

**Submission  
No 21**

**INQUIRY INTO GOVERNMENT'S MANAGEMENT OF THE  
POWERHOUSE MUSEUM AND OTHER MUSEUMS AND  
CULTURAL PROJECTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum

**Date Received:** 28 April 2020

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# Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum

*A Factory history – a people profile*

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16 April 2020

The Hon Robert Borsak MLC  
Committee Chair  
Legislative Council  
Parliament of New South Wales  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

**RE: Inquiry into the Government's management of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects in New South Wales**

Delivered by Email: [Museums@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Museums@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Mr Borsak,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our views and recommendations relating to the above Inquiry.

The Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum (LSAFM) has addressed key aspects of your Terms of Reference. In some cases, we have put forward recommendations and in others, we have offered a view without any recommendation. Our submission is attached.

We firmly believe that regional museums, such as ours, are not truly recognised by Government. Like so many others in regions, we are volunteer run. We do what it takes to make our Museum the best it can be. But it seems Government bureaucracy favours their own – those Museums with taxpayer funding and with a Sydney centric base. We sincerely believe those in Government have little idea of what we and perhaps other regional museums have and hold. In fact, we've not seen anyone from the 'arts & culture industry' come through our doors in many years. We are bitterly disappointed that this is now the norm within our diverse industry.

All of this must change and we've made suggestions as to how this could occur in this submission.

We are more than happy to address your Committee and present our position during the hearing dates. We are happy for my name and position and our submission to be published in full on your website.

I can be reached on \_\_\_\_\_ or by email on \_\_\_\_\_ should you wish to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Renzo Benedet  
President & Secretary

# Submission to the Inquiry into the Government's management of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects in New South Wales

## 1.0 Who we are and our significance

Firstly, you and some of your Committee members would be familiar with the Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum (LSAFM). We are noted nationally and internationally for our historical, educational and cultural significance of the iconic Lithgow Small Arms Factory (Factory) and its ten (10) subsidiary operations in the Central West of NSW.

We are much more than just a firearms museum.

We hold one of the most significant, diverse and detailed records of the industrial, engineering and societal developments which shaped the Australian nation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through the eyes of Lithgow. We have one of the best collections of industrial precision production machines anywhere in Australia. In February 2019, the Museum was awarded the UNESCO Australia Memory of the World award for its archive significance – a rather prestigious award putting the global spotlight on a piece of Australian history that should never be forgotten. We have access to almost 200 000 archives and almost 2600 objects which date back to 1910. Our visitors are astounded by our exhibits and those from overseas view our collection as better than most similar museums in their own country.

It is an honour to be directly associated with LSAFM and our plans for the future are exciting as we move towards establishing a special museum zone housing precision engineering, firearm objects, exhibits of the Factory's commanding history, training facilities and hospitality.

## 2.0 Proposed Powerhouse Museum shift

LSAFM's comments in relation to the proposed shift from Ultimo to Parramatta of the Powerhouse Museum are made as a peer museum, relating to its heritage, relocation and collection significance are commented on below.

LSAFM has had regular dialogue with the Powerhouse Museum over the years. We know the cultural value of their diverse collection and there is no doubt the Powerhouse Museum carries some of the most significantly important objects anywhere in the world, notably in science, technology and transport. It does also contain a range of objects which are not strictly classed as 'science, technology and transport'.

Having an allegiance to the Ultimo area of some 140 years, LSAFM is perplexed as to why the Powerhouse Museum needs to relocate and how the fabric of the Ultimo facility is going to be accommodated on a much smaller footprint at Parramatta. It just doesn't make sense to expend so much money, only to have a smaller sized museum. As it is now and more so in the future, the Castle Hill facility will be the repository depot – out of sight and out of mind. It would be an absolute shame for precious objects and artefacts to remain hidden, as though lack of exhibit space carries more importance than cultural, historical or educational significance.

### *Issues*

- a) The saga surrounding the Powerhouse Museum demonstrates that Government has little appreciation for the valuable assets such museums have. It seems the look and beauty of a building carries far more weight than the inherent value within the building. Architects can

design all they want with open-ended 'cheque books', but little is said about the incalculable value which the Powerhouse Museum houses. For this reason, the Powerhouse Museum appears to be treated like an asset – to be traded to the highest bidder – with little to no consideration of the Australian intellect inherent in each of the objects and artefacts which shaped Australian life over the years;

- b) The proposed move of the Powerhouse Museum to a smaller site and the consequent rationalisation of its objects and archives suggests a scaling down of the collection for display. There will be no net benefit to the people of Western Sydney or anyone else if that occurs;
- c) Relocating the Powerhouse Museum to a flood prone site is inconceivable and is vulnerable to regular (1:20 year) flooding events. There is a limit as to how many objects and archives can be placed above flood levels. Heavy objects like the locomotives would be impacted. The location is not fit for purpose;
- d) Looking ahead, Sydney will be a city of 8 million people within 30 years. Surely, a city of that size can sustain several Powerhouse Museums or similar and truly become an international centre with a reputation for culture and the arts. Sadly, there is no long-term plan for the city of Sydney and if there was, this whole issue of the Powerhouse Museum may have become much clearer for everyone to see. It is plain to see that the Powerhouse Museum is clustered among other noted museums, thus creating a cultural hub for the public, researchers and the professionals working in those institutions; and,
- e) With the prospect of the Powerhouse Museum objects and archives becoming increasingly hidden through storage, why not give 'life' to such historical items by having their presence in other museums across the State. There are outreach and loan agreements in place, although these agreements can be onerous with specific and restrictive conditions, such as temperature controls, humidity levels and security. Such conditions can impact smaller museums significantly and to the point where the 'fine print' discourages any mutual arrangement. We have previously engaged with the Powerhouse Museum on their hidden firearms collection with limited success. It is time to re-visit this and maximise the opportunity for the general public to experience Australian history and culture irrespective of ownership.

### *Conclusion*

Governments need to embrace museums for what they truly are and not see them as merely some form of tradeable asset. Learnings and traditions of our past is what we cherish. The substantial investment made by many people over many years in maintaining and improving museums to world class standards cannot be understated. This is precisely the case with the Powerhouse Museum located within an inner-city site with a 140-year rich history. Moving the Museum to Parramatta would see an era disappear altogether.

### *Proposed recommendations*

LSAFM recommends:

- a) Leave the Powerhouse Museum where it is and actively promote its science and technology significance and heritage;

- b) Plan and build new museums in other parts of the Greater Sydney region or regional areas in line with the significance and/or educational value of what is to be exhibited (in line with the stated vision);
- c) For Government to develop a long-term vision and plan for the Museums sector in Sydney and regional NSW; and,
- d) For objects/archives of the Powerhouse Museum which are in storage or to be placed in storage be displayed in other museums across the State, where practicable.

### **3.0 Current Government policy, funding and support for museums and galleries across regional New South Wales**

#### *Policy*

In relation to NSW Government policy as it applies to LSAFM, there is no clarity around this. Whatever policy or statements made by the NSW Government, they are conflicting, counter-productive and have no semblance of active support and promotion. It seems there is little to no consideration of volunteer-based museums, of which there are many in regional NSW.

LSAFM does not operate under any considered, well-thought through Government Museum Policy.

For LSAFM, our 'policy framework' is regulatory. We are seen by the NSW Government as a carrier of firearms needing to be suppressed at all times for 'public safety'. They do not see us as a museum with a rich history and educational value. Nor do they understand what we have, what we do and the experience we provide to so many.

Under the regulatory 'policy framework', we are seen as being no different than a firearms collector or a firearms dealer. In fact, we are relatively worse off under the current Firearms Regulation. It is incongruous to us that we find ourselves in this position. We have provided more details on this issue in our response in section 5 below.

As for advancing Culture and Arts in the State, LSAFM is not aware of any policy which actively drives and encourages regional museums, including ours.

Even if an NSW policy specific to museums (notably regional museums) was in place, we believe the 'regulatory policy' would take precedence under the current environment in our line of business. It seems to us that Museum firearm objects are not viewed as historical, educational or culturally significance. Rather they are viewed as something much less and of no benefit to society. In our case, we believe Government agencies in the field of arts and culture, have lost the knowledge in appreciating industrial heritage, they have lost the drive to make regional museums a stronger force and, lost the desire to confront regulatory agencies on matters impacting regional museums.

#### *Funding*

In terms of funding, we regularly apply for Government and private sector funding. We operate like any other volunteer-based museum seeking funds, as required. We have applied for funding under various programs, including Heritage grants, NSW Club grants, National Library of Australia grants, Create NSW grants and Community Fund grants. Those grants have largely gone towards projects involving building improvements, collection and archives management and volunteer training.

We make three comments in relation to funding:

- a) Funding of regional museums seems a 'hit and miss' affair. Unlike their State-owned counterparts which are underpinned by a continuous flow of tax-payer funding, many regional volunteer-based museums do not have access to on-going funds. They also lack the wherewithal to complete the mass of paperwork required for funding. We appreciate that funding must be evidence and merit based. But 'missing out' on funding can be detrimental to regional museums;
- b) Regionally based volunteer run museums operate with little, if any, support. Their displays reflect their region and its history. Each of these museums has a story to tell. In some cases, local Council might lend a hand but many have no external support. Their collections are valuable and unless there is community support (financially or otherwise), then this will be lost. It is important they receive advisory services through for example, the regional network which the Government established some years ago; and,
- c) Funding for museums is spread across many agencies (Local, State and Federal). There is no one 'peak' Government agency that coordinates or promotes all of this either at State or Federal levels – it seems this is left to State or National Associations to carry this out. What is required as a starting point is an easy to understand Government funding pack which lists the various bodies, basic details of the program, contact details and timings (if possible).

### *Support*

We are one of very few across the State (and Australia) which has secured a listing on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register. We have not been contacted by anyone from the NSW Arts and Cultural bureaucracy about this, even though we've made it known to all. There is no promotion and certainly no attempt to support us when we needed it – a case in point being the fiasco over the Firearms Regulation of late 2017. From our perspective, there is no real destination marketing by the State of volunteer-based museums or similar – they seem to focus very much on food and wine. There is no real coordination by the State of significant regional museums.

The LSAFM has a critical mass that can be further developed into a significant, world acclaimed, regionally based museum.

We appreciate there are many museums across the State – over 200. But if the NSW Government truly wants to have a sustainable and thriving museums sector, then it needs to get to understand, at the very least, those which are renowned nationally and internationally. It needs to start getting behind those museums with a track record of achievement and working with them to further develop.

Some may say this approach is like 'picking winners' and that is not what the Government should do. If that is the case, then all government funded museums are 'picked winners', with the Powerhouse Museum being one such example where \$500M to \$1.5bn in funding is projected to be spent in any relocation.

In our view, the essence of Government support should be driven by the 'historical, educational and cultural' significance held by museums as shown through nation building heritage, national and international reputation and propensity to grow into world-class institutions.

As mentioned above (in the funding section), regional museums need a better program of support to secure their future, where this is possible. What LSAFM is seeking is an equitable process whereby

Government support is forthcoming proactively with promotion both here and overseas. An ongoing funding platform for regional museums with 'community value' and the potential for national / international significance, should be introduced. The current practice of continually applying for grant funding is too uncertain and does not provide any certainty in planning and budgeting for growth.

### *Conclusion*

Regional communities receive a disproportionate allocation of funds for museums. The Arts & Cultural bureaucracy appear to be Sydney centric, with considerable funding going into a few Sydney based museums. Regional museums need support, especially those which are volunteer based. And Government needs to have a Regional Museums Plan and associated funding where the working relationship with key museums are identified and defined.

### *Proposed recommendations*

LSAFM recommends:

- a) The NSW Government develop an overarching Regional Museum Plan and Regional Museum Fund that fosters the development and marketing of museums with 'historical, educational and cultural significance' into world-class facilities;
- b) The NSW Government reform its policy towards 'firearms classed museums' by a more rigorous definition of such museums and for those to be exempted from the provisions of the Firearms Act; and,
- c) The NSW Government through its regional development program ensure that regional museums are supported through site visits, advisory services and specialist services, as required.

## **4.0 Whether there is equitable access to collections across New South Wales, including at the Powerhouse Museum and the Australian Museum**

Accessing collections held by other museums is almost near impossible, especially between Government funded museums and volunteer-based museums. LSAFM cannot understand why there is a roadblock in all of this, other than perhaps it is personality based or museum policy based. Whatever it is, the lack of sharing of valuable collections significantly deprives the community of viewing objects and archives of value. This needs to be un-locked.

### *Equitable access*

Over recent years, the LSAFM has approached some museums seeking to display objects and archives, which would otherwise be 'locked away'. Four examples are provided:

- a) From the date of its opening in 1997, the LSAFM had on display a Captain Cook Bicentenary exhibit showing an iron ballast from the ship 'Endeavour', along with a Queen Anne musket made at the Factory. The ballast we had on display was a gift from the Factory which in the late 1960s restored it and other iron ballast blocks for the Captain Cook Bicentenary in 1970. The Maritime Museum demanded our ballast be given to them for conservation purposes, which we did, and on the understanding the ballast would be returned to the LSAFM after 3 months. There was no such return. The Maritime Museum placed onerous conditions and requirements on LSAFM which we could not fulfil. Our protestations fell on deaf ears and so our iron ballast has been sitting in a basement within the Maritime Museum for many years. As far as we know the iron ballast was never conserved by the Maritime Museum. This type of behaviour is

outrageous. How can something of significance be sitting in a basement warehouse collecting dust. And, equally why does a taxpayer funded museum have the right to dismiss any request from the rightful owner of the iron ballast, one that was gifted by the Factory which carried out the restoration all those years ago;

- b) The Powerhouse Museum has a magnificent firearms collection. Those firearms were on display at the Powerhouse in the early years but now they are no longer – they are housed in a basement. One such firearm artefact is the Australian made McCrudden light machine gun. This historic firearm was loaned to the LSAFM by the Powerhouse Museum. But its display at the LSAFM was short lived due to interference from the NSW Firearms Registry stating the Powerhouse Museum had no right to loan the McCrudden firearm and requested it 'take it back'. The LSAFM challenged the Registry ruling and had it overturned. Sadly, the McCrudden firearm was taken back by the Powerhouse Museum before the decision to overturn the ruling was made. This example of museum to museum cooperation was thwarted by regulatory interference which should not have occurred. The poor decision making by the regulatory body on that occasion on a routine matter highlights the lack of on the ground knowledge and an insatiable need to 'regulate' and 'control';
- c) A collection of colonial firearms was bequeathed to the Australian Museum, which chose to act in self-interest by selling off the collection. A rather selfish act - the ethics around all of this is questionable. That collection or part of it could have come to LSAFM for display and recognition; and,
- d) NSW Police Ballistics Section has a very comprehensive firearms collection with many duplicate and redundant items. Coming into being in 1936, the collection was meant to be a reference library for police forensic and was deemed not a collection of historic firearms. While the LSAFM acknowledge this, the fact is that part of the collection is surplus to need and given that, the collection could be made available to bona-fide researchers or donated to a museum, like ours.

LSAFM has been disappointed by the response to date, as illustrated. We have a Vickers machine gun on loan to the Cowra Council and this transaction was approached with mutual respect and need. The sale of donor gifted objects is particularly galling and no museum should be allowed to take a unilateral action such as this without proper consultation and consideration.

These above examples can all be successfully dealt with for the benefit of the wider community. Museums have inter-loan processes and with proper security and governance procedures in place, any sharing should be straight-forward.

#### *Proposed recommendation*

- a) Where a decision to part with a donated object, the museum in question should firstly approach other museums to ascertain their interest and capacity to display that object. Any museum which sells donated objects for financial gain, without prior consultation, should be discouraged as such actions would send a message to potential donors that their objects are not valued; and,
- b) All museums need to have the proper security measures, transfer records and governance in place to transact any loan transfers or gifting of objects for public viewing. If an object of significance can be appropriately displayed by a museum with all of the necessary protections



and marketing, rather than being hidden from public view, that very outcome is in itself justifiable and should be encouraged.

## **5.0 Whether comprehensive consultation with communities and experts has informed cultural policy and projects across New South Wales, such as that applying to heritage arms and armour collections**

The short answer is absolutely not.

As mentioned above in Section 3.0, the LSAFM operates under a regulatory policy regime. Unbeknown to museums with firearm permits and the NSW Government's own Firearms Registry, a new Museums Firearms Regulation took effect in late 2017. It wasn't till 12 months later that the new Regulation became known. The new Regulation required museums to permanently deactivate all prohibited firearms and handguns – a rather draconian decision where consultation with the museums sector was non-existent. That action of late 2017 was taken with absolute disregard for any affected museum party.

### *Pre-late 2017*

There were two Stakeholder Committees formed which provided advice to the Government on Firearms legislation. LSAFM was not a party to either Committee since we were considered as not being a representative body (representing members).

We are told the first Committee was dissolved by the Government after its report and recommendations were not aligned with Government thinking. The second Committee we are told was slightly more successful in that it wasn't dissolved but the Government hastily chose to bring down its 2017 Amendment taking the Committee by surprise.

We understand the deliberations over museum firearms was considered by the first Committee, it was not so at the second Committee since it was never tabled by the Government.

### *Post-2017*

There was no communication to any museum in the State of the decision.

It was December 2018 that LSAFM became aware of the new Regulation. This was by chance only after an approach for assistance from the Gunnedah Rural Museum.

The LSAFM collection of firearms numbers just over 2500 and of those, 70% would require permanent deactivation. It made no sense to us as to why we should destroy our firearm artefacts. We pushed back and led the charge to overturn this rather ridiculous and unjust piece of legislation.

LSAFM immediately sought and was granted a meeting with the then Police Minister. It was clear from our dialogue with NSW Firearms Registry that they had little idea of the decision made or impact of that decision. Our discussions with the then Police Minister was short-lived, overtaken by the State election of March 2019.

LSAFM met with the incoming Police Minister, The Hon. David Elliott. Our concerns were heard and we spent numerous days, weeks and months trying to get across to the bureaucracy the role and significance of museums with firearm permits and the rationale for museums to be totally exempted under the Firearms Act.

Slight changes to the 2017 Regulation were made but these did not change the 'tipping point' fundamentals. The Regulation now in place maintains permanent deactivation. It gives the museums

the provision to apply for an exemption to permanent deactivation, but there is no guarantee. The Police Commissioner has the power to refuse or cancel any exemption without reason.

The end point in all of this is that museums in NSW are worse off compared to a shooter, collector or firearms dealer. If that is sensible policy, then we all should believe that 'pigs do fly'.

### *Issues*

There are several issues which need airing:

- a) The NSW Government's management of the museum firearms Regulation was appalling. There was no attempt to consult. There was no appreciation of the impact. They treated museums as dispensable. There was no understanding of nor any attempt to understand the role that museums play. There was always a hidden agenda;
- b) Museums are defined within the regulatory framework. In NSW there are 63 museums with firearm permits. But those museums are not 'like for like'. They vary from a backyard collection to something that is world class like LSAFM. We operate as a fully-fledged museum consistent with its definition – we service society by acquiring, conserving, developing, researching, educating, communicating and exhibiting. There are many other 'so called' museums under the regulatory framework which do not meet the baseline requirement. Attachment 1 outlines LSAFM's definition of Museums;
- c) The NSW Government has made no attempt to treat fully fledged museums as exempt under the Firearms Act. Prior to late 2017, publicly funded museums were exempt under the Act, even though they had no firearms on display (their firearms were kept in basement facilities). But privately run museums were not afforded that exemption even though they abided by strict security measures. Today, no museum in NSW is exempt under the Act. It is absurd that fully fledged museums are not exempted from the Act altogether;
- d) There is a lack of support for museums from associations or even the NSW Government's lead Arts & Culture organisation. Their attitude towards our plight with the firearms Regulation was of utter distancing. It seemed to us that no-one wanted to know about museum firearms. They chose to ignore us. In one case, they lost our formal request for support, only to find it again and then silence took over. They lack any sense of knowledge;
- e) There is no cultural policy in relation to industrial heritage in NSW. The LSAFM has one of the best industrial objects collection anywhere in Australia. Our UNESCO recognition should be sufficient for lawmakers to take note but sadly they chose to ignore it and their only solution for supporting museums is to lump on us more regulation. It is diabolical;
- f) Museums need a voice at the 'Government table'. We have requested that we are represented, not through some association but rather by the people on the ground who understand what is happening. The LSAFM has underway an initiative to establish a Museums Alliance (of like-minded museums) where 'our voice' can be heard directly, whether in a regulatory or non-regulatory environment;
- g) Museums in NSW seem to operate in silos. The LSAFM is based in Lithgow but we are part of a much bigger region of the State. There isn't any program or the like in bringing such museums together through networking or information flow. While there is some attempt by Local

Councils to do this, they have other priorities and don't have the wherewithal or funding capacity to make it happen; and,

- h) LSAFM is the only volunteer-based museum in the State (and Australia) able to provide formal training to State authorities on technical aspects of firearms. From our viewpoint, there is an educational void among some Registry officers / Licensing Police relating to firearm knowledge. LSAFM has offered to provide such training.

### *Conclusion*

Museums, especially those in regional areas, are not well understood by the policy makers or lawmakers. There is no overarching cultural policy governing the support and promotion of museums. Regional museums will disappear unless there is a meeting of the minds within the NSW Government bureaucracy about the issues raised above.

### *Proposed recommendation*

LSAFM recommends that:

- a) Museums be properly defined with clear mandates of what they must have in order to operate as fully fledged museums;
- b) Fully fledged museums be given exempt status under the NSW Firearms Act;
- c) The NSW Government work with regional museums providing proactive networking programs and the like;
- d) The NSW Government invite the museum sector representatives to be part of the consultative process – whether regulatory or otherwise – so that its position can be voiced; and,
- e) The NSW Government make clear their cultural policy and program in relation to museums and overcome the current differences within the bureaucracy.

## **6.0 The continuing impact of the efficiency dividend on the budgets of museums and galleries over the last 10 years**

LSAFM supports every effort for tax-funded museums to operate as efficiently as they can and not think of funding as an infinite, ongoing resource where budgets keep rising. But it is important whatever budget is set, that this delivers best-practice services with excellence in visitor experience.

We do not necessarily agree with the use of the 'efficiency dividend' marker as a universal measure of efficiency. In some cases, museums are required to have higher budgets and higher staffing to meet increasing demands through exhibits, events, promotions and educational displays. Funded museums are generally 7 day / week businesses where the public expects such service.

As such, the Museum's operational recurrent budget is crucial. One can deploy technology or build new facilities, but the essence of a museum is what it holds. One cannot replace the knowledge and craft involved in curatorship, public education, conservation and care for collections. It is their core business and restricting funding for some 'efficiency dividend' makes no sense.

Obviously, every organisation must be accountable for their actions. As professional museums, they must have the rigour and governance practices in place to effect best-practice. We have seen some tax-

payer funded museums reduce their services and staff numbers; equally, we see the reverse. But we've also seen other tax-payer funded museums allocated hundreds of millions of dollars for works that could have been better spent elsewhere.

In the case of the LSAFM, we run our museum on a low-cost budget. We have volunteers carrying out various works. Our annual business plan budgeting is dedicated to improving both the visitor experience and artefact and archive quality. We have operated without the need for ongoing tax-payer funding and have been successful in securing grant funding for much needed building and archiving works.

We have seen grant programs expand in NSW in recent years, but at the same time we have seen a scaling back of programs for regional museums in relation to advisory services, networking and promotion. The use of consultants to advise museums of what they should do, while admirable, is in some cases counter-productive as their advice is not practical for a number of small, regionally based museums.

## **7.0 Funding levels for museums and galleries in New South Wales compared with other states**

As a State, we have various museums per head of population and funding is very much heavily biased in favour of larger metropolitan institutions. With museums accessing Federal, State and/or Local Government funding, each museum has its own funding model.

The LSAFM is not in a position to offer a well-informed view between State budgets with an 'apples with apples' comparison. We do not have an equivalent similar organisation operating in other States and hence, it is difficult for us to make any comment on State by State funding as it relates to what we do.

From what we have seen, the Arts and Cultural industry in Victoria appears to be more advanced than most other States. The peak Government body 'Creative Victoria' is very open and shows strong leadership. The Victorian branch of the Australian Museums & Galleries Association (AMaGA) is also highly active in promoting and informing its members, with a greater recognition of regional museums.

In NSW, there are over 200 museums outside Sydney. There are some 14 Regional Arts Development Organisations (RADOs) in NSW, each providing strategic direction for sustainable arts and cultural development in their region. As a leading regional museum in the State, LSAFM does not see nor interact with any RADO. Our association with the State Branch of AMaGA is non-existent and there was no reason for us to maintaining any form of membership – we did not renew our annual membership with the AMaGA national body.

As mentioned above, LSAFM applies for grant funding, which is a 'hit and miss' exercise. This form of funding is common for not-for-profit organisations. While this might be a convenient way to allocate funds across the wider community, it is perhaps not optimal for regional museums. In the case of LSAFM, over 80% of our grants comes from State funding, with Federal funding making up the remainder. We do not have Local Government funding. Our recurrent funding is largely provided through entrance fees and shop sales.

Perhaps a different funding model is required and one possibly is the creation of a Regional Museums Fund.

## **8.0 Whether there are other more cost-effective strategies than the sale of the Powerhouse Museum site at Ultimo to support museum development across New South Wales, including consideration of the new Parramatta site and the proposed standalone Western Sydney Museum at the Cumberland Hospital site**

It is about time consideration be given to expanding regional museums. Regional NSW accounts for over 30% of the State's population and so why can't attention be turned towards developing more than one showcase museum in regional NSW. Regions have gone through a horror drought and bushfire season and having world-class museums would undoubtedly bring increased tourism. It would shift the current Sydney centric approach to more of a State approach.

As an example, the LSAFM is a museum that represents design, engineering, manufacturing, workplace advancement and society learning & development. It is a showcase of ingenuity in an area of utter importance to Australia's development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And the LSAFM has the archives, the objects and the technical knowledge that can be used to heighten educational, research and training interest. As such, LSAFM could be one of those regional world-class museums, harnessing, supporting and growing a rich history that is specific only to LSAFM. That is the crux of the opportunity where the significance of the museum dictates future development and funding, rather than relying only on geographic area discussions about museums.

If the Powerhouse Museum remains in Ultimo, then Sydney/ Western Sydney can easily accommodate a new museum(s) in whatever form that is. For example, the Powerhouse Museum is noted for its science, engineering and technology but it also has a diverse range of other objects, including theatrical items. Those theatrical items (and other items) can become the basis of a new museum rather than having such items in storage for no-one to see. But we do not need hundreds-of-million-dollar buildings to create a museum. Museums can be sustained by world class objects and archives. It is just a question of significance and bringing that to life.

## **9.0 Any other related matter**

Volunteering is perhaps the one universal need across volunteer-based museums. It is a major risk to museums, especially those in regions. We do not have the luxury of paid staff like the taxpayer funded museums. The LSAFM is always seeking volunteers. We offer training and development across an array of roles, thus adding to the capability and competencies of the individual. We also pay base travel costs in some cases where volunteers are required to travel some distance from home to the museum.

But we are one of many museums doing this. We are all 'fishing in the same pond'. There does need a new approach to this, especially in bringing through younger people who are willing to learn. Relying on the 'older brigade' for volunteering is not sustainable. But there is little avenue for volunteers in the museum sector (in regions) to gain educational value. The cost of external training is prohibitive.

LSAFM does not have all the answers, but the following suggestions may have some merit.

- a) Create the passion for museums through annual Museum Awards recognising the contributions by both the organisation and individual. The current practice of Awards involves submitting a submission which is then judged by Museums & Galleries NSW – this is a rather invisible process. Awards should be based on what museums are doing in the field, the experience they provide, the individuals making a difference, achievements made and seeing how museums physically operate;

- b) Develop learning pathways for volunteers leading to a Statement of Attainment training and new skills. Museums are not Registered Training Organisations but having pathways, through tertiary training institutions which can help develop skills would be desirable, especially if there were training materials which could be made available to museums for their review and implementation; and,
- c) Provide concessionary status to volunteers undertaking third-party accredited training so as to reduce the end cost paid by museums.