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Parliament of New South Wales
Parliament House, Macquarie Street Sydney
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10 Sept 2016

Dear Emma,

Museums & Galleries Inquiry: Grace Cochrane:

Page 61: Below are some notes that relate to the documentation of part of what I had to say at the Hearing on Tuesday 6 September.
This response refers to Mr David Shoebridge's question at the top of the page.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Were there ever examples that you are aware of where the museum had to reject an exhibition or refuse to collaborate with somebody because the space was inadequate or it could not be accommodated?

What I have tried to say is too long to be coherent, and is badly explained at the beginning. I don't think it is helpful to the committee the way it is. Is it at all possible to make the following changes?

As it is now: places for correction underlined

Dr COCHRANE: One of the observations that I would like to make about whether you can put on exhibitions or something could be taken and some that could not are the ones that have not actually been able to remain because a museum like that, in most of our views, needs some collection-based exhibitions—that might change—that show science and technology, decorative arts and design, social history and so on and permanent collection exhibitions telling interesting stories, fascinating stories, not just display storage the way it used to be and also have temporary exhibition spaces.

Suggested changes: amendments in red

Dr COCHRANE: One of the observations that I would like to make about whether or not you can put on exhibitions, where some could be taken and some could not, is to do with the ones that have not actually been able to remain. Because a museum like that, in most of our views, needs some collection-based exhibitions—that might change—that show science and technology, decorative arts and design, social history and so on, in permanent collection exhibitions telling interesting stories, fascinating stories, not just display storage the way it used to be—and also have temporary exhibition spaces.

Yours sincerely,

Grace Cochrane AM

behaviour because the collection does not belong to the Government; it belongs to the people of New South Wales.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Were there ever examples that you are aware of where the museum had to reject an exhibition or refuse to collaborate with somebody because the space was inadequate or it could not be accommodated?

Ms SANDERS: No.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Was that ever the case?

Ms SANDERS: There might have been a reason to reject it because of clashes in timetables but if I think back to the variety of exhibitions, some high-tech, some low-tech, one of the most successful exhibitions that the museum ever mounted was the five Faberge eggs that belong to the Romanov family. It was very simple. Someone said yesterday that objects in glass cases have had their day and that you need lots of high-tech wizardry, which of course the Powerhouse can accommodate but in the end the museum is about the original, authentic object.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And it is flexible enough to have those small intimate spaces?

Ms SANDERS: Flexible, absolutely.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And also the large display spaces.

Ms SANDERS: Yes. There was another exhibition called Knights from Imperial Austria where you walked into that front gallery and in fact the people from the collection in Austria said it had never been presented better. I do not know if members of the Committee are familiar with the main galleria space but as you walked through this exhibition, which was of the Arms and Armour collection from the major Austrian collection, they were against a sky. It was the most vivid and graphic representation of that exhibition there ever could be. A museum which can display locomotives such as the beam engine, which is one of the most important artefacts in the world, hang Catalinas such that instead of looking—and I apologise to my colleague Dr Sharp because he was director of the science museum, but there their planes are hanging about to dive into a column—you walk into that view of the boiler hall, it is a flight. It is a flight of aviation.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It does not feel like a disaster waiting to happen?

Ms SANDERS: Yes, it is the most inspiring representation from the Bleriot through to the Royal Flying Doctor Service through to the Catalina.

The CHAIR: Not to mention Dick Smith's helicopter

Ms SANDERS: Yes.

Dr COCHRANE: One of the observations that I would like to make about whether you can put on exhibitions or something could be taken and some that could not are the ones that have not actually been able to remain because a museum like that, in most of our views, needs some collection-based exhibitions—that might change—that show science and technology, decorative arts and design, social history and so on and permanent collection exhibitions telling interesting stories, fascinating stories, not just display storage the way it used to be and also have temporary exhibition spaces.

In the last 10 years there has been a reduction of funding for programs. One of the repercussions has been, as I mentioned before, halving of staff numbers. Another has been the reduction of funding that makes it more difficult to actually put exhibitions on or carry out programs with them. There have been some amazing exhibitions and colleagues behind me have done that, but one of the repercussions was that the exhibition program has changed so that some permanent collection-based exhibitions came out in favour of temporary exhibitions that would bring in finance. I think that has been very compromising to the reputation of the museum. It is famous for its collection. It is also famous for the way it presents things. Of course it brings in exhibitions and of course it sends them out but it has been suffering from that reduction in program funding, wouldn't you say?

Ms SANDERS: It is a challenge.

Dr COCHRANE: It is definitely a challenge. One of the things that was recognised by a previous director was that the museum needed to expand its space adjacent somewhere but definitely in the city linked to the museum just so that there could be the possibility for those incoming exhibitions as well as collection-based exhibitions. I do not think the solution is to separate bits of the collection and dump them out in other places because they are an integral part of the whole and it needs to be mixed and matched in different ways from different times but that reduction in funding has been hugely detrimental to this museum, I know also to the

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