

**Australian Museum Aboriginal Museum Outreach program: NSW and Victoria Workshop for
Cultural Centres and Keeping Places
Report on Needs Assessment Workshop**

As part of the *Creating Partnerships* conference a half-day workshop was held with participants and facilitated by Lynda Kelly, Evaluation Coordinator, Australian Museum. Prior to the conference about half of the participants received a two-page questionnaire with three key questions designed to prompt some early thinking about what further information, training and assistance is needed. These were:

1. Why did they decide to establish a Keeping Place/Cultural Centre?
2. The aims and objectives of the Keeping Place/Cultural Centre.
3. Positive and negative aspects of a Keeping Place/Cultural Centre.

At the workshop participants were divided into diverse groups to discuss these broad questions under the guidance of a Museum staff person as note-taker. After discussions each group presented their results to the full conference.

This document summarises the outcomes of the session taken from the presentation notes collected from each group. From these four initial recommendations have been identified for further discussion, consideration and action. A summary of the results of the workshop will be forwarded to each participant and will also form an important part of seeking further finding to undertake a more detailed study into the establishment of Keeping Places/Cultural Centres in Indigenous communities.

Lynda Kelly, Head, AMARC, June 1999

[Input to this report from all workshop participants, colleagues from the Australian Museum and Museum Victoria and Peta Cook, Museum Studies student, was very much appreciated]



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A. Why establish a Keeping Place/Cultural Centre?

Results fall under two categories – community reasons (specific to the Indigenous community) and broader community reasons (outside the specific Indigenous community).

1. Community reasons

Keeping the culture 'living' through:

- promoting contemporary ways of living and working
Brewarrina was a tribal meeting place and we wish to promote our history and culture in our local area.
- educating Indigenous youth in history, 'traditional' skills
Broader understanding between cultures and what it means to Indigenous people to be Indigenous.
- providing a meeting place for the community and a 'hub' for current activities
- preservation and maintenance of returned objects – providing a safe house in the community for care of artefacts
A safe place for objects to be returned to the community.
- need to tell the true story – stories told by Indigenous people about their own history
To tell our community story in our own way.
Keeping the land strong with evidence and history of peoples' ancestors who once owned the land and existed before white settlement.

Promoting community spirit and pride:

- self-sufficiency through providing employment and skills
Emphasise the diversity between different groups. Regain sense of individuality of community.
- preserve the individuality of groups through showing the different histories, languages and stories – show diversity of communities
Sell and display local art by keeping our culture alive – to give incentive to our people to acquire skills.

2. For the broader community

Promotion of living culture to wider community (non-Indigenous Australians, tourists, etc) through:

- education programs
- showing a living, contemporary culture
- showcasing Indigenous culture through commercial and educational functions
To educate the wider community from a traditional, historical and contemporary perspective.
We want everyone to know just how rich our culture is, that it is not lost.
- tourism – provide networks of Keeping Places/Cultural Centres throughout Australia
- economic benefits - Keeping Places/Cultural Centres as viable businesses

The overall aim is to promote reconciliation through understanding.

Recommendation 1:

Establish a formal network of all Keeping Places/Cultural Centres in Australia to facilitate:

- communication
- advice and assistance
- tourism routes and links



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This could be done as a written publication updated at regular intervals as well as via the Internet. Currently established networks in NSW and Victoria may be good starting points.

B. Aims/objectives of Keeping Places/Cultural Centres

These were closely tied to the reasons for establishing Keeping Places/Cultural Centres reported in Section A, with two main objectives identified.

1. Educate the wider community

- breakdown stereotypes by showing Indigenous culture as a living culture
Educate the wider community within schools and communities: Indigenous and non-Indigenous.
To talk to tourists and schoolchildren about our bush foods and our bush medicines – the ones that we remember. A lot has been lost.

2. Keep culture alive

- maintenance/preservation of cultural heritage (objects)
To keep our culture alive through community displays, documentation of objects and artefacts, through education in the public and put all information on a database.
- self-sufficiency (generating employment and income)
- educating Indigenous youth
To show our children and grandchildren our culture and history.
- oral history documentation (family histories)/networking for Indigenous people/communities

Recommendation 2:

People need to be able to articulate clearly the aim (broad vision statement) and objectives of their Keeping Place/Cultural Centre – further workshopping and discussions could be undertaken to facilitate this process. This will help in clearing up potential misunderstandings about Centre goals, as well as promoting what they are trying to achieve both within the specific and broader community.

Recommendation 3:

There is a need to collect data on current established Keeping Places/Cultural Centres under the following categories:

1. Date established
2. Reasons for establishment
3. Aims/objectives
4. Location
5. Size (sq. m)
6. Annual budget
7. Funding sources
8. Staff numbers
9. Number and type of programs
10. Number of visitors per annum
11. Commercial activities
12. Contact details (name, postal address, telephone, fax, Internet/website)
13. Photograph of Keeping Place/Cultural Centre



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Not all categories would be relevant to all Centres.

This information could be collected as part of the broader studies currently being overseen by the Australian Museum. This would form the background to establishing formal networks as in Recommendation 1.

C. Positive and Negative Aspects of Keeping Places/Cultural Centres

Participants were asked to imagine that another community approached them for advice about establishing a Keeping Place/Cultural Centre and to list all the positive and negative aspects of this.

Positives

Increase pride and self esteem through

- keeping culture alive; *and*
 - achieving self-sufficiency; *by*
 - educating the wider community;
 - promoting the community to work together and with Local Government *in*
 - documenting histories.

Negatives

When discussing negative aspects a broader perspective was taken through looking at community-wide issues as well as specific concerns of the Keeping Place/Cultural Centre. Responses are grouped under three main categories.

1. Funding

- negative funding bodies
- provision and maintenance of ongoing funding
- lack of funding
- lack of experience, knowledge and skills in seeking/obtaining funding

2. Resources

- closely linked to funding issues
- competition with other business
- access to expertise
- 'victims of their own success' – expected now to be self-funding

3. Attitudes

- racism
- vandalism
- division within communities
- seeking and keeping community input and ownership



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D. Training/skills needed

As the last part of the exercise participants were asked to think about the types of skills needed and training required as an initial exercise in training needs analysis. The types of training needed fell into four areas which varied depending on whether participants were from a long established, a newly established or a planned Keeping Place/Cultural Centre.

1. Planning

Conducting feasibility studies, strategic planning, business planning:

- getting funding – where to find funds, what assistance is available
- approvals needed
- setting up a business – what's involved?

2. Running a Keeping Place/Cultural Centre

Practical skills:

- business management
- training staff
- public relations
- marketing
- finance
- public programs and exhibitions

Curatorial:

- registering
- documentation
- conservation
- storage

3. Community liaison

- how to get the community involved – both Indigenous and broader communities (what's going on; what's in it for them)
- networking with other Keeping Places/Cultural Centres

4. Broader 'political' issues

- taking a global view – what's happening in broader Australian society, globally
- repatriation
- reconciliation
- political viewpoints

Recommendation 4:

A more structured, systematic format of seeking feedback on training needs is required. This could be done as part of a broader data collection project (refer to Recommendation 2).



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