

Introduction

- 1.1 Canberra's national institutions are a major drawcard for the nation's capital, attracting local, interstate and overseas visitors. By preserving and promoting Australia's history, culture, arts, science and democracy, they help to tell our national story, and to connect Australians and overseas visitors with that story. They also contribute significantly to the economy of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and to the character of Canberra as the national capital.
- 1.2 In evidence given to its inquiry the Committee received a resounding endorsement of the value and role of Canberra's national institutions, including that they are 'fundamental to our self-understanding as a people and a society',¹ and that together, they represent 'who we are – to understand what it means to be in Australia and to have a greater belief in ourselves'.²
- 1.3 Over the years a number of national institutions based in Canberra have been subject to budgetary pressures. Simultaneously, public expectations of institutions have changed with rapid technological development and audiences shifting from consumers to co-collaborators.³ Demand for their services continues to grow. Meanwhile the institutions must ensure that they continue to meet legislative requirements and public expectations relating to their governance and accountability. The national institutions therefore face both exciting opportunities and significant challenges to protect and enhance their work into the future.

1 National Museum of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 3.

2 The Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson, Director, Australian War Memorial, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 22 June 2018, p. 38.

3 National Museum of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 5.

- 1.4 This report reflects the outcomes of the Committee's inquiry into Canberra's national institutions, which examined their strategic value, their engagement with the Australian people, and their governance and resourcing challenges.

Past reports

- 1.5 A number of parliamentary committee and government reports have been produced in the past that relate to some of the national institutions based in Canberra. While these have not all focused directly on the work of the institutions, they have covered relevant themes including the effect of efficiency dividends, and private sector support for the arts, which influence the work of national institutions based in Canberra. Previous reports referred to in this report include:
- the 2008 inquiry by Parliament's Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit into the impact of efficiency dividends on small agencies, including cultural institutions;⁴
 - a 2011 Australian Government review into private sector support for the arts in Australia,⁵ conducted by Mr Harold Mitchell AC; and
 - Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) performance audits of the National Collections: *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (1998); *Safe and Accessible National Collections* (2005); and *Management of the National Collections* (2018).⁶

Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.6 On 20 March 2018, the (then) Minister for Regional Development, Territories and Local Government, the Hon. Dr John McVeigh MP, wrote to the Committee requesting that it inquire into Canberra's national institutions, and proposing terms of reference for such an inquiry. On 26 March 2018, the Committee adopted the terms of reference referred by the Minister and opened its inquiry.

4 Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, *Report 413: the efficiency dividend and small agencies: size does matter*, December 2008, Canberra, p. 56.

5 Mr Harold Mitchell, *Building Support: Report of the Review of Private Sector Support for the Arts in Australia*, October 2011.

6 Australian National Audit Office, 'Performance audit reports', <https://www.anao.gov.au/pubs/performance-audit>, viewed on 22 January 2019.

- 1.7 The inquiry was advertised for public submissions on 26 March 2018. Submissions were invited from government departments with national institutions within their portfolio, some of the contributors to previous inquiries, and other relevant stakeholders.
- 1.8 The Committee received 83 submissions and 14 supplementary submissions, which are listed in Appendix A. The Committee also received 8 exhibits, which are listed in Appendix C.
- 1.9 The Committee held five public hearings in Canberra between June and December 2018, at which it heard from a range of national institutions based in Canberra, as well as other relevant people and organisations. The public hearings held and witnesses heard are listed in Appendix B.
- 1.10 The Committee also undertook a site visit to the collection and exhibition facilities of a number of institutions in Canberra, on 14 September 2018, and held a private briefing with the ANAO in November 2018.
- 1.11 The Committee expresses its appreciation to all those who contributed to the inquiry.

Structure of the report

- 1.12 The report is structured as follows.
 - Chapter 1 (this chapter) briefly outlines background to the inquiry, and the conduct and scope of the inquiry.
 - Chapter 2 discusses the value of Canberra's national institutions, including in collecting and preserving Australia's culture and history, generating revenue for Canberra and the nation, and supporting education and research.
 - Chapter 3 examines the way the national institutions engage with the public, both within Canberra and beyond. In particular, the chapter discusses how public expectations are changing, including the growing emphasis on digital technologies. The chapter also discusses the role these institutions play in education, and their outreach beyond Canberra.
 - Chapter 4 examines the governance frameworks and processes for the national institutions, as well as processes and proposals for establishing new national institutions in Canberra.
 - Chapter 5 considers current challenges to resourcing faced by Canberra's national institutions, and how this affects their ability to meet their responsibilities now and into the future. The chapter also

discusses attracting non-government sources of revenue such as private sector and philanthropic support.

Scope of the inquiry

- 1.13 The Committee acknowledges that the term 'Canberra's national institutions' differs from pre-existing terminology used in other contexts and reports, such as 'National Cultural Institutions' and 'National Collecting Institutions'.
- 1.14 The Department of Communications and the Arts identifies the following Canberra-based institutions as National Cultural Institutions:
- the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House;
 - the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia;
 - the National Gallery of Australia;
 - the National Library of Australia;
 - the National Museum of Australia; and
 - the National Portrait Gallery.⁷
- 1.15 The National Cultural Institutions also include several institutions not located in Canberra: the Australian National Maritime Museum; Bundanon Trust; Australia Council for the Arts; Australian Film, Television and Radio School; and Screen Australia.
- 1.16 The 'National Collecting Institutions' comprise eight entities responsible for Australia's national collections of heritage and cultural assets. The six Canberra-based National Cultural Institutions listed at paragraph 1.14 are National Collecting Institutions, along with:
- the National Archives of Australia; and
 - the Australian War Memorial.⁸
- 1.17 Consistent with its terms of reference, the Committee focused its examination on institutions based in Canberra. Moreover, the Committee considered that the term 'national institutions' should extend beyond the cultural and collecting institutions, to encompass other institutions of a national character located in Canberra and overseen by a Commonwealth

7 Department of Communications and the Arts, 'Impact of our National Cultural Institutions', 2018, <https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/museums-libraries-and-galleries/impact-our-national-cultural-institutions>, viewed 3 September 2018.

8 See Australian National Audit Office, *Management of the National Collections*, Report 46 of 2017-2018, June 2018, Table 1.1.

Government agency, which also contribute to Canberra's role in preserving, expressing and promoting Australia's national identity.

1.18 Therefore, in addition to the Canberra-based National Cultural Institutions and National Collecting Institutions listed in paragraphs 1.14 and 1.16 above, the Committee examined evidence from and in relation to the following institutions, considered by it to be national institutions:

- the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies;
- the Australian National Botanic Gardens;
- the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Discovery Centre;
- the High Court of Australia;
- Parliament House;
- the National Electoral Education Centre;
- Questacon – The National Science and Technology Centre; and
- the Australian Institute of Sport.

1.19 Some evidence given to the inquiry noted that the term 'Canberra's national institutions' could be interpreted broadly to include a vast range of entities,⁹ with many submissions suggesting that additional sites could be included within the definition.¹⁰

1.20 The Committee also received evidence from a number of organisations that wished to be considered national institutions, and others proposing the establishment of new national institutions. Chapter 4 of this report considers the establishment of new national institutions.

9 For example: H C Burmester, *Submission 3*, pp. [1-2]; Lake Burley Griffin Guardians Incorporated, *Submission 45*, pp. 1-3.

10 For example: H C Burmester, *Submission 3*, pp. [1-2]; Mr Brendon Kelson, *Submission 18*, p. [1]; Science and Technology Australia, *Submission 38*, p. 3; Ms Marianne Albury-Colless, *Submission 53*, p. [1]; Meredith Hinchliffe, Ms Carolyn Forster OAM and Ms Sandy Forbes, *Submission 56*, p. 1; Shane Rattenbury MLA and Caroline Le Couteur MLA, *Submission 60*, p. 1.

