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LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM BILL 1986

Date introduced: 30 April 1986
House: House of Representatives
Presented by: Hon. Barry Cohen, M.P.,
Minister for Arts, Heritage and
Environment

DIGEST OF BILL

Purpose

To establish the Australian National Maritime Museum (the Museum).

Background

Most of the important collections in Australia are held in about 20 museums. The research and scholarship in Australian museums is concentrated heavily in these large traditional institutions. They also attract the majority of museum visitors.

Each Australian State has about two of these major institutions, usually an art museum and a general museum orientated to natural history. In addition, Victoria and New South Wales support large museums of applied science. All these institutions were founded in the nineteenth century, and are still financed almost entirely by state governments. The main Commonwealth government institutions are the Australian War Memorial, the Australian National Gallery and the Museum of Australia under construction on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra.

A wealth of historical material lies beneath the waters of the Australian coast. Over 500 shipwrecks have already been located and identified. There are 64 recorded wrecks in the Furneaux Islands area of Bass Strait including the 'Sydney Cove', wrecked in 1797. Older wrecks lie undiscovered in the waters off Western Australia. The wrecks provide economic, technological and social evidence of the past. The 'James Craig' (Sydney Cove Waterfront

Museum) and the 'Polly Woodside' (National Trust of Australia (Victoria)) are examples of large sailing vessels that have been restored to their former condition.

A Committee of Inquiry into Museums and National Collections was established in 1974. In its report, delivered in 1975, it recommended that early priority should be given to establishing a National Maritime Museum.[1] The Committee felt that the museum should go beyond the single and very costly exercise of ship restoration and include the history of ships, their cargoes, ports, sea routes and the working life and conditions of the men who manned them.

On 25 June 1985 the Prime Minister and the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment announced Commonwealth Government plans for the development of the National Maritime Museum in Sydney at Darling Harbour.[2] The Commonwealth accepted the offer by the New South Wales Government of a 4.75 hectare site for the Museum in the Darling Harbour Redevelopment Area. It is expected that the first stage of the Museum will be constructed by 1988 for the Bicentennial celebrations at a cost of approximately \$25 million. The Supply Bill (No. 1) 1986-87 appropriates \$1.129 million to the Museum for salary and administration expenses for the year commencing 1 July 1986.

Main Provisions

The interpretation provision (clause 2) contains a wide definition of Australian maritime history that includes the interaction of people and the sea, the history of the marine environment and sea travel to or from Australia.

The Australian National Maritime Museum will be established as a corporation by clause 4.

The functions of the Museum include acquiring, preserving and maintaining maritime historical material, developing a maritime collection and conducting research (clause 5). The Museum will have power to do all things incidental to its functions (clause 6).

Land and buildings under the control of the Commonwealth may be made available by the Minister to the Museum (clause 7)

A National Maritime Collection will be developed by the Museum (clause 8) and items in the collection will only be able to be disposed of by the Museum if it is satisfied

the item is unfit for the collection or not required by the collection (clause 9).

The Council of the Australian National Maritime Museum (the Council) will be established by clause 10. The function of the Council will be to ensure the proper and efficient performance of the Museum's functions (clause 11).

Directions given by the Minister to the Council must be complied with (clause 12).

The Council will consist of a Chairperson, Director and between 7 and 10 members each having some knowledge and experience of Australian maritime history (clause 13).

A pecuniary interest, whether direct or indirect, in a matter which is being considered by the Council, must be declared by a member at the first available opportunity (clause 18).

Clause 22 establishes the office of the Director, who will be appointed by the Governor-General for a period not exceeding 7 years. The Director will manage the affairs of the Museum, subject to the directions or policies of the Council (clause 23).

Museum staff will be employed under the Public Service Act 1922 (clause 31)). Other officers of the Australian or State Public Services may be made available to the Museum (clause 32), which may also choose to engage consultants (clause 33).

Parliament will appropriate money to the Museum (clause 34) and an Australian National Maritime Museum Fund will be established to receive gifts and bequests of money not received on trust (clause 35).

Museum money may only be spent on liabilities incurred incidentally to its functions and for paying Council members and Committee members (sub-clause 36(1)). Money not immediately required by the Museum will be deposited in an approved bank or invested in Commonwealth securities (sub-clause 36(2)).

Ministerial approval will be required before the Museum may enter into a contract for the purchase of any maritime historical material for an amount exceeding \$100 000 (sub-clause 38(1)(a)). Where the contract entered into does not concern historical maritime material, the

limit over which Ministerial approval is required is \$50 000 (sub-clause 36(1)(b)). The Museum will be a public authority for the purposes of the Audit Act 1901 (clause 39) and will not be subject to tax (clause 40).

The Museum will have to keep trust funds in a separate trust account (clause 41).

Regulations may be made for the sale of liquor on Museum premises (clause 44). Regulations will also be able to provide for the entry, conduct and removal of people from Museum premises (including areas of land or water and buildings or vessels). Entry fees and the sale of photographs or replicas of items belonging to the Museum will be prescribed by Regulation. Penalties for offences against such regulations will not exceed \$500 (clause 45).

For further information, if required, contact the Science, Technology and Environment Group.

11 June 1986

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Reference

1. Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections, (the Pigott Inquiry) AGPS, 1975.
2. Joint Statement by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment, 25 June 1985.

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