



Don Harwin MLC

Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities,
Minister for the Arts, Vice-President of the Executive Council

Alexandra Marsden
National Director
Australian Museums and Galleries Association
PO Box 24
Deakin West ACT 2600

Dear Ms Marsden,

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding NSW Government cultural policy. I appreciate the great work that organisations such as the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) do for NSW.

I am delighted to be able to tell you some of the great things the NSW Liberals and Nationals Government have been achieving since elected.

We understand the value and importance placed on the significant cultural collections we have here in NSW. We also recognise the critical role that museums and galleries play in fostering creativity and innovation, and their wider contribution to our creative industries and visitor economy.

That is why we are building Australia's greatest art gallery. The Sydney Modern project will double the exhibition space at the Art Gallery of NSW making our great gallery even greater.

But we won't stop there – all three of our State Museum trusts have funding for very significant projects that will make sure they remain the best in Australia.

The Australian Museum has commenced a \$57 million expansion of its touring exhibition halls and will open with the largest and most impressive Tutankhamun exhibition to ever leave Egypt.

Sydney Living Museums has a major renewal project for the Hyde Park Barracks Museum and last year, the State Library completed a significant expansion of its exhibition spaces for its incredible Australian history collection and literary holdings.

The Museum of Applied Arts and Science (MAAS) is also being transformed, with \$645 million for the new Museum at Parramatta, an expansion of the Museum Discovery Centre at Castle Hill and planning is underway for a Museum of Design and Fashion in the Ultimo creative industries precinct.

The Museum has an obligation to conserve and maintain its collections for generations to come. The existing premises were designed for 19th and 20th century collections, and have constrained the Museum's capacity to move with the times. The expansion of the Museum's Discovery Centre at Castle Hill will provide a purpose-built facility for the care and storage of MAAS's collection. This investment will reduce the need for collection treatment and storage in Parramatta, thereby maximising the gallery and visitor space. Competitive contemporary museums require technology, varied spaces, and sophisticated building services.

Our regional galleries are also benefitting with the support of the Regional Cultural Fund, including:

- A new regional art gallery in the Southern Highlands
- Major upgrades to regional galleries in Grafton, Orange, Lake Macquarie, Mudgee, Singleton and Nowra
- Other improvements to galleries in Taree, Muswellbrook, Grenfell and Forster, and
- A significant new gallery and collection storage at Bundanon on the Shoalhaven River, costing almost \$9 million, to house the collection given to the nation by Arthur and Yvonne Boyd.

There is also very significant funding for smaller, regional museums primarily supported by volunteers, from the Regional Cultural Fund. Recipients include museums at Binnaway, Barraba, Gulgong, Berrima, Kyogle, Guyra, Comboyne, Lockhart, Condobolin and Wingham. Larger projects at the Old Dubbo Gaol, the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum, and the Museum of the Riverina in Wagga Wagga have also received significant funding.

Further, we ensured the National Art School (NAS) secured tenure of a 45-year lease over the historic Darlinghurst gaol, its home for almost 100 years. We have also guaranteed their funding, designating NAS a "state significant organisation" like Carriageworks and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

As you are aware, the digital domain offers an important opportunity to significantly enhance access to our collections and programming for education, research, and tourism. An opportunity that our Government is taking full advantage of by facilitating a digitisation project across the state's Cultural Institutions. The Australian Museum is a great example of this, led by over 1,500 Australian Museum volunteers, their mission is to catalogue the Museum's collection of over 18.5 million objects. This program is extremely successful with approximately 80,000 specimens digitised each year.

In parallel we are also working with Museums and Galleries NSW (MGNSW) on a study into a "whole-of-state" approach to digitising the collections of museums and galleries across the State, ensuring our stories are not lost. We have invested \$5 million into developing a regional digitisation business case. Consultation with 32 regional museum and gallery stakeholders from areas such as Orange, Broken Hill, Albury, Bathurst, and Tweed have informed the preliminary business case and the launch of a prototype website.

We are now planning a broader adoption of the detailed project to be rolled out with other regional and smaller museums and galleries. This will allow us to expand the gathering of collections from areas across the state and develop how this information can be packaged and promoted to various audiences.

We also want to protect our collections here in NSW for future generations to enjoy. Through MGNSW there are valuable resources on their website relating to developing a disaster plan. This is an important piece of work available to all of NSW's museums and galleries to allow them to safeguard their collections into the future.

I want to assure you that a NSW Liberals and Nationals Government strongly support the collections sector. We are proud of what we have achieved, particularly in the past two years.

Finally, I'd like to congratulate you for the considerable work you do for museums and galleries across NSW and Australia and I thank you for your interest in our policies.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Harwin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent flourish at the end.

Don Harwin MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Resources

Minister for Energy and Utilities

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DATE: 19.3.19