

## CONTINUOUS CULTURES, ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES<sup>1</sup>

The Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities (CCOR) paper written by Jane Dolan contains a set of principles and guidelines for policy and procedure on the dissemination of Australian indigenous cultural heritage in cultural institutions<sup>2</sup>. It reflects years of extensive research, review and consultations<sup>3</sup> after the launch of an initial policy document, Previous Possessions, New Obligations (PPNO), by the Council of Australian Museum Associations (CAMA) in 1993.

CAMA, now Museums Australia<sup>4</sup>, is a national organization for the representation and promotion of cultural institutions in Australia<sup>5</sup>. It provides, amongst other services, legal consultancy to Australian cultural institutions to help them improve the professional practices conducted by their staff members<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, it administers the way in which collections are acquired, preserved and disseminated.

Particular attention is given to collections obtained from indigenous peoples. When a cultural institution becomes a “custodian” of an indigenous collection, Museums Australia would aim to preserve “the rights of these indigenous peoples to access and control the interpretation of their material cultural heritage”<sup>7</sup>.

The fundamental aim of the CCOR paper is thus to improve relationships between cultural institutions and indigenous peoples in Australia through the use of policy “as a tool for change in cultural institutions”<sup>8</sup>. The overall goal of the CCOR principles and

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in the resource and practices referred to in this summary do not necessarily constitute the views of WIPO or any of its Member States.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/dbdoc/ccor\\_final\\_feb\\_05.pdf](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/dbdoc/ccor_final_feb_05.pdf), p.7

<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/dbdoc/ccor\\_final\\_feb\\_05.pdf](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/dbdoc/ccor_final_feb_05.pdf), preface

<sup>4</sup> CAMA was converted into Museums Australia straight after the launch of PPNO in 1993.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/>

<sup>6</sup> See

<http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/aboutus.php?pageID=9&fileName=aboutus&dispModule=twocolnav&contentID=68&head=no>

<sup>7</sup> See

<http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/aboutus.php?pageID=9&fileName=aboutus&dispModule=twocolnav&contentID=68&head=no>

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.amol.org.au/craft/omjournal/volume3/dolan.pdf>, p.1

guidelines is to provide “a better understanding of the responsibilities that Australian cultural institutions have towards their collections”<sup>9</sup>.

Through the principles and guidelines, a shift has been made in the function of cultural institutions as “owners” to “guardians” of indigenous collections, which could lead to the development of partnerships between cultural institutions and indigenous peoples and the wide recognition of these peoples’ rights, culturally and intellectually, as defined in principles 15 and 16 of the CCOR paper.

The CCOR paper furthermore highlights the interests of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the “spiritual and practical care and control of their cultural property”<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, it recognizes the cultural practices as well as the stories associated with the collections of these indigenous peoples.

For more information, see WIPO, “Intellectual Property and Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Survey of Current Practices and Protocols in the South Pacific”<sup>11</sup>, written for WIPO by Malia Talakai, 2007.

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<sup>9</sup> See [http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/dbdoc/ccor\\_final\\_feb\\_05.pdf](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/dbdoc/ccor_final_feb_05.pdf), p.6

<sup>10</sup> See [http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/dbdoc/ccor\\_final\\_feb\\_05.pdf](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/dbdoc/ccor_final_feb_05.pdf), p.9

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/folklore/culturalheritage/casestudies/talakai\\_report.pdf](http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/folklore/culturalheritage/casestudies/talakai_report.pdf)