

I visited the National Museum of Australia for the first time, last year and was impressed, and pleased to see the emphasis given to Aboriginal Australian exhibits, both historical and contemporary. It is especially appropriate to have the Museum so close to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, of which I have been a member since its inception. I hope that there will be continuing close collaboration between the Museum and the Institute in the displays relating to Aboriginal languages, cultures, social change and historical and political issues. I also hope that the Museum will keep in close consultation with Aboriginal elders, knowledgeable people and groups who can provide interpretations of the Museum's collections, artefacts, art and history from their own knowledge and surviving oral traditions.

I have read some disturbing reports in newspapers that there may be attempts to influence some the Museum's exhibits, particularly those relating to Aboriginal-white frontier relations, because they were felt to be "biased" in some way. I hope that we have not reached such a point of political correctness that we cannot objectively acknowledge the past, or recognise that Aboriginal groups often know much more about local historical events, such as massacres than the written historical records show. There has been a tendency, in the past to favour evidence from "white experts" such as anthropologists or historians and ignore the views of the local Aboriginal people who have lived for generations in an area. The Museum should ensure that it gives Aboriginal people a chance to air their views directly, and not only through outsider academics.

This submission may be late, but I hope it is still acceptable.

Yours sincerely,

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