

## Distribution of exhibitions

### The Issue

- 3.1 Under the Policy Guidelines of the AIA, the MOs are required to ensure that an equitable distribution of exhibitions among the States and Territories is achieved over time.<sup>1</sup> Also, all AIA indemnified exhibitions must travel to at least two States or Territories.
- 3.2 The State galleries claimed that the exhibitions indemnified by the Commonwealth scheme were being shown mainly in the large centres on the east coast. This, they maintained, was inequitable because a national scheme should be enjoyed by as many Australians as possible.

### Distribution history

- 3.3 From 1979 to 2000, there were 85 Commonwealth indemnified exhibitions with 18 million visitors. Of these exhibitions, 87% were shown in more than one venue, including one or more State galleries.<sup>2</sup> The distribution of exhibitions to States was as follows:

State	VIC	NSW	QLD	ACT	SA	WA	TAS	NT
No. of exhibitions	42	41	26	21	21	20	6	2

1 DCITA, *Submission No. 1.02*, Attachment 2, p. 7.

2 Of the 13% balance, 7% have been single venue tours to one State gallery, and 6% have been single venue tours to the NGA.

- 3.4 AEA stated that of its own 48 exhibitions, 36 went to Sydney, 34 to Melbourne, 21 to Brisbane, 17 to Adelaide, 18 to Perth, six to Hobart, four to Canberra, two to Darwin and three to other centres. AEA claimed that they endeavour to provide reasonable distribution while considering the feasibility in attendance at exhibitions. It also arranges with airlines and regional bus operators to make access easier to people in regional areas.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.5 Melbourne and Sydney have been the NGA's two major partners. However, the NGA also takes exhibitions to South Australia and Western Australia, such as with the recent *Monet in Japan* exhibition.
- 3.6 Other Commonwealth programs also assist in taking exhibitions to States and regions of Australia. DCITA indicated that the AIA is part of a broader Commonwealth strategy to provide a range of programs to support the States in developing and providing arts and culture. In particular, the Commonwealth's Visions of Australia program funds exhibitions that tour outside the State of origin and to the regional areas of Australia. Since 1993, the Commonwealth has spent \$12.8 million on 381 projects under the Visions of Australia program.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.7 Also, the NGA has a travelling exhibition program which is directed at satisfying its obligations to provide access to the national collection of works of art. The NGA visits every State and Territory every year and claimed to have a strong commitment to providing access to the nation's collection.<sup>5</sup>

## Is distribution equitable?

- 3.8 Some smaller States were concerned that they were disadvantaged as the majority of big AIA exhibitions were being confined to Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra.<sup>6</sup>

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3 Dr Edwards, AEA, *Transcript*, 25 July 2000, p. CTA 7; Ms Henry, AEA, *Transcript*, 20 June 2001, p. CTA 14.

4 DCITA, *Submission No. 1.05*, p. 2.

5 Mr Froud, NGA, *Transcript*, 20 July 2001, pp. CTA 9-10.

6 Mr Radford, AGSA, *Transcript*, 25 July 2000, p. CTA 31.

- 3.9 While acknowledging that the States with the biggest audiences deserve greater access, the Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia maintained that smaller audiences still require some access:
- If other States do not get access to this federal indemnity, if it is just three cities, then it is no longer a national scheme.<sup>7</sup>
- 3.10 Although we are sympathetic to this view, we are also aware that overseas lending institutions place short time restrictions on the release of their art works. Major overseas art institutions are often reluctant to have their works travel for a long period of time. The NGA claimed that typically the major overseas art institutions restrict the release of their works of art to a seven month period.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, touring AIA exhibitions are often constrained to two venues only. AEA and NGA explained that this is why exhibitions are received more often by the larger capital cities: to maximise the exposure within the limited time period.<sup>9</sup>
- 3.11 Another reason that AIA exhibitions have been largely confined to the larger States is that it is difficult to attract a sufficient number of patrons to exhibitions in the smaller States to cover the costs of an exhibition.<sup>10</sup> The NGA stated that due to the population concentration of the east coast, it remains necessary that the majority of opportunities will go to the east coast States.<sup>11</sup>
- 3.12 AEA is a self funded private organisation. Its motive is to survive and to continue to successfully manage AIA exhibitions. Therefore it must break even financially and take into consideration the viability of where exhibitions tour. The Director of the AGNSW expressed concern that the commercial viability of an exhibition project has come to overshadow the original responsibilities of the scheme to bring major art exhibitions to a wide Australian audience.<sup>12</sup>
- 3.13 However, the Deputy Chairman of AEA referred to its aim of developing programs of exhibitions which can be seen by as many Australians as possible:
- AEA differs from other exhibition organisations in that it seeks a break even financial result and is thus able to act as an “honest”

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7 Mr Radford, AGSA, *Transcript*, 25 July 2000, p. CTA 35.

8 Mr Frond, NGA, *Transcript*, 25 July 2000, p. CTA 49.

9 Mr Marsden, DCITA, *Transcript*, 25 July 2000, p. CTA 3.

10 Mr Dodge, AGWA, *Transcript*, 25 July 2000, p. CTA 26.

11 Mr Froud, NGA, *Transcript*, 20 June 2001, p. CTA 21.

12 AGNSW, *Exhibit No. 2*, p. 1.

broker aiming to maximise the number of venues for an exhibition. This has enabled exhibitions to tour to the smaller states.<sup>13</sup>

- 3.14 The Director of the Art Gallery of Western Australia agreed that AEA and the NGA have gone out of their way to risk taking exhibitions to Western Australia when they would be better off going to Sydney or Melbourne.<sup>14</sup> He maintained that although the AIA scheme should be managed at the national level, it is still important that the smaller States and Territories receive major AIA exhibitions:

The fact that it should be shared to areas that do not have that critical mass, and that is difficult, needs to be taken into consideration. The indemnity scheme has to be kept and the higher the better ... Territory and state galleries that are smaller really need to be brought in to that scheme. It still needs to be managed nationally<sup>15</sup>

### Working on equitable distribution

- 3.15 Despite the factors limiting distribution, DCITA was conscious of the need to achieve greater geographical equity and acknowledged that there are some genuine concerns by some States about the level of access they were receiving. DCITA claimed that it is working with the MOs to address the issue.<sup>16</sup>
- 3.16 We were advised also that the State and Commonwealth cultural ministers have considered this matter, initiating an inquiry into ways of ensuring broader access to AIA exhibitions for non-Eastern states and Tasmania and the Northern Territory.<sup>17</sup> We endorse this action.

### Conclusions

- 3.17 It is clear that the majority of AIA exhibitions go to the major centres on the eastern seaboard of Australia. We believe that on a per capita basis the statistics on distribution seem reasonable.

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13 Mr McKay, AEA, *Submission No. 2*, p.2.

14 Mr Dodge, AGWA, *Transcript*, 25 July 2000, p. CTA47.

15 Mr Dodge, AGWA, *Transcript*, 25 July 2000, p. CTA26.

16 DCITA, *Submission No. 1.01*, p. 1.

17 DCITA, *Submission No. 1.02*, p. 2.

- 3.18 However, it is essential that AIA exhibitions are also taken to the smaller State capitals. This is one of the major purposes of the AIA scheme - to provide wide access by Australians to the most significant international and Australian cultural treasures.
- 3.19 AEA and the NGA must ensure that it maintains its presence in the smaller States and Territories and regional Australia, not just States with the largest populations.

#### **Recommendation 4**

- 3.20 **In considering the five-year exhibition schedules proposed by the two managing organisations, the Minister for the Arts should pay particular attention to ensuring an equitable geographic distribution of Art Indemnity Australia indemnified exhibitions.**

#### **Recommendation 5**

- 3.21 **In responding to this report, the Minister for the Arts should report to Parliament on the outcome of the review initiated by the Cultural Minister's Council into ways of ensuring an equitable geographic distribution of Art Indemnity Australia indemnified exhibitions.**

Paul Neville MP  
Committee Chairman

22 August 2001