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AUSTRALASIAN
MUSEUM
DIRECTORS

**Response to the
Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
on the 2011 Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure
Discussion Paper**

**Submitted by
Dr Meredith Foley CAMD Executive Officer on behalf of the
COUNCIL OF AUSTRALASIAN MUSEUM DIRECTORS (CAMD)**

May 2011

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALASIAN MUSEUM DIRECTORS

2011 Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure Discussion Paper - CAMD Response

MUSEUMS AND RESEARCH

The Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD) brings together the leaders of the major national, state and regional museums in Australia and New Zealand (see appendix 1). The museums represented include natural science and social history museums, science centres, industry and technology collections, combined museum/art galleries, heritage houses and outdoor museum sites in over 68 locations (see appendix 2).

Museums contribute to the national research effort in the following key ways:

- museums generate ground-breaking research in a wide range of fields in their own right, in collaboration with the private sector and through research partnerships with university researchers; and
- this research in natural history, cultural heritage, humanities and social sciences fields is informed by vast and deep museum collections which traverse all subject areas and media.

CAMD applauds the fact that the discussion paper on the development of the 2011 Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure recognises both the role of museums in research production and the value of museum and other cultural institution collections as research infrastructure.

Together, CAMD's museums hold over 60 million natural science and geoscience specimens and cultural, heritage and technological objects which form part of the distributed national collection. The major museums encompass collections that are records through time and space of the past and important predictive tools for the future. These collections provide a rich resource for evidence-based research of national and international significance in all fields of knowledge. They are an essential part of Australia's future as they provide the raw material through which researchers can discover the extent and character of biological and cultural diversity and how this may be safeguarded and sustained in the future. In addition, museums have a core role to communicate information drawn from the collections and associated research to the public through on-site exhibitions and outreach programs and also by making research data and outcomes available online.

CAMD appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Discussion Paper provided and would like to make some initial general comments, as well as recommendations relating to certain specific questions.

GENERAL COMMENT - HASS RESEARCH

CAMD welcomes the steps taken to date to integrate the potential contribution of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) research and researchers into the overall funding of research infrastructure, definitions of infrastructure and the conceptualization of the National Research Priorities.

CAMD strongly supports the creation of the *Understanding Cultures and Communities Working Group*, its implicit endorsement of the important contribution made by HASS research and its recommendation for an e-Research facility to systematically integrate the nation's most significant HASS collections.

CAMD would also recommend however, that, in order to clarify the intent to fully incorporate HASS research into the national research infrastructure, there is a need for its explicit inclusion in the definitions of 'science', 'research infrastructure' and the proposed priority principles.

CAMD Recommendation:

1. That the principle of access to infrastructure funding for HASS researchers is made explicit in the Strategic Roadmap, associated guidelines and subsequent funding programs.

CAMD Recommendation:

2. That the meaning of the definition on Research Infrastructure be clarified by explicit reference to knowledge-based collections.

There is also potential, which is not fully exploited in the current process, to involve HASS researchers, not only in the working group for *Understanding Cultures and Communities*, but across the various capabilities. As Senator Carr has noted on a number of occasions, the humanities, arts and sciences can provide critical input not only to immediately recognisable social and cultural issues but across the sciences to encourage new thinking about the conceptualisation of problems and the implementation of workable solutions. Museums, which are multi-disciplinary institutions by nature, have learnt from experience that such approaches

provide unique opportunities to identify and implement innovative problem solving approaches to a wide range of key challenges.

A possible way of encouraging the level of multi-disciplinary research infrastructure would be to create a cultural equivalent to the Atlas of Living Australia which could be integrated with ALA biodiversity and geospatial data and thus provide an important tool for research and to inform policy-making on major social and cultural issues.

It should also be noted that the Discussion Paper falls short of recommending the funding necessary to exploit the full potential of HASS research infrastructure. CAMD would welcome the support of NRIC in addressing the need for appropriate resources to be afforded HASS research infrastructure to ensure its future contribution.

GENERAL COMMENT – BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The important role of the biological collections held in museums, herbaria, universities and the CSIRO in providing essential research infrastructure has already been identified in earlier iterations of the Roadmap and, subsequently, through the provision of funds for the online *Atlas of Living Australia*. CAMD notes that ALA has been most effective in fulfilling its remit and particularly in galvanising collaborations between custodians of the national biological collections and for these reasons strongly supports its continued funding, beyond 2012.

The NCRIS funding for the Atlas has included the framework and tools to access, manipulate, correlate and link information online. More recently it has been expanded to encourage public engagement. Unfortunately, it is still the situation that only a portion of available biodiversity information has been made accessible to date through its aegis. It would appear to be well recognised within the Discussion Paper that the information contained in biodiversity collections provides an important knowledge baseline not only for the Atlas and its applications but for a range of applied studies and projects.

CAMD believes that the utilisation of these collections would be improved by their databasing and linkage, but would go further in arguing that support for both digitisation and databasing of collections in priority areas would be the final and most important step in liberating this vital information and making it widely available.

CAMD Recommendation:

3. That NCRIS funding be extended to enable the digitisation and databasing of biodiversity collections which inform the Atlas of Living Australia, the National Research Priorities and current NCRIS capabilities in general.

FUTURE FUNDING CONDITIONS

Both in relation to Environmentally Sustainable Australia and to the Understanding Cultures and Communities capabilities, CAMD strongly supports the principle that future funding programs support all aspects of research infrastructure including capital costs, skilled technical support staff, operations, maintenance and effective governance of facilities. This includes the necessity of recognising the costs of ongoing custodianship of collections and data about them as research infrastructure.

The following responses to questions asked within the Discussion Paper have greatest relevance to the reports on an *Environmentally Sustainable Australia* and the *Understanding Communities and Cultures* Expert Working Groups.

Other Key Research Directions

Both reports sought advice on whether there were other key research directions which should be identified in the Strategic Roadmap. CAMD agrees with the suggestions of the Environmentally Sustainable Australia Working Group the following should be considered as key research areas:

- the knowledge of Australian biodiversity. In this respect, CAMD would also suggest that further consideration be given to addressing the decline in Australia's taxonomic capability; and
- geosciences, which while neglected in the previous Roadmap, have the capacity to provide insight into pressing challenges such as understanding past climate patterns.

In addition, CAMD believes that future consideration should be given to developing infrastructure to improve access to and dissemination of information on nationally distributed palaeontology collections.

In the area of HASS research, CAMD strongly supports the suggestions of the *Understanding Cultures and Communities* Expert Working Group that the provision of large-scale infrastructure

should be considered for areas touching on complex issues such as social cohesion, population, health, indigenous knowledge and regional connections amongst others.

Prioritisation Processes

The Discussion Paper also sought feedback on any other prioritisation processes that should be included in the Strategic Framework.

CAMD suggests that it would be timely for NRIC to utilise the Roadmap process to revisit the current range of National Research Priorities. CAMD supports the recognition by the *Understanding Cultures and Communities* Expert Working Group that there is a need to expand National Research priorities to ensure that nationally significant issues such as indigenous knowledge and community, urban sustainability or diversity and cultural inclusion, which are not currently easily encompassed under existing national priorities, are identified and resourced.

CAMD supports the suggestion contained in the Discussion Paper that the Roadmap be reviewed every three years. In addition, consideration should be given to revisiting the National Research Priorities as part of this process to enable a rapid but considered response to emerging challenges.

CAMD Recommendation:

4. That the National Research Priorities be revisited to consider the inclusion of one or more priorities specifically encompassing significant national social and cultural questions.

COLLABORATION

The discussion paper also queried whether Australian Government investment in research infrastructure at the national and landmark scale should favour collaboration in establishment and operation of infrastructure and research collaboration. CAMD strongly supports the principle of promoting collaborative approaches. The ongoing collaboration of museum and other collections has underpinned the success of ALA. Most recently CAMD has been involved in a collaborative national project funded through the ANDS program. This involves a partnership between 14 major collecting institutions and four universities and will make a substantial body of collection-based data accessible to research academics through Research Data Australia. These experiences, however, have made it clear that collaborative funding arrangements require funding at a level which supports the full cost of project management, coordination and governance.

If further clarification or information on the content of this response is required please contact

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Attachment I

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALASIAN MUSEUM DIRECTORS MEMBERSHIP 2011

Ms Margaret Anderson

Chair, CAMD

Director
History SA

Dr Ian Galloway

Director
Queensland Museum

Mr Bill Bleathman

CAMD Executive Member

Director
Tasmanian Museum and
Art Gallery

Mr Jeremy Johnson

CAMD Treasurer

Chief Executive Officer,
Sovereign Hill Museums Association

Mr Alan Brien

Chief Executive Officer
Scitech Discovery Centre, Perth

Mr Alec Coles

Chief Executive Officer
Western Australian Museum

Dr Dawn Casey

CAMD Executive Member

Director
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences
(Powerhouse Museum)

Ms Darlene Lion

A/Director
Museum and Art Gallery of the
Northern Territory

Ms Kate Clark

Director
Historic Houses Trust of NSW

Sir Don McKinnon

A/Director
Auckland War Memorial Museum

Professor Graham Durant

Director
Questacon – National Science and
Technology Centre

Dr Suzanne Miller

Director
South Australian
Museum

Mr Richard Mulvaney

Director
Queen Victoria Museum
and Gallery

Mr Shimrath Paul

CAMD Executive Member
Chief Executive
Otago Museum and Discovery World

Dr J. Patrick Greene OBE

CAMD Executive Member
Chief Executive Officer
Museum Victoria

Mr Andrew Sayers

Director,
National Museum of
Australia

Major General Steve Gower AO
AO MIL
Director
Australian War Memorial

Mr Tony Sweeney
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Centre for the
Moving Image

Mr Michael Houlihan
Chief Executive
Museum of New Zealand Te Papa
Tongarewa

Ms Mary-Louise Williams
Director
Australian National Maritime Museum

Mr Frank Howarth
CAMD Executive Member
Director
Australian Museum

Mr Anthony Wright
Director
Canterbury Museum

Attachment 2.



CAMD Museum Sites

- **Auckland War Memorial Museum**, Auckland
- **Australian Centre for the Moving Image**, Melbourne
- **Australian National Maritime Museum**, Sydney
 - Wharf 7 Maritime Heritage Centre, Sydney
- **Australian War Memorial**, Canberra
- **Australian Museum**, Sydney
- **Canterbury Museum**, Christchurch
- **Historic Houses Trust of NSW**
 - Elizabeth Bay House, Sydney
 - Elizabeth Farm, Sydney
 - Government House, Sydney
 - Hyde Park Barracks Museum, Sydney
 - Justice & Police Museum, Sydney
 - Meroogal, Nowra
 - Museum of Sydney, Sydney
 - Rose Seidler House, Sydney
 - Rouse Hill Estate, Sydney
 - Susannah Place Museum, Sydney
 - Vaucluse House, Sydney
 - The Mint, Sydney
- **History SA**
 - History Trust of South Australia, Adelaide
 - National Motor Museum, Birdwood
 - South Australian Maritime Museum, Port Adelaide
 - Migration Museum, Adelaide
 - Queen's Theatre, Adelaide

- **Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa**
 - Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington
 - Te Papa Tory Street (Research facility & library), Wellington

- **Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory**
 - Bullock Point, Darwin
 - Fannie Bay Gaol, Darwin
 - Lyons Cottage, Darwin
 - Australian Pearling Exhibition, Darwin
 - Museum of Central Australia, Alice Springs
 - Connellan Hangar, Alice Springs
 - Kookaburra Memorial, Alice Springs

- **Museum Victoria**
 - Melbourne Museum, Melbourne
 - Scienceworks Museum, Melbourne
 - Immigration Museum, Melbourne
 - Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne

- **National Museum of Australia**, Canberra

- **Questacon – The National Science and Technology Centre** , Canberra

- **Otago Museum and Discovery World**, Dunedin

- **Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences**
 - Powerhouse Museum
 - Sydney Observatory

- **Queensland Museum**
 - Queensland Museum South Bank
 - Museum of Tropical Queensland, Townsville
 - Cobb & Co Museum, Toowoomba
 - Woodworks, the Forestry and Timber Museum, Gympie
 - Lands Mapping & Surveying Museum
 - The Workshops Rail Museum, Ipswich

- **Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery**
 - Inveresk
 - Royal Park, Launceston

- **Scitech Discovery Centre, Perth**

- **South Australian Museum**
 - South Australian Museum, Adelaide

- South Australian Museum Science Centre, Adelaide
- **The Sovereign Hill Museums Association**
 - Sovereign Hill, Ballarat
 - Gold Museum, Ballarat
 - Narmbool, Elaine
- **Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery**
 - Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
 - Moonah Complex, Hobart
 - Tasmanian Herbarium, Hobart
 - Rosny Research and Collections Centre, Hobart
- **Western Australian Museum**
 - Western Australian Museum, Perth
 - Western Australian Museums Kalgoorlie-Boulder
 - Western Australian Museum Albany
 - Western Australian Museum Geraldton
 - Fremantle History Museum
 - Western Australian Maritime Museum, Fremantle
 - Western Australian Shipwreck Galleries
 - Samson House, Fremantle