

Annual General Meeting

Agenda Item 6

May 2017

Annual Report on the Work of the Committee

For the period June 2016 to April 2017

1. Introduction

The 2016-17 year has seen some outstanding highlights administrative challenges and watershed changes for the ICOM Australia Executive including its first ICOM Australia Awards ceremony on foreign soil (New Zealand), the implementation of a new digital membership system, review of the Partnerships Program and engagement with several major sector consultations.

2. Year in Summary

2.1 Executive Board

The ICOM Australia Executive Board for 2016-17 was comprised of:

Chair	Mr Alec Coles OBE	Western Australian Museum
Vice-Chair	Ms Deborah Tout-Smith	Museum Victoria
National Secretary	Mr Ian Thilthorpe	Western Australian Museum
Treasurer	Ms Suzanne Bravery	National Museum of Australia
Membership Secretary and Public Officer	Ms Louise Douglas	National Museum of Australia
Ordinary Members	Ms Margaret Anderson	Old Treasury Building
	Ms Judith Coombes	Powerhouse Museum
	Mr Richard Ferguson	Australian National Maritime Museum
	Ms Mariea Fisher	Unaffiliated
	Ms Carolyn Forster	National Museum of Australia
	Mr Roger Garland	Unaffiliated
	Ms Mirna Heruc	The University of Adelaide
	Ms Anne Flanagan	Arts Consultant
	Dr Jonathan Sweet	Deakin University
	Ms Samantha Fabry	Freemasons Victoria
	Ms Liz Bonshek	Museums Victoria
	Mrs Christine Tarbett-Buckley	Unaffiliated

	Dr Mathew Trinca	National Museum Australia
Ex-Officio	Mr Frank Howarth	Museums Australia
Ex-Officio	Ms Tarisi Vunidilo	Pacific Islands Museums Association

2.2 Chair and Board of ICOM Australia

The 2016 AGM saw Robin Hirst step down from the role of Chair of the Executive Board after a period of three years. That period has seen significant positive changes and developments including a steady increase in membership and profile as well as reinforced support for museums and colleagues across the Indo-Pacific region.

Robin's contributions, dedication, resilience, good humour and wit will be sorely missed. The ICOM Australia Board was, however, delighted to see Robin honoured by the Australian Government with a prestigious Public Service Medal. We congratulate Robin and thank him for his excellent contribution.

He is replaced by our new Chair Alec Coles OBE, CEO of the Western Australian Museum.

In fact there were a number of changes in the ICOM Australia officers over the year, all due to members completing their tenure on the Board. We said goodbye to both Nancy Ladas, our Secretary, and Scott Mitchell, our Treasurer. Both had done excellent work in their respective positions. ICOM Australia owes both of them a great debt of gratitude.

They are replaced by Ian Thilthorpe from the Western Australian Museum and Suzanne Bravery from the National Museum of Australia.

Alec and the new board are focussing on the challenges ahead, including building profile, membership and influence across its region. A new Communication Plan has been developed to increase contact with members.

2.3 Finance

The Treasurer and Board continue to manage the organisation's finances: details can be found in the audited accounts. Ensuring the long term financial sustainability of ICOM Australia is included in the ongoing strategic direction work of the Board.

2.4 Membership

ICOM Australia continues to grow as membership increased yet again, raising the total number of individual and institutional memberships to 562. This included a total of 31 institutional/organisational members. The annual renewal rate remains positive at 95%.

2.5 ICOM General Conference

The 24th ICOM General Conference was held in Milan, Italy on the 3-9 July 2016. Robin Hirst attended the meeting as the ICOM Australia representative. The conference also saw ICOM Australia member Vinod Daniel elected to the ICOM Executive Council.

2.6 Awards for International Relations

The ICOM Australia Awards once again proved to be a highlight of the year. These awards recognise and celebrate the outstanding work undertaken by ICOM Australia member institutions and individuals. In order to qualify for an award the work must be considered to have strengthened international relations and contributed to the cultural richness of our region. This year, ICOM Australia was delighted to present two awards:

Individual Award: Dr Des Griffin AM

Dr Des Griffin AM is a museum professional who has spent his life advocating for cultural diversity within the museum sector, especially in Australia and New Zealand.

Born in New Zealand, Des Griffin came to Australia as a senior research scientist at the Australian Museum, conducting research on marine science, particularly the biology of Crustacea. In this capacity he published some 60 research papers, and a number of genera and species were named in his honour by other scientists. In 1976 he was appointed Director of the Australian Museum. Not content with advocating for science, research and education, and transforming the culture and museum practice within the Australian Museum, Des Griffin also led initiatives, reviews and policies to advance the rights and representation of Indigenous people in museums.

Des Griffin was the Chair of the Council of Australian Museum Associations Inc. (CAMA) from 1988 to 1993 and the first President, until 1996, of Museums Australia. He was a key player in the establishment and development of what became the Heritage Collections Council, which in turn supported the development of Australian Museums On-Line (AMOL).

Des Griffin was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1990 for his services to museums, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of New South Wales in 2014. After his retirement as director of the Australian Museum in 1998 his advisory and leadership roles expanded. He was the George Fairfax Fellow in Arts and Entertainment Management at Deakin University, Melbourne in April 2002 and delivered the Kenneth Myer Lecture, Entrepreneurship in the Arts: Entrepreneurship in Museums.

A deep thinker on museum management, leadership and governance, Des has published more than 30 papers since his retirement on these and other issues. He has been involved in reviews of science and museums, and has served on numerous committees and advisory bodies dealing with science and museum policy in Australia. He was the co-editor, with Leon Paroissien, of the e-book *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology* published in 2011 by the National Museum of Australia, with essays spanning every facet of museum practice since the 1975 Piggott Report. More recently Des has written on climate change, industrial relations, economics and education in the online journals *New Matilda* and *On Line Opinion*. His book, *Education Reform: the Unwinding of Intelligence and Creativity*, was published January 2014 by Springer.



Des Griffin © Des Griffin

Institutional Award: National Museum of Australia

Presented to the National Museum of Australia for its collaboration with the British Museum which saw it realise two landmark exhibitions: *Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilisations* at the British Museum, and *Encounters: Revealing Stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Objects from the British Museum* at the National Museum in Canberra.

The exhibitions were outcomes of a long-standing international collaboration to:

- research the Australian Indigenous holdings of the British Museum;
- reconnect this material with contemporary Indigenous communities;
- display the results in Canberra and London; and
- enhance the nation's cultural life through public discussion about the complex issues that surround such collections.

In 2015 this rich international collaboration drew Australian and British audiences into an engagement with the entangled Indigenous and non-Indigenous histories that lie behind this material.

The collaboration has expanded public knowledge and appreciation of these objects and their associated histories. Even more importantly, communities of origin in this country now enjoy an established dialogue with the British Museum and the National Museum of Australia in respect of the cultural material held in these collections. These relationships inform an evolving international debate about the roles and responsibilities of museums as cultural custodians of materials that originated from First Peoples communities. In an extension of the work with the British Museum, the National Museums of Australia established a partnership with the Prince's Charities Australia for a scholarship program for Indigenous cultural workers, which includes skills and capacity building placements at the Museum and access to British institutions. The partnership is providing development opportunities for six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural workers to engage in a transformative program in Canberra and London.

Over 59,000 visitors saw *Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilisations* at the British Museum, while over 70,000 visited *Encounters* at the National Museum of Australia.

The exhibitions were a feature of the Museum's international program that builds long-lasting international partnerships between institutions, enhancing Australia's cultural diplomacy objectives through the following outcomes:

- agreements which develop professional expertise in museum practice across several disciplines, in curatorial, conservation, education and public programming, among others, through staff exchanges and training programs;
- developing, touring and hosting object-rich exhibitions and two dimensional displays which communicate Australia's rich history and culture to international audiences; and
- fostering reciprocal programs that build knowledge between Australia and bilateral partners, and bring the best overseas collections to these shores for Australian audiences.

In support of this International Program, the Museum established agreements based on the same objectives of advancing cultural diplomacy between nations, including with:

- National Museum of Singapore
- National Museum of China
- British Museum
- Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery
- Museum D'Historie Naturelle Du Havre, France.



Encounters Exhibition at the National Museum © Ian Coates, NMA

2.7 ICOM Australia Bursary program

In 2016 ICOM Australia supported two members through our Bursary program:

Vinod Daniel was awarded \$2000 to attend the ICOM Triennial Conference 2-9 July 2016 Milan Italy, as a candidate for the ICOM Executive Council and was duly elected; and

Wendy Lugg Honorary Artist in Residence Royal Western Australian Historical Society, WA, was awarded \$500 to attend the Museums Australasia Conference 15-19 May 2016.

2.8 Partnerships Program

The Partnerships Program group has continued to review and develop this area of activity. The group has assessed past programs, drafted and ratified new guiding documents, and are now actively seeking a sustainable source of funding.

2.9 ICOM Australia Strategic Plan

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement and following the release of the ICOM 2016 - 2020 Strategic Plan the ICOM Australia Executive is in the process of reviewing its Strategic Plan to ensure that it continues to be a vibrant and active organisation that meets the needs of its members and the sector.

2.10 Website

ICOM Australia has been working with Museums Galleries Australia (MGA) to create a new joint membership database. Both associations provide advocacy and membership services on behalf of the Australian museum community. ICOM Australia provides an international perspective. MGA has a national focus.

ICOM Australia and MGA have a long-standing working relationship, sharing website infrastructure, membership database management along with MGA contracted to provide secretariat services to ICOM Australia.

The joint membership database went live in February 2017. The project improved communication and tracking tools to manage relationships with members of ICOM Australia and Museums Galleries Australia.

2.10 New visual identity

ICOM Australia has adopted the new visual identity announced at the 24th ICOM General Conference in Milan. It has been rolled out across ICOM Australia's website and corporate material.

2.11 Social media

The Executive is continuing to develop its social media strategy. The ICOM Australia Facebook site continues to generate interest and discussion.

2.12 Museums Australasia 2016

ICOM Australia and Museums Australia partnership continues to flourish. Once again ICOM Australia supported the Museums and Galleries Australia annual conference, which was a joint conference with Museums Aotearoa, New Zealand for the first time in 2016. The theme was *Facing the Future: Local, Global and Pacific Possibilities*. ICOM Australia sponsored and chaired a well-attended session which included a workshop on issues of disaster preparedness and response in the Asia Pacific region.

At the 2017 Museums and Galleries Australia conference to be held in Brisbane (14-18 May) ICOM is once again sponsoring a keynote address, to be delivered by John Ryan of New York's acclaimed Local Projects design group.

2.13 Blue Shield Australia

In 2016 ICOM Australia continued to take an active role in the work of Blue Shield Australia (BSA), principally through ICOM Australia Executive members Dr Jonathan Sweet, who is also the Chairperson of BSA, and Ms Nancy Ladas.

ICOM Australia is dedicated to working with the BSA partners to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by armed conflict and natural disasters, actively working to enhance disaster preparedness and recovery throughout the museum sector. The BSA committee comprises representatives from the following organisations:

- ICA: the International Council on Archives, represented in Australia by the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities
- ICOM: the International Council of Museums, represented in Australia by ICOM Australia
- ICOMOS: International Council on Monuments and Sites, represented in Australia by Australia ICOMOS
- IFLA: the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, represented in Australia by the Australian Library and Information Association

The BSA is convening an international symposium scheduled for the 29 & 30 January 2018, to be held at the National Library of Australia, Canberra. The symposium aims to bring together representatives from Australia, Asia and the Pacific to share perspectives on the conservation of cultural heritage and natural disasters.

2.13 Advocacy and influence

Through the year, ICOM Australia was involved commenting on a number of studies, reports and investigations. These included Australia's National Roadmap for Research Infrastructure and a review of Museums and Galleries in New South Wales.

ICOM Australia also worked with Questacon – Australia's National Science and Technology Centre – to celebrate and promote International Science Centre and Science Museum Day (ISCSMD). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) celebrates a World Science Day for Peace and Development. This year UNESCO joined with the ICOM and science centres and museums worldwide to celebrate this important day. Positive press coverage was received for this, also.

2.14 History of ICOM Australia

In light of Australia's active contribution to ICOM since the late 1970s, Bernice Murphy was commissioned to write an overview of Australia's role in ICOM. Bernice, an important contributor to the development of Australia's museums and galleries and a stalwart of ICOM nationally and internationally, has drafted a fine history which rightfully focuses on the work and achievements of a number of Australian individuals. Bernice's article will be available in the 'History' section of the ICOM Australia website.