

**Supplementary
Submission
No 137b**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Name: Mr Tom Lockley

Date received: 10 August 2016

Submission 3: Various matters related to the status of affiliated groups

This submission addresses the following terms of reference:

- c) opportunities to revitalise the structure, reach, and impact of museums and galleries, and their research and collecting priorities
- 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
- 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

Submission

This inquiry should recommend that developing and improving the museums' interaction with cultural groups should be a high priority. This can encompass assistance to the museum from members of these groups and assistance to the groups from the museum. This can be revenue neutral and provide benefit to all concerned and to society in general.

Supporting information

Taking the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences as an example, there have traditionally been interactions with 'affiliated groups'; these were featured in the Annual Reports until 2013-14. See the attached list.

Ms Lily Katakouzinou's job title is Head of Programs, and includes 'the determination and evaluation of the conceptual strategic framework and context for the development and delivery of public programs'. In a discussion on this matter on 11 May 2016 she indicated that plans were in hand to reinvigorate such relationships. It appears that the omission of these groups from the latest reports is brought about by pressure of work (see following paragraph), by the need to update the list and by staff reorganization.

The staff cuts to the museum, made necessary by funding reductions, appear to have been particularly severe in the specialist curatorial area. MAAS in 2011 had specialist curators for space, aviation, transport, science and technology, IT and light industry. These appear to have been replaced by a generalist head curator and another person two days per week.

This is grossly inadequate, and must be increased. This submission does not suggest the replacement of professionals by amateurs and volunteers. But demands for expert assistance are increasing, and it is suggested that in the present climate it is desirable to supplement these overworked resources.

Emails have been sent to all affiliated groups seeking and a total of 14 responses have been received in the short time available. From general observation, as well as these responses, I believe that there is strong evidence of the following trends:

1. Only a few affiliated groups have significant permanent interaction with the museum, though many members of affiliated groups are active as volunteers. The lace volunteers at MAAS Powerhouse are a great example of the potential for this type of activity.

2. There are significant examples of co-operation with other groups, ranging from the Star Wars displays of 2009 to the recent involvement of Japanese cultural groups in the recent school holiday activities. These demonstrate the value of the concept.

3. There is considerable interest in increasing interaction with the museum. Areas suggested include providing expert advice eg when people ask questions about various items, an extension of specialist curatorial volunteers, and providing assistance with themed displays. The museum could assist groups by providing access to relevant collections and making available such facilities as meeting venues at 'cost recovery' rates. One respondent stated that when commercial rates were charged for affiliated groups at Macquarie University from 2006 onwards there was a considerable decline in volunteer activity and major conferences, eg for the Australian Centre for Egyptology, moved to licensed clubs and similar venues.

4. Almost all of the affiliated groups have their headquarters and core membership centred more on the Sydney CBD than on Parramatta. There was general, but not universal, support for retaining the present site for the Museum of Arts and Sciences on the basis of its traditional heritage and general accessibility. The non-supporting comments came from two respondents were unconcerned either way.

Because of time constraints it is not possible to conduct a full survey with statistical analysis, so this submission must be seen as a personal view only.

Tom Lockley, committee member of AHSA, member of Pyrmont History group.