

COMMUNIQUE

INAUGURAL MEETING OF DIRECTORS OF AUSTRALIA'S MAJOR MIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL MUSEUMS

15 April 2019

The Directors of Australia's major migration and multicultural museums met at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney on 2 April 2019 to discuss the ways in which museums can build understanding of diversity and in doing so, help address discrimination against migrants, refugees and their families.

The meeting was convened in response to the shocking acts of terrorism against Muslims praying in Christchurch, New Zealand on Friday 15 March 2019.

In 2017/18 there were over 3.7M visitors to Australia's migration and multicultural museums and their touring exhibitions.

Recent major national and state museum exhibitions included "*So That You Might Know Each Other – Faith and Culture in Islam*" at the National Museum of Australia, "*Game Changers: Diversity in Football*" at the Immigration Museum in Victoria and "*Sym Choon: Changing Fortunes in White Australia*" at the Migration Museum in South Australia. Two innovative digital projections ("*Waves of Migration*" and "*Threads of Migration*"), based on the national migration collection, were screened on the Australian National Maritime Museum's roof on Australia Day and throughout the International Metropolis Conference on migration.

Multicultural Museums Victoria, a network of five ethnic museums in that state, including the Islamic Museum of Australia, presented their inaugural joint-project, *Grandmothers*, last year. In addition, the Sydney Jewish Museum opened its new permanent exhibition *The Holocaust and Human Rights* in February 2018.

Engaging with communities is embedded in the operation of the museums. For example, the new Western Australian Museum, due to open in 2020, has engaged with over 40,000 citizens from diverse backgrounds in its quest to ensure that it creates a safe place for multicultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

Collectively, the migration and multicultural museums have a strong online presence, deliver various curriculum aligned school programs, host public programs that deliver cross-cultural learning experiences, support multicultural festivals and contribute to migration scholarship.

The Directors discussed various ways in which their museums could further support social inclusion and community harmony, and particularly combat Islamophobia.

It was agreed it would be desirable for Australia's museums to do more to encourage reflection and dialogue about the experience of migrating and settling in Australia and to challenge the misunderstandings that fuel xenophobia, but noted that what can be delivered is funding dependent.

The Directors agreed to form an alliance to:

- I. raise the profile of migration and multicultural museums and argue for increased investment in the national migration story;
- II. collaborate in the development of migration and multicultural themed exhibitions and programs; and
- III. collaborate in touring exhibitions and programs throughout Australia.

The Directors agreed to work together on development of joint research program (led by the National Museum of Australia) and to collaborate on the development of educational resources to support social inclusion (led by the Migration Museum, a museum of the History Trust of South Australia).

Directors also noted the Australian National Maritime Museum's work on an exciting new national project to build understanding, awareness and empathy for our diverse communities and expressed interest in being involved.

The national alliance of migration and multicultural museums is comprised of the Australian National Maritime Museum, the Immigration Museum in Victoria, the Migration Museum (a museum of the History Trust of South Australia), the Western Australian Museum, the Sydney Jewish Museum, the National Museum of Australia and the five museums comprising Multicultural Museums Victoria – the Islamic Museum of Australia, the Jewish Museum of Australia, the Museum of Chinese Australian History, the Museo Italiano, the Hellenic Museum.