

Vital Signs: Cultural Indicators for Australia

Consultation March 2014

Submission from Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD)

Introduction

The Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD) congratulates the Statistical Working Group and the Meeting of Cultural Ministers on the development of draft national cultural indicators for Australia. In general, CAMD believes that the proposed indicators will make an important contribution by bringing statistics together in one place to provide a broader picture of the cultural, social and economic value of Australia's arts and culture sectors.

CAMD has included its comments on the themes and individual indicators, in line with the questions asked in the online survey, below.

Before commenting on the indicators, however, CAMD would like to emphasize its concern that the success or other of the chosen cultural indicators will rest on the currency and comprehensive nature of the data sources chosen to populate the indicators.

Data Gaps

While generally supportive of the development of cultural indicators of the type outlined in the report, CAMD remains concerned that there is no accompanying plan for ongoing collection of data on cultural industries such as museums.

Service Industry Surveys

The available data sources on museums Australia-wide are up to 6 years old. The former Service Industry Surveys (SIS) covering the collection sector, which were carried out on a 3-4 year basis with the cooperation of museums, were seen as extremely useful to the sector in providing an aggregated picture of different collection domains. There has not been a dedicated industry survey of museums since 2007-08.

The absence of SIS information has meant that the ABS is relying instead on the Household Survey, particularly in regard to attendances. As CAMD has noted in the past, the methodology for this survey is based on random telephone interviews resulting in an estimate (rather than on actual attendances). In addition, it does not record data relating to visitors under 15 or non-residents (eg international tourists) thereby overlooking two significant groups of museum patrons. CAMD has written to ABS in the past about the wide

discrepancy between its estimated visitor figures and those recorded by CAMD for its members' 60 museums.

As the *Vital Sign* report points out, some data on tourism can be sourced from Tourism Research Australia. As the last TRA data on cultural tourism was released in 2009, it would be hoped that fresh data would be provided for these indicators. The report also suggests that the more recent ABS Child Participation survey would be utilized. This data, however, is again an estimate and it will be difficult to marry it with other attendance figures to gain an overview of combined attendance figures. The result is that museum visitor numbers published in ABS reports can be up to one quarter of actual figures which can lead to a distorted understanding of the popularity of museums with the Australian public.

CAMD Surveys

CAMD currently collects data annually on a range of indicators to assist its members in their benchmarking activities and to measure the beneficial impact of the major museums on their communities. The CAMD survey has been refined over the last few years to ensure that its definition of 'visits' aligns with the definition used for the national cultural indicators. CAMD members records in regard to 'visits' are drawn not from estimates but from tickets, receipts and electronic counting of actual visitors through the door. The CAMD survey for the financial year 2009-10, found that there were over 11.6 million visits to member's museums in Australia compared to the estimate of 3.6m Australian adult visits recorded in ABS 4114.0 Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events 2009-10. Actual visits have risen to over 12.89m in 2012-13 for the sixty CAMD member museums in Australia. This does not take into account visits to other museums in Australia; we know from ABS figures that at the end of June 2008 there were at least 1,184 museums operating from 1,456 locations across Australia.

Recommendations

It is critical for both Government and our industry to have accurate data to use in considering the contribution of sectors and on which to base key resourcing, investment and marketing decisions.

CAMD recommends to the Meeting of Cultural Ministers and the Statistical Working Group that it seek advice from the ABS on its plan for the collection of data relating to museums to support the aim of having current, comprehensive and comparable information about all domains within the arts and cultural sector. In particular, CAMD supports the

reintroduction of the Service Industry Survey on a three to four year cycle for museums and galleries.

RESPONSES TO ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Themes

1. To what extent do you think the themes below capture the broad values that arts and culture create?

CAMD believes that the three broad themes proposed capture the broad values that arts and culture create 'to a great extent'.

CAMD notes, however, that the current ordering of themes appears to give primacy to 'economic development'. The overall contribution of arts and culture to the community would be better represented if the themes were reordered as follows:

- cultural value
- engagement/social impact
- economic development

2. Are there other themes that should be included?

No

Economic Indicators

3. How important do you think each indicator is in demonstrating economic value?

CAMD would agree that the following indicators: *cultural employment/voluntary work/household expenditure/tourist & visitor spend/Government support for culture/Economic impact of cultural industries and flow on effects* are all 'Very Important' when utilized in combination to create a picture of the economic contribution of the arts and cultural sectors.

As noted above, however, CAMD is concerned that the data available for this indicator is insufficiently current. The most recent data for cultural sector employment appears to be already eight years old and the next census will be in 2016. The most recent compilation in relation to cultural tourism released by Tourism Research Australia was in 2009. Fresher

data could be collected if data was sought from a new industry survey for at least some of the information above.

4. Would you suggest any other indicators of economic value?

- Private sector support for culture. With the dissolution of the Australian Business Arts Foundation Award (ABaF) and its replacement by Creative Partnerships, another survey (which extends beyond the visual and performing arts to include museums and galleries) may need to be commissioned or an industry survey undertaken to collect this data.

Cultural Indicators

5. How important do you think each indicator is in demonstrating cultural value?

- *Cultural assets (eg the nation's material cultural heritage, number of significant buildings, sites, monuments, collections and other assets).* Very important. It should be noted however that some considerable time has elapsed since the last 'audit' of museums and their collections across Australia.
- *Human capital/talent (eg development and support for artists and their creative practice).* Very Important.
- *Cultural identity (eg opportunities to experience and express ourselves as Australians, conservation of heritage assets, maintenance of Indigenous languages, prizes and awards, copyright and intellectual property, showcases of cultural identity, Australian content).* Very important.
- *Innovation (eg support for the creation of new work, incubators, subsidies and tax arrangements).* Very important.
- *Global reach of Australian arts and culture (eg Australia's ability to project its arts and culture internationally, touring and cultural export).* Very important.

6. Would you suggest any other indicators of cultural value?

- Indicators for human capital/talent should also cover **the provision of professional support (eg internships) and advice to Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff**. Data for this would best be collected via an industry survey.

Museums are the main custodians of our cultural memory and significant agents in making the nation's stories – key to our cultural identity - accessible through exhibitions

and public programs. As only a portion of the cultural artifacts found in museums can ever be on physical public display, one indicator of the health of our cultural identity and our ability to showcase cultural identity is the **turn-over in permanent exhibitions**. In addition, given the importance of digital access in this context, a second indicator could be **proportion of collection available online**. Data for both these indicators could be collected via an industry survey.

- One aspect of the conservation of heritage assets which should be covered in an indicator is **Collection storage – proportion of items stored appropriately**. Data could be sought via an industry survey.
- In relation to ‘Copyright and Intellectual property’ the value of the sector could also be enhanced by **changes to copyright laws** which allow cultural institutions to more easily fulfil their remit when making preservation copies and by improving access to ‘orphan works’. This indicator would be expressed in qualitative terms.
- Innovation could be extended to include innovative **collaborations between cultural institutions and arts forms**. Quantitative data could be sought via an industry survey.
- In relation to global reach, an industry survey could seek qualitative data from cultural institutions on the numbers of **formal agreements** with international Governments or institutions confirmed via a Memorandum of Understanding or written contract in a given period. ‘Formal agreements’ could relate to such activities as the hosting of foreign dignitaries or delegations as part of institutional events, exhibitions, festivals or programs; securing or loaning exhibitions or exhibition items; international research projects; staff and skills exchange; and international fieldwork.

Social Indicators

7. How important do you think the following indicators are in demonstrating engagement/social impact?

- ***Cultural attendance (eg attendance at venues, events and sites)***.
Very Important. CAMD’s concern over the methodology for estimating attendances at museums and the currency of data in use is noted earlier in the submission (see pp 1-2).
- ***Cultural participation (eg community participation in arts and cultural activities)***
Very important.

- *Access (eg provision of regional programs in arts and culture)* Very important. Data gathered should also include the touring of cultural exhibitions through the Visions of Australia program under the Australia Council and the touring of exhibitions intrastate undertaken by State/Territory museums and galleries.
- *Education in arts (eg take-up of education opportunities in arts and culture).* Very important.

8. Would you suggest any other indicators of engagement/social impact?

- In relation to cultural participation, qualitative data on the **engagement by cultural institutions and artists with community groups** should be collected by industry survey.
- In order to determine social engagement an attempt should be made to quantify **online visits**. This could be done both quantitatively (seeking online visit statistics via an industry survey) and qualitatively eg seeking feedback on examples where innovative approaches to digitization have allowed a marked expansion of access.
- A further indicator in the education field should be to determine numbers of school children reached through **formal education programs** (via industry survey) and the arts and cultural programs for schools and the community provided via video-conferencing links (data to be gathered from State/Territory Education departments).

Overall Framework

9. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements about the purpose of a national set of indicators.

- *to demonstrate the value of arts and culture* 'Agree'
- *to measure progress* 'Agree'
- *to monitor trends* 'Agree'
- *to provide a standard for measuring the arts* 'Agree'
- *to provide international comparisons* 'Agree'
- *to advocate for public and private investment* 'Agree'

10. Are there other purposes we have not identified above? Please specify.

No

11. How important is it to have a set of national cultural indicators for Australia?

CAMD believes that it is very important to have a set of national cultural indicators which can provide both quantitative and qualitative measures of the contribution of museums as part of the arts and culture sectors. It is equally important that there be current, comprehensive and comparable data available for reporting against the indicators.

12. How useful would a revised and updated cultural indicators framework and regular reporting be to you?

A revised and updated cultural indicators framework and regular reporting would be 'very important' to the museum sector. However, as indicated earlier in this submission, it is important that the reports are compiled on the basis of the most accurate and current data available.

CAMD

CAMD's represents the Directors and Chief Executive Officers of 23 major National, State/Territory and regional museums and museum networks in Australia and New Zealand. Its members have responsibility for over 68 separate sites including museums and galleries, science and film centres and house museums. A list of members is at *attachment A*.

Conclusion

CAMD was not made aware of the request for comment on the report and online survey until towards the very end of the consultation period. It would be greatly appreciated if CAMD and other national cultural organisations could be contacted directly about consultations of this nature in the future.

I would also be interested to receive a summary of the results of the survey and the outcomes of the review of Vital Signs.

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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 Museum**, Sydney
- **Australian War Memorial**, Canberra
- **Canterbury Museum**, Christchurch
 - Robert McDougall Gallery
- **History SA**
 - History Trust of South Australia, Adelaide
 - National Motor Museum, Birdwood
 - South Australian Maritime Museum, Port Adelaide
 - Migration Museum, Adelaide
- **Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences**
 - Powerhouse Museum
 - Sydney Observatory
 - Powerhouse Discovery Centre
- **Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House**
- **Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa**
- **Museum Victoria**
 - Melbourne Museum, Melbourne
 - Scienceworks Museum, Melbourne
 - Immigration Museum, Melbourne
 - IMAX
 - Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
- **Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory**
 - Bullock Point, Darwin
 - Fannie Bay Gaol, Darwin
 - Lyons Cottage, Darwin
- **National Museum of Australia**, Canberra

- **Questacon – The National Science and Technology Centre** , Canberra
- **Otago Museum and Discovery World**, Dunedin
- **Queensland Museum**
 - Queensland Museum South Bank, Brisbane
 - Museum of Tropical Queensland, Townsville
 - Cobb & Co Museum, Toowoomba
 - Lands Mapping & Surveying Museum
 - The Workshops Rail Museum, Ipswich
- **Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery**
 - Inveresk, Tasmania
 - Royal Park, Launceston, Tasmania
- **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
- **Sydney Living Museums**
 - 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
- **Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery**
 - Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
 - Tasmanian Herbarium, Hobart

- Rosny Research and Collections Centre, Hobart
- **Western Australian Museum**
 - Western Australian Museum, Perth
 - Western Australian Maritime Museum, Fremantle
 - Fremantle History Museum
 - Western Australian Shipwreck Galleries
 - Western Australian Museum Geraldton
 - Western Australian Museums Kalgoorlie-Boulder
 - Western Australian Museum Albany
 - Samson House, Fremantle