loan arrangements between institutions are to be commended. Nonetheless, the custodian's first responsibility is to the collections in his care, and he must be satisfied that damage will not occur during loan periods. It might, therefore, be more appropriate if an institution relinquishes collections marginal to its main functions. Ultimately it is in the national interest if the National Library, National Archives and the museum of national history each holds and cares for the collections for which its specialised skills and facilities are most appropriate and which are closely related to its principal functions.

8.16 Funds will always be limited for the acquisition of collections, and unnecessary competition for particular items will waste funds. Duplication of parts of collections in some areas is desirable, and, because of our long distances and the spread of our population, there might be a greater justification for the duplication of collections in Australia than in other small countries. At the national level, however, we have the opportunity to co-ordinate and thereby check the tendency to duplicate collections unnecessarily and compete for items to add to existing collections. The establishment of guidelines for acquisitions and collections responsibilities and the policing of those guidelines would minimise the problems we have witnessed in several other countries.

8.17 Canberra acutely needs suitable buildings to stage major exhibitions. This deficiency will be reduced when the National Gallery is open late in 1978. Meanwhile, the National Library, as far as possible, is staging some admirable exhibitions the limited space available. It would be unfortunate, however, if the National Library were to expand its present building to enlarge the display and exhibition area. The new museum

of national history should provide essential display galleries.

8.18 We *recommend* that available funds should be spent on museum galleries rather than in the expansion of existing institutions for which display is a less essential function.

### **The Australian Institute of Anatomy and its Collections**

8.19 The Australian Institute of Anatomy was established as a consequence of an agreement between the Australian Government and the late Sir Colin MacKenzie. This agreement was embodied in the Australian Institute of Anatomy, Agreement AC.1 1924-1933 which provides that:

‘The Institute shall consist of the specimens and animals referred to in clause one of the Agreement contained in the Schedule to this Act and of such specimens and animals as the Minister, from time to time, directs shall be included in the Institute.’

The specimens and animals referred to in clause one of the Agreement might be generally described as the MacKenzie collection of Australian fauna.

Under the Agreement, the Australian Government was to reserve a site for a National Museum of Zoology and to construct ‘such buildings and other enclosures as in its opinion are necessary or desirable for the accommodation of the said Museum’. Clause 9 of the Agreement provides that, although the specimens and animals are to form the nucleus of a National Museum of Australian Zoology, the specimens and animals are the absolute property of Australia and may be utilised in such manner as the government in its absolute discretion may determine.

8.20 The Institute is housed in an impressive building on a prime site. The collections, expanded over the years, now consist of a disparate array of anatomical, osteological and ethnographic material which is poorly displayed and inadequately stored. The priceless National Ethnographic Collection is held in the Institute building, but cramped conditions and the lack of air-conditioning are regrettable. The building itself is overcrowded, and shelters offices and laboratories completely unrelated to the functions or collections of the Institute.

The responsible body, the Department of Health, readily accepts that the original concept of the Institute has never been implemented and that it is probably no longer relevant to the 1970s. The Department has been forced into accepting responsibility for material which, by its criteria, is only of marginal interest. Hence, the funds allocated to the Institute of Anatomy are small.

8.21 The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies is most concerned that the ethnographic collections in the building are deteriorating. While the public galleries were recently air-conditioned, the basement area holding these Aboriginal collections is without atmospheric controls. We agree that, if this material is to be preserved, and to be made available for research and display, it must be under the direct financial and administrative control of a more relevant authority. We therefore support the Department of Health’s proposal to transfer responsibility for all ethnographic material in its custody to an appropriate body.

Some of the material and descriptions in the display in the Institute building have been criticised on the grounds that they are scientifically inaccurate. Other critics question the value of the biological collection as a way of communicating biological information to the public. As far as this Committee is aware the collection is not sustaining any current research, and this raises the question of whether the resources applied to maintaining the existing display are justified.

8.22 The display, despite its inadequacy, is popular with visitors and Canberra children.

Over 300,000 people are said to visit the Institute each year, an estimate the Committee believes would be difficult to substantiate. The building is also a forum for public lectures and meetings, and is the de facto headquarters of the local Historical Society. Again, most of these activities are unrelated to the displays, the collections and the functions of the administering authority.

8.23 The Committee has strong reservations about the operations of this museum. It does not conduct research, the authenticity of several displays is suspect and many of its themes seem unrelated. Its collections also need careful assessment. An assessment is required of the Institute's own anatomical and osteological material, its value as a collection and its relevance to the work of other Australian Government authorities or agencies. The ethnographic material should either be transferred to more suitable accommodation or, if the Institute's own collections are removed, given more space and care.

8.24 We considered a submission from the Department of Health which included a review by officers of that Department of the Institute's present role:

'The usefulness of the Institute is at present limited to public presentation of some aspects of health education and human physiology and evolution. Part of the cause of this limited approach has been the presence of extraneous material and activities within the building which, at times when the Institute might have been expected to expand its activities, has constrained that development.

'The facilities of the Institute building provide the means whereby Government policy that the Department has a focal public role in health education can be intensified with the creation of an Australian institute of health education. Steps have been taken to transfer control of the Institute, create positions in the health education field, and to remove extraneous activities from the building. As part of this, the Minister has indicated his agreement with a proposal that all ethnographic material belonging to the Institute be offered to the National Collection- ' other ethnographic material housed at the Institute belongs to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and other authorities.

'As a logically associated function, an Institute of the History of Medicine, for which a need has been recognised for a considerable period, should be established to utilise effectively the library and some museum space.'

The Committee agrees with the Department of Health that the existing institution is so deficient that the valuable building should be used more profitably for other purposes. We note the proposal for an Institute of the History of Medicine, but we see that proposal as no weightier than the other suggestions for specialised national museums which we discuss in Chapter 13. We recommend that the proposal should receive a very low priority.

8.25 The legal situation is that the Institute comprises only the MacKenzie collection and such other collections that have been declared by the Minister, and that there has been no legal reservation of the building for the purposes of the Institute. It is open to the Australian Government, therefore, to move the Institute of Anatomy collections to some other building if this is considered necessary; or to use the building entitled 'The Australian Institute of Anatomy' for purposes not associated with the custody or display of the Institute of Anatomy collections.

The Committee sees the availability of this building as an opportunity to implement promptly the proposed national museum though on a very small scale. Even with the utmost co-operation of the government, the first stage of a museum of national history could not be completed before six or seven years. The intervening period will be taken up with detailed planning and design, and so temporary headquarters will also be required. As the temporary home of the museum of national history, the Institute of Anatomy building could display selections from those important collections which for years have been hidden away in storehouses.

8.26 We therefore recommend that the Institute of Anatomy building be taken over as the temporary home of the proposed museum of national history.

### **The Government's Collections in Natural Science**

8.27 The natural science collections of the Australian Government comprise:

- biological collections which are the responsibility of various Divisions within the CSIRO;
- the collection of the Australian Institute of Anatomy;
- collections held by the Bureau of Mineral Resources;
- the collection of the Australian Institute of Marine Science.

Before the appointment of this Committee of Inquiry, the government had established the Australian Biological Resources Study (ABRS) with an Interim Council of seven members. The terms of reference of the Interim Council were announced by the Minister for Science in the Parliament on 6 December 1973:

1. The Council shall be responsible for stimulating the study of the taxonomy, distribution and ecology of Australia's biological resources and for assessing the long-term national requirements in this and related matters.
2. The Council shall promote through grants to appropriate institutions or individuals:
  - (a) collection and scientific description of species of animals and plants throughout Australia;
  - (b) in-depth ecological studies (in promoting the study referred to in (a) and (b) special attention shall be given to areas where rapid changes are taking place in the natural environment, and to remote unstudied areas);
  - (c) proper maintenance of collections.
3. The Council shall consider and, during 1976, make recommendations in relation to:
  - (a) conduct in the longer term of taxonomic and ecological studies. and
  - (b) permanent housing, maintenance and display of national biological collections.
4. The Council shall be responsible to the Minister for Science, and shall submit an annual report.

Dr D. F. Waterhouse, the Chairman of the Interim Council of ABRS, was appointed also as a member of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections, and this has fostered a most useful co-ordination between the two bodies.

8.28 The terms of reference of the interim Council of ABRS and of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections rather overlap, particularly in the collection and display of national biological material. It is clearly important that any agreement or disagreement on these mutual areas of interest should be brought to the government's attention for decision.

In considering the future of the national biological collections, this Committee did reach agreement on the following points.

8.29 We recommend against the establishment of a conventional natural history museum in Canberra on the grounds that:

- there are major significant museums of natural history in all the States;
- resources would be better utilised by a program designed to boost the excellent collections held in the State museums.

We *recommend* that natural history should be considered within the proposed Museum of Australia, and as part of the research and display associated with the theme 'Man and His Environment'.

We *recommend* that any national Institute or authority resulting from the Australian Biological Resources Study should not conduct displays or exhibitions, any display should be arranged through other institutions.

It is in the arrangement for the care and custody of the natural science collections that the Committee cannot reach agreement.

### **Majority View in Natural Science Collections**

8.30 The Committee *recommends* that the Australian Government-owned collections in the A.C.T. be placed administratively under the control and care of the proposed Museum of Australia.

We make no recommendations on the siting of these collections. The ultimate site or sites should be decided by the future management of the proposed museum of national history in association with those Australian Government instrumentalities that presently house the collections. In coming to this conclusion, the Committee had the following facts and assumptions in mind:

- We do not expect that the Australian environment section of the proposed Museum of Australia would follow traditional patterns of display in natural history. That section would be related more to the total environment and its flora, fauna, land and climate, its past evolution, and the way in which it has been moulded by man. Nevertheless, this projected section must be supported by collections of flora and fauna, geology and palaeontology, as well as their related scholarship.
- For the long-term protection of collections owned by the Australian Government, their custody should lie with a single organisation with guaranteed longevity.
- At present the collections are located in various divisions of CSIRO and BMR. There they serve as working collections but they will also become more and more useful as permanent long-term reference collections.
- The integration and permanent housing of the collections would be a long-term goal.
- Unified control would not prejudice the continuing collecting and research by those groups presently undertaking it.
- The continuing description and analysis of the Australian environment still needs to be stimulated.

### **Co-ordination of Grants to Museums**

8.31 It is understood that the Interim Council of ABRS is considering a proposal that an Institute of Fauna and Flora be established to carry out the taxonomic and ecological survey of Australian biological species and related activities, and that it is likely to make a recommendation along these lines in its report to the Minister for Science and Consumer Affairs.

The Committee considers that a national program to identify and determine the taxonomy and ecology of biological species is of major scientific importance and that this is properly the responsibility of the Minister of State whose responsibilities concern scientific policy and the development of the sciences. A major part of the taxonomic work in Australia has been carried out in the established museums, and it would be reasonable to expect that the proposed Institute of Fauna and Flora would look to museums to assist, through the mechanism of financial grants, in the national program mentioned above.



8.32 The Committee has given deep consideration to the problems that such assistance might create. It is recommended elsewhere that the proposed Australian Museums Commission be responsible for advising on assistance to museums. Accordingly, the creation of another funding authority raises the possibility of duplication and might confuse priorities. We believe that these problems can be avoided quite simply and effective co-ordination achieved if the Museums Commission is responsible for the basic funding emanating from the Australian Government.

8.33 Many Australian Government institutions help to finance research in Australian museums. They include:

- the Australian Biological Resources Study;
- the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies;
- the Australia Council;
- the Australian Research Grants Committee;
- the Science and Industry Endowment Fund;
- the Australian Heritage Commission;
- the Regional Employment Development Scheme.

Each of the above institutions or organisations has responsibilities for endowing research, or has an interest in the maintenance of collections or museum buildings. The Committee would not venture to suggest that grants now provided by these authorities should emanate from the proposed Australian Museums Commission. These other authorities must continue to exercise freely the functions for which they are responsible; they should be free to achieve their objectives by their own methods.

8.34 We *recommend*, however, that the federal authorities concerned in awarding grants to museums should co-ordinate their activities through a system of administrative arrangements.

### **The Minority View on the Custody of the Natural Science Collections**

8.35 Two members of the Committee (Dr Waterhouse and Mr Payne) disagree with the majority view expressed previously and, in particular, that:

- the Australian Government-owned collections of natural science in the A.C.T. be placed administratively under the control and care of The Museum of Australia.

They take the view that the principles applied by the Committee in connection with the National Gallery, the National Library, the National Archives and the Australian War Memorial should be applied equally in the natural sciences area, namely:

- institutions should be responsible for the development and care of collections necessary for the exercise of their statutory functions, but competition should be avoided through mutually agreed policy guidelines taking into account their formal responsibilities and the overall needs of Australia, and
- formal machinery for liaison between national institutions should be established and, in particular, a central register of collections is required.

The transfer to the museum of national history of the custody of scientific collections which are required by other authorities (or individuals) for continuing taxonomic study at the national level, or for applied research, would raise operating and other difficulties without sufficient compensating advantages to the museum of national history to justify the transfer.

8.36 The Committee members concerned are of the view that, if any scientific collections are of historical and display value only, a reasonable case could be made to

preserve and display those collections in the proposed Museum of Australia. In putting forward this view, the two members distinguish between collections required for continuing, taxonomic study, and scientific collections which are no longer productive of active research. Collections in the latter category provide evidence of past scientific endeavours and discovery and should be preserved for that reason. Such collections (eg. the mineral collection of the Bureau of Mineral Resources and the historically interesting dissections of the MacKenzie collection in the Institute of Anatomy) might therefore be transferred to The Museum of Australia.

Dr Waterhouse and Mr Payne consider that taxonomic research, active collecting and custodianship of collections must be viewed as inseparable aspects of the role of the curator of taxonomic collections. To pass the responsibility for the national taxonomic collections to an institution with a different primary natural history role, and staffed by scientists who are not appointed primarily to investigate the taxonomy of the Australian flora and fauna, would result in the following difficulties:

- Responsibility for the taxonomic collections would deflect museum staff from the main purposes of the museum.
- The collections would not develop in response to the national taxonomic needs as determined by curators appointed by the body responsible to the Minister for Science and Consumer Affairs for the expression of science policy in taxonomy.
- If the museum were to give appropriate priority to taxonomic studies, it would lose the emphasis and special character of studying and displaying the theme of 'Man and His Environment'; it would be forced to develop the taxonomic emphasis of a natural history museum in the traditional mould.
- Other institutions and scientists requiring access to the scientific collections, and dependent upon the proper growth of those collections, could be put in a position of conflict with the curatorial staff of the museum.
- The proposed involvement of the museum of national history in the maintenance and use of collections dispersed among a series of research institutions, without any direct relationship to its displays, would be an unjustified burden on museum funds.

8.37 The two members believe that, while it may be desirable for the taxonomic collections of the Australian Government to come in due course under single management, this is not necessary now for their long-term protection. There are other means of ensuring that aim. This question is the proper responsibility of the Interim Council of the Australian Biological Resources Study (see terms of reference above).

The Interim Council of the Australian Biological Resources Study will report on these matters (including the provision of a computer-based register of material in taxonomic collections) early in 1976.

8.38 Accepting that a national program to study the taxonomy and ecology of biological species is a major scientific responsibility which is properly the province of the Minister for State concerned with scientific policy and the development of the sciences, they have concluded that it would be inappropriate to consider administrative arrangements which removed from the Minister for Science and Consumer Affairs the direct responsibility for the funding and administration of the Institute of Australian Flora and Fauna and of such collections as, with the agreement of their present owners, may be lodged with the Institute.

The two members are sure that sensible arrangements could be made for the collection and scientific officers of the Institute to be available, as necessary, to assist in the display of material for the Museum Hall of 'Man and His Environment'. The Interim Council of

ABRS has indicated to the Committee that this sort of co-operation would not present difficulties. Similar co-operation and formal channels of liaison could avoid conflict in funding which might result from the exercise of different responsibilities by other government funding bodies.

8.39 Taxonomy as a field of research has been developed within museums of natural history because of the collections that they themselves had built up over many decades. It is a traditional field of work for natural history museums established on traditional lines. The Committee of Inquiry is recommending for Canberra a novel treatment of natural history in the context of man's environment, not a traditional natural history museum. Accordingly, the research of its staff should be directed towards these environmental issues and the museum should not attempt to acquire custody of collections that have been built up by other institutions for strictly taxonomic purposes and which they themselves are using for those purposes.

8.40 The minority therefore *recommends* that the Australian Government-owned collections of natural science in the A.C.T. should not be placed administratively under the control and care of the museum of national history, and that the recommendation on these matters be left to the Interim Council of the Australian Biological Resources Study.

## ATTACHMENT TO CHAPTER 8

### **Australian Government Collections**

#### AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES

Holdings total some 500,000 shelf feet of records, including 200,000 feet of files, manuscripts, registers, cards, books, maps, plans, models, films, paintings, photographs, recordings, microfilms and tapes.

#### AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION

Approximately 750 items which include wireless receivers dating back to the early 1920s, a pedal transmitter/receiver, early gramophones (cylinder and disc); microphones, recorders, valves and other sundry items. Much of the collection of early equipment is linked with the development of the ABC.

#### AUSTRALIAN POSTAL AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSIONS

*Central Office:* Material covers early plans and drawings, telegraph equipment, research laboratory equipment, documents, an extensive collection of Australian stamps, postal stationery and related material, foreign stamps and historical design material related to Australian stamps.

*State Collections:* Are comprehensive and contain documents and equipment relating to early communications developments such as the Overland Telegraph Line (1872), the Tasmania-Mainland telegraph cable (1859), the overland carriage of mail. The introduction of the telephone to Australia, and the general technological progress of the postal and telecommunications services to Australia.

#### AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

12,000 art works; 40,000 relics; 64 dioramas. 60,000 monographs. 10,000 maps. 240,000 photographs; 1,220,000 metres of line film and large collections of periodicals, newspapers, sheet music, sound recordings and press cuttings.

#### BUREAU OF MINERAL RESOURCES

Rock collections—200,000 specimens, fossil collections—200,000 specimens

including, a type collection of 13,000 specimens, collections of minerals, gems and other pieces of mining, historical, research and educational significance—25,000 specimens; models, display diagrams, and other visual aids to geological education.

## CSIRO

*Division of Entomology—Australian National Insect Collection:* 7,000 primary types, almost all of Australian species. Coleoptera, 7,000 species, Diptera. 100,000 specimens; Lepidoptera. 500,000 specimens, including 80%, of the known species, and 3,000 primary types.

*Division of Building Research:* 3,000 cultures of wood inhabiting fungi and bacteria, 10,000 specimens in the fungal herbarium, and the wood anatomy collection.

*Division Wildlife Research:* Collections of birds—19,000 specimens, including 8,000 from Papua New Guinea. Mammals—10,000 including 1,000 from Papua New Guinea; 1,000 dried plants, several hundred reptiles, amphibia and freshwater fish.

*Division of Plant Industry:* The Herbarium Australiense holds about 280 000 specimens including 700 type specimens.

*Division of Mineralogy:* 10,000 mineralogical samples of considerable research importance.

*Division of Tropical Agronomy:* A collection of botanical specimens from south-east Queensland is held for research purposes.

*Division of Horticultural Research:* Collections of permanent mounts of plant- and soil inhabiting nematodes.

*Marine Biochemistry Unit:* Collection of living unicellular marine algae.

*Division of Animal Health:* Collections of microbiological material; preserved ticks.

*Division of Forest Research:* An Herbarium containing extensive collections of Eucalyptus botanical material, together with herbarium material of other tree species.

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

*Forestry and Timber Bureau:* Many examples of early wooden objects; static displays of an old-time sawmill, a logging whim from Western Australia, and a wooden log carriage from the Murray River.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE CAPITAL TERRITORY

*Canberra Botanic Gardens:* 80,000 plants including 5,000 species of Australian plants; 65,000 herbarium specimens.

*Horse Era Museum:* 11 restored carriages, 7 restored commercial vehicles, 41 harness and saddlery items. In addition there are eight miscellaneous items suggested for outdoor display, 6 restored and 10 unrestored vehicles and hundreds of miscellaneous items.

## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE

*Air Office:* 40 complete aircraft, 6 aircraft frames, 10 aircraft engines, 10 aircraft propellers, aircraft and flying log books, uniforms, flying clothing, badges and insignia, photographs, weapons and RAAF memorabilia.

*Navy Office:* Holdings in excess of 13,000 items, relics, and trophies. (No detailed inventory is available.)

*Army Office:* Approximately 30 armoured vehicles, 1,400 small arms, 100 flags, as well as large collections of various militaria, badges, uniforms, photographs. (A complete inventory is not available.)

#### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Small collections of records and medical equipment are held at each of the Quarantine Stations in Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney, and in the Northern Territory Division of the Department.

*Institute of Anatomy:* Holds collections of anatomical and ethnographic material. The anatomical and osteological collection has seven component parts with a total of 4,312 catalogued items and approximately 10,00 uncatalogued items. This material includes the original MacKenzie collection. Ten major collections and many smaller ones containing in all over 20,000 items of Melanesian and Aboriginal origin form the National Ethnographic Collection. A great deal of this material is uncatalogued.

*School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Sydney:*

An important collection of insects and related forms of medical importance.

#### DEPARTMENT OF MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Collections of small arms, swords, bayonets, a production line similar to that operated in 1912 plus original machine tools in working order, ammunition stores and books on ammunition are held at production establishments. (Most of the collections are not catalogued.)

#### DEPARTMENT OF THE MEDIA

Film Australia has a film library; the Australian Information Service has a photographic library.

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE Holds a piece of moon rock from the Apollo 17 Mission. *Antarctic Division:* Small collections of books, logs of ANARE expeditions, field equipment, biological specimens, and films and photographs of expeditions.

*Australian Government Analytical Laboratories:* A collection of standards which are used solely for reference purposes during analysis of forensic drugs, chemicals, pesticides and water samples.

*Patents Office:* Samples of hardware currently on sale and illustrating inventions which were commercially successful; a sample of a pocket calculator for use by pilots of light aircraft, invented by Lord Casey and Professor D. H. Myers.

#### DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

Collections of historic records and relics relating to marine navigation, marine archaeology, civil aviation, railways, and roads and road transport.

#### JOINT HOUSE DEPARTMENT

Forty-one portrait paintings of members of the Royal Family, the Governors-General, and Prime Ministers. 27 portraits of the Presidents of the Senate and the Speakers of the House of Representatives, 17 portraits of Australian explorers, poets, etc., 19 other portraits, 11 general paintings; 15 busts. 33 pottery items; and 49 miscellaneous articles including the table, inkstand and pen used by Queen Victoria when signing the Commonwealth Constitution Act.

#### NATIONAL GALLERY

Over 700 Australian paintings, prints, drawings, crafts and pieces of sculpture; 80 items of ethnic art; 110 international art works; a lending collection of 270 items, and 48 miscellaneous items.

#### NATIONAL LIBRARY

1,439,976 volumes; 72,662 periodicals, newspapers and serials; 1,550 running metres of

manuscripts, 1,008 oral history tapes; 17,887 music scores, 84,000 sound recordings; 25 150 paintings, drawings and prints, 139 160 photographs. 5 300 000 metres of moving picture film. 60 000 motion picture stills. 283 172 maps; 500 000 aerial photographs, 91 411 reels of microfilm, 509 200 microfiche. 228 950 microprint pieces and cards, and .3 100 000 data records.

#### ROYAL AUSTRALIAN MINT

The total collection includes a comprehensive collection of gold coins struck in Australia. Australian £ s d coins from 1910, examples of all Royal Australian Mint strikings each year of Australian coins plus Australian decimal strikings from the Mints in Melbourne, Perth and London, representative coins from other countries including U.K. and New Zealand

# 9 A National Organisation to Co-ordinate Museum Activities

9.1 The Committee of Inquiry has been asked:

‘to advise on the scope, objectives and functions of’ an Australia Institute to develop, co-ordinate and foster collections, research and displays of historical, cultural and scientific material of national significance, giving particular attention to its relationship with Government and other institutions.’

Before discussing the specific questions raised by this part of the terms of reference, it is relevant to discuss the experiences of other countries which prefer co-ordinated or individualist policies towards their museums.

In the overseas visit made by representatives of the Committee of Inquiry, particular attention was given to the recent changes in museum administration in Canada. The bold program in Mexico and the possibility of changes in museum policy in the United States of America and Britain were also closely examined.

## **The National Museums of Canada**

9.2 Following an inquiry into the administration and development of museums, the Canadian Government established a statutory authority with the aim of co-ordinating and promoting museums in that country. In brief, the Canadian authority—The National Museums of Canada—is completely responsible for the running of the four federal museums in Ottawa. Through an arrangement of ‘associated museums’, it also gives various forms of assistance to, provincial museums which meet specified criteria. Special grants are also made to museums, other than associated museums, to improve the standards of display and care of exhibits. The national authority also controls a special fund for acquisitions. That fund enables the museum authority to purchase in Canada significant cultural material which is threatened with sale to foreign buyers, or to bring back to Canada important objects which are for sale overseas. The Emergency Purchase Fund is a trust fund. Unexpended moneys are not returned to the Revenue Account at the end of a financial year and the Fund is topped up annually to provide a continuing source for urgent acquisitions.

The four national museums are: The National Gallery of Canada; The National Museum of Man; The National Museum of Science and Technology; and The National Museum of Natural Sciences. Each museum is administered by a director, who is responsible to the board of trustees of the national museum authority. The directors are subject to decisions taken by the board in determining a national museums policy, and the board determines how much money should be allocated to each national museum from the Parliamentary appropriation.

A Canadian Conservation Institute has also been established under the museum authority to provide a conservation service for the national museums. It also serves the regional museums through a network of five regional laboratories.

9.3 The establishment of a statutory authority, controlling the national museums, appears to have a mixed reaction from museum directors and senior staff. Some museum officials consider that the national authority, in providing common services to national museums, is in a position to Interfere ill administrative matters, Likewise, the new arrangements are said to remove unwisely from the director much of his freedom and responsibility particularly in staffing decisions. On the other hand, the national authority maintains that it does not seek to interfere in the day-to-day administration of national museums, and that the provision of common services through one authority reduces administrative costs and frees the director and his staff from details of administration which are time-absorbing and relatively unproductive.

In addition, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, through its Restoration Services Division, Technical Services Branch sustains a major effort in maintaining historic sites and buildings throughout Canada. Many of these buildings are historical

museums, while a major archaeological program adds data and relies.

The Department's Conservation Laboratory in Ottawa, which treats the total range of historical artefacts and materials, has a large professional staff, housed in a building, of some 3,740 sqm.

Many of the new Canadian arrangements are still in their teething time. The Committee of inquiry does not presume to judge the success or suitability of those arrangements in the particular circumstances of that country. The particular arrangements do, however, reflect the government's determination to make Canadians more aware of the richness and diversity of their culture, including, their diverse European backgrounds and the Indian and Eskimo heritage.

### **National Museums in Mexico**

9.4 Museums in Mexico are national institutions, administered through a government department and funded entirely by the State.

As part of the program to foster a distinct national identity amongst its citizens, the Government of Mexico decided, in early 1960, to build four major museums in Mexico City. The museums were built on the grand scale with astonishing speed. The most famous of these museums, the Mexican National Museum of Anthropology concentrates on portraying the ancient civilisations and cultural diversity of Mexico. It displays imaginatively and movingly one of the outstanding collections in the world.

Mexico is not regarded as one of the more developed countries, and its brilliant program for museums illustrates the importance attached by some countries to the preservation and display of their cultural history. Mexico's initiatives are unashamedly 'national' in their concept. The display in the Museum of Anthropology, for example, sets out to make the Mexican citizen proud of his identity as a descendant of an impressive culturally-rich civilisation.

Mexico is richly endowed with cultural relics of great antiquity. The relics are eagerly sought by museums and private collectors. The Mexican experience of large-scale looting, if relies over the past century has led the government to impose stringent control on archaeological missions and on the export of cultural property. A central conservation laboratory has been established in Mexico City, and all new-found relics are sent to that laboratory for treatment, research and cataloguing; all will be listed in a computer register of relics.

### **Museums in the United States of America**

9.5 Over the last fifty years the United States of America has usually led the world, both in the growth of museums and the resources devoted to the collecting of cultural relics. Private and public institutions run more than 6,000 museums, some 1,500 of which contain collections which could be described as significant. The increase in local Museum activity, foreshadowing the upsurge in Australia today, reflected a quickening interest in local and regional history.

Several crucial factors have to be taken into account when assessing museums in America today. The first concerns the vast resources which a highly developed and affluent country can devote to its major museums, and which it would be unrealistic to emulate. The second major distinguishing factor is that many of the older museums of merit were established through huge private endowments. Most of the excellence in museums in that country is attributable to investment from the private sector and not from government and in this regard the U.S.A. is unique. The private contribution to museums owes much to the very generous tax laws which treat donations and gifts to museums as Income tax deductions.

The character of museums, as institutions financed principally by private endowment and administered by independent boards of trustees, is jealously guarded.



At the same time, there is now less financial buoyancy in museums in the United States. In particular, the recent Inflation is eroding the value of endowments and the return on invested capital.

Increasingly, the private museums are seeking government funds as a supplement. This is so even in the great institutions like the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. Occasionally, supporting public funds are provided from municipal or State Governments, but the Belmont Report (1969) on museums in the U.S.A. made a strong case for federal aid on the basis that only the Federal Government had the great funds required to correct the deficiencies which had crept into American museum management.

9.6 At the federal level the Smithsonian Institution has been defined as the National Museum by an Act of Congress. Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian depends heavily on private benefactions to finance its great museums in Washington and its multi-pronged research effort. It also receives a federal appropriation which amounted to \$US60 million in 1973, to help finance its work.

There is, as yet, slender federal aid towards other museums in the U.S.A. Tax concessions for those who make donations to museums can be classed as a form of federal aid, though it is unsystematic aid. The research carried on within many museums in the U.S.A. has also been helped by large grants from the National Science Foundation, the Atomic Energy Commission and other federal bodies. Art and history museums, however, are usually overlooked in these Grants.

In addition the National Museum(s) Act imposes certain national obligations on the Smithsonian Institution, requiring it to:

- co-operate with museums and their professional organisations in a continuing study of museum problems and opportunities, both in the United States and abroad.
- prepare and carry out programs for training the career employees in museum practices either at the Smithsonian Institution or at other museums or institutions.
- prepare and distribute significant museum publications.
- perform research on and otherwise contribute to the development of museum techniques.
- co-operate with departments and agencies of the Federal Government, which operate, assist or are otherwise concerned with museums.

9.7 The National Museums Act is a Federal recognition of the case for Government aid to museums in general, although the functions allotted to the Smithsonian Institution for this purpose seem short of what might be described as a national program for museum development. The funds allotted, moreover, seem very frugal. There are signs, however, of more involvement by the Federal Government. This could result in a broader-based support and even a positive national policy towards museums.

### **Museum Organisation in Britain**

9.8 The national museums of Britain hold some of the greatest collections in the world. National museums are governed by boards of trustees, with the director and his staff holding appointments in the Civil Service. They are financed through the Department of Education and Science with operational and capital costs coming from public revenues.

Apart from the eleven national museums, more than a thousand other museums in Great Britain are run by local government authorities, universities, the armed services and private committees. According to the Report of the Wright Committee on 'Provincial Museums and Galleries' (1973) a total of 468 museums in England and

Wales were financed by the local authorities. Some museums—for instance Liverpool and Birmingham—hold major collections cared for by a large staff. Many local museums were too poor to employ a full-time curator. The annual income of these 468 local authority museums was less than half of the annual income of the ten national museums in London and the national museum in Wales.

The British Government spends small sums through the eight museum area councils, voluntary associations of regional museums and art galleries. These museum area councils are, in one sense, co-ordinating bodies. With the aid of pound-for-pound grants from British Government's own Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, these area councils provide regional museums with information, technical advice, arrange loans and travelling exhibitions, and provide technical services on conservation, display and publicity. They also help local museums in the vital task of identifying objects.

9.9 The recent report of the Wright Committee, which conducted an official inquiry into provincial museums, called for greater government aid in order to arrest the neglect from which many important museum buildings and collections now suffered. They urged the British minister responsible for the arts to set up a central body which could improve museums buildings, subsidise acquisitions for museums, and finance the training of curators and conservators at selected museums, and develop a small number of museums 'as provincial centres of excellence'. The central body would present annually to the Government the justification for financial resources, and would allocate those resources, working in part through new provincial councils. \*

### **The Trend of Museum Policies**

9.10 This brief summary of museums' policies in four of the countries examined by members of the Committee illustrates the diversity of national approaches towards the funding and administration of museums. No contrast could be stronger than the individualist approach of the United States and the more centralist approach of Mexico and Canada. Each approach of course has its merits and defects; and the exact balance of merits and defects depends much on the geography, wealth, forms of government, ethnic and cultural history, and the condition of the museums of each country.

Significantly even the United States and England seem likely to move more towards some central co-ordination and promotion of museums. The financial woes of many important museums was increasing the pressure on the central governments to vote money. Recognition of the valuable education provided by well-run museums is also a strong argument. Above all the increasing concern at the neglect of national treasures in many museums, and the urgent need to provide conservation staff and facilities, appears to be pushing governments towards the shaping of national policies.

The Governments of Canada and Mexico have embarked on an ambitious national museum policy partly with the political objective of increasing the awareness amongst citizens of their distinctive cultural heritage. Both countries live in the shadow of the politically powerful and culturally pervasive United States. Their Governments believe that they have strong reasons for using museums as one of the instruments for expressing their own national identity. Canadian policy also sees a national program towards museums as partly a healing function, a way of bringing harmoniously together the French and English traditions.

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\* pp.61-63, Wright Report, 1973

9.11 Museums, imaginatively built and operated, can be very persuasive voices of political propaganda: more persuasive, perhaps, than most Australians realise. A national museum authority which co-ordinates can also be a powerful propaganda agency for the government of the day. While this Committee recommends that a national co-ordinating or stimulating authority be established in Australia, it is conscious of possible dangers of this step. For this reason—and other reasons—the Committee sees merit in the existing State and regional museums retaining a considerable degree of autonomy and complete autonomy over their own display galleries and educational functions.

### **An Australian Policy towards Museums**

9.12 There is a powerful case for setting, up a national body which can co-ordinate collections and research and promote displays in Australian museums. Many of the arguments, based on present deficiencies in museums, are set out in greater detail in other chapters.

The deterioration of important collections is so serious and so widespread that only a national body can satisfactorily supervise the tackling of the issue.

Australia at present is better served by some categories of museums than by others. The finest natural history museums here are generally far superior to the finest human history museums.

A national body can so allocate funds as to remedy some of these deficiencies. A national body can help to raise the professional standards of the average museum employee.

9.13 Rationalisation of the resources available to museums through federal funding calls for a national body. It is unlikely that Australia can afford the luxury of unnecessarily duplicating collections or the research programs undertaken on those collections. As a nation we now possess a multitude of museums which often reflect haphazard allocation of those resources hitherto available for collections and research. One of the major goals of a national body should be to achieve some co-ordination in the policy of collecting, in the exchange of collections between museums, and in fostering specialised research centres in museums. While recommending that much more money be devoted to museums, we believe that the money would be utilised more efficiently through a national body.

Even at the Australian Government's present rate of support for museums a co-ordinating body is urgently required. In the absence of a federal policy for the promotion of 'museums, requests for assistance from local, regional and folk museums have been taken up by various Australian Government departments. During the course of its inquiries, the Committee has been concerned that significant grants from public revenues have been made by the Department of Tourism and Recreation, the Department of Urban and Regional Development (particularly through the National Estate program), the Department of Labor and Immigration (the Regional Employment Development, or so-called RED Scheme) and the Australia Council.

9.14 The effect of grants under these programs has been in our view, to distort the priorities which should be followed in any considered plan to utilise and promote Australia's museums.

In fairness it should be stated that there has been increasing consultation by departments and authorities with this Committee on projects involving museums. In our view it would have been preferable, however, if the Government had refrained from entering into any further commitment for museums until the Committee had completed its inquiries and its report had been made available.

Government departments and agencies with responsibilities in tourism, recreation, the arts and regional development have legitimate reasons for creating, or assisting museums. It would not be logical, to conclude that these authorities should be the planning and funding, authorities for museums.

9.15 The proposed national museums authority should have the prime responsibility for advising on a national program of assistance to museums, in consultation With departments and authorities which have a functional interest in the development of a museum in a particular area.

### **What Type of National Museums Authority?**

9.16 There have been some suggestions that an ‘Australia Institute’ should be developed on the lines of the Smithsonian Institution of the United States. These suggestions may have been made without a full understanding of the nature of the ‘Smithsonian’. The Smithsonian Institution includes museums of world-fame located on the Mall in Washington DC, the John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts, and a program of research into many intellectual disciplines. To attempt to set up an Australian version of the Smithsonian would be to translate to Canberra a series of functions and an administrative pattern which have developed to meet particular American needs and which in part have sprung from historical accidents. In Canberra some of the Smithsonian-type functions are ‘already carried out by a variety of institutions ranging from divisions of CSIRO, the Australian National University and the National Gallery. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the Smithsonian does not act as a co-ordinating organisation for the nation’s museums and so could not serve as a model for an Australian organisation which would attempt to foster and co-ordinate.

9.17 It is the Committee’s conclusion that an authority, independent of the administration of a national museum complex, should promote the development of museums. The State museums support the establishment of an independent authority. Understandably, the State museums take the view that a national authority, responsible for funding its own museums and for providing assistance to State museums, would concentrate available resources on its own national museums and shun the major State museums. The State museums are the major museums in Australia. They are in serious funding difficulties and no relief can be expected without assistance from the central government.

9.18 We *recommend* that a statutory authority be established to develop a national assistance program for museums. The powers and functions which should be vested in such an authority are discussed in the next chapter.

# 10 A Proposal for an Australian Museums Commission

10.1 If the case for a national authority to assist museums is accepted, the relationship of that authority to existing museums needs careful consideration.

Hitherto, the main impetus in museums, excluding the A.C.T. and other Territories, came from State governments. In a time of rapid population growth, State governments have understandably concentrated on providing the more essential services for their residents. It is difficult in these circumstances to complain that State governments have not given an adequate allocation to their museums. In the context of financial responsibilities in our federal system, it is unlikely that the States would see any possibility of a significant increase in support for museums. Any additional money will have to come from the Australian Government.

10.2 In endorsing the idea of an Australian Government museums authority, we would not recommend that the Australian Government should take over the total funding of the major State institutions, even if that were the desire of the States, which have been the originators and the mainstay of museums. Furthermore, so long as primary and secondary schools remain largely the States' responsibility, there is a strong case for the States retaining a strong interest in museums because in primary and secondary education the museums are important teaching tools.

10.3 Public museums have a style of administration which involves the community in the management of each institution. This is true of the museums and museum-type institutions in Canberra as well as in the other capital cities. We recommend a continuation of this arrangement whereby a chief executive is responsible to a board of trustees or a board of management. Museums should be identified with and, as far as possible, answerable to the communities they serve. That the museum trustees in several States tend to continue in office for too long a period, and that they perhaps do not adequately represent the main interests which their museums serve, is not an argument for dispensing with local management: it is rather an argument for making local management more objective. The relationship between museums and their city or region would be endangered if the system of local trustees were abolished and the total funding responsibility were transferred to Canberra.

10.4 In brief, the authority proposed would have something of the character and role of the Australian Universities Commission, but without the function of that Commission for recommending a total funding of universities. In addition, it is proposed the national museums authority should have other functions and powers which appear desirable if the objectives of enhancing the status of museums, and of encouraging a greater public use of museum resources and facilities, are to be realised.

## **Proposed Functions**

10.5 The proposed functions of the national museums authority which the Committee *recommends* are:

- To improve the quality, of Museum staff by promoting the establishment of appropriate courses of study.
- To advise the Minister on action necessary to develop, conserve and co-ordinate collections of national significance, with particular reference to those collections which record the history and Culture of Australia and its natural environment.
- To encourage and promote co-ordination in research activities on existing collections of national significance.
- To arrange technical advice and assistance for authorities responsible for collections of national significance.
- To advise the Minister on Australian Government funds necessary to improve the

standards of museums in Australia, including as appropriate, the provision of funds for expenditures of a capital nature; and to advise the Minister on the allocation of any funds appropriated by the Parliament for this purpose, including the conditions under which any financial assistance should be granted.

- To advise the Minister on proposals for the export of historical and cultural material, including advice on the possible acquisition of such material on behalf of a national, State or municipal institution.
- In carrying out these functions the authority shall consult, as necessary, with State, local government and other authorities or persons responsible for the collections concerned.

### **Proposed Powers**

10.6 The principal powers of the museums authority might be:

- To undertake research as considered necessary or desirable for the purpose of advising the Minister.
- To arrange for the preparation and publication of papers, pamphlets, books, periodicals, or films which are designed to stimulate public interest in work of museums in Australia and in collections of national significance.
- To stimulate the publication of papers which report on research undertaken in museums and which are considered to be of historic, scientific or of other interest.
- To arrange, or promote, courses of study, seminars and other conferences on matters which relate to museums and collections of national significance in Australia.
- To liaise with authorities in other countries for the purpose of arranging loans or exchanges of administrative and technical staff engaged in aspects of museum activity: and to promote the reciprocal loans of collections between overseas authorities and authorities in Australia, or between Australian institutions.

10.7 In this concept of a museum authority, there would be no disturbance to the present arrangements whereby Australian Government institutions operate through separate boards of trustees. At present, these boards submit their expenditure proposals to the responsible Minister through the appropriate department. These proposals cover not only administrative costs but any capital expenditures envisaged in the next financial year. The boards' proposals are then considered by the Minister in the Budget context each year, except in the case of major capital works, which require Cabinet approval.

If these exact arrangements were to remain unaltered there would be insufficient scope for a national organisation 'to develop, co-ordinate and foster collections, research and displays of historical, cultural and scientific material of national significance'. One solution might be to require the boards of existing national institutions to submit their expenditure proposals to the national authority who would then advise the Minister concerned. We appreciate, however, that experienced boards accustomed to a large degree of autonomy, and with access to the responsible Minister, would view such an arrangement as placing them in a subservient position.

10.8 As the simplest solution, this Committee recommends that national institutions responsible for collections should seek their basic funding under the existing administrative arrangements. This basic funding would include provision, as appropriate, for acquisitions.

At present, more than one Federal Minister is responsible for museums and for national collections.

10.9 It is therefore recommended that consideration be given to placing the Ministerial

responsibility for all Australian Government museums within the one portfolio. This action would facilitate the co-ordinating of the separate activities of each institution. The advantages of co-ordination will increase with the implementation of the various cultural agreements between Australia and other countries.

Above their basic funding requirements, the Australian Government's museums would have access in the same way as any state, municipal or other type of museum to the national museums authority for capital funds, and money for special projects (research, exchange programmes, etc.) and special or urgent acquisitions which cannot be funded within existing financial provisions.

The separation of normal administrative funding from the special funding for specific projects would also demonstrate an intention not to favour the national institutions at the expense of State institutions.

### **Suggested Guidelines for Priorities in Funding**

10.10 The major problems faced by custodians of collections of national significance are the inadequacy of storage and conservation facilities.

10.11 It is *recommended* that these facilities should receive priority in the expenditure of any funds available through a national museums authority. As a general principle, funds should not be made available for promoting museum displays until the storage and conservation problems have been overcome.

At the close of Chapter 3, the Committee recommended that museums should be graded as follows:

- major museums
- associated museums
- local museums

*Major Museums:* It is *recommended* that a museum classified as a 'major' institution should have access to any program of assistance administered by a national museums authority. This may entail the total funding of new or improved conservation and storage facilities, including the provision of facilities as part of a new museum building and the improving of facilities in an existing building. We envisage not more than 25 museums in this classification in the near future.

*Associated Museums:* It is *recommended* that an 'associated museum', in this category should be eligible for assistance grants to:

- improve facilities within an existing building;
- improve the display arrangements;
- acquire further material to augment an existing collection of national importance,
- employ a person with approved qualifications or experience as a curator and cataloguer of the collection.

*Local Museums:* A 'local museum' should be eligible to apply for expert advice on the identifying, cataloguing, display and conservation of its collection. It is envisaged that this advice will usually be a privilege of membership of the regional associations outlined in Chapter 5.

### **Name of Proposed National Authority**

10.12 The committee's terms of reference refer to the national body as 'an Australia Institute', perhaps seeing some relationship between its possible functions and those of the famed Smithsonian Institution in the U.S.A. The Committee, however, recommends against the use of the title 'Australia Institute' for the proposed national authority.

Preferring a title which defines more clearly the functions of the authority, it suggests the name 'The Australian Museums Commission'.

#### **Administration of Proposed 'Australian Museums Commission'**

10.13 In the committee's view, an appropriate membership of the Museums Commission would be a Chairman and a committee of about 10 members whose pooled experience covers the broad fields of museum activities.

We envisage that the Museums Commission would be serviced by a small secretariat in the charge of a Director and comprising perhaps 20 other staff, including typists and office staff. It is considered that a definite aim should be to contain staff numbers within this general limit by a policy of seeking advice from other governmental authorities, wherever practicable, or from outside experts.

It is assumed that existing governmental authorities could be used as a source of high-level advice on many matters before the Commission. The Australia Council, through its various boards, could supply advice on aspects of the arts; the National Library could advise on such matters as the acquisition of historical manuscripts and the needs of museums for reference libraries; the CSIRO could provide professional advice on a multiplicity of scientific issues; and the National Gallery could advise on paintings, prints and the fine arts.

10.14 The annual costs associated with the recommendations above are assessed as the following:

- \$20,000 for expenses and allowances of Commission members (part-time),
- \$250,000 for salaries and general expenses of the Commission's secretariat,
- \$50,000 for employment of experts.

There would be certain non-recurrent expenses in establishing the secretariat which might total a further \$20,000.



# 11 Conservation of Cultural Materials

11.1 The Committee was most impressed with the wealth of museum materials held in the federal, state and local museums. It would be difficult to estimate accurately their value in money, but \$2,000 million would be a conservative estimate. Paintings held at the Australian War Memorial alone are valued at \$40 million, and the total collections there are valued conservatively at \$100 million.

We were disturbed by the lack of care given to this national asset. As noted in Chapter 4, many collections are improperly housed and inadequately cared for. Some material is already in irretrievable decay. In the major museums only about 5 per cent of the collections are on public view; and the Committee considered that, with certain exceptions, the selected artefacts on display were in good condition. It was the housing, storage and care of the remaining 95 per cent which gave us great concern.

11.2 The problems of preserving and conserving the collections held by the Australian museums are compounded by the fact that so many of their unique items are ethnographic artefacts from Australia or the Pacific Islands. These objects are usually of wood and, fibre, or are composites of feathers, fur and other organic substances, coloured with fugitive dyes and paints. No research here has yet investigated the long-term deterioration that arises when cultural materials are transplanted to city museums in temperate or sub-tropical climates.

11.3 Even if solutions to these problems had been found, it is difficult to see how they could have been implemented. Very few museums are equipped with a conservation laboratory. Where laboratories do exist, they are inadequately staffed and space and equipment is skimped. Australia has less than ten conservators who could be considered to be professionally trained, and their present backlog of work has been estimated at thousands of man-years. The conservator of the National Library estimates that his task alone requires 750 man-years.

## **The Varieties of Decay**

11.4 The display areas of the main Federal and State museums are usually spacious and the spacious appearance is often praised by the public. In contrast, the storage areas of the museums, hidden from sight, are usually crowded. The constant search for storage space means that places of last resort are increasingly utilised as the store rooms for valuable materials. Clearly, the storage space should be designed carefully if it is to carry out the prime function of preserving the collections. The skills of designers, however, are concentrated in the display galleries and absent from the storage areas several museums—for instance, the Western Australian Museum and parts of the Australian Museum—the storage space is adequately designed; but too often the collections were spilling over into areas which had not been intended as repositories. Some Museums were storing collections in cellars, in the corridors of their buildings, and even in stacks beside the hot-water pipes. Several museums were pushing the overflow into galvanised-iron buildings where the wide fluctuations in temperature must be harmful to many objects. It is estimated that, of the total storage in Australian Museums, the temperature and humidity is controlled in less than 10 per cent of that storage space.

In these unsatisfactory storage areas the risk of fire is high. In the older the antiquity of the electrical wiring increases the danger of fire. Even where fire precautions have been adopted, the water damage in the event of fire may result in as much destruction as the smoke and flames.

11.5 In the Australian Government's own museums, conservation is often lacking. The director of the Australian War Memorial is perturbed that some of his valuable material is stacked against exterior walls. In stairways, and in an old shed. His conservation

laboratory is small and was formerly a lavatory. The director of a large United States Museum recently commented: 'The storage facilities of the Australian War Memorial are appalling'. Sir William Dargie, the artist, after inspecting the War Memorial's thousands of works of art and the mass of archival material, recorded his concern: 'I cannot express, too strongly my opinion that, as a matter of urgency, you should find ways and means of setting in train a thorough ongoing program of restoration and conservation'.

The Institute of Anatomy which houses collections of ethnographic material Valued at millions of dollars, recently air-conditioned its public galleries. It ignored, however, the more important basement, where the collections totalling 20,000 items are crammed into an area of a mere 420 square metres. Crammed storage prevents the material from becoming available to research workers; nor can the material be regularly inspected for damage. Fortunately, plans for the new National Gallery and the National Archives building include large conservation laboratories.

11.6 The decay or damage in storage can stem from various causes: fungus, insects such as silverfish and borers; corrosion from the oxides of nitrogen or sulphur present in the urban air; variations in temperature and humidity; or exposure to light. Examples of mechanical, biological or chemical damage were observed in most of the institutions visited.

In The Australian Museum a leaking roof resulted in the flooding of a priceless collection of New Guinea objects, and, in turn, a severe mould appeared on the wood, hair and other organic materials in the artefacts. In the Australian War Memorial old soldiers making their pilgrimage have complained that several military uniforms on display showed the incorrect regimental colours; it transpired that the museum's early officers had not realised how the exposure of textiles to light would lead to the fading of the colours. In most of the folk museums visited by members of this Committee, parts of the leatherwork in the coaches and in the harnesses appears to need preservative treatment. The South Australian Museum less than ten years ago brought in from the countryside one of those rare surviving tree trunks from which Aboriginals long ago cut the bark for a canoe, unfortunately, the tree trunk, stored in an unlined and open steel shelter, has possibly suffered more from its new site than from its old site in the open weather.

The showcases in several important museums are unwitting advertisements of neglect. The fine wooden dust on the floor of one showcase suggests that the antique on display was either being eaten away or was in an advanced state of rot. In another showcase the fibre-wares of Pacific Islanders, made in the nineteenth century when the ancient crafts were untouched by European tastes, had so deteriorated that if moved they were likely to disintegrate. Yet another showcase bore a placard announcing a '*recent*' acquisition; the acquisition had been there since the reign of Edward VII.

11.7 In the basements and storage areas, out of view of the visitors, the deterioration in several collections is acute: stuffed animals misshaped through long congestion; Aboriginal wooden implements and basketry altered through slow attrition and rubbing; paintings so stacked that a careless move of the foot could kick a hole in the canvas; and jars in which the preserving spirits had evaporated, allowing the preserved snake or fish to rot. Shortage of space is dangerous even when the museum curators show great care. In one museum inspected by the Committee, a door was opened to reveal the cramped storage places for paintings: as soon as the door was opened, a Drysdale fell flat on its face.

11.8 Awareness of the varieties of deterioration and decay, and of the speed with which it can occur, has come only recently to most Museum curators. Some of the trustees of

major Australian museums appear not to have heard of this problem but they are not alone: their counterparts in some of the famous institutions overseas are also presiding unperturbedly over quiet decay. Many Australian museums are worried, in varying degrees, about the condition of their collections. A heartening sign is the recent formation in Australia of the Institute for Conservation of Cultural Material. That new organisation, and its unpaid office-bearers, have been most helpful to this Committee.

### **The Storage Crisis**

11.9 Suitable storage space must be provided. In almost all of the major museums and galleries, the total storage space available is utilised. Furthermore, much of the current space used is unsuitable and we estimate that the new storage area requirement in the next 10 years would amount to 200,000m<sup>2</sup>.

It is hoped that when adequate storage is available, the State museums will accept, for safe-keeping, some of the material precariously held in smaller museums. As noted elsewhere in this report, valuable objects have been collected by historical societies and other local groups. These collections are mostly housed in buildings of historical importance which lack the ingredients of a sound museum building. The volunteers who care for the material are enthusiastic but, for the most part, unaware of the need for conservation. Consideration should be given to establishing regional repositories where conservation services could also be provided. There could also be advantages in sending mobile laboratories to assist the smaller museums.

The directors of the major museums see the need for conservation facilities and staff, but one director told the Committee that, even if they were available, he could not use them until space was provided. It is estimated that the floor space required for a conservation centre in a major museum would be about 200 square metres. Typically the staff might consist of about two conservators and four technicians. Any expenditure will be small compared to the value of the collections held.

11.10 *We recommend*, therefore, that a plan be drawn up to provide adequate housing for the collections of national significance. An early task of the Australian Museums Commission will be the sponsoring of a detailed examination of the storage needs of the major State and Federal museums. A ten-year plan for providing storage should be commenced with the utmost urgency if irreplaceable collections are to be protected.

### **Central Institute for Cultural Materials**

11.11 A century or more ago, before science was systematically applied to conservation problems, curators were forced to devise simple techniques. Sometimes the techniques proved reasonably effective in one environment but disastrous in another. 'Rule of thumb' or 'cosmetic' prescriptions often proved inept for Australian materials or conditions. They destroyed what they were intended to preserve. Thus paradecolorbenzin was used as a fumigant and insect deterrent, but over a period its fumes had unfortunate side-effects. The organic resins used as adhesives in Aboriginal manufactures were partly liquefied by the fumes. So several Australian museums now possess deformed, twisted Aboriginal axes and spears. (*Records of the South Australian Museum* XII (1956): 205.)

In Australia, scientific conservation has been a latecomer, except at the Art Gallery of N.S.W. and a few other institutions. Conservation became better known through the publicising of the recovery of the Endeavour cannon, the Investigator anchors and of similarly corroded artefacts from Dutch wrecks on the western coast. The Western Australian Museum developed a specialised laboratory at Fremantle to deal with marine wrecks and today it is the largest conservation laboratory in Australia. The need to conserve swamp-degraded wood recovered in archaeological excavations was answered

in the laboratory of the Department of Prehistory, Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. There a technique of freeze-drying was perfected. Most other Australian laboratories carry out routine prescription and do not initiate new research methods. Without more staff and equipment, strong advances cannot be expected.

Practically no conservation research has been done in Australia on collections of Aboriginal or Pacific islands ethnographic material. Many items in such collection's are constructed of organic materials which are unique to the region, but no conservators have attempted systematic research into the preservation of these organic materials. This fact, together with the extreme environmental contrasts, means that the existing 'cosmetic prescriptions' are of little value. Regrettably, The Australian Museum is the only institution which employs a trained conservator to work on a major ethnographic collection.

11.12 This Committee recommends that a central Cultural Materials Conservation Institute be set up, independent of any museum or gallery, to study the deterioration of our museum artefacts under Australian conditions. The institute should pay particular attention to ethnographic material. This research will necessitate fieldwork in order to ascertain how the perishable organic materials were prepared and used by the original Aboriginal manufacturers.

A rich part of our national heritage consists of the rock sites painted or engraved by Aboriginals and the buildings erected by Europeans. This institute should undertake research on the preservation of such exterior monuments in collaboration with the National Heritage Commission and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

This central institute should not provide routine services for existing State or Australian Government museums. The responsibility for the routine conserving of materials must rest with the holders of the collections, partly because distant travel may, damage objects, but also because Much of the treatment is elementary and can be easily carried out by the curator. A main function of the central institute will be to devise appropriate methods that can be applied in conservation laboratories at any museum.

The institute should be autonomous. As it should collaborate with all conservation laboratories in Australia, its council should include a number of practising conservators from State institutions.

11.13 We envisage the Cultural Materials Conservation Institute becoming a centre of excellence in all matters relating to conservation and the co-ordinator of research in conservation: it should be equipped and encouraged to:

- (a) give advice on all aspects of conservation, including research, training, analysis and documentation;
- (b) develop or evaluate laboratory techniques, particularly those related to conserving Australian and Pacific ethnographic collections;
- (c) examine and analyse artefacts in order to understand their source, composition and technique of fabrication; conduct artificial ageing or durability tests on materials used by conservators in the restoration or protective coating of specimens; and make routine quality-tests on the diversity of commonly used materials such as resins;
- (d) undertake special projects for Australian museums or the Australian Heritage Commission;
- (e) publish scientific papers in order to inform all museum staff of new trends in conservation;
- (f) provide specific training courses and seminars conservators from other

- institutions wishing to specialise in the handling of particular materials; with a program of visiting fellowships funded for conservators;
- (g) assist neighbouring countries of our region with advice or laboratory research;
  - (h) maintain a comprehensive library and bibliography on conservation;
  - (i) provide information on, or establish, national standards for the storage and associated facilities of collections of various size, nature and complexity;
  - (j) provide facilities and equipment for emergency relief when collections are damaged or endangered by natural disasters;
  - (k) establish a mobile service to advise small regional institutions.

11.14 As this institute should serve the whole of Australia, a central site is desirable. The recent Conference of Museum Directors and Dr A. E. Werner's UNESCO Report both recommended that it should be located in Canberra. There it would be near the collections of the Australian War Memorial, the National Library, and the National Gallery, for which representative samples of materials and items could be borrowed. The institute would also be usefully associated with the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, several CSIRO laboratories, and the collections and laboratory of the Prehistory Department of the Australian National University. Taken together, the materials in Canberra encompass the whole range of conservation problems encountered in this part of the world.

11.15 Some of the urgent conservation issues and needs in Australia are:

- (a) The lack of a rapid mechanised means for chemically stabilising the millions of sheets of documents and archives in the national collections.
- (b) The lack of suitable media for preventing preserved biological specimens from losing colour and strength.
- (c) The lack of suitable consolidants or other means for preserving the surfaces of many kinds of building stones in historic buildings or monuments.
- (d) The total absence of a proven method for stabilising the deteriorating surfaces of caves and rock shelters bearing Aboriginal rock art.
- (e) The need to discover elective long-term methods of treating ethnographic items which embody such diverse materials as blood, cobwebs, feathers, animal skins, fur, gum hafting, and fugitive vegetable dyes.
- (f) The specification of conservation procedures for small collections in those tropical countries lacking funds for elaborate environmental control and adequate storage.
- (g) The search for insecticides which do not cause fading or other damage to materials.
- (h) The storage of lame animal specimens, especially fish without the loss of skin colouration and damage to soft tissues.
- (i) The lack of information on the ageing properties of materials used in conservation.

This list merely illustrates the range of problems which conservators encounter. It could be multiplied by adding conservation puzzles in collections of historical relics and in marine and land archaeology.

### **Training of Specialists in Materials Conservation**

11.16 Traditionally, the conservators of cultural materials have been trained like many other new professions, on what amounts to an apprenticeship system. Motivated students have been attached to established practitioners of the art. Only in the last twenty years have formal courses of study been set up, and even now they exist in few countries.

11.17 Specialists in materials conservation can be trained in three places:

- (a) the conservation laboratory of a museum;
- (b) a national organisation with specific responsibility for conserving cultural;
- (c) a specialist course at a university, college of advanced education, or technical college.

The Committee considers that the on-the-job training in museum laboratories would prove inadequate. Qualified conservators should have a tertiary qualification in a scientific discipline and should have undergone further studies and training in conservation associated with a range of materials such as metals, paper and paper products, wood, leather, paints and pigments. The required scientific knowledge is unlikely to be obtained through on-the-job training.

11.18 The second way of training conservators—through a national specialised agency—has been adopted in Canada. There a central conservation laboratory trains conservators in various disciplines, thus retaining many of the merits of an apprenticeship system. On the other hand, an institution which is responsible for scientific research can suffer a dilution of purpose if it trains conservation workers. In our view the two functions require separate facilities and separate staff. Moreover, there would be difficulty in gaining academic recognition of an institution which is not itself part of a recognised higher educational system.

11.19 The Committee *recommends* the third proposed method: the training of conservators in a degree-granting institution. Preferably it should be near the proposed conservation institute, whose staff would be available for specialist teaching. The Canberra College of Advanced Education has shown interest in establishing such a course and, in our view, would be an appropriate institution.

It is beyond this Committee's competence to put forward detailed proposals about the course which might be offered to students. We envisage, however, that it would run for two or three years, at post-graduate level, leading to a degree or diploma in materials conservation. As much of the course should centre oil materials and their physical and chemical properties, incoming students should have some knowledge of those subjects. In addition, they should have a feel for cultural materials and possess manual dexterity.

A professional course is proposed because tasks in conservation are often so complex as to be beyond the competence of technicians applying standardised measures. It is essential that the conservators be viewed as professionals. In salary and status they should be equated with curators.

Conservators in Australia, with one or two notable exceptions, have received their training overseas. There the demand for the available conservators is highly competitive, and the major institutions are in a better position to offer attractive conditions. The training of conservators within Australia is now essential.

11.20 The Committee recommends that negotiations should begin immediately with the Canberra College of Advanced Education with the purpose of establishing a course in materials conservation at that College in 1977. We also recommend that funds be made available for the Principal of the College to visit overseas in 1976 for discussions with overseas training institutions on course structures, and on the possibility of engaging a course director for the College.

We have discussed with the Principal of the Canberra College the likely costs of establishing a post-graduate course on lines outlined above. The costs involved, including specialist equipment and teaching staff, would probably be in the order of \$300,000 over a four year period.

11.21 We do not recommend a special training school for technicians or laboratory assistants working in conservation. They should work essentially under an apprenticeship-type system, supplemented by studies at a local technical college. The conservation laboratories of the larger museums should accept a major responsibility in taking on such apprentices.

A qualification system should be created so that all conservation workers can gain recognition for their skills and abilities. These formal qualifications should be recognised equally by the State and Australian Government Public Service Boards, Museums, Art Galleries and Library and Archive Associations. It would be desirable if these qualifications won recognition from conservators and conservation institutions overseas.

### **Conservation and Restoration of Easel Paintings**

11.22 Art museums face an additional dilemma in conservation: how far should damaged paintings be restored, and who should undertake the restoration? In conservation institutes in other countries the restoration of easel paintings is often a vital part of the teaching. Restoration work calls not only for historical and theoretical knowledge but also for marked manual skills. There is therefore a valid case for a separate course which trains conservators to specialise in the restoration of easel paintings.

Richard D. Buck, Director of the Inter Museum Conservation Association Laboratory in Oberlin College, Ohio, gives the following definition of restoration:

‘Restoration carries a sense of renewal from a defective or incomplete state. It usually includes removal of elements foreign to an original design or the replacement of those lost... Properly used, the word denotes action prefaced by and dependent on competent research.’

In our discussions with various directors and staff of art museums, they gave different views about the wisdom of the restoration of easel paintings. Some were wary of attempts to restore a painting to what was believed to be its original condition. We are in no position to arbitrate between the conflicting views of art museums on conservation as against conservation plus restoration.

11.23 We believe that conservation of art work should be an integral part of the work of a trained conservator and, for this reason, should be included in the proposed course of study at the Canberra College of Advanced Education.

11.24 We make no other recommendation on the special training required for the restoration of easel paintings. In our view, the art museums should define their attitudes more specifically and, if necessary, submit training plans to the government for further consideration.

### **Training of Museum Personnel**

11.25 The Committee gives priority to the training of conservation staff, but also appreciates the need for training the other personnel who, being employed in museums, share responsibility for the preservation of the collections.

We considered the report *The Professional Training of Museum Staff in Australia* prepared by a UNESCO consultant, Mr H. R. Singleton,\* following his participation in a major seminar organised by the Australian UNESCO Committee of Museums and Libraries. We understand that some of his suggestions for the training of curatorial staff have been taken up. A joint committee representing the Art Galleries and Museum

\* Singleton, H. R., *The Professional Training of Museum Staff in Australia*, UNESCO Serial No. 2997/RMO, 1973

Associations of Australia is examining the possibility of an under-graduate course in Museum Studies at a college of advanced education. In 1976, the Power Institute of Fine Arts at the University of Sydney will offer a one-year post-graduate course in museum studies. It is believed that such a course will do much to the collections held in Australian museums.

11.26 We support the initiatives that have been taken by State governments, through major museums, to organise seminars for staff of local and regional museums and to publish instructional handbooks on museum practice. In this area the proposed Australian Museums Commission could provide considerable assistance, and we anticipate a large degree of co-operation between the Commission and the State bodies.

### **Main Recommendations**

11.27 *We recommend:*

- That high priority for a National Conservation program is now essential.
- The nation's collections be housed in those conditions of temperature and humidity most appropriate to each class of material, thus reducing the rate of deterioration. All museums include conservation laboratories, adequately equipped and staffed at a professional level.
- A central institute should be set up to investigate the reasons for the deterioration of Museum artefacts under Australian conditions and to devise methods of arresting and correcting this decay, especially the decay in ethnographic materials.
- The central institute should co-operate closely with laboratories in all other major museums in Australia.
- A course should be set up at the Canberra College of Advanced Education to train conservators for museums.
- Apprenticeship training in the museological field be stimulated.



# 12 Outline of a National Museum of History

12.1 The Committee has been asked to give particular attention to the establishment of a national museum of history.

12.2 *We recommend* that a national museum should be established in Canberra. Our reasons are outlined below.

Virtually every nation has its national museum but here the argument for a national museum is particularly powerful. For the nation covers a whole continent and moreover that continent, because of its long isolation from the other land masses, has had an unusual natural history and human history. A new comprehensive museum offers—for the first time—an unsurpassed opportunity to display the geological, climatic, natural and human histories of an entire continent.

It should be stressed that a continent, rather than a nation, is the ideal focus for a museum, because the natural boundaries are more permanent and powerful than man-made boundaries. Hitherto, because of national boundaries, no continent has constituted the central theme of a large museum.

A new national museum offers a chance to mend several intellectual rifts which still affect those major museums founded in the nineteenth century. As explained in Chapter 4, the major museums which were created in Australia in the nineteenth century tended to divorce Aboriginal man from European man and to divorce European man from Nature. The achievements of Aboriginal society over 40,000 years were minimised; and the subtle inter-dependence of European man and Nature was also minimised. Accordingly, many of the factors which moulded the human history of both black and white settlers were neglected.

A new national museum will illuminate new fields of knowledge and also link traditional fields in revealing ways. Australia's natural history and human history is unusual, and today the knowledge of many facets of that history is unfolding in exciting ways. A new national museum will naturally chart a course quite different to that followed by other national museums in Europe or the Americas or by those earlier Australian museums which were founded during a different educational and scientific climate.

12.3 In giving high priority to this recommendation we are conscious that Canberra has vital national collections and a specialist war museum but no wide-ranging museum. Significantly, Melbourne and Sydney already had comprehensive museums when they held fewer people than Canberra holds today. Even the smaller cities of Hobart and Launceston have long provided their residents with museum displays and services not yet available in Canberra.

The founding of a major museum provides all opportunity to take valuable initiatives and employ new techniques in popular education. No comprehensive museum has been founded in Australia for more than half a century.

12.4 We believe that a decision to establish a comprehensive museum with a national responsibility or charter is long overdue. We are confident that a decision to do this would be widely supported by Australians.

12.5 *We recommend* that the new institution should be called The Museum of Australia. In proposing this name we accept that the two largest State museums—The Australian Museum in Sydney and the National Museum in Melbourne—will cling to their traditional continent-wide names and that only confusion and ill will result from an attempt to commandeer the words 'Australian' or 'National' for the title of the new museum.

## **Themes of The Museum of Australia**

12.6 We recommend that the theme of the Museum be the history of man and nature in

this continent, their linked roles, and their interactions. We suggest that to divorce man from nature in the new museum would be to perpetuate a schism which the nineteenth century, in the interests of science, did much to foster.

Essentially a museum of man and the Australian environment, it should consist of three themes or sections, each linked intellectually and physically to the other at appropriate points. We believe that one theme should embrace the environment—land and sea, geology, flora, fauna and climates. Another theme or section should cover Aboriginal history stretching over some 40,000 years. A third linked theme should cover the history of Europeans in Australia.

12.7 In suggesting these three main overlapping themes for the museum we were influenced by a variety of considerations which merit brief comment.

12.8 The argument for a major display of Aboriginal history is overwhelming. The chronology of the human occupation on Australia is dominated by Aboriginals. If the human history of Australia were to be marked on a 12-hour clockface, the era of the white man would run for only the last three or four minutes. A museum of Aboriginal history was the subject of a special committee under the chairmanship of Professor D. J. Mulvaney, and we comment, at the end of this chapter, on that report and its proposed Gallery of Aboriginal Man.

12.9 The justification for a major pavilion on the history of Europeans in Australia is also strong. The quickening public interest in Australia's recent history has not been satisfied by the older State museums. They have usually lacked funds to collect adequately in that field; moreover, they have been oriented more to the natural sciences, though occasionally they have built up valuable collections in facets of applied science and technology. It is fair to say that so far no museum in Australia has attempted, even on a moderate scale, to depict the history of Australia since the coming of the British.

12.10 For a time this Committee was not sure whether the Australian environment should be given prominence in the new museum. We were conscious that natural history was the field in which the older museums had been vigorous collectors and exhibitors. The six State capital cities, and Launceston as well, had created museums with an excellent component of natural history. Accordingly, a decision to set up a conventional museum of natural history in Canberra might well duplicate the very field where the older museums were most successful. Furthermore, a conventional museum in Canberra could overlap the taxonomic research pursued only a mile or two away by various divisions of CSIRO and by the Bureau of Mineral Resources. While these arguments show the folly of duplicating existing institutions, they do not preclude the creation of a museum which interprets the natural environment in a different way. It is an inescapable conclusion that much of the history of man in Australia—whether the Aboriginals' remarkable harvest of herbs and plant foods, the pastoral rushes and the gold rushes of the nineteenth century, or the droughts and dust storms of the early twentieth century—is tied to natural history. A museum integrating environment and people became, eventually, the obvious solution. Such a Museum would, in no sense, duplicate an existing institution.

We see the arrangement into three major themes as a simple way of organising and administering the museum: but each theme or section should not be self-contained.

The manner in which man has coped with and utilised his natural environment has been a determining factor in his social, cultural and economic development. The implications of the uncontrolled use of the environment are only now being appreciated. Environmental protection is likely to be a subject of continuing concern and research.

While we propose a separate building or section devoted to ‘the Environment’, the effect of the natural environment cannot be excluded from the Aboriginal and European galleries or sections. Aboriginal mythology and economic life often reflected the demands, pressures and resources of the natural environment. Exploration, settlement, farming, mining and industrial development by Europeans in Australia is linked closely to the natural environment.

The web of interaction between Environment and Man is all important for the proposed museum. When the time comes to plan the museum, the design of the buildings should reflect the interaction of these themes. If it is resolved to design a separate pavilion for each of the main themes, the pavilions should be so sited and shaped that the connecting links are in no way prevented.

12.11 We *recommend*, in order to safeguard the interaction between the themes, that the various sections of the museum be built simultaneously. To open the museum with only an Aboriginal section or an Environment section would endanger or destroy the concept.

The themes of the history of man and his environment should also be linked by a nature park which, within the museum grounds, displays some of the natural and introduced fauna of this continent. Such a display would also illustrate the ecology of species which are endangered. The display would also show how Aboriginal and European Man has used the natural and imported species for his own use, and how the environment was affected.

12.12 We have not seen a Museum—or are we aware of one—where a nature park has been incorporated into the museum in such a way. It offers the following advantages:

- it lessens the reliance on prepared animals and plants for internal displays;
- the live specimen in a natural setting always has more appeal than a stuffed skin in a showcase—visitors will be more interested in the biology of the species if the live specimen is before them;
- live specimens can aid ecological research;
- the museum should make visitors more aware of the fauna and flora of their country, and of the case for the protection of particular species.

In the museum display the fragmentation of knowledge into the familiar compartments should be avoided as much as possible. In the galleries which mainly display the environment there should not be for example, a distinct geology section and a distinct sea-shell section. In galleries depicting Australia since the Dutch voyages, there should not be a section devoted solely to transport and a section devoted solely to the history of Australian sport and leisure. As far as possible the visitors to the museum should have the sensation of a journey through time. They should see, juxtaposed, the events that are happening, simultaneously, that are colliding with one another or reacting against one another. The old system of dividing knowledge into the familiar compartments of the school syllabus, into history and anthropology and zoology, naturally has advantages and can be seen in most museums. But there are also great advantages in bridging those divisions. A new museum provides an exciting opportunity for new bridges.

12.13 It is not this Committee’s responsibility to suggest in detail the sequence and arrangement of The Museum of Australia. That is rather the responsibility of the director and curators, working within the guidelines identified by their trustees. We would envisage, in general terms, that the sequence of displays within the museum would commence with the origins of the Australian landmass and its slow northwards drift; the evolution of its distinctive flora and fauna; the moulding of regional landscapes; the effects of the last of the ice ages; the arrival of the first Aborigines; their influence

through fire and hunting on the environment; the environment's effects on the Aborigines' various ways of life and in turn their skilful harnessing of the environment; the long isolation of the Tasmanian Aborigines; the last rising seas of the seas and the separating of Australia and Papua New Guinea. Even in the sequence outlined so far, any rigid barrier between displays of natural history and Aboriginal history would distort a fundamental relationship.

The Committee considered proposals that the museum should have a permanent hall or institution with challenging exhibitions on new discoveries or on the interconnection of art, science, technology and design. Rather than establish a separate institution, it believes that concepts such as those exemplified by the stimulating Australia '75 exhibition would be better fitted into appropriate sections of the Museum of Australia portraying the inter-relationship between society and the environment. Such temporary displays could be a feature of the museum.

12.14 We recommend that the museum should include a planetarium. This might be established in a separate building or could logically be placed within the gallery on the environment. The Science Museum of Victoria and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in New South Wales each possess a planetarium, and it is one of the most popular parts of the museum. Although several submissions pressed the case for a separate national planetarium, we believe that the planetarium should concentrate more on Southern skies and thus fit into the theme of the museum.

12.15 In defining the scope of the national museum we recommend that the phrase 'national' should be interpreted in a wide sense. The museum should portray, when appropriate, European and Asian and American influences on Australia's human and natural history. Australia's communications with the outside world should be an important theme in the museum. The territory covered by the museum's collections and exhibits should include Australian Antarctica. Furthermore, Papua New Guinea should be included where appropriate, for it was physically joined to Australia for at least three-quarters of the human history of this continent, and was administered by Australia for a relatively short period in recent times.

### **The Techniques of Display**

12.16 We *recommend* that, before the museum is planned, market research be conducted on the kinds of display techniques which are best suited to Australian audiences of different age groups and backgrounds. Are press-button displays more effective than dioramas? Are actual objects more effective than models or transparencies? While the trend in many overseas museums is towards press-button participation, some U.S. research suggests that actual communication with the audience lessens rather than increases through press-button gadgetry.

The museum, where appropriate, should display controversial issues. In our view, too many museums concentrate on certainty and dogma, thereby forsaking the function of stimulating legitimate doubt and thoughtful discussion.

We consider that the museum should periodically expose itself to scholarly examination of its displays through small seminars of specialists—or perhaps by the engagement of consultants—to report on the accuracy and intellectual adequacy of displays. Alternatively, a review formula should be devised to diminish the chance of the Museum becoming the familiar second-hand encyclopaedia. From the outset, the annual budget of the museum should allow a considerable sum for new displays or alterations to old displays. Museums if their displays remain unchanged, silently defeat their own aims. This is a defect of most museums in Australia. New display can be an item of some cost, but we feel it is inexcusable that one major Museum should be allocated less than \$3,000 in the current financial year for display of its collections.

We also believe that there is considerable merit in the use of 'enlargements of' historical photographs as a background to items on display. This technique has been used admirably in the Fremantle Branch of the Museum of Western Australia.

In most museums of the world, a curator is responsible for the display. Without wishing to be uncharitable, we consider that the dreariness and intellectual dullness of many displays can be traced to the decisions of scientists on what is an appropriate display. The gallery cluttered with a mass of objects without any consistent theme is a common sight throughout the world.

The curator is the specialist on the collection in his custody and he must accept the responsibility for the accuracy of his material on public display. The curator cannot therefore be divorced from the display function, but he should not dominate the choice of display techniques and designs. As we see it, the role of the curator is to determine, in general terms, the theme of a display and to approve the accuracy of the display. It is the work of the professional in the display medium to submit a graphic design of how this theme could be translated into a display gallery.

12.17 We *recommend* that the proposed Museum of Australia employ professionals in the display media with the responsibility for developing the gallery displays in consultation with the individual curators of the collections.

12.18 We *recommend* that a special, section of the museum should cater specially for children under the age of 12 or 14. As argued in Chapter 4, this arrangement offers advantages to both children and adults.

### **Special Facilities in the Museum**

12.19 Rooms should be set aside, off the main galleries, where serious visitors or tertiary students can see selected parts of the collection which cannot be displayed for lack of space in the main galleries. Unfortunately, in major museums throughout the world, the number of objects on display in public galleries tends to diminish as display techniques improve. Thus, the advanced students or those with special interests are penalised, but no attempt is made to compensate them by giving access to rooms where they can inspect quietly a relative clutter of catalogued objects.

12.20 The museum could serve to keep alive and perhaps teach certain of those crafts which in earlier days were vital means of livelihood. Sometimes the blacksmith, cobbler, seamstress, lithographer or watch-maker of the nineteenth century, or Aboriginal craftsmen of earlier centuries, can have a vital place in a modern museum. These workshop crafts also form an area of research where a national museum can offer much to those regional and folk museums which have already shown the educational and entertainment value of a living workshop.

12.21 To enhance the effectiveness of the Museum it should offer a variety of additional facilities:

- (a) shops for the sale of crafts, books, and high-quality reproductions of selected museum exhibits;
- (b) an outside area with facilities which encourage the use of the grounds for general recreation;
- (c) a browsing library with a large area of informal seating and a small stock of relevant books and journals: if a museum sharpens the curiosity of many who visit it, an appropriate browsing library is probably even more useful than a bookshop;
- (d) a gallery for visiting exhibitions;
- (e) a hostel where visiting school children might study for a few days in

conjunction with a visit to the museum would be another facility which might be considered when the Museum has developed.

The museum, to attract visitors, should be designed with their comfort in mind. The objective of holding the visitor's interest through imaginative displays is defeated if he leaves exhausted after several hours. Through the use of comfortable seating at points, and side lounges where people can relax, 'museum fatigue' can be minimised.

Refreshment rooms and a family cafeteria are important facilities in large museums but are almost totally neglected in Australia. The museum should incorporate adequate facilities on the assumption that it will attract nearly all visitors to Canberra as well as the local residents.

### **Research**

12.22 Research should be a vital function of the proposed Museum of Australia. As the collections grow they will promote research: likewise, active research will assist the collections to grow along those lines which appear to be more rewarding.

There is also a strong argument, given the interdisciplinary concept of the new national museum, for fostering research on multi-disciplinary themes. Fellowships should be offered to visiting scholars of distinction. Such scholars would also be available as museum consultants, as commentators on the effectiveness and accuracy of the museum's message.

The Committee discussed sympathetically a suggestion that a research institute should be attached or affiliated to each main thematic section of the museum. Thus, Institute of Aboriginal Studies could be linked to the Aboriginal section, an Institute of Flora and Fauna to the environment section, and a proposed Institute for the History of Technology or of Folk Culture, to the modern history section.

12.23 It is *recommended* that the Trustees of the new museum investigate this proposal.

In view of the frail links between museums and social scientists in Australia, as in most countries, and in view of the museum's obvious need to draw on the research in a wide area of history and the social sciences, positive efforts should be made to encourage research in those branches of the social sciences most relevant to the museum's displays and collections. An effective research library in the history of science and technology would be valuable. Australia has no adequate library in that field, but increasingly historians will study the influence of technology on Australian history. Such a library—perhaps run jointly by the Museum and the Academy of Science and the National Library—would also be invaluable for the museum's specialists in materials conservation.

### **The Inevitable Storage Crisis**

12.24 Before the designing of the museum, careful investigation should be made of the short-term and long-term storage needs of the Australian museums elsewhere. The experience of national museums tends to under-estimate their storage needs. When the inevitable accommodation crisis arises, many items are damaged in the transfer to the warehouses and others deteriorate there over the years. Off-site storage, if deemed expedient for certain national collections, should be planned more carefully further in advance than on-site storage, for storage on cheap land away from the museum site has hazards.

In major Australian Museums, off-site storage has been arranged reluctantly. Space has been jammed in the main buildings. The moves have not been successful. At The Australian Museum and the N.S.W. Museum of Applied Sciences, the curators and scholars have remained at the main buildings while the overflow collections have been

stored on less valuable sites a few miles away. The divorce of curators from their collections understandably leads to deterioration in many of the objects. Collections out of sight and not liable to regular inspection soon suffer.

In several large museums, for instance the British Museum (Natural History) and the South Australian Museum, overcrowding in the main buildings has been met only by transferring an entire department—lock, stock and microscope—to a new outer site. There the collections are still guarded carefully by the curators, but the unity of the museum has been broken and the desirable contact between research workers in sister disciplines is probably lessened. Moreover, the interpretative and educational staff working through the display halls of the museum can be deprived of the invigorating contact with the curator and research staff who work some miles away.

12.25 Generally a many-sided museum gains if its collections, display halls, library, research facilities, educators and researchers and custodians, all work closely together. An integrated museum, other things being equal, is more likely to achieve excellence. Such is the opinion of most of the experienced museum directors with whom we discussed this issue.

Accordingly, the measurable economic gains of storing certain collections away from the main site has to be balanced against the less measurable losses which can easily arise from off-site storage. We support the principle that the collections should be stored within the museum grounds, and we see no reason why this should not be adopted for the national museum.

### **Physical Plan of the Museum**

12.26 There have been earlier proposals to establish a national museum in Canberra but these have differed significantly from the concept put forward in this report. While a traditional museum structure would suit the Parliamentary Triangle, the concept of a national museum as outlined in our report would be impaired if it were located there. The Parliamentary Triangle is a prestige area reserved for national institutions. The present buildings include Parliament House, the National Library and the Australian War Memorial, and now the National Gallery and the High Court of Australia are in the course of construction. These buildings might be termed ‘monumental’ in design. We believe that such architectural monuments would be inappropriate for the proposed Museum of Australia.

12.27 The area of the land allocated for public institutions in this area is:

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Buildings m<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Site Area (hectares)</i>	<i>Site Surrounds (incl. site area) (hectares)</i>
Parliament House	28 000	3	7.5
Australian War Memorial	12 938	3	12
National Library	25 740	4	10.5
High Court	11 500	2	4
National Gallery	20 000	4	8

With some partial exceptions, these institutions’ functions are performed inside the building and the exterior grounds are used only for carparking and landscaping. We see The Museum of Australia, however, as occupying an extensive site which apart from, carparks and other facilities would be used for permanent displays. Re-creations, working models, Sound-and-light festivals the exhibition of fauna and flora, and all those outdoor activities which enliven and improve a comprehensive museum. The

national museum should be set in the kind of landscape which is loosely described as 'typically Australian'. The Parliamentary Triangle with its formal buildings of international design and man-created landscapes is more a European than an Australian setting and therefore not appropriate. Nor does it offer adequate space.

While the new planning, design and display techniques used overseas are impressive, the museums visited overseas provided no model that incorporated most of the essential features we envisage for The Museum of Australia. Even where the overseas museums had large floor areas, site limitations were pointed out. The Committee was told on many occasions that, given hindsight, a particular museum would have been sited on a larger area. Very few major museums have been able to secure appropriate space. Where sufficient display area is provided, there are usually consequential reductions in other areas—storage, research, etc.

12.28 With these arguments in mind, we *recommend* that planning should be for 100,000 square metres of floor space. This would include some storage space. A central repository for material not on display would also be required. This suggested area consists of the following nine components.

12.29 Exhibition Area. We *recommend* that the design should provide for about 60,000m<sup>2</sup> of display area divided between the Aboriginal Gallery and the other two principal themes of the museum. Each section would average about 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> for exhibiting material. As the proposed museum would in effect be a trio of museums, the suggested area of 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> for each museum should be compared with that of other major museums:

National Gallery	7,100 m <sup>2</sup>
Australian Museum, Sydney	6,481 m <sup>2</sup>
Art Gallery of New South Wales	4,907 m <sup>2</sup>
Australian War Memorial	8,902 m <sup>2</sup>
Deutsches Museum, Munich	40,000 m <sup>2</sup>
(additional display area planned)	15,000 m <sup>2</sup>
Royal Ontario Museum	20,925 m <sup>2</sup>
Museum of Anthropology, Mexico	68,700 m <sup>2</sup>
California Museum of Science and Technology	20,359 m <sup>2</sup>
Ontario Science Centre	16,666 m <sup>2</sup>
The Oakland Museum	9,166 m <sup>2</sup>
Italian National Museum of Science and Technology	24,916 m <sup>2</sup>
The American Museum of Natural History, New York	65,100 m <sup>2</sup>

Not all of the 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> for each of the trio of museums would be internal space. Courtyards and other external areas should also display exhibits or cater for activities which can be better arranged outside gallery walls. This arrangement has been successful at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico where, according to an official publication, the internal and external areas were designed on the following principles:

'Since the prime purpose of the museum was educational, various psychological factors had to be considered in the creation of interior and exterior space. The very generous interior spaces were dictated by the need to provide an atmosphere in which the visitor, in spite of crowds, would be able to enjoy a suitable degree of privacy and repose for contemplating the museum displays in a leisurely and rewarding way. To avoid the fatigue commonly produced by a large museum, exhibits were also placed in the gardens adjacent to each room, and circulation patterns were arranged in such a way as to prevent the visitor from passing through more than two display rooms without entering the patio (on the ground floor), or at least looking down on it (on the upper floor). This intermittent change of atmosphere has a restful effect and is a constant reminder that the museum is in a park.'



In fact, a little more than half (35,700 m<sup>2</sup>) of that Museum's display space is in open areas.

12.30 *Rest Areas.* Too often museums are planned with little regard for the public for whom the Museums are built. Visitors' interest will decline as they proceed through a Museum; the physical comfort of the casual visitor is essential. Rest areas should be provided throughout the buildings and seating should be generously provided in galleries. Expert advice should be sought on floor coverings—hard surfaces accentuate fatigue while a range of surfaces and colour tones can produce a relaxed feeling which increases a visitor's perception. As well as providing relaxation, rest areas should offer a change of mood and emphasis. We suggest that some 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> be set aside for rest areas.

12.31 *Research and Office Areas.* In addition to the curatorial staff who will need research space, other scholars should be encouraged to use facilities at the museum. Organisations such as the Institute of Aboriginal Studies may require research facilities and offices in the museum; and for planning purposes a total area of between 8,000 and 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> is recommended.

12.32 *Library.* If our recommendations, detailed elsewhere, are accepted, a minimum of 1,700m<sup>2</sup> should be provided.

12.33 *Conservation and Restoration.* Adequate space is vital for the carrying out of conservation. Treatment of objects may involve steps taken over a lengthy period, and this requires more space in the conservation area. Overseas experience suggests no uniform ratio of laboratory area to other museum areas. As a national museum has to conserve materials in all forms from hard metals to delicate fabrics, a minimum area of 3,000m<sup>2</sup> is suggested.

12.34 *Minor Storage.* Within the main complex, storage must be provided for material used in current or planned displays and for research allied with the material on display. Fifteen per cent of the area allocated for displays is regarded as a useful rule-of-thumb for the planning of storage, suggesting a requirement of 9,000m<sup>2</sup> for the storage purposes.

12.35 *Education.* Few museum designs have specifically provided an education service to adults and school children. We have planned on the basis that The Museum of Australia will eventually attract over 500,000 school children a year, and appropriate facilities are required to handle this intake. Two theatrettes, each with a seating capacity of about 100 persons, and lecture and activities rooms are considered to be essential. Overall, special facilities to cater for as many as 500 visiting students at any one time is likely to be required, suggesting an area commitment of 1,000m<sup>2</sup>.

12.36 *Service Facilities.* Including airconditioning rooms, toilets and reception areas, they, would occupy about 10 per cent of- the total area. or some 10,000m<sup>2</sup>.

12.37 *Major Storage.* Storage could be separated, but we have recommended that it be located on the main site. The building should be designed to allow further additions but, initially, a space of 100,000m<sup>2</sup> should be planned. This assumes that about 10 per cent of the collections will be on display at the same time.

### **The Site for a National Museum**

12.38 Calculating on the basis of the above figures, it would be physically possible to accommodate the museum within a site of approximately 20 hectares. The three themes of the museum, however, rely on some of the displays being in a natural environment.

Thus, display of living fauna would require a substantial area of natural landscape.

To stress a lesson painfully learned by many museum administrators: in siting a museum, we must keep in mind its growth in the following decades. A living museum will never be completed. Successive generations must have the opportunity to alter or add. A national museum should have the space to grow or alter with the nation.

12.39 The Committee, therefore *recommends* that an area of more than 90 hectares be reserved for the museum site. In putting forward this recommendation, we may well be criticised on the grounds of extravagance and over-ambition. Our defence against such charges is that we have taken a long-term view of the museum's development. Too many museum planners in other lands have encumbered capital city with a museum site and building which now prevent innovative planning. The proposed museum must not be viewed as just another building which equally be designed for a library or an art museum. We believe that, with the right approach, Australia could lead in museum planning.

12.40 Other specifications we endorse for the museum site are:

- it should be reasonably close to the centre of Canberra;
- it should serve the particular needs of the Museum;
- it should have reasonable road access from a number of directions
- it should allow the museum building to be an identifiable landmark;
- it should be reasonably distant from residential areas and other major institutional buildings.

The Committee has considered a range of possible sites for the museum and *recommends* an area west of Black Mountain. This site all the specifications outlined above, and an aerial photograph and a notional schematic, tie representation are included in this report.

In considering a possible site, we have had the benefit of consultations with the Commissioner of the National Capital Development Commission (Mr A. Powell) and other senior Commission officers. While the Commission is not yet in a position to endorse any site for museum purposes, it has advised that the site nominated by the Committee does not present any major difficulties.

12.41 We *recommend* that an appropriate area of land on the site identified above be reserved for the proposed Museum of Australia.

We further *recommend* that the National Capital Development Commission be the planning and constructing authority for The Museum of Australia.

### **The Museum Building**

12.42 If the Committee is open to criticism on the large area of land required for the Museum, we would hope that any such criticism is balanced against the rather modest proposals for the museum buildings.

We have come down firmly against an inordinately expensive monumental, multi-storey building, with all the granite or marble facings of a prestige institution.

A museum should not generate a forbidding cathedral-type atmosphere. It should provide space in which enjoyment and excitement come easily. The appropriate enclosed space for a museum is often described as akin to a warehouse or aircraft hangar. The building should allow flexibility of use, with interior walls so that display galleries can be changed as necessary.

12.43 The essential features we recommend are:

- buildings comprising a basement and two main floors;
- minimum internal structural columns or walls;
- air-conditioning throughout;
- the use of courtyards and external areas for display and to provide relief from formal buildings;
- access to and from the buildings at various points so that visitors can move to external areas for rest and relaxation;
- decorative emphasis on the internal displays rather than on the building's facade.

It is a matter for later consideration whether there should be three large buildings linked physically or otherwise to accommodate the three proposed themes of the museum, or whether these thematic displays should be divided between a number of smaller buildings.

12.44 We *recommend*, however, that there be separate buildings for museum administration and storage, leaving the main buildings free for display and curatorial staff.

#### **Building in Stages**

12.45 A museum of the dimensions we have outlined would at current prices, cost in the order of 550 million for buildings and site preparation. Clearly, a museum of this magnitude cannot be contemplated as one construction project. Apart from the problems of funding, it would take years of collecting material and planning of displays to reach a static where such a large area could be used effectively.

12.46 We *recommend*, therefore, that the museum be designed for erection in stages. For the first stage, we *recommend* the construction of buildings which will provide about 20,000m<sup>2</sup> of space for display, storage, administration, laboratories and curatorial staff. This stage, including site preparation would cost about \$14 million at the prices of Winter 1975.

#### **The Establishment and Administration of the National Museum**

12.47 We *recommend* that the Museum of Australia be established by Act of the Parliament, and that the museum be charged with the collection, preservation and display of material which is related to the history of man in Australia, including the natural environment.

12.48 We also *recommend* that the legislation provide for the administration of the museum by a Board of Trustees of twelve members, four of whom should be selected for their knowledge and ability to represent the Aboriginal theme within the Museum. Trustees should be appointed for terms not exceeding three years; and a trustee should be disqualified for serving for more than six years in succession.

#### **Interim Arrangements**

12.49 The time between a decision to build a national museum and the start of actual construction work will be considerable. It would be undesirable therefore to defer further action until such time as legislation has been passed to establish the museum. A Director-General should be appointed in time for his active involvement in the design of the museum; and similarly the Directors of each of the three distinct sections of the museum should be appointed well before construction is commenced.

12.50 We *recommend* that interim trustees or an interim board of management be appointed to advise on the preliminary work flowing from a decision to proceed with the establishment of the Museum, including the appointment of a Director-General. It is

proposed that the Interim board would be 'national' rather than 'local' in its membership.

### **The Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia**

12.51 The Committee of Inquiry has considered the Report of the above Planning Committee and in general supports strongly the concept outlined.

Recognizing that the Chairman of that Committee may wish to reserve his position on some aspects, the only proposal on which we express reservations is that the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia should be a separate statutory authority, controlled by trustees or a council, with a director and full complement of staff qualified to undertake the various responsibilities associated with the Gallery.

We appreciate and have considerable sympathy for this view. For too long Aboriginal culture and the problems of Aboriginal society have been misunderstood by the rest of the Australian community. It is therefore understandable that Aborigines would wish to ensure that the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia is not just another institution which perpetuates such misunderstandings.

Our reservations concern solely the appropriateness of the administrative arrangements which would result from a division of responsibilities as seen in the report of the Planning Committee. In essence, we question whether an integrated museum of national history can be achieved if responsibilities for its management are divided in this way.

12.52 In our view, an institution must have an identifiable administrative head if it is to operate successfully. It requires a range of common services for each proposed division. They range from maintaining the grounds of the museum and paying the museum staff to the arrangements for the recording of the museum collections, and the accounting for revenue and expenditures.

We think it would be unfortunate, if not impracticable, to draw artificial lines between the administrative responsibilities. At the same time, we believe that the views of those reporting on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia can be accommodated.

12.53 The legislation establishing The Museum of Australia can provide for a separate Council or Board to plan and conduct the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia. This separate Council or Board would be responsible for the Gallery's displays and acquisition policy. It might also have the responsibility for recommending on the appointment of the Director of the Gallery and other staff, and for submitting expenditure proposals for consideration. It might also determine research programmes in Aboriginal history and culture. It would be essential, however, that several members of the separate Board or Council of the Aboriginal Gallery should also be members of the Board of the total Museum.

12.54 Within such arrangements, a single Director-General should be responsible for the overall co-ordination of activities within the museum and for its general administration. We believe that such arrangements are not opposed in principle to the Report of the Planning Committee on a Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, and might usefully be discussed in detail with relevant Aboriginal groups.

# 13 Other National Museums

13.1 A Wide variety of societies and individuals submitted proposals for specialist museums. While some envisaged a large specialist gallery within the national museum, most envisaged a series of separate museums in Canberra or other cities. Many submissions argued the advantages of national museums for aviation, railways and tramways, and ships. Other facets of technology, it was urged, should also have their own museums.

We received arguments in favour of a Museum of Australian Inventors and Inventions, a Museum of Civil Engineering, a Museum of Techniques and Tools and Systems, a National Military Museum, an Agricultural Machinery Museum, and other segmented museums. More comprehensive proposals called for a National Museum of Technology.

In natural history, proposals were made to the Committee for a great museum of natural history and smaller museums displaying narrow facets of natural history. Australia urgently needs, according to other submissions, a National Museum of Gemstones and Rare Minerals, a Museum of Medical History, and Museums of Radiology, Biology, and the Antarctic. Sport and leisure, hobbies and social history were other topics which, we were enthusiastically informed, now required their own specialist museums. Our cultural life, it was hinted, would be choked until people could freely visit large museums of toys, decorative art, citizenship, sport, films and costumes. Some of these plans were, persuasively argued and carefully documented. Some were the jottings of enthusiasts who pleaded for national recognition of their lifelong hobby. Taken together, these proposals for specialist national museums represent a strong affirmation of the value of museums in education and entertainment. They perhaps also signify a wide disappointment that hitherto the government-initiated Museums in this country have tended to concentrate on the inanimate activities and to ignore the history of man.

## **The Defects of a Multiplicity of National Museums**

13.2 The previous chapter recommended that the proposed national museum in Canberra should span a wide range of interests. We do not recommend, however, a multiplicity of national museums, each specialising in a relatively narrow field. A long line of separate national museums would be extremely expensive. A multiplicity of national museums could be administratively cumbersome. Moreover, to set up a national museum displaying nothing but toys and another national museum displaying only farming machinery, is to lessen the prospect of successful initiatives along the same lines in other cities. Already some provincial cities and towns have the beginnings of specialist museums which would be choked if they were to be imitated in Canberra. Thus, the agricultural Museums would suffer if one were to be singled out and designated as the national museum of farming machinery.

A network of 'national' Museums, each of which displays a single pastime or science, has other advantages. The list of museums is likely to be interminable. A request by philatelists for a national museum of postage stamps will lead to a museum of postage stamps will lead to a request for a national museum of coins and banknotes. The deliberate fragmenting of knowledge—the unnecessary pigeon-holing of our history—must be avoided as much as possible in designing the new Museum of Australia.

13.3 To warrant the word 'national', collections or museums should usually have a special significance for Australia. Generally the activities or sciences depicted should have made some impact on Australian history in order to merit prominence in a 'national' museum.

13.4 In rejecting proposals for a scatter of national museums we accept the argument that certain vital themes would be covered more successfully in a specialist museum. Maritime history and aviation history both merit special coverage in separate national

museums. While shipping and aircraft, because of their importance in the history of an isolated nation, should have a place in the main Museum of Australia, they also merit separate institutions where their particular needs can be met. An effective maritime museum must be by the sea; in discussions the directors of several maritime museums in Europe were more emphatic on this point than perhaps on any other. A similar, though less emphatic, argument suggests that a comprehensive aviation museum of aircraft requires a larger area of flat ground than seems likely to be available in the proposed site for the Museum of Australia in Canberra. Moreover, a remoter site for the aviation museum would enable models of early aircraft engines to work without creating obtrusive noise.

### **A National Maritime Museum**

13.5 Members of this Committee, individually or as a group, inspected many maritime museums in Australia and overseas. Submissions on maritime museums were received from a variety of organisations, including the Queensland Maritime Museum, which possesses a steam tug and the old South Brisbane Dry Dock, the Department of Defence (Navy Office), which has collected 13,000 items of naval history, the Department of Tourism and Recreation, the Newcastle Maritime Museum Society (1972), the Paynesville Maritime Museum, which plans a museum on the history of the Gippsland Lakes and the offshore oil discoveries, the Port Adelaide Institute, which operates a nautical museum that includes the figureheads of old sailing ships, the Tasmanian Maritime and Folk Museum, which opened a small display in a house in Devonport in 1973, the Sydney Cove Waterfront Museum, which plans a museum around the three-masted iron barque James Craig, the Underwater Research Group of Queensland, which hopes to exhibit artefacts recovered from wrecks, the World Ship Society, which holds a small library of maritime publications and illustrations, and the Naval History Society of Australia, which is planning a museum named 'Foundation of the Sea' around old naval vessels. While some of these organisations would like to be the focus of, or part of, a national maritime museum, we have concluded that any national Museum—including a maritime museum should be solely under the authority and aegis of the Australian Government.

13.6 We *recommend* that early priority be given to establishing a national maritime museum. The museum should display and research not only the history of ships but their cargoes, ports, sea routes, and the working life and conditions of the men who manned them. It is our view that too many museums of the sea are antiquarian and stillborn because they see no further than the hull, rigging, and engine room.

We are aware of the heavy cost of establishing an institution which will cover Australian mercantile and naval history on an appropriate scale.

13.7 We therefore *recommend* that only one national maritime museum be created in the near future. Later, a second or subsidiary maritime museum might be justified; a whaling and sealing museum in Tasmania is one long-term possibility. Knowledge of the heavy costs involved has forced LIS to reject the suggestions that branches of the national maritime MUSCUM be set up in the main port or the oldest port in each State.

The maritime Museum should be located in Sydney. As the oldest of the British ports in Australia, and for long periods the largest port in Australia, Sydney's claim is strong. Submissions from several groups in rival ports recognise the strength of Sydney's claim. Sydney too has the considered support of the professional body the Museums' Association of Australia. The N.S.W. Branch of this Association elected an Advisory Committee for the Establishment of a National Maritime Museum in Sydney. The submission presented by this body pointed out the urgent need for an Australian National Maritime Museum and recommended that it should be located on Sydney Harbour; that

a national committee be set up to prepare a brief; and that legislation be initiated to preserve the Australian maritime heritage.

The maritime museum should be accessible by land and sea. The museum should have large display and storage areas. The ornate old Customs House on Sydney Cove could possibly be suitable as the main central building. We make no firm recommendations about this site, although we note that some years ago the Government agreed to reserve the old Customs House for such a museum. At the request of the Committee, the Department of Services and Property arranged for a report to be prepared on the feasibility of using this building for a museum. It seems that there could be structural problems if the upper floors are used and conversion costs would be expensive and perhaps even impractical. We have commented elsewhere on the danger of adapting old buildings for museums and this could be an example of the availability of a building becoming the determining factor while more basic considerations, such as the suitability of the site and of the building itself, are disregarded.

13.8 We, therefore, *recommend* that a detailed examination be carried out on all available sites before a final decision is made.

13.9 At the invitation of the Department of Defence, the Committee visited Spectacle Island, which has been proposed as the site of a naval museum. The Department of Defence (Navy Office) has been contemplating the idea of a naval museum for some years and now uses Spectacle Island as the repository of historic naval relics. The island, lying upharbour and opposite the suburb of Drummoyne, occupies about two hectares. It was used as a powder magazine as long ago as 1865; and some of the buildings, designed as ammunition stores with thick stone walls, have been classified by the National Trust. The island is well-serviced for a maritime museum as it has a slipway and is equipped with shipwrights, joiners, fitters and machine shops. It can be approached from different parts of the harbour and its surrounds—main wharves, dry docks and the like—add atmosphere. As an island, however, it has a remoteness which even a ferry service might not fully overcome.

Spectacle Island could become a valuable adjunct of the National Maritime Museum. Little cost would be involved as it is owned by the Government. Many of the buildings could be preserved and used; irrelevant buildings could be removed and the whole area landscaped. It could also permanently house bulky exhibits which might not be suitable for the main site.

13.10 We consider that the Australian Government should commence an active acquisitions program for the Maritime Museum and propose that Spectacle Island be used as a repository pending the establishment of the museum.

The exact scope of the National Maritime Museum will depend partly on working arrangements between its trustees and directors and those of the national museums in Canberra. Maritime exhibits and displays will obviously appear occasionally in the Museum of Australia's three main pavilions—Aboriginal history, white Australian history and the environment—but many of the exhibits might well be borrowed from the collections held by the National Maritime Museum. Likewise, the National Maritime Museum in Sydney might decide to commence its displays with vessels representing the maritime history of early Australia—the bark canoes of Sydney Aboriginals, the outrigger canoes of Cape York, or the Macassan praus which annually visited northern Australia on trepang expeditions as early as the eighteenth century. Probably the pavilion of Aboriginal history would be the appropriate collection for such seacraft, irrespective of whether they were sometimes exhibited in other museums.

13.11 Research should be fostered by the National Maritime Museum. A large maritime library to work in classifying, objects, restoring maritime library is essential as an a equipment and vessels, or designing authentic displays. The library will encourage research in an important field which so far has attracted few professional historians in Australia. As a teaching centre, the maritime museum could also be effective in restraining that underwater piracy which at present is rife at historic wrecks along the coastline of eastern Australia.

### **Restoration of Ships**

13.12 Overseas and Australian experience has shown that the restoration of early ships is very laborious and expensive. In fact, the restoration is continuous and is never completed. We query whether such heavy expenditure is justified except in recovering wrecks of Great historic importance or in restoring a small number of ships which typified an era. Replicas should be built as necessary; their construction, employing original techniques, provides in itself a very successful exhibition if the public are admitted to the construction site.

In Australia two large sailing vessels are in the process of restoration—the *James Craig* for the Sydney Cove Waterfront Museum, and *Polly Woodside* (1885) for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). The attention of the Committee was also drawn to proposals relating to the future of the HMAS *Sydney*, which had reached the end of her working life and had been paid off. Several organisations had expressed interest in acquiring her as a floating museum, and representations were also made that the government should retain her for a similar purpose. The Committee made inquiries which indicated clearly that it would be impracticable to retain the ship. The *Sydney* is a vessel of 15,000 tonnes and draws 8 metres of water. Normal maintenance costs would soon exceed \$100,000 a year and she would have to enter drydock every two years. Painting is an incessant task and a large crew of men would be permanently employed on this task alone. Furthermore, it would be necessary to refit the ship for museum purposes. We have no idea of that cost; even to make an estimate for the re-fitting would be a major undertaking, while the actual work would cost some millions of dollars. The USS *Yorktown*, an ex-aircraft carrier, is about to be opened as a museum in South Carolina. Estimated costs are at least \$3,000,000. The Committee endorses the decision of the Government to dispose of the *Sydney*.

13.13 On a lesser scale, the other restoration work on ships in Sydney and Melbourne causes concern. Significant amounts of Australian Government money have helped these projects, and considerably more will be needed before the sailing ships are restored. It is estimated that the *James Craig* will cost more than \$600,000. The budget for the *Polly Woodside* is said to be \$500,000, of which the State government is to provide \$233,000 and the Australian Government \$65,000. The Sydney Cove Waterfront Museum has estimated that 100,000 visitors a year will board the *James Craig*. Unless admission fees are extraordinarily high, which would tend to reduce numbers, the income would not meet normal maintenance and running expenses, let alone major renovations. In view of the enormous expense in restoring and maintaining an old sailing vessel, it is doubtful whether Australia should be simultaneously restoring two such vessels, especially as the history of the vessels is not dissimilar.

Old ships enhance a nautical museum, but overseas experience raises doubts on whether it is economically feasible to maintain old ships in water rather than in a dry dock. The British National Maritime Museum in Greenwich Park is most successful and attracts over 1.5 million visitors each year. While it has large exhibits, such as the almost complete fabric of the riveted steam paddle tug *Reliant*, It has no ships moored in the



water, Nearby, on the bank of the Thames, the sailing ship *Cutty Sark* is also in dry dock.

The Committee merely points out one of the dangers maritime museums and suggests caution. Ship restoration is very expensive, and could swallow up the available funds at the expense of other and possibly more important aspects of the museum.

### **A National Aviation Museum**

13.14 Arguments for a separate museum of aviation have already been set out. Aviation is important in Australia's history. Many Australian airmen won world fame in the era when aircraft first crossed oceans. Names such as Charles Kingsford-Smith, Harry Hawker, Ross and Keith Smith, Ulm, Hinkler and Taylor almost symbolised a generation of Australian history. These 120-kilometres-an-hour aviators pioneered many of the main air routes of the world. Within this continent their mail routes and emergency medical and supply services eased the acute isolation of outback settlements. In the Second World War the influence of aviation on the course of the fighting in the Pacific and on Australia's defence effort was powerful.

13.15 The strongest argument for a separate aviation museum is more practical than historical. Aircraft require an unusually large space for storage and display: offsite storage, moreover, is impractical. In addition, it has been suggested that an airfield site would enable some of the pioneering aircraft to be so restored that regular flying displays would be feasible; the National Museum of Science and Technology in Canada conducts flying pageants, using the old biplanes and flying boats of half a century ago.

Whether similar flying pageants should be organised in Australia is an open question. The preservation of aircraft and flying equipment is the main aim of an aviation museum, and only the directors, curators and aviation officials of the Department of Transport can judge whether the particular aircraft in their care should be risked in flight in old age. On the other hand, an aviation museum which stands on the edge of its own airfield can certainly be a centre for air pageants and for rallies of privately-owned vintage aircraft or museum replicas of early aircraft.

13.16 The National Aviation Museum should include civil and military aircraft, for in many decades the two were interchangeable. In collecting military aircraft it should co-operate with the Australian War Memorial, and usually offer the older institution priority if a prized war-time aircraft comes on to the market. At the Australian War Memorial, shortage of space for display and for storage will serve to regulate such competition.

A major airport is not suitable as a long-term site for the National Aviation Museum.

13.17 We *recommend* that the Museum be placed at a nominated growth centre, preferably on a busy tourist route. Albury-Wodonga appears to be an appropriate site. A museum there would prove to be a useful stimulus to the policy of decentralisation.

### **A National Railway Museum**

13.18 Australia has many railway museums and many other museums with a prominent display of steam locomotives. In addition, it has been suggested that a national transport or railway museum be set up.

13.19 We *recommend* that no separate museum be established by the Australian Government. While railways, tramways and other forms of transport will have their place in the national museum, any attempt to build up a comprehensive collection of steam locomotives and old rolling stock would merely duplicate, at heavy cost, outstanding collections which already exist in several State-supported railway museums. Moreover, it is doubtful whether the Australian Government, even spending heavily,

could acquire railway exhibits of sufficient merit and comprehensiveness to merit the title of a 'national collection'. Most of Australia's railways were built and owned by State governments and most of the historical relics have remained with State-sponsored museums or collections.

The proposed Australian Museums Commission will, presumably, offer aid or technical services to certain railway museums and to several of the preservation societies which are trying to operate or re-open short stretches of old railway track. One weakness of many of these institutions is their inability to preserve the locomotives which it is their proclaimed aim to preserve. Having saved locomotives and carriages and permanent ways from destruction, they are now quietly allowing corrosion to achieve the same destruction.

### **Gallery of Australian Biography**

13.20 Britain, the United States and many other Countries have set up specialist biographical museums. The National Portrait Gallery in London is perhaps the best known of these Museums, though its origin as a portrait gallery has perhaps limited its development in recent decades. One advantage of such a gallery is that it compensates for the strong tendency of museums to concentrate on types and species rather than individuals. Public interest in biography in the western world has never been higher, and this kind of museum has great public appeal as well as a capacity to promote research into the lives of celebrated individuals.

13.21 Ultimately, the national capital should have a Gallery or Pavilion of Australian Biography. It should be wider in scope than similar museums overseas. It should collect and display not only portraits but also photographs, movie snippets, voice recordings, specimens of handwriting, costumes, personal mementoes and curios. These could embrace celebrated Australians and perhaps, at times, a cross-section of Australians of varying occupations and ethnic backgrounds. This gallery would be partly a display place and partly a repository which could be used by scholars, other museums, and the press and television.

Perhaps the place of honour in the hall of biography, or at the entrance, could be the grave of an ancient Aboriginal and named, symbolically, as 'The Grave of the First Australian', or 'The Grave of a Discoverer of Australia'.

13.22 At present the following national bodies pursue some aspects of Australian biography: the National Library, which also collects voice recordings and films and paintings, as well as many kinds of private archives; the National Archives; the Historical Memorials Committee, which is serviced by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and seems likely to move into collecting photographs of eminent Australians; Parliament House and its portraits of Prime Ministers; the Australian War Memorial; the National Gallery; the Australian Academy of Science, which has collected material on the life of scientists; and the Dictionary of National Biography, which is attached to the Australian National University. Between these national bodies is much overlap and many gaps. The dispersal of collections and activities is probably an impediment to both research and display.

The Gallery of Australian Biography is not an urgent priority, and a decision on a site could be postponed. It could be an additional smaller pavilion within the grounds of the national museum. If, however, a site in central Canberra became available, the Gallery of Australian Biography could be established there. A central city site would offer several advantages, being close to the National Library, National Art Gallery and presumably also the National Archives. Those institutions would supply much of the display material and would be represented on the board of trustees, if a separate board

is decided upon. If it were decided to design the Gallery of Biography partly as a kind of national pantheon, it should probably be in the centre of Canberra rather than at the site of the national museum. The present Parliament House, when vacated, could be suitable. Reluctant to foster chauvinism, we suggest that a separate formal Gallery of Biography could be a useful, simple focus for nationalist sentiments.

### **Guidelines for Discussing New National Museums**

13.23 In years to come the Australian Government or the new museum authorities will receive many proposals for the setting up of separate national museums covering particular sciences, fields of history, or activities. In assessing these proposals the following guidelines have merit:

- Is the proposed museum activity of 'national' significance?
- Will the new Museum meet a legitimate need which is not met by an existing museum?
- Will the new museum preserve adequately the collections likely to be entrusted to its stewardship?
- Will it conform to scholarly standards and directly or indirectly stimulate research in its field?
- Will it unnecessarily duplicate any other institutions—federal or state or municipal?
- Does it merit priority against the competing claims for funds from other national collections and museums?

# 14 Marine and Historical Archaeology

14.1 A wealth of historical material lies beneath the waters of the Australian coast. Over 500 shipwrecks have already been located and identified but the total number is probably in the thousands. The Furneaux Islands at the eastern end of Bass Strait are one of many hazardous areas, and records show 64 wrecks (including the Sydney Cove which was wrecked in 1797). The oldest known wrecks, however, lie off the West Australian coast. There the *Tryal*, an English East India Company merchantman, was lost in 1622 and a small fleet of Dutch vessels on passage to the East Indies ran aground between 1629 and 1727.

The majority of wrecks on Australia's coast occurred during the 19th century. Many have been located and explored by amateur divers in the hope of finding bullion and other valuable cargoes. To historians these wrecks are also valuable. They are virtually time capsules whose cargoes provide crucial economic, technological or social evidence of the past. For example, the cargo of the English barque *Elizabeth*, wrecked near Fremantle in 1839, was unremarkable in its day, but its recovery allows the close dating of a comprehensive and typical list of merchandise en route to the colonies. Research on the durable cargoes of wrecks not only illuminates maritime history but facilitates accurate identification and dating of many objects which at present are erroneously or vaguely described in Australian folk museums.

14.2 The recovery and identification of relics from shipwrecks is known as marine archaeology when it is carried out for historical purposes. In many countries, marine archaeology has become one of the most important aspects of field work by archaeologists. While marine archaeology is probably more important in investigating distant centuries from which too few written records have survived, it is nonetheless a rewarding field in new lands in which written records of shipping and cargoes are plentiful. Marine archaeology, moreover, is a vital source for those Australian museums which belatedly are investigating and exhibiting maritime history.

The Committee is concerned that the legislative powers and procedures at present in force cannot protect historic shipwrecks in Australia from indiscriminate looting. Future research in marine archaeology will be severely impaired because of the scores of significant shipwrecks which have been pillaged, damaged or disturbed by amateur archaeologists and treasure seekers in the last two decades. Since the invention of the aqualung in 1943, and the subsequent popularisation of underwater activities, diving in search of shipwrecks has become a popular sport and, on parts of the Australian coast, an unsystematic industry. In some wrecks relics have been recovered in a responsible manner. In other wrecks the divers have looted what they assessed as marketable and have blown up or discarded the remainder: often the remainder has been more important, historically.

14.3 The Special Minister of State has been given the responsibility for preparing legislation to ensure the protection of marine sites, wrecks and relics. We believe that the proposed legislation will do much to prevent indiscriminate looting and salvage, although the extent and effectiveness of the legislation will depend upon the outcome of the appeal to the High Court on the constitutionality of the Seas and Submerged Lands Act.

As the earliest wreck off the West Australian coast is the earliest known contact of European Man with Australia—66 years before Dampier's voyages and 148 years before James Cook's discovery of the east coast—it is disturbing to learn of the wanton destruction that has occurred. In 1622 the *Tryal* sank in fairly deep water and hence escaped battering from the waves. When she was discovered in 1969, she seemed to be virtually as she was when she sank three centuries previously. In 1971, however, a Museum

expedition found that the wreck had been recently blown to pieces. Apparently charges had been placed along the hull and in the mouths of the ancient cannons, and the resulting explosion had not only scattered the relics but had also brought down a cliff, thus burying many of the remains. One of the divers reported:

‘The wreck lies in about 25 feet of water. Around it we found an area of extreme destruction, with piles of rubble all over it. We swam around and saw cannons and anchors blown to smithereens...suddenly, by one stupid action, they are lost forever.’

The *Vergulde Draeck* (‘Gilt Dragon’) wrecked on the West Australian coast in 1656, was also damaged recklessly by explosives three centuries later. The *Daily News* of 14 October 1963, reported:

‘The wonderfully preserved shape of the ship itself had been split open by several charges of explosives...Fragmented elephant tusks, broken ballast bricks, limestone chunks, ancient wood, silver coins, all lie in a jumbled confusion...’

‘Until the explosions there were good chances of recovering intact more of the 17th century clay jugs that had delighted not only wreck enthusiasts but audiences of the general public all over Australia since the wreck was discovered last Easter. The jugs remaining would now be fractured into small pieces.’

These are not isolated incidents of underwater vandalism although they may be the most serious. The Committee’s attention was also drawn to an issue of the magazine, *Skindiving in Australia*<sup>9</sup> which described how divers found a ship’s money box but, realising that the box contained only old paper money and documents, threw it back into the sea. Another issue (Vol. 3. No. 3) review’s ‘The Treasure Divers Guide’: ‘this excellent new edition presents updated information on sunken treasures throughout the world. Australia gets a good mention’. The pirating of wrecks is increasing rapidly along the Australian coast.

14.4 A responsible attitude is shown by many divers and underwater organisations. The Western Australian Museum encourages local divers to participate in the recovery work on the Dutch wrecks and to search for and survey other wrecks. Funds are given to diving clubs which assist the museums. In South Australia a Society for Underwater Historical Research works in closely with the Museum. One member group of the Queensland Maritime Museum Association is an Underwater Research Group which is pledged to carry out investigations of wrecks in a responsible manner.

The romance of wrecks will continue to attract skindivers, despite any legislative program. Much of this activity, though damaging, is carried out in good faith. An educational campaign is needed. Courses in the general principles of underwater archaeology, with emphasis on the detailed recording of wrecks and their contents, could be offered by museums.

### **Flaws in the Legislation**

14.5 In most of the States there is no law or an adequate law to protect wrecks from pillage. Only South Australia and Western Australia have relevant legislation. In South Australia the Aboriginal and Historical Relics Act, 1965 might apply to marine relics but it is understood that the legislation has never been so applied. More specific legislation is proposed. In Western Australia the Maritime Archaeology Act 1973 was designed specifically to cover maritime wrecks and sites but this legislation is currently under challenge in the High Court.

International conventions could offer a modicum of help in protecting shipwrecks. The relevant conventions are:

The Convention for the Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage

The UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property

### The Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone

#### The Convention on the Continental Shelf

Even if these conventions were to be ratified by most nations, their efficacy is limited. The Interdepartmental committee set up by the Department of the Special Minister of State took the view that these conventions would, by themselves, do little to safeguard underwater treasures and relics in Australia.

14.6 At present the Australian Government's own responsibility is restricted to the authority given by the Navigation Act and by the recent Agreement between Australia and the Netherlands concerning old Dutch wrecks. Section 303 of the Navigation Act empowers the Receiver of Wreck, when he so desires, to take possession of a wreck. The purposes for taking possession of wreck are to protect the rights of the owner and salvor as well as to ensure that unclaimed wreck revert to the Australian Government.

The responsibility of the Receiver of Wreck in relation to the protection of historic wreck is indirect and incidental to his main functions under the Act. The use of the Navigation Act to protect historic wrecks has been very useful as a stop-gap but more appropriate legislation is needed. Its most unsatisfactory feature is that the Receiver of Wreck is primarily concerned with locating the legal owner and if he cannot locate the owner within 12 months, he must dispose of the wreck. Obviously, the legal owners of a barque wrecked in 1875 cannot be quickly traced in 1975. The situation might arise in which the Receiver was required by law to sell by auction a most important historic wreck.

14.7 In November 1972, an Agreement between Australia and the Netherlands concerning old Dutch shipwrecks was signed. Under this Agreement the Netherlands Government transferred its right to and title and interest in the wrecked vessels of the Dutch East India Company on or off the coast of Western Australia. The four wrecks covered by the Agreement are the *Batavia*, the *Vergulde Draeck*, the *Zuytdorpp* and the *Zeewyk*.

The Agreement recognised that the Netherlands has a continuing interest in articles recovered from these wrecks, and it was agreed that a committee should be set up to determine the disposition and subsequent ownership of recovered articles. The Governments of the Netherlands and Australia each nominate two members to serve on this committee. As a result of decisions taken by the committee, the Australian Government has acquired a representative collection of material recovered from the *Batavia* wreck. This collection includes stoneware jugs, earthenware jugs, brass bowls and other metal articles, ballast bricks and small cannon.

### **Need for New Legislation**

14.8 In view of the inadequacies of State and Federal legislation on shipwrecks and their cargoes, further legislation is desirable. At present, however, the States and the Australian Government both claim the right to exercise sovereign control over the resources of the seabed off the Australian coast. In November 1973, the Senate passed the Seas and Submerged Lands Act, by which the Australian Government claimed sovereignty of the seabed from the low water mark on the Australian coast to the outer limits of the continental shelf. The Governments of New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia have since challenged the validity of the Act, and the appeal is at present before the High Court.

14.9 Meanwhile the Special Minister of State has been given the responsibility of preparing legislation to protect marine sites, wrecks and relics. It is understood that the proposed legislation will give the Minister authority to declare sites and wrecks and

relics and will enable him to control the recovery and disposal of relics and to issue licences for research purposes. The legislation would extend to all Shipwrecks within Australian territorial jurisdictions and the actions of Australian citizens and residents in regard to shipwrecks outside that Jurisdiction. We support the introduction of this legislation but any legislative action must also be accompanied by the compilation of detailed wreck records and by the appointment of staff to supervise the implementation of the Act.

If the High Court should rule that the States have certain rights to the seabed, legislative action by four or perhaps five States will be the only way of safeguarding the more valuable shipwrecks. Unfortunately, too many of the state museums are not yet sufficiently interested in the economic and social history of Australia and so do not see the value of shipwrecks as a source of knowledge and of exciting museum exhibits. If the State museums were to become more interested in shipwrecks, legislation would be more likely. Significantly Western Australia is the leader in marine archaeology, in the field of maritime museums and in legislative concern for the wrecks on its seabed.

### **Maritime Museum at Fremantle**

14.10 While recommending the previous chapter that the only national maritime museum should be in Sydney, we agreed with the force of many of the arguments presented on behalf of the Fremantle Museum. A branch of the Western Australian Museum, and housed in an old stone building near the sea. Fremantle's museum is the most attractive seafaring museum in Australia. Imaginative design and the skilful use of photographs make a visit there an exciting experience for all those Australians previously starved of the opportunity to see vivid depictions of maritime history.

The Western Australian Museum has been the leader in marine archaeology in this country thus strengthening the case for sympathetic Support. The objects salvaged from Dutch ships wrecked on the Western Australian coast in the seventeenth century, and now oil display in the Fremantle Museum, are probably the oldest European relics so far discovered in Australia.

14.11 To assist this pioneering work in maritime archaeology, we *recommend* that the Fremantle Museum receive special aid. It should be the main repository for relics of shipwrecks on the Western Australian coast and, presumably, from time to time, a source of objects for display in special exhibitions at either the proposed Museum of Australia or the proposed National Maritime Museum in Sydney.

### **Similarities of Sea and Land Archaeology**

14.12 The similarities between archaeology on land and sea are closer than is realised. The main work in archaeology is the study of the objects recovered or excavated: and in Australia the objects found in a shipwreck of 1850 or on the site of a flour mill in 1850 are usually alike. They are the works of the same industrial civilisation. A study of objects recorded from the sea will illuminate puzzles in land archaeology: the reverse also applies.

14.13 The Australian Museums Commission should, therefore, concern itself with promoting any facet of historical archaeology which will aid museums as places of research, education and display. It should co-operate closely with the Australian Heritage Commission, which is primarily concerned with the preservation of historic buildings and sites. While the Australian Museums Commission will naturally be more for the recovery, preservation and study of individual objects from that site, its field of interest will always overlap with that of the Australian Heritage Commission. The time may come when changing techniques enable an underwater museum to be constructed around

a wrecked Ship lying untouched on the seabed, the museum thus encasing the wreck. In such a contingency, the Australian Museums Commission would be the sole authority of the Australian Government, but in most ventures involving historical archaeology the close co-operation of the two government commissions is vital.

14.14 We *recommend* that a small liaison committee be set up linking the two Commissions in their respective concerns for historic sites and for material objects.

#### **Promotion of Historical Archaeology**

14.15 The Australian Museums Commission can utilise and promote historical archaeology most effectively by:

- advising governments in the vital task of legislating for the protection of potential archaeological sites on sea and land;
- ensuring, whenever possible, that no ancient buildings or sites should be touched by departments or agencies or grant-recipients of the Australian Government without the prior advice and the active participation of professional archaeologists;
- encourage the creation of university courses, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in marine and industrial archaeology and other aspects of historical archaeology. Marine archaeology, we recommend, should not be taught in isolation;
- assisting museums and other institutions to conduct field-work in excavating, documenting and studying everyday objects of the period since 1788;
- setting aside, for a trial period of three years, a small fund to subsidise the publication of the results of Australian investigations in historical archaeology;
- co-operating with the Australian Heritage Commission in a field investigation to assess which phases and events in Australian history require archaeological evidence as a means of increasing scholarly understanding and public interest. As historical archaeology is expensive and not always as illuminating as expected, and as the number of potential applicants for funds will always far exceed the funds available, a system of priorities is essential;
- assisting the growth and dissemination of that historical expertise which is so urgently needed by historical museums throughout Australia.



# 15 Export and Import of Cultural Material

15.1 The private export of cultural treasures to museums and private collectors has caused many nations to control this traffic. Countries such as Greece, Cyprus and Mexico, which have been subject to intense archaeological investigation, have legislated to control archaeological work, protect their ancient monuments, and prevent the illicit sale of relics. Other countries have tried to prevent their cultural property from being sold to wealthy foreign collectors.

'Protection of cultural property' is not directed solely at indigenous works of art. Thus, the proposed export of Titian's *The Death of Actaeon* was prohibited by the British Government for a period of 12 months to enable the National Gallery to raise funds (approx. £1.76 million) to acquire the painting.

15.2 The national laws protecting cultural relics are diverse. Some laws define cultural property in general terms: others provide a reasonably specific description of the type of material which is protected. Thus, the antiquities legislation of Cyprus protects objects pre-dating 1700 A.D., and comprehensive conditions are prescribed for the granting of permits to excavate historic sites. Under the Monuments and Archaeological, Artistic and Historic Zones law of Mexico, a permit is required for any archaeological work. The export of pre-Columbian relics is prohibited absolutely. Relics from other periods of Mexican history may be exported subject to a permit being granted.

15.3 It is possible to discern several principles in most overseas legislation of this nature:

- (a) *Cultural property* includes property which is of historic, artistic or scientific interest.
- (b) *Historic monuments* are included in the items protected, although there is some divergence in the definition of such monuments.
- (c) Archaeological excavations are included in the protective legislation, and permits are required to carry out any excavation.
- (d) A '*national register*' is maintained of that cultural property whose export is prohibited absolutely.
- (e) *Export approval* is required of cultural property not subject to an absolute prohibition.
- (f) *Contemporary works of art* are excluded from export control in those Countries where the law specifies in detail the cultural property which is protected.

In Australia, the export of material of cultural, historic or scientific significance has been controlled by regulations made under the Customs Act. In considering the appropriate export controls for Australia, the Committee examined the controls used in countries but concluded that the particular controls tried to meet a variety of historical situations and present needs which are not appropriate for Australia. The Committee therefore turned to a closer examination of the arrangements made in Britain and those under consideration in Canada, as possible models for adaptation in Australia.

## **Britain: Export of Cultural Property**

15.4 There is no specific legislation in Britain to protect or preserve cultural property of national significance. Under the legislation dealing with exports and customs, Export of Goods Control Orders are made, and these Orders list the requirements for export approval of various cultural material. The Orders require an export licence for all articles manufactured or produced more than 100 years before the date of exportation, including works of art but not including philatelic and similar articles.

An 'Open General Licence' may be granted which permits the export of any antique if its value is less than £2000, but documents, manuscripts and archives and archaeological discoveries are excluded from the licence.

Applications for export approval are made to the Export Licensing Branch of the Department of Trade and Industry. Applications to export objects which:

- (a) were not imported within the last 50 years;
- (b) were made more than 100 years ago;
- (c) exceed £2000 in value (except manuscripts, archives and archaeological material)

are referred to an 'expert adviser'. If the adviser recommends that a licence be refused, the case is referred to the 'Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art' and the applicant is asked to state his case in writing.

In reviewing the application, the Committee has the following considerations before it:

- (a) Is the object so closely connected with our history and national life that its departure would be a misfortune?
- (b) Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance?
- (c) Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art learning or history?

The Committee's decision—without supporting reasons—is notified to the applicant by the Secretary. When the decision disallows an export licence, an offer must be made within a reasonable time for the purchase of the object; failing such an offer, an export licence is granted. The price offered is that which the Reviewing Committee considers reasonable. Significantly, while the Department of Trade and Industry administers matters relating to customs and exports, the Reviewing Committee functions within the Department of Education and Science.

15.5 Information on the British arrangements is set out in the 1971-72 report of the Reviewing Committee. There may have been later changes in the detail of those arrangements, but to the best of our knowledge the above summary outlines the principal features of British practice.

### **Canada: Export of Cultural Property**

15.6 Comprehensive legislation to control the export of cultural property and the import of cultural property which had been illicitly exported from foreign States was introduced in the Canadian Parliament in November 1974. The proposed legislation is still under consideration, the Bill having been stood over to allow for public comment and views.

15.7 The principal features of the proposed legislation are summarised below:

A Canadian Cultural Property Export Control List is established to include, regardless of their places of origin, objects or classes of objects which it is deemed necessary to control to preserve the national heritage in Canada. The objects or classes of objects are defined as:

- (a) objects of any value that are of archaeological, prehistorical, historical, artistic or scientific interest recovered from the land, territorial sea or inland waters of Canada;
- (b) objects made by, or documents, etc., relating to, the Aboriginal peoples of Canada and which have a fair market value in excess of \$500;
- (c) objects of decorative art made in Canada which are more than 100 years old;
- (d) books, records, documents, photographic positives and sound recordings, and collections of any of those objects that have a Canadian market value in excess of \$1,000;

(e) drawings, engravings, original prints and watercolours that have a fair market value in Canada of more than \$1,000;

(f) any other objects that have a fair market value in Canada in excess of \$3,000.

There are certain exclusions from the Control List. An object less than 50 years old, or made by a natural person still living, is not subject to export control.

The legislation provides for the appointment of Customs officers as permit officers to issue export permits. If the application concerns an item imported into Canada within the preceding 35 years, or not included in the Control List, the Permit Officer is required to issue a permit. In other applications, the Permit Officer is required to refer them to an 'expert examiner' who determines:

(a) whether the object is of outstanding significance by reason of

(i) its close association with Canadian history or national life;

(ii) its aesthetic qualities; or

(iii) its value in the study of the arts and sciences; and

(b) whether the object is of such a degree of national importance that its loss to Canada would significantly diminish the national heritage.

Where an export permit is refused on the advice of an 'expert examiner', an applicant may appeal to a 'Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board'. The Review Board may direct that an export permit be issued. If it decides that the object meets the criteria referred to in the preceding paragraph, and concludes that a fair offer to purchase the object might be made by an institution or public authority in Canada within six months, it shall establish a 'delay period' of between two and six months. The Review Board may be asked to determine a 'fair cash offer' for the object. If an institution or public authority does not offer to buy the object at this price and within the 'delay period', the Review Board shall rule that an export permit be issued. Where the Review Board determines that an object meets the approval criteria, it shall issue a certificate for the purposes of determining concessions available under the Income Tax Act.

The legislation also proposes the establishment of a 'Canadian Heritage Preservation Endowment Account'. With that Account the appropriate Minister may make grants and loans to institutions and public authorities, enabling them to purchase objects for which export permits have been refused, or to purchase in other lands any cultural property that is related to the national heritage.

### **Australia: Protection of Cultural Property**

15.8 As mentioned earlier, there is no specific legislation in Australia which outlines a philosophy for the protection of cultural property. All existing protection measures have been taken by export control Regulations under the Customs Act. Australia might be seen as following broadly the British form of export control, except that no criteria have been established for assessing export applications; and no authority has been established to review cases where an export application may be refused. More importantly, an export ban on a particular item can continue to operate even though no local institution or private collector is willing to buy the article: in such circumstances, the owner is deprived, unfairly, both of his home market and his export market.

15.9 'Cultural property' which can be exported only with Ministerial approval under the Customs (Prohibited Exports) Regulations includes the following categories of objects:

(a) animals and birds native to Australia, and their skins or plumage;

(b) archaeological and anthropological objects and specimens (including articles of ethnological interest) derived from or relating to Aborigines;

- (c) fossil material and other geological specimens;
- (d) coins made before 4 October 1901;
- (e) any document recording the assignment of land made between Aborigines and an early settler or explorer;
- (f) contemporaneous records or accounts of events connected with the discovery, early settlement or exploration of Australia, and goods owned by a person associated with the discovery, early settlement or exploration.

The Regulations outlined in sub-paras (e) and (f) above were responses to initiatives of this Committee following events which occurred during the inquiry. One event was the advertised auction in Australia of one of the three original deeds recording the agreement between Aborigines and John Batman for the transfer of the land on which the city of Melbourne was founded. The deed is a document of national significance, and the Committee was concerned that it might be exported.

The second event which caused concern was the sale by auction of certain relics which were said to have once been the property of Captain James Cook. The Regulation referred to in sub-para (f) is intended to prevent the export, without approval, of such relics.

15.10 Resolutions of the Committee of Inquiry, expressing concern at the possible export of national historical material, were referred to the Special Minister of State, who raised with Ministerial colleagues the possibility of amending the Customs Regulations. The Committee records its appreciation of the responses made by the Australian Government, by way of amendments to Customs Regulations, and the co-operation provided by officers of the Department of Police and Customs.

While the Customs Act can prevent the loss of cultural property through export, it is the Committee's view that this arrangement, at the best, can only provide interim protection for cultural property it is obvious from the proposed Canadian legislation, and from the enactments of other countries, that there are advantages in specific legislation. Through legislation the rights of the individual and the objectives and powers of the government can be defined, thus eliminating the uncertainties, the arbitrariness and sometimes the unfairness of our present practice of Ministerial Decrees by Regulation. This Committee also supports the creation of a 'register' or 'index' of cultural property, listing specific objects or categories of objects which cannot be exported without official approval.

15.11 The Committee *recommends*, therefore, that the Government introduce specific legislation to control the export of cultural property, and that the legislation:

- (a) define, in some detail, the categories or classes of cultural property protected by the legislation;
- (b) provide for the establishment of a National Register of objects or categories of objects which can be exported only with approval;
- (c) establish machinery by which objects under consideration can be referred to experts in particular cultural fields;
- (d) state the principles determining whether a particular object should not be exported;
- (e) provide for a system of review or appeal for applicants whose request for an export permit was refused.

15.12 The Committee *recommends* the general approach, followed in the Canadian Bill, of establishing a delay period during which export approval is withheld in order to provide local institutions with an opportunity to offer to purchase the item. In addition,

the Government should have the necessary power to prohibit absolutely the export of a particular item in circumstances where:

- (a) the item is considered to be of such importance that it forms an intrinsic part of the cultural heritage of Australia, and
- (b) the acquisition of that item by a public institution would place an unwarranted burden on available public funds.

In recommending legislation to protect cultural property, the Committee cautions against legislating, or administering new laws, in a way which would merely create additional disadvantages. At present many cultural objects are exported simply because the existing museums lack the purchasing funds with which to buy a selection of the rare items which come onto the market: if the major Australian museums were to enlarge their acquisitions funds, many of the cultural items which are now exported would be captured by local museums. Accordingly, the present case for a stricter control of exports is really a case for a more generous buying policy by Australian museums. Moreover, a rigid attitude in the control of exports could indirectly tend, in the long run to discourage the import into Australia of paintings, antique furniture, ancient manuscripts and other cultural objects. Australia, with its relative affluence, has tended to be a net importer of cultural objects in recent years; and most of the objects have been imported privately in the knowledge that, if the need arises, they can be freely traded on the international market. A field ban on cultural exports could therefore become eventually a deterrent to Cultural imports and, therefore, self-defeating.

Objects of particularly Australian appeal—for example, a reputed sea chest of Captain James Cook or an early Australian landscape painting—receive considerable publicity if they seem likely to be exported. Publicity, however, is rarely given to items of Australian relevance which are bought in auction rooms or antique shops in London and New York and shipped here by private collectors. In addition, the export of Australian cultural objects of certain categories, and the publicity which they receive overseas can lead indirectly to our appreciation, and systematic collection of objects which we had previously neglected or under-valued. These cautions do not detract from the case for legislating to protect cultural property, but they do point to the dangers of heavy-handed or inflexible administering of such laws.

### **UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property**

15.13 This Convention was adopted by UNESCO in 1970. So far, at least 26 countries have ratified the Convention. The Committee of Inquiry has examined the provisions of the Convention to determine whether there would be advantages, including greater international goodwill, if Australia were to ratify it.

The Convention seeks to close the international black market in cultural property. The ratifying States undertake to impose controls on the export of their own cultural property and to prevent the illegal import of cultural property from other countries. The Convention reflects a need felt by some under-developed countries to protect their history and their national treasures. It also reflects the burgeoning international market for cultural objects.

Traditionally, the wealthy patrons of the arts in many countries have paid little regard to how a particular object came into the hands of a seller. As a consequence, property obtained illegally from one country has found a ready market in others. While responsible Museums take steps to ensure the 'provenance' and 'pedigree' of an article before it is purchased, there is still considerable traffic in objects which have been illicitly removed from the country of origin.

The Convention requires an undertaking by the ratifying country that it will establish one or more national services for the protection of its cultural heritage. The functions of 'a national service' include the creation of a national inventory of protected property, the promotion of institutions to preserve and present cultural property, and the supervision of archaeological excavations.

Further undertakings required are:

- (a) that the ratifying State will introduce an appropriate certificate to authorise the export of cultural property, and will prohibit otherwise the export of such property;
- (b) to take necessary measures to prevent museums and similar institutions from acquiring cultural property illegally exported from another State;
- (c) to prohibit the import of cultural property stolen from a museum or institution in another State after the Convention has come into force in the State concerned; and to take appropriate steps to recover and return any such property.

15.14 While the spirit and intention of the Convention is clear, it is difficult to interpret the practical effect of some of the Articles. For example, Article 9 provides that 'Any State Party to this Convention whose cultural patrimony is in jeopardy from pillage of archaeological or ethnological materials may call upon other State Parties who are affected'. In these circumstances the State Parties to the Convention undertake 'to participate in a concerted international effort to determine and to carry out the necessary concrete measures, including the control of exports and imports and international commerce in the specific materials concerned'.

15.15 Accepting this difficulty of interpretation, the Committee considers that the protection of Australian cultural material would be increased if the Convention were implemented in Australia.

15.16 It is a matter of overall governmental policy whether the Convention is ratified by Australia, but we strongly *recommend* that it be ratified and that the necessary legislative action be taken to enable Australia to implement the undertakings required by the Convention. As we have recommended in Chapter 9 that a commission be set up to promote museum development in Australia, that commission could also be responsible for carrying out the spirit and letter of the UNESCO Convention.

# 16 The Encouragement of Gifts to Museums—The Tax Question

16.1 Most museums of Australia are not blessed with substantial private endowments to supplement their public funding. The Felton Bequest endowment of the National Gallery of Victoria is one of the few notable exceptions. On the other hand, many of the major museums of America are funded predominantly from income derived from private bequests. Gifts of private collections have also made a major contribution to the excellence of those institutions. It is the federal income tax concession, granted in respect of non-cash gifts to museums, which gives American museums an advantage over their counterparts in Australia.

The American income tax law allows a deduction in respect of a monetary gift to a museum to the extent that the total contribution does not exceed 50 per cent of the taxpayer's adjusted gross income in that year. The excess not deductible in that year can be deducted, on the same basis, over the next succeeding five years.

A gift of 'capital gain property', i.e. a non-cash gift, to a museum is an allowable deduction to the extent of 30 per cent of the taxpayer's adjusted gross income. The excess is deductible in the same way as a monetary gift over the next succeeding five years. If the gift is tangible personal property—for instance, the donation of a painting to an art museum—the allowable deduction is determined on the fair market value of the property.

The position in Australia regarding deductions or exemptions from federal and State law for bequests and gifts to museums is outlined below.

## Federal Taxes and Duties

16.2 *Income Tax.* Under existing law, deductions may be claimed for gifts to the value of \$2 and upwards, whether in cash or kind, made to the bodies or for the purposes listed in section 78(1)(a) of the Income Tax Assessment Act. The listed bodies include public libraries, Museums and art galleries (or combinations thereof). For a gift in kind to be deductible, the object must have been purchased by the donor during the twelve months' period immediately preceding the making of the gift, the donor is allowed, as a deduction, the value of the property at the date of the gift or the amount paid for it, whichever is the smaller.

16.3 *Estate Duty.* The federal estate duty law provides for an exemption in respect of property passing for 'public educational purposes in Australia'. This term is defined to embrace legacies to public museums and public art galleries. Bequests to public libraries are exempt from estate duty under a specific provision in the law.

16.4 *Gift duty.* There is no specific exemption in the gift duty legislation in respect of gifts to public libraries, art galleries or museums, but gifts to these bodies would be encompassed by the exemption in the law for gifts to non-profit bodies generally.

16.5 *State Death Duty.* The provisions of State laws are set out in the following chart:

	<i>Bequest to Public Galleries within the State</i>	<i>Bequest to Public Galleries in other States or in Territories</i>
N.S.W.	Bequests to the Art Gallery of N.S.W. are exempt. Bequests to the other public art galleries in N.S.W. are dutiable at concessional rates but these are only marginally less than full rates	Dutiable at maximum rates

	<i>Bequest to Public Galleries within the State</i>	<i>Bequest to Public Galleries in other States or in Territories</i>
Vic.	Bequests to National Gallery of Victoria and public non-profit art galleries in Victoria are exempt.	Dutiable
Qld	Bequests to Queensland Art Gallery are exempt.	Dutiable at rates applicable to bequests to strangers
S.A.	Bequests to State public galleries are exempt.	Dutiable
W.A.	Exempt	Exempt
Tas.	Exempt	Dutiable

16.6 State Gift Duty. Victoria, Queensland and South Australia are the only States which levy gift duty. The situation in these States is as follows:

Vic. Gifts to any public art gallery in Australia are exempt.

Qld Gifts to the Queensland Art Gallery are exempt but gifts to other art galleries in Australia are dutiable.

S.A. Gifts to any public art gallery in Australia are exempt.

16.7 Most private collections of merit are put together over a number of years, the collector taking a satisfaction in his achievements and skills as collector, as well as any pleasures he might draw from the aesthetic appeal of his collection. Some private collections of importance have been amassed by professionals who originally used their personal collections for reference or research purposes. Such collections would not attract an income tax deduction for the donor if presented to a public museum, as most of the items would not have been purchased by the donor during the twelve months immediately preceding the making of the gift.

The income tax law in this regard is also a mitigating factor against gifts of objects which have been acquired by private persons through inheritance or by way of gift. A donor of objects which have come into his hands other than through purchase is not entitled to any personal income tax concession.

16.8 The loss of public revenue through the granting of an income tax deduction for a non-cash gift to a museum would be less than the public cost of acquiring the object or objects by sale through public auction or private agreement. The real difficulty is to ensure that only items of 'national cultural importance' attract the income tax concession.

16.9 In determining what might be an appropriate policy on the deductibility of non-cash gifts to museums, certain considerations arise:

- (a) It should not be left to a particular institution to decide whether a proposed gift of an item (or items) is to be accepted by the museum, and consequently attracting an income tax concession for the donor.
- (b) Some mechanism for determining a reasonable value of the gift for the purpose of a tax concession is required; and a basis set also on which the value of an object should be assessed.
- (c) If the proposed donation consists of more than one object, not all the objects may be of national cultural significance.
- (d) Should an income tax concession be allowable if the proposed donor attaches conditions to the gift?
- (e) If the proposed gift is more appropriate to the role and collections of a Museum other than the institution indicated by the donor, should any tax concession be withheld?
- (f) Would income tax concessions of this kind result in museums being active competitors for the acquisition of particular private collections?



- (g) How should the law regard a private collector who may seek to maximise any income tax concession by spreading the gift of his collection over several financial years?

There may be other implications which come to the minds of those who are expert in the field of income tax and we are conscious of this fact in putting forward our recommendations for changes in the law. The Committee feels, however, that it has an obligation to state its views in this regard.

16.10 We have concluded that:

- the present law on income tax concessions for gifts to Museums and libraries should be liberalised in the public interest;
- the area where the income tax law should be amended is in regard to non-cash gifts, so that items purchased by a proposed donor at any time, and items which have come into the hands of a proposed donor other than through his purchase of those items, should attract an income tax deduction in appropriate circumstances.

16.11 As a consequence of those conclusions, the Committee recommends that consideration be given to implementing changes to existing legislation so that:

- (a) gifts to public museums, libraries and archival authorities of objects, items and other material which are judged to be of national historic, cultural or scientific importance should attract an income tax concession to the donor;
- (b) all such proposed gifts be referred to all independent authority for a report on:
  - (i) the significance of the items concerned, having regard to the criteria referred to in (a) above,
    - (ii) the value of the gift determined on 'a fair market price' in Australia;
    - (iii) if the proposed gift is to a particular institution, whether it would be consistent with the role and functions of that museum, and its existing collections, to accept the gift;
- (c) any deduction in respect of a total collection should be given only in respect to those items which meet the approved criteria.
- (d) the income tax deduction should not be available in respect of a gift with conditions attached to that gift.

Several members of the Committee were also of the opinion that any amendment of the income tax law for the above purpose might well take into consideration the case of a donor who has split the gift of his collection over several financial years, with the intention of maximising the benefit of any income tax deduction.

An additional comment will be the Committee's thinking about 'conditional gifts' to museums and libraries. Many museums are now reluctant to accept the gift of objects which are tied to a condition that they be permanently displayed, perhaps at a particular institution, or not be sold or lent. If a group of objects form a distinctive 'collection', it is not unusual for a donor to specify, as a condition of the gift, that the objects remain in perpetuity as one collection.

16.12 Such conditions remove much of the flexibility which museums require in questions of display and in their deletion and acquisition policy. Gifts of objects, with conditions attached, often impose burdens on a museum which are out of proportion to the objects' value for display or research purposes. If an owner proposes only a 'conditional gift' of a rare object to a museum, we consider that the museum—public interest—should have access to funds enabling it to consider the outright purchase of the object

# Appendixes

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## APPENDIX 1

### Analysis of Submissions

*Submissions have been grouped according to their main subject heading. Where a submission has more than one subject in any detail, it appears in each of the groups.*

#### **The Concept of a National Museum**

Association of Australasian Palaeontologists of the Geological Society of Australia  
Incorporated

Australian Electric Transport Museum (S.A.) Inc., Adelaide, S.A. Australian Museum,  
Trustees of the, Sydney, N.S.W.

Australian Post Office

Australian War Memorial—Members of Staff—Canberra, A.C.T. Bailey, Mr R. A., and  
Mrs A. V., Brighton, Vic.

Bell, Mr G. W., Eltham, Vic.

Bickford, Miss A., Annandale, N.S.W.

Canberra and District Historical Society, Inc., A.C.T.

Canberra Gem Society Inc., Canberra, A.C.T.

Chippendale, Mr G., Forest Research Institute, Yarralumla, A.C.T.

Conference of Australian Museum Directors

D'Arcy, Mrs J., Curtin, A.C.T.

Department of Defence

Department of Tourism and Recreation

Department of Transport

Dyer, Mr S. W., Department of History, The University of New England, Armidale,  
N.S.W.

Estrada, Mr R. J., Shepparton, Vic.

Eurobadalla Shire Historical Society, Moruya, N.S.W.

Fahy, Mr K., Hunters Hill, N.S.W.

Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, Field Survey Group of the, Victoria Field

Naturalists' Club of Victoria, South Yarra, Vic.

Gandevia, Professor B., The Prince Henry Hospital, Little Bay, N.S.W.

Haglund, Ms L., Sydney, N.S.W.

Hilton, Mr R. N., Nedlands, W.A.

Howes, Mr A. R., Campbell, A.C.T.

Huntley, Mr D. V., Latham, A.C.T.

Kinsella, Rev. Bro. D., Waverley College, Waverley, N.S.W.

Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Surrey Hills, Vic.

McCull, Mr D. H., Curator of Museum, Bureau of Mineral Resources, Canberra,  
A.C.T.

MacDonald, Mr B., Museum of Historic Engines, Goulburn, N.S.W.  
 McDonald, Mr D. I, Hackett, A.C.T.  
 Marine Study Group of Victoria, Ringwood, Vic.  
 Mawby, Sir Maurice, Melbourne, Vic.  
 Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Trustees of the, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Museums' Association of Australia, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Museum Society of Queensland, Kenmore, Qld  
 National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.), Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Nature Conservation Society of South Australia Inc., Blackwood, S.A.  
 Northern Territory Museums and Art Galleries Board, Darwin, N.T.  
 North Western Agricultural Machinery Museum, Warracknabeal, Vic.  
 N.S.W. Antiquities Preservation Society, Orange, N.S.W.  
 N.S.W. Military Historical Society, Coogee, N.S.W.  
 Pigott, Mr B. F., Frankston, Vic.  
 Rosander, Miss E., Carlton, Vic.  
 Royal Aeronautical Society, Council of the Australian Division of the, Parkville, Vic.  
 Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.  
 South Australian Museum Board, Adelaide, S.A.  
 Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Trustees of the, Hobart, Tas.  
 Victorian Society for Social Responsibility in Science, Melbourne. Vic.  
 Warren, Mr G., State College of Victoria, Burwood, Vic.  
 Western Australia Museum, Trustees of the, Perth, W.A.  
 Whittaker, Mr W. L., Oatley, N.S.W.  
 Winterburn, Mr R. G., Mt. Evelyn, Vic.

### **The Functions, Contents and Planning of the Proposed National Museum**

#### *Functions*

Bickford, Miss A., Annandale, N.S.W.  
 Canberra and District Historical Society, Inc., A.C.T.  
 Conference of Australian Museum Directors  
 Haglund, Ms L., Sydney, N.S.W.  
 McColl, Mr D. H., Curator of Museum, Bureau of Mineral Resources. Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Museums' Association of Australia, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 N.S.W. Antiquities Preservation Society, Orange, N.S.W.  
 Rosander, Miss E., Carlton, Vic.  
 South Australian Museum Board, Adelaide, S.A.  
 Warren, Mr G., State College of Victoria, Burwood, Vic.

#### *Contents*

Antiquities Preservation Society, Orange, N.S.W.  
 Barnes, Mr B. A., Aranda, A.C.T.  
 Bickford, Miss A., Annandale, N.S.W.  
 Canberra and District Historical Society, Inc., A.C.T.  
 Canberra Gem Society Inc., Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Department of Labor and Immigration  
 Fahy, Mr K., Hunters Hill, N.S.W.  
 Gandevia, Professor B., The Prince Henry Hospital, Little Bay, N.S.W.  
 Haglund, Ms L., Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Heraldry Society of Australia, Hawthorn, Vic.  
 Huntley, Mr D. V., Latham, A.C.T.  
 Inventors' Association of Australia Limited, Sydney, N.S.W.

Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Surrey Hills, Vic.  
 MacDonald, Mr B., Museum of Historic Engines, Goulburn, N.S.W.  
 McGough, Mrs B. I, Adelaide, S.A.  
 Mawby, Sir Maurice, Melbourne, Vic.  
 Mitchell, Mr F. J., Lithgow, N.S.W.  
 Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Trustees of the, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Pigott, Mr B. F., Frankston, Vic.  
 Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.  
 Winterburn, Mr R. G., Mt Evelyn, Vic.

### *Planning*

Australian Electric Transport Museum (S.A.) Inc., Adelaide, S.A.  
 Bailey, Mr R. A., and Mrs A. V., Brighton, Vic.  
 Bickford, Miss A., Annandale, N.S.W.  
 Kinsella, Rev. Bro. D., Waverley College, Waverley, N.S.W.  
 MacDonald, Mr B., Museum of Historic Engines, Goulburn, N.S.W.  
 McDonald, Mr D. I, Hackett, A.C.T.  
 Museums' Association of Australia, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 N.S.W. Antiquities Preservation Society, Orange, N.S.W.  
 Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.

## **Specific Subject National Museums**

### *Aboriginal*

Bickford, Miss A., Annandale, N.S.W.  
 Pigott, Mr B. F. Frankston, Vic.  
 South Australian Museum Board, Adelaide, S.A.  
 Stubbs, Mr H. D., Lakes Entrance, Vic.

### *Antarctic*

Department of Science  
 Russell, Mr J, College Park, S.A.

### *Aviation*

Australian Society for Aero-historical Preservation Inc., Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Aviation Historical Society of Australia Ltd., Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Brooker-Pain, Mr J. F., Burwood, N.S.W.  
 Department of Tourism and Recreation  
 Department of Transport  
 Dyer, Mr S. W., Department of History, The University of New England, Armidale,  
 N.S.W.  
 Hourigan, Mr R., Highett, Vic., and Gallagher, Mr J., Loftus, N.S.W.  
 Moorabbin Air Museum—Australian Aircraft Restoration Group, Moorabbin, Vic.  
 Qantas Airways Limited, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Queensland Air Museum, in co-ordination with Aviation Historical Society of  
 Australia (Queensland Branch), Brisbane, Qld  
 Warbirds' Aviation Museum, Mildura Airport, Vic.

### *Biological*

Australian Entomological Society, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Australian Plant Pathology Society, Vic.  
 Biological Centre Committee (Dr S. Boyden), Canberra, A.C.T.  
 George, Mr R. W., Curator, Western Australian Museum, Perth, W.A.  
 Western Australian Museum, Trustees of the, Perth, W.A.

*Citizenship*

Grassby, the Hon. A. J., Special Consultant on Community Relations, Canberra.  
A.C.T.

*Colonial*

Department of Tourism and Recreation

*Decorative Arts*

Bickford, Miss A., Annandale, N.S.W.  
Department of Urban and Regional Development  
Graham, Mrs M., West Ryde, N.S.W.

*Films*

Association for a National Film Archive  
Cooper, Mr R. F., Department of History, Monash University, Vic.  
Edmundson, Mr R., Film Archivist, National Library, A.C.T.

*Fossil*

Association of Australasian Palaeontologists of the Geological Society of Australia  
Incorporated  
Palaeontological Group, Bureau of Mineral Resources

*Gemstones*

Crowe, Mr M. W., Morphett Vale, S.A.

*Invention*

Jeffery, Mr C. N., Manuka, A.C.T.

*Landscape Museums*

Bowden, Rev. K., Darlington, N.S.W.

*Machinery, Science & Technology*

Auty, Mr J. H., Hughes, A.C.T.  
Bailey, Mr R. A., and Mrs A. V., Brighton, Vic.  
Bickford, Miss A., Annandale, N.S.W.  
Cooke, Mr T. H., Hackett, A.C.T.

*Department of Science*

Manning, Mr C. R., Fig Tree, N.S.W., and Others  
Melbourne Steam Traction Engine Club, Melbourne, Vic.  
Radford, Miss J. Chemistry Department, University of Melbourne, Vic., and Hoare,  
Mr M. E., Research School of Social Sciences, A.N.U. Canberra. A.C.T.  
Wrigley, Mr D. F., A.N.U., Canberra, A.C.T.

*Mankind*

Museums' Association of Australia, Sydney, N.S.W.

*Marine Life*

Baker, Dr J. T., Dee Why, N.S.W.

*Maritime*

Department of Defence, Navy Office  
Department of Tourism and Recreation  
Louttit, Mr D. M., Glen Iris, Vic.  
Museums' Association of Australia, Sydney, N.S.W.  
National Maritime Museum for Sydney (Advisory Committee)  
Northern Territory Museums and Art Galleries Board, Darwin, N.T.  
Primrose, Dr B. N., Canberra, A.C.T.  
Queensland Maritime Museum Association, Hamilton, Qld  
Western Australian Museum, Trustees of the, Perth, W.A.  
World Ship Society, N.S.W. Branch

*Medical and Dental*

Brodsky, Dr I., Neutral Bay, N.S.W.

Department of Health

Levine, Mr S., Department of Preventive Dentistry, University of Sydney, N.S.W.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Sydney, N.S.W.

*Military*

Department of Tourism and Recreation

N.S.W. Military Historical Society, Coogee, N.S.W.

Ray, Mr A. J., Kirribilli, N.S.W.; Lyons, Mr J. K., St Kilda, Vic.; and Videon, Mr B. J.,  
Bentleigh East, Vic.

*Motor Racing*

Howard, Mr G., Balmain, N.S.W.

*Music*

Joseph, Mr C. A., Castle Hill, N.S.W.

*Natural History*

Chippendale, Mr G., Forest Research Institute, Yarralumla, A.C.T.

Museums' Association of Australia, Sydney, N.S.W.

*Numismatics*

Numismatic Association of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.

*Philatelic*

Ward, Mr J., Adelaide, S.A.

*Planetarium*

Royal Society of Canberra, Canberra, A.C.T.

*Prints*

Print Council of Australia, Melbourne, Vic.

*Sport and Recreation*

Boles, Mr B., Melbourne, Vic.

Department of Tourism and Recreation

Lindsay, Dr P. L., Physical Education Department, University of Queensland,  
Qld

*Toys*

Leonard, Ms H. M., Brighton, Vic.

*Transport*

Brooker-Pain, Mr J. F., Burwood, N.S.W.

Department of Tourism and Recreation

Department of Transport

Howes, Mr A. R., Campbell, A.C.T.

Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Surrey Hills, Vic.

**The Concept of a Central Museums Authority**

Ashley, Mr R. W. P., Ballarat, Vic.

Australian Electric Transport Museum (S.A.) Inc., Adelaide, S.A.

Australian Dental Association Inc. North Sydney, N.S.W.

Australian Museum, Trustees of the, Sydney, N.S.W.

Australian War Memorial—Members of Staff—Canberra, A.C.T.

Aviation Historical Society of Australia Ltd., Sydney, N.S.W.

Bickford, Miss A., Annandale, N.S.W.

Bowden, Rev. K., Darlington, N.S.W.

Brisbane Tramway Museum Society, Brisbane, Qld

Canberra and District Historical Society, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Capp, Mr R., Lochinvar, N.S.W.  
 Conference of Australian Museum Directors  
 Department of Science  
 Department of the Capital Territory  
 Department of Tourism and Recreation  
 Department of Urban and Regional Development  
 Dyer, Mr S. W., Department of History, The University of New England, Armidale,  
 N.S.W.  
 Fahy, Mr K., Hunters Hill, N.S.W.  
 George, Mr R. W., Curator of Crustacea, Western Australian Museum, Perth, W.A.  
 Glover, Mr L. P., 'Good Old Days' Pioneer Exhibition, Swansea, Tas.  
 Graham, Mrs E., Wollstonecraft, N.S.W.  
 Hilton, Mr R. N., Nedlands, W.A.  
 International Association of Art Critics, Australian Division, Arncliffe, N.S.W.  
 Kelly, Mr P. F., Bald Hills, Qld  
 Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, S.A.  
 Melbourne Steam Traction Engine Club, Melbourne, Vic.  
 Murphy, Mr J., Hawthorn, Vic.  
 Museum Education Group, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Trustees of the, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Museums' Association of Australia, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 National Library of Australia, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 National Trust of Australia (New South Wales), Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Naval Historical Society of Australia, Garden Island, N.S.W.  
 Northern Territory Museums and Art Galleries Board, Darwin, N.T.  
 N.S.W. Rail Transport Museum, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Pioneer Farm Museum, Hampden Bridge Park & Historic Museum Trust, Kangaroo  
 Valley, N.S.W.  
 Postmaster-General's Department  
 Queensland Museum Board of Trustees, Brisbane, Qld  
 Rimmer, Professor W. G., University of New South Wales, Kensington, N.S.W.  
 Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld  
 Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.  
 Science Museum of Victoria, Council of the, Melbourne, Vic.  
 South Australian Museum Board, Adelaide, S.A.  
 Stephenson, Professor P. J., James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville,  
 Qld  
 Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Trustees of the, Hobart, Tas.  
 Tasmanian Transport Museum Society Inc., Hobart, Tas.  
 University of Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Vickery, Mr G. C., Glen Iris, Vic.  
 Warren, Mr G., State College of Victoria, Burwood, Vic.  
 Western Australian Museum, Trustees of the, Perth, W.A.  
 Whittaker, Mr W. L., Oatley, N.S.W.  
 Woocoo Historical Society, Broweena, Qld

**Existing Collections Identified (not including Major Museums or Government Departments)**

Armidale and District Folk Museum Committee (Armidale City Council), Armidale,  
 N.S.W.

Armidale Teachers' College (Mr M. C. Schroder), Armidale, N.S.W.  
 Astrojet Exhibitions Pty Ltd, Space and Science Museum, Melbourne Airport, VIC.  
 Auffi, Mr I.L., Modbury, S.A.  
 Australian Academy of Science, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society, Blackburn, Vic.  
 Australian Council for the Arts, Dance Panel, North Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Australian Electric Transport Museum (S.A.) Inc., Adelaide, S.A.  
 Australian National Folk Trust, Australian Folklore Centre, Paddington, N.S.W.  
 Australian Railway Historical Society, N.S.W. Division  
 Australian Society for Aero-historical Preservation Inc., Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Australian Society for Parasitology (Professor Arundel)  
 Bennett, Dr R., Department of Radiology, Preston and Northcote Community  
 Hospital, Preston, Vic.  
 Berry Museum, Berry, N.S.W.  
 Blain, Mr E., Dennington, Vic.  
 Bowden, Rev. K., Darlington, N.S.W.  
 Broken Hill Civic Centre Gallery, Broken Hill, N.S.W.  
 Bronk's Motor Museum and Book Shop, Watson's Bay, N.S.W.  
 Brusasco, Alderman, I., Brisbane, Qld  
 Burnie Municipal Council (Pioneer Village Museum), Burnie, Tas.  
 Byles, Mr R. D., Highbury, S.A.  
 Chapman, Mr A. H., Glebe Point, N.S.W., and Gardner, Mr A. E., Glebe Point,  
 N.S.W.  
 Charters Towers Branch of the National Trust, Charters Towers, Qld  
 Chatley, Mr A. F. H., Preston, Vic.  
 Chippendale, Mr G., Forest Research Institute, Yarralumla, A.C.T.  
 Cornucopia Museum and Art Gallery (M. & J. Weatherhead), Tynong North, Vic.  
 Corowa District Historical Society, Corowa, N.S.W.  
 Cunderdin Museum Committee, Cunderdin, W.A.  
 Davidson, Mr G. M., Beaumaris, Vic.  
 Department of Mines, Victorian Government  
 Drage, Mr J. G. (Drage's Historical Aircraft Museum), Wodonga, Vic.  
 Far North Queensland Development Bureau, Cairns, Qld  
 Fox, Mr A. H., Moonee Ponds, Vic.  
 Goulburn and District Historical Society (The St. Clair Historical Home), Goulburn,  
 N.S.W.  
 Grainger Museum Board, University of Melbourne, Vic.  
 Haneman, Mr B., Hurstville, N.S.W.  
 Hart-Smith, Mr W., Perth, W.A.  
 Holland, Mr R., Lidcombe Hospital, Lidcombe, N.S.W.  
 Honey House and Museum (L. H. Jones), Kuranda, Qld  
 Illawarra Light Railway Museum Society, Wollongong, N.S.W.  
 Imlay, Shire of, (Eden Museum), Eden, N.S.W.  
 International Flag Gallery (Mr & Mrs A. Rehardt), Gympie, Qld  
 Jeffery, Mrs D. I., Avalon, N.S.W.  
 Kuble, Mr A. G., Merricks North, Vic.  
 Kyneton Historical Museum, Kyneton, Vic.  
 Leonard, Ms H. M., Brighton, Vic.  
 Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, S.A.  
 Library Board of Western Australia, Perth, W.A.  
 MacDonald, Mr B., Museum of Historic Engines, Goulburn, N.S.W.  
 MacDonald, Mr S., Balgowlah Heights, N.S.W.



McGrath, Mr B. F., Albury, N.S.W.  
 McLeod, Mr J. A., Geurie, N.S.W.  
 Melbourne Steam Traction Engine Club, Melbourne, Vic.  
 Melvaine, Mr M., Hornsby, N.S.W.  
 Mile End Railway Museum, Adelaide, S.A.  
 Montrose Cottage and Eureka Military Museum (Mr E. J. Millet), Ballarat, Vic.  
 New South Wales Department of Agriculture (Royal Botanic Gardens, N.S.W.  
     National Herbarium and Biology Branch Herbarium)  
 New South Wales Department of Mines  
 New South Wales Rail Transport Museum, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Nock, Mr L. J., Deakin, A.C.T.  
 Noel's Rock Museum (Mr N. Franks), Albury, N.S.W.  
 Peck, Mr R. C., Drummoyne, N.S.W.  
 Pickerd, Air Commodore, O.B.E., D.F.C., Administrator, Norfolk Island  
 Point Lookout-Stradbroke Island Tourist Development Association. Stradbroke  
     Island, Qld  
 Port Adelaide Institute Inc., Port Adelaide Nautical Museum, S.A.  
 Queensland Agricultural College, Council of the, Lawes, Qld  
 Richmond, Mr L. R., Queanbeyan, N.S.W.  
 Roseworthy Agricultural College, Roseworthy, S.A.  
 Rotary Club of Parramatta, Parramatta, N.S.W.  
 Royal New South Wales Lancers Memorial Museum, Parramatta, N.S.W.  
 Royal Western Australia Historical Society (Inc.), Nedlands. W.A.  
 Scurrall, Mr V. E., Lidcombe, N.S.W.  
 Sherbrooke Historical Society, Upwey, Vic.  
 Society of Australian Genealogists, Surry Hills, N.S.W.  
 South Coast Model Engineering Society, Windang, N.S.W.  
 Steam Preservation Co-ordinating Committee, Huntingdale, Vic.  
 Steam Tram and Railway Preservation Co-op Society Ltd, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Swinkels, Mrs B., Magill, S.A.  
 'Sydney' Training Depot (Maritime Museum), Snapper Island, N.S.W.  
 Tasmanian Transport Museum Society Inc., Hobart, Tas.  
 Taylor, Mr D. M\_ Terrey Hills, N.S.W.  
 Toodyay Shire Council and Toodyay Tourist Centre, Toodyay, W.A.  
 Tootell, Miss M. G., Castlemaine, Vic.  
 Vintage Motorcycle Club of Victoria, Templestowe, Vic.  
 Webeck, Mr L, 'Bungau Castle', Newport, N.S.W.  
 Wedd, Mr M. T. A., The Historical Museum, Dee Why, N.S.W.  
 Western Australian Secondary Teachers College, Nedlands, W.A.  
 Woodcarvers Guild of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld  
 University of Adelaide, Adelaide, S.A.  
 University of Melbourne Archives, Parkville, Vic.  
 University of Melbourne-Geology Department Museum-Vic.  
 University of Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Upton, Mr M. S., Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Van Diemen's Land Memorial Folk Museum, Hobart, Tas.  
 Venn, Mr B., Launceston, Tas.  
 Winniston Trust, Denmark, W. A.

**Proposals Suggesting Assistance to Maintain and/or Develop Collections and Related Museum Activity**

Air Force Association (W.A. Division), Bull Creek, W.A.

Andrews, Mr B. G., Mareeba, Qld  
 Antique Arms Collectors Society of Australia (Co-op Ltd) Seven Hills, N.S.W.  
 Apex Club of Narrogin, Narrogin, W.A.  
 Armidale and District Folk Museum Committee, (Armidale City Council), Armidale, N.S.W.  
 Armidale Teachers' College, Museum of Education, Armidale, N.S.W.  
 Armidale Teachers' College (Mr M. C. Schroder), Armidale, N.S.W.  
 Ashton, Mr C. M., North Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Astronomical Society of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.  
 Australian Electric Transport Museum (S.A.) Inc., Adelaide, S.A.  
 Australian Film Institute, Carlton, Vic.  
 Australian Narrow Gauge Railway Museum Society, Brisbane, Qld  
 Australian Numismatic Society, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Australian Railway Historical Society, Victoria Division  
 Australian Railway Historical Society (W.A.) Inc., Bassendean, W.A.  
 Australian Wheat Collection, Tamworth, N.S.W.  
 Aviation Historical Society of Australia Ltd., Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat, Vic.  
 Ballarat Historical Park Association (Sovereign Hill), Ballarat, Vic.  
 Ballarat Historical Society, Ballarat, Vic.  
 Ballarat Municipal Libraries, City of Ballarat, Vic.  
 Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society, Ltd, Ballarat, Vic.  
 Bendigo Trust, Dal Gum San Committee, Bendigo, Vic.  
 Binns, Mr R. A., Department of Geology, University of Western Australia, W.A.  
 Blaiklock, Mr D. R., Mataranka Primary School, Mataranka, N.T.  
 Bowen Historical Society and Bowen War Memorial Historical Museum, Bowen, Qld  
 Boydell, Mr B., Gibson, W.A.  
 Brisbane Tramway Museum Society, Brisbane, Qld  
 Bronk's Motor Museum and Book Shop, Watson's Bay, N.S.W.  
 Buchanan, Mr J. S., Gunnedah, N.S.W.  
 Bundaberg Historical Museum Committee, Bundaberg, Qld  
 Cairns, The Historical Society of, North Queensland, Cairns, Qld  
 Cairns Aircraft Recovery Team, Cairns, Qld  
 Capp, Mr P., Lochinvar, N.S.W.  
 Charters Towers, Council of the City of, Qld  
 Chiltern Athenaeum Trust, Chiltern, Vic.  
 Chinchilla and District Historical Society, Chinchilla, Qld  
 Clements, Mr S., Kew, Vic.  
 Combined Historical Museums Development Committee, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Cobram, Shire of, Cobram, Vic.  
 Creswick, Council of the Shire of, Creswick, Vic.  
 Department of Primary Industries, Queensland Government  
 Dimboola, Shire of, (Wimmera-Mallee Pioneers Museum), Jeparit, Vic.  
 Drayton Pioneer Crafts Village Steering Committee, Toowoomba, Qld  
 Eadle, Mr K., Drummoyne, N.S.W.  
 Eurobadalla Shire Historical Society, Moruya, N.S.W.  
 Frankston Historical Society, Frankston, Vic.  
 Furneaux Historical Research Association, Flinders Island, Tas.  
 Gippsland Folk Museum, Moe, Vic.  
 Good Neighbour Council of South Australia Inc., Adelaide, S.A.  
 Gunning and District Historical Society, Gunning, N.S.W.  
 Haslett, Mr J. M., Darwin, N.T.

Hawkins, Mr J. B., Cammeray, N.S.W.  
 Hecker, Mr S. W., Maryborough, Qld  
 Hicks, Miss B., Albany, W.A.  
 Holland, Mr R., Lidcombe Hospital, Lidcombe, N.S.W.  
 Holmes, The Venerable Stephen, Archdeacon of Albury, Albury, N.S.W.  
 Horne, Mr W. R., Tanawha, via Buderim, Qld  
 Hourigan, Mr R., Highett, Vic, and Gallagher, Mr J., Loftus, N.S.W.  
 Houston, Mr J. M., Mangrove Mountain, N.S.W.  
 Hunter Valley Steam Railway and Museum, Broadmeadow, N.S.W.  
 Illawarra Historical Society Museum, Wollongong, N.S.W.  
 Imlay, Shire of, (Eden Museum), Eden, N.S.W.  
 Jesse, Mr H., Machan's Beach, Via Cairns, Qld  
 Johns, Mrs E. V., Beulah Park, S.A.  
 Kay, Mr J. R. D., Eldorado, Vic.  
 Kedron Park Teachers College-Departments of Social Studies and Health and  
 Physical Education, Lutwyche, Qld  
 Kyneton Historical Museum, Kyneton, Vic.  
 'Lakeland Park', Paynesville, Vic.  
 Lakes Entrance Antique Car and Folk Museum (R. G. and H. P. Standerwick), Lakes  
 Entrance, Vic.  
 Leslie, Rt Rev. E. K., Bishop of Bathurst, Bathurst, N.S.W.  
 Le Souef, Mr J. D., Blairgowrie, Vic.  
 Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, S.A.  
 Library Board of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld  
 Library Board of Western Australia, Perth, W.A.  
 Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Surrey Hills, Vic.  
 Liverpool Museum Trust Group, Miller, N.S.W.  
 Longreach, Shire of, Longreach, Qld  
 Lubrano, Ms J., History Department, The University of New England, Armidale,  
 N.S.W.  
 MacDonald, Mr B., Museum of Historic Engines, Goulburn, N.S.W.  
 Mackay City Council, Mackay, Qld  
 Maclean District Historical Society, Maclean, N.S.W.  
 Macleay River Historical Society, Kempsey, N.S.W.  
 McIntosh, Mr D. J., Brisbane, Qld  
 McMahan, Mrs P. R., Editor, Hand Weavers and Spinners Guild, Castlecrag, N.S.W.  
 Mile End Railway Museum, Adelaide, S.A.  
 Moorabbin Air Museum, Australian Aircraft Restoration Group, Vic.  
 Mornington Peninsula Historical Vehicles Club, Frankston, Vic.  
 Murweh Shire Council (Charleville District Historical and Cultural Society),  
 Charleville, Qld  
 Museum of Agricultural Progress and Rural Technology, Orange, N.S.W.  
 Muswellbrook Municipal Council (Muswellbrook Arts Centre Committee), Muswell-  
 brook, N.S.W.  
 National Committee for the History and Philosophy of Science, Australian Academy  
 of Science, Canberra  
 National Museum of Victoria, Science Museum of Victoria, and Library Council,  
 Melbourne, Vic.  
 National Trust of Australia (Victoria), South Yarra, Vic.  
 National Trust of South Australia, Adelaide, S.A.  
 National Trust of South Australia, Moonta Branch, Moonta, S.A.  
 Nature Conservation Society of South Australia Inc., Blackwood, S.A.

Newcastle Maritime Museum Society, Newcastle, N.S.W.  
 New South Wales Institute of Technology, School of Life Sciences, Broadway, N.S.W.  
 New South Wales Rail Transport Museum, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 New South Wales Steam Engine Preservation Society, Mortdale, N.S.W.  
 Noel's Rock Museum (Mr N. Franks), Albury, N.S.W.  
 Norfolk Island Historical Society, Norfolk Island  
 North Western Agricultural Machinery Museum, Warracknabeal, Vic.  
 Norris, Mr P., Brisbane, Qld  
 Nyngan and District Historical Society, Nyngan, N.S.W.  
 Old Colonial Home Folk Museum (Mr P. Bourke), Surfers Paradise, Qld  
 Owen 'Cavanough' Fellowship, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Parramatta, Council of the City of, Parramatta, N.S.W.  
 Pinjarra Steam and Hills Railway Preservation Society, Pinjarra, W.A.  
 'Pitchi Richi Sanctuary' (Mrs E. Corbett), Alice Springs, N.T.  
 Preservation of Las Balsas Rafts Committee, Ballina, N.S.W.  
 Prewett, Mr P. A., Blackwood, S.A.  
 Puffing Billy Preservation Society, Melbourne, Vic.  
 Queensland Air Museum, in co-ordination with Aviation Historical Society of  
 Australia (Queensland Branch), Brisbane, Qld  
 Queensland Churches of Christ Historical Society, Brisbane Qld  
 Queensland Maritime Museum Association, Hamilton, Qld  
 Randwick Historical Society, Randwick, N.S.W.  
 Redland Museum Foundation, Cleveland, Qld  
 Residency Museum Management Committee, York, W.A.  
 Rotary Club of Parramatta, Parramatta, N.S.W.  
 Rottnest Island Museum Management Committee, Perth, W.A.  
 Royal Aeronautical Society, Council of the Australian Division of the, Parkville, Vic.  
 Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Library Committee, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Faculty of Anaesthetists (Drs B. Dwyer & H.  
 P. Penn), Melbourne, Vic.  
 Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld  
 Royal Western Australian Historical Society Inc., Donnybrook Branch, Donnybrook,  
 W.A.  
 Royal Western Australian Historical Society Inc., Nedlands, W.A.  
 Rushworth District Historical Society, Rushworth, Vic.  
 St John's School House Museum, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Shepparton and Goulburn Valley Historical Society, Shepparton, Vic.  
 Silby, Rev. G. D., Braidwood, N.S.W.  
 Society of Australian Genealogists, Surry Hills, N.S.W.  
 South Pacific Electric Railway Co-operative Society Ltd Tramway Museum, Sydney,  
 N.S.W.  
 Steam Tram and Railway Preservation Co-op Society Ltd, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Stewart, Mrs M., Deans Marsh, Vic.  
 Straughair, Mr E. A., 'Kelly Museum', Benalla, Vic.  
 Sydenham, Dr P., Department of Geophysics, The University of New England,  
 Armidale, N.S.W.  
 Sydney Cove Waterfront Museum Limited, North Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Tasmanian Library Board, Hobart, Tas.  
 Tasmanian Maritime and Folk Museum, Devonport, Tas.  
 Tasmanian Transport Museum Society Inc., Hobart, Tas.  
 Temora Historical Society (Temora Rural Museum), Temora, N.S.W.  
 Tootell, Miss M. G., Castlemaine, Vic.

Tramway Museum Society of Victoria Limited, Melbourne, Vic.  
 Underwater Research Group of Queensland, North Quay, Qld  
 Underwater Research Group of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.  
 University of Adelaide, Adelaide, S.A.  
 University of Melbourne, Parkville, Vic.  
 University of Melbourne, Department of Medical History (Professor K. T. Russell),  
 Melbourne, Vic.  
 University of Queensland, Students of the Department of Architecture, St Lucia, Qld  
 University of Sydney, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Victorian Council of Numismatic Societies, Oakleigh, Vic.  
 Victorian Society for Social Responsibility in Science, Melbourne, Vic.  
 Victorian State Coal Mine Historic Park, Wonthaggi, Vic.  
 Van Dieman's and Memorial Folk Museum, Hobart, Tas.  
 Verhoeven, Mr G. H., Aitkenvale, Qld  
 Veteran Car Club of W.A., West Perth, W.A.  
 Wagner, Ms C., Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Walcha District Historical Society, Walcha, N.S.W.  
 Wandiligong Preservation Society, Wandiligong, Vic.  
 Warbirds' Aviation Museum, Mildura Airport, Vic.  
 Warhamooloo Arts and Craft Centre, Hamilton, N.S.W.  
 Western Australian Transport Museum Inc., Maylands, W.A.  
 Wheat Industry Research Council, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 White, Mr J. S., Seaforth, N.S.W.  
 Williamstown, City of, Williamstown, Vic.  
 Winniston Trust, Denmark, W.A.

### **Museum Services, Including Conservation, Museum Training and Educational Aspects**

Ambrose, Mr W. R., Prehistory Department, Research School of Pacific Studies,  
 Australian National University, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Art Galleries' Association and Museums' Association, Joint Consultative Committee  
 on Museum Training.  
 Canny, Professor M. J., Monash University, Vic.  
 Cook, Mr I., Conservator, National Library, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Cope, Mr R. L., Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Dimpel, Mr H., Weetangera, A.C.T.  
 Douglas, Mr A. M., Nollamara, W.A.  
 Education Department-Australian Government  
 Hedge, Mr J. C., The Power Institute of Fine Arts, Sydney University, N.S.W.  
 Howse, Dr W. J., Nedlands, W.A.  
 Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Lyons, Mr K., Western Australian Institute of Technology, South Bentley, W.A.  
 McDonald, Miss P. M., Sydney, N.S.W.  
 Mooney, Mr I., South Launceston, Tas.  
 Museum Education Group, Sydney, N.S.W.  
 New South Wales Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation  
 Rann, Mr C. S., Torrens, A.C.T.  
 Regional Galleries' Association of New South Wales, Newcastle, N.S.W.  
 Reid, Mr J., Curator of Art, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, A.C.T.  
 Rosander, Miss E., Carlton, Vic.; McKay, Mr P., Melbourne, Vic.; Goodman, Ms D.,  
 Melbourne, Vic.; and Hollingworth, Ms J., Melbourne, Vic.  
 University of Queensland, University Library

Walston, Miss S., Conservation Laboratory, The Australian Museum, Sydney,  
N.S.W.  
Workers' Educational Association of N.S.W., Sydney, N. S.W.

## APPENDIX II

### Australian Museums, Galleries and Other Centres Visited by Members of the Committee

#### **Australian Capital Territory**

Australian Institute of Anatomy  
Australian National Insect Collection—CSIRO  
Australian War Memorial  
Bureau of Mineral Resources—Palaeontological and Geological Collections  
Division of Wildlife Research—CSIRO  
Herbarium Australiense—CSIRO  
Lanyon Homestead

#### **New South Wales**

Goulburn Mardsen Steam Museum  
Sydney Art Gallery of New South Wales  
Australian Museum  
Macleay Museum—University of Sydney  
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences  
National Herbarium of New South Wales  
Spectacle Island—Department of Defence, Navy Office

#### **Queensland**

Brisbane Anthropology Museum, University of Queensland  
Geology Museum, University of Queensland  
Queensland Art Gallery  
Queensland Maritime Museum (Dry Dock only)  
Queensland Museum  
State Library of Queensland

#### **South Australia**

Adelaide Art Gallery of South Australia  
National Trust Headquarters  
Post Office Museum  
South Australian Museum  
State Herbarium of South Australia  
State Library of South Australia  
University of Adelaide  
Birdwood Birdwood Mill Museum  
Burra Mining Relics and Museum  
Port Adelaide Port Adelaide Nautical Museum  
Salisbury Australian Electric Transport Museum (S.A.) Inc.  
Mile End Railway  
Tanunda Barossa Valley Historical Museum

#### **Tasmania**

Burnie Pioneer Village Museum  
Devonport Tasmanian Maritime and Folk Museum  
Hadspen Entally House  
Hobart Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts  
State Library of Tasmania  
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery  
Van Diemen's Land Memorial Folk Museum  
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery  
Port Arthur Museum  
Zeehan West Coast Pioneers' Memorial Museum

## APPENDIX II

### Australian Museums, Galleries and Other Centres Visited by Members of the Committee

#### **Australian Capital Territory**

Australian Institute of Anatomy  
Australian National Insect Collection—CSIRO  
Australian War Memorial  
Bureau of Mineral Resources—Palaeontological and Geological Collections  
Division of Wildlife Research—CSIRO  
Herbarium Australiense—CSIRO  
Lanyon Homestead

#### **New South Wales**

Goulburn Mardsen Steam Museum  
Sydney Art Gallery of New South Wales  
Australian Museum  
Macleay Museum—University of Sydney  
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences  
National Herbarium of New South Wales  
Spectacle Island—Department of Defence, Navy Office

#### **Queensland**

Brisbane Anthropology Museum, University of Queensland  
Geology Museum, University of Queensland  
Queensland Art Gallery  
Queensland Maritime Museum (Dry Dock only)  
Queensland Museum  
State Library of Queensland

#### **South Australia**

Adelaide Art Gallery of South Australia  
National Trust Headquarters  
Post Office Museum  
South Australian Museum  
State Herbarium of South Australia  
State Library of South Australia  
University of Adelaide  
Birdwood Birdwood Mill Museum  
Burra Mining Relics and Museum  
Port Adelaide Port Adelaide Nautical Museum  
Salisbury Australian Electric Transport Museum (S.A.) Inc.  
Mile End Railway  
Tanunda Barossa Valley Historical Museum

#### **Tasmania**

Burnie Pioneer Village Museum  
Devonport Tasmanian Maritime and Folk Museum  
Hadspen Entally House  
Hobart Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts  
State Library of Tasmania  
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery  
Van Diemen's Land Memorial Folk Museum  
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery  
Port Arthur Museum  
Zeehan West Coast Pioneers' Memorial Museum



**Victoria**

Ballarat	Ballarat Fine Art Gallery Ballarat Historical Park Association (Sovereign Hill) Ballarat Historical Society Museum Montrose Cottage
Castlemaine	Castlemaine Market Museum Walmuma, Imperial Hotel
Melbourne	Grainger Centre, University of Melbourne National Gallery of Victoria National Museum of Victoria Science Museum of Victoria
Point Cook	RAAF Museum

**Western Australia**

Albany	Patrick Taylor Cottage and Old Gaol Residency Museum Strawberry Hill Farm
Boulder	Hainault Tourist Mine Pty Ltd
Coolgardie	Coolgardie Historical Exhibition
Cunderdin	Cunderdin Municipal Museum
Fremantle	Fremantle Museum and Art Centre
Kalgoorlie	Golden Mile Museum
New Norcia	Benedictine Monastery
Perth	Geological Museum Royal Western Australian Historical Society (Inc.) Headquarters Transport Collection, Guildford Western Australian Art Gallery Western Australian Herbarium Western Australian Museum
Toodyay	Newcastle Gaol Museum

## **A selected List of Museums, Galleries and Other Centres Visited by Members of the Committee during the Overseas Visit**

**Canada**

Ottawa	Canadian Conservation Institute National Museum of Man National Museum of Science and Technology National Museums of Canada
Toronto	Art Gallery of Ontario Black Creek Pioneer Village Ontario Science Centre Royal Ontario Museum

**Denmark**

Brede	National Museum
Copenhagen	Louisiana Art Museum National Museum (Ethnographic and Prehistory Departments)
Lejre	Historical Archaeological Research Centre
Sorgenfri	Open Air Museum

**Germany**

Munich	Deutsches Museum
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**Mexico**

Mexico City Mexican National Museum of Anthropology

**Netherlands**

Amsterdam The Stedelijk (Municipal) Museum

Eindhoven Evoluon Museum

**Spain**

Barcelona Maritime Museum

**United Kingdom**

Greenwich National Maritime Museum

Beaulieu National Motor Museum

Hendon Royal Air Force Museum

Singleton Weald and Downlands Open Air Museum

London British Museum (Natural History)

London Museum

**United States of America**

Cooperstown New York State Historical Association

New York American Museum of Natural History

The Cloisters

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Museum of Contemporary Crafts

San Francisco California Academy of Sciences

The Exploratorium

Oakland Museum

Washington Smithsonian Institution

Williamsburg Colonial Williamsburg

# APPENDIX III

## Statistics of 16 Major Australian Museums and Galleries

**Table 1**

	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Date of Foundation</i>	<i>Construction date of earliest building occupied</i>	<i>Possibility of further development on site</i>	<i>Collections</i>
Northern Territory Museum & Art Gallery, Darwin. Alice Springs	Australian Government	1965	1883 destroyed 1974	very limited	Anthropology, natural hist., geology, contemp. art
Australian War Memorial. Canberra	Australian Government	1925	1941	nil. if present shape to be retained	Art, war relics, printed and written records
The Australian Museum, Sydney	State	1827	1849	very limited	Natural hist., anthropology, geology
Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, Sydney	State	1880	1893	nil	Applied arts, science and technology
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney	State	1874	1897	limited	Paintings. sculpture. drawings. prints
National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne	State	1854	1893	very limited	Natural hist., anthropology, geology
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne	State	1861	1968	nil	Paintings. prints, sculpture, pottery, costumes
Science Museum of Victoria, Melbourne	State	1870	1870	limited	Science and technology
Queensland Museum, Brisbane	State	1855	1896	very limited	Natural hist., anthropology. geology, history and technology
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane	State	1895	temporary premises occupied 1975	nil	Paintings, sculpture. prints. furniture
South Australian Museum, Adelaide	State	1856	1859	nil	Natural hist., anthropology,
Art Gallery, of South Australia, Adelaide	State	1884	1900	good	Paintings, drawings. sculpture. furniture. coins
Western Australian Museum, Perth	State	1891	1861 (Fremantle site)	nil	Natural hist., anthropology, history, maritime
Western Australian Art Gallery, Perth	State	1895	1907	nil	Paintings, drawings. sculpture. prints
Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Hobart	State	1829	1815	excellent	Art, natural hist., anthropology, geology, history
Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston	Municipal authority,	1891	1891	nil	Art, natural history, anthropology, history

\*Statistics in tables 1-6 reflect present situation following extensive cyclonic damage in Darwin.

**Table 2**  
**Display and Storage Facilities**

	Display Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	% with atmos. control	Storage Area Perm. (m <sup>2</sup> )	Temp.	% with atmos. control	% of storage area utilised at present
Northern Territory						
Museum & Art Gallery	200	50	60	60	100	100
Australian War Memorial	8902	33	1500	1393	2.2	100
The Australian Museum	6481	nil	1861	1852	9.2	100
Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences	1667	1.7	2315	variable (no figure given)	nil	100
Art Gallery of New South Wales	4907	66	2315	no figure given	100	80
National Museum of Victoria	4352	nil	2500	278	nil	90
National Gallery of Victoria			No figures provided		100	100
Science Museum of Victoria	3333	nil	1111	370	nil	100
Queensland Museum	2500	nil	889	93	nil	100
Queensland Art Gallery	634	100	—	523	82	100
South Australian Museum	4200	nil	5245	2690	nil	100
Art Gallery of South Australia	3015	23	503	362	10	100
Western Australian Museum	3056	37	1409	2060	10	100
Western Australian Art Gallery	1204	nil	120	19	nil	100
Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery	2755	nil	423	170	nil	90
Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery	1639	nil	821	200	nil	100

**Table 3**  
**Staffing 1974**

	Professional (Directors, Curators, Teachers, Librarians, Conservators)	Technical	Administrative	Other	TOTAL
Northern Territory					
Museum & Art Gallery	7	3	2	4	10
Australian War Memorial	9	8	11	58	86
The Australian Museum	45	30	12	67	154 (1975)
Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences					
Art Gallery of New South Wales	12	30	5	18	65
National Museum of Victoria	15	3	5	60	83
National Gallery of Victoria	25	22	6	—	53
Science Museum of Victoria	22	120	14	—	156
	11	5	3	67	86
Queensland Museum					
Queensland Art Gallery	19	25	7	9	60
	3	1	—	15	19 (incl. 1 p/t librarian)
South Australian Museum					
Art Gallery of South Australia	27	22	7	11	67
Western Australian Museum	7	3	9	16	35
Western Australian Art Gallery	40	47	23	23	133
	11	3	5	10	29 (incl. 1 p/t conservator)
Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery					
Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery	9	5	3	9	26
	5	2	3	4	14

**Table 4**  
**Conservation Staff and Facilities**  
(Figures may not be directly comparable)

	Conservation facilities available	Staff employed in conservation areas	Number of conservation staff that could be employed
Northern Territory			
Museum & Art Gallery	no	1	10
Australia War Memorial	yes	1	6
The Australian Museum	yes	3	6
Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences	no	nil	3
Art Gallery of New South Wales	yes	2	6
National Museum of Victoria	no	nil	1
National Gallery of Victoria	—	—	4
Science Museum of Victoria	no	nil	1
Queensland Museum	no	nil	1
			(at least)
Queensland Art Gallery	very limited	nil	1
South Australian Museum	no	nil	3
Art Gallery of South Australia	yes, limited	1	4
Western Australian Museum	yes	15	25
Western Australian Art Gallery	yes, temporary workshop	2	3
Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery	workshop under construction	appointments pending	3
Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery	laboratory under construction	position advertised	3

**Table 5**  
**Attendances, Education Facilities and Services**

	Estimated attendance figures			Student visits 1974	Education facilities available	Education expenditure 1974
	1964	1970	1974			
Northern Territory Museum & Art Gallery	not established			8 000	limited	\$2 500
Australian War Memorial	488 609	586 413	692 568	n.a.	no	nil
The Australian Museum	358 045	465 400	560 000	25 628 (1973-74)	yes	\$431 100 (1973-74 also incl. exhibits program)
Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences	207 322	212 399	211 088	41 613	yes	n.a.
Art Gallery of New South Wales	n.a.	n.a.	435 365 (1974-75)	43 753	yes	n.a.
National Museum of Victoria	335 900	400 000	500 000	33 488	yes	\$3 230
National Gallery of Victoria	n.a.	555 148	590 509	27 410	yes	\$5000
Science Museum of Victoria	310 000	425 000	581 000	54 000	yes	n.a.
Queensland Museum	n.a.	155 000	188 834	31 892	yes	\$8933 (excl. salaries)
Queensland Art Gallery	n.a.	124800	gallery closed (Apr/Jun '75)	2716 (Apr/Jun '75)	no	nil
South Australian Museum	100 000	200 000	250 000	32 000	yes	\$2500
Art Gallery of South Australia	100 000	142 000	140 000	29 000	yes	\$42 000 (incl. salaries)
Western Australian Museum	115 793	124 416	119 903 (Perth) 122 157 (Fremantle)	50 950	yes	\$5 761 (excl. salaries)
Western Australian Art Gallery	118 922	121 718	109 857	5 788	yes	\$41 056
Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery	n.a.	n.a.	135 000	26 000	limited	\$10 300
Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery	68 020	89 221	85 082	10 000	yes	\$4000 (excl. salaries)

**Table 6**  
**Finance and Acquisitions 1974/75**

	Expenditure	Australian Government assistance	State Government assistance	Other assistance	Amount for acquis- itions
Northern Territory					
Museum & Art Gallery	\$300 000	300 000	—	\$60 000	\$50 000
Australian War Memorial	\$815 440	\$757 518	nil	\$90 015	\$18 792
The Australian Museum	\$1 990 000	\$102 181	\$1 394 056 (excl. capital works + some admin. expen.)	\$178 000	\$11 500
Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences	\$537 518	\$1 465	\$537 518	nil	\$19 665
Art Gallery of New South Wales	\$479 813	\$34 664	\$130 000	n.a.	\$120 437
National Museum of Victoria	\$511 205	\$24 740	\$481 215	\$5 250	n.a.
National Gallery of Victoria	\$1 655 000	\$10 083	\$1 465 000	\$179 000	\$108 000
Science Museum of Victoria	\$400 000	nil	\$400 000	nil	\$10 000
Queensland Museum	\$550 897	\$30 224	\$472 000 (excl. mainten. & capital works)	\$274 12	\$2 268
Queensland Art Gallery	\$97 100	nil	\$85 000	\$5 300	\$35 670
South Australian Museum	\$690 500	\$70 700	\$555 900	\$49 000	\$3 000
Art Gallery of South Australia	\$370 000	\$39 189	\$442 653 (excl. maint.)	\$81 000	\$141 750
Western Australian Museum	\$1 711 827	\$234 815	\$1 350 088	\$10 642	\$10 072
Western Australian Art Gallery	\$402 103	\$6 920	\$362 668	\$20 423 (incl. gallery services)	\$90 667
Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery	\$265 000	\$31 000	\$250 000	\$3 700	\$24 000
Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery	\$208 424 (1975/76 estimate)	\$21 000	\$65 000	\$2 120	\$1 850

# APPENDIX IV

## Acknowledgments

A wide-ranging inquiry into the museums and national collections of Australia could not be contemplated without various support from persons and groups with interests, skills and experiences in the matters and issues pertinent to the inquiry. If our report is successful in disclosing for public consideration, the major problems of our museums, and if some of our recommendations for change are considered to merit implementation, we would hope that the many people who contributed to the Committee's own understanding and knowledge will feel that their efforts have not been wasted.

We record our sincere thanks to those persons, organisations and groups who expressed their interest in written submissions to the Committee. While it was not physically possible for the Committee to meet with all those who made written submissions, their views, plans and hopes for the future widened the Committee's appreciation of the problems in operating museums in present circumstances.

Through the co-operation of the State Governments, the Committee was accorded full access to all major museums and art galleries and was able to enjoy detailed and frank discussions with the Directors and members of the staff of the various State institutions. We are particularly indebted to them, and those trustees who gave so generously of their time and knowledge during visits of the Committee. Through their efforts, we were exposed to the many situations with which professional museum administrators and curators must cope using at most times totally inadequate resources.

Our thanks are due also to the various departments and authorities of the Australian Government which responded to our requests for information or assistance. Our particular thanks are due to the following departments:

- Special Minister of State
- Transport
- Education
- Health
- Services and Property
- Media

Those members who visited overseas are grateful to the Department of Foreign Affairs for arranging the visits and to officers of overseas Embassies and High Commissions for the courtesies and hospitality extended them.

There is a community of interests shared by museum administrators which transcends national boundaries. We were honoured by the manner of our reception from museum officials in Britain, Spain, Denmark, the Netherlands, West Germany, the United States, Canada and Mexico. Without exception they went to considerable trouble to make the visit as meaningful as possible for Committee members.

We acknowledge the support and counsel received from Mr A. J. Powell, Commissioner, National Capital Development Commission and Mr Paul Reld, First Assistant Commissioner, in matters relating to the establishment of a museum of national history in Canberra. Their comments were always helpful and assisted the Committee in determining its recommendations.

The Committee wishes to thank the consultants it engaged. Without their help the vital area of local museums and galleries could not have been examined in any detail and the report would have been poorer for this omission.

The Chairman of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia wishes to thank the following for their co-operation.

Mr J. Reynolds, Department of Aboriginal Affairs  
Mr G. Gokson, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies

The Committee completed its inquiry in about sixteen months. The input of the Secretariat over this period was major and of a very high standard. The Committee records its warm appreciation of the many services provided and for the continuing good humour with which they carried the work through to the preparation and finalisation of this report. We mention in particular Mr Peter Ryan upon whom fell the brunt of much of the hard work and Miss Jenny Beckett who transformed the outcome of our meetings into orderly records.



**GALLERY  
OF  
ABORIGINAL  
AUSTRALIA**

**Report of the  
Planning Committee**

Department of Prehistory  
and Anthropology  
The Australian National  
University

The Hon. L. R. Johnson, MP  
The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra A.C.T. 2600

Dear Mr Johnson,

On behalf of the members of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, I have pleasure in presenting our Report.

In accordance with the statement by the then Special Minister of State the Hon. Lionel Bowen, 10 April, 1974, I am forwarding copies both to yourself and to the Chairman of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections.

It is proposed that the Report will be published both separately and also within the general Inquiry report.

Yours sincerely,

D. J. Mulvaney (Chairman)

K. Colbung  
R. Edwards  
J. Gwadbu  
P. K. Lauer  
D. R. Moore  
H. Parker  
D. Roughsey  
W. E. H. Stanner  
P. J. Ucko  
M. Valadian

Department of Prehistory  
and Anthropology  
The Australian National  
University

Mr. P. Pigott  
Chairman  
Committee of Inquiry on  
Museums and National Collections,  
P.O. Box E286  
Canberra A.C.T. 2600.

Dear Mr. Pigott,

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D. J. Mulvaney (Chairman)  
*Planning Committee, Gallery of Aboriginal Australia*

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D. Roughsey  
W. E. H. Stanner  
P. J. Ucko  
M. Valadian

## The Planning Committee

Mr K. Colbung	Chairman, Western Australian Land Trust and Aboriginal leader, Perth. Member, Aboriginal Arts Board; Council and Executive Member, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
Mr R. Edwards	Director, Aboriginal Arts Board.
Mr J. Gwadbu	National Aboriginal Consultative Committee representative, Goulburn Island. Member, Goulburn Island Council and Progress Association.
Dr P. K. Lauer	Curator, Anthropology Museum, University of Queensland.
Mr D. R. Moore	Curator of Anthropology, The Australian Museum, Sydney.
D. J. Mulvaney	Professor of Prehistory, School of General Studies, Australian National University; Deputy Chairman, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
Mr H. Parker	National Aboriginal Consultative Council representative, Onslow, W.A. Supervisor of Noualla Community Centre, Onslow.
Mr D. Rouhsey	Chairman, Aboriginal Arts Board; Council member Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and Chairman of its Aboriginal Advisory Committee; Artist and author, Mornington Island.
W. E. H. Stanner	C.M.G., Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, Australian National University, Executive Member Council for Aboriginal Affairs.
Dr P. J. Ucko	Principal, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
Miss M. Valadian	Social worker and Community Development Consultant. Graduate of University of Queensland and University of Hawaii.

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# Summary of Recommendations by the Planning Committee

1. A Gallery of Aboriginal Australia is an imaginative and practicable concept which merits priority planning and construction. It would constitute a symbolic acknowledgement of the uniqueness and quality of Aboriginal culture.
2. The Gallery should be a statutory, autonomous institution, with an Aboriginal majority on its governing body.
3. The siting of the Gallery is cardinal to the total design and an appropriate site exists south-west of Black Mountain, allowing ample space, relative isolation and wide vistas.
4. Careful environmental design, using a broad-acres concept of 'dioramas without walls' and an open amphitheatre are essential, combined with display halls using the full range of modern communication skills and a low profile structure which allows flexibility in exhibition changing.
5. The establishment of an interim governing body and acting director is an immediate priority before detailed architectural or landscape planning begins. Their brief would include the following matters.
  - (a) Plan the concept in detail, including the relationship between the Gallery and any other proposed cultural centres;
  - (b) Initiate discussions with Aboriginal communities concerning their involvement;
  - (c) Establish a positive working relationship with the Aboriginal Arts Board and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies;
  - (d) Arrange provision of scholarship and training facilities for potential Aboriginal staff members, both in museum administration and in scientific and technical aspects, including conservation;
  - (e) Obtain immediate temporary accommodation for the National Ethnographic Collection;
  - (f) Pursue an active acquisition policy.
6. The Gallery should be a centre of excellence, for the quality of its research, the authenticity of its display, its significance as a national repository, a focus for Aboriginal culture and performing arts, its success in creating mutual understanding, and in the education of the entire community.
7. The Gallery should set an example by the standards and equipment of its conservation laboratory and its spacious environmentally controlled storage and display facilities.
8. The Gallery governing body should co-operate closely with local community 'museums' in order to establish a mutual interchange of material, expertise and personnel. These local repositories must form a vital link in the museum chain and careful custody and conservation of such collections should be encouraged.
9. The Gallery should have provision for tight security store rooms in order to house ceremonial and other secret objects and restricted films, tapes and other items.
10. The Gallery authorities should establish close co-operation with State museums to initiate a scheme for the exchange of personnel, and of temporary special exhibitions and collections, on a reciprocal basis.

**Immediate Requirements**

1. Appropriate storage for the National Ethnographic Collection.
2. An adequate purchasing fund.
3. Implementation of a program of training Aborigines in museology and conservation.

# 1 Background

1.1 That any National Museum established in Canberra would include ethnographic material has been implicit since 1934 when the Australian Government transferred to Canberra what was termed 'The National Ethnographic Collection', which was then stored in the basement of the recently completed Australian Institute of Anatomy.

1.2 At the 1939 meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science at Canberra, the General Council of ANZAAS passed a motion urging on the Government 'the need for housing, protecting and displaying the ethnological specimens' and the desirability of erecting the first part of a National Museum\*.

1.3 In 1955, the Department of Health, which administers the Institute of Anatomy, provided some staff to begin to catalogue and register the material. Some of it was displayed in public galleries.

1.4 With the foundation of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) in 1961, moves began to obtain more adequate storage and display facilities for the National Ethnographic Collection, and as early as 1962 preliminary plans had been drawn up by the NCDC for buildings to accommodate the National Art Gallery and the AIAS on Capital Hill, as the first section of a complex of museums around the brow of the hill. However, nothing positive resulted from these initiatives.

1.5 Since its inception, and particularly over the past three years, the AIAS has followed an active policy of adding to the Aboriginal holdings in the National Ethnographic Collection. There are now some 10,000 organic objects and many thousands of stone tools. Its collection of bark paintings is the largest assembled in the world, while the total collection ranks as the fourth largest in Australia. Non-Aboriginal items number around 10,000, covering the fields of Oceania and southeast Asia.

1.6 Public interest in a building related specifically to the indigenous peoples of this region, and particularly to the Aborigines, was greatly stimulated in 1965 by a newspaper article by Professor W. E. H. Stanner (*Canberra Times*, 13 February 1965). His proposal for a *Gallery of Southern Man* was a bold and imaginative concept which broke with traditional museum design and highlighted the need for a living cultural centre. His ideas foreshadowed much that is recommended in this report. He assumed a connection between the AIAS and the Gallery but did not specify its nature since he expected that the Institute would eventually become part of the Australian National University, in accordance with the known wishes of the then Prime Minister. As the building of a collection by the AIAS continued and archaeological research by the Department of Prehistory, Australian National University, developed it became obvious by 1968 that the existing storage facilities in the Australian Institute of Anatomy were inadequate to cope with the quantity of material which could be deposited. Over the following two years various initiatives were taken by the AIAS, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs and the ANU. In 1969 a working group was formed with representatives from the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, the AIAS, the ANU and the National Capital Development Commission.

1.7 It had also become evident that storage and conservation facilities in other Australian museums were inadequate, and that unless urgent action was taken, ethnographic collections would deteriorate seriously. An indication of this concern was a conference, sponsored in 1968 by the AIAS, on *Aboriginal Antiquities in Australia—Their Nature and Preservation* (edited, F. D. McCarthy, AIAS, Canberra, 1970).

\* ANZAAS 24 (1939) p.XXXII



1.8 In 1970, the Australian UNESCO Committee for Museums recommended a visit to Australia by Dr A. E. Werner, noted British conservator, as a UNESCO consultant, to report on conservation needs in Australia. Dr Werner's report recommended the establishment of a central institute for scientific research into and training in modern methods of conservation. As the recommendations included in this report related particularly to ethnographic collections, they provided a further basis to the claims that there was in Australia an urgent need for the development of a conservation program, and that this program should be incorporated into the overall plans for any planned National Museum or Aboriginal Gallery.

1.9 A national seminar on antiquities and their conservation was also sponsored by the AIAS in May 1972, which reiterated the need for a major conservation program.

1.10 In February 1970, the Council of the AIAS recommended the erection of a 'National Gallery and Academy of Aboriginal Man in Australia'. This was strongly endorsed by the Fourth General Meeting of the AIAS held during May 1970. Members urged the Federal Government 'to consider that whatever final form of national gallery and academy is decided by the Government, a distinctive emphasis and central place be allotted to Aboriginal Man in Australia'. It was further recommended that the AIAS should have a permanent home in such an institution.

1.11 The views expressed were submitted to the next meeting of the interim Council of the National Gallery Committee, which reported to the Prime Minister on the proposal. Further discussions ensued between representatives of the Prime Minister's Department, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs and the NCDC.

1.12 On 11 February 1972, a meeting was held between the different Australian Government agencies concerned with ethnic art - i.e. the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board, the Council for Aboriginal Affairs and the AIAS - to determine Australian Government involvement in this field. At this meeting Professor Stanner's proposal for a 'Gallery of Southern Man' was discussed and the role of the bodies concerned in relation to such an institution was examined. It was agreed that a committee should be set up to investigate the proposal and to advise on:

- the need for a Gallery of Southern Man or some similar institution;
- the purposes that such an institution might serve and the scope of its activities;
- the problems presently associated with the collection and storage of ethnic material, possible future action and co-ordination of the activities of the agencies involved.

1.13 It was decided that the committee should include representatives of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, the Department of External Territories, the Department of the Interior and the Australian National University. The Committee was to report to the Minister for the Environment, Aborigines and the Arts. However, this Committee never met.

1.14 After the Labor Government assumed office, the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. G. M. Bryant, requested the Institute's Principal to convene a 'Museum Planning Committee', in May 1973. Those who attended that meeting included representatives of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Council for the Arts, the Aboriginal Arts Board, and the National Aboriginal Consultative Council.

1.15 Several meetings of the Museum Planning Committee, with representation also from the NCDC and the Special Minister of State, led in July 1973, to a draft Cabinet Submission recommending the establishment of a Gallery of Aboriginal Australia.

This submission led directly to the establishment of the present Planning Committee, many of whose recommendations were foreshadowed in that submission, particularly the emphasis on the primary functions of display, research and conservation, the location in the Gallery complex of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and the encouragement of living arts and crafts.

1.16 The appointment of this Planning Committee was announced by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator the Hon. J. L. Cavanagh, on 23 April 1975. It had been foreshadowed in a statement by the Special Minister of State, the Hon. Lionel Bowen, on 10 April 1974. In announcing the establishment of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections, Mr Bowen informed the House of Representatives, that this Planning Committee would report to the Committee of Inquiry. He said:

‘The story of Aboriginal man is an important one and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs joins me in announcing that priority will be given to examining the possibility, of establishing a Gallery of Aboriginal Australia. Aboriginal Australians are known to have occupied this continent for at least 30,000 years but neither the Aboriginal people nor more recent Australians can draw much pride or encouragement from existing displays of their unique history, culture or achievements. To ensure that appropriate and timely attention can be given to the question of a Gallery of Aboriginal Australia we will establish a separate committee, including representatives of the Aboriginal people, to examine and report on this important subject.’

1.17 In the formulation of its recommendations, this Planning Committee has included the Torres Strait Islanders as integral to the Gallery concept.

1.18 The Planning, Committee met on six occasions. At its first meeting Professor Mulvaney was unanimously elected Chairman.

1.19 The Committee appreciates that it has been offered a unique opportunity to sketch the plan of a memorable institution, which could become as meaningful for all Australians as is the Mexican National Museum of Anthropology for all Mexicans.

1.20 But the institution will need more than a physical structure if it is to become an illuminating centre of learning and instruction, an active research centre and a focus for the ongoing Aboriginal cultural heritage, able to convey to other peoples the essential uniqueness and spirituality of the Aboriginal lifeway. In addition to generous Government funding and an appropriate location, it will require the active and sympathetic participation of Aboriginal people in its planning, staffing, control and operation.

1.21 Implementation of the recommendations which accompany subsequent sections of this report necessitates a period of constructive co-operation between all those concerned for Aboriginal society. The Committee admits that many problems will require resolution and detailed planning. It also believes that they can be resolved if approached with the same candour and mutual respect as the Committee itself enjoyed during its deliberations.

1.22 That a major Gallery of Aboriginal Australia can assist the Aboriginal search for cultural identity is a challenge. Indeed, the standing of such a Gallery in Australian national life may come to be seen as an index of its cultural maturity.

### **The Name**

1.23 For historical reasons and reasons of convenience the Planning Committee has referred to the proposed institution simply as ‘The Gallery’. This practice in part reflects the fact that the original proposal made by Professor Stanner was for a ‘Gallery of

Southern Man' and in part the general opinion which has formed since then that gallery is a more appropriate word than most commonly suggested alternatives—'museum' because of the gloomy connotations that 'museum' has in the popular mind. However, there is no assumption, nor has there been any decision, that 'gallery' should be part of the name finally chosen. Other general concepts have also needed to be considered, e.g. 'centre' and 'institute'.

1.24 The Committee considers that the name of the institution should be short, descriptive if not definitive of what the institution is and does, free of unfavourable connotations, and if possible, euphonious and capable of being contracted and popularised.

1.25 The pros and cons of several suggested names have been considered:

- Gallery of Southern Man
- Gallery of Aboriginal Man
- Gallery of Aboriginal Culture
- Gallery of Aboriginal Australia
- Centre of Aboriginal Culture
- Institute of Aboriginal Culture
- Gallery and Academy of Aboriginal Australia

1.26 None has emerged as a clear favourite, although 'Gallery of Aboriginal Australia' has probably acquired an edge over the others.

1.27 Some members of the Committee feel that 'gallery' could have an unfortunate connotation in suggesting a place for exhibitions without educative intention, and it is generally felt that the instruction of the public must at all times be regarded as a primary function.

1.28 On the other hand any advantage offered by the alternative terms are accompanied by disadvantages which may seem greater. The otherwise suitable term 'centre' couples awkwardly with 'Aboriginal Australia', 'Aboriginal Culture' or 'Aboriginal Man'. The Planning Committee feels obliged to accept the view that 'Man' is no longer widely acceptable as a generic term for both sexes. The name 'Gallery of Aboriginal Australia' is possibly the most free of difficulty, though it tends to suggest a greater emphasis on the physical and the environmental than the Planning Committee considers appropriate, and unless the meaning of 'gallery' can be appropriately established, the name may not sufficiently indicate the institution's primary teaching function.

# 2 The Concept and Design of a Gallery of Aboriginal Australia

2.1 The Planning Committee envisages the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia as one of the national capital's major building complexes, intended to provide a permanent focus for the collection, conservation, interpretation and exhibition of all the elements of Aboriginal ways of life which are susceptible of display by any appropriate means. It would be able to transcend the culture of any particular Aboriginal group in time or place, present a statement for the whole of Australia, and yet convey the complexity and diversity of regional responses.

2.2 The Planning Committee considers that the case for such a cultural focus is powerful. Aborigines constitute one of the major divisions of human kind; they discovered, occupied, mastered and humanised an entire continent; and archaeological evidence substantiates their presence within it for at least 40,000 years. If the Gallery does not convey the message of the unique spirituality and creativity of Aboriginal society, it will have failed. It will fail also, if it is seen merely as a gesture of restitution - repairing a guilty national conscience - or if it were believed to have relevance for, or to be used by Aborigines only.

2.3 The Committee sees a close analogy with the Mexican National Museum of Anthropology. Set in central Mexico City, within Chapultepec Park, expansive displays feature the various great societies of Mexico's past, together with regional ethnographies of today. The theme of continuity and organic affiliation is greatly enhanced by the architectural design. Clearly, the Museum serves a unifying 'political' function, yet the treatment is respectful and constructive. A Mexican visitor is made conscious and proud of his cultural heritage, but a Mexican of European descent or a foreigner has no reason to feel alienated. Indeed, within the same park, other national museums portray aspects of the European heritage with sympathy and assert Mexican nationality with conviction and without regard to racial origins.

2.4 A Gallery of Aboriginal Australia must prove equally successful in combining a comparable harmony with a didactic purpose. The means to achieve this positive result include:

- careful environmental design, using a broad-acres concept of 'dioramas without walls' combined with display halls using the full range of modern communication skills;
- participation in planning and construction of displays and external structures by different Aboriginal communities;
- the promotion of the full complement of Aboriginal visual and performing arts and crafts possibly in conjunction with the physical presence of the Aboriginal Arts Board within the complex;
- conservation and preservation of Aboriginal ethnographic material through adequate laboratory and storage facilities, including the training of Aborigines, both for employment in this institution and in local museums and storehouses;
- careful documentation, information, field and archival support services, and research initiatives in education, through collaboration with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, possibly also housed within the Gallery;
- strong emphasis on its public educational role, for both white and black citizens, using performing arts, modern communication techniques and objective research;
- use of residential hostels in Canberra for teachers and children on extended visits,
- close collaboration with the major Australian museums, in arranging reciprocal loan collections for temporary displays.

## **The Site**

2.5 The Planning Committee considers that the siting of the Gallery is cardinal to total design. The Gallery will portray with maximal authenticity and realism the truly distinctive achievements of the Aborigines as a people who had adapted hunter-gatherer society to an immense variety of continental conditions. Although it is necessary to use material artefacts in display, it is essential that a sense of territory, spirituality and artistic creativity should pervade the display. One way of doing so will be the use of 'dioramas without walls' to demonstrate the relationships between the outward and the inward aspects of societies which lived in a highly imaginative way entirely in the open countryside. To portray the external, environmental or ecological dimension of a range of Aboriginal social forms will require large and unconfined spaces, developed with as much insight and sympathy as the portrayal within walls of the inward, mental or spiritual correlates of those forms.

2.6 It has approached the question of finding and recommending an appropriate site for the Gallery with, certain considerations strongly in mind. It has hoped to find available a generous area close to Canberra but away from the urban congestion; with a continuing degree of probable isolation from the capital's projected growth-zones; with ample and varied space for the representation of Aboriginal life in the open, including the full-scale celebration of public ceremonies; and if possible with both near and distant purviews of bush country which are unlikely to be built out.

2.7 The attention of the Planning Committee was drawn to several possible sites. Only one met the Committee's desiderata but it did so superbly. A close inspection was made of the open tract surrounding 'The Cork Plantation' adjacent to the intersection of Caswell Drive and Lady Denman Drive south-west of Black Mountain. The particular part of the tract which appealed to the Committee as in every way suitable was the higher ground towards and including the main ridge. The slopes fall on one side towards Lake Burley Griffin and on the other towards open bush, with a distant view of the Brindabellas. The members of the Committee were unanimous that they could recommend without qualification the site as suitable for the construction of the kind of Gallery they have in mind.

2.8 The place recommended is within five kilometres of Civic Centre, which is sufficiently near to attract visitors and tourists, yet far enough away to be undisturbed by urban noise and commotion. It can readily be reached from a main traffic artery, but a road and parking space can be concealed so as not to obtrude upon the Gallery's special areas. The topography of the site is such that service buildings, perhaps even the main building or buildings, can be constructed and/or placed so as not to dominate the natural landscape. It should be possible by landscaping and 'dioramas without walls' to create for visitors a mounting impression of entry into 'blackfellow country' and the Committee hopes that by architectural ingenuity, ways will be found of using the magnificent views of the lake and of the Brindabellas so as to become natural back-drops for dioramas within the main buildings. Here, if anywhere in Canberra, it would seem practicable to create a convincing representation of the physical settings in which Aboriginal societies humanised the continent from ocean to ocean.

2.9 A heavy emphasis placed upon the four criteria mentioned above - ample space, relative isolation, imaginative freedom from walls, and an unobstructed vista of the open bush - as integral to the shaping of the mentality of visitors to the Gallery. It believes that, if they are preserved, they will deepen the effect of the Gallery upon all visitors, particularly those Aborigines who have lacked the opportunity to experience the intimate man-land relationship of traditional society. A Gallery, inwardly magnificent, if it

opened on to crowded street or was foreclosed by urban conglomeration or had no vista of the bush, could only reinforce the distorted outlook that has been so common in the past, when Aboriginal social forms and cultural achievements were either not understood at all or were 'understood' only as they appeared through European spectacles. The choice of an appropriate site is crucial to the kind of Gallery which the Committee recommends.

2.10 A relatively large tract of land is necessary for the fulfilment of this concept. Yet, as discussed later in this chapter, should its planning be co-ordinated with that of any other museum-type institutions located within the same general area, space saving could result from related access and other service facilities. Equally important, systematic arrangement of institutions on these undulating ridges could allow the inclusion of distant vistas from all of them, thereby accentuating the spatial dimension.

2.11 The Planning Committee considers that under these circumstances, Gallery requirements range between twenty-five and forty hectares.

### **Display Planning**

2.12 As to the function of the complex of structures and environmental settings, its essentials were anticipated by Charles Rowley, when he wrote concerning Aboriginal society as follows:\*

'A glimpse of this harmony with the environment as it was, of its deepest meaning, so that it served for the Aboriginal the functions that home, town, garden, library, theatre, school and church discharge in the western culture; and those of farm and factory as well. Here too was the close integration of religion with economic life. When the Aboriginal lost this relationship with his 'country' he lost everything.'

2.13 The Planning Committee considers that a monumental building would defeat this purpose. What is required is a structural design which allows the greatest flexibility in changing displays within the covered sections, but providing space for large dioramas, and contrasting exterior landscaped territories which incorporate Aboriginal material culture and replicas of larger relics such as caves, engraved rock sites, stone arrangements or carved trees. In the actual construction of the full paraphernalia of a Central Australian encampment, for example, a selected Aboriginal community would be commissioned to prepare the material, artists would be employed to create non-secret versions of paintings or ground drawings.

2.14 If different ecological 'territories' are to be developed, it will require long term tree and shrub planting and other environmental modification. Wild-life in its natural context is a further consideration. It is envisaged, therefore, that the complex could be developed over a period. Such phasing will be facilitated if the buildings are designed to allow extensions, because display hall areas need integration with the environmental settings. Some displays should face out to a mountain back-drop, while Lake Burley Griffin is appropriate to other contexts.

2.15 Another external feature which will become a focal point of Gallery activities is a natural amphitheatre - or ceremonial ground - where performances of the various Aboriginal arts can be staged. These aspects are discussed further in Chapter 5. The Planning Committee considers that it is essential that no detailed architectural or landscape planning should commence before the appointment of an interim governing body and an acting director.

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\* Charles Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, Vol. 1, ANU Press, Canberra 1970, p.207.

### **Display Halls and Dioramas Without Walls**

2.16 The Planning Committee discussed at length the major themes and essential components of the Gallery. To facilitate discussion in this report, themes are included within ten notional 'Halls'. In most cases they are related to extensive external displays. Naturally, some Halls will need to be larger than others, but a notional average of 1,000 square metres has been assumed. The administrative space requirements are considered in Chapter 5.

- I An orientation and reception centre, where audio-visual aids, models, maps, artefacts, inform the visitor of the Gallery lay-out and introduce Aboriginal society.
- II Aboriginal Origins: Subjects included within this Hall could include:
  - (a) The Australian environment at the time of human colonisation: Ice Age climate; sea level and continental coastline changes, fluctuations in temperature, rainfall, evaporation and consequences for flora and fauna; Papua New Guinea and Tasmania as part of this continent, and the date of their severance.
  - (b) South-east Asia as the starting point for migration: environmental and cultural evidence.
  - (c) The first Australian colonisation down to the end of Pleistocene (Ice Age) times. The evidence for the spread of settlement and its regional adaptations and achievements.
  - (d) The ethnic group known as 'Aboriginal'—origins, physical anthropology.
- III The Complexity of Prehistoric Society. A survey of the development of Aboriginal society from its origins until 1788. Its major sources would be archaeological or scientific and it would treat of cultural development and innovations - art; burial customs; artefacts; settlement patterns; exploitation of natural resources, exchange cycles; inventions - and Man's impact upon the environment, including use of fire, introduction of dingo, extinction of animal species.
- IV-VI The World of the Aborigines. The fabric of traditional society portrayed in its ecological diversity; the complex tribal, moiety, linguistic and customary variation; economy; the daily life cycle; material culture, e.g. technology, weapons, utensils, watercraft; the spiritual world; art; education and discipline as male and female progress through life. (The Planning Committee emphasises that material which could cause offence would not be utilised, and that despite this restriction, a rounded presentation should be possible.)

A notional division of this complex material would be by geography, rather than the presentation of each topic in isolation. It is essential that ecology, art, technology, belief systems, for example, should be integrated within the social fabric of a particular people, rather than apportioned between several show cases or pigeonholes. Therefore, the Committee suggests that one Hall and related dioramas might be devoted to the Tropics, another to arid lands and another to temperate Australia. Within these general divisions, there would be room for regional diversity. For example, displays relating to Torres Strait, Cape York, Arnhem Land and the Kimberleys in the first Hall; Western Desert, Coopers Creek and Central Australia in the second; and Tasmania, coastal NSW and the Murray-Darling region in the third Hall.

- VII Interaction with Neighbouring Peoples and Contrasting Cultures. What has Aboriginal culture assimilated from, or contributed to, other societies?
- (a) What are the common factors between south-east Asia, or other Oceanic societies, and what are the contrasts?
  - (b) Macassans and other Indonesians on the northern coast.
  - (c) The Torres Strait Islanders and links with Papua New Guinea.
  - (d) The South Sea Islands, especially the influence of indentured labour.
- VIII Aboriginal History and Europeans. This would constitute an objective history of race relations from the first contacts with Europeans in the Seventeenth Century up to around 1950. Themes might include: the early fatal impact; frontier conflict and co-operation (e.g. with explorers); disease and decimation; fringe and city dwellers; missions; humanitarianism Aboriginal sportsmen; Aborigines in the labour force. Government policies, World Wars and their consequences.
- IX Contemporary Aboriginal Australia. The broad political, social and economic changes over the past 25 years. Examples of urban adaptation and social adjustment to changing circumstances by different traditional societies; the challenge of prejudice, education.
- X A Hall for special loan exhibitions. This area constitutes a focal point in the Gallery, which offers the returning visitor fresh visual experience. The sources of display material are varied: short term exhibition of major historic ethnographic collections held by other Australian institutions; contemporary material assembled to present particular arts or crafts; display of archaeological discoveries from a particular site; exhibition of overseas loan collections portraying other cultures or even of material collected in Australia and returned on loan.

2.17 Members of the Planning Committee do not believe that this summary list exhausts the potentialities. Some consideration was given to the possibility of a Hall where artistic creations were displayed in highlighted isolation, simply as works of art to be appreciated. However, other Committee members preferred to leave all artefacts within the context of the integrated regional display. Others urged a broader canvas, which variously included the whole Pacific; Asia; Third World countries. It was agreed that if the net was cast too widely, displays would prove superficial. Also, the suggested Hall themes do relate to the world outside, while the Exhibition Hall is available for feature displays on such issues.

2.18 An alternative method of presentation to the chronological pattern described above, would be to treat various areas separately, with material ranging from prehistory to the present day, in an attempt to emphasise regional individuality. For example, in addition to Torres Strait, the twelve ecological areas used for index and reference purposes by the AIAS, could form useful segments. These areas are - Kimberleys, Arnhem Land, Cape York, West Coast, Western Desert, Central Australia, Lakes and Channel Country, Gulf Country, Darling-Murray area, East Coast, Southeast Coast and Tasmania.

2.19 Whatever topical separation is devised, however, present State boundaries can play no part.

### **The Continuity of Human History**

2.20 This Planning Committee is aware that Aboriginal orientations represent only part of Australian history, and that post-1788 developments may merit a national record.



However, despite the neglect of the subject by historians until recently, one of the most significant themes of that history is the racial contact which resulted when originally separate people, with unlike cultures, value systems or symbolic world views, suddenly became linked.

2.21 Yet, neither the Aboriginal past nor history since 1788 can be appreciated without reference to the Australian environment, which played a constant and dynamic role through its interaction with both Aboriginal and European societies. The land is a common denominator, as both societies had to adapt to and come to terms with local environments. The landscape which was altered so drastically by Europeans, was itself the consequence not only of climatic and other physical influences, but it resulted also from at least four hundred centuries of Aboriginal interference, including firefighting and predation by both hunters and their dogs.

2.22 This Committee, therefore, believes that an Aboriginal Gallery should not be considered in isolation from the need to portray the fields of natural history and European history. It acknowledges that one solution would be to have one single Gallery of Man and Nature. It could be argued that separate institutions are potentially divisive.

2.23 The recommendation for an Aboriginal Gallery does not represent, however, a mutually exclusive and separatist concept. One single institution which sought to give adequate attention to each of the fields of concern listed above - land, Aborigines, Europeans - could prove unduly large and centralised. After years of neglect, the community at large is coming to recognise the uniqueness and importance of Aboriginal culture, as well as its specific problems in contemporary society, and this has been acknowledged by the Australian Government, through the appointment of a Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and the establishment of an Aboriginal Arts Board and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

2.24 The Committee concludes that the Gallery is a further positive move in ensuring Aboriginal participation in and collaboration with our common Australian heritage. To endow it with this status in the National Capital, would be a symbolic acknowledgement of the uniqueness and quality of Aboriginal culture.

2.25 However, it strongly recommends that the Gallery complex should be planned in conjunction with those institutions devoted to environmental, historical or other cultural matters. If they were all set contiguously on a single broad-acres site, it permits their symbolic juxtaposition, and possibly even an architectural complementarity. It could also allow for the future possibility of integrated cross planning of certain major display themes between all three institutions.

### **Source of Display Material**

2.26 The Planning Committee concludes that there are four major sources of material for the Gallery.

I Aboriginal communities, craftsmen and artists, commissioned to prepare exhibits or to paint designs on replicated rock surfaces, etc. As explained in Chapter 5, much material would be produced in the Gallery workshop, which could be sold in the Gallery shop, if it was not required for Gallery use.

II *The National Ethnographic Collection.*

This presently numbers approximately 10,000 items of Australian objects, excluding a large and chiefly uncatalogued collection of stone tools. While it does not constitute as significant a collection of early ethnographic material as those held by The Australian Museum, the National Museum of Victoria and the South

Australian Museum, it is fairly representative regionally. Because of AIAS collection building over the past decade, it does hold a basic research and display collection of traditional material produced during recent times. It is unique in the detail and extent of its documentation. There are 10,000 items of Oceanic and Southeast Asian origin in the collection. These are a firm basis for the display, of the cultures of Australia's neighbours, and some of the material is of high quality. Deficiencies could be compensated for loan or exchange collections.

### III *Loan collections*

The Planning Committee considers that this is an important source of material, available from two sources. The first source is from amongst Aboriginal communities, whose work could be commissioned for display in Canberra, and later returned to the local or regional museum for permanent retention. Secondly, the major State museums may be willing to lend duplicate material, or some specialised collections, as a reciprocal arrangement. This Committee strongly recommends the encouragement of such a policy, and funds should be reserved for the purpose of permitting the preparation, documentation and transport of such exhibitions.

### IV *Purchase of existing collections*

During the period since the foundation of AIAS several major collections have been obtained for the National Collection, in addition to smaller collections. A total of \$200,000 has been spent on this purpose, excluding collection and documentation costs, during the past two years. In some cases purchases have been arranged jointly with the relevant State museum. This is a policy which the Planning Committee commends. Unless major collections are purchased when they come on the market, they will be dispersed. In those areas where traditional arts and crafts are no longer practised, they constitute an irreplaceable portion of the national heritage and their sharing between the State(s) of origin and the National Ethnographic Collection ensures that those regions are more fully represented in all collections.

2.27 The Planning Committee notes that the AIAS acquisition fund was greatly increased in 1972, and it recommends that this policy should continue through the Gallery, as the AIAS is currently unable to continue to provide the necessary funds. Quite apart from the cultural value represented, it is a sound economic investment. The future Gallery administration may need to give consideration also to Australian ethnographic collections which become available for sale overseas.

2.28 It will be essential to continue the policy of collection acquisition in the future, both for the Gallery and for other institutions throughout Australia. However, as many collections appear on the market unexpectedly, for such reasons as the disposal of a deceased estate, they cannot be anticipated realistically, in budgetary estimates.

2.29 It is recommended that a sum (not less than the previous \$100,000 available through the AIAS) should continue to be earmarked for special acquisition for the National Ethnographic Collection, and that it be treated as a special emergency purchase fund. The ideal would be a trust fund which could be carried over from year to year. In addition, the machinery whereby special submissions may be made to and expedited by Treasury should be clarified.

2.30 Acquisition from Aboriginal craftsmen through direct purchase or commission is a separate issue, which currently is a joint function of the Aboriginal Arts Board and the AIAS. This would need to be co-ordinated with the Gallery in any transactions that related directly to Gallery matters. As an interim and immediate measure, the Aboriginal

Arts Board should be requested to commission work for the Gallery, particularly from those elderly craftsmen who hold a fund of traditional knowledge and skills which may not be passed on to younger generations.

# 3 Conservation and Storage

3.1 Aboriginal ethnographic items were collected in numbers by early explorers and settlers, and Natural History Museums all acquired Aboriginal material from the date of their foundation. Most of this early material has perished, or is widely dispersed overseas, but what survives in Australian museums has been generally ill-housed and little curated. A decade ago, no collections were stored adequately, and even today, only one major has its total collections stored under temperature and humidity controlled conditions. Only the Western Australian Museum and The Australian Museum possess scientific laboratories where materials may be analysed and treated, but only The Australian Museum employs a conservator whose chief concern lies specifically with ethnographic conservation. Even the basic facilities for the fumigation of organic materials are usually lacking in museums.

3.2 This Committee considers the past neglect of ethnographic collections to be national disgrace; now that Aboriginal art has become acceptable to those of Western tradition, it is also an economic disaster. In monetary terms, some collections are valued at millions of dollars, yet they continue to decay rapidly. The Committee simply raises this economic argument in order to emphasise the pragmatic aspects of this misguided neglect.

3.3 Much more significant is the fact that this wasting asset represents the heritage of a unique people. Some of the biggest and worst cared for collections originated in regions where traditional arts and crafts are no longer practised. These objects are, therefore, irreplaceable and will be increasingly valued by future Aboriginal people and indeed by all Australians above any monetary value. Their educational value for all races is similarly beyond price. This is because many early ethnographic collections represent technological and artistic styles which have now disappeared. Only through their study can present generations appreciate the diversity and aesthetic appeal of items such as Lower Murray River woven basketry, Tasmanian shell necklaces, Victorian parrying shields, or Hunter River possum skin cloaks.

3.4 Aboriginal ethnographic items cover a very wide range of perishable or fleeting organic materials, including wood of many species, plants and plant fibres, resin, wax and gums, bark, blood, feathers, fur, sinews, skins, hair, bone and shell. Apart from artefacts, modern collections need to include ethnobotanical, faunal or dietary samples and other perishable data. This variety means that conservators need a number of skills in order to protect items from physical, chemical or biological attack.

3.5 The tremendous environmental contrasts within Australia pose further problems, particularly tropical humidity, excessive aridity, extreme temperature changes, or urban chemical contamination.

3.6 It is evident that these hazards have been virtually disregarded even in major museums, where problems have been compounded through lack of scientific facilities and inadequate storage. The Committee is aware of museums where dozens of boomerangs have been plied up rubbing against each other; spears stacked like a veritable armoury so they warp or the stone tips drop off; bark paintings crushed so closely that they flake or crack, woven baskets crammed misshapen into glass cases; stone axes or knives stuffed randomly in drawers so that the resin hafts become distorted; feather objects standing unsupported till they buckle; others subjected to intense light until they fade; carved trees and grave posts standing in windy, damp or oven-like galvanised iron shelters until they crack or rot. Such examples are chosen as extremes, but unfortunately they are not the exception and more than one museum holds material answering to all these faults. Some collections have preserved well in spite of

crowding, because of the fortunate chance that the vaults of substantial old buildings combine darkness with relative uniformity in humidity and temperature.

3.7 The Australian Ethnographic Collection, housed in the basement of the Institute of Anatomy, is such an incidental beneficiary from the architecture. This is fortunate, because it possesses few other advantages. Over 20,000 perishable organic ethnographic items (approximately 10,000 of them of Aboriginal origin), many thousands of stone artefacts and a valuable photographic collection, co-exist only 420 square metres. Yet this includes such bulky items as three carved trees, several canoes, one of them a massive Arnhem Land dug-out, 25 mortuary (Pukumani) poles, 1,104 spears and the world's largest and finest collection of bark paintings.

3.8 In the centre of the store is set the plant which forces air conditioning into every area of the building except this store, whose total contents constitute the fourth largest Aboriginal ethnographic collection in the world and whose monetary value may be counted in millions of dollars; there is no conservation laboratory; there is no space to carry out research work; because there is no space left to unpack, process and store acquisitions, crates holding a collection valued at \$82,000 cannot be unpacked for cataloguing and study. It is urgent that adequate accommodation is provided for this collection.

3.9 This Committee believes that it is essential that the proposed Gallery should set a high standard of excellence, both in regard to conservation and to storage, in order to confidence to Aboriginal people that their cultural heritage will be preserved for the future and as an example to other museums, including local Aboriginal storehouses. It is necessary that the Gallery should have its own laboratory, equipped to deal with the full range of routine ethnographic conservation and fumigation.

### **Aboriginal Conservators**

3.10 In this regard, the Planning Committee emphasises the importance of training Aborigines in conservation techniques, and of employing them not only within the Gallery, but as advisors to local communities on the requirements of conservation in local museums and also on traditional sites, such as rock art galleries. The Committee considers that training programs for Aborigines should be developed as priority matters. It considers that local repositories such as that developed by the Yuendumu community must form a vital link in the Museum chain and careful custody of such collections should be encouraged.

3.11 It is emphasised that museum-storehouses such as that at Yuendumu, and those planned for other centres such as Oenpelli, Papunya, Elcho Island and Bathurst Island, are new elements in Aboriginal community life. Until recently, cultural factors worked to assist natural factors in ensuring that few items of an organic nature in traditional society. For example, many objects were not intended by their makers to be durable, and elaborate ceremonial objects which took hours to construct destroyed at the conclusion of a ceremony; Pukumani grave posts, carved trees, or decorated bark shelters were left to decay. The prevalence of ceremonial exchange systems also ensured the dispersal of even the most valued possessions, rather than their retention in any 'store' for reasons of sentiment or desire to amass wealth in kind.

3.12 This means that today, except for sacred ceremonial objects which are preserved in secrecy, there is no reserve of artefacts dating from earlier times amongst traditional societies. It is significant that groups whose cultural status today may be described as neo-traditional, that is, those whose traditional life is dimly remembered but still a force, are particularly anxious to have access to material as a means of reviving their traditional skills.

3.13 If community 'museums' are to be effective as a means of preserving present cultural possessions, therefore, they will require advice and training from the Gallery or from State museums. Although sophisticated environmental control systems may be financially or practically impossible in these structures, careful design may minimise temperature extremes or excess light and provide facilities.

3.14 These local communities do possess one resource, however, which the Gallery or other museums could utilise. That is, the expertise of craftsmen or artists versed in traditional skills. Although it would be inadvisable to restore many items in the museum collections, certain classes could benefit from repair by traditional craftsmen, brought to the Gallery for a short-term, while rare items which should not be altered could be replicated. For example, some tools in which the resin has deteriorated could be renewed or with others, the paintwork could be retouched. The Gallery could perform a useful service by keeping resource lists of such persons skilled in specific arts and crafts - the equivalent of oral informants in linguistics - whose expertise would parallel craft workers in European folk museums.

3.15 At this time, however, the knowledge of how to conserve ethnographic items in Australian environments is elementary. Much fundamental research is necessary into suitable techniques. In addition, one of Australia's great heritages is its Aboriginal rock art, both paintings and engravings. Several art regions in contrasting environments would meet the criteria of the UNESCO World Heritage Classification. Yet they are disappearing rapidly in the face of natural weathering and human interference. A massive program of research into methods best suited to arrest decay is essential and it is needed immediately.

3.16 For these reasons, the Planning Committee considers that in addition to routine conservation tasks, there is justification for a research laboratory, whose staff investigate both museums and filed conservation problems. This research would require sophisticated apparatus and a high level of scientific expertise. It also would include research an advice relating to all ethnographic collections within Australia, whether institutional, private, or local Aboriginal storehouses and museums. In regard to these latter, much material is of a secret and ceremonial nature which may not be publicly displayed. This should not preclude conservation laboratory treatment. This is the situation in which trained Aboriginal conservators could explain to local communities the relevance of the work and the benefits which preservation of objects bestow.

### **Storage**

3.17 There is little point in careful conservation if preservation of an object is not the major consideration. Whether the item is on public display or in the reserve store, they require appropriate accommodation which ensures that damage from physical, biological or chemical sources is minimised. The Planning Committee notes the wisdom of the advice recently offered United Kingdom museums by an expert committee.\*

Expenditure on practical conservation work is to some extent a waste of resources if an exhibit that has deteriorated owing to its poor environment is replaced in the same environment after treatment, since it will again deteriorate. If an exhibit that has been conserved is housed in a fully controlled environment, that is to say one in which the level of atmospheric pollution, the relative humidity, and the lighting are maintained within the standards recommended by the International Institute for Conservation, it is probable that it will not require further treatment for a considerable number of years.

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\* *Conservation in Museums and Galleries*, U.K. Group of International Institute for Conservation, 1974, p.21.

To these desiderata, this Committee must add storage conditions in which objects are not piled upon each other, and fire prevention apparatus which does not render the cure potentially as destructive as the cause.

3.18 The Planning Committee suggests that a model for Gallery storage planning has been provided on a small scale by the Anthropology Museum, University of Queensland. The entire store area is climatically controlled; there are no windows and all fluorescent lights are filtered for colour-damaging ultra-violet light; a carbon dioxide fire extinguishing service extends throughout, and access is guarded by ultrasonic alarm systems.

3.19 Storage facilities have been maximised through the use of wire mesh on some walls upon which to suspend large or irregular shaped items, while all metal shelves are perforated so as to allow free airflow and easy inspection for insects or dust. Each object is free of contact with any other. Compactus units have converted an area of 150 square metres into a high density store of 750 square metres of shelving. This represents a ratio of shelf area to floor area of 5:1; however, some museums calculate on a ratio of little more than 2:1, depending upon the nature of the objects stored.

3.20 This Anthropology Museum also provides a useful gauge for calculating storage area requirements in the Gallery. As there are 11,000 items stored in this high density store, an ethnographic collection of 100,000 artefacts would require 6,750 sq m of shelf area. On this formula, compactus units 2.3 m high could accommodate such a collection in approximately 1,350 sq m.

3.21 Of course, not all items would fit in such units, and extensive open storage is needed for large objects such as canoes or posts. It implies, however, that the National Ethnographic Collection of 20,000 items could be presently housed in comparable manner with 280 sqm of compactus and a further 100 sqm of open storage, with additional areas for processing (unpacking, cataloguing, documentation) and a research area.

3.22 As the collection will grow rapidly, the initial stage of building should plan for a floor space of at least 375 sqm of compactus-type storage and 300 sqm of other storage and unpacking area.

# 4 Aboriginal Participation

4.1 The Planning Committee referred above to the necessity of active co-operation between the Gallery and local communities. It envisages a centre where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff collaborate in their attempt to make the Gallery outstanding, for the quality of its research, the authenticity of the total specimens of its display, its significance as a national repository, a focus for Aboriginal culture and performing arts, its success in creating mutual understanding, and in the education of the entire community - adults and children.

4.2 In a discussion of the preservation of indigenous cultures which have adapted uniquely to differing natural environments, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution made an observation which has application to the Gallery.\*

‘By creating a dignified aura of self-examination and self research it might be possible to raise more rapidly the self-esteem and pride in individuality of these marvellous people before they trample the last remnants of their own uniqueness to death, rushing to be like everyone else.’

4.3 This Committee is aware that many Aboriginal people have expressed misgivings about the role of museums in Australia. As the concept of the Gallery represents a new approach, the Committee does not enter into a justification of past attitudes or actions of other institutions. However, because of possible Aboriginal doubts concerning the role of the Gallery, some matters require comment. Any Gallery interim planning council should include them in their deliberations.

4.4 These adverse opinions, unless faced frankly and taken into account, could seriously impair the effective role of the Gallery. In summary form, the general drift of criticisms centre on the following:

- that the Gallery will be devised by and controlled by Europeans;
- that it would display secret or sacred objects, or the bones of dead people;
- that the type of research initiated might benefit white scholars, but is not relevant to Aboriginal needs;
- that museums are not interested in the educational requirements or aspirations of Aborigines and that little is done to encourage them as visitors;
- that museums hoard items of material culture which being more rightly the possessions of the tribal group which made them, should be returned to their original owners.

4.5 The display of certain objects in museums indeed has caused offence to Aborigines, and attention to this matter should be central to Gallery policy. In some museums, Aboriginal confidence has been restored by the provision of locked strong rooms in which secret objects are housed, and access to which is limited to Aboriginal people who possess direct relationship with specific items. A large security store, with stringent access regulations, is an essential feature of the proposed Gallery. Aboriginal people must feel that anything deposited on restricted terms will be cared for and preserved as a valuable heritage possession, but only available to persons on the restricted access list for that item. This practice is already adopted by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies for tapes and manuscripts which contain secret material, and it is working well. Such materials also would be transferred to strong-rooms at the Gallery.

4.6 Restricted rights of access have implications, however, for the freedom of movement and working efficiency of Aboriginal staff members of the Gallery. Although not insuperable, this is a matter to which the Gallery Council must direct its attention.

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\* S. D. Ripley, *The Sacred Grove*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1969, p.89.



4.7 Clarification of display problems is also essential. At present, some Aboriginal criticisms of the museum scene are expressed in general terms and appear to be advanced without regard to the complexity and diversity of Aboriginal societies. Some examples of issues capable of resolution are as follows:

- the function of the Gallery must be understood. While it will provide employment for Aboriginal staff, including craftsmen and performers, its role is not economic or social welfare. Its role is education, research and to provide a focus for cultural activities.
- it is unfortunate that a belief is current today that a real distinction exists between research (synonyms: 'pure', 'academic', 'impractical') and applied research, with utilitarian connotations. One major aspect of the proposed Gallery programs with its conjunction of AIAS and Arts Board activities, could be the demonstration that research which assists mutual understanding between peoples, and promotes pride in the Aboriginal heritage, brings long term social and economic returns.
- over-simplistic concepts that Aboriginal culture is a unitary system lie behind many criticisms of museum practice. While the full complexity of regional adaptations will be expounded in the display, visitors should be made aware of the difficulties inherent in presenting adequate, meaningful displays of the culture of any society. The Gallery must anticipate the different expectations and needs of fully traditional, part-tribal and urbanised groups.
- some items or photographs which may be considered sacred by all communities may not be necessarily secret to all of them.
- objects or art motifs which are neither sacred nor secret in one region, may give offence if displayed before people from another area. The Gallery should display such artefacts or designs only if it is made explicit that they relate to the area of their secular use.
- the insensitive display of skeletal material has drawn much criticism during recent years. It is important therefore, that Aboriginal people are made aware of the tremendous variety of ritual practice and belief throughout Australia. The respectful display or storage of human remains would not offend many of the communities concerned. In some areas, for example, once burial rituals terminate, the bones of the deceased are neither sacred nor secret. In other circumstances it is possible that while the display of bones could prove offensive, casts would be acceptable.
- the 'message' of a display should be understood. For example, the exhibition of a reconstructed grave group may provide insight past ideologies and complex spiritual values. Its public display contains no overtones of racial or mental inferiority and failure to present such important evidence would prove both misleading and lacking in respect for the spirituality of the past.

4.8 It is this sense of respect for the society and the identification of its members with Gallery matters, that should be its keynote as a custodian of collections.

4.9 This attitude differs markedly from that of the founders of earlier museums, who acted within the intellectual climate and preconceptions of their time. Possibly some of the misunderstanding which has arisen in recent years between some Aborigines and museums, was due to the failure of those institutions to clarify their changed museological philosophy and practice. This Committee regrets that some institutions even today have failed to adapt to new circumstances. The foundation of the main Australian museums in the mid-nineteenth century coincided in time with the climax of the Western faith in material progress and doctrinal certainty in human and social

evolution. Because scientific interest emphasised tracing chains of evolutionary progress, and arranging, artefacts and races in sequences, the Aborigines were ranged on the lower steps of the ladder of human success. Europocentric preconceptions concealed the essential spirituality, the network of social bonding and obligations and intimate man-territory relationship which typify Aboriginal society.

4.10 The *Guide to the Australian Ethnographical Collection in the National Museum of Victoria*,\* written in 1901 by its distinguished biologist-anthropologist director, W. Baldwin Spencer, stated the situation succinctly:

‘The Australian Aborigine may be regarded as a relic of the early childhood of mankind left stranded in a part of the world where he has, without the impetus derived from competition, remained in a low condition of savagery.

‘The Tasmanians were even lower in the scale of material progress: they were, in fact, living representatives of palaeolithic man, lower in the scale of culture, than any human beings now upon the earth.’

4.11 Today, on the contrary, no museum director would endorse such views, even though some displays still enshrine outmoded concepts. Indeed, in the opinion of the Planning Committee, it is the individuality of Aboriginal society, which tapped alternative imaginative sources to the Western world, that is the theme and justification of the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia as a separate entity.

4.12 If earlier museum collection building programs failed to involve the Aborigines at a participatory and intellectual level, by not explaining the purpose of the collections, or by assuming that the museum visitors would be Europeans, it remains important that Aboriginal communities who now seek to revive their heritage should be aware of the earlier positive contribution made by Australian museums, in preserving so much that otherwise would be lost today. It may not be realised how early in colonial settlement times it was that Australian museums were founded. For example, the National Museum of Victoria and the South Australian Museum date from around only the twentieth years of their respective colonies, and Aboriginal artefacts were sought from their inception. Indeed, much that is now of great value in museums from regions where traditions are faint, was regarded as ephemeral material by its original makers and was not intended to be preserved by them.

### **Local Communities**

4.13 The Planning Committee believes that there is need of extended consultation between the interim Gallery authorities and local communities, to explain the principles guiding collection building, preservation and access. Different communities possess varying, attitudes to the notion of ‘sharing’ their culture, or of the potentialities of the Gallery for instructing future generations of their people. It is important that communities be directly involved in discussions and through the preparation of artefacts or by participation in the performing arts. The example could be cited of those communities where, during recent years, elders have approached some museums or the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies to remove and preserve items of particular importance to them, but which currently are disregarded by younger people. The existence of the Gallery, also could accentuate the Aboriginal Arts Board’s practice of commissioning the manufacture of traditional objects, so as to ensure the continuance of specific crafts or techniques. The Gallery should become therefore, the symbol of the revival of traditional ways and a centre where the customs, arts and crafts of different regional groups can be created, displayed, examined and preserved.

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\* Government Printer, Melbourne, 1st edition, 1901; 3rd edition, 1922, pp.12, 8.

4.14 The Committee is sympathetic to the needs of local communities who wish to exhibit items of their material culture, but it does not believe that all collections should be returned to their place of origin. Under the rigorous climatic conditions and lack of facilities for their conservation and safe storage, these objects would be consigned to certain destruction. The short-term regional benefits would be outweighed by the longer-term loss to Aboriginal culture as a whole.

4.15 One partial solution which has been suggested is the creation of local museums. It must be emphasised that, if such repositories were to have the necessary temperature and humidity control stores, conservation staff and laboratories, curators and other facilities, the cost would be on a lavish scale far in excess of the costs of the Gallery and the upgrading of the conservation facilities in existing major museums. It is important to distinguish here between local storehouses where ritual objects are housed in secrecy or secular objects are displayed chiefly for local educational purposes, and a museum with the connotation of the curation, documentation and conservation of major heritage and research resources.

4.16 The Planning Committee believes that the Gallery could make further positive contributions towards meaningful relationships between the local community and a national cultural focus in the following manner:

- Development of a policy of extensive limited access store rooms in the Gallery, similar to those in some other museums, where material is kept under optimum conditions, but is available to inspection by the owners, thereby giving them confidence that their objects are safeguarded.
- Encouragement of short-term loans of duplicate or replica items to local communities, provided that the conditions of storage reach specified minimal conditions.
- A program of Gallery visitation by concerned Aborigines. Those experienced in traditional matters, or wishing to learn and revive the traditions of areas where these are no longer living, should have space and other facilities within the Gallery where they could study and record matters of interest. This program necessitates supporting funds for travel and hostel accommodation in Canberra.
- Commissioning of projects from traditional communities or those which have attempted to revive traditions. Portion of such collections would be retained by the Gallery and the balance could remain with the community on the expectation that it would have a short-term value for display and education there.
- Provision of advice to custodians of local storehouses, including visits to communities by conservators or other specialists, or alternatively, instruction of custodians at the Gallery.

### **Museological Training for Aborigines**

4.17 Special consideration must be given to the training of Aborigines in specialist museum fields, so that they are qualified for appointment to Gallery staff posts, including that of Director. A program of cadetships or scholarships for Aborigines seems essential. Early consideration should be given to a training program, in order that qualified persons should be available to staff the Gallery in its initial stages. State museums could assist through the attachment of at least one trainee in a specialised aspect of Museum work, including administration, curation, cataloguing, exhibition preparation and conservation. The newly established course in museology at the Power Institute of Fine Arts, University of Sydney, is also appropriate. If the Gallery is to achieve a reputation for high standards, it is important that all appointments should be made on merit. If it is to be truly meaningful to Aboriginal people, however, it is

necessary that Aborigines be equipped with expertise necessary to hold posts at any level of staffing.

# 5 The Functioning of the Gallery: Relationship with the Aboriginal Arts Board and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies

5.1 The Planning Committee believes that the Gallery offers a unique opportunity to develop an integrated and humanistic concept which could become one of the notable features of the National Capital. It suggests that the Gallery has potential as a major educational institution and would serve as the shop window and contribute to the effectiveness of the role of both the Aboriginal Arts Board and the AIAS, which are currently performing functions on a national basis, highly relevant to Gallery objectives.

5.2 The contemporary resurgence of interest in encouraging and recording traditional technology, decorative arts, song and dance, has stimulated a greater Aboriginal confidence, in the old traditions, and a realisation that there were many differences between groups throughout Australia in their ceremonial and artistic life. It is independently supported by the accumulating evidence of the antiquity and early cultural achievements of Aborigines in this continent and growing awareness of the distinctiveness of their lifeway.

5.3 Knowledge of the wider Aboriginal community and a sense of pride in its achievement are paralleled in urban communities. Aboriginal people in city environments are turning to modern forms of theatre and other creative arts, to express their alienation and to focus upon the social pressures and deprivations of their people. This social statement, the Planning Committee believes, is part of contemporary Aboriginal life and could find its place in Gallery activities. It considers that activities which encourage pride in a people's past and a sense of common identity are an essential expression of the national heritage.

5.4 The Committee observes further, that these developments within the Gallery should be seen within the perspective of the overall complex which may portray Man and Environment in Australia. Assertion of Aboriginal cultural identity through the medium of the Gallery, could be emphatic, yet not narrowly political.

5.5 Aboriginal Arts Board policies since its inception have encouraged the revival of traditional arts and crafts amongst Aboriginal communities and have done much to make the non-Aboriginal public aware of their originality and creativity. The Board is one of seven constituent Boards of the Australia Council. Formed in May 1973, the Board has an all Aboriginal membership. It has sought to develop policies and make recommendations on grants for all forms of Aboriginal art, along the following guidelines:

- to strengthen and revive traditional Aboriginal arts and to encourage a pride in and knowledge of them, both amongst the wider Australian community and overseas;
- to formulate programs to teach children traditional arts;
- to stimulate developments in the arts where the traditional ways have been lost;
- to assist the emergence of professionalism in all Aboriginal arts and crafts;
- to educate the wider community in the value and quality of Aboriginal arts through exhibitions, performances, publications and films.

5.6 Therefore, the Aboriginal Arts Board could bring to the development of the Gallery expertise and experience in the organisation and promotion of a comprehensive program of activities in the arts. The Planning Committee considers that as the Gallery could become a national centre for the creative arts, consideration should be given to

maintaining a close association between Gallery activities and the Aboriginal Arts Board.

5.7 Activities with which the Board could be associated cover a wide spectrum through entertainment, instruction and marketing, together with advice during Gallery planning, to ensure the commissioning of appropriate decorative or other materials from Aboriginal communities.

5.8 It is envisaged that the Gallery would have workshops, demonstration centres, recording studios and other audio-visual aids, and a theatre, together with exterior working facilities which could be integrated into relevant 'dioramas without walls'. A program of visits by craftsmen or performers would provide feature activities, although the Gallery would employ Aborigines permanently in its workshops or outdoor demonstration areas. Craft activities, whose products could be sold in the Gallery shop, could highlight painting in various forms, stone flaking, basket making and weaving, wooden implement production, and wood carving. Larger items intended for Gallery use or sale to other institutions could include posts for Pukumani displays or dug-out canoe manufacture. Such activities would be associated with demonstrations of fire-making, spear or boomerang throwing or use of resins as hafting media.

5.9 There would be a place also for non-traditional Aboriginal crafts, such as handscreen printing, wall rugs, leatherwork and mosaic tiles. In the Gallery design, this source might provide important decorative features.

5.10 During warmer months, both the traditional and non-traditional performing arts could be staged in the open air natural amphitheatre.

5.11 Whether performances are staged outside or within the building, the Board could act as the liaison office and sponsor of these activities. Re-enactments of historically significant episodes in Aboriginal history, performed by urban theatre groups, would add another dimension to presentation. Such performances would be particularly appropriate during national celebrations of significance to Aborigines.

5.12 The Planning Committee emphasises that these proposals promote the close relationship between the creative life of individual communities, and the national capital. It points to the success of smaller-scale but comparable programs in Canada which have served to foster interest in indigenous arts and crafts, to perform major educational functions, and to provide employment.

5.13 The British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, B.C., maintains a staff of craftsmen wood carvers, who produce totem poles for museum use or outside sale. In the same Province, at Hazelton, the Indian peoples of the Upper Skeena River in collaboration with the National Museum of Man, Ottawa, in 1970 established the Indian museum and craft village of 'Ksan. It has stimulated a major revival in traditional arts and crafts, is a major educational and tourist experience, and has developed its owl research momentum. The words of the exhibition booklet are quoted here because of their relevance.\*

'Ksan's success owes much to the integrative qualities of the project: the meld of art with ceremony, in which artists create for performers and performers inspire artists; the involvement of young and old in the creative process; and the blending of traditional values with contemporary viewpoints.'

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\* *Ksan Breath of our Grandfathers*, National Museums of Canada, Ottawa. 1972, p.11.

### **The Gallery Shop**

5.14 A sales outlet is important to the role of the Gallery, as it not only offers potential for Aboriginal involvement and employment, but it represents a national showcase for the dissemination of information about Aboriginal society.

5.15 All items sold in the Gallery shop should possess a high degree of authenticity. In addition to original objects made by Gallery employees, or during demonstrations at the Gallery, replicas of important specimens such as stone artefacts could be sold. Descriptive booklets describing their technology, significance and traditional source of origin would be available as part of an authoritative publication series.

5.16 Through the assistance of the Aboriginal Arts Board, objects could be marketed from local communities. The promotional benefits which this shop could have for the improved marketing of local industries is indicated by listing those communities or areas for which the Board has continuing commitments to support traditional activities.

Yirrkala, Oenpelli, Maningrida, Bamyili, Milingimbi, Croker, Goulburn and Elcho Islands, Papunya, Yaiyai	Bark paintings, didjeridu Sand painting
Bathurst and Melville Islands	Pukumani poles
Yirrkala, Milingimbi, Bathurst and Melville Islands	Carved figures
Mowanjum, Broome	Carved boab-nuts
Arnhem Land Communities, Arukun, Edward R. and Yarrabah, Murray Valley communities	Baskets
Maningrida and other Arnhem Land Communities	Fish-nets and traps
Mornington Island and communities in Cape York, Arnhem Land, Central Australia	Spears, boomerangs, shields, woomeras coolamons
Cape York, Arnhem Land communities	Dug-out canoes, traditional shelters
Mowanjum, Broome, Yuendumu	Stone tools

5.17 The Gallery shop would also display a wide selection of books by Aboriginal authors or about Aboriginal Australia, together with slides, films and records. The Gallery could become a resource centre for schools and an exclusive outlet for Aboriginal copyright ethnographic objects, postcards printed cloth, tapestry and other items. It is relevant that as over 700,000 visitors annually tour the Australian War Memorial, at least a comparable number could be expected to visit this original complex.

5.18 Another facility which could be linked to the shop is a general visitor information service relating to the whole continent. Visitors could obtain reliable data relating to Aboriginal matters or ascertain details of conducted tours, local site museums, major rock art galleries where visitors are permitted and other matters which could encourage and control cultural tourism and so provide local economic benefits to those communities involved.

5.19 An integration or at least a close association between the AIAS and a 'National Museum' was implicit in the 1962 preliminary plans by the NCDC. The AIAS building incorporated the museum, which shared a common storage basement with the National Art Gallery.

5.20 The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Act 1964-73, established that body to promote Aboriginal studies in all ways, including, direct funding of research, training, publication and co-operation with other institutions, including museums. It has present responsibility for the National Ethnographic Collection, which it has augmented over the past decade by acquisitions purchased for around \$250,000.

5.21 During the intervening years the AIAS has built up a unique library, manuscript and bibliography facility, with a staff establishment of ten, which makes it the foremost resource for Aboriginal oriented research. Its library of over 21,000 titles relating to Aboriginal Australia includes some 500 research thesis topics, and it is the repository for a growing manuscript collection, including fieldwork data from grantees and staff. In the bibliographical section, author catalogue entries alone number around 45,000.

5.22 Other record and research facilities include 4,000 two-hour length archival tapes, 17,000 colour slides and 25,000 black and white photographic negatives. The film unit has achieved international recognition for its documentary ethnographic films and could be developed into an ethnographic film archive. The Institute has the responsibility for compiling a National Register of Aboriginal Sites, and the Registrar of Sites is investigating a computerisation program. Ethnomusicological research is undertaken and sound recordings of Aboriginal song are produced for public distribution. The publications section produces several volumes annually and its expertise is appropriate to any Gallery publishing ventures.

5.23 As much of the data recorded in the Institute relates to the secret or sacred dimension, it is securely housed and is available only under owner- or donor-specified conditions of restricted access. Similar restrictions and facilities would be necessary in the Gallery complex.

5.24 In accordance with the Act, the Council of the Institute has regulated its affairs through advisory committees of which there are twelve. Seven of these are descendants of the academic advisory panels set up at an early stage of the Institute's history to advise Council in major fields of Aboriginal studies: ethnomusicology, human biology, linguistics, material culture, prehistory, psychology and social anthropology. Two, the Publications Committee and the Research and Membership Committee, have been reconstituted from the former Research and Publications Committee. Three are new. The Sites of Significance Advisory Committee results from the Institute having taken on the responsibility for a national program of recording Aboriginal sites of significance. The establishment of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee and the Education Advisory Committee reflect increasing concern of the Institute for its relationship with Aborigines and with the Australian community at large. In addition to the Aboriginal Advisory Committee of six Aborigines, Aborigines also now serve on several other committees.

5.25 In the context of the proposed activities of the Gallery, it is evident that the AIAS Council and its advisory committees possess expertise over a wide range involving research, information and education, which could usefully be applied to Gallery affairs. It is relevant to outline the brief of the Education Advisory Committee, which is engaged in documenting existing resource materials at all levels from primary to tertiary education, supplementing them with commissioned works.

5.26 These Institute resources are essential to the understanding of Aboriginal society, and their duplication in a separate building would be costly and unnecessary. If the Institute was based in the Gallery, it could provide much of the necessary support for the research, information and educational activities of the Gallery. In some sections present Institute staffing and facilities could cope with the added usage which might be expected



from their incorporation into the Gallery, but added staffing would be essential in other sections.

5.27 The AIAS currently occupies temporary rented accommodation in three buildings in Braddon. It therefore seems logical to plan for a common facility between the AIAS and the Gallery.

### **Space Requirements**

5.28 Possible relocation of the AIAS in the Gallery, in proximity to a possible Aboriginal Arts Board representation, permits an economy of both effort and facility usage, together with the association of all facets of Aboriginal cultural life.

5.29 AIAS staff and related research personnel number around 70 persons, while the Aboriginal Arts Board number would be small. In addition, however, adequate accommodation would be necessary for Aboriginal artists and craftsmen associated with Board and Gallery sponsored enterprises.

5.30 In addition to standard office and related accommodation, both bodies as well as the Gallery require theatre or theatrette facilities, lecture rooms and smaller meetings or seminar rooms. Amongst specialist facilities are numbered the following:

- laboratories, dark rooms, etc. for the film unit and general photographic sections;
- archive for ethnographic films and associated lending library;
- recording studio and sound laboratory;
- sound proof booths;
- computer-telex terminal room;
- laboratories for osteologist, ecologist, draftsmen and other technical staff;
- environmentally controlled archives for film, tapes, manuscripts;
- storage-working area and public reading facilities in the library and bibliography;
- craft workshops adequate to cover a variety of activities with space for public participation;
- stores for craft products, publications, records, etc. intended for public sale in the Gallery shop or elsewhere.

5.31 The total space estimate in order to incorporate all the current combined activities, and allowing for some expansion over the next five to ten years, is around 4,000 square metres. This estimate does not take into account normal Gallery administrative offices, information centre and sales area.

5.32 Should it be decided eventually that the AIAS and the Aboriginal Arts Board do not associate in Gallery activities, most of their functions would need duplicating in the Gallery. This means that the outline presented above still remains a reasonable guide to Gallery requirements.

### **Administration**

5.33 The Planning Committee considers that the Gallery of Aboriginal should be a statutory authority, controlled by trustees or a council, with a director and full complement of staff qualified to undertake the varied duties of administration, curation, conservation, exhibition, demonstration and education outlined in this report. At least a majority of the governing body should be Aborigines. Positive scholarship and training programs require immediate implementation, to ensure that Aboriginal people possess appropriate skills and experience to be considered on merit for any staff position, including that of director.

5.34 There are major policy issues involved in the arrangement and administrative structure of the proposed Gallery. These issues concern, firstly, the relationship and the division of functions between possible component elements of the Gallery; secondly, the question of unitary or multi-Ministerial responsibility; and thirdly, the relationship and control between the Gallery and any other museum type-development which might be associated within the same area of the National Capital.

5.35 Some alternative structures and arrangements have been discussed by the Planning Committee. The preference of some members is for a limited integration of related activities between the Gallery, the AIAS and the Aboriginal Arts Board. It is emphasised by supporters of this proposal that they refer only to those functions which directly involve Gallery activities. It is appreciated that at present both the AIAS and the Board are statutory, autonomous entities, controlled by different Councils responsible to different Ministers. It is agreed that their respective autonomy should be safeguarded on all matters other than those concerning Gallery affairs, and that areas of overlap should be defined closely.

5.36 Under this integrated arrangement, it is suggested that the existing Aboriginal Arts Board and AIAS Council would be paralleled by a Gallery Board of Trustees (the majority of whom would be Aborigines), with an Executive Management Committee which would be concerned with basic Gallery functions. In addition, the Gallery and Arts Board directors and the AIAS Principal would be members of a Board which would direct and co-ordinate all matters of common concern.

5.37 Another possible arrangement would be a transfer of those functions deemed more appropriate to the new Gallery, from the Aboriginal Arts Board and the AIAS.

5.38 Another possibility is envisaged by some Planning Committee members. They do not consider that the Aboriginal Arts Board and the AIAS could be integrated within the Gallery except with a complex and costly administrative system and at the cost of some loss of identity and compromise of distinctive functions. They prefer all alternative administrative option under which the AIAS and the Aboriginal Arts Board remain entirely independent of the Gallery administration, but have a physical presence in the complex by occupying leased quarters. They could contribute expert advice and support facilities to Gallery running, but not have any responsibility or major commitment to it.

5.39 Under any arrangement, as all three potential components are concerned with Aboriginal cultural matters, it is a matter for consideration whether they more appropriately should derive their funds from a single source and be responsible to the same Minister.

5.40 Whatever administrative framework is erected, close collaboration is the prerequisite for a positive institution. All three bodies should make vital contributions to Aboriginal training, research expertise and public education, and duplication of this effort with resulting competition in a separate Gallery would be detrimental to all institutions.

5.41 The Planning Committee, without prejudging any of the questions, therefore, considers that possible working relationships between the three bodies should be fully examined by the Councils of the Aboriginal Arts Board and the AIAS and the Interim Council of the Gallery, when appointed, without necessary prejudice to the present status and operations of these bodies.

5.42 Should it be proposed to establish any other institutions within the general precinct of the Gallery which could be envisaged as complementary in scope, the Planning Committee emphasises that, despite such proximity, the Gallery should remain autonomous. It is appreciated however, that positive co-operation between the Gallery and any other institutions on common matters of site design, management or shared facilities would prove essential.

5.43 The Planning Committee draws attention to the initial announcement by the Special Minister of State, in which he stated that priority would be given to consideration of a Gallery of Aboriginal Australia. It believes that the proposal does indeed merit high priority.