

**Submission
No 42**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Organisation: Museums Galleries Australia

Date received: 14 August 2016

NSW PARLIAMENT – STANDING COMMITTEE 4
INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

14 August 2016

SUBMISSION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MA: Museums Galleries Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to this Inquiry. The submission on the following pages addresses each Term of Reference. We have made 12 recommendations.

The key points are:

- NSW needs a more coherent and equitable policy framework and implementation programs for the museums and galleries sector
 - this must include better recognition of and support for regional and community museums and galleries
 - this should also draw on the increasing understanding of the value of the cultural sector to society and the economy, and, amongst other measures, provide adequate budget appropriations to state museums and galleries to ensure sustainability, including the removal of the grossly inefficient “efficiency dividend”
- NSW needs to develop and fund a comprehensive plan for digital access to collections that links with and contributes to the emerging national framework and standards
- The proposed relocation of the Powerhouse Museum from Ultimo to Parramatta requires much further consideration as part of a coherent long-term plan for museum and gallery development throughout Sydney and regional NSW
 - There is widespread concern about the process to date
 - The move should be put on hold while greater consultation and investigation of options take place – this is to provide the best solutions for both the people of Western Sydney and the Powerhouse Museum in its role as a leading state and international institution
 - If the relocation proceeds, the NSW government must commit adequate relocation, capital development and ongoing operational funds to enable an exemplary 21st Century cultural facility to thrive

14 August 2016

Hon Robert Borsak MLC
Committee Chair
General Purpose Standing Committee No.4
Parliament House
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Borsak

Re: Inquiry into museums and galleries

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission. We will address the specific Terms of Reference in turn, but first will outline who we are and what we do, and stress the importance of the cultural sector.

Who we are

MA: Museums Galleries Australia is the national association and peak advocacy body representing museums and galleries. We encompass a wide and diverse range of national, state, regional and community museums, galleries, historic sites, botanic and zoological gardens, research centres, Indigenous cultural centres, and Keeping Places across Australia. All of our members are, however, linked by a shared dedication to culture, the arts, movable cultural heritage and communities, and the knowledge that Australian cultural life is a dynamic ecosystem that generates creativity and innovation and contributes to the social and economic wellbeing of the country. Attachment A provides a short profile of the organisation and a snapshot of the diverse range of member institutions.

MA is also a service and professional development organisation. We seek to enhance the value of Australia's collections, public programs and stories by sharing knowledge, developing skills, inspiring innovation and providing leadership and the authoritative voice in protecting and promoting our arts and cultural heritage.

We have branches in every state and territory, and support professional national networks of expertise. The NSW Branch is one of the largest, with 355 members in total, comprising 195 organisations (ranging from national to remote, volunteer-run institutions) and 160 individuals, both professional and volunteer. The branch has seven chapters throughout rural and regional NSW.

This submission draws both on the lived experience of museums and galleries throughout NSW, and state, national and international research, expertise and standards.

Our most recent achievements

- In 2015, MA initiated the first ever collaboration of GLAM Peak (galleries, museums, libraries and archives' peak bodies) that is focusing on an integrated approach to expanding Australia's digital access to collections and meeting the 21st century's requirements for a knowledge economy. Year one of a project to develop a national framework and case-study based toolkit is currently underway.

- MA has provided leadership training for practically all the directors of museums and galleries in Australia and New Zealand through the internationally recognised Museum Leadership Program. Supported since its inception by the Gordon Darling Foundation, the 7th program was delivered in Sydney at the end of last year.
- MA (NSW) builds on a history of museum professional association activity that extends back to the 1930s.
- Most recently, MA (NSW) successfully delivered the national museums and galleries conference in 2015, along with a number of symposia focused on state issues, submissions to government enquiries and chapter events.

The cultural sector

The cultural sector is the parallel source of knowledge to the formal education system and museums and galleries, as core parts of this sector, are hugely trusted sources of information, learning and engagement for people of all ages. (Horne, Marsden and Painter, 1993) Furthermore, they help foster the creative industries which are one of the engine houses of the economy. (Darren Henley, *The Arts Dividend: Why investment in culture pays*, 2016)

Museums and galleries are also places where Indigenous and settler Australians meet and learn about each other, and are key resources for achieving reconciliation. The social capital outcomes of investing in these places will be invaluable.

The health of the sector should therefore be a prime concern of government as well as the community.

The Terms of Reference

MA, representing our broad spectrum of member organisations, has a number of observations and recommendations. In particular, the recommendations focus on the improvements and opportunities offered through this Inquiry.

TOR a) *NSW government policy, funding and support for museums and galleries, museum and gallery buildings and heritage collections, including volunteer managed museums and museums managed by councils*

Key point/s

- There is a need for a more coherent and equitable cultural strategy for NSW that guides and prioritises both capital and capability investment in all levels of cultural activity.
- The current policy framework is patchy and the associated resourcing and support is inadequate most significantly for volunteer and council-managed museums and galleries – many of which feel isolated, vulnerable and lacking the ability, knowledge or skills to effectively carry out organisational sustainability strategies.
 - There are more than 300 volunteer managed community museums and historical societies, caring for irreplaceable heritage collections, who receive little or no recognition or access to funding and support from either state or local government.
- The *Create in NSW* policy and its related Arts & Cultural Development funding program (ACDP) is focused mostly about audience engagement – a good focus, but the sector also needs support for skills development and facilities.
- The intermittent and low level of Commonwealth, state and local support and interest in the museum and gallery sector is reflected in both the lack of strategic planning for the sector and in the ongoing poverty and struggle of many regional and local community museums, galleries and keeping places.
 - 21 museum professional positions have been lost from regional NSW in the last fifteen years. These had been subsidised by Arts NSW funding but were not

maintained after the 50% salary subsidy ran out, or were abolished in subsequent years.

- Access to collection advice is poor, including irregular and insufficient support and sharing of expertise from the large state cultural institutions with the regional, remote and community museums and galleries. We note this type of support is not a mandated requirement and not purpose-funded – the state institutions, most notably the MAAS, strive to provide what little they can.
 - This situation needs to change and there are models that could be adapted.
- Museums and Galleries NSW should also be supported to deliver an expanded funding and advisory service for regional, remote and community museums – in a range of ways: through supporting advisors, networks, specific collections care programs and training.
 - Most obviously, MA's network of chapters is an existing structure that could be used and strengthened to help provide advice and foster cost-effective collaborations.
 - This would help deliver a vertically integrated system of cultural provision in the state.
- There are opportunities to make strategic state investments in, for example, digital access to the full range of collections large and small, and in stepping up Indigenous participation and representation in museum exhibitions and museum practice. A coherent investment program could be a significant positive influence on the long-term development of the broad museums and galleries sector.

Recommendation/s

1. Arts NSW to expand the current framework to include a specific museums program

- This program should have structured long term goals and significant implementation funding
- It should recognise the very wide range of museums and galleries and provide different types of museum development funding, advice and support which respond to the differing levels of capability and need
- Collaboration across the regions using a hub and spoke model should be strongly supported – there are currently the seven MA chapters which could be strengthened to deliver better service
- M&GNSW should be further supported to direct and shape the complementary streams of activity

2. Arts NSW to investigate other vertically integrated models of longer term and institutional support, for example within NSW there are the obligations and support services mandated under legislation to be provided by the State Library of NSW to regional and local libraries.

TOR b) *Potential funding impacts on museums and galleries affected by council amalgamations*

Key point/s

- While it is too early to tell exactly how museums and galleries will be impacted, it is clear that there are both opportunities and threats for these organisations, their staff and their communities
 - While economies of scale and larger funding bases for councils offer possibilities for expanded cultural services, there are risks that regional and community distinctiveness as expressed in their local museums and galleries, could disappear either through the retention or expansion of only one institution, or the homogenisation of many organisations into one council management structure

- If amalgamated councils decide to only support cultural facilities already receiving support (in many areas of NSW this is strongly skewed towards art galleries with heritage overlooked), this will also reduce the diversity of cultural provision that is possible.
- Furthermore, new councils may only regard council-owned or funded museums and galleries as part of their responsibilities and not in-kind and other support for the broader cultural ecosystem of volunteer and community-run organisations
- A key threat also is the loss of informal networks with local government that are often the only thing that sustains volunteer museums – in the absence of any financial arrangements.
- On the positive side, amalgamation can allow museums and galleries to help a new council with community vision, identity and planning.
- There are lessons from the experiences in both Queensland and Victoria:
 - In Victoria, while many collections and jobs vanished in the amalgamations of the mid-late 1990s, some new, larger councils took expanded views of their region and developed new or larger museums and galleries to showcase regional arts and heritage and boost tourism, for example, the upgrading of the old Museum of Lilydale to the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum
 - In Queensland, local galleries and museums receive no state government operational funding, and almost all support comes therefore from local government. The 2012 local government elections saw a large proportion of Queensland councils with new mayors and first-time councillors with no knowledge of the sector. There was lack of direction and support and many cultural organisations had to start again in demonstrating their value.
- A key way forward must be open discussion in the affected council areas of needs and objectives **now**, and support for more collaboration with different groups throughout the larger council areas, including integrated cultural planning across all the departments of council.

Further sources of information

Local Government Amalgamations in Queensland: Tips for Surviving and Thriving, M&GQLD magazine Artery December 2007

Recommendation/s

3. Communities and councils to instigate collaborative cultural plans for their regions – this should be funded by the NSW government as part of their innovation or other specific new allocations to enable the amalgamations to proceed smoothly and with better outcomes.

TOR c) *Opportunities to revitalise the structure, reach, and impact of museums and galleries, and their research and collecting priorities*

Key point/s

- The strength and impact of museums and galleries in NSW is variable – there is much superb work at every level, however most institutions appear to be operating within the state’s twentieth century operational framework and lack of overarching strategy and with a mismatch of funding to requirements.
- As advised above, NSW needs a new museum and gallery strategic framework.
 - This should be evidence-based and developed collaboratively
 - It must support collaboration and shared learning between all sizes and types of institutions
 - It should encourage council investment

- It must draw on current understanding of the role of the creative industries
 - It must enable more digital discoverability and access to collections
 - It should link with national strategies, for example the GLAM Peak Digital Access Framework and Standards project
- A case study of a strategic state-funded and network delivered multi-year project is the Victorian Collections – outlined below.

Case Study

Victorian Collections

Background/rationale

The need for a free, accessible, online system to digitise cultural collections was identified by Museum Victoria and Museums Australia (Victoria) in 2009, initially as a risk management response to protect the Distributed State Collection from climate disasters.

Collections remain an ongoing risk of damage or loss from fire and flood. Mitigating practices include effective cataloguing and back-ups of the catalogue data. Many collections were identified as 'at risk' due to their reliance on hard copy catalogues – such as card indexes - or stand-alone electronic databases – such as Filemaker, or unsupported legacy versions of current software.

The project and its success factors

Victorian Collections was the pioneering approach taken by Museums Victoria and Museums Australia (Victoria) to address these issues, by offering a free, easy to use online cataloguing system and platform for the public to access and explore cultural heritage. Museum Victoria provides the technical capacity and resources for the site. Coding, development, technical support and development are managed by the Museum Victoria team.

Museums Australia (Victoria) develops and delivers comprehensive training, face-to-face workshops and manages enquiries.

These combined factors – world-class technology, hands-on training and advice, digital equipment loans, the goodwill of volunteers and staff digitising, cataloguing, and sharing their experiences with each other, and the trust between users, MV and MA (Vic) – are all key to the success of the project.

Funding background

2009 – 2011

Victorian Government - \$280,000 (Collaborative Internet Innovation Fund)
 Shared between MA (Vic) and MV
 + in-kind sponsorship from Dell and Telstra

2012

Victorian Government - \$160,000 (Victorian Cultural Network)

2013

Victorian Government - \$110,000 (Victorian Cultural Network)
 Victorian Government - \$36,000 (Office of Multicultural Affairs)

2014

Victorian Government - \$79,000 (Veterans Branch, DPC)
 Victorian Government - \$35,000 (Victorian Cultural Network)
 Local government - \$12,000 (Targeted multicultural activities)

2015

Victorian Government - \$80,000 (Veterans Branch, DPC)
 Victorian Government - \$45,000 (Victorian Cultural Network)

2016

Victorian Government - \$50,000 (Veterans Branch, DPC)
 Victorian Government - \$90,000 (Victorian Cultural Network)

Recommendation/s

4. Arts NSW to co-develop a new museum and gallery strategic framework, that recognises and supports in particular the invaluable cultural heritage collections currently at serious risk in regional NSW.

TOR d) *Access to the collections of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, the Australian Museum and any other state collections held in trust for the people of New South Wales, and programs that promote physical and online access*

Key point/s

- Better access is increasingly regarded as core business by all cultural institutions. This encompasses physical and online access (as well as intellectual – that is a range of public programs for people of differing levels of ability, age and engagement).
- The new joint open storage complex at Castle Hill for the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, the Australian Museum and Sydney Living Museums is a good step and will increase collection access.
- However, there is insufficient physical access to much other material that is in collections mandated by enabling legislation. One such example is the collections of the NSW Mines Department that have been inaccessible for over 20 years.
- Most problematically, there is no joined up strategy or approach to online access in NSW. Substantial funding has been made available to the State Library of New South Wales to digitize newspaper collections but comparable funding has not been made available to other cultural institutions to enabled digital access to their collections.

Further sources of information

Survey findings and recommendations from the Cultural Ministers' Digital Technologies Working Group - <http://mcm.arts.gov.au/sites/default/files/mcm-digital-technologies-working-group--final-report.pdf>

Recommendation/s

5. Arts NSW should co-develop a state implementation plan for digital discoverability and access to collections that links with the emerging national framework and standards.

TOR e) *The sale of the Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo and its proposed move to Parramatta, and whether there are alternative strategies to support museum development*

Key point/s

- While the right of governments to make policy decisions is understood, we are concerned at the apparent shortcomings in this particular process
 - There is widespread concern about the inadequacy of the process leading to the decision to relocate the Powerhouse Museum, and how the sale of the site, the move of the museum and objects, and the establishment of a fit-for-purpose museum will be carried out
- Museums Australia strongly supports the provision of appropriate cultural facilities including museums and galleries in greater Western Sydney
 - The people of greater Western Sydney and the current cultural organisations and local government in greater Western Sydney should have a substantial say in the planning for and provision of those museum and gallery facilities
 - Parramatta deserves a world class museum facility and cultural precinct - one that reflects the place, the people and the history – as well as responding to community needs
 - We are concerned that such planning does not appear to have taken place
- The Powerhouse Museum is part of Sydney's leading creative industries precinct in Ultimo. Museums of art and design play a key role in innovation and Museums Australia urges the New South Wales government to look at the implications of the loss of the Powerhouse Museum to the Ultimo precinct.

- The decision to relocate the Powerhouse Museum seems to have been taken in isolation of consideration of the role of the other major state cultural institutions and their ability to provide cultural services to greater Western Sydney. Arguably it would be better to provide a facility in Parramatta that was able to be used by all of the cultural institutions for exhibitions and programs.
- The fate of the current Powerhouse Museum should be decided as part of a coherent long-term plan for museum and gallery development throughout Sydney and regional NSW. This should be based on extensive consultation, in particular with local communities, as well as research into good practice, future trends, and economic and cultural value models.
- There are always alternative strategies – in addition, where large and costly change is mooted, it is prudent, often, to prototype and test aspects of the proposals so that timely lessons can be learnt and applied.
- If the final decision is to still move the entire museum to the Parramatta site, then the implementation and its future funding must be at a level commensurate with the requirements to deliver a better institution and experience – to be an exemplar of a 21st century museum - to enlarge rather than diminish the offering.
- A further question, if the move is going to go ahead, is if there is any refinement of the decision that might create greater benefit? That might create a better facility for western Sydney and might create or leave something in Ultimo that really adds value?
- Governments and communities rarely get the chance to re-think, literally from the ground up, the contemporary purpose of a major cultural facility. The decision to relocate the Powerhouse is such an opportunity, and it must be taken.

Recommendation/s

6. The process of relocation of the Powerhouse Museum should be put on hold to enable greater consultation with the people and cultural institutions of greater Western Sydney prior to finalizing any development for Parramatta.
7. The New South Wales government more openly consider the option of providing a multipurpose exhibition and program space in Parramatta that could be supported by the full range of major New South Wales cultural institutions rather than simply relocating the Powerhouse Museum.
8. If the Powerhouse Museum is to be moved, the New South Wales government should look at the retention in Ultimo of those aspects of the Powerhouse Museum that support design, creative industries and innovation.
9. The New South Wales government acknowledge that the level of funding needed to relocate the Powerhouse Museum will substantially exceed the revenue from land sale and that the government commits to funding any relocation of all or part of the museum at a level necessary to create an exemplary 21st century cultural facility.

TOR f) *The development and transparency of advice to the government on priorities for NSW museums and galleries*

Key point/s

- Governments need to access diverse sources of advice, including user-focused, citizen-centric processes and industry experts.

- Currently there is no formal conduit, external to government, for museum and gallery matters to be raised with the Minister for the Arts or Arts NSW.
 - With the demise of the museum officers network, and the regional arts officers focused (understandably) much more on arts practice rather than on the other concerns of regional galleries, the channels are lacking
 - MA Chapters are providing informal levels of advice and connection within their areas but MA has no formalised and regular way to provide such evidence-based information and advice to government

Recommendation/s

10. The cultural sector jointly explore with the Minister and departmental officers ways in which regular discussion and advice on policy development can be shared.
 - A museum and gallery advisory committee to the Ministry should be created
 - The board of Museums and Galleries NSW could be broadened, and formally include MA representation

TOR g) *The impact of the efficiency dividend on the budgets of museums and galleries over the last 10 years, and funding levels compared to other states*

Key point/s

The Efficiency Dividend

- The concept of an Efficiency Dividend is a false one – it is in essence a compounding cut to operational budgets.
- It is a “blunt instrument, which flies in the face of condemnation from all sides”. “Smaller organisations [such as museums and galleries] feel a disproportionate level of pain, while larger organisations have more flexibility on where to make the savings”. (Christopher Stone, Research Director at the Centre for Policy Development, 2014)
- Salaries and wages comprise the majority of cultural institutions’ operating costs – compounding cuts over many years at both Commonwealth and state level have resulted in the loss of numerous experienced staff along with services and activities.
 - Impacts include the loss of expertise, compromised long term strategic planning, reduced options for creativity and innovation, and risks to organisational sustainability.
- “Efficiency dividends varying from 1% to 4% have been required of almost all parts of the Commonwealth public sector since 1987 but it has long been acknowledged that cultural institutions fare worse than other government departments as a result of their high fixed costs. In recognition of this problem, when Simon Crean was Minister for the Arts he was able to get cultural institutions exempted from a 2.5% efficiency dividend in the 2012 financial year.” *Deborah Stone, 2016*
- At the Commonwealth level, due to the Efficiency Dividend, most recently the National Gallery of Australia had to close its contemporary art building, and lose another 20 jobs by June 2016.
- Recent research into the effect on national cultural institutions concludes that “without increased government funding, institutions would be unable to meet their legislated role.” Dr Kristin van Barneveld and Osmond Chiu, April 2016
- In NSW, staffing levels at the MAAS have dropped over the last five years from 274.6 EFT in 2009-10 to 188 in 2014-15 – with the most dramatic reduction in the category of Professionals (from 112 down to 53.7). *MAAS Annual Report 2014/15, page 90*

- During this period, both the Australian Museum and The Art Gallery of NSW have also undertaken large reductions in staff.

Funding levels compared to other states

- Total expenditure on cultural activities by individual state and territory governments generally reflects population size with the more highly populated states spending the most in absolute terms. **However, on a per person basis, the smaller states and territories had relatively higher levels of expenditure.** *ABS 2014*
- In 2012-13, of all the state and territory governments, the New South Wales Government had the highest estimate for recurrent expenditure on Heritage activities (\$482.5m) and the Victorian Government had the highest estimate for recurrent expenditure on Arts activities (\$156.7m). *ABS Cultural Funding by Government 2013*

Further sources of information

<https://theconversation.com/getting-more-bang-for-public-bucks-is-the-efficiency-dividend-efficient-24803>

<http://www.artshub.com.au/news-article/news/grants-and-funding/deborah-stone/major-cultural-institutions-cant-afford-to-do-their-job-251137>

http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/2012-2013/EfficiencyDividend

Recommendation/s

11. The NSW government stops imposing the grossly inefficient and inequitable efficiency dividends on cultural institutions.

TOR h) *The economic impact of museums and galleries on cultural tourism, and their role in supporting the visitor economy in Sydney and regional New South Wales*

Key point/s

- Research shows that investment in regional arts, culture and heritage boosts cultural tourism

Evidence

- An economic study undertaken by Museums and Galleries NSW in 2014 that examined the economic impact of cultural facilities in seven regional NSW cities concluded that: "There is a positive economic impact on the local and regional economies from the operations of the facilities, capital expenditure related to the facilities, and non-local (tourist) visitation ... [furthermore] there is a positive impact on employment and volunteering at the facilities and on the local and regional economies."
- Victoria's Creative Industries Taskforce reported in 2016 that: "The impact of Victoria's cultural and creative economy is already significant. In 2013, it accounted for 8% of the State's economy, employed more than 220,000 people, and contributed \$22.7 billion in gross value add. Arts and culture are a fundamental drawcard to Victoria's visitor economy, with cultural tourism generating \$1 billion for the State in 2013." However, "The lack of a clear policy focus has stifled innovation and created uncertainty."
- The report concludes: "Victoria should be ambitious about the future...The most effective role for government is to strengthen the overall ecosystem within which creative practice takes place. For this reason, the Taskforce proposes initiatives that aim to strengthen the entire cultural and creative ecosystem and all the sectors within it."

- In Queensland, a 2013 study showed that Queensland public galleries are strong contributors to the state’s tourism industry and the local economies. 40% of public gallery audiences were tourists, with 59% of these staying four or more nights in the region. (*Guess Who’s Going to the Gallery? Queensland Report* October 2013).
- The Australia Council reported in 2012 that cultural tourism reached a high in that year with almost 3 million international tourists and 23 million domestic cultural and heritage tourists. *The 2012 International Visitor Survey* showed that 48 percent of all overseas visitors had attended at least one cultural attraction while in Australia. Of these 58 percent had visited an art gallery or museum and 20 percent attended theatre, concerts or other performing arts events.

Recommendation/s

12. The NSW government, through Arts NSW and Destination NSW, co-develop and support an investment and marketing program for regional museums and galleries.

TOR i) Any other related matter

Key point/s

Arts and Heritage

- There is a lack of integration of the arts with heritage frameworks, funding and support in NSW
 - This exacerbates the lack of opportunities for smaller museums and galleries that are the custodians of much of the state’s movable cultural heritage.

Climate Change

- All levels of government need to support efforts to disaster proof our arts and heritage institutions and communities – the increasing rate of climate-induced destruction of irreplaceable cultural collections, particularly in regional NSW, must be recognised and local museums and galleries need advice and support to both reduce the risk and mitigate the consequences.

The Value of Arts, Culture, Creativity and Heritage

- Current research is revealing the deep value of arts, culture and heritage to society and the economy in increasing numbers of ways, including business innovation and health and wellbeing. The NSW government needs to draw on this research to develop more cross-governmental strategies and programs that enable all museums and galleries to thrive and contribute.

Evidence

- “Australia’s top-flight innovators will draw on a mix of skills – creative, business and technical – to tap new sources of wealth”, *Skills and capabilities for Australian Enterprise Innovation*, ACOLA Report 2016
- “ Long term arts engagement supports positive health outcomes”, and “ Arts in education ... contributes in important ways to the factors that underpin learning, such as cognitive abilities, confidence, motivation, problem-solving and communication skills”, Crossick & Kaszynska, *Understanding the Value of Arts & Culture*, AHRC, UK 2016

In conclusion, Museums Australia is happy to be called as a witness at a later hearing.

Yours sincerely

Frank Howarth PSM
President
MA: Museums Galleries Australia

Alex Marsden
National Director
MA: Museums Galleries Australia

Andrew Simpson
Executive Officer
MA NSW Branch