

Annual General Meeting

12 Nov 2020

Agenda Item 6

Annual Report on the Work of the Committee For the period May 2019 to November 2020

1. Introduction

The period between May 2019 and November 2020 has been a time of unprecedented challenges in Australia that have impacted the work of ICOM Australia, including major bushfires and a pandemic.

The following report covers the period between the ICOM Australia Annual General Meeting of May 2019 and the AGM of November 2020, delayed by pandemic restrictions which prevented face-to-face meetings.

2. Year in Summary

2.1 Executive Board

The ICOM Australia Executive Board for 2019/20 was comprised of:

Chair	Dr Mathew Trinca	National Museum of Australia
Vice-Chair	Ms Deborah Tout-Smith	Museums Victoria
National Secretary	Ms Cherie McNair	Unaffiliated
Treasurer	Lisa Walters	SLM/Unaffiliated
Membership Secretary	Dr Toner Stevenson	University of Sydney (SOFI)
Public Officer	Mr Roger Garland	Unaffiliated
Ordinary Members	Ms Nancy Ladas	Museums Victoria
	Dr Regan Forrest	Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
	Elizabeth Gehde	Queensland Museum Network (Seconded)

	Deanne Fitzgerald	WA Museum Boola Bardip (Seconded)
	Roger Garland	Part Year, completed full 6 year term
	Judith Coombes	Part Year, completed full 6 year term
Ex-Officio	Dr Robin Hirst PSM	Australian Museums and Galleries Association
Ex-Officio	Ms Tarisi Vunidilo	Pacific Islands Museums Association

2.2 Chair of ICOM Australia

There has been no other year quite like the ‘long year’ that we have experienced since the last Annual General Meeting of ICOM Australia in May 2019. The ‘long year’ refers of course to the fact that we are holding our Annual General Meeting in late 2020 a good six months after it would normally have been held due to the global COVID-19 crisis. In the first instance, we are grateful to the ACT Government for allowing our association, incorporated in the ACT, to delay its Annual General Meeting till now, given the wider circumstances that have prevailed.

This ‘long year’ has proved tumultuous and challenging in many respects, but it began conventionally enough with our sponsored keynote by Neil MacGregor, former Director of the British Museum and founding director of the Humboldt Forum, at the groundbreaking AMAGA national conference in Alice Springs. His address, ‘Museums: Places for Complex Stories and Diverse Publics’, revealed both the breadth of possibilities, and responsibilities, of museums as they work to address their own histories as much as dealing with the cultural politics of our age.

The presentation of ICOM Australia’s annual awards, to Professor Jim Gehling AO and the Queensland Art Gallery Gallery of Modern Art, was especially memorable for its location – under the stars of the brilliant night sky in the Country of the Arrernte people just outside Alice Springs itself. Director of the South Australian Museum Brian Oldman was on hand to accept the award on behalf of Professor Gehling and Simon Elliott accepted the award for QAGOMA. The Conference also gave us a chance to farewell the outgoing Chair of ICOM Australia Alec Coles and other Executive Board members Ian Thilthorpe (Secretary) and Scott Mitchell (Treasurer) and thank them for their service.

ICOM Australia was then well-represented at the ICOM 25th General Conference and associated meetings in Kyoto in early September, with myself, Deb Tout-Smith, Toner Stevenson, Judith Coombes and outgoing chair Alec Coles attending. The conference was notable not just for the breadth of ideas and discussions about museums covered in the plenaries and sessions, but also for the culmination of the work to develop a new museum definition, with which ICOM Australia had been intimately involved.

It quickly emerged that, despite the strong endorsement of the need for a new museum definition at the previous conference in Milan in 2016, there was strong debate about the merits of the definition proposed by the Executive Board of ICOM. ICOM Australia advocated for change and the sentiments expressed in the new definition but acknowledged that the wording itself might benefit from amendment to improve clarity. As it transpired, the proposal for the new definition was not carried at the Extraordinary General Assembly held to address the matter in Kyoto, and instead delegates asked for more work to be done on redrafting a definition.

I was pleased to accept a request from ICOM President Suay Aksoy to join the reconstituted standing committee for a new definition, known as Museum Definition, Prospects and Potential 2 (MDPP2), and have been able to represent Australia's interests in that group. A survey was launched in late 2019 to establish the views of our membership regarding the proposed change, and the results of the survey and the views of our members have been taken into the new process for change. While there is a breadth of opinion about the phraseology that should be employed, it is clear that there is keen interest in establishing a new definition that speaks to the work of museums in the 21st century.

Globally, this discussion has proved challenging for ICOM with several resignations of key members of the first MDPP committee, including its chair Jette Sandahl, and ultimately was implicated in the decision of President Aksoy to resign in June of this year. The work of the committee has, however, continued under the direction of the new President Alberto Garlandani and I am hopeful that the process it is establishing will involve more members in realising the ambition for a new definition of museums that more ably meets the needs of this age. As well as our involvement in the museum definition standing committee, ICOM Australia is also now represented on the ICOM Ethics Committee (Mathew Trinca), and on the ICOM Strategic Allocation Review Committee (Deb Tout-Smith), which represents our contribution to the global community of museums.

In July, 2020, I participated as Chair of ICOM Australia in the first ICOM General Assembly to be held entirely online. At that meeting, and an associated meeting of all National Committees, I represented our country's strong interest in seeing a general improvement in ICOM's global governance and communications. Following the disquiet which surrounded the resignations from MDPP2, and the resignation of the ICOM President, it was gratifying to hear President Garlandani speak so clearly of the need for reform of aspects of the organisation. In particular, there is an emerging view that the Executive Board of ICOM need to ensure greater transparency and openness in ICOM's affairs, improve communications and engagement with the national committees and international committees of ICOM, and demonstrate clear leadership in developing a new museum definition.

Establishing collaborative relationships to help drive our program in the Asia Pacific has been a key goal of ICOM Australia over the course of the past year. In 2020, ICOM Australia developed a Memorandum of Understanding with ICOM Singapore to work on joint projects and interests together, and the first project has been to work together to develop a curriculum for a training program in Wet Tropics Heritage Conservation. ICOM Australia received a grant of \$21,900 to develop this program from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and while early discussions have proceeded the project itself had to be delayed to 2021 due to COVID-19.

Similarly, ICOM Australia has worked with ICOM New Zealand and ICOM International to develop a week-long intensive museums training program for Pacific nations. However, when the crisis hit in early 2020 all parties agreed to delay this work to 2021, with a view to undertaking such a program depending on circumstances at the time. ICOM Australia has also joined with the Committee for University Museums and Collections (UMAC) to undertake a program for The Ethics of Restitution and Repatriation which involves examining approaches to these fundamental issues across the world. This project has been successful in securing €4.800 in grant funds from ICOM International.

Of course, this is a year that has demanded a great deal of us all, as we first battled the destructive bushfires that swept across Australia in the summer 2019-20 and then of course as the COVID-19 crisis struck in March 2020. ICOM Australia committed itself to assist wherever possible and expressed its support in writing to the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, through its foundation support of Blue Shield Australia, and through its participation in GLAM Peak with AMAGA and meetings of the AMaGA Bushfires/Climate Change Cultural Response Roundtable. ICOM Australia has also joined a GLAM Peak initiative to engage consultants for a study of how to improve the combined lobbying power of galleries, libraries, archives and museums in Australia. Our Deputy Chair Deb Tout Smith has been particularly involved in this work, and I thank her for her terrific support.

ICOM Australia has continued to advocate on behalf of members' interests and contribute to broader debates about the place of arts and cultural activity in the nation. In the first instance, this involved us making a submission to the NSW Parliament on management of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences and other related issues in May, followed by our representation at a subsequent parliamentary hearing in July by National Secretary Cherie McNair. ICOM Australia also made submissions to a Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 (May) and a Commonwealth Inquiry into Australia's Creative and Cultural Industries and Institutions (October), in the course of the year. Additionally, I wrote to the Chair of Rio Tinto expressing our concern about the destruction of Aboriginal cultural heritage at Juukan Gorge (May), and suggesting advice and assistance to help prevent such an event again.

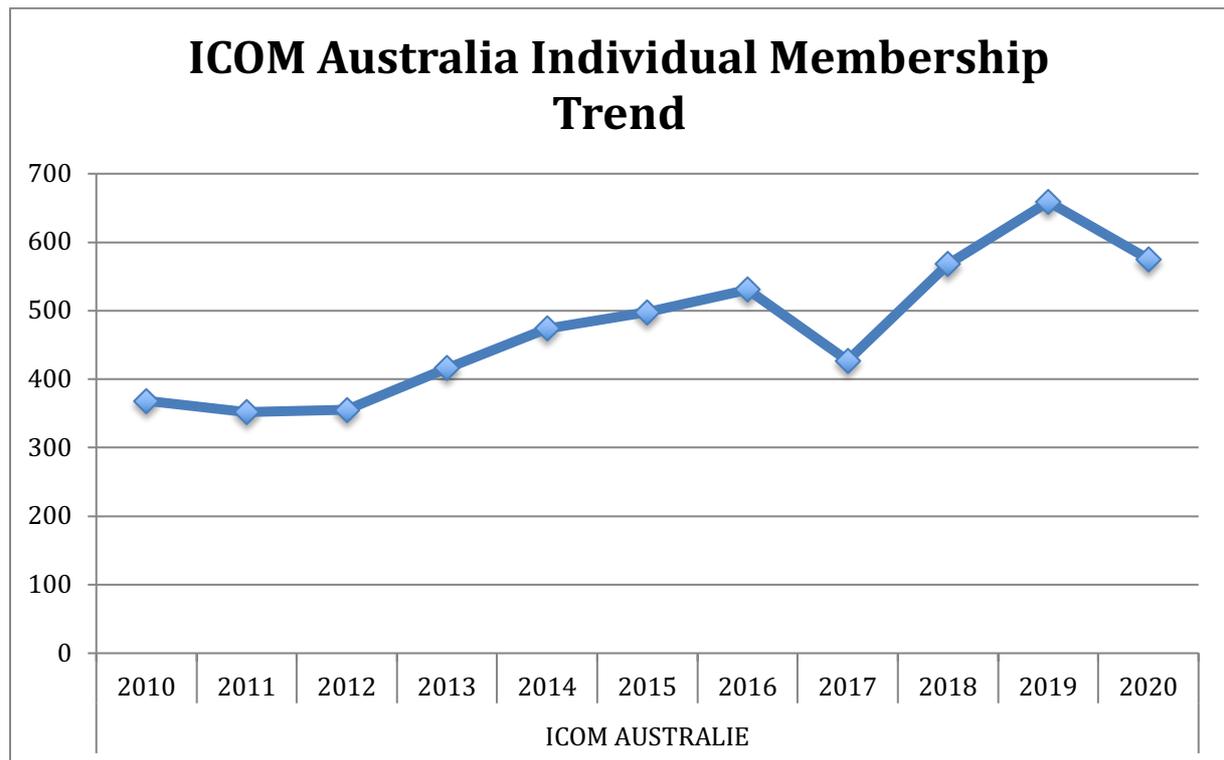
As the international arm of the museum and galleries sector in this country, ICOM Australia is committed to advancing the interests of the global community of museums and museum professionals. I thank all members of our Executive Board here in Australia for their wholehearted commitment and support for our work and you our members for all you have done in the course of the year to keep you, your family and friends, and your institutions and organisations safe in this year like no other we have experienced.

2.3 Membership

Membership update

Given that this has been an extraordinary year, with little chance for travel or even to visit some local museums and galleries, new memberships and renewals have been relatively strong. There are currently 575 individual and 35 Institutional members. This is less than in 2019 (659 individual members) but more than in 2018 (568 individual

members). Despite Covid-19 Institutional members have remained engaged in 2020 on par with previous years.



Substantial progress has been made in implementing the IRIS Salesforce CRM system. This is now ready to go live with a number of communications held with ICOM (Paris and Valencia). Using IRIS will increase members’ opportunities for engagement with International Committees and once the direct credit card purchase is established, improve the experience in making payment for renewals and new membership applications. ICOM Paris has been very helpful in training and providing a new manual for using the IRIS Salesforce system.

Thank you to the Membership Committee for prompt and considered comments and approvals of new memberships, usually within 3 days. Acknowledgement and thanks to AMaGA who have processed renewals and new memberships. ICOM volunteer, Anne Slade, has continued to ensure new members receive an email to acknowledge that their application is received and approved in a timely manner, and updates on card arrival times.

To clarify communications a new membership-only email was established: members@icom.org.au and Roger Garland continues to regularly update the ICOM Australia website content relating to memberships.

Membership Type	#Members as at Oct 2020
Individual	305

Retired	193
Student	61
Supporting	4
Life Member	1
Total Individual	575
Institutional	
Cat 1	1
Cat 2	2
Cat 3	6
Cat 4	6
Cat 5	4
Cat 6	16
Total Institutions	35

Institutional Members:

Institution Name	Member category
Geoscience Australia	Institutional 1
UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA	Institutional 2
KERRY STOKES COLLECTION	Institutional 2
City of Melbourne	Institutional 3
LOGAN ART GALLERY	Institutional 3
Buxton Contemporary	Institutional 3
Australian National Maritime Museum	Institutional 3
THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, THE GRIMWADE CENTRE FOR CULTURAL MATERIALS CONSERVATION	Institutional 3
OLD TREASURY BUILDING	Institutional 3
THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, THE IAN POTTER MUSEUM OF ART	Institutional 4
CANBERRA MUSEUM AND GALLERY	Institutional 4
MUSEUM OF BRISBANE	Institutional 4
Heide Museum of Modern Art	Institutional 4
ART GALLERY SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES	Institutional 4
ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA	Institutional 4
MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY	Institutional 5
WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM (WAM)	Institutional 5
ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA	Institutional 5
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, CANBERRA	Institutional 5

MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY AT OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE	Institutional 5
National Museum of Australia	Institutional 6
STATE LIBRARY OF NEW SOUTH WALES	Institutional 6
AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM	Institutional 6
The National Gallery	Institutional 6
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY	Institutional 6
THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA	Institutional 6
Art Gallery of New South Wales	Institutional 6
AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE MOVING IMAGE	Institutional 6
THE SOVEREIGN HILL MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION	Institutional 6
QUEENSLAND MUSEUM	Institutional 6
QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY GALLERY OF MODERN ART (QAGOMA)	Institutional 6
MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS AND SCIENCES	Institutional 6
Museums Victoria	Institutional 6
THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA	Institutional 6
The National Trust	Institutional 6
SYDNEY LIVING MUSEUMS	Institutional 6

Membership rates

Board considered the membership pricing for 2021 at the September meeting and most rates were retained as previous, with the exception of two Institutional rates which were costing the organisation. For 2021 Institutional 1 rate is charged at \$450 and Institutional 2 at \$825.

2.4 ICOM Australia Strategic Plan

ICOM Australia continues to work towards fulfilling the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan, to ensure that it meets the needs of its members, and the sector, both nationally and internationally.

2.5 Partnerships Program

In June 2019 the ICOM Australia Partnerships Program sponsored a successful training course at the Papua New Guinea National Museum & Art Gallery (NMAG). The five-day course was attended by 20 museum curatorial and conservation officers and volunteers from NMAG and colleagues from Take Anda Museum, in Enga, the Rabaul Historical Society and cultural centres in West New Britain, Autonomous Region of Bougainville and Madang.

Dr Alison Wain from University of Canberra and specialist conservator Carolyn McLennan conducted the training in conservation and curatorial practice. The course was conducted under an MOU between ICOM Australia and the University of Canberra. Its long-term impacts are being assessed by the University with a view to shaping training, partnership and internship opportunities in the future.

The workshop was funded by ICOM Australia, and additional funding from the PNG-Australia Partnership, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. ICOM Australia's Partnerships Program working group comprises Deborah Tout-Smith (chair), Dr Mathew Trinca, Cherie McNair and Regan Forrest.

Planning for further Partnerships Programs is continuing, including offers of Australian internships to selected students of the 2019 course, and a reciprocal offer from the NMAG for museum professional to undertake on-site work.

2.6 2019 Bursary Recipients

Due to the postponement or cancellation of many events in 2020, the Bursary's for 2020 were not dispersed. This decision will be reviewed by the new committee for 2020/2021.

2.7 Australian Museums and Galleries Association 2019

ICOM Australia continues to recognise the essential role that the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) plays in representing and connecting the arts, cultural and heritage organisations within Australia. Additionally, during the past year ICOM Australia has participated in GLAM Peak with AMAGA and in meetings of the AMaGA Bushfires/Climate Change Cultural Response Roundtable

ICOM Australia is indebted to Alex Marsden, outgoing Director, for her dedication and hard work, and to Robin Hirst, AMaGA President, for his continued support of the ICOM Board as an ex-officio member.

2.8 ICOM Australia Awards

Due to the cancellation of the AMAGA Conference and the challenges and disruption experienced by the sector this year, the ICOM Awards were placed on hold for 2020. Nominations will open early 2021.

2.9 ICOM Australia Essay Competition

The ICOM Australia Essay Competition invites students to submit essays on the International Museums Day topic each year. The winning submission is usually announced at the annual awards dinner in May, with a prize of a year's student membership of ICOM.

The spread of the pandemic across Australia in early 2020 and the closure of university campuses coincided with the advertising of the 2020 ICOM Australia Essay Competition. Unsurprisingly the competition failed to attract entries. Planning is underway for a modified approach in 2021, to ensure student engagement and support the aims of the competition: to communicate ICOM's benefits to a new generation of museum professionals.

2.10 Web and Social Media

ICOM Australia's web and social media presence continues to strengthen.

The ICOM Australia Facebook page was initially established in July 2013 and the ICOM Australia Twitter account (@ICOMAustralia) in February 2018.

Whilst not replacing the ICOM Australia website as a repository for official membership information, the Facebook page enhances our online presence and allows us to post up to the minute international museum news. It has been gratifying to note that page has this year attracted a particularly strong international following.

When first reported on at the 2015 AGM, the Facebook page at that time had 200 likes. By the end of September 2020 this had increased to 1608 likes and 1657 page followers. We will continue to use Facebook to promote international news and plan to increase our Twitter activity.

2.11 Blue Shield Australia

Blue Shield Australia (BSA), the Australian national committee of the Blue Shield (BS), is a network that is *"committed to the protection of the world's cultural property, and is concerned with the protection of cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible, in the event of armed conflict, natural- or human-made disaster."* The BSA committee comprises representatives from the following Australian peak industry organisations: the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities, Australia ICOMOS, the Australian Library and Information Association and ICOM Australia. ICOM Australia is a Founding Member of the BSA.

The BS's primary context is the 14 May 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the First Protocol, 14 May 1954 and Second Protocol, 26 March 1999.

The International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS), was founded in 1996 to protect the world's cultural heritage from threats such as armed conflict and natural disasters.

In 2008, the Association of the National Committees (ANCBS) was established to coordinate the work of the national committees. In 2016, the ICBS and the ANCBS were amalgamated to become The Blue Shield and new statutes were drawn up and in 2017 these were approved at the Blue Shield General Assembly.

The coordinating body of BS is now called Blue Shield International (BSI).

Each Blue Shield National Committee must agree to recognise and accept the Blue Shield Statutes (2016), Rules and Principles, Approach, ICBS Charter (2000) and other policies adopted by the General Assembly. Members of the ICOM Australia Executive Board recognised and accepted changes to the Rules and Principles and the Approach in August 2020.

The General Assembly is held every three years and was most recently hosted online on Friday 28 August 2020.

The regular May Day promotion of disaster preparedness coordinated by BSA moved to October in 2020. For many years BSA promoted disaster preparedness activities around the theme of MayDay linking in with information management activities during the month of May. However, even though risks are present at all times, BSA recognises that the Australian disaster season more commonly falls over the summer months. From 2020, BSA will focus its awareness raising campaign around 13 October, the United Nations International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

BSA has continued to provide commentary and support on national and international industry events and projects including the destruction of the culturally significant Juukan Gorge rock shelters, Pilbara region, Western Australia, the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements and the resumption of armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh

ICOM Australia Executive is represented on BSA by Ordinary Member Nancy Ladas. Plans are underway to provide an additional ICOM Australia representative to the BSA committee.

2.12 International Museum Day

International Museum Day, was celebrated in this COVID year, on 18 May 2020 through an online initiative. The theme for this year was 'Museums for Equality: Diversity and Inclusion', considered particularly apt given the great challenges being faced by Museums globally at that time.

Institutions and individuals were encouraged to select a single object from their collection to share with the public through social media channels, with a short statement explaining why the object, work of art or other artefact says something important to us at this time. Objects included those relating to current global challenges and those affirming all that we value in human society and experience.

Over 54 institutions across Australasia and between 40 – 50 individuals participated across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

2.13 International Involvement

ICOM Australia Executive Board Chair Dr Mathew Trinca has been appointed to the new ICOM Standing Committee on Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials (MDPP2), and also to the ICOM Ethics Committee.

Dr Trinca has also worked with ICOM Singapore to develop a joint Memorandum of Understanding to oversee work on joint projects and interests.

During 2020 ICOM Australia was represented on a number of fora including webinars initiated by ICOM India and ICOM International.

ICOM Australia Executive Board Vice-Chair Deborah Tout-Smith has completed a three-year term on the ICOM International Training Centre (ITC) Program Committee, and in 2020 was appointed for another three-year term.

Deborah has also recently been appointed for a three-year term on the ICOM Strategic Allocation Review Committee (SAREC).

ICOM General Assembly, Kyoto, September 2019

In September 2019 several members of the ICOM Australia Executive Board attended the ICOM Triennial in Kyoto: Dr Mathew Trinca, Deborah Tout-Smith, Toner Stevenson, Judith Coombes and Dr Robin Hirst.