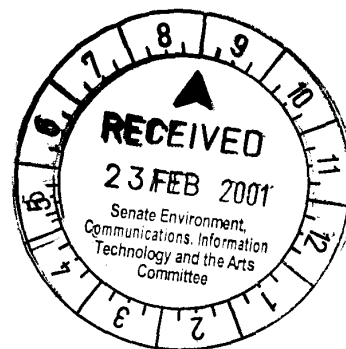




22 February 2001

Senator Alan Eggleston
Chairman
Environment, Communications,
Information Technology and Arts
Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Fax: 62775818



Dear Senator Eggleston,

At the Committee hearing today (22 February) Senator Schacht commented upon advice contained in a report received by the National Gallery in May 1999 and expressed the view that the response provided to a May 2000 Committee hearing was inadequate. A check of the hansard record of the hearing of 25 May 2000 revealed that the Gallery did advise the Committee of the very concerns mentioned today by Senator Schacht.

I attach a copy of ECITA 260 SENATE - Legislation Thursday 25 May 2000, and draw to your attention comments made by Mr Rees as follows:

'Reading from the precis ... comprehensive planning.'

The Gallery did draw this report to the attention of the Committee at the hearing of 25 May 2000 and did not as has been proposed inadequately advise the Committee on this issue - I would be grateful if you were able to set the record straight and ensure any report of the Committee's activities accurately reflect the facts.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Brian Kennedy
Director

cc Senator the Hon Richard Alston, Minister for CITA
Mr Neville Stevens, Secretary, DCITA
Senator the Hon Chris Schacht

GPO Box 1150 Canberra
ACT 2601 Australia

Telephone 61 2 6240 6400
Facsimile 61 2 6240 6426
www.nga.gov.au

Dr Kennedy—Taking the spirit of your question, which is motivated, I am sure, by concern for public health, the National Gallery of Australia will, in the light of this report and of your questions, continue to review, as recommended in the report, what it is actually doing to make sure that our plant is to the highest levels. If that includes having to examine all plant and that is the advice, then that is what we will do. That is a very expensive process, and the management of a system continuously requires due care. Indeed, Mr Broadbent has referred, for example, to periodic attention being normal and addressed on an as-needs basis for certain things. Other things require full examination. When a complaint is made, which is a serious complaint, even by an anonymous informant, that spurs into action very seriously and immediately a full examination of that area. That has happened. The continuous examination of the full plant will be ongoing.

Senator LUNDY—Dr Kennedy, what is your process for acting on complaints that you receive in relation to occupational health and safety matters at the Gallery?

Dr Kennedy—To have them investigated by the competent parties within the Gallery.

Senator LUNDY—What is your process for initiating that action? Which officer is responsible; do you call in Comcare straight away?

Dr Kennedy—No. The competent officer in the Gallery gets the material relevant to that person. In this particular case, the competent officer is Mr Rees, who will have the people who look after our system and know it very well indeed who are also cited in the report—Mr Sitauti and Mr Cox—conduct investigations. They know the system very well. They have lived with it for a long time and have worked in the Gallery for a long time.

Senator LUNDY—Going back to 4.4(b), this reference to the Bligh Voller Nield building audit, can you supply that full report, including the recommendations, to the committee?

Mr Rees—Yes.

Senator LUNDY—Can you tell me if there are any recommendations to either that report or to the 1995 report that have not been acted on completely or finalised at this point?

Mr Rees—Yes.

Senator LUNDY—There are some?

Mr Rees—Yes, but they relate to issues that can be addressed only by a full analysis of the problem and a comprehensive program of works worth \$1 million plus. They are not overnight issues.

Senator LUNDY—Do any of those outstanding problems relate to the airconditioning system or the water-cooling towers?

Mr Rees—Reading from the precis, it seems that there is insufficient fresh air supplied to public galleries, that smoke exhausts and shaft pressurisation seem to require some co-compliance, that service tunnel exhausts are inadequate, that water overspray is causing some rotting fabric and that airborne gases can be eliminated by installing carbon filters. That is what the report will reveal, and those issues require strategic planning and comprehensive programming.

Senator LUNDY—So you are still addressing those?

Mr Rees—Yes.

Senator LUNDY—Tell me if I am wrong, but it seems that the photographic evidence supplied and the problems that you have just outlined indicate that there is actually some relationship between the issues in this complaint and the activities that have been raised in the report that the gallery is still acting on?

Mr Rees—Yes.

Senator LUNDY—And I think that, Dr Kennedy, makes it very clear that not only are you aware of those issues but you are acting on them, and that this Comcare investigation has identified an ongoing presence of the problems that you are trying to address.

Dr Kennedy—I do not accept that, Senator.

Senator LUNDY—Read the *Hansard*. Is there a resource problem in acting on those recommendations? What is your building services budget looking like last year and this year, and is that constraining your ability to act on the recommendations from the 1999 report?

Dr Kennedy—As you know, since my time here I have made it a priority to try to address the issues concerning the building which are generational lifecycle issues—effectively a generation; 20 to 25 years—requiring the continuous renewal of very expensive plant and machinery. We have had boiler replacement which we notified to this committee two years ago. We have ongoing major plant which requires us to budget