

Panel discussion

At the conclusion of the panel presentations from Elaine Gurian, Professor Graeme Davison, Dr Patrick Green, and Associate Professor Chris Nash, the audience was divided into groups to discuss the issues raised by the Symposium. Participants then returned to a forum where the floor was opened up to discussion. The session was chaired by Dr Paul Tacon, Head, People and Place Research Centre, Australian Museum. The three panelists and researchers were available for further questions. Below is a transcript of the discussion that ensued, including each group's report.

Mat Trinca, National Museum: Graeme, you spoke a little bit about pluralism and then set that against something coming out of the Carroll Report about a unified national story. My question is, do you see some possibility for some intersections in that there are points where those stories do intersect, and which might be productive for us?

Graeme: When I spoke of pluralism, I realise I was probably using that term to cover a number of things. One is the sense that the kind of interpretation offered itself registers many different viewpoints. The other is that it also should explicitly register the participation of a variety of different producers of that knowledge. I can imagine that you could have a unified interpretation of the national story which was somehow or other told by a group of different people, but I argue for something a bit more than that, so the way in which the story is told itself reflects a sense of the importance of difference within the

nation. The nation itself is constituted of a plurality of people and interests. Now clearly there will be, as there is in historical debate, a range of views about how much emphasis you place upon the sense of coherence and unification of the national story and how much you place upon difference. Clearly the complaint of people like John Carroll is implicitly that we have gone overboard on difference, and do not give nearly enough attention to the sense in which the national story can be a unified one. But I think he's going rather further than that, what I really objected to in his view was the longing for the museum, poor thing, to somehow bear the weight of responsibility that he now sees as somehow being vacated by other institutions such as the church. And I think that is to place a weight of expectations upon museums which is not only unattainable, but it's also potentially debilitating for the institutions themselves.

Carol Scott, Powerhouse Museum: Graeme, you talked about the heavier scrutiny, and I would add intervention by governments, in the role and work of museums. It seems that in much of this increased intervention is not only fiscal accountability, but public accountability, and that it is very much tied to ongoing funding. It now seems that governments are requiring museums to realise government public policy goals. Those public policy goals are tied to the governments of the day, and museums are more permanent institutions. I think that this is a critical factor in terms of the lessening degree of freedom that museums have to actually tell the stories with the voices of constituents. I think it is becoming more constricted to tell the stories from the point of view that governments want.

Graeme: I think it is both worrying and flattering at the same time. I'll deal with the flattery first, because if you go back ten or fifteen years governments would not have bothered, because museums were not seen to be as significant players in society. So the fact that governments now want to see museums delivering on their objectives is a reflection of the fact that governments now believe that museums make a difference. Now where I've observed it in the UK is with the election of a Labor government and its principles of social inclusion. That is not problematic as a principle, I think most people in museums would like them to play a role for a broad range of the public, especially for members of the public who least able to access culture and education and other things. But of course, in taking the shilling on that one, then it opens the door to any other initiative. In Victoria at the moment, I can think of two areas where we have taken quite large sums of government money to do things which are part of government priorities. One is design, Victoria is a state where design has a high status. That fits absolutely well with our objectives. The other is, in terms of innovation, with virtual reality and IT, again, that fits well with us. But I worry about future governments that might come into office with very different objectives. If the precedent is set, and we are then expected to jump to the tune, and I don't have a solution for this, I am just describing a situation which has undoubtedly occurred in the UK and is undoubtedly occurring here. It would be interesting to know if there are similar pressures, or similar opportunities in say, Canada.

It seems to me historically in fact what Patrick has described is precisely what has happened on a broader front, that is to say institutions would be first invited to do things to which could take no objection. And that becomes the means by which structurally

they become committed to patterns of obedience which they then cannot refuse. I hold the Labor party as much responsible as the Liberal party for the transition that we've seen occur in Australia, in so far as they instituted the patterns of corporate government which have now provided the structures within which a government of a different persuasion can now ask for other things to be done. In the original model it was very often councils which represented a diversity of opinion which could stand as a buffer and to support the museum's independence, but it seems to me now the pattern of appointments to most councils has become so increasingly political, that it is very difficult for them to perform that role. So that is the dilemma and is why I've placed as much emphasis as I did on the independent role of the director. I think that directors, as far as possible have to try and ensure that they're appointed on a basis that enables them for as long as they're there, and if necessary, as Elaine said in the end they have to be Kamikazes, that might be. We ought to pay them enough to make sure that if they have to be Kamikazes, their livelihoods are not in peril.

Museums were constituted in the nineteenth and into the twentieth century as an outcome of Tory paternalism. It was ruling class high culture, it was where the treasures of the society would be held. And that came under assault from a left position in the '60s and '70s, as museums expanded and a lot of people moved out of the universities to become part of a professional staff. But what happened in politics was that that Tory noblesse oblige went under to Thatcher and a sort of small business mentality, what we now call neoconservative and it is very unclear what the basis of it is.

When the Minister for Communication Richard Alston can suggest that the ABC, which many people would see as a bastion of the Westminster system, should be reduced

to the status of the national public broadcaster like the system in the United States, which is subscription based. When the minister charged with its defence can suggest that then you know that the philosophical underpinning of an institution's existence is up for grabs. And museums are in exactly the same position. And what is interesting about the ABC is that the minister was reduced to that, and the minister was also reduced to putting a series of complaints like any other citizen to the ABC about its coverage of the Iraq war, precisely because he felt that the place of the ABC in the Australian mind is such that it survives. That is what I would suggest to museums as well, they need a constituency. They need to be able to imagine their constituency and they need to be able to build it, so that they can point that constituency out to the power brokers and they can say, touch us if you dare.

I think in fact the National Museum of Australia was very good and very clever in the way that it built its constituency and I also agree with Patrick's points about the way in which museums, led by the Australian Museum, have linked themselves to the issue of reconciliation and indigenous rights. And even though that is in a bit of a shadow in the current situation, nonetheless they are very, very firm foundations. I would suggest that being tied through the turnstile to who can afford to come into an institution really does limit your opportunities for how you will actually build that base.

Chair: I was asked a short while ago to read out a brief statement that Elaine Heumann Gurian's reference to timidity within the museum community is a very pertinent topic in Australia today. Yet even within the context of this symposium some of us feel we cannot raise issues of professional and ethical concern. There is someone here today

who, as a result of attempting to challenge this aspect of museum culture within their own institution, has been denied permission to attend this symposium in an official capacity. I find that disappointing, frightening and sad. And I suggest that this person is actually very brave and that perhaps the administration of that institution is timid. It reminded me of when Des Griffin was director of the Australian Museum and on several occasions he said, we will take risks. And of course he was right. He also said, if we don't take risks, we'll be dead. And I think that is true. Of course we need to take calculated risks, but once you stop taking risks you can become irrelevant. I think all senior managers at cultural institutions should remember that. Now, I'm going to take a bit of a risk and very briefly show you a slide of a picture I took during my PhD fieldwork in the mid 1980s. I showed it to some of the Aboriginal people who I was working with and they had no problem with the image. And indeed the people in the image thought it was fantastic but when I showed it to some of the white rangers, they said, that is too controversial. When I showed it to some people at the Australian National University where I was doing my PhD, they said I wouldn't present that in a public arena, it is too controversial. And it may be that it's not so controversial today, but this is the image. One of the reasons I'm showing it is because museums are all about people and objects. The problem, at least back in the '80s was that I showed these three great mates and one of them had a glass of beer. Now if these were white Australians there would be no problem. But because they were Aboriginal Australians, and one of them had a glass of beer, even though they weren't alcoholics and indeed the per capita rate of alcoholism among white Australians is much higher than among black Australians, that was seen as being too controversial to publish or show in a public arena. Anyway, that's just a bit of

food (or drink) for thought.

Group one report: Megan Hicks, Curator, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney: Our question was, should museums lead and what does lead mean? The first point was that museums do lead, even if they may think that they do not. Inevitably they lead in the sense of the objects that are accessioned into the collection, the objects that are exhibited, the stories that are told and not told. The challenge for museums is to consider ways of making these processes a little bit more transparent, and here I am covering the second point. We had quite a lot of discussion about the ways that museums could open themselves out a little in terms of making exhibition processes more obvious, everything from discussing or making available by some means the objects for an exhibition that were not chosen and why they were not chosen, the processes of whittling down designs, that sort of thing. But we also talked a little bit about the sort of vexed politics that can go into exhibition development, and how difficult it can be to make people more aware of how those sorts of things happen. It was thought that museums do lead also by offering different points of view and a safe place to debate. We can lead or model in some specific ways. One was that indigenous history and indigenous issues are important, that museums can open up debates which can assist processes of reconciliation. It was also thought that the cloning of the thylacine was an interesting example of how museums were leading possibly in a scientific way but also informing people that such a process is possible. And the final comment there was, if museums don't lead, who will? That comes back to what we were saying earlier today about the trust that is placed in museums, so it seems from the research. If that is so, then perhaps we do have a responsibility to acknowledge

that we do lead in these important ways. We had a bit of a side debate about contemporary art spaces and contemporary art museums. It was said this morning that those were places possibly where controversial issues and contentious issues can be explored more readily. A couple of people in our group said things to do with funding in museums, connoisseurship, the art market, the careers of contemporary artists actually mean that sometimes it is not so easy as we might think to exhibit, or to discuss contentious issues.

Group two report: Caleb Williams, Police and Justice Museum, Historic Houses Trust, Sydney: Our question was, should museums be moralising institutions? And our group all felt there was something a bit loaded, scary and pejorative about the term moralising, it felt a bit sort of nineteenth century. It brought to mind Elaine's bad news exhibitions with the preachy tone and sort of guilt inducing imagery and heated texts. But having said that we also felt there is a great need in curatorial life for ethical conscience, for moral awareness and integrity in curatorial and museum products. A definition problem between professional ethics and imposing a moral point of view. Whose view, how is it arrived at, is it an institutional point of view, a personal point of view, a private gripe. So yes we thought that was definitely a difficult issue and we didn't fully resolve that, we were much more happy with ethical than moral I think. We also noted that there's been a bit of a shift in contemporary museology away from thinking about the museum as a sort of a temple or a shrine to the objects, towards moral controversy and social awareness exhibitions.

Because of this the primacy of the object is somewhat demoted and we felt that

this came out of the pressure to be visible, there's a marketing agenda, there's a re-branding agenda, there are all sorts of agendas out there. We are all fighting for audience share, so we felt there is a shift to audiences rather than collections and that is very market driven. We also felt that there is a difficulty in presenting strongly held views in the museum's constituency because there is an innate controversy. There are so many sometimes quite wildly differing viewpoints, and to collect them all together and to honour them all and to make everyone happy that they have been represented, is an enormous curatorial trap, a challenge. It amounts to ticking off seventeen different perspectives in a very piecemeal way without really endeavouring to say anything very profound. And then there is the idea that ethical and truthful responses to collections from curators are going to be inherently challenging because of the nature of public morality and religious groups, and the truth about objects will offend some people in our community. And if we are honest to our collections, the example was of a health and medicine curator at the Powerhouse, and the history of contraception, if we speak about our objects in honest ways, we are bound simply to offend, because not everyone will like the truth of those stories being told, even about the utility of things like contraceptives.

Group three report: Adrienne Gollop, Canadian Museums Association intern: I work with Lynda, Linda and Fiona at the Australian Museum on this project. Our group was focusing on ways that museums engage visitors and active dialogue within the exhibition spaces, and specifically what had worked in different institutions. Public programming was mentioned, offering to visitors a very safe space, where they can feel comfortable,

active engagement, using visitors' responses in the actual exhibitions, as part of the exhibition itself. The Museum of the British Empire had a radio broadcast station or community program, which was tuned into the themes of an exhibition. In cross-cultural exhibitions, where you are trying to add as many voices to an exhibition as possible, you are leading away from an authoritative kind of approach towards accepting a multiplicity of views and also being sensitive to a threat of shared experience in the community. At the National Maritime Museum visitors literally added their opinions on little cards to a wall board, and afterwards a database to communicate with audiences was set up. Web sites are excellent ways to advertise and explain exhibitions and visitors can also add their own opinions to those web sites. At the War Memorial visitors scroll through the list of names to find a family connection. This helps visitors to feel a personal connection with the material. We talk a lot about dialogues between institutions and audiences, but also a dialogue between the visitors themselves, and how different visitors feel differently, based on culture, generation, those types of things. Interactive children's tools such as puzzles and paintings which they can assemble while they are there helps them have a more personal experience with it and leads away from the passive museum experience.

Group four report: Dr Jennifer Barrett, Director, Museum Studies, University of Sydney: Our question was where and how do we place the role and position of the museum voice. We looked at exhibitions in terms of controversy and funding of museums. We pointed out that there were many other ways that the museum speaks, through public programs, performances, and also through the museum space. We look at

things like the architecture and the situation of a museum within the broader community. We also looked at the museum voice and who is it speaking to. And that really leads to is the relationship between the museum and its audiences, constituted as communities. So we looked at who is the museum speaking to and how the museum represents the different voices within its institution, as well as the different voices in relation to the communities that it's working with. So how does the museum position itself clearly in a community? We talked about how the public was more accepting of the museum presenting a neutral view. In terms of the museum and its voice, we thought there was quite a bit that could be played with there, both internally and externally. We talked about the way in which the museum should be a sympathetic and accessible space for its audiences and its communities and the ways in which the museum could also be a more flexible space to accommodate the different kinds of voices that emerge during a controversial exhibition as well. It is not actually about just having the controversy represented but also representing the effect of the controversial exhibition and the communities involved with that, including the museum community. Museums can speak in metaphor and we talked about a more strategic use, or a better understanding of the use of, metaphor in working within the museum and working externally. We looked at authoring, not just a literal notion of authoring, but the way in which labels, for instance, would be insufficient. We looked at the way in which curators could be more involved with floor talks or other ways the curators could be more involved with engaging with the communities and the visitors. The anonymous curator was not the only sort of author of the exhibition, that like in films and architecture, there are many people involved in the collaboration of putting an exhibition together. And there needs to be a better way to

represent that kind of involvement, and that might be like in films, where credits and acknowledgments are actually shown. We talked about different ways in which credit could be acknowledged, so that the collaborative process becomes better known and expected, or knowledge about that practice becomes better known and expected by the community. And the last point relates to community consultation and the notion of voice. And I think that the point we are trying to make here is that community consultation needs to be something that is quite sincere but integrated throughout the institution's activities, not just in relation to the exhibition, some kind of regular and ongoing, sincere relationship with communities in order for the museum to have an effective, convincing and trustworthy voice.

I thought it was interesting that there seemed to be a suggestion that museum is moralising if it put on an exhibition that took views that were consistent with the basis of religion, religious philosophy, issues of social justice, issues that question the right to kill other people, issues that involve human rights. The suggestion is that if you put exhibitions up that dealt with, say asylum seekers' treatment in Australia, that somehow that would be offensive in a society which claims to be respectful of and indeed based on or following religious views, think back to the preface to the constitution that John Howard wrote.

One of the things that came out in our group was that we had some concerns about the word constituency raised by Associate Professor Nash and we were wondering whether he was using in that sense of a museum or an institution having a particularly defined group of people that they targeted.

Graeme: It is not very smart to think of audiences as defined by particular social characteristics, sort of indelibly, because audiences change in time and space. You might actually be a member of an audience while the TV is on and you're sitting there in the lounge room and then you get up and you walk out of the lounge room and you're no longer in the audience. Audiences are constituted by their engagement with a media product. And that is what I think about constituencies for museums. They are broadly defined socio-economically, ethnically, etc, and you would be very silly if you attempted to essentialise an audience into a particular set of social characteristics.

The key thing is to actually engage people with what you do, so that a broad diversity of people will actually defend it, and that of course is the strength of the ABC. Because even though it is seen as being a blue-rinse, sort of older type audience, something like 90% of the population actually use the ABC at least once a week. So it is a very broad constituency. I use constituency in the active sense that people respond to you, they engage with you and they're prepared to go in and bat for you, and bat with you as part of a campaign for your own survival or for a definition of your own role. But it is certainly not defined in any sense by exclusive demographic characteristics. I would imagine would be suicide for any institution to do that.

Stakeholders has got more a sense of people with cards in their hands sitting around a table playing bluff. Constituency is I think a more ongoing relationship, that sense of being large, or being a mass. And that people come to identify themselves as a member of a constituency, I support reconciliation, I support border security, I support the Wallabies, you identify with something in that sense.

Elaine: Graeme raises a very interesting question. There is work done that suggests that people under strife, beleaguered countries, in fact care about museums more than people in good times. Or they care about national patrimony, and that national patrimony is in fact a military target, because people are going after their understanding of the soul of the country, rather than the user. In beleaguered cities of my country the mayors of the cities believe museums are important. In Detroit they have built the African American museum. It was rated in a survey as very high, as important to the city even though its use by white people is quite low. So if you are going to look at political stakeholders, there are stakeholders who are non-users who are a much broader constituency than the stakeholders that are users.

Chair: That's an excellent point, and of course, museums are places of both group and individual identity, and that's one of the things that invading groups seek to destroy or usurp.

Look at what happened in Iraq, and there are many ways to look at, and the world outrage is also interesting. Because the outrage for this particular desecration is very targeted while the outrage for other desecration is completely lost in the media. I'm just wondering whether we're being a bit timid here. I am referring to some pamphlets that were handed out as many of us approached the symposium today, it looks as though there is a contested site in our very midst. I am just wondering if there's someone who can speak a bit about this particular exhibition, and the issues involved in it. Would anyone like to put themselves on the line? Powerhouse Museum?

Carol Scott: The Premier of the state was approached by the head of the Palestinian delegation, a gentleman by the name of Ali Kasak who has a large collection of Palestinian material, much of which would be classified I guess as decorative arts and design. It includes photographs, posters, and textiles and ceramics and various other very lovely things. And he suggested to the Premier that this exhibition had been put on at Canberra at the Canberra Museum and Gallery, and that it would be a good exhibition to present in NSW because in Sydney the largest language group outside of English is Arabic. The Premier was very interested in this idea, and gave a verbal undertaking that that would happen, and then approached the Powerhouse to see whether or not the museum would take it, I think largely because the Powerhouse itself has a large decorative arts and design collection, and I think that there seemed to be a synergy.

From what I've seen of the material, and I think the material we have presented, is a selection of the material, and this was negotiated with Mr Kazak. And he signed an agreement that in fact the museum could have curatorial control and selection over the material that was chosen. The entire exhibition has a particularly one-sided view of the Middle Eastern conflict, and it is most definitely from the Palestinian point of view, and does not take into account the Israeli point of view as well. And I suppose in many ways, it's a really interesting case study of an outside stakeholder with a strongly held view and a collection that belongs to him, and the Museum trying to take into account an important group, a really important story, an unresolved current social issue, and to present it in a way that actually gets the story out there. Mr Kazak is extremely unhappy with the selection that the museum has made because it has not put in all the photographs, posters and other material. But I think that the exhibition is very beautifully designed and very

respectful. We were very interested in what visitor feedback would be, there has been some agitation in the media from stakeholders who have a political viewpoint, but we were interested in what the visitors would say. So we've put a feedback sheet in the exhibition. It is very open-ended, it simply says, we welcome your feedback. It does not ask a question, we are not intercepting people, it's completely voluntary, and it's translated into Arabic as well as English. Over the past four weeks now, we have had nearly 90 responses, and about twelve of them are in Arabic, and are in the process of being translated, we have logged the other 76 and it's very interesting. We use a categorisation framework that we have used for another three exhibitions, all of which involved an element of potential controversy: One was about contraception, one was an exhibition about the Jewish community in Prague during the Holocaust and another one was about the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. You get a certain number of teenage children with busy hormones who tend to make a certain type of comment. And you get very general comments, and you get some criticisms and you get some specific comments about particular objects or the story, or the design, or some particular exhibition element. And then you get a whole other group, which are the most interesting, and that is largely people's perceptions about how they feel having seen that exhibition. And these have tended to be much more lengthy, and so much of what has come through from these comments, reflects many of the aspects that were raised from the research today. Saying that they were very glad that the museum had the exhibition on because the very presence in the museum legitimised Palestinian culture, the struggle and the tremendous cultural survival in a context of crisis and change. I suppose that would be representative of many of the comments. And then there were some other comments that were from, we

offer people the option of putting their name and address, and there were some that are from identifiably Jewish people who are very angry at the museum for having put on the exhibition at all, and who take umbrage at the Palestinian interpretation as it is presented. So it has been a very interesting one, in terms of the museum's position, its right to actually put on this exhibition, where the stakeholders sit and how the visitors actually feel about it.

Chair: Well in terms of the larger discussion today, it appears to me that the question is, when does curation of an exhibition become censorship. If you have a selection of objects, a selection of images to choose from, and you do not wish to use the entire set, where does censorship sit on that scale, from objective curation, or curation from a particular point of view, to what other people would interpret as censorship. Does anyone want to answer that?

From the floor: Perhaps if you look at the protocols that have been set up with indigenous Australians, where we allow that community to speak for itself there is a place for that. Perhaps is it a relevant example to use that by extension to other communities, and to accept that there's a possibility for community self-representing in institutions. In terms of curatorial and censorship roles, if we engage with those communities and form a partnership with them, it is then the community's voice is heard within those exhibitions and it's presented with their involvement, and then many communities can have a voice.

Chair: Certainly that model has been followed with other communities in a number of institutions, the problem really occurs when you have a community addressing a very controversial topic – one that really upsets another community. And it's a real challenge for the curator, for the museum staff, to somehow balance the different community views, without blatant censorship.

Bill Richards, National Maritime Museum: I'm also a journalist who has worked for a long time in museums. To get back to the point about this particular exhibition, my view is that the museum surely has to take responsibility for what it puts on within its own walls, to go to the parallel of journalism, each journalist when he is amassing the information that he is going to use in his story that he is writing, I think leaves out a lot of material, but is that censorship? I don't think it is, he is simply making a selection from the material he has available to him, and he puts his story forward. And it that is what's happened in this case, although I don't know the case as intimately as people who work at the Powerhouse. I don't think that a museum can just open its doors and take an exhibition as is, the museum has to take responsibility.

Des Griffin: The big question I think is, in any situation where a museum is contemplating an exhibition, is how important is this exhibition, how does it fit with what we're trying to do, as expressed in our mission. And can we, with our resources, and including this material, in this case, can we do justice to this issue. I just wonder, was there the option of saying to the gentleman, well, thank you, but this is a very important issue, and we would like to do a major exhibition on this, and we would like to be in

touch with you, to include some of your material.

Jennifer Barrett: I just wanted to say that it is important to acknowledge that working with community, in a sincere way, is actually a messy business. It cannot be shied away from and to try and sort of gloss over the messiness, and not acknowledge that in some way, because I think part of the challenge for the sector, is how to actually deal with this messiness, how to represent it in a way that it comes to some sort of resolution. But is not always saying that we've solved it. And the other point that I wanted to make, was that we cannot always translate everything, we cannot always translate, say other, different cultures into our own. There are some things we just will not understand, or that we cannot deal with properly.

Chair: Thank you, those are excellent points, and I might add that not only can dealing with communities be messy, but it's time-consuming, and Patrick I think is next, and then Carol.

Patrick: I was going to pick up the point about the journalistic role. And if I draw an analogy between my role as director of a museum and any other profession, it comes most close to being the editor of a newspaper. Editors of papers have to take judgements all the time, about content, about the balance of one particular story against another; sport against business pages; there is a whole series of judgements made every day, all the time, even between editions of the newspapers.

In natural history museums where we have anthropology collections, we often put

the scientific view of evolution up in a prominent place, and we put the indigenous Aboriginal view of evolution and the origin of people up in a prominent place. And we seem to not have too much difficulty accepting that we can, in the right context, put the two up side by side. But when it comes to a creationist view, no one wants to approach that. Are scientists saying people to not have the right to believe in creationism?

Chris: I welcomed Jennifer's comment about just how messy these things can be and equally I think the comment that Des made previously about the margin for refusal. There are times where in fact we are in a good position in museums to have a margin of refusal when difficult things come to us, as Patrick was saying, when they come from groups where we have perhaps some concerns about their motivation or the polemical nature of it. But we do not always have that margin for refusal, there are situations, particularly in public institutions, where governments are becoming much more interventionist through our boards and through our leadership. And I think that is a messy question, and it is one we really have to deal with.

I certainly agree that museums have a responsibility to exercise their curatorial power. And I absolutely endorse the comment that it gets very messy, and once you do stop dealing with other professionals, other museums and receiving exhibitions from them, and start dealing directly with the public as, for example with an Indigenous community, then it becomes extremely messy. And what happens with journalists is they are held, journalists have a strict sense of protocols, about how you're supposed to deal with sources. What is on the record, what is not on the record, if somebody makes a claim, then you go to the person against whom the claim is made to give them a right of

reply, and if you do not do that and you end up in court. Not having seen the Lateline report, but having read some of the material around it, it seems to me that the problem is with process. The problem is not with the right of the museum to say, thanks, we will take these photographs and not those, it is once all of those decisions were made, the process. And I think one of the other issues is that this notion of constituency and building a constituency, that is based on trust. If a newspaper gets it wrong one day, then you can run the right of reply the next day, or you can give people some other platform, or you can run a whole set of other stories next week which tells your constituency where you stand. The trouble with exhibitions is that they are one off, and you certainly don't want to get into the business of giving right of reply exhibitions.

So the point I am making, and journalists understand this very well because they are held liable through the defamation laws for what they publish and what claims they pass on from other people, is that the process before it actually goes to air, or hits, goes into print, is the key process. And you have actually got to be able to justify the process, and that all of the legitimate stakeholders were dealt with according to due process and in an equal and fair manner. That becomes the issue in the media.

Chair: Thank you Chris, we're running a bit overtime, but I think we need one last right of reply from Elaine.

Elaine: Well I think that there are a lot of issues on the table and sympathy for all parties is probably useful. But the right of reply, the right of unmediated presentation and the simultaneous right of reply is a well-known museological technique. And if you are

going to look at process, we should at least have it on the record that however this happened, that there is precedent for people with a singular vision to speak directly to the audience, and an equal precedent for the right of reply to speak also directly to the audience. And if we have spent the day talking about forum, we should at least talk about that as a possible strategy, not advocating one or the other.

Chair: Thank you, I think that's a great way to end. I'd just like to wind things up by saying a few thank yous and then I think that someone else has a few words to say. First of all, I'd like to thank all of you for participating in the last two hours of discussion and debate. It's unfortunate I thought that we were winding up, and this could go on for hours, but I really enjoyed everything you had to say. I'd like to thank all of the speakers who presented today and the project team on the Australian Research Council funded grant. And finally I'd especially like to thank Fiona, Lynda and Linda. And last but not least Myra and Aletha and their organisation, the Museum and Galleries Foundation for the wonderful job they did of organising not only today, but yesterday.

Thanks very much Paul, and look, I too would like to reiterate the thanks, particularly to the research team, to Fiona, Lynda, Linda and also to Jenny Ellison from Canada, who has worked on this, and also Adrienne Gollop. I think is a very important debate for our industry to continue amongst ourselves as well as to bring the public along with us. And I think that our dialogue with audience through the programs we run, the exhibitions that we develop, those voices that we find ways to mediate for and with, is a challenge that we continue in our practise as we return to work. I think also we need to acknowledge

the project team who supported the research team here, Helen Withnell, Paul Tacon, and Professor Stephen Garton. The Museums and Galleries Foundation has been very pleased to be a partner of this event, and we have done this jointly with the History Department of Sydney University, also with the Audience Research Centre of the Australian Museum and with the Australian War Memorial. I'd also like to thank and acknowledge the National Museum for their contribution to bringing Elaine Gurian out, and to thank Elaine for her contribution.