

‘Towards a National Cultural Policy’: Museums Australia submission to Minister for the Arts (The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP, Minister for the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts)

2010



This Submission is organised in five parts:

- A. Summary of Recommendations
- B. Introduction and background
- C. Responses to the Minister's three questions
- D. Responses to the Minister's three key themes
- E. Attachments

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Museums Australia also acknowledges the considered input of the President, Dr Darryl McIntyre, and members of the MA National Council.

MA further acknowledges the contribution of colleagues who attended the Common Ground Meeting convened by Museums Australia at the Melbourne Museum (Museum Victoria), in September 2009, and the resulting Common Ground Declaration (*Caring for Culture: Framing a National Cultural Policy and its Living Support Systems*) that was submitted to the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP, Minister for the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, in October 2009, as an early contribution to the Minister's consultative process towards development of a National Cultural Policy.

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Part A: Summary of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1 (Sect.3)

That the Commonwealth, in association with its COAG partners, articulate a vision statement for Australian cultural heritage care: to provide a cohesive framework for the documentation, protection, conservation, interpretation and communication of Australian cultural heritage, in all its diversity, for all Australians.

RECOMMENDATION 2 (Sect.4)

That NCP development take note of the model of cultural process, *The Cycle of Culture & Heritage* (Museums Australia, Jan. 2010), offered as a useful modelling tool for scoping cultural policy affecting both arts development and culture and heritage in their fundamentally integrated and dynamic relationships.

RECOMMENDATION 3 (Sect.5.3)

That a Cultural Heritage Council (CHC) be established to ensure national coordination and rationalisation of expertise informing policy development and programs relating to culture and heritage (and their legislative safeguards) at national and international levels

RECOMMENDATION 4 (Sect.5.4)

That the Commonwealth note and promote measures, in concert with COAG, to overcome current disjunctions in the legislative provision for an integrated approach to the protection of Australia's cultural heritage.

RECOMMENDATION 5 (Sect.5.4)

That the Commonwealth take steps to ensure better alignment of the management of heritage places and movable collections nationwide.

RECOMMENDATION 6 (Sect.5.5)

That the Commonwealth recognise, and more actively include the role of the museums sector, in providing advice and support for implementation measures towards the protection of culture and heritage under international law and treaty obligations.

RECOMMENDATION 7 (Sect. 7.1.1)

That the Commonwealth government recognises the historical role of State/Territory institutions in caring for the Distributed National Collection, and ensures that 'national cultural heritage' continues to include within its frame of reference all the museums and historic sites across the country that collect, interpret, communicate and preserve parts of the cultural heritage of Australia.

RECOMMENDATION 8 (Sect.7.2.1)

That the Commonwealth recognise and ensure that Museums Australia's Indigenous policy, *Continuing Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities /CCOR* (2004), is referenced in the development of affirmative action on Indigenous management and control of Indigenous heritage in all respects involving museums, collections, and the exhibition of historical and contemporary Indigenous art and culture.

RECOMMENDATION 9 (Sect.7.3 and 7.3.1)

That the Commonwealth provide leadership to ensure that programs to give effect to the access principles articulated in the National Arts and Disability Strategy are enacted in all jurisdictions to provide equitable access for all Australians across the nation.

RECOMMENDATION 10 (Sect.8)

That the Commonwealth commission a review of the Australian museums sector's contribution to the preservation, interpretation and communication of Australia's diverse culture and heritage as encompassed by the museums sector in 'Keeping culture strong'. Such review could be part of a more inclusive review of culture and heritage measures as a whole, within which museums sector contributions would be better recognised in their wider relations.

RECOMMENDATION 11 (Sect.9)

That the Commonwealth, in association with COAG partners, establish a national program for the care of cultural heritage across the nation, *Caring for Culture*, (comparable to the Caring for Country program focused on the natural environment), to ensure that all Australians, wherever they reside, have equitable access and opportunity to participate in and contribute to the care of their own cultural heritage.

RECOMMENDATION 12 (Sect.10.1)

That the Commonwealth establish a national cultural digitisation program, focussed on ensuring that the nation's cultural heritage is accessible as a living resource to stimulate and support the educational development of young Australians, and for the understanding of Australian culture and heritage to be promoted as a shared benefit of citizenship.

RECOMMENDATION 13 (Sect.10.2 and 10.3)

That the Minister for the Arts, Heritage and the Environment meet again with the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA), to agree on program approaches to ensure that equitable access to local, regional and national culture and heritage is readily able to be provided nationwide to enrich teaching and learning approaches to all subject areas in the developing National Curriculum.

Part B: Introduction and Framing

1 Introduction

Museums Australia (MA) welcomes the Minister's commitment to the development of a National Cultural Policy (NCP), and the opportunities provided through a public consultative process to encourage the widest diversity of input towards its development.

While respecting the Minister's focus on creativity, and emphasis on the arts in profiling his commitment to developing a National Cultural Policy, Museums Australia advocates the need to support all the elements of a comprehensive and integrated modelling of cultural process.

MA argues the importance of embracing the dynamically connected resources that link

- Creativity
- Experience
- Interpretation &
- Preservation

MA emphasises the vital importance of cross-fertilising currents flowing between all parts, at all times, in order to '*Keep culture strong*' (Minister's Theme 1).

2 Museums Australia's engagement with NCP development

The envisaged development of a National Cultural Policy directly intersects with central issues in MA's organisational vision and guiding objectives:

... for natural and cultural heritage to be valued, sustained and communicated, as it represents the shared histories, heritage and identities of all Australians.

(Museums Australia mission statement, 2008)

Museums Australia is the national organisation for the museums sector. Members encompass individuals (including volunteers), national and state institutions (largest to smallest), as well as local and community-run museums across remote, rural and regional Australia. (See **Attachment 1** at end of this submission, for a snapshot of Museums Australia, including its national geographic extent and diverse regional connection with communities.)

The international (ICOM) definition of museums includes galleries, historic sites, keeping places, botanic gardens and zoos – that is, public sector institutions, large and small, dedicated to the creation, conservation, collecting and interpretation of cultural heritage in its broadest aspects.

The museums sector includes *places* (sites) and their collections, and encompasses the conservation, continuation and communication of Australia's historic, natural and Indigenous heritage, in both tangible and intangible heritage dimensions.

3 Envisioning Australia's cultural heritage

To provide a framework for cultural policy development, a picture is needed of the scope of *culture* (and *cultural heritage*) to be encompassed by a National Cultural Policy.

Museums Australia proposes, as a starting point for wider scoping, the following vision of Australia's cultural heritage:¹

Australia's heritage, shaped by nature, culture and history, is a 'living inheritance' passed from one generation to the next. It is an ever-evolving record of places, objects, events, associations and memories that define and sustain our natural and cultural history. They configure our identity, arouse pride in our collective achievement and are important vehicles in promoting our identity to the world.

Australia's cultural heritage has many interrelated expressions, including places, objects, documents, traditions, customs and languages. Collectively these shape the nation's stories and are the responsibility of us all.

This vision of the integral links between nature and culture, between the arts and heritage, is crucially underpinned by an understanding of the many connections between cultural heritage and community identity, regional distinctiveness, amenity and quality of life.

It is for us, the present generation, to nourish and nurture this inheritance for future generations.

This integrated framework and interconnected approach to understanding cultural heritage underpins the present submission from Museums Australia, shaping the detailed arguments and Recommendations it advances.

RECOMMENDATION 1 (Sect.3)

That the Commonwealth, in association with its COAG partners, articulate a vision statement for Australian cultural heritage care: to provide a cohesive framework for the documentation, protection, conservation, interpretation and communication of Australian cultural heritage, in all its diversity, for all Australians.

4 Modelling 'how culture works' in development of a National Cultural Policy

There is a frequent slippage or ambiguity in current policy consultation around some key terms used. For example, what is sought in a *national cultural policy* may be confusing, where statements employ an interchange of different terms without clarifying their shifts in context or meaning: notably the terms *culture*, *the arts*, *heritage*, and *cultural heritage*.

In current documents, *culture* is understood to include 'more than the arts'.² However it is the importance of *the arts* that is repeatedly affirmed throughout the Minister's speech to the

1 Museums Australia participated with partner NGO cultural heritage bodies in the formerly existing National Cultural Heritage Forum (convened ministerially, through the Heritage division under the former DEWHA department of government; co-ordinated on the NGO side by Australia ICOMOS). The NCHF evolved a vision of Australia's cultural heritage in 2004, as an anticipatory step towards the promulgation of a vision by government itself – which did not transpire. Some of that 'envisioning' work and process, however, configures material presented here, and NCHF partner bodies' dialogue in a collaborative endeavour is appreciatively acknowledged.

2 '[W]hile the arts are a core component of culture, culture is more than just the arts.' The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP, Minister For The Environment, Heritage And The Arts, National Press Club Address, Canberra, 27 October 2009.

National Press Club in October 2010. Indeed in the guidelines as to the key topics for input sought by the Minister, ‘the arts’ and a focus on support for artists feature many times more prominently than other aspects of ‘culture’ and ‘heritage’ support or protection. This is not surprising, since the indisputable vitality of Australian arts practice and ongoing development today is both a social good – in its affirmation of cultural creativity, distinctiveness and shared heritage – and a demonstration of the effectiveness of more than three decades of affirmative action by the Australia Council in support of *arts development*. However the Minister’s recent consultative process has sought responses broadly to the development of a *national cultural policy* (generally); and then raised more specific questions, directed to the concept of a *national heritage policy* (Minister’s Q.2).

Museums Australia stresses the importance of an encompassing vision of culture and cultural process as including support for the arts, while also including support for heritage – overcoming unnecessary ambiguities or apparent disjunctures within the Commonwealth’s overarching responsibilities for arts, culture and heritage at a national level.

In framing policy, Australia has not drawn upon definitions of culture and related concepts in wide circulation in international policy instruments – such as UNESCO’s Conventions and supporting documents. For example, the *Mexico Declaration on Cultural Policies*, formulated as an outcome of a benchmarking international conference on cultural policies in Mexico City, 1982, has long had a totemic place in UNESCO documents on culture, but is yet to be referenced in Australian Commonwealth documents on cultural policy. The importance of the Mexico City Declaration and its enduring impact internationally since 1982 is highlighted below.

***Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies** (1982):**

(Preamble)
Culture:
‘[I]n its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.’

(Article 1):
‘Every culture represents a unique and irreplaceable body of values since each people’s traditions and forms of expression are its most effective means of demonstrating its presence in the world.’

(*Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies*; World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City, 26 July - 6 August 1982)
http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/files/12762/11295421661mexico_en.pdf/mexico_en.pdf

*The Mexico City Declaration resulted from a ground-breaking, world conference on cultural policies in 1982 – which shifted paradigms and fundamental concepts of definition and application in the management of culture (critically changing vantage-points and answers to first-principle questions: management *for* whom? and *on behalf of* whom?). UNESCO still broadly acknowledges in many of its Culture Division documents and activities in the early 21st century that it continues to draw on the *Mexico City Declaration* of 1982 – influencing much of UNESCO’s continuing IGO cultural policy development work today.
[Museums Australia, Ed.]

Museums Australia adopts a similarly broad approach to culture, its definition and impact, which is reflected throughout the present submission.

Figure 1 (below), ***The Cycle of Culture & Heritage***, is a model developed by Museums Australia that illustrates the interconnected nature of different parts of cultural productivity in all societies. Museums Australia’s model understands cultural processes as occurring within an

integrated and dynamic cycle, in which all parts influence and are responsive to each other, continuously. It has some significant features:

- **An encompassing and durable framework**

The *Cycle of Culture and Heritage* provides a picture of continuous and irrepressible productivity within all cultures and societies at all times, connecting 'the arts' and new cultural forms of the moment to the ongoing consolidation of 'heritage'.

- **A living picture of cultural process**

MA's *Cycle* makes the test-model a living picture of cultural process itself. It contrasts with diagrams of bureaucratic arrangements for the administration of culture and heritage – which often create artificial divisions of processes that are vitally integrated; and pre-set delivery concepts of governmental support or intervention, which frequently result in segmentation and silos.

- **An integrated cultural system**

The representation of cultural process in MA's *Cycle* provides a base-model for an integrated, always-functioning and inclusive cultural system. It dissolves limiting distinctions between 'high' and 'low' cultural forms; and between metropolitan and regional or local forms and centres of cultural production. All have their place and validity, and are constantly responsive in relation to one another.

- **Culture in the present tense**

One of the most important aspects of the concept of the cultural cycle is that it is non-linear. It moves beyond the idea that past artworks are somehow 'of the past', and 'in the past', and therefore not available for reinterpretation in the present – whereas past works are in fact *experienced in the present* and often act as a *powerful stimulus to new cultural works* being created.

- **Inter-generational transmission of heritage**

The cycle also reveals how inter-generational transfer of cultural heritage occurs as a living aspect of the cycle, linking creativity with interpretation, renewal and preservation of heritage.

- **Compatibility with Indigenous culture**

A further benefit of the model is that it is compatible with an Indigenous modelling of cultural process – linking land (environment), people (society) and cultural identity (heritage) in a holistic set of interconnections. It could easily sit alongside an Indigenous model, while it does not seek to appropriate or 'speak for' Indigenous people or their own self-representation of culture and identity.

RECOMMENDATION 2 (Sect.4)

That NCP development take note of the model of cultural process, *The Cycle of Culture & Heritage* (Museums Australia, Jan. 2010), offered as a useful modelling tool for scoping cultural policy affecting both arts development and culture and heritage in their fundamentally integrated and dynamic relationships.

(See representation of *The Cycle of Culture & Heritage* - Figure1, following page.)

The Cycle of Culture & Heritage

All parts are dynamic and interacting, individually and collectively: all societies, everywhere, all times.



A working model by Bernice L. Murphy © Museums Australia

Figure 1. The Cycle of Culture & Heritage

Part C. Responses to Minister's Three Questions:
Proposals for improved cultural heritage management, protection & enriched public value

5 Steps to advance Australia's culture

[Q.1] *What positive steps would MA like to see to advance Australian culture?*

5.1 Commonwealth leadership not only in framing a National Cultural Policy (NCP) but also in developing implementation strategies

The vital overseeing role of the Commonwealth is essential as a coordinating dynamic for NCP scope and effectiveness. This national perspective, which can only be provided by the federal government through exercise of the roles of *overview* and *coordination* of cultural policy in partnership with State/Territory agencies, is the first and foremost responsibility of the Commonwealth.

5.2 Championship of an overarching vision of Australia's culture and heritage

The Commonwealth has an irreplaceable role in defining and advancing a 'national vision' of Australia's culture and heritage. Such a vision does not generally arise 'upwards' as a spontaneous emanation from the States/Territories or local communities alone – although for such a vision to be embraced and supported it must have grass-roots support across the country.

Without the Commonwealth's championing of a 'national vision' of Australia's culture and heritage, the great potential of the States/Territories' own support for management and preservation of culture and heritage cannot be aroused to the fullest extent.

A sketch for such a national vision underpins **Recommendation 1** (Sect. 3) in this submission.

5.3 Interconnection of government initiatives and reviews within an NCP framework

There has been a plethora of reviews and inquiries conducted by the Commonwealth across areas of cultural heritage responsibility over the past eighteen months or more. However, without an NCP framework, such reviews appear to be conducted in a policy vacuum.

Museums Australia believes that consideration of the broad governance and policy context, within which current administrative arrangements and delivery programs affecting national cultural (and heritage) policy operate or are under review, is crucial to harvesting best value through any NCP development process.

Current difficulties are exacerbated by the lack of structures at a national level that would enable two broad zones of policy implementation to foster conversations that could rationalise issues

arising under arts and culture agencies and programs on the one hand, and heritage and protection agencies and programs on the other. That is, although the Minister has responsibility for Heritage and the Arts in his portfolio, these responsibilities are divided in practice across different legislative provisions and ministerial Councils, and such divisions are deepened through exercise of different departments of government in measures for implementation of policy.

5.3.1 Comparison with the Australia Council

The Australia Council has a long-established provision and extensive organisational achievement in advancing the arts spectrum, from artists' grants and artform-support and programs through to sharply-attuned government policy and numerous improved outcomes nationally and internationally.

The Australia Council's durable architecture over more than three decades – linking separate artform boards and artform-specific staff/directors/chairs within a centralised structure of staff/CEO & overarching principal Chair guiding the Council itself – provides a proven structure for coordinated uptake of diverse advice and ideas shaping policy development and programs through a sifting channel leading to the Minister. This arrangement astutely guarantees a chain of links, from broad constituency and practitioner touch-points through to more condensed government policy interests and administrative structures.

There has been no corresponding architecture for the *culture and heritage* bandwidth. Provisions for culture and heritage policy and programs have evolved, often haphazardly, across an array of shifting structures and bodies since the 1970s. There has been no continuing, durable body (like the Australia Council) to garner appropriate input and harvest expertise along an interconnected chain of relationships: from advice sourced at frontlines professionally/locally, through to implementation and refinement of national program provision in tandem with S/T provision, and stimulus towards overarching policy development by the Commonwealth nationally and internationally.

The Recommendation below (**Recommendation 3**) would go a considerable way towards overcoming such divisions as have retarded corresponding advances along the culture and heritage bandwidth, and would put in place a structure of support that could achieve comparable outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 3 (Sect.5.3)

That a **Cultural Heritage Council** (CHC) be established to ensure national coordination and rationalisation of expertise informing policy development and programs relating to culture and heritage (and their legislative safeguards) at national and international levels.

5.4 Rationalisation of overlap/ anomalies in national legislative provisions across S/T jurisdictions

At present there is a cumbersome national mosaic of different legislative provisions, management systems and resources allocation, leading to inequitable community access to, and capability to care for, cultural heritage across the nation. There is frequently a disabling

lack of coherence in Australia's national legislative environment, in which the Commonwealth has a crucial role to examine and steer resolution of jurisdictional contradictions.

Difficulties persist in implementation of the national heritage system. The goals of coherence and linked architecture of legislation across jurisdictions are frustrated by disjunctures that continue to encumber procedures for the 'significance assessment' of both *movable cultural heritage* (collections) and *immovable heritage* (historic sites/places, buildings and environmental heritage).

For example, while the National Heritage System protects *collections* associated with *places* on the National and Commonwealth Heritage Lists – as do an increasing number of State/Territory jurisdictions – there is no agreed set of thresholds for *assessing the significance* of *collections* (*movable cultural heritage*), comparable to those now supporting the assessment of *heritage places* (*immovable cultural heritage*).

Therefore there is *no agreed methodology* for supporting the Commonwealth in its legislative responsibility to ensure the protection (from export) of objects of national significance under the *Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986* (PMCH Act) – currently under a two-fold review process.

RECOMMENDATION 4 (Sect.5.4)

That the Commonwealth note and promote measures, in concert with COAG, to overcome current disjunctions in the legislative provision for an integrated approach to the protection of Australia's cultural heritage.

The complex *national heritage system* for the protection of *movable cultural heritage* in Australia depends upon a refined methodology of '*heritage*' *assessment*: under the *Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986* (PMCH Act), currently undergoing two separate review processes.

As discussed further below (in **6.2**), shifting terminology concerning *culture* and *heritage* in government provisions (whether in policy or in law) jeopardises clear understanding of important distinctions enlistered in any discrimination between *local*, *state* and *national* '*significance*' of *cultural heritage items* (and their frequent association with *places*) that might be proposed for inscription on a relevant Register – for the protection of movable cultural heritage across varying Australian jurisdictions.

RECOMMENDATION 5 (Sect.5.4)

That the Commonwealth take steps to ensure better alignment of the management of heritage places and movable collections nationwide.

5.5 Connection of national legislative provisions with Commonwealth responsibilities under Australia's international treaty obligations

As is well recognised, the Commonwealth, in collaboration with S/T governments, must take the lead in ensuring Australia meets its obligations in respect of international treaties related to cultural heritage.

Australia led the world nationally in its approach to the conservation and protection of the environment from the 1970s: with the establishment of the holistic **Register of the National Estate**; with the **World Heritage Listing** of places such as Kakadu and Uluru for their cultural as well as natural heritage values; and with the inclusion of cultural heritage as a key indicator in the recurrent **State of the Environment Reports**.

Australia's long-standing obligations concerning international conventions generally require only regular reporting on implementation (for example, concerning implementation of the 1970 UNESCO Convention to inhibit illicit trafficking in cultural property – currently under review on UNESCO's Executive Board agenda, at a meeting Paris in April 2010).

However where Australia is (or may be preparing to become) a signatory to more recent international conventions/instruments for cultural heritage care and protection (such as the 1999 *Second Protocol* to the *Hague Convention* of 1954; or the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2003), enabling legislation is often required in order to facilitate compliance.

Australian legislation in the form of the *Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986* (PMCH Act) – currently under review – has provided such enabling legislation in relation to movable cultural heritage. However comparable enabling legislation has not yet been achieved in relation to other, more recent movements in international treaty provision and anticipated obligations of compliance by Australia.

For example:

- UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, adopted 2001 (Australia is still considering requirements arising);
- UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted 2003; (Australia is still considering possible State Party ratification);
- UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression, adopted 2005; effective 2007 (Australia has become a State Party);
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Sept. 2007; (Aust. support 2009)
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted 2006; effective 2008 (Australia became a signatory in July 2008)

Museums Australia proposes that the museums sector be more actively drawn upon for advice and assistance in implementation of cultural heritage protection measures, noting the sector's close relationships with internationally oriented colleague bodies such as **ICOM Australia** (the Australian National Committee of the International Council of Museums/ICOM, Paris); **Australia ICOMOS** (the Australian National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites/ICOMOS, Paris); and **Blue Shield Australia** (the Australian National Committee of the International Committee of the Blue Shield/ICBS, The Hague).

RECOMMENDATION 6 (Sect.5.5)

That the Commonwealth recognise, and more actively include the role of the museums sector, in providing advice and support for implementation measures towards the protection of culture and heritage under international law and treaty obligations.

MA's advocacy of this Recommendation aligns with **Recommendation 1** (Sect. 3) calling for a national vision statement and framework for Australian cultural heritage care. It also accords with **Recommendation 3** (Sect. 5.3), advocating the establishment of a **Cultural Heritage Council**, which would overview and link consideration of all the bodies that sit in various relationships with each other, and/or in relation to a variety of Commonwealth and S/T agencies. This would produce a more integrated national endeavour in promotion, care and protection of Australia's culture and heritage, as has long been provided for *arts development* nationally and internationally through the operations of the **Australia Council** (examined in Sect. 5.3).

6 Priorities for a National Heritage Policy (NHP)

[Q.2] *What do you think should be the priorities for a national heritage policy?*

6.1 A clear framework established for NHP development

As has been argued above, Australia has lacked a comprehensive vision and framework for a national cultural policy (NCP) – and the same could be said for a National Heritage Policy (NHP).

A first question would be: How are these two concepts related? Are they different creatures or related parts of an organic system anchored by *cultural process and productivity* itself? Museums Australia's firm conviction about cultural process, as involving an integrated relationship of arts, culture and heritage, is presented in MA's model diagram of *The Cycle of Culture & Heritage* (Figure 1).

Engaging such an integrative framework for development of either an NCP or an NHP would ensure that mutually sustaining links are supported throughout a whole system: interconnecting CREATIVITY (including our arts development); CULTURE (in its broader, more inclusive scope, including the 'memory institutions' of museums, galleries, libraries and archives); and CULTURAL HERITAGE (the stock-pile of our arts, cultural and scientific achievements recognised as a rich legacy passing between generations).

Throughout current government documents, there are scattered references to the concept of *heritage*, without definition. However when 'culture' is bracketed with 'heritage', and the *cultural heritage* of the nation is referred to, this concept is clearly mobilised at a high order of value – yet again, regrettably unsupported by a statement as to what is encompassed by the term.

A more inclusive consciousness is needed as to what changes in meaning are invoked when the shifting terms *culture*, *heritage*, and *cultural heritage* are used in policy documents (and whether *arts* is incorporated or excluded in these terms). This is desirable to clarify discrimination between *national cultural policy* and *national heritage policy* intentions – even in current consultative documents issued by government; to evaluate the broad scope of both terms in relation to promoting and safeguarding Australia's culture and heritage for all.

(See **Recommendation 1** (Sect. 3) concerning the need for a national vision for Australian cultural heritage and its care.)

6.2 Consideration of the national legislative, governance and policy context inclusively

In response to the Minister's first question (Q1: ...'*steps to advance Australian culture*'), MA argues throughout this submission the need for a broad national cultural policy framework, without which different strands of government policy initiatives and programs that impinge on national cultural heritage cannot successfully be interconnected or rationalised.

MA further argues that differing approaches to managing *collections* and *place*, implicit in current Commonwealth laws and administrative arrangements – see (5.4) in this submission – is but one aspect of the difficulties inhibiting successful synthesis of policy, law and action across the complex horizon of culture and heritage. Meanwhile disjunctions in heritage protection across different jurisdictions within Australia's federal system undercuts a comprehensive approach to operation of the *national heritage system* in terms of legal safeguards to protect the heritage of all Australians.

6.3 Connection of Culture and Heritage policies to socio-economic development of communities

Difficulties in clear meaning of key terms highlighted above (under 6.1 and 6.2) cascade further to the broadest reaches of government policy, and often complicate or inhibit measures for '*Keeping Culture Strong*' at community levels.

Furthermore, discontinuities in the policy or legislative environment, from an inclusively 'national' perspective (see 5.4 and **Recommendation 4**), often negatively impact on social and economic initiatives that directly affect the wellbeing of regional communities.

The potential to stimulate socio-economic development and local jobs for communities through successful promotion of national policy and infrastructure supporting **tourism** heightens these connections sharply. The successful telling of local, regional and national stories must utilise both places and their *associated collections*, which may be dispersed and distant. Nevertheless it is clear that presentation of heritage *places* and their *associated collections* are inextricably intertwined in any process of public *interpretation* of culture and heritage.

However through the long history of lamentable neglect of the museums sector at the local community level across Australia³ – evidenced in local historical collections left uncatalogued for decades; or no historical collections developed at all in some communities – it is often the case that regional, rural or remote communities are sadly bereft of the resources and skills to interpret their own history successfully *to their own members*; or to connect *the meaning of their local history* to larger 'Australian stories' projected as narratives of national development.

Much less is it possible, without historical resources, cultural interpretation skills and suitable physical amenities as a rallying point, for communities to project a sense of *distinctive local identity* to *outsiders* (as a vital promotion of social identity and encouragement of tourism).

Museums Australia's highly successful Rural + Remote Training Workshops, provided as a day's add-on package in recent years to MA's National Conferences (and supported by the

³ See Kylie Winkworth, 'Fixing The Slums Of Australian Museums; Or Sustaining Heritage Collections In Regional Australia', paper for Museums Australia Conference, 2005.

Commonwealth through special-purpose grant-funding by DEWHA), have shown clearly how strong is the need regionally for base-level training for volunteers seeking skills-development to gather resources and collections needed to interpret local history effectively.

The success of cultural amenity and identity-enhancing programs at a local community level, especially in regional and remote communities, therefore has direct connections to socio-economic development and entrepreneurial venture in those communities.

Finally, to the degree that awareness of local history, cohesive social identity and pride in shared achievement play directly into the whole complex of forces that promote enterprise, infrastructural development and related economic opportunities at a community level, these issues speak directly to *enhancing the social capital of Australia's distributed national communities*.

7 Other Issues

[Q.3] *What other issues do you think are important?*

7.1 Recognition of 'national' policy frameworks as including State/Territory institutions in cultural heritage care

There have been some negative consequences of the Commonwealth's increasing focus in recent years on the National Museums (mostly situated in the national capital) in sourcing advice on policy and care for collections of 'national' significance.

Many of these fine National Museums are new institutions, and deservedly provide a focus for Commonwealth attention. The creation of such long-anticipated national institutions – widely perceived as 'missing' on our national cultural horizon – was indeed generally welcomed by the museums sector for years, in anticipation of both the National Gallery of Australia being opened (in 1982) and a National Museum of Australia eventually being constructed in the nation's capital (Federation's centenary finally providing the impetus for an opening of the NMA in 2001).

However it was not anticipated that the realisation of new 'National' museums (joined by the National Portrait Gallery in 1999, and the Museum of Australian Democracy in Old Parliament House, May 2009) would lead the Commonwealth gradually to withdraw its interest in the foundational and continuing importance of the suite of state museums and galleries that had long considered their roles as primary institutions of *national heritage value* – in addition to the state responsibilities they discharge under the State/Territory legislation that governs their status, resourcing and operations.

7.1.1 The oldest and largest state institutions have historically cared for 'national' heritage

What needs to be added to the Commonwealth picture is the historical interconnection of the major state/territory institutions in their own pivotal care and projection of Australia's heritage at a 'national' level, in the development of their collections, buildings and programs since their foundations under colonial governments in the nineteenth century.

Most of the state capital museums – and indeed a number of important regional galleries (such as the oldest at Ballarat, founded in 1883) – have significant histories stretching back more than a century before Canberra was founded. Some of our state museums and galleries (for example The Australian Museum, in terms of our national history and *scientific heritage*; and in terms of *cultural heritage*, the National Museum and National Gallery of Victoria, originally combined with the State Library) have incomparably rich collections and histories that once defined Australia's relationships with the international world of much older museums. Those international relationships often continue to the present day.

In the area of natural history museums (that is, Australia's scientific heritage beginning with early-settlement flora and fauna collections; earliest archaeology, geology, botany, biology, and anthropology collections); and in the area of museums of applied arts and sciences (involving huge repositories of collected machinery and the history of applied science and technological development in Australia); in the areas also of decorative arts, design and furniture: across this wide spectrum of museum typologies, the state institutions have historically been the preeminent institutions in Australia, collectively encompassing the national histories and cumulated expertise in these areas.

It would be impossible to harvest a fully informed perspective on issues affecting Australia's 'national patrimony' or 'national cultural heritage' without sourcing advice from these institutions – and, indeed, it should be tapped through some recurrent structures to source relevant feedback and expertise on relevant national questions.

It would be positive for the Commonwealth to include some state museum/gallery representation in significant consultative forums involving National institutions – for an inclusive understanding of how the Distributed National Collection may continue to be enhanced and accessed in its broadest geographical reach and 'national' interrelationships.

RECOMMENDATION 7 (Sect.7.1.1)

That the Commonwealth government recognises the historical role of State/Territory institutions in caring for the Distributed National Collection, and ensures that 'national cultural heritage' continues to include within its frame of reference all the museums and historic sites across the country that collect, interpret, communicate and preserve parts of the cultural heritage of Australia.

7.2 Policy support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 'Keeping culture strong'

7.2.1 Museums Australia's Indigenous policy, '*Continuing Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities*'/CCOR *

* (This is the 2nd, revised edition, 2004, of MA's Indigenous policy upheld since foundation of MA in 1994.)

Australian museums in general, and Museums Australia in particular, have pursued a world-leading *policy and affirmative action program in relation to Australian Indigenous people* since the moment of MA's incorporation of our association as a single national body for the sector (in 1993-1994).

▪ **Cumulative effort of affirmative action towards Indigenous people by museums since the early 1990s**

The CCOR revised policy (2004), adopted by MA's Council after a 2003 consultation process on a draft review document, sits squarely within a cumulative, affirmative action policy initiative by Australia's museums since the early 1990s.

▪ **MA's continuous policy position affirming Indigenous rights (1993-2010)**

The 2nd edition (revised) policy (CCOR) directly inherits and builds upon the first policy, *Previous Possessions, New Obligations (PPNO)* of 1993. The earlier policy was promulgated as a first and still-benchmarking document in Australia to guide museums in their responsibilities towards Indigenous people.

- The PPNO policy gestation process, involving detailed consultation with Indigenous representatives through a committee that met in the early 1990s (with 50-50% reciprocal representation of museums representatives and Indigenous leaders); the committee undertook a series of meetings over a year or more that were financially supported by the Commonwealth.

The work program of the PPNO committee (Co-chaired by Dr Des Griffin, then Director of the Australian Museum, and Ms Lori Richardson, then a senior curator in the nascent National Museum of Australia) embraced the following strands:

- the development of a first *national policy document* to frame relations and protocols between museums and Indigenous people in respect of material long held in museum collections across the country;
- the first nationally coordinated effort to provenance Indigenous human remains (spearheaded at the time by the South Australian Museum under its then director, Dr Chris Anderson);
- the beginnings of a concerted effort nationally to accomplish repatriation of Indigenous ancestral remains back to their rightful communities and their descendants – as both prelude and accompaniment to affirmative action on repatriation of secret-sacred objects.

The work today of the DEWHA-supported **Return of Indigenous Cultural Property (RICP) Committee** (advising Commonwealth officers on implementation of the **RICP Program** nationally) is in fact a direct inheritor and continuation of the PPNO-gestation process that began, at the initiative of Australian museums collectively and reaching across State/Territory jurisdictions in moral common cause, in the 1990s.

Three members of the early 1990s committee and process – Bob Weatherall, Phil Gordon and Bernice Murphy – are members of the DEWHA-convened RICP Committee today and can speak to this long continuity of interconnected history and endeavour, in an effort that has yielded a national repatriation program in Australia that has been benchmarking by world standards of museums conduct.

Museums Australia's continuous commitment to an Indigenous policy for Australian museums over at least 17 years has therefore sought to provide a broad base-position guiding all museums in affirmative action towards Indigenous communities and heritage. At the same time Museums Australia recognises and encourages the fact that specific museums may develop institution-specific policies that will encompass special histories, resources and policy positions within States and Territories.

This effort and achievement should be recognised and referenced in Commonwealth policy documents, since it bears a continuous history and legacy of purposive investment by the Commonwealth itself, towards a highly significant outcome and record of progress in remediating deep national wrongs of history.

The Commonwealth can be justly proud of this cumulative effort and ongoing endeavour as producing a legacy that speaks directly to one strand of '**Closing the Gap**' objectives of government today.

RECOMMENDATION 8 (Sect.7.2.1)

That the Commonwealth recognise and ensure that Museums Australia's Indigenous policy, *Continuing Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities /CCOR* (2004), is referenced in the development of affirmative action on Indigenous management and control of Indigenous heritage in all respects involving museums, collections, and the exhibition of historical and contemporary Indigenous art and culture.

7.3 National programs required to support the National Arts and Disability Strategy

Museums Australia welcomes the *National Arts and Disability Strategy* adopted on 9 October 2009.

The Cultural Ministers Council has agreed to the National Arts and Disability Strategy as a measure of support to the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. This affirms the Australian government's commitment to social inclusion, which sets out a vision for improving access and participation in artistic and cultural activities for people with disabilities. The Strategy provides a framework within which jurisdictions can assess and improve existing activities. It also identifies new priority projects that could be progressed as national initiatives or by individual jurisdictions.

The Strategy sets out eight underlying principles that will guide its implementation. These address issues such as the right for all Australians to have access to, and participate in, arts and cultural activities, and the need for people with a disability to be involved in the decisions

that affect them.

7.3.1 Community impact issues

It is of concern to Museums Australia that this National Strategy not only fails to take note of the two very important national legislative changes impinging directly on the provision of access nationwide; the document also contains *no program for implementation*, and *no strategy for ensuring that access is able to be provided* – on an equitable basis of local capacity to deliver such access in heritage buildings still cared for by local communities – according to the principles enshrined in the document.

The two legislative changes are:

- proposals – now agreed – to amend the Building Code of Australia to ensure all public buildings are rendered fully accessible, and
- associated amendments to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* that place the burden of compliance on the owner/lessee for provision of access.

MA is greatly concerned that many community museums and historical societies, especially those in regional and remote Australia, will be unable to comply with these new access requirements readily, and could therefore find themselves in the invidious and unfair position of being in violation of the law. It would be a regrettable outcome if one worthy social objective – enjoining physical access for people with disability to old buildings built in an earlier age, according to very different building codes of the day – were to produce compliance obligations that conflicted with another worthy public good objective: caring for Australia's built heritage of the past as part of local history in Australia's region and rural communities.

It must be recognised that many local historical societies, small volunteer-run museums and their collections are frequently housed in old buildings – buildings that often form part of the public identity and communal heritage activities directly represented by these bodies and their associated buildings. It would be a tragedy if such bodies felt unable to remain in or to seek to occupy such historic buildings because the new Disability Access requirements, combined with the changes to the *Disability Discrimination Act*, require often complex and often financially onerous actions burdens beyond the capacity of most community organisations to manage. Such an enforced flight by communities from historic buildings could indeed represent a tragedy at a national level, were this to be a general result.

The difficulties indicated above underline the need for the Commonwealth to ensure that some program funding is available to support the principles espoused in the *National Arts and Disability Strategy*, to ensure that local and community-based organisations both understand the new provisions and are assisted to make the adjustments necessary for legal compliance. Such bodies would generally wish to comply, but often have inadequate funding and insufficient knowledge to be able to make the necessary adjustments required by recent legislative change.

RECOMMENDATION 9 (Sect.7.3 & 7.3.1)

That the Commonwealth provide leadership to ensure that programs enabling access principles articulated in the National Arts and Disability Strategy are enacted in all jurisdictions to provide equitable access for all Australians across the nation.

**Part D. Responses to Minister's three key themes:
'Keeping culture strong', 'Engaging the community', 'Powering the young'**

8 Measures for 'Keeping culture strong' [Theme 1]

8.1 Implementing a comprehensive approach to 'culture' and 'heritage'

As indicated in Museums Australia's model of the *Cycle of Culture and Heritage* (Fig.1), keeping culture strong requires attention to all parts of the *cycle of cultural production*.

This part of the submission accordingly highlights the many ways that museums currently support cultural creation and protection/preservation simultaneously. It includes Recommendations to enable the whole museums sector to provide stronger support in 'Keeping culture strong' into the future.

8.2 Affirming the role of museums and galleries in cultural heritage care

Museums – as can be seen by the description under (8.3) below – are primary sites of communication, interpretation and preservation of culture, providing essential stimulus to creativity, and support for artists in all forms of creative expression. Without museums as 'keepers' of culture, the creation of culture would be diminished, and the cultural heritage legacy passed to future generation would be infinitely lessened.

8.3 Endorsing an inclusive definition of museums and their social relevance

The use of the word 'museum' in this submission is broadly inclusive of galleries, science and natural history centres, historic sites and heritage places, monuments, keeping places and cultural centres, zoos and herbaria, libraries and archives and includes collections, resources, programs and exhibitions.

Moreover museums are geared towards social purpose and public benefit:

A museum helps people understand the world by using objects and ideas to understand and interpret the past and present and explore the future. A museum preserves and researches collections, and makes objects and information accessible in actual and virtual environments. Museums are established in the public interest as permanent, not-for-profit organisations that contribute long-term value to communities.

(Museums Australia Constitution [2002])

8.4 Supporting the museums sector's provision of resources for 'Keeping culture strong'

Our keeping places, knowledge centres and story-telling institutions – our art galleries and museums, together with historic buildings, national parks and sites, libraries and archives – are crucial to the 'caring for culture' values to be secured on behalf of all Australians.

Without museums and galleries, our creative vitality would be unsupported by the civil society institutions that 'Keep culture strong' in all modern nations: institutions permanently dedicated to the functions of interpretation, communication, collection and preservation of cultural heritage.

8.5 Recognising museums' stimulus of social creativity through their embrace of cultural diversity

Australians' cultural creativity, in all its diversity, is daily experienced, interpreted, conserved and re-presented by museums and galleries as part of our evolving identity and shared national heritage. Moreover an affirmative embrace of cultural diversity increases resources that directly encourage social creativity – as recognised in the 2001 UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

Creation draws on the roots of cultural tradition, but flourishes in contact with other cultures. For this reason, heritage in all its forms must be preserved, enhanced and handed on to future generations as a record of human experience and aspirations, so as to foster creativity in all its diversity and to inspire genuine dialogue among cultures.

UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2 Nov 2001): Article 7: 'Cultural heritage as the wellspring of creativity'.
http://www.unesco.org/confgen/press_rel/021101_clt_diversity.shtml
[accessed 20 Jan.2010]

8.6 Reinforcing museums' inter-generational transfer of cultural forms, as the heritage legacy for future Australians

Without museums and galleries (supported by libraries and archives), the creative forms of the present risk being detached from the generation that has created them, thus 'lost' to reinterpretation and unavailable for the continued stimulus and enrichment of future generations.

All societies that '*keep culture strong*' commit great resources to disclosure and reflection on their cultural forms; to education of their new members about the history of these forms, their meaning and social importance; and to the inter-generational transfer of this heritage as a legacy to oncoming members.

RECOMMENDATION 10 (Sect. 8)

That the Commonwealth commission a review of the Australian museums sector's contribution to the preservation, interpretation and communication of Australia's diverse culture and heritage as encompassed by the museums sector in 'Keeping culture strong'. Such review could be part of a more inclusive review of culture and heritage measures as a whole, within which museums sector contributions would be better recognised in their wider relations.

9 Measures for ‘Engaging the community’ [Theme 2]

9.1 Museums are catalysts for community engagement

Museums today are lively civic spaces that encourage social interaction and stimulate discussion and debate. They enrich and support the social development of our nation, nurturing the distinctiveness and inter-connectedness of its many diverse communities.

9.2 Museums are essential to our sense of ourselves as Australians

Museums and galleries across the country are potent places of encounter. Museums capture, present and keep alive the many forms of expression, thought and accomplishment by which we recognise ourselves as Australians and our achievements as a nation.

Sites and museums, large and small across the country, welcome tourists and visitors daily, revealing the important relations people share with each other, and their connections and associations with distinctive places. They show how these interactions have shaped our culture, our way of life, our environment and our special stories.

9.3 Museums help people know their stories, understand their community’s development, and map their place in the world

Our historical museums and art galleries connect people to the wider world of story-telling and experience – of cultural forms, events and cumulative memory. They respond to the vital need in human beings to imagine how we fit into the larger, longer story of the world’s history, and the diverse journeys that all societies have made towards the present.

These ‘story-telling institutions’ arouse our understanding of history, of scientific and technological achievement, and of cultural developments. They heighten our relations and contrasts with other peoples and their stories, and help us to respect the shared heritage of all humankind.

9.4 Museums showcase Indigenous culture and communities

Our Indigenous cultural centres and keeping places, together with the living cultural heritage of Indigenous communities, continue to shape Australian identity, community, story and song in unique ways, keeping alive what is irreplaceable and distinctive about Indigenous culture in both our ancient and contemporary heritage. (See **Recommendation 7** (Sect. 7.1.1) concerning Indigenous policy.)

9.5 Museums inform and enhance communities in environmental care

Museums showcase and nurture understanding of the natural world; they help us all to understand and better care for the environment. Museums, botanical gardens, zoos, marine sites and national parks – our many ‘open-air and underwater museums’ – heighten our understanding of the natural world we inherit, which nourishes, shelters and feeds us.

These knowledge centres and resources raise public awareness of our responsibilities to care for the legacy of nature that sustains life for all, and to replenish these resources for future generations.

9.6 Museum Australia's vision of cultural heritage engages communities

9.6.1 The socially animating role of communities

A missing element of cultural heritage consideration has been the socially animating component of *communities*, supported by the recognition that communities care for cultural heritage long before – and long after – any governmental initiative in this regard.

9.6.1 Communities transmit and secure intangible heritage values

Recognition of communities also admits the full scope of *intangible heritage*, often providing the vital connective tissue of communal memory and meaning that is necessary to make sense of any *tangible heritage* (sites, buildings, objects, texts, records) surviving over time.

The UNESCO definition of intangible cultural heritage merits noting for its breadth of social reference in relation to communities:

What is meant by *intangible cultural heritage*?

The 'intangible cultural heritage' means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

(Text of UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO, Paris, 17 October 2003)

9.6.2 Institutional 'ownership' of collections includes community stakeholders

Communities have to be brought into the picture more actively as front-line stakeholders, beneficiaries and custodians of cultural heritage – even restored to an adjusted picture of 'ownership', to the degree that public institutions (museums and galleries) 'own' their collections only on behalf of the communities whose support has long contributed to their evolution and resourcing.

9.6.3 Recognition of private-sector and informal collecting

A huge proportion (many would assert, by far the greater proportion) of Australia's cultural heritage is owned privately – is in fact situated outside our public institutions. However much material is known by curators, historians and other experts, and is generously able to be accessed (lent) to public museums and galleries, regularly supplying significant content in their exhibitions. This is strikingly true in the case of art museums/galleries, where outstanding works of art in private ownership are constantly drawn upon in preparing exhibitions in our major state and national galleries.

9.6.4 From community collecting and social history to 'national heritage'

In contrast to Australia's rising tide of ambitious private collectors, there is a far larger phenomenon of diverse personal collecting, often at quite modest levels of resources or wealth – but expanding the 'typology' of collections more broadly; there is a vast amount of collections-development that goes on daily in private and social spheres of community life.

While there is no need for governments to intervene in this large domain of private collecting, there would nevertheless be a positive gain in recognising its role, value and contribution to social and cultural history, from local through to national levels. It would be positive to champion its worthiness and even provide public-sector expertise (authoritative, expert advice – notably on conservation issues) to assist and 'honour' this activity of community-driven preservation of cultural history and heritage.

Building such links of recognition and reinforcement between public sector institutional activity and the informal work of community-based cultural preservation daily (to which people contribute their own extensive resources and time) would weave strands in public policy-setting that reinforce the supportive role of communities in the preservation of cultural forms, conservation of social memory, and animation of cultural life – as constant, ongoing activity, often pursued with passion over lifetimes.

9.6.5 Community-collecting as reinforcement of diversity and strengthening of social capital

The examples given here suggest the many connections to be recognised between public policy setting and private-sphere activities as jointly connected to issues of public value, while not requiring public intervention. Such recognition, however, can significantly reinforce the social capital of community-based collecting activity, and positively validate the huge cultural diversity of interests that it encompasses.

Public recognition of the links between private and public activities that sift and interpret our cultural life can thereby act as a reinforcement and support of citizen-developed collections that make up (further downstream) the evolving *cultural heritage* of the nation. This recognition can enhance individuals', groups' and the

broader community's role in building a vibrant society: more affirmatively interconnected through its cultural bonds of diversity, and its variegated forms of expression that embody and enliven a collective heritage.

9.6.6 Joining the dots: reconnecting movable and immovable cultural heritage

The human record of what has been thought, known, achieved – preserved through oral traditions, archives and collections, consolidated through scholarship, exhibitions, interpretation and publications – is aroused through attention to the diverse history of communities. This vantage-point vitally unlocks the underpinning links between people and place, between site and action, between movable and immovable culture and heritage. Such connections through people and communities animate the vibrating dimensions of tangible and intangible heritage and their often indissoluble binding and entwining, one with the other, in all living experience of heritage.

9.7 Communities are both source and guarantor of 'public good' values

9.7.1 Collections are held on public trust

Public collections are held on trust (under the vital ethical principles of public interest, public good, and the animating concept of stewardship), as part of a long-term legacy of tangible and intangible heritage steadily accumulated and transferred from one generation to the next.

9.7.2 Collections are mute without interpretation and audiences

There is value in recognising a simple equation that presents a more complete and dynamic understanding of where public policy should place its touch-points of recognition and set its tent-poles of long-range strategic planning at a national level:

<cultural heritage = collections + stories + communities>

RECOMMENDATION 11 (Sect.9 - generally)

That the Commonwealth, in association with COAG partners, establish a national program for the care of cultural heritage across the nation, **Caring for Culture**, (comparable to the **Caring for Country** program focused on the natural environment), to ensure that all Australians, wherever they reside, have equitable access and opportunity to participate in and contribute to the care of their own cultural heritage.

10 Measures for ‘Powering the young’ [Theme 3]

10.1 Museums offer a critical stimulus for ‘Powering the young’

Today’s youth have unparalleled opportunities to unlock cultural richness in all its diversity through digital and actual encounters available and prepared for them in galleries, museums, national parks, deserts, botanical gardens, zoos, marine environments, wilderness trails and historical sites across the country.

The sheer variety of these learning resources stimulates youth to explore the world and create new patterns and meanings that transform the present and re-shape the future.

However, this ever-changing digital environment presents constant challenges to the cultural sector, even as it opens new possibilities of access, exploration and discovery.

As technology accelerates, there is a seemingly widening gap between youthful expectations of seamless cultural access, and the capacity and capability of the cultural sector to support this curiosity and urgent interest.

Therefore a relatively recent but critical element in any national cultural policy must be recognition of the increasing pace of expectation of access to older forms of cultural expression, as a key stimulus and support for new and innovative contemporary cultural expression.

Museums are acutely aware of this gap in expectation and delivery, and while striving within limited resources to address diverse interests, need concerted government support to realise the full potential of the digital age.

Major national initiatives are in train that bear upon, but have thus far not been directly associated with, the cultural sector. In recent months the Commonwealth has strengthened its commitment to the National Broadband Network, has accepted all of the Web 2.0 Taskforce recommendations regarding open government (including accessible information and services), and has continued to mandate development of the National Curriculum and implement the computers in schools program.

Museums Australia urges that the proposed National Cultural Policy recognise this changing landscape and the necessity of incorporating specific strategies to ensure that cultural heritage will continue to be available in readily accessible ways to enrich and stimulate young people throughout our society.

RECOMMENDATION 12 (Sect.10.1)

That the Commonwealth establish a national cultural digitisation program, focussed on ensuring that the nation’s cultural heritage is accessible as a living resource to stimulate and support the educational development of young Australians, and for the understanding of Australian culture and heritage to be promoted as a shared benefit of citizenship.

10.2 Museums are essential places of life-long learning

Museums and galleries provide vital access to sites, collections, exhibitions, performance and a wide variety of multi-media resource material: enriching, stimulating and empowering students and their teachers to attain the full potential of human development.

Museums thereby enable and support young Australians to become confident and creative individuals, successful life-long learners, and active and informed citizens through unique and authentic learning experiences.

10.3 Museums are vital partners supporting teaching and learning outcomes in the new national curriculum

The process of framing a National Cultural Policy is occurring at the same time as the hugely significant effort is under way to realise a National Curriculum designed to enrich and enliven learning across the nation. Museums and galleries – together with historic buildings, sites, precincts and national parks – are integral to the learning outcomes proposed in all areas of the new National Curriculum.

Museums have vital primary-source materials and resources (objects, collections, displays, interactive experiential exhibitions) able to stimulate and support teachers and students in all learning areas across the new curriculum. Moreover museum resources are specifically profiled and embedded in the teaching and learning strategies across core subject areas (History, Science, Mathematics, English in the first phase), framing the learning pathways of all Australians as they participate in their growth-stages towards full personhood and democratic citizenship.

The new curriculum recognises the need for all students to understand their local and regional history, their local environment, and their own distinctive arts and culture, in order to be able to see themselves as citizens of the whole nation. Accordingly, students and their teachers will need to grasp perspectives encompassing local, national and international dimensions as they proceed through their years of schooling. It is only through facilitated access to the nation's museums, galleries, historical society resources and the collections they hold that this promise and expectation can be realised as an active component of the national education process.

In summary, museums and galleries have an invaluable role to play in supporting the new curriculum, through (i) delivering excellent on-site programming specifically designed to meet the new curriculum's content and skills development; (ii) continuing to produce first-rank curriculum resources that can be increasingly accessed online, and that will also be explicitly linked to requirements of the new curriculum; and (iii) providing professional development support both for in-service and pre-service teacher training.

Museums Australia believes that for relatively small investment in museums-based learning materials and visitation opportunities, rich dividends can be reaped in schools across the nation. Furthermore, digital availability is an inescapable component of such an investment and enrichment today.

Realising this enrichment potential supporting national education objectives will only be possible if ministerial colleagues from the cultural and heritage sectors actively promote relationships with the work of the Education Minister and education sector.

Museums Australia proposes that a tailored ministerial partnership program is required: to connect the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA), with the Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) and the Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC). It was a meeting of cross-council ministerial representatives that successfully created the impetus for the development of the National Arts Curriculum, and there have been earlier successful cross-portfolio partnerships involving education.

(See **Attachment 2: Museums Australia: Declaration of the Value of Museums to Education**, Museums Australia, 2009)

RECOMMENDATION 13 (Sect.10.2 and 10.3)

That the Minister for the Arts, Heritage and the Environment meet again with the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA), to agree on program approaches to ensure that equitable access to local, regional and national culture and heritage is readily able to be provided nationwide to enrich teaching and learning approaches to all subject areas in the developing National Curriculum.

Part E: Attachments

Attachment 1:
Snapshot of Museums Australia as a national organisation

Attachment 2:
Museums Australia: Declaration of the Value of Museums to Education (2009)

Profile

(Museums Australia was formed in 1994, combining various museum organisations, dating back to the 1930s)

Museums Australia (museums + galleries) encompasses a diverse range of museums, galleries, historic sites, heritage centres, botanic and zoological gardens, research centres, Indigenous Cultural Centres, and Keeping Places across Australia; it includes some other cultural heritage organisations.

MA is a service and professional development organisation. It seeks to provide professional stimulus and value for the whole museums sector nationally (and especially regionally).

- MA produces **programs and services nationally**, not confined to MA members alone;
 - MA works with a **range of “third sector” partners in the non-profit area of cultural heritage provision** – e.g. Federation of Australian Historical Societies, ICOMOS, ACNT;
 - MA is not a union or lobbyist organisation – remuneration and employment conditions are matters for relevant employing authorities at all levels of government or other bodies;
 - As a service organisation, MA is focused as much on museums’ **service to Australian communities** as on the **capacities of museums** themselves to increase resources and skills, and render such service;
 - MA also **acts internationally** as a museums organisation (and especially – in partnership with ICOM-Australia – with proactive attention to the Asia-Pacific region).
-

MA Membership

Current total membership (December 2009): **1,517 members**

- **789 individual members**
 - Including consultants, business owners, students, volunteers, retired persons and professionals
 - **728 institutional members**
 - Representing approximately 7,000 professionals employed in the sector from National museums and galleries to small regional historical societies and art spaces
 - Encompassing at least 10,000 volunteers
-

A current national snapshot of MA institutional members

(This snapshot captures the variety of institutions, from tiny, regional and remote, to large/capital city institutions: from parks and zoos to galleries)

Australian Capital Territory

In addition to the major institutional members of MA in Canberra (**National Gallery of Australia, Australian War Memorial, National Museum of Australia, Old Parliament House**) MA ACT includes the following institutional members:

- Australian Customs Service
- ACT Historic Places (incl. Lanyon Art Gallery; Blundells Cottage)
- Canberra Museum and Art Gallery (Canberra Civic)
- Australian Natural Wildlife Collection (CSIRO)
- Australian Council of National Trusts (ACNT)

New South Wales

- Lake Macquarie Regional Gallery (Lake Macquarie)
- Zoology Museum, University of New England (Armidale)
- Goulburn Regional Art Gallery (Goulburn)
- Goulburn Mulwaree Parks and Recreation Services
- McCrossin’s Mill Museum (Uralla)

Northern Territory

- Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (Darwin)
- Northern Territory Police Museum, Winnelli (Darwin)
- Catherine Outback Heritage Museum (Catherine)
- Chung Wah Society Inc. (Darwin) (for Chinese heritage; volunteer-run)
- Northern Territory Police Museum (Darwin)
- Strehlow Research Centre (Alice Springs)
- National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame (Alice Springs)

Queensland

- Calliope River Historical Village (Gladstone)
- Yugambeh Museum, Language and Heritage Resource Centre (Indigenous museum project – Yugambeh is south of Brisbane area); ("Marvellous Regional Museums"- Indigenous Cultural Centre/ Keeping Place category winner 2008)
- North Burnett Regional Council (incl. Mundubbera Art Gallery (Gayndah)
- Cairns Regional Gallery
- Tableland Regional Gallery (Atherton)
- Brisbane Botanic Gardens (Mt Coot-Tha)
- University of Queensland Art Museum (UQ)
- University of Technology Art Museum (QUT)
- University of Queensland Anthropology Museum (School of Social Sciences, UQ)

South Australia

- Architecture Museum, University of South Australia
- Art Gallery of South Australia
- Army Museum of South Australia (Keswick)
- Flinders University Art Museum
- Mary McKillop Penola Centre (Penola)
- Olive Wood, Renmark

Tasmania

- Levendale and Woodsdale History Room (Orford)
- Devonport Regional Gallery (Devonport)
- Beaconsfield Mine and Heritage Centre (Beaconsfield)
- Tasmanian Wood Design Centre

Victoria

- Zoos Victoria (Melbourne)
- Museum Victoria (Melbourne)
- Latrobe Regional Gallery (Morwell)
- Sovereign Hill (Ballarat)
- Insectarium of Victoria (Mt Macedon)
- Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery (Swan Hill)
- Golden Dragon Museum (Bendigo)
- Bendigo Art Gallery (Bendigo)
- Ararat Regional Gallery (Ararat)
- Parks Victoria
- Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Library
- Monash University Museum of Art (Clayton)

Western Australia

- Broome Historical Society (Broome) (Volunteer-run)
- Museum of Natural History (Guildford, WA)
- Geraldton Art Gallery (Geraldton)
- Ongerup and Needilup District Museum, Ongerup (north of Albany)
- Carnamah Historical Society (300 km north of Perth)
- Kodja Place and Visitors Centre, Kojanup.(ABC RN "Marvellous Regional Museums" National Winner (all categories), 2008)

Declaration of the Value of Museums to Education

Museums... are universal educational institutions of immense expressive power and authority. They hold their resources in trust for all people.

They communicate with us across boundaries of language, culture and time, and suggest comparisons which illuminate our experience of the present...

Through museums, we have direct contact with peoples of all ages and cultures, experience the unimaginable variety of the natural world and expand our understanding of what it means to be human.¹

Museums are essential places of learning. They enable and support young Australians to become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners and active and informed citizens through unique and authentic learning experiences.

Museums are critical partners with government, schools and communities in the promotion of equity and excellence in education through access to sites, collections, exhibitions, professional staff, programs and resources.

Engagement with, and enjoyment of, Australia's wealth of natural and cultural heritage should be:

- Integral to the learning outcomes proposed in all areas of the National Curriculum, and
- Embedded in the teaching and learning strategies of the National Curriculum.

Museums and National Curriculum learning outcomes

Museums are integral to the learning outcomes proposed in the National Curriculum by:

- (a) Deepening and broadening the learning experience of all Australian students and teachers, by exposing them to the diversity, singularity and complexity of Australia's natural and cultural heritage, and to the ways in which this has been, and continues to be, expressed;
- (b) Educating students about the place of humanity in the environment, the nature of the physical universe, and the impacts of global development and change;
- (c) Strengthening awareness of the value of diversity and sustainability;
- (d) Contributing to students' understanding of Australian national identities; and
- (e) Developing student understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens through providing local, regional, national and global perspectives.

¹ *A Common Wealth* – Museums in the Learning Age, Report by David Anderson, revised 1999

Museums and teaching and learning strategies

Museums enrich teaching and learning by:

- (a) Providing teachers and students with opportunities for direct and virtual access to material culture (primary sources, including sites);
- (b) Supporting access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture;
- (c) Fostering the development of student self-esteem through active student-centred learning;
- (d) Responding to individual abilities and learning preferences;
- (e) Encouraging skills development, collaboration, problem solving and dialogue in safe, stimulating environments; and
- (f) Offering students hands-on, experiential and visual learning outside the classroom.

What is a museum?

A museum helps people understand the world by using objects and ideas to understand and interpret the past and present and explore the future. A museum preserves and researches collections, and makes objects and information accessible in actual and virtual environments. Museums are established in the public interest as permanent, not-for-profit organisations that contribute long-term value to communities.

The use of the word "museum" in this document is broadly inclusive of galleries, science and natural history centres, historic sites and heritage places, monuments, keeping places and cultural centres, zoos and herbaria, libraries and archives and includes collections, resources, programs and exhibitions.

What is the Museums Australia Education National Network?

Museums Australia (MA) is the national organisation for the museums sector, committed to the conservation, continuation and communication of Australia's heritage. MA encompasses places and their collections, and covers the conservation, continuation and communication of Australia's historic, natural and Indigenous heritage: tangible and intangible.

The Education National Network is a professional body of educators in museums across Australia founded in 1975. It came under the auspices of MA in 1993.

Working with the National Curriculum Board

We are committed to working with the National Curriculum Board and its processes to ensure that the museums sector can play its part in helping to deliver a world class curriculum for Australian schools.

Contact details

To contact the Education National Network go to:
<http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/site/page75.php>