

CONSERVATION OF AUSTRALIA'S HISTORIC HERITAGE PLACES

Submission on behalf of Museum Victoria to the Productivity Commission

This submission is made by Dr J. Patrick Greene, Chief Executive Officer of Museum Victoria which is the State Museum comprising the Melbourne Museum, Scienceworks, the Immigration Museum and the Royal Exhibition Building. It is the largest museum organisation in Australia and in the past year served 4.8 million people as visitors, participants in its Discovery program and through website visits.

Museum Victoria is responsible for three important heritage buildings. The Royal Exhibition Building, with the surrounding Carlton Gardens (cared for by the City of Melbourne), was placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2004 and was also listed as a National Heritage place. The former Customs House is one of the finest colonial administration buildings in Victoria, and has been restored to house the Immigration Museum. Scienceworks occupies the buildings of the former Spotswood sewage pumping station, an outstanding monument to steam technology and public sanitation. With its intact examples of steam technology, the pumping station is of international significance. There is no doubt that the historic nature of these buildings adds greatly to their appeal to visitors and together they comprise a noteworthy assemblage of nineteenth-century architecture. The Museum provides high standards of stewardship and interpretation of the buildings in order to ensure their preservation and to maximise the public's appreciation of their significance.

Prior to taking up my position as CEO of Museum Victoria in August 2002 I was Director of the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, UK. It comprised five major industrial buildings including the world's oldest railway station. Development of the Museum involved the rescue of the derelict buildings, their restoration and adaptation for new uses as part of the regeneration of central Manchester. Funding came from a variety of sources including British Government, European Union and Heritage Lottery Fund. Amongst offices that I have held are Chairman of the European Museum Forum, Chair of the Greater Manchester Visitor and Convention Bureau, Chairman of the Heritage Lottery Fund Expert Panel and Member of the English Heritage Industrial Archaeology Advisory Committee. I am currently a member of the Council of Australasian Museum Directors and I am a Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration of Australia.

I would like to discuss with the Commission the following aspects of Australia's Historic Heritage Places:

- The potential of historic buildings to provide a sense of place and identity for Australians and visitors from overseas
- The role of museums, with particular reference to Museum Victoria, as stewards and interpreters of heritage buildings and places
- The economic impact of museums and heritage places
- The limited range of funding sources for conservation of historic buildings compared to, for example, the UK
- The opportunities to capitalise upon the selection of the Royal Exhibition Building as a World Heritage Site and a place on the National Heritage List including raising awareness amongst Australians and internationally, and enhanced public access and interpretation.