

**SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
DEFENCE AND TRADE COMMITTEE:
INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND CONDUCT OF
AUSTRALIA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**
From Museums Australia
31 January 2007

This submission from Museums Australia (from the National Office located in Old Parliament House, Canberra, but drawing also on MA's State Branches – especially MA-Victoria) responds in part or in full to the four terms of reference **(TOR) (a), (b), (c) and (d)** for this Inquiry, indicated as introducing particular comments below.

As an Appendix to this submission, information is provided on Museums Australia as a national organisation, to help assess in more detail the resources that Museums Australia has to offer of relevance to this Inquiry.

However, the main body of the submission below, focuses on the specific terms of reference and thrust of the Senate DFAT Committee's "Inquiry Into the Nature and Conduct of Australia's Public Diplomacy".

Museums Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry, and would be ready at any time to provide further information or input of relevance to the matters under review.

Bernice Murphy
National Director
Museums Australia
31 Jan. 2007

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Recognise that effective cultural representation abroad (and associated diplomatic objectives within Australia) require systematic access to appropriate expertise, professional support networks and sustained, well resourced effort to achieve positive results at a public diplomacy level.

Recommendation 2:

Recognise that opportunities exist to better utilise and strengthen existing national museums/gallery networks at the international level – through cultural exchange projects promoting long-term cultural links that are important in Australia's public diplomacy objectives and may vitally affect perception of Australia as a nation internationally.

Recommendation 3:

Recognise that how Australia's national museums/gallery networks have greatly improved over two decades their expertise, consultative processes and steady commitment to presenting Indigenous culture nationally (and contribute to exhibitions showing Indigenous culture abroad) have provided one of the most significant resources in shifting perceptions internationally as to Australia's 'public conduct' as a nation in terms of its Indigenous history.

Note also (3.1) that when international visitors come to Australia, the most likely resource they will access in seeking to encounter Australia's Indigenous culture directly will be the variety of permanent collection displays (and special exhibitions) of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture presented (without exception) by all of Australia's major state and national museums and art galleries across the country.

Note (3.2) that the above situation (and regularly collected tourist/audience source data to support it) demonstrates clearly how the museums/galleries sector provides a front-line network of resources connecting Australia's public diplomacy interests with economic interests directly dependent on tourism on the one hand, and on trading opportunities stimulated by inter-governmental projects of cultural exchange on the other.

Note (3.3) that Australia's public museums and galleries have similarly provided a front-line resource and service for more than two decades in assisting the Australian nation generally to gain greater understanding of Indigenous culture and history, and thereby to shift perceptions and embrace Indigenous cultures' place in Australia's history and destiny as a nation – which has vital connections to public diplomacy interests within Australia (the fostering of social capital and security of inter-group relations) as well as internationally.

Recommendation 4:

Create a dedicated national organisation or agency to co-ordinate and manage (or oversee delivery of) Australian cultural presentations abroad. Such an agency, to be fully effective and command respect, must have strong links and credibility with the arts/cultural community.

Recommendation 5:

Establish a specialised fund to resource the co-ordination and management of Australian cultural presentations abroad.

Recommendation 6:

Recognise that additional sources of support (especially from the private sector) can be garnered only on the basis of effective public-sector infrastructure, delivery and performance, long-term.

Recommendation 7:

Commission an audit of the variety of fellowships, funds, grants, cultural agencies and similar funding sources (within Australia and through foreign cultural channels) that could augment public diplomacy objectives and promote ambassadorial/professional-level exchanges involving museums constituencies both institutionally and in terms of their direct interface with Australia's distributed local communities.

Recommendation 8:

Ensure that such a national audit incorporates partnership objectives (and funding opportunities) available through building links with other areas of Commonwealth policy and program delivery – including effective liaison with state/territory governments and their own resource-networks – that would address links with the arts, education, heritage and tourism portfolios, as well as foreign affairs networks.

TOR

- (a) *The extent and effectiveness of current public diplomacy programs and activities in achieving the objectives of the Australian Government;*

1. Public diplomacy programs and their effectiveness

- 1.1 Public diplomacy abroad relies on presentation of Australian culture in all its diversity to represent Australia as a distinctive society and nation to the world. Given this reliance, the opportunity to contribute to the current Inquiry is welcome.
- 1.2 It is now many years since Australia had a broad and varied range of Cultural Agreements in place with other countries. Such Agreements – often highlighting exhibition exchanges of direct relevance to the ‘museums sector’ nationally – involved museums and galleries directly in the planning and realisation of high-quality exhibition exchanges that involved the professional staff, collections, and a huge range of in-kind institutional resources and infrastructural support systems resident in our museums/galleries, in a meaningful way.
- 1.3 When such Cultural Agreements were more actively pursued in the diplomatic sphere, Australia experienced a great range of knowledge transfer and values-exchange, about both our own and other cultural heritages. Australia also gained many spin-off experiences and follow-on projects (not necessarily needing direct government support) that established, or consolidated and broadened, dialogue between Australian people and institutions and their colleagues and ordinary citizens in other countries.
- 1.4 This submission recognises that both the Commonwealth government and DFAT might well have had good reasons for reducing the number of Cultural Agreements with foreign countries in place (after the high-tide of their creation in the 1970s). However arguments are made here about the reduction in effective delivery of diplomatic programs by Australia in the cultural sphere, when professional knowledge, experience, appropriate support networks and long-term continuities of interaction (through peer networks internationally) were progressively reduced or done away with in the 1980s and 1990s – especially after the demise of the nationally representative Australian Gallery Directors Council in 1980.
- 1.5 The **AGDC (Australian Gallery Directors Council)**, it may be noted, had enjoyed a continuous history since 1948 (originally called an AGDC/“Conference”), when the first meeting of state gallery directors was hosted by the Director of the National Gallery of Victoria (Daryl Lindsay) in 1948.
- 1.5.1 The AGDC’s purposes were: to begin co-operation across state borders on the development of common professional standards in state galleries; to achieve co-ordinated endeavour in planning and touring of exhibitions nationally (and internationally); and to provide a source of regular informed advice to the Commonwealth government on Australia’s cultural representation abroad (especially in the area of visual arts), and similarly on exhibitions and initiatives offered from abroad to Australia’s major public galleries. The AGDC was regularly advising the Commonwealth government (in the first instance under Prime Minister Menzies) of the importance of Australia having a proper, professionally prepared representation in the

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Biennale of Venice (this was more than 30 years before Australia actually achieved its own national pavilion in Venice, which has since become a prime event for the Australia Council's attention biennially).

- 1.5.2 The AGDC had thus (by 1980) enjoyed 32 years of continuous history. It had in the 1970s grown into a larger and more representative body (incorporating regional galleries), and was resourced for hugely increased exhibitions activity at a secretariat level by the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council in the 1970s. It had a pivotal role in stimulating the professionalisation of the public galleries sector in Australia (excluding museums), and in providing training for the acquisition of vital professional skills which the state and best regional galleries now command in their daily work.
- 1.5.3 The AGDC had meanwhile offered a pool of expertise, co-ordinated endeavour and direct, ongoing dialogue on national policy interests to the Australia Council. However with the demise of the AGDC (because the Commonwealth had created a cultural corporation model to manage large-scale exhibitions), the broad footprint of that organization at a national level disappeared, and has never been replaced in the 26 years since. The diverse connections to regional as well as state galleries similarly disappeared.
- 1.5.4 Two cultural corporations created by the Commonwealth in the late 1970s, for the management of large-scale exhibitions, finally gave way (under an initiative of Arts Minister Senator Bob Ellicott, within the Fraser government) to a further corporation and direct predecessor present body, Art Exhibitions Australia. All were exclusively focused on the negotiation and touring of major (so-called blockbuster) exhibitions sourced internationally, and the utilisation of Australian government indemnity to facilitate their realisation..
- 1.5.5 By contrast, the much wider range of professional concerns of the museums/galleries sector – and utilisation of its collections, staff and expertise by the Commonwealth, was never within the brief or primary purposes of Art Exhibitions Australia.
- 1.5.6 Thus a gap was opened up in 1980, of abandoned broadly-based sectoral resources (especially collections and staff) and ongoing advice directly offered to the Commonwealth in the area of visual arts (and cultural representation in the diplomatic sphere).
- 1.5.7 The creation of Museums Australia through collaborative professional effort in the early 1990s – as a body (by 1994) joining together separate professional associations (the Museums Association of Australia, the Art Museums Association of Australia, the Museums Education Association of Australia) into a single national body – might be seen as filling that gap, as providing a successor to the disappeared AGDC.

However Museums Australia is somewhat different, and in fact is an entity with a much broader sectoral footprint across the whole museums/galleries community nationally (not simply the art galleries).

Meanwhile the Commonwealth has turned away from either drawing directly on this large sectoral resource in any systematic way, and has also turned away from any provision of funding to enable it to continue professional development and co-ordination of services nationally offered through this sector – as was directly resourced by Commonwealth funding avenues (Australia Council grant programs) in the dynamic delivery period of exhibitions development in the 1970s.

1.5.8 Museums Australia (with almost half its membership made up of institutional members, alongside individuals) does offer a professional resource of great potential value to Commonwealth cultural policy, heritage policy and public diplomacy interests. However this resource is not currently being drawn upon by the Commonwealth in any systematic, purposive way. Contacts are at a somewhat occasional level of interaction, and dialogues only sporadic.

1.6 It is very expensive and neither fully consequential (in results) nor efficient (in delivery) to gather 'one-off' or 'start-up resources' each time a specific venture is planned involving Australia with a foreign country in realizing a project in the cultural sphere. Moreover sustaining long-term networks and infrastructural support is essential to achieve projects at optimum levels – at levels through which it is feasible to promote ongoing contacts, flow-on initiatives, and draw in new forms of support (especially from the private sector).

Recommendation 1:

Recognise that effective cultural representation abroad (and associated diplomatic objectives within Australia) require systematic access to appropriate expertise, professional support networks and sustained, well resourced effort to achieve positive results at a public diplomacy level.

TOR

(b) *The opportunities for enhancing public diplomacy both in Australia and overseas;*

2 Opportunities for enhancement of public diplomacy programs and effectiveness: nation-wide museums-sector resources

Current cultural diplomacy programs could be greatly expanded and make greater use of the wealth of cultural material and professionalism in Australia's museums and galleries.

The following is what Australia's museums (that is, museums and galleries, from capital cities to regions all over the country) have to offer:

- 2.1 Australia's ***cultural heritage collections*** are outstanding resources of national importance held within these institutions.
- 2.2 The national museums/galleries networks represent a potent 'sectoral' resource for cultural initiatives at the international level of external relations, which are long recognised as having a crucial role in promoting links that pave the way for greater understanding and confidence at the trade and economic levels of interchange between countries.
- 2.3 The distinctive character of Australia's history and cultural expressions might be better accessed to diverse audiences internationally – as conveyed through the immediacy of actual objects brought together and experienced 'directly' by audiences visiting or receiving exhibitions.
- 2.4 The more varied and informal the kinds of contact promoted between people sharing cultural heritage engagement or responses (whether within Australia or overseas), the better for Australian long-term investment in public diplomacy programs and their sustainable outcomes.
- 2.5 Networks of day-to-day professional co-operation and cultural expertise are active all over Australia in museums and art galleries. These networks exist through prior provision, but are not being actively – that is, systematically – drawn upon by the Commonwealth in terms of tapping their potential to provide or add direct value to public diplomacy interests.
- 2.6 Professionals in Australian history and cultural interpretation are also professionals in exhibitions organisation, object interpretation and program presentation of Australian culture to diverse audiences – including to foreign audiences. These connections could open up more actively many international opportunities, and offer natural links to the large education sector in Australia, with the potential to build links not only at the level of formal training courses offered, but also in broadening the presentation of Australian culture to the world, and promoting international exchange opportunities.
- 2.7 In many countries of high significance in Australian foreign relations – for example, India, China, the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle East – there is a high motivation on the part of persons in those countries to gain wider, professionally developed cultural interchange and experience in-situ, in museum/gallery locations abroad (i.e. in

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Australia) that represent 'best-practice' effort. This includes effort in regional and local situations, where resources may be more limited than in capital cities.

- 2.8** The Australian museums sector has therefore many resources to offer that might be of interest in museum-to-museum, or community-to-community exchanges at the local level of cultural heritage management, interpretation, and sustainable resource development. Indeed many initiatives have already been undertaken for years in the Asia-Pacific region, with or without Commonwealth involvement, that harbour greater potential to develop long-term objectives in dialogue with Australia's enduring diplomatic interests.
- 2.8.1** Such two-way exchanges have a far greater potential at the level of sustainability and durability of effect, and viability of long-term networks established, than Australians going abroad to offer short-term training programs locally.
- 2.8.2** Australian agencies utilising governmental funds on Australian personnel to travel and deliver training internationally – often without due sensitivity to local need or two-way learning – has been one of the most criticised phenomena in the Pacific region over many years. It has been perceived that Australia delivers funds that increase the skills and international travel experience of its own citizens, while often ignoring or pre-empting much needed professional development (including international experience) at local community levels abroad – and at culturally informed levels of need.
- 2.9** Cultural relations can often be sustained at the local and professionally focused level when relations are temporally 'bruised' at the formal diplomatic level – that is, productive, confidence-building or confidence-rescuing efforts may be maintained in difficult periods until diplomatic relations can be re-established on a better basis for long-term benefit.
- 2.9.1** For example, Australian museums people were able to keep alive dialogues and conversations about professional support and aid to assist East Timor among colleagues in both Timor and Indonesia, at the very time when relations with Indonesia were most damaged and dysfunctional formally over Timor's independence.
- 2.9.2** Museums keep such work going at the NGO level all the time, deliberately maintaining international links despite NGO relations sometimes being fractured.
- 2.10** Another example of possible international projects of value (without objects or people needing to move much, or at all) would be working with museums on online / digital projects using museums and ACMI – digital story telling. Such a venture could provide both new and innovative projects in the spirit of second-stage, 'Internet 2' cultural potential (distinguished by interpretive interactivity and co-creation of meaning by audiences locally, rather than one-way flows of data from 'authoritative' institutions). A venture of this kind could harness electronic means of conveying, exchanging and highlighting Australia's cultural diversity, in partnership with the experience of cultural diversity in other countries of interest in Australia's foreign cultural relations.

- 2.11** It is worth noting that while many Asian countries are fast-track developers in ICT industries and communication, they often do not have (by tradition) a long-developed history or expertise in **public cultural debate and diverse interpretation** through their own museum institutions. That is, there is generally not a long tradition in civil society terms of free exchange of multiple and often diverse opinions and first-person narratives, as is highly developed in the Australian museums/galleries/cultural heritage sector. These traditions are also embedded in Australian society at large and long-nurtured through its democratic institutions of free debate.
- 2.11.1** It is little recognised at a public diplomacy level that this is one of the most distinctive and profound ways of expressing and communicating Australian social (and cultural) values to other people – in experiencing the ways in which Australians value free, spirited exchange of public opinion on a huge range of topics in their daily lives.
- 2.11.2** Moreover cultural institutions in Australia regularly seek to highlight debate and diverse opinion in all major educational and public program initiatives they develop in an ongoing way.
- 2.11.3** These have become a feature and represent core skills that our museum/gallery institutions have developed in their wider audience-building capacities over the last two decades. Such patterns are well recognised as important in the creation of social capital and building of trust in the reflexivity and stability of our social institutions.
- 2.11.4** Such skills resident in our museum/gallery professional communities are little-discussed in terms of their diplomatic potential, but they are highly useful socio-cultural skills that could be promoted at a cultural exchange level, drawing in institutions and people working in the cultural heritage sector broadly in other countries.
- 2.11.5** Museums and galleries across Australia have also developed greatly increased skills in the representation of Indigenous cultures since the 1980s, and have developed a range of networks and consultative processes involving Indigenous communities directly in the representation of their culture and knowledge of collections long-held by museums. Such skills, as long-developed by professional museum/gallery staff, are highly consequential resources to draw on in terms of Australia's national representation in the international arena.
- 2.12 In summary:**
- 2.12.1** The skills in 'story telling', in public 'knowledge representation', communication and audience development that many professionals in Australia utilise in their day-to-day work are often highly-developed within our national 'museums culture' comparatively speaking.
- 2.12.2** These skills and practices are often of much interest in other countries less used to applying such skills – especially those countries of highly significant interest to Australia's foreign affairs interests (India, China, the South-East Asian region generally, and the Pacific).

- 2.12.3 These very skills – and informal ways of speaking to many audiences and anticipating dialogue – are skills that, of themselves, convey a lot subliminally about underpinning Australian social attitudes and cultural life.
- 2.12.4 This again argues the value of bringing foreign professionals to Australia as a means of transmitting Australian cultural values, not simply taking Australian professionals out to other countries, where a more limited transmission (or curtailed two-way exchange) may occur.
- 2.12.5 The nation-wide museums/ galleries sector in Australia thus offers a great variety of human-capital resources (developed professional expertise and performance) that could be tapped and 'harvested' towards diplomatic objectives in Australia's cultural policy internationally.
- 2.12.6 Finally, the same sector commands the huge range of unique collections resources around which so much of our national cultural heritage achievements can be built interpretatively. Together with the work of contemporary artists, they are the major resources for content for exhibitions exchanges.

Recommendation 2:

Recognise that opportunities exist to better utilise and strengthen existing national museums/gallery networks at the international level – through cultural exchange projects promoting long-term cultural links that are important in Australia's public diplomacy objectives and may vitally affect perception of Australia as a nation internationally.

Recommendation 3:

Recognise that how Australia's national museums/gallery networks have greatly improved over two decades their expertise, consultative processes and steady commitment to presenting Indigenous culture nationally (and contribute to exhibitions showing Indigenous culture abroad) have provided one of the most significant resources in shifting perceptions internationally as to Australia's 'public conduct' as a nation in terms of its Indigenous history.

Note also (3.1) that when international visitors come to Australia, the most likely resource they will access in seeking to encounter Australia's Indigenous culture directly will be the variety of permanent collection displays (and special exhibitions) of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture presented (without exception) by all of Australia's major state and national museums and art galleries across the country.

Note (3.2) that the above situation (and regularly collected tourist/audience source data to support it) demonstrates clearly how the museums/galleries sector provides a front-line network of resources connecting Australia's

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public diplomacy interests with economic interests directly dependent on tourism on the one hand, and on trading opportunities stimulated by inter-governmental projects of cultural exchange on the other.

Note (3.3) that Australia's public museums and galleries have similarly provided a front-line resource and service for more than two decades in assisting the Australian nation generally to gain greater understanding of Indigenous culture and history, and thereby to shift perceptions and embrace Indigenous cultures' place in Australia's history and destiny as a nation – which has vital connections to public diplomacy interests within Australia (the fostering of social capital and security of inter-group relations) as well as internationally.

TOR

- (c) *The effectiveness of and possible need to reform administrative arrangements relating to the conduct of public diplomacy within and between Commonwealth agencies, and where relevant, the agencies of state governments;*

3 Possible change of administrative arrangements between Commonwealth agencies (and state government agencies operating internationally)

- 3.1 Without a formal, consistent structure of logistical and financial support for cultural representation internationally, Australia's cultural endeavours in other countries are dependent – often haphazardly – on the energy, capacities and commitment of individuals at the local level of missions abroad. Such officers have to balance, in turn, their commitment to cultural interests against other interests, and multiple demands of the post at the local level.
- 3.2 It is often confusing and inefficient for Australia to present multiple levels of government as 'the public face' of Australian cultural exchange internationally – that is, without some channel of co-ordinating dialogue as to how each project contributes to a larger international endeavour – in an arena where most countries operate through one international agency (or national ministry of culture) when pursuing cultural representations outside of their own country.
- 3.2.1 In the distant past, representation of culture by Australian state governments (for example in initiating exhibitions abroad) have often been pursued randomly, at the behest of particular individuals with no previous professional experience in cultural representation, or any of the proven skills entailed in its success. More recently, by contrast, many state-initiated projects have been of great value and quality, and the major cultural institutions at the state level have greatly increased their capacities to take independent cultural initiatives (especially in the area of exhibitions development and exchange) that have made them key players in terms of Australia's cultural representation abroad (and domestically). They have accordingly increased their roles as pivotal actors in public diplomacy arenas of national interest.
- 3.2.2 In terms of resources, many cultural projects in the past created their own one-off networks, pursued independent negotiation to achieve a variety of venues for exhibitions or cultural events (including unsuitable, not highly respected venues). Sometimes one-off projects counteracted other projects nurtured at the 'national' level. The final outcomes may have been largely negative in public diplomacy terms at the point-of-reception of a project.
- 3.2.3 This is often highly wasteful of expensive or scarce resources that are required to curate and ship exhibitions internationally, or to realise any effective cultural project 'representing Australia' abroad.

- 3.3** Both cultural exchanges and public diplomacy objectives need high-quality resources and administrative support to carry out their mandates to fullest effect. It is therefore highly desirable that Australia act through one cultural agency in organizing cultural representations abroad, to achieve consistency, long-term delivery capacities (more efficient, more economical, avoiding wasteful duplication of effort and resources available), and knowingly targeted to appropriate venues, peer networks and likely critical reception networks abroad, for more reliable effects internationally.
- 3.4** Cultural offices abroad need to be tailored to fit each country's specific situation locally, but also to be staffed with appropriately knowledgeable Australians with an existing track record of achievement and background relevant to cultural ventures.
- 3.5** Australian government programs should facilitate exchanges for their long-term intellectual, artistic and educational value, rather than be tied to short-term contingency-driven objectives of one-off project delivery (often failing to capture full value of long-developed networks and expertise that contribute their own interest over many years, when trustworthy, durable links are established). Such long-term networks also deliver value-adding resources of further support (in-kind, professional, cultural-agency, and even financial support) long after initial Australian government investment in specific projects may have been accomplished and concluded.
- 3.6** There is a strong case for establishment of an agency like the British Council, Germany's IFA (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen/Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations), or France's AFAA (Association Française d'Action Artistique) to manage foreign cultural relations programs being delivered internationally. These are highly successful agencies internationally, and secure a high standard of representation of their countries' culture in the international arena.
- 3.6.1** The **Australia International Cultural Council (AICC)**, established in 1998, is a very different body from the types of agencies indicated above – all of which distinguish themselves by their direct interface with professional-level sectoral expertise for the achievement of projects that can secure durable, long-term respect and the nourishment of ongoing networks that will stimulate further projects at their own independent initiative. The AICC, by contrast is a self-designated *'consultative group... draw[ing] together leaders from government, the arts and business with a common interest in promoting Australia overseas through art and culture'*.
- 3.7** The success of these three foreign cultural agencies above, in particular, arises through their maintenance of specialised knowledge, rich networks tapping into professional institutional knowledge, cumulated memory, appropriate logistical and support-contacts, and highly developed know-how over many years. They provide a sustaining continuity of venture, self-critique and review. They often highlight needed changes in practices and delivery of programs for better effect. They deliver enduring support and value to governments in stabilisation of programs long-term. They also ensure knowledge and appropriate skills-base renewal when political leadership, policies and programs may change in the shorter term.
- 3.8** Even new directions in policy-setting by governments of the day are better served by drawing on a developed infrastructural support system for cultural exchange management.

This is preferable to striking out in new directions or on one-off projects repeatedly – often at a much less-developed level of network development – without benefit of a good skills-base and cumulated knowledge as the enabling instruments of new initiatives themselves.

- 3.9** The guidelines for cultural support through bodies such as AUSAID have specifically excluded funding of cultural projects and programs. Cultural projects are meanwhile not formally provided for (other than at minimal levels of support) through DFAT. However our public diplomacy agencies regularly draw on our *cultural products* to ‘showcase’ Australian culture to the world – without any substantial committal of medium- or long-term funding, or the development of appropriate infrastructural expertise, to do so.
- 3.10** There is a case for establishing a specialised fund to support Australian cultural representation internationally. An example would be the Canadian *Public Diplomacy Fund*. It would be advantageous to have dedicated funding in a manner comparable with countries that have made long-term investment in their cultural ‘face’ to the world for decades (for example, Britain, Germany, France and Canada).

Recommendation 4:

Create a dedicated national organisation or agency to co-ordinate and manage (or oversee delivery of) Australian cultural presentations abroad. Such an agency, to be fully effective and command respect, must have strong links and credibility with the arts/cultural community.

Recommendation 5:

Establish a specialised fund to resource the co-ordination and management of Australian cultural presentations abroad.

TOR

- (d) *The need and opportunities for expanding levels of funding for Australia's public diplomacy programs, including opportunities for funding within the private sector.*

4 Opportunities for expanding levels of funding, including from the private sector

- 4.1 The private sector in Australia (as distinct from American society where there is a long tradition of private-sector initiatives for provision of such basic facilities as education (schools, universities), health (hospitals) as well as cultural institutions) can augment public-sector funding only when good public sector capacities and performance-records are already established.

Note remarks already made above under (1.5):

1.5 *"(S)ustaining long-term networks and infrastructural support is essential to achieve projects at optimum levels – at levels through which it is feasible to promote ongoing contacts, flow-on initiatives, and draw in new forms of support (especially from the private sector)."*

- 4.2 The private sector in Australia cannot act as a substitute for good public-sector practice or cumulated record of effective public endeavour. On the contrary, if the private sector is induced to contribute, and appropriate infrastructure and performance capacities are not in place to convert and maximize such a contribution, the effect is usually negative, and such support is deterred or withheld in future.
- 4.3 However the private sector has long contributed to outstanding exhibition projects of national significance both culturally and in public diplomacy terms – where appropriate expertise was in place for their organisation.
- 4.3.1 A watershed example from the 1970s was when Mobil Pty Ltd underwrote the (first) major exhibition from China, ***The Chinese Exhibition*** (1976), and provided also a cash grant for the exhibition's presentation in Australia. That exhibition was hugely consequential in laying the foundations of positive co-operation between Australia and China in the cultural sphere, directly paving the way for better links built in subsequent years in the trade and economic spheres.
- 4.3.2 Alcoa Pty Ltd had provided similar major financial support as a sponsor the year before for the 'first blockbuster' to Australia, ***Modern Masters: Manet to Matisse*** (1975), from the Museum of Modern Art, New York – that exhibition being the trigger and occasion for the development of the Australian Government Indemnity scheme, to overcome prohibitive insurance charges required for exhibitions of outstanding cultural quality and rarity.
- 4.4 It would be of value to commission a national audit of appropriate, supplementary funding sources (including various agencies, grants, funds, scholarships and existing fellowships – such as the Churchill Fellowships; Australiana Fund, or ABaF) to

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facilitate cultural ambassadorial opportunities for Australia's museum professionals working in the science, art, cultural heritage and environment areas that could directly assist Australia's public diplomacy programs internationally. Participants in such programs would have the opportunity to shape attitudes, launch new ideas, and facilitate cultural understanding and exchange, promoting a positive representation of Australian culture and support to public diplomacy interests.

Recommendation 6: Recognise that additional sources of support (especially from the private sector) can be garnered only on the basis of effective public-sector infrastructure, delivery and performance, long-term.

Recommendation 7: Commission an audit of the variety of fellowships, funds, grants, cultural agencies and similar funding sources (within Australia and through foreign cultural channels) that could augment public diplomacy objectives and promote ambassadorial/professional-level exchanges involving museums constituencies both institutionally and in terms of their direct interface with Australia's distributed local communities.

Recommendation 8: Ensure that such a national audit incorporates partnership objectives (and funding opportunities) available through building links with other areas of Commonwealth policy and program delivery – including effective liaison with state/territory governments and their own resource-networks – that would address links with the arts, education, heritage and tourism portfolios, as well as foreign affairs networks.

Appendix 1:

Museums Australia – an overview

Museums Australia is as broadly diverse in character as the museum profession itself.

Formed in 1994 through the amalgamation of many long-standing organisations that represented specific disciplines, particular kinds of museums, and common programs, eg, education, Museums Australia embraces *both* great commonality (as a profession with linked codes of professional practice) and significant internal diversity.

Museums Australia has 749 institutional members (museum or gallery members) and more than 1000 individual members across all states and territories.

Some useful statistics concerning MA

- MA has a **National Council** (of 22 members) and **49 divisions or sub-bodies**, including:
 - Branches (8)
 - Chapters (19) and
 - Special Interest Groups or disciplinary National Networks (22)

Given the minimum number of members required to make up any committee, this means at any given time that a minimum of **357 committee members distributed nationally** are working for the national association's professional objectives and making decisions under the authority of the National Council of Museums Australia.

Museums Australia's International Links

Museums Australia is a highly respected and strongly contributing member of **ICOM, the International Council of Museums**.

ICOM has worked as a strategic partner to UNESCO since they were both created within the same fortnight in Paris, in 1946. It incorporates 30 distinct International Committees (for specialist disciplinary work), as well as 114 National Committees spread all over the world.

The **ICOM Australian National Committee** is structurally joined to the Australian museums community through **Museums Australia's constitution** – with the Chair of ICOM Australia (Dr Ian Galloway, Director Queensland Museum) having an *ex officio* place on MA's Council, and understood as chairing the international committee activities of Museums Australia.

International responsibilities of the Australian museums community are thus important activities linked directly from ICOM through Museums Australia, and many Australian museum professionals belong to, and have been office-holders or chairs of committees, within ICOM.

In terms of ongoing international museum community links, the present National Director of Museums Australia, Bernice Murphy, was for six years Vice-President of ICOM (Secretariat located in UNESCO headquarters, Paris), chaired ICOM's Reform Task Force 1998-2001 (resulting in 54 structural Reforms to the international body founded in 1946), and is currently Chair of ICOM's Ethics Committee.

The Work of the International Council of Museums

ICOM incorporates 30 specialist International Committees, 12 Affiliated Organizations and 7 Regional Organizations.

ICOM committees and organisational links advance the following kinds of activities for Australian cultural heritage care, interpretation and development:

- professional standards and training;
- curatorship in specialist museum types, from ethnography to natural history, science, archaeology and art;
- international exhibitions exchange and travelling exhibitions;
- observation of international law and Conventions;
- the fight against illicit traffic;
- conservation and registration standards, including digitisation and access;
- contracts, insurance and indemnities;
- proper provenancing of objects in collections;
- return of cultural property that may turn out to have been looted during World War II;
- return of cultural property claimed from museums by source communities (including Indigenous cultural property – and especially Indigenous human remains)
- museum ethics;
- museum security;
- marketing and public relations;
- management and leadership;
- touring exhibitions; international loans; documentation; couriers etc.
- exchange of personnel and internships;
- international co-operation in specialist museum meetings and activities;
- sharing of professional information, consultation and benchmarking of performance in a world of rapid technological and communications change