

## Ellen Mannix

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**From:** Merino <merino@netspace.net.au>  
**Sent:** Sunday, 18 November 2018 10:05 PM  
**To:** Ellen Mannix  
**Subject:** Australian Museum - Alterations and Additions (SSD 9452)

Submission by Marina Garlick, 73 College St, Balmain, NSW 2041

Background: The EIS deals only with technical matters relating to the building but there are much wider issues to consider in such a major project. There is no mention of the impact on the Museum's collections, particularly the world renowned collections of some 60,000 items showing the rich and diverse cultures of our Pacific neighbours. Much of these Pacific collections date back to the late nineteenth century, when they were rebuilt after the Garden Palace fire. They are an important part of the Museum's holdings but only a small proportion is currently on public exhibition. The bulk of these collections is currently stored on open shelves in a storage area in the College St building. Here it can be viewed, particularly by members of the Pacific communities as well as by international visitors such as, recently, the former President of Kiribas, Anote Tong.

As part of the "alterations and additions", this priceless and fragile collection is being boxed, without conservation, and transferred off site into "temporary storage" in a warehouse in Rydalmere for at least five years. The current storage space is to be demolished to make way for the proposed Tutankhamun exhibition. It will therefore no longer be accessible for the Pacific communities who currently visit frequently. There are apparently other areas of the Museum which could be adapted for exhibition purposes without moving the Pacific collections.

Consultation : it is claimed in the EIS that "there has been consultation with local aboriginal and cultural groups including the Metropolitan Land Council and indigenous Museum staff". This consultation, however, relates to the Museum's Master Plan only. There has been no consultation with the Pacific communities about the off site relocation of the Pacific collections. This is a serious omission and must be remedied before approval is given for the alterations.

As the collections are being boxed, it is unlikely that there would be any access for the communities at the Rydalmere warehouse. Such access would involve scarce museum staff travelling an hour each way to unpack the boxes. There is a suggestion that the Pacific collections would eventually be stored at the Discovery Centre at Castle Hill where a small part of the Museum's collection is currently stored. The bulk of the Discovery Centre holds 95% of the Powerhouse Museum collections and is full. As part of the proposed move of the Powerhouse to Parramatta an extension of the Discovery Centre has been put forward. However, there is no room on the site for any expansion, nor has any funding been allocated. In any case, the same strictures as to access would apply.

The Australian Museum does claim that it will develop a larger Pacific gallery in the future but given resource constraints, this seems problematic.

Australia has belatedly realised that it has a role to play in the Pacific, if only to spite China. The off site move of the Pacific collections is therefore particularly unfortunate. It is important for all Australians to have a wider understanding of our Pacific neighbours.

The Tutankhamun exhibition: The demolition of the current Pacific collection storage area is designed to provide more space for the Tutankhamun exhibition. The State Government has given the Australian Museum \$57.5 million for this show. One can only question the priorities while priceless objects such as the Boulton and Watts engine (one of only three in the world) are allowed to deteriorate at the Powerhouse Museum. \$ 57.5 million could also provide a splendid exhibition showcasing the Pacific collection rather than banishing this to inaccessible off site storage.

The figures provided to support the funding of the Tutankhamun show are also in the realm of fantasy. It is claimed that at peak times there will be nine people per minute accessing the exhibition. Even with the proposed extension of the Crystal Hall foyer this seems to be highly unlikely.

Apparently the Museum is paying Egypt \$US 5 million to hold the Tutankhamun show. This is presumably included in the \$57.5 million. Under these circumstances, entry fees are likely to be high ( in Los Angeles they were US\$30) which will impact attendance figures. It is also claimed that 13.9 EFT staff positions will be created . If these are to be funded from Tutankhamun takings they will only be temporary, if at all.

While some alterations to the Museum building may be advantageous, these could happen anyway without the disruption to the Pacific collections.

Conclusions: The proposed removal of the Pacific collections from the College St site to off site storage should be halted while other options for space for the Tutankhamun exhibition are explored.

The EIS does not cover the full impact of the alterations and additions and should extend beyond the environmental and financial impacts. There has also been no consultation with the Pacific communities who are frequent visitors to the current store and whose access to the off site location is likely to be extremely limited.

Accordingly, it is essential that an independent cultural impact assessment be carried out. This would include consultation with Pacific stakeholders and would focus on the cultural impact of the extensions. It would require analysis of the costs( including non financial costs) and benefits for the fragile collections. The Pacific collections should not be moved until this has been undertaken.

Sent from my iPad