INQUIRY INTO FOLLOW UP OF AUDITOR-GENERAL'S PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORTS OCTOBER 2009 TO SEPTEMBER 2010

Organisation: NSW Audit Office

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Theme:

Summary

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THE AUDIT OFFICE
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Mr J O'Dea
Chair
Public Accounts Committee
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

S September 2011

Dear Mr O'Dea

Examination of Auditor-General's Performance Audit Report
Knowing the Collections - Australian Museum

We have reviewed the submission provided by the Australian Museum concerning the recommendations in the above performance audit report.

Following tabling of the report, we were pleased that the Museum broadly accepted our recommendations - with one recommendation being accepted in part.

The Museum's submission indicates that it is making progress in implementing the recommendations.

Please find attached our comments on the progress reported in relation to each recommendation in our original report. We have not substantiated the submission.

In some instances, more information would be helpful to better understand what has been done to address our recommendations.

I am happy to provide any further assistance the Committee may need in completing its examination.

Yours sincerely

Peter Achterstraat
Auditor-General

Attachment

Knowing the Collections - Australian Museum

Recommendation	Reported Actions	Comment
1. The Museum needs to grade or otherwise prioritise its collections in terms of their use and importance, in crder to better protect the collections and improve its use of resources. It needs to adopt criteria for this purpose by March 2011.	A Canadian model has been selected. Workshops have been held to develop criteria. The new system has been established in the collections management database system.	It would be interesting to understand the basic elements of the new system. It would be helpful to know the Museum's program for applying the new grading system to its existing collections.
2. The Museum needs to tighten inventory control by December 2011 to reflect differing levels of collection risk by:		
a. establishing an independent oversight and reporting role	No action reported.	This is a requirement of the *State Records Act 1998*. We identified specific examples of such roles at National Museums Scotland, Museum Victoria, Australian National Insect Collection, and Powerhouse Museum.
b. clearly defining the control and checking requirements of objects in each collection	Inventory checking requirements have been revised based on risk and the criteria developed above.	
c. setting specific standards for timeliness and cataloguing content	Minimum requirements for registration are being defined according to risk and importance. Work to digitise existing records would need additional funding.	It appears that the Museum has no plans to set specific standards for timeliness and cataloguing content for its collections.
d. identifying the location of all objects within the collections, pin-pointing high risk objects	High risk objects have been identified and location data is being entered in the database.	It would be helpful to learn of the Museum's plans for identifying the location of the remaining items or groups of items in the collections.
e. evaluating ways of making inventory checking more efficient	The Museum is piloting a system developed at Museum Victoria	
f. conducting a baseline inventory to serve as a basis for future inventory control	No action on beyond current checks.	Without this, the Museum cannot tell if items now reported as unable to be located were lost recently, or at any time over the last 140 years. Has it considered establishing a baseline inventory for its priority items?

Recommendation	Reported Actions	Comment
3. The Museum needs to develop by September 2011 specific management policy and plans for retrospective documentation and digitisation including:		
a. its understanding of the backlogs it has	Priorities have been identified in a *Digital Asset Management* proposal.	It would be helpful to understand the nature and extent of the backlog faced by the Museum.
b. its timescales for reducing the backlogs	Some priority projects have been undertaken using internal resources.	It would be helpful to learn of the Museum's envisaged timescales for reducing the overall backlogs.
c. levels of resources allocated to the task	A funding proposal was developed, but the outcome is unknown.	It would be helpful to learn more about the funding proposal.
d. the number of objects/records to be addressed		It would be helpful to understand the extent of the current digitisation proposals.
e. the standard of documentation required		As above.
f. progress reviews on a regular basis.	Reporting to the Australian Museum Trust will be part of a plan, which is being developed..	It would be helpful to gain some understanding of the nature and extent of the plan.