

# Annual General Meeting

5:30pm - 6:30pm AEST 8 June 2021  
Biame Room, National Museum of Australia

## ITEM 6. 2020 Annual Report of the ICOM Australia Committee

### 1. Introduction

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The year 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 ICOM Australia Annual General Meeting was delayed until November 2020 by pandemic restrictions which prevented face-to-face meetings, in compliance with standard incorporation requirements (since varied).

### 2. Executive Board

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The ICOM Australia Board, 2020-21, comprises:

<b>Chair</b>	Dr Mathew Trinca	National Museum of Australia
<b>Vice-Chair</b>	Ms Deborah Tout-Smith	Museums Victoria
<b>National Secretary</b>	Ms Cherie McNair	Unaffiliated
<b>Treasurer</b>	Lisa Walters	SLM/Unaffiliated
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Dr Toner Stevenson	University of Sydney (SOFI)
<b>Public Officer</b>	Alexandra Marsden	Alex Marsden Cultural Services
<b>Ordinary Members</b>	Nancy Ladas	Museums Victoria
	Dr Regan Forrest	Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
	Brodie Taylor	University of Southern Queensland
<b>Co-opted Member</b>	Elizabeth Gehde	Queensland Museum Network
<b>Co-opted Member</b>	Deanne Fitzgerald	WA Museum Boola Bardip, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representative
<b>Co-opted Member</b>	Linda Byrne	National Museum of Australia, Blue Shield representative
<b>Ex-Officio</b>	Dr Robin Hirst PSM	Australian Museums and Galleries Association
<b>Ex-Officio</b>	Michael Mel ()	Port Moresby, Pacific Islands Museums Association representative
<b>Ex-Officio</b>	Sana Balai	Logan QLD/Buka, Pacific Islands Museums Association representative

The ICOM Australia Executive Board for 2019-20 (before the delayed AGM in November 2020) comprised:

<b>Chair</b>	Dr Mathew Trinca	National Museum of Australia
<b>Vice-Chair</b>	Ms Deborah Tout-Smith	Museums Victoria
<b>National Secretary</b>	Ms Cherie McNair	Unaffiliated
<b>Treasurer</b>	Lisa Walters	SLM/Unaffiliated
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Dr Toner Stevenson	University of Sydney (SOFI)
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<b>Ordinary Members</b>	Ms Nancy Ladas	Museums Victoria
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<b>Co-opted Member</b>	Elizabeth Gehde	Queensland Museum Network (Secoded)
	Deanne Fitzgerald	WA Museum Boola Bardip (Secoded)
<b>Ex-Officio</b>	Dr Robin Hirst PSM	Australian Museums and Galleries Association
<b>Ex-Officio</b>	Ms Tarisi Vunidilo	Pacific Islands Museums Association

### 3. Year in Summary

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The year 2020 has been a time of unprecedented challenges for Australian museums, impacting the work of ICOM Australia.

Over the summer of 2019-20 the worst bushfires in Australia's history devastated large parts of south-eastern Australia. Many museums and collections were directly impacted or threatened, leading to longer-term thinking about safety, risk management and planning for collections.

Recovery was just beginning when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, leading to the widespread closure of museums across Australia. In the state of Victoria, a lock-down of over 100 days saw an unprecedented extension of closures which continue to this day. Amidst this, we have had to face the tragedy of the destruction of the ancient Juukan Gorge by mining company Rio Tinto, a site of deep significance to Aboriginal communities.

The bushfires and the pandemic particularly impacted ICOM Australia's plans for the year, but we have nevertheless seen significant achievements.

ICOM Australia has been an active participant in the Cultural Response Roundtable, convened by Blue Shield with peak museum, library, local government, heritage and other organisations in Australia to coordinate and communicate responses to the bushfires, pandemic, destruction of Juukan Gorge and other crises facing Australia and beyond.

### 4. Highlights of 2020

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#### International Engagement

The ICOM Australia Executive Board served on the following ICOM Committees:

ICOM Define	Dr Mathew Trinca
ICOM Ethics Committee	Dr Mathew Trinca
ICOM Strategic Allocation Review Committee (SAREC)	Ms Deborah Tout-Smith

ICOM Australia has developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ICOM Singapore to work on joint projects and interests together. The first collaboration arising from this MoU is the development of a curriculum for a training program in Wet Tropics Heritage Conservation. Whilst early discussions have proceeded, the project itself has had to be delayed until 2021 due to COVID-19.

ICOM Australia, ICOM New Zealand and ICOM International are working to develop a week-long intensive museums training program for Pacific nations. Unfortunately this project is currently on hold, pending easing of travel restrictions.

ICOM Australia has joined with Committee for University Museums and Collections to undertake a program for The Ethics of Restitution and Repatriation, involving the examination of approaches to these fundamental issues across the world.

### **National Engagement & Advocacy**

Following the devastating bushfires that swept across Australia in the summer of 2019-20, ICOM Australia committed itself to assist wherever possible and expressed support in writing to the National Bushfire Recovery Agency. Support has also been provided through ICOM Australia's role as one of the pillars of Blue Shield Australia, and of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) Bushfires/Climate Change Cultural Response Roundtable.

ICOM Australia has joined an initiative coordinated by GLAM Peak (an alliance of the peak bodies for galleries, libraries, archives, museums, historical societies, and other collecting institutions in Australia) to research methods for improving the combined lobbying power of galleries, libraries, archives and museums in Australia.

ICOM Australia has advocated on members behalf through submissions to the following government inquiries: New South Wales Parliament inquiry on the management of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences and other related issues; Senate Select Committee on COVID-19; and Commonwealth Inquiry into Australia's Creative and Cultural Industries and Institutions.

ICOM Australia also wrote to the Chair of mining company Rio Tinto, expressing concern about the destruction of the Indigenous cultural heritage at Juukan Gorge, Australia, and suggesting advice and assistance to help prevent such an event again.

### **Pandemic Response and Webinars**

ICOM Australia has continued to advocate for its membership and ICOM's interests during the pandemic. We have actively communicated ICOM's international initiatives and support including the COVID-19 survey. We have participated in webinars including:

Dr Trinca, Chair of ICOM Australia: panellist on the webinar coordinated by ICOM India - Resurgence: An International Webinar on the Return of Audience to Museum.

Dr Trinca, Chair of ICOM Australia: participated in the successful ICOM International webinar series "Recover and Recreate: Stimulating Employment in the Museum Sector", in November 2020.

### **International Museum Day 2020**

ICOM Australia was pleased to join with others around the world to celebrate International Museum Day, and to promote its recognition across Australian institutions. Over 54 institutions across

Australasia and between 40-50 individuals participated across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, focussing on the theme *Museums for Equality: Diversity and Inclusion*.

### **Partnerships Program**

Planning for 2020 Partnership Programs was initiated immediately after the successful ICOM Australia Partnerships Program at the Papua New Guinea National Museum & Art Gallery (NMAG) in June 2019, a five-day course that was attended by 20 museum curatorial and conservation officers and volunteers from NMAG and colleagues from across PNG.

Opportunities for Australian internships for some of the course participants were pursued by Deborah Tout-Smith and Dr Alison Wain from University of Canberra. Internship arrangements were under discussion at the National Museum of Australia and Museums Victoria, with funding from NMAG, when the COVID-19 pandemic led to the suspension of the program until the pandemic has receded – likely later 2021 or 2022. Similarly, a plan for conservator Carolyn McLennan, who co-presented the the NMAG training, to undertake work at NMAG was suspended.

ICOM Australia's Partnerships Program working group comprises Deborah Tout-Smith (chair), Dr Mathew Trinca, Cherie McNair and Regan Forrest.

### **2019 Bursary Recipients**

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

### **Australian Museums and Galleries Association Relationship**

During 2020 ICOM Australia continued its valuable long-term relationship with the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA). We continued to resource administrative offices and services in conjunction with AMaGA.

### **ICOM Australia Awards**

Due to the cancellation of the AMAGA Conference and with such a challenging year for the sector, the ICOM Awards have been placed on hold for 2020. Nominations will open early 2021.

### **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. Not not surprisingly the competition failed to attract entries. Planning is underway for a modified approach in 2021-22, to ensure student engagement and to communicate ICOM's benefits to a new generation of museum professionals.

### **Web and Social Media**

The ICOM Australia web and social media presence continues to strengthen. Preparation is underway for transferring the ICOM Australia database to IRIS. The ICOM Facebook page has attracted a particularly strong international following.