

**Submission
No 157**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

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Summary For NSW Migration Heritage Centre - Former NSW Government Immigration Museum Initiative

The NSW Migration Heritage Centre at the Powerhouse Museum was established as the second stage of NSW Government's immigration museum initiative to record the memories of former migrants and help them document their collections for posterity through exhibitions. A third stage left open the possibility of an immigration museum for NSW and was scoped under the NSW Government's 2012-2015 *Multicultural Advantage* policy but the results were not made public.

The NSW Migration Heritage Centre at the Powerhouse Museum was a NSW Government initiative supported by Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW. After starting as a heritage, arts and research *grants program* with a website in the NSW Premier's Department (Stage One, 1998) the Centre moved to the Powerhouse Museum (Stage Two, 2003) with an increase of approximately \$375,000 to the Museum's annual recurrent funding from the NSW Treasury and an annual \$100,000 financial contribution to the Museum for the Centre from the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW. This annual budget of \$475,000 employed a Manager, part-time Website Co-ordinator, a Project Officer and a Heritage Officer and funded a state-wide program of dollar for dollar research and exhibition partnerships with Local Government museums and galleries working with local communities. A Panel of Advisors was appointed by the President of the Board of Trustees to provide strategic direction and governance.

I was appointed to the new position of Manager to establish the Centre at the Museum in 2004. The Centre completed some 40 collections documentation, exhibition and publication projects with ethnic communities and won over 20 industry awards including a 2007 national MAPDA award for its website. In 2012 the Premier of NSW presented the Centre with the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW and Macquarie University 'Building Inclusive Communities' award. The Centre was cited by the Australasian Council of Museum Directors as the region's exemplar for helping communities preserve their heritage and there was international interest in the decentralised museum model.

I departed in 2012 after accepting an offer of a voluntary redundancy as a consequence of budget cuts. I left along with the Centre's Website Co-ordinator and both positions were abolished. The virtual museum was left without a leader or website support. A Heritage and Project Officer continued in employment for some two years later but no further meetings of the Panel of Advisors were convened by the Museum and the Centre was quietly shelved and abolished without transparency. The website www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au is no longer maintained by the Museum's staff limiting online access to the State's community collections and body of work.

This ended the only NSW Government initiative for a public immigration museum (unlike Victoria and South Australia which have long-standing immigration museums) and a successful and economical model to decentralise museum operations and support rural and regional community museums and galleries, including cultural tourism. The result is also a high level of inequity in arts and cultural funding for ethnic communities and rural and regional areas of NSW, including Western Sydney, and the abolition of the Powerhouse Museum's programs for Australian Social History and collections engagement and support for ethnic and rural and regional communities as a consequence of efficiency dividends and budget cuts. **I wish to be a witness at a later hearing.**

John Petersen

Supporting Documentation For NSW Migration Heritage Centre – Former NSW Government Immigration Museum Initiative

In his 1997 Heritage Week Lecture, former Premier of New South Wales Bob Carr articulated his vision for creating a new NSW cultural institution that would:

...aspire to a presentation of our cultural heritage through the investigation of living cultures within our ethnic communities ... show how their lives have intertwined with the lives of the people already living here ... show how a new, unique Australian society and culture has emerged through this interaction.[3]

That resulting NSW Migration Heritage Centre was conceived as an organisation ‘to reach beyond the notion of a static museum of immigration’. [4] It was founded as ‘a museum without walls’ [5] and a virtual heritage centre. It commenced as a Strategic Project in the NSW Premier’s Department in October 1998 and in its second stage of development it was relocated to the Powerhouse Museum in 2003 to give it a physical location for administrative activities to continue its distributed work with museums and galleries and small organisations across rural and regional New South Wales.[6]

The NSW Migration Heritage Centre reached all regions of NSW and it was established ‘to provide a focus for innovation in heritage based service delivery including multi-media and new information technologies; not be a monolithic institution; be a dynamic organisation, advising on collection policy development and administration; assist communities to conserve their collections; and enhance public access to these collections.’[7] The idea of an online virtual museum in New South Wales was also originally in part a strategy to forestall increasing demands from established ethnic communities wanting governments to support numerous and separate ethno-specific museums. In 1998, this model was considered unsustainable[8] (how many museums and what level of visitation?). The numerous ethno-specific museums now established in Victoria, competing for private and government funding, and struggling to establish sustainable operating models are an interesting counterpoint to the former policy initiatives in New South Wales.

The policy thinking behind the NSW Migration Heritage Centre was more complex than one about creating and sustaining new ethnic museums. The Centre was to encourage new initiatives in *existing* cultural organisations to ensure greater accountability and equity to ensure that cultural diversity was adequately reflected in all their programs to better serve and reflect the multicultural population.[9]

The initial press release announcing the NSW Migration Heritage Centre was to send a wake-up call to the State’s arts bodies.

The policy statements, ‘The Arts and cultural diversity: Principles for multicultural arts support in New South Wales’ (August 1997) and ‘Principles for regional programs by State Government cultural institutions’ (December 1997) acknowledged that:

“...If arts and cultural institutions, companies and organisations are to acknowledge and cater for diversity they must accept that there are inequities in the distribution of resources, and that many communities are missing out on benefits and opportunities available to others. They must accept the need for change.”[10]

Catherine Chung, former Commissioner, Ethnic Affairs Commission was further quoted in the release saying:

The responsibility of the success of the MHC rests with a wide range of groups and institutions in the community, in fact it involves everyone. It is not just ethnics doing things for ethnics.[11]

Migrants and former migrants live in a multicultural society - while they have often settled together in particular suburbs and districts, alongside other communities, their generational and inter-generational histories of migrating to Australia and settling in NSW are intermingled and intertwined and are significant for telling the stories of the rural and regional areas.

From 2003 and certainly until 2012, the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW contributed \$100,000 annually to the operating budget of the NSW Migration Heritage Centre to support its continuance as a NSW Government initiative and an independent unit at the Powerhouse Museum managed under its governance structures.

The Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW had a stated policy interest in building harmonious communities and promoting multiculturalism. This was a key factor in defining the Centre's Strategic Plan and the desire to include culturally diverse histories in mainstream Australian social history.

The need to research a multicultural narrative in New South Wales and to identify and conserve its culturally diverse heritage legacy remains apparent when more than half the population of Sydney are first or second generation migrants[12] and four out of ten people in the State are either migrants or their children.[13] There are people from over 200 countries of birth living in New South Wales.

After moving to the Museum, the Centre's Mission was stated in a new Strategic Plan developed by the Centre with a Panel of Advisors:

To give new perspectives on Australian history and ensure a more representative heritage is preserved for future generations and to validate experiences and challenge myths and prejudices.[14]

It also stated:

We will develop and maintain a collaborative network of partners in community, government, educational and cultural organisations to optimise and share ideas, skills, resources, audience and influence and in turn, reduce duplication. Our programs will have enduring benefits for the people of New South Wales and their families ensuring that culturally significant collections, places and associated histories are recorded and preserved for future generations.[15]

Its operational focus was to mainstream migration history into broader narratives of Australian history. The Centre was not to work in isolation, or compete with existing museum venues, galleries and other cultural institutions in Western Sydney and regional NSW, but rather to work with them and to strengthen existing trained and untrained heritage and community networks. The Centre was also keen to create a lasting and useful body of heritage research as a legacy for the future.

The Plan was also interested in achieving the following results in a way balanced and inclusive of smaller and larger community groups.

Heritage places and collections are surveyed and documented through community participation in regional thematic studies and significance assessment workshops.

The heritage of ageing migrants is recorded.

Migration heritage is interpreted so that the public can access places and collections across New South Wales to learn about the history of migration, including people's experiences. Migration heritage material and information is available in a clear, engaging, culturally sensitive and informative manner.[16]

Following from this Strategic Plan, and freed of exhibition schedules in a building, the establishment of a virtual museum enabled the Centre to pioneer a dispersed museum model. Its research program was almost completely decentralised outside of the city of Sydney but instead produced in partnership with Local Government funded museums, art galleries and community organisations located in regions across New South Wales.

The Centre researched the heritage legacy of migration to Australia and settlement in New South Wales as a series of chapters in Australian history written in regions across the State. These waves of migration reflected major world events as push factors and in turn Colonial or Federal Government migration policies as entry or restriction points and settlement patterns which changed over time.

The distinctions between the identification and conservation of heritage collections and heritage places diminished during the past two decades in Australia.[17] The revised 2004 edition of the *Illustrated Burra Charter: Good Practice For Heritage Places*, the recognised standard for heritage place practice in Australia[18] featured sections on movable heritage recognising the potentially significant relationships between collections and places. The 2001 Heritage Collections Council's *Significance* and its revision in 2009 *Significance 2*[19] set a process and criteria for assessing the cultural heritage significance of collections modelled on those used for heritage places since the 1990s.[20] Both publications are now almost universally accepted by Australian museum workers for the assessment of significance.

Following from the new found interest in assessing the heritage significance of collections in Australian museums; the Centre with the word 'heritage' in its name, reflected this evolution in museums thinking, and adapted environmental heritage survey and assessment methods for places, such as thematic and typology studies. Its regional work for collections surveys recognised that heritage collections are associated with people and places[21] and the nature of its work focussed on the use of history.

The Centre tried to get to know local people and partners, and worked hard to maintain relationships of trust which remains the basis for accessing local collections and knowledge (the collections are privately owned in addition to being held in publicly accessible collections). Where additional expertise was required we encouraged local partners to employ trained historians and heritage workers already living in the region to strengthen existing networks. Among the benefits in bringing trained and untrained people together in local partnerships was that in many cases the research continued after the exhibition was completed, and new heritage skills were developed in councils and the communities.[22]

Working with Local Government museums and community organisations in contractual partnerships enabled a 'museum' located in Sydney to conduct research projects in the regions where communities lived no matter how far from the city. The projects typically ran for two to three years when using the thematic study model. This comprised a Stage One commissioned history, a Stage Two survey of collections drawn from the commissioned history's themes (typically through workshops and local family networks) and documentation of the collections with local knowledge and memories using the *Significance* assessment model.[23] In Stage Three, the research was showcased in the Centre's joint and shared exhibitions produced by Local Government and located in Western Sydney, rural and regional museums, galleries and libraries, where the communities gathered and met. The exhibitions were later produced on the Centre's website as virtual exhibitions and made accessible to the rest of the State - and the world - as online exhibition and educational resources hosted on the Centre's website www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au.

The Centre's most collection rich web projects *Belongings: Post Second World War Migration Memories And Journeys* and *Objects Through Time*[24] attracted the bulk of visitor traffic and referrals through Google where the Centre was highly ranked. The latter project drew together many objects documented with statements of cultural heritage significance through the Centre's partnership thematic studies, as well as substantial research by Stephen Thompson. Visitor numbers declined during school holidays indicating that increases were driven by traffic from the education sector.[25] The web exhibitions were particularly popular with primary and secondary school students and teachers. The need to directly engage with these audiences did not drive the selection of research partnerships, however the Centre maintained a close watch on the school curricula and web visitation to ensure that it trended upwards. The interpretation and presentation of information in *Objects Through Time* was targeted to serve the needs of its education audience.[26]

The website belied the Centre's actual size of three full-time heritage staff and one-part-time web designer and programmer. It is hard to compare one website with others. There are websites associated with 'bricks and mortar' cultural institutions, and numerous government and privately funded stand-alone history websites and virtual museums, but the Centre was the only New South Wales Government funded virtual museum created with the stated intention of being a website to fulfil the State-wide public role of a museum including exhibition, community participation and education, collections documentation and conservation. There was, at the time, no known equivalent virtual museum in other Australian States or Territories. Website project visitor statistics tend to be guarded with undue secrecy. Museum buildings with websites attract all kinds of web traffic including people checking hours of opening or wanting collections access and they are not useful benchmarks for the virtual museum. The Centre was definitely a successful NSW Government website. In January 2011, it received more monthly visitors than Arts NSW, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Sydney Buses and Ferries. With an annual marketing budget under \$500 it achieved substantially higher web visitor numbers than the former NSW Labor Government's *It's A Living Thing Our Environment* campaign which featured prime-time television advertising.[27] The Centre won over 20 industry awards including National Trust Heritage Awards for projects with its partners. Notably in 2007, it was shortlisted for the prestigious NSW Premier's History Award for an Audio Visual project and won the national MAPDA award for its website.

Post-Second World War migration and settlement until recently had fallen out of fashion in Australia's museums in favour of contemporary projects about more recent arrivals. To this very day,

Australia's museums have not done significant surveys of migration and settlement histories and heritage legacies. They do not hold substantial collections associated with this migration wave or oral histories to record memories associated with collections and migrant centres, major worksites and other places of significance for migrants.

This is an extraordinary situation. Post-Second World War migration is perhaps the defining chapter of Australia's history in the second half of the 20th century. It shaped our nation's political and religious life, labour market and industry, suburban and regional development and our culture and society.[28]

The Centre focussed much of its work on post-War migration and settlement and its ageing population because this is both a history and heritage at risk of being lost. Buildings can be forgotten, gutted or demolished; or collections lost or dispersed through moving house or even death. This is often before the places and collections are documented and meanings understood with people's memories of migration and settlement

Belongings, curated and co-ordinated by Andrea Fernandes, recorded 150 oral histories of migrants, in people's homes across the State and documented over 400 privately owned photographs and migration collections, mainly through research partnerships. The project had a series of prompt questions to anchor the oral history to collections and places, in a bid to map the migration and tie it to dates and places as well as giving the participant ample opportunity to tell their story.[29] These memories linked to objects, images and places could often be more specific and vivid than traditional oral histories. As a body of work this project uncovered the diverse range of objects associated with post-Second World War migrants arriving in Australia and settling in New South Wales. Far from being a comprehensive survey, it is still perhaps the most substantial typology study of this migration wave led by an Australian public museum.

Web-based typology studies like *Belongings* and *Objects Through Time* present the range and different types of objects that have been surveyed and documented which are associated with an historical theme. They are useful for the comparative analysis of other objects to assess representativeness and rarity in cultural heritage significance criteria. Other good examples of web-based typology studies with on the ground regional collections surveys in New South Wales included the Powerhouse Museum's *Australian Dress Register*, the work of Janis Wilton, *Golden Threads*, for *Australian Museums Online* (later the now defunct and formerly Federally funded *Collections Australia Network*) and the Pioneer Women's Hut at Tumbarumba with its *National Quilt Register* (which was hosted on the NSW Migration Heritage Centre website and has subsequently disappeared from public view due to lack of website maintenance by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences).[30]

Belongings was serving as a model for collection documentation in many other organisations including the Albury LibraryMuseum, Co.As.It. and the Australian National Maritime Museum which now documents privately owned collections as well as memories for its *Welcome Wall*.[31]

NSW Government policy imperatives aside, there was a sound and driving historic rationale to work in particular regions to document post-War migration and settlement in a decentralised work program. After reviewing existing regional histories the Centre targeted the districts and former and current workplaces surrounding the 38 plus migrant accommodation centres across New South

Wales that settled post-War migrants to work in local industries. The migrants often worked under assisted passage schemes and they were given temporary accommodation in exchange for two years work on government projects or in facilities.[32] A notable feature of locally based research, as opposed to ethno-specific histories, is the way it uncovered relationships and interactions between different ethnic groups and local communities who worked and lived side by side - and not always harmoniously. It is recognised that migration waves and working and living conditions changed in one place over time.

Exhibitions in regional museums like *The Bonegilla Story* at the Albury Library Museum, *Half A World Away* at the Orange Regional Gallery and *The Other Side Of The World* at the Tweed River Regional Museum, reflected current scholarship and regional research from *Belongings* Local Government partnerships with the Centre. They drew less romanticised, better evidenced and more diverse and complex exhibition narratives from material culture collections and historical research.

They were completed with community participation through local family networks, publicly advertised workshops and the efforts of volunteer run historical societies. Orange-based journalist and historian, Elisabeth Edward's subsequent book associated with the exhibition *Half A World Away*[33] remains a good example of the benefits of community workshops recording oral histories and documenting collections to write the history of people and a place - in this instance the Orange region. The former migrants were settled through a migrant accommodation centre and many people were employed in the Westinghouse factory. The *Other Side Of The World* [34] was written by regional historian Johanna Kijas with the volunteers of the Tweed River Regional Museum comprising the Historical Societies of Tweed Heads, Murwillumbah and Uki and South Arm. A later Tweed River documentary *Sweet Harvests*[35] documented the memories, photos and other collections of the Indian and Islander communities working in the region's sugar cane fields and banana plantations. It was produced for the partnership by Magali McDuffie and the participants were interviewed by Museum volunteer Mary Lee Connery with a steering committee of keen local Indian and Islander family history researchers.

Many museum exhibitions are researched without a structured or clearly articulated method to identify the significance of places, collections and associated memories. Although the days of food, suitcase, shoe and national costume exhibitions, in the absence of migrant community engagement or historical collections surveys are long gone, many migration exhibitions are still produced on the basis of a curatorial hypothesis and exhibition proposal (often reviewed for marketing and box office potential) rather than from material culture and history - from the ground - or historic evidence up - both tangible and intangible. This can result in the exhibition saying as much about the cultural background of the curator or the working culture of the museum as it does about the community.

This in part explains why so many migration exhibitions are framed around notions of difference and cultural exotica or 'successful migrants' and 'cultural contributions'. These are often outsiders' perspectives. They are not drawn from cultural anthropological understandings from inside communities - of historical research drawn from personal memories of places and material culture collections.

Meredith Walker in her 2015 book *Every Story Counts: Investigating Migration Heritage Wollongong*[36] for the Centre and Illawarra Migration Heritage Project Inc. identified a framework of general historical themes in migration and settlement which are a useful to structure research

and document migration histories and collections. They are also closer to the actual experiences of migrants and better tied to memories of places rather than our constructions of them. They are *Life in the Homeland*, *The Decision To Emigrate*, *Journey to Australia* and (region), *First Accommodation and Next Home*, *Work, Worship, Forming Communities*, *Resources for Migrants*, *Home and Family*, *Adjusting and Identity*, *Celebration and Reflection* and *Revisiting Homelands*.^[37] The themes were drawn from the evidence of migration histories, oral histories, places, collections, memories and conversations with migrants living in the Illawarra about their actual experiences of migration and settlement.

The Centre's work in history required us to clearly establish our topic of research, a date range, geographic region and define the communities to be researched. These were usually brokered by the Centre, but in many instances they were determined by the communities themselves, in particular, well-organised ethnic communities actively researching their own regional history. The Centre did focus thematic studies on particular ethnic groups where they were strongly represented and have played a significant role in shaping particular regions alongside other communities.

Since 2004, the Centre commissioned heritage studies on child migration, in particular Fairbridge Farm, Molong (which resulted in the Random House book by David Hill *The Forgotten Children* and the ABC television documentary *The Long Journey Home* which documented the hidden history of child abuse and later assisted the Australian National Maritime Museum's *On Their Own* touring exhibition) and the Dreadnought boys at Scheyville (North-West Sydney). In addition to regional partnerships (Orange, Albury, Botany Bay, Fairfield, Lake Macquarie, Leeton, Tweed) and collaborations with communities (Sydney Jewish Museum and Co.As.It.) to record oral histories and survey post-Second World War collections and places for *Belongings*, the Centre supported the recording of oral histories with Holocaust Survivors (Sydney Jewish Museum), former Cambodian refugees and migrants (including Pol Pot Survivors in Western Sydney), former Sudanese refugees (Blacktown in Western Sydney), former Vietnamese refugees and migrants (South-West Sydney and Georges River) and diverse groups of former migrants in Canterbury, Bankstown, Liverpool, Fairfield, Hawkesbury (all Western Sydney), Wagga Wagga, Illawarra, New England and the outback town of Broken Hill. When I departed, it commenced studies of the Museums Australia Hunter Chapter with the Newcastle Museum and the Mid-North Coast Chapter with Port Macquarie-Hastings Council. The Centre also published short migration histories of places including migrant accommodation such as Bonegilla, Bathurst, Scheyville and work-sites including the Snowy Scheme, Lighting Ridge, La Perouse and New South Wales's market gardens. It also supported research on Estonians (poultry farmers at Thirlmere in Western Sydney) which resulted in the Powerhouse Museum's *Our New Home* exhibition and Macedonians (Newcastle, Port Kembla and Tweed) which culminated in the Museum's *Ties With Tradition: Macedonian Apron Designs* exhibition with the Port Kembla-based Macedonian Welfare Association. Heritage trails were produced for migration heritage places in Fairfield, Orange, Griffith and Liverpool. The Centre supported an Australian Lebanese Historical Society study of people from Lebanese backgrounds across the State. The Centre's work on previously hidden histories such as First World War internment of Germans in partnership projects in the Riverina, Liverpool, Berrima and Trial Bay resulted in a partnership exhibition entitled *The Enemy At Home* at the Museum of Sydney.^[38] It also advised the Powerhouse Museum on community participation in its *Faith, Fashion, Fusion: Muslim Women's Style In Australia* exhibition which later travelled to the Melbourne Immigration Museum.

Partnership thematic studies, where the Centre and regional museums work together with volunteer-run historical societies and local communities to research history and document collections, were a good 'hands on' way to bring people together, share local knowledge and develop museum and exhibition skills in communities.

The NSW Heritage Office's state-wide survey Regional Histories[39] provided early leads for a number of the Centre's partnerships with Local Government bodies. It noted that the towns of Griffith and Leeton are important in New South Wales' history as major centres of irrigation and horticulture developed by Italian migrants who represent 60% of the local population.[40] A thematic history of the Griffith area was required to provide a basis for volunteers at the Griffith Italian Museum to reconnect local collections with local family memories, places and associated histories. The resulting *Fruits Of Our Labour: The History Of Griffith's Italian Community*[41] thematic study documented how Italian farmers, irrigators and viticulturists helped, along with other cultural groups, transformed the Griffith region into a nationally significant area for growing and processing rice, grapes and citrus and stone fruits. The project was designed to build upon the Council's heritage advisor Peter Kabaila's regional heritage places study, which while comprehensive, was not able to research the Italian history of Griffith in detail with people's stories and collections.[42]

The Council commissioned Sydney-based historian Jennifer Cornwall to write the Stage One thematic history with the Museum's Italian Committee. A local historian was not available but Jennifer Cornwall spent a significant amount of time in Griffith working with the Committee, librarian, Margaret King, and local families. The resulting history served as contextual research for the Griffith Italian Museum to document collections in Stage Two. The resulting statements of cultural heritage significance were written by Peter Kabaila and added to the Centre's *Objects Through Time* web exhibition. Stage Three heritage interpretations included the *Fruits Of Our Labour* book by Jennifer Cornwall which was launched at the Griffith Italian Museum on 31 August 2007 in front of a large community audience, the visiting Heritage Council of NSW and WIN television.

The project supported the Griffith City Council's initiatives to promote Italian history, and its living cultures, through heritage interpretation and cultural tourism. A heritage place interpretation trail[43] was produced by the Council in partnership with the Centre. The places for the trail were suggested by the public in a number of community forums. It was launched in June 2010.

Regional exhibitions and heritage trails, as cultural experiences and attractions, supported tourism and local businesses. They also brought people from diverse backgrounds together as communities in civic spaces. Director of the Orange Regional Gallery, Alan Sisley, was quoted in the media as having over 30,000 visitors a year. On a proportional basis he indicated that would be the same as three million a year for the Art Gallery of NSW in Sydney.[44] The appetite for historical and art exhibitions in New South Wales's regional areas is enormous and the programs have a huge impact. They are well attended and strongly promoted by local print media, regional ABC radio and WIN commercial television.

Regional areas like Griffith, Wagga and Orange are successfully settling and employing new migrants, including refugees. Local museums and galleries play important roles in challenging myths and prejudices and building harmonious communities to welcome and settle new arrivals.

Tracking The Dragon: A History Of The Chinese In The Riverina[45] is a Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga and Centre thematic study that produced a partnership exhibition and an illustrated publication, exploring the public and private lives of Chinese-Australian migrants.

The project was promoted by the Chinese-Australian Historical Society in Sydney and featured numerous objects and photographs held by Riverina locals. Over 11,000 people visited the exhibition. The Wagga Wagga local government area has a population of approximately 60,000 people and the Museum of the Riverina attracted approximately 43,000 visitors a year. Local Riverina residents, New South Wales and interstate visitors and a small percentage of overseas travellers attended the exhibition which supported cultural tourism and associated small businesses (cafes, restaurants, hotels and motels) in Wagga Wagga and the surrounding region.[46]

The exhibition was launched in November 2010 during the Wagga Wagga floods. Rising waters failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the large opening night crowd who braved detours to get there. The exhibition was later toured by the Museum of the Riverina to the Albury Library Museum where additional Murray River content was added and it enjoyed similar success and visitor numbers. The Centre produced an online version of the exhibition for its website, as part of the partnership, for primary and secondary school teacher and student audiences across the State. Education kits are also online.

The Stage One historical research and Stage Two collection surveys of local families, including descendants of Chinese settlers, spanned the Riverina from Wagga Wagga, west to Hillston, Booligal and Balranald, north to Temora, east to Tumut and Adelong and south to Albury on the Murray River from 1850 to the present. *Tracking The Dragon* was researched by Canberra-based historian Dr Barry McGowan and Museum of the Riverina staff over two years. Documentation of the region's Chinese-Australian collections through the Museum of the Riverina and Albury Library Museum, and some 7 local volunteer-run historical societies, is continuing. Orange commissioned a similar study with Dr McGowan in 2015.

Barry McGowan noted that:

Much of the heritage of the Chinese in the Riverina has been lost or at best marginalised...Regional studies allow for a more detailed analysis and description of people's daily lives, in particular the linkages between different families and places, and the European community. They also emphasise the merit in looking beyond the well-worn paths of the gold mining communities, and in so doing helping to further illustrate the rich diversity in the lives of the Chinese people in regional Australia and add to the body of work that is so successfully addressing the many stereotypes and generalisations that still litter the historic landscape.[47]

This exhibition, by the use of the regional thematic study method, the depth of its research within a region, the involvement of Chinese-Australian researchers, families and their descendants, and the associated collections helped rewrite a chapter of history. It counterbalanced the older histories of Chinese-Australians working on gold fields - which are often viewed through racially antagonistic events like the Lambing Flat Riots. In contrast, Chinese-Australians in the Riverina were not considered as a major economic threat - even if they were sometimes viewed with suspicion or curiosity - they were an important and integral part of the local labour force and Riverina community

and helped shape the local economy and society. This is similar to the experiences of new groups of migrants and refugees now settling in the Riverina.

The Centre's work in regional communities illuminated the present. Its body of work helped the Heritage Council of NSW survey post-war migration and settlement places for the State Heritage Register through a thematic study on arriving and settling since 1945 being written by Bruce Pennay and Terry Kass.

In 2012, the NSW Government led by Premier Barry O'Farrell launched a document entitled *Multicultural Advantage 2012-2015* to outline a 'detailed plan of action'. The NSW Government would seek 'to further reap the great social and economic benefits of this asset ...'

[multiculturalism]. It included a strategy for a feasibility study in 2012 that explored the social, cultural and economic value in developing 'multicultural hub/s in a specific location/s' and '**could include a migration museum**' (my emphasis). It stated:

*A 'multicultural hub' would cater to the communal, educational and celebratory needs of culturally diverse communities through the provision of accessible and suitably located infrastructure which could include a **migration museum**, festival space, local institutions, organisations, programs, activities and services on site. A 'multicultural hub' would aim to facilitate the interaction of different peoples and contribute to greater exposure and an increased understanding of diversity.[48]*

The feasibility study of the *Multicultural Advantage 2012-2015* policy again opened the discussion for an immigration museum - which the NSW Migration Heritage Centre's work in partnerships across the State was working toward - and a new means for community interaction of different peoples. It was hoped that it would draw upon the partnerships and substantial volunteer and professional efforts of heritage workers in culturally diverse communities to record regional heritage legacies of collections, places and associated memories of migration and settlement - as represented in the above survey of the Centre's work.

The feasibility study was quite possibly never publicly released. The NSW Migration Heritage Centre, after the departure of two key staff through voluntary redundancies and the abolition of the two positions, was quietly shelved along with any plans for a State Government funded immigration museum for NSW like the successful ones in Victoria and South Australia.

John Petersen

[1] The Centre's interest in Western Sydney and rural New South Wales was drawn from the history of migrants settling in Sydney and regional areas, and a NSW Ministry for the Arts guiding document affirming the importance of regional work entitled *Principles For Regional Programs By State Government Cultural Institutions*, NSW Ministry for the Arts, December 1997

[2] John Petersen 'Though This Be Madness: Heritage Methods For Working In Culturally Diverse Communities' Paul Ashton and Louisa Di Bartolomeo (eds) *Public History Review* Vol 17, 2010

[3] Bob Carr cited in Press Release Notes announcing the NSW Migration Heritage Centre, 3 September 1998

[4] 'New Body To Showcase Migrant Heritage' in *Arts Bulletin*, NSW Ministry for the Arts, August 1998

[5] Ibid

[6] Press Release Notes announcing the NSW Migration Heritage Centre, 3 September 1998

[7] Ibid

[8] Communication with Kylie Winkworth, NSW Migration Heritage Centre, Panel of Advisors and former Powerhouse Museum Trustee

[9] Press Release Notes announcing the NSW Migration Heritage Centre, 3 September 1998

[10] Bob Carr cited in Press Release Notes announcing the NSW Migration Heritage Centre 3 September 1998

[11] Catherine Chung cited in Ibid

[12] Walter Lalich, 'Ethnic Community Capital in Sydney' *ACCORD Report* no. 11, Australian Centre For Cooperative Research and Development, University of Technology Sydney and Charles Sturt University p.1

[13] 'Australia's Migration History', Webber, K. 2005, *Belongings: Post Second World War Migration Memories And Journeys* (Online) <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/belongings/>

[14] *Strategic Plan*, NSW Migration Heritage Centre 2004, (Online) <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategic-plan/> (

[15] Ibid

[16] Ibid

[17] This evolution in thinking is due to a continuity of methodology development with the influence and advice of Kylie Winkworth on the Centre's Panel of Advisors from 2003-12 and the advice of both Kylie Winkworth and Meredith Walker on the NSW Heritage Office's Movable Heritage Project Reference Group 1998-02. John Petersen, *Movable Heritage Principles*, NSW Heritage Office, Parramatta 2000. *Objects In Their Place: An Introduction To Movable Heritage*, NSW Heritage Office, Parramatta 1999. The Carr Government's 1999 cultural policy noted in the museum section that "our policies uphold the principle of communities retaining heritage collections in the places where they have most significance".

[18] Meredith Walker and Peter Marquis-Kylie *The Illustrated Burra Charter: Good Practices For Heritage Places*, Australia ICOMOS Inc., Sydney 2004

[19] Kylie Winkworth and Roslyn Russell *Significance 2*, Heritage Collections Council, Canberra 2009

[20] Sharon Sullivan and Mike Pearson, *Looking After Heritage Places: The Basics Of Heritage Planning For Managers, Landowners And Administrators*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton 1995

[21] Meredith Walker and Kylie Winkworth, *Places, Objects And People: Retaining Significant Relationships – A Discussion Paper*, Australian Heritage Commission and Museums Australia, Canberra 1995

[22] Jennifer Barrett and John Petersen, 2007, *The Museum, Democracy and Domesticity: Who's In Whose Web*, paper presented to Museums Australia National Conference (Online)
<http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au>

Jennifer Barrett *Museums And The Public Sphere*, Blackwell Publishing, West Sussex 2011

[23] Kylie Winkworth and Roslyn Russell *Significance 2*, Heritage Collections Council, Canberra 2009

[24] *Belongings* (Online) <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/belongings/> and *Objects Through Time* (Online) <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/objects-through-time/>

[25] Communication with Annette Loudon, Website Coordinator, NSW Migration Heritage Centre

[26] An analysis of this exhibition is in Stephen Thompson 'Objects Through Time: Creating And Interpreting An Online Virtual Collection' *Interesting Times: New Roles For Collections: Conference Papers*, Museums Australia National Conference 2010

[27] NSW Government Rank Data, January 2011. In February and March 2012, the Centre's web traffic increased by 38% over the same months in 2011. The Centre achieved 450,000 unique visitors and 4 million hits each year.

[28] John Petersen 'Collecting Memories' in Bruce Pennay *Sharing Bonegilla Stories* Albury Library Museum 2012 p72-73

[29] Andrea Fernandes , 2008, *Belongings: Post-World War 2 Migration Memories And Journeys*, Paper presented to Moving Cultures, Shifting Identities Conference, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia (Online) www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/belongings/aboutbelongings/belongings-paper/

Janis Wilton, 'Belongings: Oral History, Objects And An Online Exhibition', *Public History Review* Vol 16 (2009) pp1-19

[30] Australian Dress Register (Pre 1945), Powerhouse Museum (Online)
<http://www.australiandressregister.org/>

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Pioneer Women's Hut, *National Quilt Register (Early 19th Century to 1965)*, Australian Museums Online launched 20 May 2001 but drawing together work from 1995 onwards (Online)
<http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/nqr/index.php/>

[31] Communication with Dana Fletcher, Australian National Maritime Museum

[32] Mary Hutchinson has described the Commonwealth Government's assisted passage schemes and provided insight into the administration of migrant centres. The migrants were housed in

temporary and basic accommodation provided by the government until they could afford their own. After two years, rent was paid by those able to find private employment. Mary Hutchinson, 'Accommodating Strangers: Commonwealth Government Records Of Bonegilla And Other Migrant Accommodation Centres' in *Public History Review* Vol 11 (2004) pp 63-79

[33] Elisabeth Edwards, *Half A World Away: Postwar Migration To The Orange District 1948-1965* Orange City Council 2007

[34] Johanna Kijas and Volunteers of the Tweed River Regional Museum *The Other Side Of The World: International Migration To The Tweed 1940s To 1960s* Tweed Shire Council 2007

[35] Magali McDuffie *Sweet Harvests* DVD Pandion Pictures and Tweed River Regional Museum 2011

[36] Meredith Walker, *Every Story Counts: Investigating Migration Heritage Wollongong* Illawarra Migration Heritage Project Inc with Wollongong University, 2015

[37] Ibid

[38] Details of the partnerships, publications, exhibitions and web exhibitions are on the Centre's website and all publications are lodged in the Library of the Powerhouse Museum. NSW Migration Heritage Centre (Online) www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au More details about the Centre's projects are in John Petersen 'Migration Heritage Centre, State of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia' in L. Prencipe (ed) *Migration Museums, Centre For Migration Studies*, Rome N167 July-September 2007

[39] *Regional Histories: Regional Histories Of New South Wales*, NSW Heritage Office and Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 1996

[40] Ibid pp 137-139

[41] Jennifer Cornwall *Fruits Of Our Labour: The History Of Griffith's Italian Community* Griffith City Council 2007

[42] Peter Kabaila *Griffith Heritage* Pirion Publishing, Canberra 2007

[43] *Griffith Italian Heritage Trail* (Online)

<http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/publications/griffith-italian-heritage/> [44] Alan Sisley quoted in *Orange News Now* 13 October 2011

[45] Barry McGowan *Tracking The Dragon: A History Of The Chinese In The Riverina* Museum of the Riverina 2010

[46] Communication with Madeline Scully, Former Director, Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

[47] Barry McGowan, 'Shoulder Yokes And Mooncakes: The Chinese Diaspora In The Riverina District of New South Wales, Australia, 1850 To The Present', *Historic Environment Australia ICOMOS*, Vol 24 (2012) p33

[48] *Multicultural Advantage 2012-2015*, NSW Government Citizen And Communities Portfolio, Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW, 2012 p 27