

COMMUNIQUE

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

3 December 2019

The Directors of Australia's major migration and multicultural museums met at the **Islamic Museum of Australia** in Melbourne on 28 October 2019 to further discussions on ways in which museums can build understanding of diversity and in doing so, help address discrimination against migrants, refugees and their families. This was the group's second meeting after the shocking acts of terrorism against Muslims praying in Christchurch, New Zealand on Friday 15 March 2019.

Directors discussed more than 50 actions taken across their museums to support social inclusion and community harmony, and particularly combat Islamophobia, since Christchurch. These included:

- 4 significant exhibitions: "In Our Own Voices: Stories of Journey and Resettlement from the Middle East" (Migration Museum, South Australia); "Spirit of Ramadan" (Immigration Museum, Victoria); "Artistry of Islam" (Islamic Museum of Australia); "Ticket to Paradise" (a National Archives of Australia touring exhibition at Western Australia Museum)
- Screening and promotion of the Islamic Museum of Australia's film "Boundless Plains" daily from May to September 2019 (Australian National Maritime Museum)
- Acquisition of a significant new collection of photographs – "Muslims in Australia" (Immigration Museum)
- Relabelling of relevant objects in a permanent gallery to better recognise Australian Muslim history (Australian National Maritime Museum)
- Opening of a dedicated Contemplation Room to meet the needs of visitors (National Museum of Australia)
- New education initiatives, including "Our Schools Together", a new pilot program by the Islamic Museum of Australia, the Australian Jewish Museum and the Immigration Museum funded by Sidney Myer Fund; and the School Ambassadors program at the Migration Museum
- Community activities included: participation in the Mosque open day (Islamic Museum of Australia); an iftarr dinner at the Immigration Museum; the "Shared Table" program (NSW Jewish Board of Deputies) and various Refugee Week activities (Migration Museum, Immigration Museum, Australian National Maritime Museum)
- Fundraising almost \$70,000 for the victims of Christchurch (NSW Jewish Board of Deputies)
- Actively supporting the Race Discrimination Commissioner's public consultations with Australian Muslims (Islamic Museum of Australia; Migration Museum; Australian National Maritime Museum).

Directors agreed that this is an area worthy of ongoing attention across the sector but that what can be achieved is funding dependent. An emerging priority for some museums is the installation of suitably equipped prayer rooms and ablution facilities.

Directors endorsed the proposal before UNESCO to proclaim 18 November as the International Day of Islamic Art.

Directors received a presentation from the Race Discrimination Commissioner, Chin Tan, about the “Sharing the Stories of Australian Muslims Project”. Directors commended the Human Rights Commission for undertaking this work, emphasising the important contribution museums make in this area and the results which could be achieved with additional financial support.

Directors discussed growing international interest in collaboration between migration museums and the opportunities for global sharing of resources, research and expertise. The interest of Australian audiences in high quality international exhibitions on migration themes was also acknowledged. Directors agreed to join the world’s major migration museums in acknowledging International Migrants Day on 18 December 2019.

Directors met with the Empathy Museum (UK) about a forthcoming collaboration with the Australian National Maritime Museum focused on the stories of migrants and refugees. Directors were very impressed by the Empathy Museum’s work and several expressed interest in collaborating on the project with the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Directors agreed to develop proposals to research the levels of migrant employment in their museums, as well as review the diversity of their audiences.

Directors also reaffirmed the desirability of sharing and jointly developing educational resources to support social inclusion.

Finally, the Directors warmly welcomed the participation of Sovereign Hill and the Jewish Holocaust Centre in the Alliance.

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, 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 - and the Jewish Holocaust Centre, Sovereign Hill and the Museum of Freedom and Tolerance.