

26 AUG 2008

Patron: His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Ret'd)



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Submission No:.....67.....
Date Received:.....26 Aug 2008.....
Secretary:.....

Ms. Sharon Grierson MP
Chair
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms. Grierson,

Further to my brief conversation with you and Senator Lundy this afternoon I am writing on behalf of the Australian Federation of Friends of Museums (AFFM). AFFM is a member of the World Federation of Friends of Museums.

AFFM is the peak body which represents 97 museums' and galleries' Friends groups and in turn their members number approximately 200,000 people, almost all of whom are volunteers.

The efficiency dividend imposed by government has a trickle-down effect on our member groups, who are striving to provide programs and benefits for their members in a continuing financially reduced environment.

Each national cultural institution has an obligation to make its collections and programs widely accessible and achieves this in large part through collaboration with state regional and local cultural organisations.

There are considerable difficulties for these important collaborative relationships when education and travelling exhibition programs from major institutions are reduced due to continuing budget restraints.

There is a knock-on effect:

- Communities around Australia are deprived of access to cultural experiences and education programs from our national institutions.
- The Friends groups who so ably support their museums feel powerless and neglected, and in turn have less to offer their members, as volunteers and member organisations are the ones who very often provide the only add-on programs.
- This will translate further to loss of their membership base and the funds and subscriptions with which they run their organisations.

Many communities throughout Australia are struggling under the problems of drought and climate change so people are unable to travel to see any cultural programs. The ability for national cultural institutions to tour their collections becomes even more important and valuable.

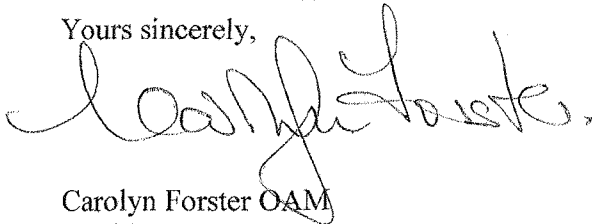
Cultural organisations rely heavily on the good will of the community through:

- Voluntary help
- By philanthropic contributions which support the purchase of art and artefacts
- And with bequests.

If it is seen that this large sector of the community is not recognised and supported then, in turn, this support will be lost. Friends and member organisations are the bodies which attract this support from both individuals and in some cases from corporate sponsorship, and are advocates both for their museums and for the people in the community.

The longer term effect of these efficiency dividends, imposed on our national cultural institutions, may result in a very costly task in order to rehabilitate these institutions and their capacity to provide communities throughout Australia with access to our national collections. This cost will also be borne by the many volunteer and member organisations that are a backbone of the cultural life of communities throughout Australia.

Yours sincerely,



Carolyn Forster OAM
President

21st August 2008