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Issues Paper

**Museums Galleries Australia –
Indigenous Roadmap Project**

DRAFT Issues Paper: Indigenous Roadmap Project, 20 July 2017
Museums Galleries Australia

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1. PREFACE

Museums Galleries Australia (MGA) is developing a 10-year Roadmap for museums and galleries working with Indigenous peoples. MGA worked with their Indigenous Advisory Committee to understand the key issues surrounding Indigenous participation in the sector. The Indigenous Advisory Group includes Alex Marsden, Director of MGA, Mat Trinca, Director of National Museum of Australia, Alison Page, Nancia Guivarra, Jilda Andrews, Greg Lehmann, Genevieve Grieves, Mirna Heruc, Lyndall Osborne, Dawn Casey, Neil Anderson, Rod Little, Lydia Miller, Margo Neale, Peter White, Alec Coles, Stephen Gilchrist, Kimberley Moulton, Marcus Schutenko, Glenn Iseger-Pilkington, Karen Mundine and Franchesca Cubillo.

MGA has previously produced two key documents, *Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1993* (Previous Possessions) and *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities: Principles and Guidelines for Australian Museums Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage 2005* (Continuous Cultures) to guide the relationships between the museums/galleries sector and Indigenous peoples.

Building on the strong foundation of these key documents, the 10-year Roadmap will provide a clear path to create better engagement over the next decade. The project will focus on two main areas – how Indigenous cultures and histories are represented in museums/galleries across the country, and the employment and training of Indigenous people in these institutions.

This issues paper has been prepared to seek your opinions on what should be covered in the Roadmap, and how to address the various issues.

We welcome your comments. You can send submissions in writing, by post, fax or email, or on audio or videotape. Or you can contact the consultant who is preparing the Roadmap, Terri Janke and Company, to organise an interview via telephone.

Send submissions to:

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We have also created a webpage where you can submit your submissions:

<http://mgaindigenousroadmap.com.au/>

The closing date for submissions is Tuesday, 31st October 2017.

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2. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples are integral to a greater understanding of Australian history, art and culture. Museums and galleries offer a space where authentic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, art and culture can be considered, reviewed, analysed, re-assessed and ultimately understood. Museums and galleries also open up discussion around Indigenous history and heritage.

A closer relationship between Indigenous peoples and the museums and galleries sector will result in a more accurate, more truthful and ultimately a more complete understanding of Australian history.

For museums and galleries a closer relationship with Indigenous peoples is about maintaining their reputations as public institutions that promote the truth, as centres of integrity in public life. The general public demands this high standard from their public institutions.

For Indigenous people this relationship with museums and galleries is about their pride, their honour and their feeling of inclusiveness. An institutional recognition that their past experiences are real, not fantasy. And that these experiences have created an environment for current challenges.

Since the 1970s, museums have been addressing the role of promoting long-term cultural and spiritual survival of Indigenous peoples.¹ This survival fell in line with developing relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities to ensure the best collaborations.

In the early 1990s, the first national Indigenous policy for the Australian museums sector, *Previous Possessions, New Obligations*, was developed to ensure appropriate consultation took place for Indigenous communities regarding how their heritage was looked after in museums and galleries.

Issues addressed by *Previous Possessions* included:

- Human Remains and Secret/Sacred Material
- Research Collections in General
- Public and Other Programs
- Governance
- Organisation Goals and Strategy
- Leadership
- Resource Support, Structure and Systems
- Policies and Procedures

Previous Possessions also developed protocols and guidelines surrounding:

- Human Remains
- Secret or Sacred Material
- Public and Other Programs
- Staffing, Training and Financial Reports
- Direction and Management
- Cooperation.²

¹ Lynda Kelly, Phil Gordon and Tim Sullivan, *We Deal with Relationships: not just objects: An Evaluation of Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Museums Australia Policy for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Museums Australia, 2000).

² Museums Australia, *Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (1993; May 2000; first adopted in December 1993 at the final national conference of CAMA (Council of Australian Museum Associations), which steered the formation of Museums Australia in January 1994). <https://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/SubmissionsPolicies/previous_possessions_policy_2000.pdf>.

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An evaluation of *Previous Possessions* in 2000 called for an update due to changes in the sector. A revised policy, *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities* sought to build upon *Previous Possessions* principles and also to establish changes to ideas around working with Indigenous cultural material, these included:

- “Custodianship and caretaking, rather than ownership
- Recognition of the value of stories and other intangibles associated with objects
- Acknowledgment and recognition within museums of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices
- The creation of genuine relationships of recognition and reciprocity between traditional custodians and museums and galleries.”³

Continuous Cultures established that the document was required to be followed as an adjunct to the Code of Ethics for the museums and galleries sector. The Principles were also expanded upon. New issues included:

- Self-determination
- Management and Collections
- Access to Collections and Information
- Assistance to Indigenous Communities
- Employment and training
- Policy formulation
- Cultural and intellectual property rights
- Reconciliation.

Guidelines were included for:

- Collections Management
- Employment and training
- Direction and management
- New technologies
- Relationships and communication.

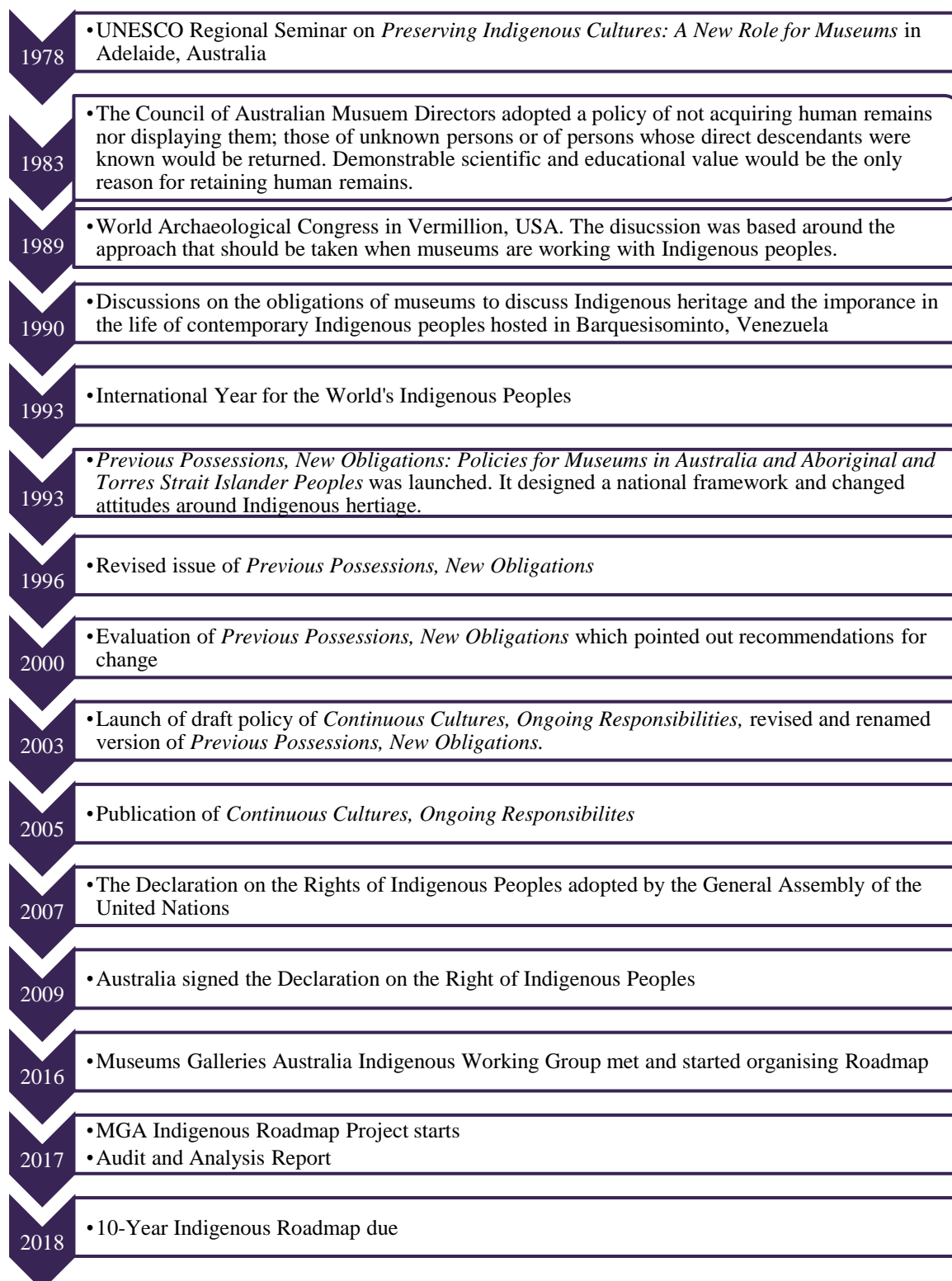
Since 2014 a small working group has met to discuss how best to advance the participation and representation of Indigenous people in the museums and galleries sector. An Indigenous Advisory Group (IAG) was formed and in workshops the issues were explored.

In March 2017 Terri Janke and Company (TJC) was engaged by Museums Galleries Australia to undertake the Indigenous Roadmap Project. As part of that process TJC has drafted this Issues Paper (extracted from *Previous Possessions* and *Continuous Cultures* and notes from the Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) workshops) to remind and refresh stakeholders to the key issues.

Feedback from stakeholders will improve the understanding of the current relationship between Indigenous peoples and museums and galleries. It will also form the foundations in the development of the 10 Year Indigenous Roadmap.

³ Museums Australia, *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities: Principles and guidelines for Australian museums working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage* (Museums Australia, 2005), 7.

2.1 Timeline



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⁴ Some information in timeline created from: Lynda Kelly, Phil Gordon and Tim Sullivan, *We deal with relationships: not just objects: An evaluation of Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Museums Australia Policy for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Museums Australia, 2000), 6–7.

3. WHAT ISSUES SHOULD THE 10-YEAR ROADMAP ADDRESS?

The following is a summary of the key issues that have been identified in past documents and by the IAC as being important to addressing Indigenous engagement in the museums and galleries sector. Please note that it is not an exhaustive list and is written here only for the purposes of encouraging discussion.

3.1 Self-Determination

Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. This self-determination is essential for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. Self-determination has been said to mean “the right and duty of Indigenous peoples to maintain and develop their own cultures and knowledge systems and forms of social organisation.”⁵ *Continuous Cultures* recognises this right in its Principles.

How could self-determination be applied in the museums/galleries sector?

3.2 Indigenous Engagement and Community Consultation

Indigenous engagement and community consultation ensures that museums and galleries are getting the correct information when dealing with Indigenous collections. Communication with the relevant Indigenous communities and people is essential. This allows for consultation around the depiction and interpretation of Indigenous cultural heritage.⁶

Are there processes for consulting with Indigenous peoples and communities about collections? How could this be best dealt with?

3.3 Management of Collections

Indigenous people must be given opportunities to have informed input into decisions about how their cultural heritage is managed and displayed by museums and galleries.

3.4 Interpretation

Museums present Indigenous cultural material through a wide range of programs including exhibitions, websites and projects. Indigenous peoples should be encouraged to shape the understanding and perspectives presented.⁷

How are Indigenous people being consulted about the interpretation of collections of Indigenous heritage material?

⁵ Terri Janke, *Our Culture: Our Future: Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights* (Michael Frankel & Company, 1998).

⁶ Terri Janke (2 ed), *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts* (Australia Council for the Arts, 2007).

⁷ From Interpreting Collections 1.2 – Museums Australia, *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities: Principles and guidelines for Australian museums working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage* (Museums Australia, 2005), 16.

3.5 Indigenous Keeping Places

Indigenous keeping places give Indigenous peoples the opportunity to explain how they want their material collected, conserved, researched, exhibited, taught and performed.⁸ This can enable Indigenous peoples to control all aspects of their heritage.

How could museums/galleries help when it comes to Indigenous keeping places?

3.6 Repatriation

Indigenous sacred objects can have strong cultural restrictions in regard to access and viewing. Certain museums have policies for the return of sacred/secret Indigenous objects if they are contacted and asked for their return.⁹ The introduction of digitisation and digital access techniques means that it is easier for secret/sacred objects to be digitised and kept online or shared. This adds another layer of risk.

3.7 Ancestral Remains

The collection, storage, display and management of human remains is a highly sensitive and complex subject. Indigenous people have called continuously for the repatriation of Indigenous ancestors. The Evaluation of *Previous Possessions, New Obligations* in 2001 found that museums and galleries are respectful of the wishes of Indigenous peoples regarding repatriation and human remains but drew attention to the lack of consultation around conservation and care.¹⁰

3.8 Application of Protocols

Protocols provide a set of principles or steps that offer best practice for working with Indigenous communities and people.

What protocols should be applied to museums and galleries?

Should protocols be developed for individual museums and galleries or would national protocols be enough?

Should national protocols be compulsory when museums and galleries are working with Indigenous Australians?

3.9 Secret/Sacred Heritage and Gender Uses

⁸ Terri Janke, *Our Culture: Our Future: Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights* (Michael Frankel & Company, 1998), 231.

⁹ Michael Pickering, 'The Big Picture': the repatriation of Australian Indigenous sacred objects' (2015) 30(5) *Museum Management and Curatorship*.

¹⁰ Museums Australia, *An Evaluation of Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Museums Australia Policy for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, Green Paper, revised February 2001.

Indigenous cultural heritage has particular secret and sacred material and gender uses surrounding it. When consulting with Indigenous groups, ask whether the material is secret or sacred and whether there are certain gender uses surrounding it. This prevents particular cultural heritage being discussed or used inappropriately.¹¹

3.10 Attribution

The attribution of Indigenous cultural heritage is important. Additionally, ensuring that the correct Indigenous communities and language groups are attributed is equally important. The knowledge that has been gathered over hundreds of thousands of years deserves to be attributed correctly.¹²

3.11 Benefit Sharing

Indigenous cultural knowledge and resources make up a huge contribution to the Australian cultural sector. Therefore, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property has a commercial value. This commercial value should be recognised when working with Indigenous peoples and communities. When using Indigenous cultural material commercially, benefit sharing, royalties or compensation could be a way of helping the appropriate communities.¹³

The calculation of compensation should be negotiated with the Indigenous communities or people that are involved in the project.

Do museums/galleries have benefit sharing processes when consulting and working with Indigenous peoples and communities?

If so, what are these processes?

3.12 Maintaining Indigenous Culture

Working with Indigenous communities to maintain Indigenous culture is important. There is a deep understanding of land and culture that still exists today. Working with Indigenous communities to respectfully protect this heritage can ensure that the knowledge is carried forward.¹⁴

How can museums/galleries work towards maintaining Indigenous culture?

3.13 Recognition and Protection

¹¹ Terri Janke (2 ed), *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts* (Australia Council for the Arts, 2007) 20.

¹² Terri Janke (2 ed), *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts* (Australia Council for the Arts, 2007) 21.

¹³ Terri Janke, *Our Culture: Our Future: Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights* (Michael Frankel & Company, 1998), 13.

¹⁴ Terri Janke (2 ed), *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts* (Australia Council for the Arts, 2007) 33.

Recognition and protection of Indigenous heritage ensures that the reproduction and dissemination of certain heritage is handled correctly. Indigenous people should be consulted on the law and given the opportunity to understand what their best options are. The *Copyright Act* does not recognise communal rights and the right for their continuous protection. This means that some heritage is left unprotected.¹⁵

3.14 Employment

Indigenous employees bring different skill-sets to the workplace. They open new networks. More diverse work places are more successful workplaces.

How should museums and galleries approach Indigenous employment?

Where would you like to see improvement from museums and galleries in regard to employment?

What events should museums and galleries participate in?

What training should be provided to Indigenous peoples and communities?

3.15 Training

Training is an important factor of employment. Training allows for education in certain areas to provide guidance. Indigenous communities have identified that undertaking training in the museums and galleries sector would enable the community to determine the best practices for management of their own cultural heritage.¹⁶

Should museums and galleries also support communities in management of community museums, cultural centres, art centres and keeping places?

Cultural awareness training is provided to organisations that want to ensure that employees have a better understanding of certain things.

Should cultural awareness training also be provided for non-Indigenous staff members?

What type of in-house programs are the most effective?

Are there in-house programs that teach Indigenous youth about the museums and galleries sector?

What type of outreach programs are run and are they effective?

3.16 Governance

¹⁵ Terri Janke (2 ed), *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts* (Australia Council for the Arts, 2007) 33.

¹⁶ Kombumerri Aboriginal Corporation for Culture, Yugambeh Museum and Language & Heritage Research Centre, *Training and Professional Development Needs of Indigenous People in Museums and Art Galleries Throughout Queensland* (Museums Australia Queensland & Regional Galleries Association Queensland, 2000).

Creating Indigenous Advisory Committees or placing Indigenous peoples on the board can help add the representation and perspective that is important in making decisions. Indigenous board members can help with consultations, networks and making policy decisions.¹⁷

Should Indigenous peoples be on boards? What level of training is required?

How many Indigenous peoples should be on boards of museums/galleries?

3.17 Technology

Technology allows more opportunities for communication, enhances access to collections and allows access to a global perspective, which can maintain standards for Indigenous participation.¹⁸ Despite this, some technologies are not available in regional Indigenous communities.

Should collections be made available online? What are the risks?

Is there a certain technology that you think should be harnessed to encourage Indigenous participation?

Is access to technology difficult?

Is there a way that museums and galleries could help if this is the case?

3.18 Reconciliation Action Plans

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) provide a framework for organisations to begin a path towards reconciliation. The RAP acts in a similar way to a business plan through documenting what an organisation commits to in order to contribute to reconciliation in Australia.

A question to ask would be whether museums and galleries should strive to apply RAPs in each of their organisations?

Should every museum and gallery have a RAP or should there just be one overall RAP? How important is the process of undertaking a RAP, to that actual outcome?

Would it be possible for all museums and galleries to have a RAP?

What would be a suggestion if a smaller museum or gallery didn't have the resources to have a RAP?

3.19 International Application

¹⁷ Museums Australia, *Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (December 1993; May 2000)
<https://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/SubmissionsPolicies/previous_possessions_policy_2000.pdf>.

¹⁸ Museums Australia, *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities: Principles and guidelines for Australian museums working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage* (Museums Australia, 2005), 9.

The application of Indigenous engagement internationally could provide a good framework for the Roadmap. International museums and galleries have different ways of showing Indigenous heritage. Examining these could improve the Australian application.

What International museums and galleries have a good framework around Indigenous engagement? What about libraries, archives and other cultural organisations that often hold Indigenous cultural material?

3.20 Procurement

The Commonwealth Government commenced the Indigenous Procurement Policy in 2016.¹⁹ The Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP) aims to create opportunities for Indigenous owned business within the supply chain of the Commonwealth Government in order to grow and increase Indigenous business and employment.

Variations of the policy are applied within the Non-Government and Corporate sectors as well. Should museums and galleries establish their own procurement policy to help develop and maintain relationships with Indigenous people, their networks and their communities?

Supply Nation provides links to Certified Indigenous Suppliers from a broad range of industries (for example, professional services, trades, cleaners, office supplies, cultural products, event management.) What percentage of museum expenditure should be with Indigenous suppliers?

3.21 Regional/Rural/Volunteer-run Museums and Galleries

There are some rural, regional and community/volunteer-run museums and galleries that may struggle with resources and funding. This could prevent successful engagement with Indigenous communities and people.

How could these community, regional and rural museums and galleries benefit from the Roadmap?

What would community, regional and rural organisations need to ensure successful engagement with Indigenous communities and people?

4. WORKING TOWARDS A 10-YEAR ROADMAP

We are interested in hearing comments and ideas on the issues discussed in this paper, or on any other issues that you would like to raise. Either send in a written submission or go to the website <http://mgaindigenousroadmap.com.au/> to find dates for consultations and workshops, which are taking place nationally. The cut-off date for submissions is 31 October 2017.

¹⁹ The Commonwealth Government of Australia, *Indigenous Procurement Policy* (Commonwealth Government of Australia, 2015).

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The website also includes surveys that will also contribute to the Indigenous Roadmap. Head to <https://www.mgaindigenousroadmap.com.au/survey> to participate in the survey.

Send your submissions to:

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