

**Submission
No 164**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Organisation: Orange City Council

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Submission to Upper House enquiry into museums in NSW

There is a distinctive gap in the distribution of cultural funding within NSW for volunteer run museums and professionally managed museums. This short submission provides an insight in some of the challenges and issued faced by the ten volunteer run museums working with the award winning Sustainable Collections Program facilitated by Orange City Council's museum program.

Summary/recommendations

Volunteer Museums

- Provide funding for Conservation Management Plans and site masterplans for museums and heritage buildings:
- Increased funding to improve the poor standard of museum facilities in regional and community museums, including better storage, the development of temporary exhibition spaces and online access
- Provide funding to employ staff to work with museums on grant writing and acquittals and implementation of projects.
- Funding to be made available to assist museums to engage a professional curator and exhibition designer to plan and produce new exhibitions.

Regional Museums

- Provide funding for capital infrastructure for regional cultural facilities like Orange Regional Museum between local, state and federal governments
- Encourage local government to support regional museums through programs like the Sustainable Collections Program

Over the past ten years the Orange Regional Museum has been a museum without walls providing an engaging program of collections care and preservation, temporary exhibitions, heritage projects, collection documentation, professional advice and training to ten regional museums in Central NSW via carriage of the award winning Sustainable Collections Program.

Orange Regional Museum is a new museum that has been supported by a \$4m Federal grant in 2014 for a total of \$8.2m construction build. Community support for the project was to be a contribution of \$1.2m, however only \$0.5m has been raised to date. With the opening scheduled for later this year the museum will explore the collections and stories of the region around the themes of gold discovery in NSW in particular Ophir, Lucknow and Cadia, migration heritage including Chinese and post war migrants, exploration including Major Thomas Mitchell and Wiradjuri Cultural Heritage. Orange Regional Museum is actively seeking funds towards the permanent exhibition fit out.

Orange Regional Museum has facilitated the Sustainable Collections Program over the past ten years. The program works with community museums and collections in the region on the documentation and interpretation of significant collections, audience engagement initiatives and planning for future sustainability of the museums and collections. Funding provided by Orange, Blayney and Cabonne Councils and Arts NSW has supported the employment of collections officers to work with museum volunteers on the documentation of their collections, the interpretation of distinctive stories in each museum, using professional designers, and the presentation of public programs.

However the program has revealed issues and challenges for regional museums. The majority of the museums that the Sustainable Collections Program supports are located in historic buildings or houses. Molong Museum has had its major entrance closed for approximately 12 months; after parts of it broke away from the building it was deemed unsafe. To date the building doesn't have a CMP or funding to repair the entrance. Funding for conservation management plans would assist museums to seek funding for building maintenance.

Collection storage is minimal and museum facilities don't have basic amenities such as a toilet for the volunteers. An audit of the museums in 2007 revealed that many volunteers are over the age of 70. There is a great need for a professional person who would be able to source additional grant funds, apply and acquit grants on behalf of the museums.

Many of the museums exhibitions are tired and have been on display for more than 10 years. There is a great need for grants or funding to be made available to assist museums to engage a professional curator and exhibition designer to plan and produce new exhibitions that are focussed on the stories of their village, town or locality and significant events or people.

Many of the museums do not have access to internet, if they do their limited income cannot support the recurrent cost of a phone line. Access to the internet would provide online access for collection documentation and an avenue for museums to network and share stories and collections online.

The Regional Museums Network meets regularly and is an opportunity for volunteers to share ideas and news, however some travel an hour to come to Orange to attend a meeting.

The Program is proven to be an effective model for community museum funding, support and engagement operating in any region of Australia. To find out more about the program

<http://www.centralnswmuseums.orangemuseum.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/SustainableCollectionsProjects1.pdf>

Alison Russell

Museum and Heritage Coordinator/ Sustainable Collections Program Officer

Orange City Council

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