

**Submission
No 38**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

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MAAS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

SUBMISSION TO NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Overview and recent successes

The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) commands a unique place at the intersection of science, technology, design and the arts. Established as part of the 19th century agenda for the advancement of knowledge and social reform, following the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879, MAAS remains as relevant and as resonant in its role today as it was then.

From its inception, the Museum has experienced multiple variations of its name, as well as occupying an assortment of sites. Today, MAAS includes the Powerhouse Museum, the Sydney Observatory and the Museums Discovery Centre.

The Museum's critical focus on creativity, ideas and innovation as well as engagement with STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) through its core disciplines, collections, programs and research has seen the Museum rapidly establishing a reputation in the delivery of effective and meaningful public engagement initiatives that sit at the nexus of art and science.

The Museum is acknowledged internationally for the calibre of its collection, scholarship and exhibitions. The collection broadly spans applied arts and science disciplines and provides a comprehensive insight into our rich and diverse country. There is estimated to be well over 500,000 separate items in the Museum's collection, which is in high demand with active regional, national and international loan and touring programs.

Over the past two and a half years the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences has experienced unprecedented growth and change. Fundamental to driving this change has been the alignment of vision and direction. In 2014-15 a new organisation structure aligned staff to the MAAS *2020 Vision*. This has enabled the Museum to invest an additional \$5 million annually in exhibitions, as well as public and educational programs including the revitalisation of its gallery spaces, visitor experience and engagement and increased access to its collections both physically and digitally. This is in line with the NSW Premier's State Priority to increase visitation to cultural institutions by 15% by 2019.

In 2015/16, the Museum achieved:

- A 30% year on year increase in MAAS visitation to 730,000 visits
- An 11% year on year increase in education visits to the Powerhouse Museum and the Sydney Observatory
- Over 65,000 education visits including over 3,000 students taught by video conference across Australia
- A 35% year on year increase in visitation to the Powerhouse Museum with nearly 570,000 visits
- A 16% year on year increase in visitation to Sydney Observatory, with over 160,000 visits
- Nearly 39,000 physical visits on a single weekend at both venues to celebrate free kids admission
- More than three and a half million website visits (3,616,271)
- Over 60,000 Facebook likes (60,637), and

- Over 170,000 e-news subscribers (173,034).

The Museums Discovery Centre remained closed for refurbishments throughout the fiscal year, set to re-open in September 2016.

Impact of efficiency dividend on commercial and philanthropic activities

The Efficiency Dividend is applied to the Museum's total operating expenditure and not limited to the value of the recurrent grant provided from Government. The Trust welcomes the opportunity to discuss with Government strategies to further enable commercial and philanthropic activities.

Exhibition overview

Forward Exhibition Program

The Museum supports a long term program of temporary exhibitions, long term gallery renewal, touring exhibitions, visible collection storage projects, and presents installations developed through dynamic collaborations with a number of leading creatives.

A commitment to ensuring greater public access to the Museum's rich collection is demonstrated through the *Recollect – Visible Collection Storage* series and the ongoing upgrades to long term galleries. To compliment this offer the Museum develops and presents a broad program of cross discipline exhibitions showcasing the depth and diversity of the collection.

The forthcoming exhibition program also features collaborations with significant international partners including the London Science Museum (UK), Museum of Art and Design (USA), The British Museum (UK), The Wellcome Collection (UK), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (USA), and the Victoria and Albert Museum (UK), amongst others.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) Protocol

MAAS recognises and shares the value and importance of preserving and strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements. The Museum signed a commitment to develop its inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan in 2015 and this is now in final stages of approval and implementation.

The Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) Protocol has been prepared in association with Terri Janke and Company and aligns with the RAP to develop staff awareness and understanding of the obligation to respectfully deal with Indigenous Cultural Material. The Protocol is a guide in acceptable use and acquisition of Indigenous Cultural Material, encouraging best practice.

Education and research

Placing a strong emphasis on learning and creativity, the Museum provides a suite of educator led, self-directed, video conference and professional development programs to over 65,000 students and their educators each year. Through the disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and the Arts, learn-by-making workshops are delivered in *Thinkspace*, the digital learning centre, and the wider Museum. Guided by experts, learning experiences are engaging, interactive and 100% hands-on.

In addition to education programs the Museum is committed to advancing knowledge through research. The evolving collection is a key part of the way scholarly inquiry is inspired and fostered. MAAS research focuses on the following areas: Fashion; Innovation in the areas of design, engineering, science, technology, & creativity; STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) in the areas of learning, education and public understanding; digitisation and digital preservation; conservation; and museology.

MAAS is involved in funded research projects with different partners in line with its Research Strategy and overall vision. There are current partnerships with universities on a variety of ARC research projects spanning education, conservation and visitor engagement.

Outreach

Beyond its three physical sites, MAAS provides access to the collection, expertise and programs locally, nationally and internationally. These activities include touring exhibitions, lectures, workshops, site visits, internships, collection loans and collaborations. In 2014-15 the touring exhibitions reached more than 95,000 visitors across Australia, and in 2015 over 1.8M people accessed MAAS Collection items lent out globally.

Support for the Museum sector within Regional NSW saw 216 events, engaged 63 organisations from 37 regional NSW locations and 10 Western Sydney organisations. Digital engagement is critical to reaching beyond museum walls, with over 7M (growing at 12%) visitors to MAAS websites and over 1.8M accessing online collections (42% of those are international). The award winning MAAS video conferencing programs reached more than 10,000 primary, secondary and tertiary students across Australia, USA, and South Korea over the past 24 months.

Partnerships & collaborations

The Museum has seen significant advancement of its partnerships program over the past 18 months through strategic partnerships aligned with the Museum's eight core disciplines.

- In 2015-16, approximately \$3 million in development income and contra was raised to support innovative exhibitions, public programs, collection acquisitions and school education programs.
- Key partners are often recruited for their shared interest in Museum disciplines, including organisations like Microsoft, MathWorks and Jaycar Electronics (for the Museum STEAM initiatives) and Target, Garde Robe, Westfield and Miele (for the Museum's Centre for Fashion initiatives) while other partners are targeted for ongoing support of Museum activities and hospitality offerings like QT Hotels and Tamburlaine Organic Wines .
- The MAAS Centre for Fashion forged strategic partnerships with the Australian Fashion Chamber (AFC) and IMG Fashion Week to become the latter's latest cultural offering. The upcoming launch of the MAAS Centre for Innovation in STEAM will have similar alignments with a Major Principal Partner and a Major Tertiary Partner already confirmed.
- Throughout the year, the Museum also produces and engages partners in signature public events like the Sydney Science Festival and the Sydney Design Festival where partners contribute resources, staff and venue spaces to enhance the festivals through a diverse range of public programs, talks and workshops for Museum audiences.

- MAAS has a three year agreement with Penrith Regional Art Gallery and Lewers Bequest to jointly develop and present exhibitions and programs. The first collaborative exhibition, showcasing the MAAS collection, opens in September 2016. MAAS is exploring similar collaborations with the Campbelltown Arts Centre.
- MAAS has collaborated with the Australian Museum and Sydney Living Museums on the development of programs and engagement linked to the opening of the Museums Discovery Centre collection stores at Castle Hill, from September 2016.
- MAAS collaborates and partners on a regular basis with the State Cultural Institutions as well as the State Significant Organisations and Sydney Living Museum including but not limited to exhibitions and programs, loans, research, marketing and outreach activities.

Contribution to the visitor economy, social cohesion

The Museum's exhibitions and programs have a vital role to play in contributing to the strategic ambitions of the NSW Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan (VEIAP) and night-time economy of Sydney.

Working closely with Destination NSW the Museum has delivered the following exclusive and world premiere exhibitions:

- *Art of the Brick: DC Comics*
- *Collette Dinnigan: Unlaced*
- *Isabella Blow: A Fashionable Life*
- *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives*

The Museum's MAASive Lates program includes free after –hours events, playing a part in the night time economy of NSW.

MAAS Parramatta Project

Underpinned by the Museum's ethos and mission, the Trust recognises the unique opportunity presented by the proposed relocation of the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta.

The Trust is committed to the development and delivery of a state of the art, iconic, world class cultural institution that is acknowledged and respected internationally as Australia's leading museum of applied arts and sciences and that provides audiences with the best quality physical and digital experiences as well as optimum access to the Museum's collections through personalisation, innovation, technology, knowledge sharing and exchange platforms.

Sydney Observatory

Built in 1858, Sydney Observatory is one of the most significant sites in the nation's scientific history. It is recognised as an item of 'state significance' by the New South Wales Government and is heritage listed. Today the Observatory is a Museum and public observatory with an important role in astronomy education and public telescope viewing.

With the expansion and rapid development of Millers Point and Barangaroo, Sydney Observatory has an opportunity to position itself as the heart of the district and take advantage of the major growth in visitors, employees and residents in the area.

The Museum is currently developing a masterplan focussed on revitalising the public gallery spaces and visitor experience.

Museums Discovery Centre (Castle Hill)

The Museums Discovery Centre (MDC) opens in September 2016 at Castle Hill, a collaboration led by MAAS, co-operating with Australian Museum and Sydney Living Museums. The result of a \$34m NSW Government investment, the MDC provides unprecedented public access as well as safe and secure care for these three NSW State collections. New displays and programs target visitors from Northwest Sydney and enhance school visits and educational opportunities.

This facility provides a fundamentally different experience to that available at each of the collaborating museum's flagship venues, with the focus on allowing public insight into the behind the scenes workings of a museum and access to the collection.