

Upper House Committees
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Cc: Museums@parliament.nsw.gov.au

27 August 2020

Dear

I write in response to your recent email, following the appearance of ICOM Australia representative, Ms Cherie McNair before the Select Committee on the Government's management of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects in New South Wales on 29 July 2020.

Please find attached our requested transcript corrections and answers to the following questions on notice:

- A list of Institutions located in areas where RISK is a factor in attracting loans/exhibitions.
- A list of multi campus institutions with (or without) connecting transportation services offered by the institution.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mathew Trinca AM
ICOM Australia Chair

Q1. Are there other examples of institutions you can think of where there are those kinds of risks and it has an impact on their ability to attract exhibitions or the loan of items?

There is a National Standard in Australia for Museums. Which is endorsed by the Council of Australian Museum Directors (CAMD). This Standard refers to ICOM's code of ethics and includes a standard for a Museum building facility (2016, p.35-36

http://www.magsq.com.au/dbase_upl/NSFAMG_v1.5_2016.pdf)

Standard A4.3 The museum conserves, maintains, protects and documents its assets

Benchmark A4.3.1 The museum premises provide a suitable and safe environment for all of the museum's operations, including the storage and display of the collection. Buildings should be:

- Solid and stable
- Dry
- Well ventilated
- Insect and vermin proof.

These are expectations for all loan exhibitions. Facility requirements are articulated more specifically in Exhibition Loan Agreements. ICOM UK has developed a standard loan agreement https://uk.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Template_International_Touring_Agreement_WEB.pdf. This specifies humidity and temperature ranges and the responsibilities of receiving venues in regards to their sites (p. 55).

The conditions can be even more stringent, for example, in 2000 the Powerhouse Museum exhibited a highly significant collection of drawings and notes by Leonardo Da Vinci, called the Codex Leicester. This was on loan from Bill Gates as part of the Cultural Olympiad. Each cabinet was fitted with a humidity and temperature-recording device. The loan agreement had extremely tight parameters specifying minimal change in humidity of +/- 2% fluctuations and temperature control measures that required additional air controls. The readings were downloaded daily and reported to the lender (Bill Gates) who had the rights to remove the valuable artifacts should the fluctuations exceed those specified in the contract.

Whilst possibly considered a more 'popular' style of exhibition, similarly specific requirements were specified by The Smithsonian Museum for Star Wars: Magic of Myth exhibition which opened in 2002 to record numbers of visitors.

Examples of where exhibitions have been closed or not made available due to poorly located facilities and where major damage impacted insurance and the potential to hold loan exhibitions include:

- November 2019 the Venice Biennale Exhibition was closed due to flooding.

- June 2018 the Louvre, Musee D'Orsay and many other Museums in Paris were closed due to flooding. The damage and other costs were over 1 billion Euros.
- February 2016 major museums in Europe, including the Jorvik Viking Centre were closed due to flooding.

Q2. A list of multi-campus institutions with (or without) connecting transportation services offered by institution.

There are a number of international examples that ICOM can provide in terms of comparative models for the Powerhouse administration to look at when they are trying to connect them. There are a number of very successful international models with multi-campus activity:

Sydney Living Museums connects its 12 sites through its publications, membership strategy, events and cultural calendar series of programs. This has been an effective method for decentering the Museum and enabling each site to have a distinctive profile. The large event held each year called Sydney Open offers a program to connect across sites over a weekend, with night and day events and opening times.

The Natural History Museum connects its Wandsworth, Tring and South Kensington sites through on-line internal communications, and on-line programming which is accessible to the public. They have been using the Covid lockdown to strengthen their on-line connections and develop connected programming across the sites.