‘…it is inevitable that museums that do not significantly improve their offer to visitors by opening a capital development, introducing free admission where they previously charged, or making their programming more appealing will experience a fall in attendances … it’s not enough to just stop the structure decaying – museums have to keep getting better…It is not just about refreshing old cases and redecorating the loos every so often. They have to innovate as well.’

Museums Journal December 2004

Disclaimer

The views and opinions set down in this paper represent those of the Consultant and do not necessarily reflect the views of any other party. To the best of the Consultant’s ability, the data included are accurate and all statements are based on information the Consultant believes to be factual.

Gary Morgan
December 2004
Review of the Museum and Art Gallery (of the Northern Territory) Services

Executive Summary

Background

Earlier reports have indicated that the ‘current budget allocation for MAGNT is inadequate for what the organisation is endeavouring to achieve.’

This Review has looked at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory’s outputs relative to benchmark museum and art gallery activities and outputs around Australia and relative to international trends in museum practice. This Review has also considered possible service outcomes set against three funding scenarios.

The background includes a brief summary of the MAGNT’s history and current operations.

MAGNT outputs relative to those of other state museums and galleries

The MAGNT is one of the smallest of Australia’s museums and galleries in terms of staff numbers and operating budget. However, it is one of Australia’s most intrinsically diverse cultural agencies. It acts as the equivalent to the state museum and state art gallery, one of only two institutions in Australia to do so. Its range of collection and curatorial disciplines, and the related public programs, are commensurately diverse. Given the MAGNT also operates several public sites, it might be said that the MAGNT is Australia’s most diverse museum.

In other states the role of the MAGNT would be delivered by several museums and galleries. In the main, each of these is in turn larger and better resourced than the MAGNT.

The core functions of the MAGNT are well aligned with those of other institutions.

Collections

The MAGNT collection is large at over 1 million items, reflecting the natural science dimension to the organisation. Unlike most of Australia’s museums and galleries, the MAGNT collections have not yet been valued, but it can be expected that the monetary value will be at least several tens of millions of dollars.

The MAGNT has well documented policies and procedures for collection development and care, in keeping with best museum practice. Several areas have been identified by the MAGNT for focus in their collections, a sensible strategy for legislative reasons (to meet the requirements of the Museums and Art Galleries Act), logistical reasons (‘you can’t collect everything’) and strategic reasons (to give the MAGNT a degree of niche positioning amongst Australian cultural agencies).
emphasis is upon the natural and cultural heritage of the Northern Territory and its region (tropical northern Australia and Southeast Asia).

The collection development strategy of the MAGNT is sensible and appropriate to its role in servicing the Northern Territory and as a member of the museum family of Australia.

Collection management must reflect the diversity of the collections and hence requires a variety of approaches at the MAGNT. The overall staffing structure to collection management is akin to that of other state museums and galleries. The nature of storage systems is diverse, to meet the needs of a diverse collection. Storage is approaching its capacity for significant parts of the collection. While the wet collections have growth capacity to c. 2016, the dry collections may reach their capacity within a couple of years. Offsite storage (at McMinn Street) is in very poor conditions (no temperature, humidity, dust or pest control). Planning for collection storage should be a priority in future MAGNT masterplanning.

Collection documentation has significant gaps, even for the art collection. Great improvements would be achieved by implementing a purpose-designed integrated Collection Information Management System, to enhance collection management and to provide better access (for Government, other agencies and the public) to collection information. It is vital that the information that the collections hold is made useable and relevant to the Territory.

No internal process of audit appears to be in place for the collections. This is desirable and should be reported to the Board. A rotating semi-random inventory process would be appropriate.

Otherwise, the collection management procedures appear to be sound and appropriate and comparable to those of other major museums and galleries.

Recommendations:

- An annual semi-random inventory of collections should be an audit function for reporting to the Board.
- Criteria should be developed for prioritising conservation works on the collection and included in the collection management procedures.
- When resources permit, a new Collection Management Information System should be implemented as a priority.
- Areas of the collection requiring strategic development through acquisitions include the social history and Australian art collections.
- When resources permit, new collection storage should be acquired/constructed as a priority.

Public programs

The types of public programs being delivered by the MAGNT are alike to those of other state and national institutions in terms of broad scope and intent. The MAGNT cannot deliver on the same scale as other agencies given the differential in resources.
The site of the MAGNT is a key attribute to the public program and would benefit from investment in more interpretive experiences around the buildings, linking with the surrounding precinct.

Visitation to the MAGNT is the lowest for the state museums and galleries but the highest of any state institution relative to the residential population of the state. In 2003/04, visitor numbers actually exceeded the population of the Territory. Visitor numbers at the MAGNT have grown at a time of reducing visitor numbers to the Territory. The proportion of tourists visiting the MAGNT is high (over 70%) and the percentage of tourists to the Northern Territory who visit the MAGNT is also high (6-9%) by museum standards.

School student attendance is comparable or better than to other major museums in Australia. The education program has been expanded over recent years and is well documented with annual calendars of events. The education staffing level is low.

Galleries are dedicated to themes that relate to the span of the collections. Visitor satisfaction levels are high overall. Thematics that would warrant significant enhancement are Northern Territory history and Australian art. While popular, the Aboriginal art exhibition like other galleries is looking rather tired and warrants rejuvenation. The MAGNT could do more in enhancing the static presentation of Aboriginal art with other dimensions of Aboriginal culture. The Discovery Centre is a positive initiative that provides hands-on learning experiences (the only are of the MAGNT to do so) but is fairly small and very modest in its fitout.

The program of exhibitions at the MAGNT is not as large as for many other museums and galleries. This reflects both a lack of space and insufficient funding to expand the program. Relative to the population of the Territory however, the MAGNT operates a diverse program of exhibitions. A detailed five year Exhibitions Plan is developed with a less defined plan for out years, in keeping with good museum practice.

MAGNT has a Marketing Plan in place that, while brief, considers image, brand, positioning, audience research and advertising. This too is good practice and in accord with museum benchmarks.

There is opportunity for some growth in revenue generation from commercial activities. Review of the merchandise mix available in the shop may provide a better range of products for tourists. The lease arrangement for the Cornucopia Museum café requires attention (as per the Stanton Partners Report, 2004). There may be opportunities to expand venue activities, although internal spaces are limiting. Recruiting a senior commercial manager should yield dividends across the MAGNT’s commercial operations.

There is a real opportunity to increase income from donations, through a recommended donation scheme targeting tourists to the site. If fees for general admission should be considered at some time in the future, then concurrent consideration should be given to what discounts and incentives could be given to residents of the Northern Territory.
Recommendations:
- The precinct around the MAGNT buildings should be interpreted as part of the visitor experience.
- Precinct works to address visitor safety should be a priority.
- The social history of the Northern Territory should be significantly expanded in MAGNT exhibitions. Expansion of the Aboriginal cultural experience should also be explored.
- Resources permitting, the Discovery Centre would benefit from investment in more diverse interactive infrastructure.
- Resources permitting, the environmental conditions of the Maritime Gallery should be significantly enhanced.
- Increasing donations from visitors should be a priority action. Applying a suggested donation is recommended.
- Recruitment of senior commercial expertise is recommended as a strategic investment for the MAGNT.
- Exploration of enhanced venue hire is suggested with greater use of the grounds an option for exploration.
- While not within the scope of this review, the long term relationship of the MAGNT to its secondary sites should be reviewed, in parallel with development of a Strategic Asset Management Plan.

Research

The research output of the MAGNT is diverse, supporting specialist and popular products. There are different emphases in research across the disciplines, as is the case in other multidisciplinary museums.

Scientific research is the subject of further examination in a later section.

Facilities management

A funded Strategic Asset Management Plan is not in place and maintenance is largely reactive incident management.

Recommendation:
- A Strategic Asset Management Plan for the MAGNT should be developed and funding committed to it.

MAGNT outputs relative to national and international trends in museums and galleries

Better understanding the needs of the audiences and being more audience focused

The MAGNT has a program of audience research (Exit/Intercept surveys) that while basic is a useful tool to informing planning decisions. While not at the leading edge of audience research, the MAGNT is making a dedicated effort to assess audience needs. The staff of the MAGNT give a strong impression of being audience aware and have a strong desire to improve the audience experience.
Research into the potential audience that is not attending the MAGNT would also be useful. Remote audiences have little access to the MAGNT given the lack of a true outreach program, including virtual program delivery.

Recommendations:

- Future visitor surveys should attempt to gauge the impacts of the exhibitions on the audience ie does the visitor feel they have learnt something and what has that been?
- There should be a formalised process that ensures audience data are inserted into planning processes within the MAGNT, and actions should be tracked and recorded against those data.
- Resources permitting, surveys of non-visitors should be implemented to gain information on why people are not visiting.

Providing more products that reflect the changing needs of the community

Being a diverse museum/art gallery combination, the MAGNT delivers a range of products that is diverse in topics and themes. It is unusual to be able to have an experience of fine and Indigenous arts, history and natural science at one destination.

Visitor reaction to the mix of MAGNT programs seems positive given the Exit survey results. There are thematic weaknesses that some visitors have commented upon, for example the paucity of displays on Northern Territory history (other than Cyclone Tracy which is a popular exhibition). It can be argued that the MAGNT is not providing an ongoing experience of non-Indigenous Australian art that would befit a state art gallery.

MAGNT staff have tried to introduce a range of new products including education and holiday programs. The Discovery Centre, though a good initiative, could arguably be doing more as a self-learning centre for visitors.

Being more involved in community-partnered products

Museums are working more to tell the stories of people with them rather than for them. In recent years, the MAGNT has partnered with Indigenous groups, especially the Larrakia Nation on a number of programs, including an annual Cultural Awareness Program. Given the high population of Indigenous Territorians the MAGNT is well placed to be at the cutting edge of Australian museums in working to break down the museum stereotype of static displays of culture. The opportunity exists to deliver a visitor experience of material culture and associated living culture that tourists are hard pressed to find anywhere.

A Community Access Program with other community groups of the Territory would provide a relatively inexpensive and changing program and strengthen links between the local communities and their museum. It can empower community groups to present themselves to the greater community, to tell the stories they want to tell.
Recommendations:
- The MAGNT should build on its already strong reputation in Indigenous arts to establish new products for and about Indigenous people and their culture. There is the opportunity to be a national leader in this regard.
- A Community Access Program could be established with relatively small additional resources.

Developing products for special interest and under-service groups

With some few exceptions, museums are not well patronised by Indigenous people anywhere in the world. Working with Indigenous people to make the museum a welcoming and relevant place will require real commitment from the MAGNT and Government. The Te Papa Museum of New Zealand model is one example of a museum that has established and maintained Indigenous linkages through dedicated products.

Other special interest groups that museums elsewhere are targeting include the older visitor; youth at risk (in the Territory this will overlap with Indigenous youth); and demographics that appear to rarely visit museums, (for example, it has been suggested the residents of Palmerston are not well represented in visitors).

Recommendations:
- An improved and expanded Aboriginal cultural program is recommended above.
- Consideration should be given to identifying a number of demographic groups (eg. young children, older people) and a program developed to provide focused products (this may require additional resources).

Improving the learning experience by the use of a wide array of methodologies

Museums are placing greater emphasis on effective learning and how this can be achieved. New methods can assist in this if well applied.

The MAGNT is making an attempt to engage with innovative methods but is limited by space and resources. Its exhibitions do not utilise interactive approaches, be they via multimedia or physical devices. There is a dearth of drawer systems and similar devices that encourage the visitor to explore at their own pace. There are no audioguides.

The Discovery Centre at the MAGNT is relatively small and very basically equipped. It does not have computers for visitors to search on topics related to the displays, nor systems that allow progressive display of objects that are not on display in the main galleries.

Customer Service Officers at the MAGNT do provide a visitor interface for additional information on the exhibitions. At times, touch trolleys are supported by Education Volunteers.

The MAGNT website is extremely basic and does not deliver an extension of the museum experience. Websites are taking museums and galleries to the world and
allowing the world to visit them, with increased resourcing of this technology seeing massive increases in user sessions. The MAGNT is not participating in this dimension of museum service delivery.

With additional resourcing, there is a great deal that the MAGNT could do to expand the range of learning experiences available to its visitors.

Recommendations:

- If additional resources can be secured, there should be a program of exhibition enhancements that incorporate a range of methods and technologies to enhance learning. This should apply to the main galleries and the Discovery Centre.
- A rich and engaging website which provides a range of services and information should be developed as a priority.

Acting as forum points for debate and discussion

The MAGNT's theatrette is used for regular film events and at times for public talks. There are also occasional floor and teacher talks. There is potential for the MAGNT to host a more active calendar of talks by visiting scholars and academics, but the theatre does need investment to make it a contemporary seminar space.

The MAGNT does not much embrace the notion of forum within its exhibitions. This is more an opportunity for any future development of the history of the Northern Territory which should be a platform for engaging with contemporary issues as well as historic facts.

Recommendation:

- The MAGNT should explore more actively its role as a forum for public debate and this principle should be incorporated into future delivery of an expanded history exhibition and program (resources permitting).

Presenting a plurality of views and perspectives

As with the above trend, the MAGNT has the opportunity to demonstrate a plurality of perspectives in any future development of the stories of the Territory’s history. This will require a commitment of the museum to seek out the recollections of history as well as the documented chronicle of events. The MAGNT will have to arrive at its view about oral histories and the place of, for example, Aboriginal histories within the mosaic of the Northern Territory’s past.

Recommendation:

- The MAGNT should be exploring a plurality of perspectives whenever possible in its programs, and in particular, in planning for any future expanded program on the history of the Northern Territory.
**Greater awareness and canniness in commercial activities**

The MAGNT is clearly aware of the need to maximise revenue streams. There are areas where attention may yield greater income notably in the shop merchandise, the café lease, and opportunities for increasing venue hire (including of the grounds).

**Recommendation:**
- The areas of commercial activity noted above should be subject to review, in tandem with securing senior commercial expertise.

**Closer partnerships with business**

The Telstra NATSA Award partnership is one of national significance. However, the MAGNT will always face significant challenges in securing major sponsorships, given the relatively small catchment of large companies and the low population base of the Northern Territory. Its placement within the Governmental departmental structure may exacerbate that challenge.

**Consideration of the scientific focus of the MAGNT**

**Science management and outcomes relative to other museums**

Allowing for significant variation in science corporate structures in various museums, the organisation of science within the MAGNT is as valid as any other. With intended corporate restructuring, science will reside with history and culture under an Assistant Director of Research and Collections.

The high level range of scientific disciplines at the MAGNT has much in common with that of other science museums. The disciplinary coverage at the MAGNT is if anything a little narrower than at most other state museums, reflecting the smaller number of scientific staff. Science has appropriate policy documentation including a Research and Consultancy Policy.

The general outputs of scientific research at the MAGNT are also much as for other museums, channelling into publications (professional and popular), talks, public enquiries and various components of the public program, including exhibitions and education programs.

In terms of publication output (on a per staff member basis), the MAGNT research staff perform at a level roughly comparable to or slightly lower than that of other major museums. A number of the MAGNT research associates publish regularly, reflecting a functional associate network.

While MAGNT scientists produce popular articles there is not as organised a program of popular outputs as at some museums, notably in field guides. There may be opportunities for the MAGNT is this area of popularising science.
Recommendation:
- The MAGNT should explore opportunities for producing more popular publications on the natural history of the Northern Territory and consider tourists as a significant part of the market.
- The MAGNT should explore opportunities for joint staff appointments with Charles Darwin University (or other possible partner agencies).

Contribution of science to Northern Territory economic activity and Government programs

External stakeholder comment regarding the MAGNT’s science was very predominantly positive. This reflected the recognition by those persons of the use and value of museum science in terms of assisting their own agencies’ activities. Some respondents felt the MAGNT had not been as responsive as it might to making its knowledge available in a useful way to Government, but there was a strong attitude that this had substantially changed and that today the MAGNT was keen to have its science used and being seen as useful. The skill base at the MAGNT was seen as unique, needed and not replaceable by other agencies. The museums’ expertise in marine taxonomy was particularly noted.

MAGNT science is involved with a wide range of partnerships with State agencies, Commonwealth bodies and the private sector. Major scientific research projects in which the MAGNT has been lead agent or a partner have brought in $1.9 million of external (non-Territory) funding since 1998. Using a simple multiplier conversion, this can be seen as generating an economic impact of over $3 million from external funds. Some of the value of the MAGNT’s research is not quantifiable. One example of this is the identification of fouling organisms and pests that could cause enormous environmental and economic damage if not detected and contained.

The natural science collections are large and an invaluable scientific resource. They are particularly strong in tropical Australian specimens which are often less represented in other museum collections. Some significant areas of modern museum collections are not strong, such as tissue samples for DNA analysis.

Comparison of per square metre exhibition costs at the MAGNT relative to those of other institutions

Museums and galleries mount a very wide range of exhibition types, for which the cost of development and installation can be equally variable. Hanging of art works from a gallery’s own collection can be a relatively inexpensive exercise, as can certain community access programs where works are presented for basic staff and minimal additional costs. At the other extreme are long term (‘permanent’) museum exhibitions that require more complex investment in infrastructure and often ancillary technologies such as multimedia. Costings per square metre are normally applied to mounting this latter type of exhibition rather than displays of artworks.

The MAGNT has not been able to (re)develop many major long term galleries in recent years. The one gallery that has been delivered (Transformations in 2001) was completed for $700 per square metre, approximately one quarter the per square metre budget that many larger Australian museums regard as a basic (minimal) costing for a
quality outcome. (The Consultant normally advises that wherever possible, a budget of $2,500 to $3,000 per square metre should be allowed for a complex long term exhibition with quality fittings.) Allowing for the MAGNT’s inability to fund expensive enhancements to the gallery, *Transformations* works well as a museum experience and rates highly with visitors.

The major annual art exhibition, the Telstra NATSIA Award, has a significant budget, largely sponsored by Telstra, of which only a small amount (around $15,000) is available to actually installing the exhibition. The NATSIAA program is very complex including developing the exhibition, organising the event and the awards, and subsequently its tour around Australia. The MAGNT is hard-pressed to resource the requirements of the program and cannot support dedicated staff for it.

In short, the MAGNT is achieving quality (albeit limited in scope in certain respects) outcomes on exhibition budgets that are well under the industry standard.

**Recommendations:**

- If additional resources are available in future, the MAGNT should be directing more funds to exhibition development and refurbishment utilising a range of industry standard methods. Quality long term exhibitions should be funded at $2,500 to $3,000 per square metre of gallery space.
- Additional resourcing should be found to support the changing exhibition program including the Telstra NATSIAA.
- Virtual exhibitions should be developed in parallel with the new website.

**Comparison of the acquisition budget of the MAGNT relative to those of other institutions**

The costs of collection acquisitions are often obscured within the operating budgets of museums, where they can be subsumed within other costs centres such as field work and research. Significant parts of collections are donated to both museums and art galleries. Comparing acquisition budgets is an imprecise exercise but most relevant for art galleries where items have a readily identified market value.

Allowing for the reluctance for galleries to reveal too many details about acquisition budgets and for significant variation on the sources of funds for acquisitions, it can still be said that the MAGNT expends a very small amount on collection acquisition relative to most other state galleries. Some galleries allocate significant appropriation funds to acquisitions while others rely mostly on donations from a strong network of patrons and sponsors within large population centres. The South Australian, New South Wales and National Galleries have acquired works valued at between $4 million and $10 million pa in recent years, funded from a mix of sources.

The MAGNT has a small overall budget resulting in very limited acquisition funds and lacks an established network of donors, placing it at a very significant disadvantage to its eastern state equivalents in terms of building its collection.

**Recommendation:**

- The MAGNT should be better resourced to acquire collection objects, especially works of art, to build a collection commensurate with the status of
Discussion of three budget scenarios for the MAGNT with their consequent service outcomes

Quantifying the relativities of current and past budgets is difficult given the changes to the MAGNT’s status within Government and the amalgamation of corporate services within the Department. A $600,000 shortfall in budget in each of the past two financial years is indicative of the funding pressures.

The three budget scenarios scoped into this study were assessed against a set of parameters identified by the Consultant for prioritisation of expenditure and against the Five Year Plans of the MAGNT (endorsed by the Board).

The discussion focuses on operational activities of the MAGNT but where there are related capital costs, they are noted.

**Scenario 1: Current funding allocation**

With current funding levels extending indefinitely, there will be ongoing decline in the quality of the infrastructure and progressive decrease in programs across the core functions of public programs, collection care and research.

Facilities will deteriorate; long term exhibitions will grow progressively more tired and temporary exhibitions will become less frequent and even more reliant on external sponsorship; scientific research will become entirely dependent on external funding; there will be continued attrition in staff positions and consequently staff expertise. Risk management will become ever more critical for the public and the staff (many of whom are currently in accommodation that does not meet compliance standards). Collection storage will become critical within two to three years.

Tourist visitation may not be dramatically impacted by this, at least in the short term, as the MAGNT is a unique cultural venue in the Northern Territory, but there will be a growth in negative feedback regarding the quality of exhibitions and facilities. Local repeat visitation may show a greater impact if a changing program of events becomes less achievable.

Cessation of programs will have to be considered. Some suggestions for consideration are scientific research, operation of secondary sites and collection acquisitions.

**Scenario 2: 2003/04 funding plus an additional $1.5 million per year recurrent**

Funding scenario two would address the shortfall in operational funding evident in the past two years and would allow some attendance to key priorities in programs and enhancing the core functions to the extent possible. Areas of critical staffing deficit could be addressed. The overall public program of the MAGNT would be enhanced with a more dynamic exhibition program and collection acquisition program. The changing exhibitions should allow the MAGNT to maintain or grow its repeat
visitation by local residents and tourists will appreciate the improvements in long term displays.

The acquisition budget would still be modest but would allow some strategic development of the collection, notably in art and social history.

Some allocation to facilities maintenance, collection care and research would be possible.

A number of the operational elements have capital costs associated with them (approximately $10.9 million in associated capital costs especially for staff accommodation and collection storage).

A suggested allocation is tabled below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Parameters addressed</th>
<th>Operational costs pa</th>
<th>Associated capital costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff (9 new FTEs)</td>
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<td>Website development</td>
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<td>c. $0.01 million (operations) (Staffing in staff above)</td>
<td>Website setup (c.$0.25 million)</td>
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<td>Temporary exhibition program</td>
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<td>$0.30 million</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Programmed upgrades of long term galleries</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$0.25 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection acquisitions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$0.25 million</td>
<td>Expanded and improved collection storage will be required (c.$7.0 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous operations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$1.50 million</strong></td>
<td><strong>c. $10.85 million</strong></td>
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**Scenario 3: 2003/04 funding plus $5.5 million recurrent over 3-5 years and then an amount to be determined per year recurrent**

Funding scenario three would result in very significant enhancement of the MAGNT's program delivery across all areas of its core functions.

The public program would be resourced to a degree comparable to or exceeding other Australian state museums and art galleries and the collections acquisition funding would be adequate to build a state collection of significance.
Research and collection care functions would be improved, within the limitations of current facilities.

Many of the operational elements have associated capital costs (approximately $12.2 million associated with the increased operational activity). A project-based approach to expenditure would allow advancement on some of the priority capital/one-off costs.

*A suggested allocation is tabled below.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
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<td>Temporary exhibition program</td>
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<td>Collection acquisitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collection care/ consumables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research &amp; travel (incl fieldwork)</td>
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<td>$0.04 million</td>
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<td>Facilities maintenance</td>
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<td>$0.15 million</td>
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<td>Masterplanning</td>
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<td>Set-up (c.$0.37 million)</td>
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<td>$0.90 million (development and installation) Allow an extra $0.10 million for high end experiences</td>
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<td>Outreach program</td>
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<td>Accommodation (see above)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>$5.50 million</strong></td>
<td><strong>c.$12.22 million</strong></td>
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Recommendation on funding scenarios:

- In considering the three funding scenarios, it is the Consultant’s view that a funding increase somewhere between scenarios two and three would place the MAGNT soundly for delivering on its dual role of state museum and art gallery. Given the relative size of the Northern Territory, scenario three would be a generous allocation on a per capita basis, although the multiple roles of the MAGNT must be considered. Scenario three would certainly result in very significant improvements in public service delivery assuming associated capital costs could also be addressed.

How big is a $30 million capital works program?

Assuming the MAGNT Masterplan is an approximately $30 million project, this would place it on absolute terms as a medium sized museum project for Australia in recent years, similar in scale to the Western Australian Maritime Museum in Fremantle. Relative to the resident population of the Northern Territory, a $30 million project is a very large one, more expensive per resident than Te Papa Museum of New Zealand, one of the world’s largest museum projects.

The final outcome would also see the MAGNT with one of the largest total gallery areas of any of Australia’s museums and galleries. This must be considered in light of the dual role of the MAGNT as state museum and state art gallery.

In considering the absolute and relative dimensions of the project, one must recognise that there are unique aspects to the Northern Territory and the MAGNT. Elements of the development relate to the size and diversity of the MAGNT collection and to the dual roles of art gallery and museum. Delivery of a well planned project of this scale would see the residents of the Territory enjoying arts and museum products on par with the best of those available in the eastern capitals. It would also make the MAGNT an institution of national profile as a tourist attraction and could position the MAGNT as Australia’s premier public centre for Aboriginal arts and culture.

The MAGNT of the future could be a statement of Northern Territory culture and identity.

Recommendations:

- The MAGNT Building Masterplan requires ongoing planning, refinement and costings which should be addressed as a priority.
- In considering the quantum of the masterplan, the dual role of the MAGNT as state museum and art gallery must be considered as should opportunities to establish an iconic statement of Northern Territory identity.
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PART A  INTRODUCTION

1 Background

1.1 Background to this review

This review was commissioned by Risk Management Services of the Department of the Chief Minister for the Northern Territory, on behalf of the Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs. The review was put to Tender in October 2004, with the Tender awarded in November 2004.

This review follows on several recent reports pertaining to the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT), including:

- Budget review of Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, January 2004, Stanton Partners.
- Review of the Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, Bullocky Point, Fannie Bay, Darwin, for the Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs, internal review March 2004.

These reviews identified that ‘the current budget allocation for the MAGNT is inadequate for what the organisation is endeavouring to achieve’ (Project RFT, Scope of Services, 3.2 Background). The Stanton Partners budget review of January 2004 considered some options for increasing revenue and reducing costs. The Internal Review of March 2004 is a quite detailed summary of current operations of the organisation, with an identification of perceived operational and infrastructural problems and some recommendations for remedial actions. The March 2004 report also includes suggested five year Building and Business Plans for the MAGNT.

The current review was structured against a number of key issues that required clarification and useful data for informed decision-making. Those issues are reflected in the specific objectives of the review (Project RFT, Scope of Services, 3.3 Specific Objectives) against which the Review Outputs have been set (see below). (Refer also Appendix 1. Scope of services for the Review).

1.2 Aims/objectives of this review

The specific objectives of this Review are to:

- Assess the output of MAGNT against the standard activities of collection development and management, public programs and research in comparison with that of other state level museums and art galleries interstate.
- Identify current trends in museums and art galleries and assess the appropriateness of the current focus of the MAGNT in comparison with overseas and interstate trends.
Assess the manner in which the scientific focus of the MAGNT contributes to Territory economic activity and Government programs and how management of scientific research and outcomes compares with that in other museums.

Provide succinct advice on what the service outcomes of the following budget scenarios would be:

- Current funding allocation only
- 2003/4 funding plus an additional $1.5 million per year (recurrent)
- Increasing 2003/4 funding by an additional $5.5 million over 3-5 years and then an amount to be determined per year (recurrent)

Compare per square metre costs of exhibitions mounted by the MAGNT with those of comparable state level institutions.

Compare relative acquisitions budgets with comparable state level art galleries and museums.

Through the current Review, the Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs is seeking ‘detailed information to inform directions for the MAGNT, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its operation, to identify any gaps, and to put sound funding proposals to Government if necessary ...’. (Project RFT, Scope of Services, 3.8 Review Outcomes).

While the MAGNT operates several public sites, the scope of the review has been restricted to operations conducted at the main site at Bullocky Point on Fannie Bay.

### 1.3 Methodology of this review

The three key background reports noted above were initial reading for this Review. This report attempts to build upon, but not repeat, those studies.

Key stakeholders were interviewed as an integral part of this study. Wherever possible, these interviews were conducted face-to-face with the Consultant. The Consultant visited Darwin between 21-26 November for meetings with a range of internal and external stakeholders (refer Appendix 2). A consistent range of questions was put to each stakeholder (refer Appendix 3). Other external stakeholders (notably senior museum and gallery managers in Australia) were contacted for information relevant to this review, by telephone or email.

Relevant information was sourced by the Consultant via the internet, the personal library of the Consultant and the Reference Library of the Western Australian Museum, Perth.

The MAGNT provided internal documents relating to finances and budgets, policies and procedures, visitor survey data and various internal reports relating to its operations.

The 2001/02 and 2002/03 Council of Australian Museum Directors (CAMD) survey reports were made available to the Consultant by the MAGNT. These are non-public reports that are distributed only to participating museum Directors.

Sources of information are tabled at the end of this Report.
1.4 A brief history of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory at Bullocky Point

The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) was established in 1969. After Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin in 1974, the MAGNT moved from the former Town Hall to interim non-public housing until it could relocate to purpose-built buildings at the current main site at Bullocky Point in 1982. The reported cost of the new facility was $5.6 million. The original 1981 building was expanded over following years with a workshop and taxidermy facility completed in 1991 (cost $0.77 million); a Maritime Gallery added in 1992 (cost unknown); and a ‘wet’ (alcohol) store completed in 2000 (cost $1 million). There have been relatively minor recent works (refer MAGNT Internal Review, March 2004). The built infrastructure is complemented by a number of demountable buildings for various functions including accommodation for visiting workers and research.

From its inception, the MAGNT has acted as an equivalent to the state museum and state art gallery for the Northern Territory comprising a geographic area of 1.352 million square kilometres and servicing a resident population of 198,660 in 2002 (Australian Bureau of Statistics).

Until 1997, the MAGNT was a statutory authority. In 1997 the MAGNT ceased its statutory authority status and was incorporated into a (then) new Department of Arts and Museums. It now is placed as a Branch within the Arts Museums and Library Services Division of the Department of Community Development Sport & Cultural Affairs.

The co-delivery of the roles of state museum and state art gallery has been endorsed by the Chief Minister/Minister for Arts and Museums.

1.5 Summary of current core functions and activities of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

The MAGNT operates within a legislative framework established by the Museum and Art Galleries Act 1999, which defines the respective functions and powers of the Minister and the Board. The functions of the Minister and Board under the Act are noted in Appendix 5.

The Museum’s Mission is:

Making sense of our world by discovering and interpreting the past and present for the future.

The MAGNT is a highly multidisciplinary museum and gallery, with collections and curatorial functions spanning a broad spectrum. The MAGNT Collection Policy, reflected too in the organisation’s operational structure, subdivides the collection into a number of programs and sub-programs, reflecting the diversity of collection holdings:
History and culture
- Aboriginal heritage
  - Aboriginal art and culture
  - Prehistory (including archaeology and rock art sites)
- Regional history
  - Northern Territory history
  - Maritime archaeology and history
- Art and material culture
  - Australian visual art and craft
  - Southeast Asian art and material culture

Natural sciences
- Palaeontology and earth history
  - Palaeontology
  - Earth history
- Biodiversity (terrestrial, marine and freshwater faunas)
- Taxonomy and systematics
- Reference collections

Public programs including exhibitions and educational programs largely reflect the scope of the collections.

The MAGNT’s main site* at Bullocky Point on Fannie Bay comprises permanent and touring galleries, educational facilities, a discovery centre, a theatrette, shop and café. This site also houses the bulk of the MAGNT collection comprising over 1.2 million objects and accommodates most of the MAGNT staff and functions such as collection management, conservation, research, library and workshop functions.

(*This review is scoped to consider only the activities of the main MAGNT site at Bullocky Point.)

The MAGNT operates an active collection care, research and public program from the Bullocky Point site, together with nine other sites or heritage properties in the Northern Territory. The MAGNT administers the Regional Museums Grants Support Program, assisting small museums and keeping places around the Territory.

The MAGNT currently (2004/05) employs 72 staff in established positions, both full and part time, based at Bullocky Point, with four staff based at other sites. Another 16 staff are currently employed on external funding. Some Departmental staff providing centralised functions such as Registry/Library are also located at the Bullocky Point site. Around twenty-five Education Volunteers and 14 trainee volunteers spend various periods at the site. The current structure of the MAGNT is attached in Appendix 6.

In 2003/04, the MAGNT had a total budget for output costings of $11.662* million of which it allocated $6.15 million, split $4.03 million (66%) to personnel and $2.12 million (34%) including $0.48 million in carry forward to operating costs. In 2004/05, the MAGNT has a total output budget of $11.081* million, of which $6.4 million was available for personnel ($4.2 million; 66%) and operations ($2.2 million; 34%). The remainder covers repairs and maintenance for the whole of the Division of Arts, Museums and Library Services and the costs of services provided by the Corporate Services Division and the Department of Corporate and Information Services.

*The apparent decrease in total budget between 2003/04 and 2004/05 is described as 'reflecting the one off and c/f funds during 2003/04 and the productivity dividend effect. There has been an increase in
divisional allocation of $0.378 m for operational and personnel for 04/05.’ DCDSCA Output Group budget statement.

A MAGNT Foundation supports the institution in seeking financial support from the private sector (individuals and companies).

In 2003/04, 210,787 people visited the MAGNT at Bullocky Point.

For more detailed and extensive data on current MAGNT operations, refer the MAGNT Internal Review March 2004.
2 Outputs of the review

The outputs of this study address the Objectives of the Review.

The outputs are a series of sections that consider:
   a) absolute data, and
   b) relative data (where the data are ratio’d against a common denominator)
for the MAGNT, and comparisons made of those data to museums and galleries
around Australia (and on occasion, internationally).

The absolute deliverables and relativities of the MAGNT compared to its sibling
institutions (other state and national museums and galleries) are discussed in each
section. Both commonalities and differences are highlighted.
PART B OUTPUTS OF THE MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

3 A comparison of the MAGNT outputs in activities of collection development and management, public programs and research relative to those of other state museums and galleries

3.1 Overview

The internal MAGNT Review of March 2004 provides a quite detailed summary of MAGNT outputs and facilities. It also has a number of comparisons of the MAGNT to several other Australian Museums, and some broader comparisons to average museum data. This Review does not attempt to repeat what has been provided in that internal March Review. This report refers to that document and to the Reviews by Stanton Partners (January 2004) and Mitchell (July 2004).

Many types of organisation can be defined as a ‘museum’. This breadth of role is evident in the ICOM (the International Council of Museums) definition of a museum as:

A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment (...

The peak membership body for museums in Australia, Museums Australia, has coined the definition (2002):

A museum helps people understand the world by using objects and ideas to interpret the past and present and explore the future. A museum preserves and researches collections, and makes objects and information accessible in actual and virtual environments. Museums are established in the public interest as permanent, not-for-profit organisations that contribute long-term values to communities.

Within these definitions, museums include art galleries and can include zoological gardens, botanical gardens, herbaria, aquaria and science centres.

Museums as a generic type of organisation are diverse. It might be expected then that there will be significant differences in what different museums do.

Even if the term museum is applied more restrictively, say to institutions that are easily recognised as museums and art galleries, there is considerable diversity in the collections held and the disciplines pursued via research and public programs. This is as evident in Australia-New Zealand as it is overseas. Australia and New Zealand generally distinguish in title between museums (as collection and educational agencies of history, anthropology/ethnology, science, technology, natural history) and art galleries (as collection and educational agencies of visual arts, including fine and decorative arts). Nonetheless, there is considerable overlap in the collection coverage of agencies titled museums and those called art galleries and in the use of the terms...
museum and gallery. By way of small example, on its website the Art Gallery of New South Wales refers to itself as the ‘leading museum of art in NSW.’

Box 1. Range of disciplines and number of public sites of major State and Commonwealth museums and art galleries of Australia (plus Te Papa Museum of New Zealand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural sciences &amp; anthropology</th>
<th>History/social history</th>
<th>History, anthropology, natural sciences</th>
<th>Arts &amp; sciences</th>
<th>Art gallery/museum combination</th>
<th>Art gallery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>△ South Australian Museum (2)</td>
<td>▲ Australian War Memorial (1)</td>
<td>△ Museum of Victoria (3 – in Melbourne)</td>
<td>▲ Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (5)</td>
<td>▲ National Gallery of South Australia (1)</td>
<td>▲ Art Gallery of Western Australia (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>△ Historic Houses Trust of NSW incl Museum of Sydney (13)</td>
<td>△ Historc Houses Trust of South Australia (3)</td>
<td>△ Queensland Museum (7)</td>
<td>△ Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (3)</td>
<td>▲ National Gallery Victoria (2 - in Melbourne)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>△ Australian National Maritime Museum (2, adjacent sites)</td>
<td>▲ Australian National Maritime Museum (2, adjacent sites)</td>
<td></td>
<td>▲ Te Papa Museum of New Zealand (2 – in Wellington)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Box 1 gives a comparison of the disciplinary range of the 19 major state and national museums and art galleries of Australia and Te Papa Museum of New Zealand. Dedicated science centres (eg Questacon, Scitech) are not included here as they are not holders of collections nor do they undertake primary research. Several points are worth noting, even at this very broad level of detail.

Firstly, there is a considerable range in the diversity of disciplines of state and national museums. Overall however, all the major museums of Australia have diverse collections, reflecting a brief to hold a cross-section of the material heritage of their constituency, however that is defined.

Secondly, most of the agencies do not function or co-brand as both art gallery and museum, although all of the museums hold numerous objects of art in their collections.
and art gallery collections may also be regarded as cultural and historic. The distinction between cultural objects and works of art is an often blurred and in some cases, a meaningless differentiation, most particularly so for Indigenous art. If there is a distinction it is one of degree and extent, and perhaps as importantly, one of intent. It is less common for a museum to hold collection objects or to mount an exhibition on the sole basis of the artistic merit of the works; art works are more commonly held for their historic or cultural significance. Galleries on the other hand will focus heavily on the objects as works of visual significance and merit, with varying emphasis upon the historic and cultural dimensions.

The MAGNT is one of the institutions that is, and is titled as, both museum and art gallery. It can be seen from Box 1 that the closest similarity within Australia is with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, also a relatively small museum set within a small state. The interpretation of this is that there is an efficiency of scale insofar as co-delivery of more typical museum and art gallery products when the agency is relatively small. Box 2 illustrates the rough equivalence in delivery between the Northern Territory, Western Australia and New South Wales, which give a fair span of the population sizes of the Australian states.

**Box 2. Disciplinary equivalence in delivery of the state institutions of the Northern Territory, Western Australia and New South Wales.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northern Territory (population 198,700*)</th>
<th>Western Australia (population 1,924,500*)</th>
<th>New South Wales (population 6,634,100*)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory</td>
<td>Western Australian Museum</td>
<td>Australian Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Art Gallery of Western Australia</td>
<td>Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Historic Houses Trust of NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Art Gallery of New South Wales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (as at 30 June 2002)

The most populous Australian state New South Wales is arguably the most partitioned in terms of its state collections being distributed between a range of museums. In NSW, the functional delivery of the MAGNT would be compartmentalised into at least four state institutions based in Sydney: the Art Gallery of NSW, the Australian Museum, the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Powerhouse) and (in part) the Historic Houses Trust. In addition, MAGNT overlaps with the Australian National Maritime Museum, also based in Sydney.

The one glaring exception to the above generalisation of scale is Te Papa Museum of New Zealand. This large national museum was formally established only recently, in 1992, with the new $300 million plus building opened in 1998. It arose as the amalgamation of the then National Art Gallery and National Museum of New Zealand. The underpinning philosophy to this was to explore the intersections between the formerly separate disciplines and to achieve economies in scale through shared resources. There are relatively few recent examples of such integration of large cultural agencies. The more common evolution has been towards separation of disciplines over time.
Thirdly, even allowing for the variation in organisational size, the MAGNT is one of Australia’s more diverse state institutions in terms of disciplinary coverage. As is noted above, the closest sister state agency to the MAGNT in disciplinary diversity is the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery also holds plants in the state herbarium, the only state museum in Australia to do so but does not have a major maritime archaeology/history dimension. The MAGNT operates multiple sites over a large geographic area, more akin to the Western Australian Museum and Queensland Museum, which are also highly diverse museums but exclude the role of state art gallery. The MAGNT’s six year Strategic Plan identifies this intrinsic diversity as a strength. The Consultant concurs that there are particular opportunities for flexible program development and economies of scale in having the state museum and art gallery linked, assuming the expectations of key stakeholder groups to give strong presentation of the component parts can be met.

In contrast to the diversity of disciplines and disciplinary coverage, the core functions of major cultural agencies, while often branded differently and with different emphases, are remarkably similar. The core functions of the MAGNT (which align with the key activities scoped into this Review) may be broadly defined as:

- Developing, caring for and providing access to the collections
- Undertaking research relating to the collections and through fieldwork
- Interpreting the collections and providing public experiences to educate and entertain (exhibitions, education, and so forth).

A perusal of respective annual reports, websites and other published materials reveals that these reflect the core functions of other state and national museums and galleries. They may be labelled differently of course. For example, the Western Australian Museum identifies its core functions as ‘collection development and care, knowledge generation and knowledge communication’ and the Art Gallery of South Australia as ‘preservation, research and communication’. The State and Commonwealth Acts of Parliament* establishing the various agencies or their Boards also reflect the similarity of legislative core functions. If one adds to these core/legislative functions, supportive activities such as commercial enterprises (via retail outlets, dining facilities, venue activities, consultancies, etc) and fund-raising, as well as advertising and marketing, then the total packages of activity for any of the large museums and galleries in this country are very similar indeed.

*The Acts are accessible on websites of most of the institutions.

The differences between the various state and national museums and galleries in Australia are less in the ‘what’, then in the ‘how’ and ‘how much’. While the broad areas of activity may be very similar, how they are delivered and how much emphasis they assume (and as a corollary, how much funding they require) vary. It is at this level that each agency must decide the balance between its functions and how to apportion internal resources to deliver on the corporate outputs and outcomes. There is no ‘correct’ balance, and no single formula that determines the best mix of the core functions. No museum or gallery in this country would claim to be adequately addressing all of the collection management or development needs of its collection. Similarly, no museum or gallery in this country would suggest it could not do more in terms of public services if it had the resources to do so.
In short, museums and galleries are conjoined by the core functions that define a modern museum, and also by the commonality of being unable to deliver on the range of programs that they would wish to achieve (and which are expected of them). The observation in the Project’s RFT, 3.2, Background, that ‘… the current budget for the MAGNT is inadequate for what the organisation is endeavouring to achieve’ is arguably the single most challenging issue facing museums in this country today.

Box 3 compares the major museums and galleries of Australia on the basis of their operating incomes and number of staff. These can be seen as fair indicators of the ‘size’ of the agencies. (The comparison of budgets is less straightforward than might be expected. A number of museums are supplied with centralised corporate services from their departments, which is costed differently from those institutions where the corporate services are internally provided and costed.). Allowing for some variation, the relativities are still sound.

**Box 3. Relative sizes of a range of the state and national museums of Australia based on total operating incomes ($ millions) and staff numbers (2002/03)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TMAG</th>
<th>MAGNT</th>
<th>SAM</th>
<th>AGSA</th>
<th>AGWA</th>
<th>WAM</th>
<th>QM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incomes¹</td>
<td>$5.0 m</td>
<td>$7.1 m²</td>
<td>$11.3 m</td>
<td>$14.4 m</td>
<td>$18.6 m</td>
<td>$21.5 m</td>
<td>$23.5 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff²</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AM</th>
<th>Te Papa</th>
<th>MAAS</th>
<th>AGNSW</th>
<th>MV</th>
<th>NMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incomes¹</td>
<td>$30.4 m</td>
<td>$NZ 37.9m</td>
<td>$39.2 m</td>
<td>$42.8 m</td>
<td>$51.0 m</td>
<td>$72.1 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff²</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These are input measures rather than outputs but give a framework for comparison of relative size. Figures may vary somewhat according to reporting of status of staff but the relativities will be valid.

2. Full time, p/t and casual staff.
3. The MAGNT is citing only its direct appropriation from Government for staff and operations. There are other services the MAGNT receives on a Departmental basis that are costed in its total Budget.
4. 2002/03 had a high Government appropriation to the NMA. The total income for the NMA in 2003/04 was $45.8 million.

Sources:
CAMD report (2002/03); annual reports for art galleries

As a broad but fair observation, the national museums tend to be better resourced than most of the state agencies although it can also be argued that the public and political expectations placed on the national bodies are commensurately higher*.
*The public scrutiny and media controversy that has characterised the first years of operation of the National Museum of Australia, and the ongoing focus on the balance of programs at the National Gallery, give testament to the extent of political and stakeholder interest in national cultural bodies.

The MAGNT is a relatively small state museum/gallery. Only the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery has a smaller operating revenue (allowing for the comment above on costing of centralised services). Staff numbers at the MAGNT are higher than at several state art galleries but lower than for the other state museums other than TMAG.

In summary, the core functions and major program areas of the MAGNT align well with those of other Australian state and national museums and galleries. Given its combination of very broad disciplinary coverage and operation of multiple sites, the MAGNT is one of Australia’s most diverse cultural organisations (arguably, the most diverse). This complexity is combined with a relatively small size of the institution, in terms of staff and budget. Box 4 is a qualitative comparison of the MAGNT to other state museums and art galleries in Australia.

**Box 4. A qualitative comparison of the MAGNT to other large Australian museums in terms of facilities and functionality.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delta</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>∆</td>
<td>In all meaningful respects, operating as and regarded as a State level institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∆</td>
<td>Delivering a nationally and arguably internationally significant program in the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∆</td>
<td>Operating several public sites over a large geographic area (closest comparators are the Western Australian Museum and Queensland Museum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∆</td>
<td>Facing the challenges of running most sites with free admission as costs increase across the board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∆</td>
<td>A disciplinary diversity at the upper end of the museum sector and one of the few to combine art gallery and museum functions (closest comparators are Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the much larger Te Papa Museum of New Zealand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∆</td>
<td>One of the smallest of the state agencies in operating income and staff numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∆</td>
<td>A very high visitation rate relative to the resident population and a very high visitation by tourists to the Northern Territory (see public programs below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∆</td>
<td>A strong commitment to regional services; most other state museums do not have regional sites and/or do not operate anything akin to the Regional Museums Support Program (closest comparators are the WA Museum and Queensland Museum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∆</td>
<td>Identifiable facilities and program shortcomings, some of which are becoming critical, including collection storage and management, IT products for collections care and public delivery, staff accommodation at modern OH&amp;S standards and galleries for delivering a state-level program for both museum and art gallery functions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.2 Collection development and care

The six year Strategic Plan for the MAGNT reinforces the agency’s commitment to ‘holding and maintaining its unique multi-disciplinary collection’ and to ‘maintaining the highest ethical standards with regards to the management of its collection’.

Box 5 compares the sizes and assessed valuations* of several collections in museums and galleries of Australia. Not surprisingly, the largest collections are held by large museums of natural science. Art galleries occupy the other extreme with relatively small but valuable (on a per object basis) collections.

*The valuation of collections has been a sometimes controversial issue for museums (Tyzack, 1998; Carnegie & Wolnizer, 1995). Art galleries more typically have valued collections, given the ready marketability of artworks. Collections in museums are often difficult to value in a meaningful way and there are ethical and philosophic issues regarding the relevance and appropriateness of any such valuation. While the valuation of collections usually considers market value and/or replacement value as key variables, there is no consistent methodology for collection valuations yet in place and thus values shown must be treated as indicative.

**Box 5. Size and dollar valuation of collections of a number of major museums and galleries in Australia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TMAG</th>
<th>MAGNT</th>
<th>WAM</th>
<th>SAM</th>
<th>AGWA</th>
<th>NMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td>1.24 m</td>
<td>3.0 m+</td>
<td>3.0 m+</td>
<td>15,700</td>
<td>190,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>$27.9 m</td>
<td>$113.2 m</td>
<td>$132.2 m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>QM</th>
<th>MV</th>
<th>MAAS</th>
<th>AM</th>
<th>AGSA</th>
<th>AGNSW</th>
<th>NGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>12 m+</td>
<td>16 m</td>
<td>385,000</td>
<td>10 m+</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>$178.4 m</td>
<td>$228.7 m</td>
<td>$367.5 m</td>
<td>$530.3 m</td>
<td>$540 m</td>
<td>$603.8 m</td>
<td>$1,583.5 m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/V: Not valued

TMAG: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
MV: Museum Victoria
WAM: Western Australian Museum
MAAS: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences
SAM: South Australian Museum
AM: Australian Museum
AGWA: Art Gallery of Western Australia
AGSA: Art Gallery of South Australia
NMA: National Museum of Australia
AGNSW: Art Gallery of New South Wales
QM: Queensland Museum
NGA: National Gallery of Australia

Sources: Annual reports and websites

*The TMAG does not value its collections but makes a special insurance provision for them of $37.5 million in 2001/02.

It can be seen that the MAGNT has a large collection, much larger than any dedicated art gallery, reflecting its natural science activities. Over 1 million of the MAGNT’s collections comprise natural science specimens.

The MAGNT has not had its collections valued. Several years ago, an approximate valuation of those natural science collections acquired by the MAGNT was attempted, with a value of $14 million assigned to them on the basis of staff and field collection costs (MAGNT pers. com.). This did not include a costing of the significant
collections acquired from other sources such as DBIRD (Fisheries) and DIPE (Parks and Wildlife). Consideration is being given now to a fuller valuation of the entire MAGNT collection, in consultation with the Valuer General. It can be expected that the monetary value will be at least some tens of millions of dollars (market value and/or replacement value).

The scientific, cultural and historical values of the collections cannot be expressed in dollar terms of course.

Generally speaking, the very large collections held by the older institutions are valued at the highest monetary value. The older museums and galleries of Australia have been acquiring (through purchase, collection or donation) collection items over more than a century, while the MAGNT is a very young institution. The capacity of the MAGNT to purchase significant works is and has been very limited. The extremely high valuation of the NGA collection reflects the very considerable resources available to that institution to develop a high value and high profile collection. The acquisition capacity of the MAGNT relative to some other institutions is discussed further in Section 7.

The degree and nature of care required by the collection items is similarly variable. Maintaining a large alcohol-stored collection, a collection of Aboriginal bark paintings, a collection of wooden or bone implements and a collection of art works on paper each has its own peculiarities and challenges. The more diverse the collection held by an institution, the more various will be the collection management environments and techniques. The MAGNT, as a highly multi-disciplinary museum/gallery, must be able to address the collection storage and conservation needs of a very diverse range of objects.

The MAGNT has a Collection Policy (1994 policy reviewed in 2002, and new Policy approved by Board in February 2003). This policy has sub-policies addressing Collection Development, Collection Management and Collection Access. The policies in turn inform several procedural documents, for collection development, management and access (all in draft version, dated 30 June 2004). This approach and documentation is consistent with benchmark museum practice. In the view of the Consultant, the documents are generally appropriate and adequate to meet the needs of the organisation, and the documentation can be regarded as quite comprehensive. There are certainly large museums with less comprehensive collection policy and procedures. Nonetheless, they should continue to be subject to review and confirmation, as well as monitoring as to their consistent application.

One recommendation here is that a process of regular collection inventory be included as an audit function within the Collection Policy as part of Reporting and Compliance and in the collection management procedures (refer Collection Management below).

In conclusion, it can be seen that the MAGNT has responsibility for a large and very diverse collection, with all of the associated complexities of storage and stakeholder access. The MAGNT is showing a professional approach to the strategic growth and care of that collection.

3.2.1 Collection development
The Collection Policy (2003) for the MAGNT identifies five acquisition criteria:
- Significance
- Geographical emphasis
- Engagement or interpretive potential
- Resource availability
- Integrity.

There is a clear emphasis on the heritage of Northern Territory and its region (tropical northern Australia and Southeast Asia).

Collection development determines the focus of the collection for any museum or gallery, via what is acquired and what is let go. The MAGNT has policy, criteria and procedural documentation for this, which is appropriate to good museum practice. (The Consultant would observe that Deaccessioning is addressed within the MAGNT’s collection management procedures without reference in the collection development procedural document. It could be argued that the alternative would be more logical but that is a matter of detail. The important thing is that the deaccessioning is addressed in terms of decision-making and process.)

The logistics of managing a heritage collection are very significant. On balance, museum and gallery collections in this country are growing as acquisition outstrips deaccessioning. This is hardly surprising but places increasing pressures on museums and galleries to house and manage those growing collections in an appropriate manner. The MAGNT is facing this challenge together with most of the museums, and many of the art galleries, of Australia.

The quality of a museum’s collection development cannot be simply measured by the numbers of objects acquired, even if they all meet the acquisition criteria. Simply comparing the numbers of objects acquired each year does not serve well as a measure of good practice, either between museums or within any given museum. The pressures of housing growing collections will continue to pose hard questions to museums in so far as how much material can be stored appropriately and at what rate should collections be allowed to grow. There are many dimensions to this debate. Availability is one key aspect. An object of significant cultural or scientific value may not be available in the future if not acquired when it is first made available. In natural science, species records may not be repeated, and with the continued loss of biodiversity specimens may not be collected again from a given area at some time in the future.

In its collection development, the MAGNT has identified key focal points. Its focus on the natural and cultural heritage of the Northern Territory, Indigenous (including contemporary Indigenous) art, and the regional context of Southeast Asia is logical and sensible. This places the MAGNT as having some distinctive emphases within the family of Australian museums and art galleries. It also means that the MAGNT can effectively serve the dual purposes of informing residents of the Northern Territory about their place in the world and of informing visitors about the unique heritage of the Northern Territory.
One must be cautious in over-stating these niche values of course. There are other Australian museums and galleries with very strong Aboriginal collections and which have identified those collections as a strategic strength (for example, the Art Gallery of Western Australia identifies its Indigenous holdings as a corporate priority; the Art Gallery of New South Wales has its *Yiribana* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Art Gallery; Museum Victoria’s Melbourne Museum has its *Bunjilaka* Gallery of Aboriginal culture). Neither can the MAGNT claim anything approaching a monopoly on Asian art and culture (in one case alone, the AGNSW has invested millions of dollars in a newly opened (2003) Asian Art Gallery.) Nonetheless, in parallel with the focus on the ‘top end’ and central deserts of Australia, the synergy of focal points does serve to give the MAGNT a recognisable character.

As for all museums and art galleries, there are areas of strengths and weaknesses in the collection holdings. There appears to be sound reason for suggesting that the social history holdings of the MAGNT may prove currently inadequate to properly represent the history of the Northern Territory in any future expansion of history exhibitions. The non-Indigenous Australian art collection has been identified by various stakeholders as lacking depth. These areas of the collections will need strategic enhancement, resources permitting.

In short, the Consultant regards the overall collection development strategy of the MAGNT to be sound and well based in so far as comparison to other Australian institutions and in achieving the MAGNT’s legislative and strategic mission. There are strong and weak areas in the collections which will need to addressed via prioritised acquisitions, should resources become available.

As is noted above, the acquisition budget of the MAGNT relative to that of other organisations is discussed separately, in Section 7.

### 3.2.2 Collection management

Collection management at the MAGNT is the day to day responsibility of the Registrar and Collection Managers. Conservation staff have a fundamental support role in ensuring care of the collection objects. Currently collection management is split between two streams, one in History and Culture and one in Natural Sciences, with the conservation section aligned with the former and taxidermy with the latter. It is proposed as part of the MAGNT restructuring to consolidate the research and collections functions under one Assistant Director and this would see a structural integration of collection management functions. There are some basic differences in practice between art/history and natural sciences, but there are also strong similarities. If the MAGNT pursues a single Collection Management Information System, then the proposed integration has functional merit. In its integration of former national museum and national art gallery, Te Papa Museum of New Zealand integrated the collection management functions in a similar vein.

Allowing for the art gallery and museum functions of the MAGNT, the above structural approach to collection management is a common one for museums and galleries. There is some variation in the extent to which curators have a direct and day-to-day responsibility for managing the collections. Some museums such as the Australian Museum have separated curators from the collection management duties as
has the MAGNT. At others, such as the Western Australian Museum and Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, curators continue to act as senior collection managers with technical staff to assist them in management duties including loan processing.

Materials conservation at the MAGNT is undertaken by a small staff (three established positions). Most of the large museums and galleries (and libraries and archives) in this country operate their own materials conservation units, comprising staff with skills relevant to the organisation’s collections. In South Australia, the conservation functions of the arts agencies have been separated since 1985 into a quasi-autonomous business enterprise within Arts South Australia, Artlab Australia, that provides services to the collection holding institutions and the private sector on a fee-for-service basis.

Given that the MAGNT comprises both state art gallery and museum, and that there are relatively few other cultural agencies holding heritage collections in the Northern Territory, there seems little reason to actively explore the South Australian model. It is worth noting however that conservation activities can generate income when servicing the private sector but this has to be set against the priorities of caring for the public collections of the state or territory.

The concerns that collection objects are not being adequately conserved is a common one in museums, and some art galleries, around the country. The numbers of objects needing attention outstrips the available resources and staff to deal with them as promptly as most museum staff and directors would wish. Prioritisation of collection objects for treatment is vital. While it most certainly will be happening in practice at the MAGNT, there is no reference to this in the organisation’s collection management procedures. It is recommended here that criteria be developed to inform the process of prioritisation for conservation treatment of objects.

There are notable gaps in the documentation and record of the MAGNT’s collections. This is not unusual for large natural science collections where, particularly for invertebrate collections, the sheer volume of specimens and the paucity of identifications can result in substantial gaps in formal registration and cataloguing. Progress on cataloguing collections must nonetheless advance as scientific collections are only as useful as the information they yield. More concerning in the short term is that there are gaps in the cataloguing of the history and even the art collections at the MAGNT. Given their relatively small collections of easily identifiable market value, art galleries consistently have the most comprehensive cataloguing of their collection items. The MAGNT is not keeping pace with its sister institutions in this area of activity.

The MAGNT Review (Internal, March 2004) identifies the need for a new Collection Information Management System (CIMS) to assist in collection management and to enhance public access. A business case has been prepared for a common CIMS across the MAGNT and other branches within the Department of Community Development, Sport & Cultural Affairs that hold heritage objects and images. Given the mixed systems currently in use and the documentation problems noted above, the Consultant concurs that this should be a priority for the MAGNT. There are several systems widely in use in Australia and overseas and those options are not considered here. A sophisticated CIMS can dramatically improve the standard of collection management.
and access to information relating to the collections. While primarily a management tool, it can also be an invaluable method for improving public access to collection information. This can be approached in various ways, for example subsets of the collection database can be available to the public for restricted searches. Confidential or sensitive data can be kept secure. Some form of user-friendly front end is desirable to facilitate public use.

As is noted earlier, a process of regular inventory should be included within the collection management procedures. This may already be done in practice but should be formalised. A rotating and at least partly random process of checking for collection items should applied and reported as an audit function to the Board.

The recent controversy over the theft of large numbers of collection objects from the Australian Museum acts as a reminder not only of the risk of object theft and the need for vigilance and security processes, but also of the need for museums to demonstrate they are doing everything possible to deter and detect theft.

Most of the MAGNT’s collections are housed at the Bullochy Point site. With a collection numbering in excess of 1.2 million objects/specimens, this is a large cultural and scientific resource. The Internal Report March 2004 describes at some length the collection storage infrastructure at the MAGNT. As with most museums in this country, collection storage areas are under substantial pressure especially in certain disciplines. The wet (alcohol) collections of the MAGNT are arguably the most comfortably housed in the wet store that opened in 2000. There is estimated growth capacity for wet collections through to 2016, reflecting a greater concentration on collecting under-represented faunal groups (which are mostly invertebrates and thus mostly small animals). The MAGNT is currently engaged with a reorganisation of dry collection storage but there are concerns that it will be exhausted within two years. There is a leased offsite storage facility at McMinn Street. It is not environmentally controlled (temperature or humidity) and neither is it pest proof. Mostly large and non-delicate objects (such as canoes) are stored there, together with workshop materials. It is not suitable for most of the MAGNT collection and is of dubious standard for what is stored there now.

Many of the museums of Australia have moved or are in the process of moving collections into improved storage conditions. The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Powerhouse), the Western Australian Museum and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery are doing so now; the new Melbourne Museum has state of the art collection storage on site and good offsite storage; and so on. The task of storing collections in adequate conditions is a challenging but necessary part of museum and gallery business. Planning for the MAGNT’s future must include consideration of collection storage as a priority (refer funding scenarios, Section 8).

As is noted above, the MAGNT has well documented collection management procedures. It has also recently developed an Integrated Pest Management Plan. With these procedures in place, and allowing for the infrastructural and staffing limitations, the MAGNT is demonstrating a commitment to best practice in museum collection management on par with other state agencies.
3.3 Public programs

3.3.1 General

The public programs of the MAGNT comprise exhibitions (long term/permanent*, temporary and touring), products and services associated with those exhibitions, the education program, products delivered online, talks and seminars and any other outputs that make contact with the public to inform and entertain. Publications of staff may be seen as a zone of overlap between research and public programs.

(*No exhibitions are truly permanent. The long term galleries of museums are costly to install and are intended to have a significant part of their infrastructure in place for a number of years. The actual life of a long term exhibition may be as brief as two to three years, but is more typically five to ten, and in many cases significantly longer than that. Art galleries typically change a much higher proportion of their exhibitions on a regular basis.)

As is noted above, at a core functional level museums in this country deliver similar services. There are some (relatively small) areas of inclusion or exclusion. For example, unique amongst Australian museums the WA Museum operates a Documentary Unit developing media products for commercial sale. Some museums run their own publishing unit (e.g. the Queensland Museum, Australian Museum, Western Australian Museum), and others do not. The generic public programs of the MAGNT are in keeping with those delivered by the other state and national bodies. There is nothing in the MAGNT’s public programs that one would suggest as being a ‘non-museum’ product.

(A component of the public program that is not within the scope of this Review would justify further analysis. The MAGNT operates a number of sites in addition to Bullocky Point. Several of those sites are heritage buildings/historic sites. Operating historic sites can be seen as a museum function, but to a large extent, that role has been divested to other agencies/departments in most Australian states. The role of a state museum and gallery is to profile and interpret the moveable cultural heritage of the state; running and maintaining historic buildings is at best peripheral to those key functions, and at worst, diverts resources and strategic attention away from the primary outcomes. The ongoing relationship of the MAGNT to these sites should be reviewed, in tandem with development of a Strategic Asset Management Plan)

3.3.2 Site

The Bullocky Point site is in itself a key aspect of the public program of the MAGNT. This is one of the most striking sites for any of Australia’s large museums. The land-water interface is always an evocative siting for museums and galleries as can be seen in other Australian examples (National Museum of Australia on Lake Burley Griffin; Australian National Maritime Museum on Darling Harbour; Queensland Museum on the Brisbane River; Western Australian Maritime Museum on Fremantle Port) as well as overseas examples (such as the Guggenheim Bilbao and Te Papa Museum of New Zealand). The tropical setting of the MAGNT, with its canopy of lush vegetation, is a convivial and welcoming framework for the museum. There are significant opportunities to better integrate the precinct into the MAGNT experience such as outdoor art and more interpretive signage of the Indigenous associations and natural features and processes of the area. In some cases, new museums have attempted to artificially create from scratch what the MAGNT already has as a natural attribute; for example, Te Papa Museum of New Zealand’s Bush City and the Museum of Melbourne’s Forest Gallery.
However the MAGNT site is not easily accessed as part of passing trade. The site is some distance (2-3 kilometres) from the CBD and walking from the city, while possible, is not an appealing prospect in the wet season and quite a significant hike even in the more equable dry season. The coastal walking/biking trail is the most pleasant approach and offers the best opportunities for the enhanced interpretive experiences noted above. These could be further expanded by partnership with the nearby Botanic Gardens which is to undergo significant revitalisation in the future (George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens Masterplan, 2004).

Being some distance from the CBD, the MAGNT must be a destination, one that people commit to visiting, rather than one visited by chance in passing. In this, it differs from more centrally placed facilities. For example, the Art Gallery of NSW in Sydney’s Domain gets a significant percentage of its one million annual visitors from city shoppers and office workers visiting in their lunch breaks (AGNSW, pers. comm.) The MAGNT cannot easily avail of that type of visitation.

Given the distance of the site from the city, it is essential that good car parking exists adjacent to the facilities. The Internal Review of March 2004 discussed issues of car and coach parking at some length. There are also risk management issues regarding safe pedestrian access via the car park. This will need to be considered as a matter of visitor convenience and safety that should be addressed as part of the site masterplan. Public bus services set down on East Point Road 500 metres from the MAGNT main entry.

### 3.3.3 Visitation

Box 6 records the visitation to the Bullocky Point site for 2000 to 2004.

**Box 6. Visitation to the MAGNT Bullocky Point for years 2000-2004 with percentage increases between years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2000/01</th>
<th>2001/02</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>139,041</td>
<td>140,431 (+9%)</td>
<td>162,769 (+15%)</td>
<td>210,787 (+30%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAGNT internal visitor records

The 2000-2003 numbers are discussed in the Internal Review March 2004, but certain points are worth reiterating and some additional comments are warranted. Firstly, the growth in visitation over this period has been significant, notably in a time of stagnant population growth in the Territory and decreasing tourist visitation for much of this period. Data from Exit Surveys indicate the percentage of tourists as part of the MAGNT visitation. Those data are presented in some detail in the Internal Review March 2004 and are summarised and reformatted in Box 7 below, for calendar years.
Box 7. Northern Territory resident and tourist visitation at the MAGNT Bullochy Point for calendar years 2001-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NT residents</td>
<td>23,218 (16.3%)</td>
<td>42,359 (29.0%)</td>
<td>42,329 (23.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists to NT</td>
<td>119,226 (83.7%)</td>
<td>103,708 (71.0%)</td>
<td>137,795 (76.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>142,444</td>
<td>146,067</td>
<td>180,124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAGNT internal visitor records, Internal Review MARCH 2004

The tourist market in the Northern Territory and elsewhere has been impacted since 2001 by factors internal (e.g., Ansett collapse) and external (e.g., 9/11 attacks in the USA, Bali bombing, the war in Iraq and the SARS epidemic). Box 8 shows the visitor numbers to the Northern Territory from late 2000 to the end of 2003. Plotted against this is the total number of visitors to the MAGNT at Bullochy Point and the number of tourist visitors for the same period, with an additional record of total visitation at end June 2004.

Considering Boxes 6, 7 and 8, a number of points can be made. The increase in visitation at the MAGNT has been at a time of decreasing visitor numbers to the Northern Territory. The increase in visitation for the MAGNT has been substantial, especially in the last full year of comparison: 30% between 2002/03 and 2003/04. Even the visitation by tourists has mostly defied the overall slide in Territory visitors.

Box 8. Visitor numbers to the Northern Territory and total and tourist visitation at the MAGNT Bullochy Point for 2000-2004

Y-axis scale: millions for NT visitors; 100,000s for MAGNT visitors

Sources: NT visitation from Northern Territory Tourism Commission website
          MAGNT visitation from internal MAGNT records and Internal Review March 2004
How do these visitor trends compare to other museums? Museums keep various data on their visitors and report it variously in public documents. Box 9 compares the attendances to the main sites of several museums and galleries relative to the population of their State or Territory. Figures are those for 2001/02, the latest year for population statistics on the Australian Bureau of Statistics website. Te Papa Museum of New Zealand is the most visited museum in Australia-New Zealand.

Some patterns are clear. The MAGNT has the lowest visitation of the large state museums and galleries. However, the number of visitors to the MAGNT is very high relative to the number of residents in the Northern Territory. This was also commented on in the Internal Review of March 2004. In fact in 2003/04, visitation to the MAGNT at Bullocky Point (210,787) exceeded the resident population of the Territory. Only the national museums and galleries in Canberra can claim similar outcomes as is evidenced from the National Museum and National Gallery of Australia’s attendances*. While this should be seen as a measure of success, this is not entirely surprising as tourists make up a large percentage of the MAGNT’s visitors. Nonetheless, it does reflect that the MAGNT is making good contact with its constituency, both resident and tourist, by the standard of museums across the country.

*It may be argued that the audience for the national institutions should be regarded as the people of Australia. In that scenario, the NMV and NMA are respectively attracting 3% and 4% of their constituency. This gives a better comparison to the figures of Te Papa where the national population has been used as the denominator.

Box 9. Visitation to the MAGNT and several other Australian state museums and galleries, with reference to state or territory population (2001/02)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MAGNT</th>
<th>TMAG</th>
<th>AM</th>
<th>WAM</th>
<th>AGWA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visitation¹</td>
<td>140,431</td>
<td>198,144</td>
<td>244,141</td>
<td>248,152</td>
<td>657,415*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State population</td>
<td>198,600</td>
<td>478,400</td>
<td>6,634 m</td>
<td>1.924 m</td>
<td>1.924 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of state population</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of visitors who are tourists²</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23-25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NGA</th>
<th>NMA</th>
<th>AGNSW</th>
<th>Te Papa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visitation¹</td>
<td>589,569</td>
<td>803,012</td>
<td>1.01 m</td>
<td>1.31 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State population/ NZ population</td>
<td>321,512</td>
<td>321,512</td>
<td>6.634 m</td>
<td>3.7 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of state population</td>
<td>183%</td>
<td>250%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of visitors who are tourists²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TMAG: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery  
AM:    Australian Museum  
WAM: Western Australian Museum  
AGWA: Art Gallery of Western Australia  
Te Papa: Te Papa Museum of New Zealand

NGA: National Gallery of Australia  
NMA: National Museum of Australia  
AGNSW: Art Gallery of New South Wales
1. Main site only (some of the institutions operate a single site and some multiple; refer Box 1)
2. Interstate and overseas combined, where figures could be sourced.
3. The AGWA attendance figure for 2001/02 was very high due to the success of the major touring exhibition *Monet & Japan*. In 2002/03, AGWA attendances were 484,095, still an increase over preceding years other than 2001/02.

Sources: Annual reports, CAMD survey 2001/02, ABS website, internal MAGNT records

The high proportion of tourists in the MAGNT’s visitation is not unduly surprising given the high ratio of visitors to residents in the Northern Territory (1.5 million visitors and a resident population of just under 200,000 in 2003). It is interesting to consider what percentage of visitors to the Northern Territory are being captured by the MAGNT.

In a recent review (Travers et al, 2003) of one of the world’s largest museums, the Natural History Museum in London, various attempts were made to assess the economic contribution of that institution to the economy of the United Kingdom. Particular consideration was given to the numbers of tourists that visited. Box 10 compares the capture of tourists by the MAGNT relative to that of the NHM.

**Box 10. Percentage of visitors to the Northern Territory and United Kingdom who visited the MAGNT and Natural History Museum respectively**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitor numbers to the NT¹/UK³</th>
<th>MAGNT 2001</th>
<th>MAGNT 2002</th>
<th>MAGNT 2003</th>
<th>NHM 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourist numbers at museum²,³</td>
<td>119,200</td>
<td>103,700</td>
<td>137,800</td>
<td>1,450,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor capture (%)</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
1. Northern Territory Tourism Commission website
2. MAGNT records and Internal Review March 2004

The MAGNT is performing well in tourist capture by the standards of a museum that is regarded as one of the great tourist attractions of the United Kingdom. By way of comparison, the NHM is only just exceeded by Scotland and far exceeds Wales in terms of tourist numbers! Nonetheless, there is still clearly room to grow the tourist visitation at the MAGNT.

Box 6 shows the increase in visitation at Bullocky Point over the years 2000-2003. Box 11 below compares this performance against the visitation growth across the main sites of major museums in Australia in that period.
Box 11. Visitation growth at the MAGNT relative to growth across other major Australian museums (excluding art galleries) between 2000 and 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>MAGNT visitation (Bullocky Point)</th>
<th>Australian museums total visits</th>
<th>Largest increase and decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000/01</td>
<td>139,041</td>
<td>7.7 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/02</td>
<td>140,431 (+9%)</td>
<td>8.4 million (+9%)</td>
<td>+106%, -38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>162,769 (+15%)</td>
<td>8.3 million (-2%)</td>
<td>+56%, -34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Main sites only.
2. Increase for the National Museum of Australia in its first full year of operations.

Source: CAMD (2001/02, 2002/03) surveys

The MAGNT visitation followed the museum national average growth from 2000/01 to 2001/02 (skewed somewhat by the NMA figures) and has grown again when the average fell in 2001/02 to 2002/03. With visitation of 210,787 in 2003/04, the MAGNT has seen a 52% increase from 2000 to 2004.

The Stanton Partners Review (January 2004) makes some further comparisons, deserved of brief repeat here. That report observed that the MAGNT compares favourably with other Australian museums (CAMD data) on a ratio of visitors to staff members (MAGNT 2,788 visitors per staff member; Australian average 3,177 visitors per staff member). Further, the MAGNT has a lower operating budget per visitor than the Australian average (MAGNT $30 per visitor; Australian average $40 per visitor).

3.3.4 Education and schools

Educational programs are a key component of the public program of museums. School programs can target all age groups, from pre-school to tertiary, and include adult learning for that matter. For a summary of the roles of museums in working with schools in education programs, the reader is recommended Mitchell (1996).

The Internal Report March 2004 compares student numbers at the MAGNT to several other museums and those comparisons are not repeated here. The figures show the MAGNT to be performing at a comparable level in servicing students, relative to total visitor numbers, and attracts a relatively high percentage of the Territory’s student population each year.

The MAGNT now produces an education calendar of special events associated with the exhibition program, targeting school students and teachers. These events include floor talks, study days and events in the Discovery Centre. Education Kits relating to major exhibitions are produced for grade ranges. All of this reflects good museum practice and resembles the education programs of other large museums and galleries in the country.

The MAGNT staffing levels in Education are quite low, with two established positions. The education program is supported heavily by the Education Volunteers, numbering 27 people at the time of this Review. Volunteers are used variously by
museums and galleries in their educational programs, but in the main are seen to be an important resource.

3.3.5 Galleries and exhibitions

Public spaces at the Bullocky Point site total 5,700 square metres of which 4,910 square metres are gallery/display spaces. This area of display places the MAGNT as a moderately sized public facility relative to other state museums and galleries in Australia (refer Box 12). A qualifier is that 47% of the MAGNT gallery space is that of the Maritime Gallery, which as is noted below, is a sub-standard museum environment. Te Papa and the Australian War Memorial are amongst the largest museums in the southern hemisphere. The Western Australian Maritime Museum is a branch of the Western Australian Museum but is a recently opened (end 2002) museum of similar scale to the developments suggested in the MAGNT Building Masterplan.

Box 12. Areas of exhibition galleries for a range of museums and art galleries of Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAGNT</th>
<th>WAMM</th>
<th>WAM*</th>
<th>AM</th>
<th>NMA</th>
<th>NGA</th>
<th>Te Papa</th>
<th>AWM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4,900 m²</td>
<td>2,500m²</td>
<td>4,000m²</td>
<td>5,000m²</td>
<td>6,600m²</td>
<td>7,000m²</td>
<td>10,000m²</td>
<td>13,000m²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WAMM: Western Australian Maritime Museum
WAM: Western Australian Museum
AM: Australian Museum
NMA: National Museum of Australia
NGA: National Gallery of Australia
Te Papa: Te Papa Museum of New Zealand
AWM: Australian War Memorial

*These are gallery areas for the main site of the WAM. Until this year, the gallery space was 1,500 m² larger, but a major building has closed for safety reasons.

Sources: Annual reports; internal MAGNT papers; personal communications

The key themes of the MAGNT exhibitions at Bullocky Point, correlating closely with gallery allocations, are:
- Aboriginal art
- Other visual art
- Cyclone Tracy
- Maritime history (notably watercraft of Southeast Asia)
- Southeast Asian art and culture
- Natural history

The environmental conditions within most galleries are to the Consultant’s understanding acceptable. The exception is the Maritime Gallery. This large (2,300 square metre) gallery is not airconditioned or humidity controlled which for wooden objects falls well short of industry best practice. As a result, 47% of the MAGNT’s gallery space is not at museum standard. This should be a priority in future capital works planning.

The MAGNT has an Exhibitions Committee comprising senior staff representatives and has developed a five year Exhibition Schedule (2004-2008), with a less detailed and more notional scheduling for out years to 2013. (This is represented in a Gantt
Chart format, copy provided by MAGNT.) The emphasis in the schedule is on special and touring exhibitions, both to and from the MAGNT (see below). While the Consultant has not attempted a detailed review of the planned exhibition schedule, nor sat in on meetings of the Committee, the impression given from the process, the schedule and the discussions with staff is that the MAGNT has appropriate exhibitions planning in line with professional practice in the museum sector.

MAGNT stages a changing program of short term exhibitions, some developed internally and some toured from elsewhere. From 2001/02 to 2003/04, the MAGNT staged two to three touring exhibitions and four to five inhouse developed exhibitions each year (seven to nine temporary exhibitions per year).

As was noted in the Internal Review March 2004, there are museums and galleries that provide a greater number of exhibitions (long term and temporary) than does the MAGNT (c. 16 per year). Examples given in that report include the Art Gallery of Western Australia (23) and the Western Australian Museum (98, for all of its sites).

As was noted earlier, the MAGNT is something of an equivalent for those two agencies and hence one might suggest that the exhibitions supported by the AGWA and WAM might be totalled to compare with the MAGNT. On that basis of absolute figures, it could be concluded (as the Internal Review does) that relative to its equivalents in Western Australia, exhibition program provision by the MAGNT is low.

However, if the size of the population of the respective state/territory is considered (Western Australia has nearly 2 million people, the Northern Territory about 200,000) as a relative measure, than the numbers of exhibitions supported per head of resident population are 30% higher for the MAGNT than for the WAM and AGWA combined.

Focusing on the changing nature of the exhibition program (as a key attractor for repeat visitors), the number of new in-house and exhibitions on loan for 2002/03 is compared to the range and average for CAMD museums in Box 13.

**Box 13. New in-house exhibitions and exhibitions on loan staged by the MAGNT relative to other museums in Australia (2002/03)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MAGNT</th>
<th>Museum ranges (and average)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New in-house exhibitions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4-32 (10.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibitions received on loan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0-19 (5.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CAMD Survey 2002/03.

In terms of overall exhibition activity in that year, the MAGNT is at the lower end of the range and well under the average for exhibitions developed in-house, and somewhat under the average for exhibitions taken on loan.

Note: the comments regarding exhibition activity relative to resident population would be relevant here as well.

The exhibition themes noted above reflect the strategic intent of the MAGNT to focus on the Northern Territory and its region. They reflect too some key strengths of the collections such as Aboriginal art. There is a considerable challenge in presenting a range of displays that address the dual role of museum (history, natural science) and
art gallery (as Te Papa Museum of New Zealand found when it opened to generally high acclaim but also some protest that the institution was not adequately serving as the national art gallery). There is also opportunity to explore the synergies between disciplines.

Given there is no ‘correct’ range of themes for a multidisciplinary museum to address, comments regarding the current range must be interpreted as merely one view. It is the Consultant’s opinion that the MAGNT is not providing a satisfactory introduction to the history of the Northern Territory and Darwin. The Cyclone Tracy exhibition is popular with visitors (it has the highest satisfaction rate of all galleries from Exit Survey results) yet is only one part of the fascinating story of the Territory. There is no where in the MAGNT to learn about early contact between Aboriginal people and Macassans; nothing on early white settlements; nothing on the Second World War years or the bombing of Darwin. These are vital elements to the understanding of what the Northern Territory is and who Northern Territorians are. Resources permitting, this theme should be enhanced in the future.

The Consultant also feels that the introduction to Aboriginal culture is not as expansive as it might be. The Aboriginal Gallery has truly exceptional works on display and is again popular with visitors. Yet the MAGNT gives relatively little interpretation of the diversity of Aboriginal cultures in the Territory, their relationships with country and the cultural dimensions outside of visual arts. One of the great opportunities for the MAGNT is to place itself as a centre of excellence in living Aboriginal art and culture (discussed at greater length in Section 4).

If the MAGNT is to serve the Northern Territory as both a resource for Territory residents and a strong attractor to tourists, it must stage a balanced program that recognises the desire by locals for:
- a changing and attractive exhibition program
- a range of activities and experiences; and
- a responsive source of information

and tourists for:
- an engaging introduction to the culture and natural history of the Northern Territory; and
- a source of mementos of their visit.

Both locals and tourists will desire:
- a pleasant environment and quality visitor facilities
- complementary facilities such as a well-stocked shop and comfortable and well-priced café (which can be destinations in their own right).

The MAGNT attempts this balance, and the visitation numbers would suggest it is doing so with more than a fair degree of success. The comments from visitors in the biannual Exit Surveys and the August 2004 Intercept Survey (McGregor Tan Research) indicate a positive response to the visitor experience. The exhibitions do not avail of significant audio-visual or multimedia elements, in large part due to budget limitations (discussed further in Section 4).

As adjuncts to the exhibitions themselves, the MAGNT provides a map of galleries and Customer Service Officers are on hand to provide personalised assistance. The
CSOs are acting as docents in providing information about the exhibitions. There are touch trolleys at busy times.

The Discovery Centre is a popular aspect of the public education program although from the Visitor Intercept Survey (2004) a high percentage of visitors (around 70% of those interviewed) did not visit it. This area dedicated to hands-on activities is not large at just over 100 square metres. The interactive experiences are not sophisticated in so far as multimedia and computer products. Nor is there access for the public to a large number of objects and natural science specimens in special display cases and drawer systems. These are now staples in discovery centre type areas of museums around Australia (eg search and discover at the Australian Museum; Infozone at the Melbourne Museum; The Discovery Centre at the Western Australian Museum.) In comparison to the equivalent spaces of most other state museums, the Discovery Centre of the MAGNT is small and unrefined. With increased resourcing, it could be much more engaging for more people. It is suggested that this be a priority for enhanced funding.

3.3.6 Marketing

The MAGNT has a Five Year Marketing Plan (2003-2008) that addresses image building and the MAGNT brand; positioning the MAGNT in the community; audience research and development; and advertising and promotion. It is good, arguably essential, practice for a museum to have such a Plan. The Consultant is aware of some major museums that do not have a meaningful equivalent, to their detriment.

3.3.7 Admission fees

The MAGNT at Bullocky Point has free admission. The issue of charging for general admissions to museums and galleries is a significant one, with a history of some controversy and angst around Australia. There are those large museums that charge for general admission (eg. the Australian Museum, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Australian National Maritime Museum) and those that do not. Some museums have dropped or reduced charges in recent years (eg. the National Gallery of Australia, Museum Victoria). Some new facilities have opened with a charged regime (eg the new Western Australian Maritime Museum) and some have opened recently with free entry (eg the National Museum of Australia). Stanton Partners have some discussion of admission fees in their 2004 Report.*

*One point of correction relating to the Stanton Report is that the new museums that have introduced fees have not done so to recover capital costs; there has been no expectation from the respective funding governments to pay back capital costs. The fees are to recover a proportion of the recurrent operating costs of the new facilities.

It is assumed here that there is no serious consideration to introducing general admission charges at the MAGNT Bullocky Point site. If this were done, then on the basis of experiences at other museums there will be a significant impact on visitation, especially of local residents unless they are offered some form of inducement or discount. The Queensland Museum has negotiated a ‘local community pass’ that gives free entry to charged venues for residents of defined councils eg local council residents for entry to the Museum of Tropical Queensland in Townsville.
Tourists on the other hand are less sensitive to admission charges. The MAGNT has a large proportion of tourist visitors and it may be asked whether or not the museum is maximising its income from that source. Even if general admissions are not in place, visitors can be encouraged to make a donation, even a donation of a suggested amount. The MAGNT currently generates around $30,000 pa from the Bullocky Point donation box (MAGNT staff, pers.com.). Options should be considered to significantly increase this revenue stream. The ‘gold coin’ approach is a common one but it must be said that $1 or $2 is not a great deal of money today. At the Western Australian Museum’s regional branch in Geraldton, the more prominent positioning of the donation box with a suggested donation of $5 for adults more than doubled the income from donations. It is the Consultant’s view that few interstate and even fewer overseas tourists visiting the MAGNT would find a donation of about $5 per adult excessive for the experience provided. Increasing donation revenue should be actively pursued.

Note: Donations are like sponsorships in that there is an expectation that the funds contributed will be used to the purpose they were intended. In the case of donations, there will be an expectation that these funds will go towards ‘topping up’ museum activities. If donations are offset against appropriations from Government, then it not only defeats the purpose of the donations it also raises questions regarding the integrity and transparency of the donation process.

While there is significant variation in charging general admissions amongst museums and art galleries, there is a consistent view that special products can attract an entry charge. Several of those people interviewed observed that it seemed to have been some time since the MAGNT charged for a special exhibition. There are of course costs involved in collecting the fees and in safe handling of the moneys. As well, sponsorship relationships can preclude charging on some occasions, but most special exhibitions at Australian museums and galleries today are part-sponsored, even when admission charges are levied.

### 3.3.8 Commercial activities

Like other state and national museums and galleries, the MAGNT operates a shop. The role of shops in museums is partly commercial and partly to extend the visitor experience. A visitor can continue their learning experience after leaving the museum by taking with them a book, remind themselves of the visit via a memento or take a gift for those back home. While the commercial considerations are not the sole motivation for trading, making the shop generate the maximum income in supporting the core operations of the museum is desirable.

**Box 14. Average spend per visitor on merchandise at MAGNT and other Australian museums**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Merchandise spend per visitor</th>
<th>MAGNT</th>
<th>Australian average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001/02</td>
<td>$2.70</td>
<td>$1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>$1.58</td>
<td>$2.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
CAMD Surveys (2001/02, 2002/03), MAGNT figures
Spend per visitor at the MAGNT shop is shown in Box 14. The two years give quite different impressions of the success of the MAGNT shop. In 2001/02, spend per head was 50% above the national average. In 2002/03 it had declined by $1.12 per visitor and was 25% below the national average. Visitation to the MAGNT increased by 15% in this period.

The Stanton Partners Review (January 2004) discussed the MAGNT shop at some length and makes a number of recommendations. Those recommendations seem sensible. In the MAGNT’s Building Masterplan there are intentions to expand the shop facilities in order to generate additional revenue. Needless to say, a bigger shop does not necessarily mean a more profitable shop, and so any commitment to this requires a business case analysis. Several of those interviewed for this Review felt that the mix of merchandise in the shop was not right to tap into tourists in search of mementos. Museum shops must strike a good mix of affordable (but high margin) knick-knacks and higher end or more ‘worthy’ products. The Consultant is of the view that the MAGNT would benefit – across the board – from senior commercial skills, which would have application in the shop operations and elsewhere.

It is typical for a large museum or art gallery to have some form of eating facilities associated with it. Several of the large recent museum developments have several dining outlets, often on a scale of quality/price to cater for a wide range of clients (eg. Museum Victoria, National Museum of Australia, Te Papa Museum of New Zealand). Some museums operate their cafes with staff; others lease out the facilities to a commercial operator. The Cornucopia Museum Café at the MAGNT is a highly regarded dining facility on a wonderful location. The café is also subject to discussion by Stanton Partners notably regarding the terms of the lease. That report makes several recommendations. The Consultant has little further to add in this Review.

Venue operations are another source of income for museums and art galleries. Not only does this serve to generate funds, it can also attract people to the sites who would otherwise not be a visitor. If the experience is a quality one, and especially if it is linked somehow with the nature of the museum, then it can encourage those people to visit again to engage with the full museum experience.

Venue operations were not discussed by Stanton Partners in that review other than a short comment about tours and functions at the end of the report. Staff at the MAGNT feel that the current facilities do not lend themselves well to hiring out for functions. The foyer is rather oddly shaped and is not a convivial space in any case for functions. Outdoor functions in the gardens during the dry season, especially at night, must be an opportunity worthy of investigation for potential growth. In any further masterplanning for the site, the Consultant recommends that consideration be given to multiple uses of spaces wherever feasible, so that the MAGNT may be better able to lever off its site and uniqueness in growing a venue business.

Overall, the MAGNT has a professional and informed approach to its public programs. It is attempting to evaluate input from audiences to inform the range of programs and service delivery. It is also apparent from discussions with staff that there is a customer-focused corporate mentality. The types of programs being
supported are broadly similar to those of other museums around the country as are the planning processes. Commercial activities have some room for growth.

3.4 Research

Research that relates to the collections, their provenance and their relevance, is a core function of all large museums and galleries in Australia. That research is communicated via the public programs - including the exhibitions, education programs and printed materials – and through a range of specialist and popular publications, in hardcopy and electronic formats. Research underpins the generation of knowledge in museums.

The research function is undertaken by a variety of museum staff but in practice the curators are the primary researchers and research leaders of museums and galleries. In some museums, the term ‘Curator’ has been superseded. The Australian Museum, arguably Australia’s most active natural science research museum, has Research Scientists for whom research is the primary job function. At many other museums including the MAGNT, the research function is still undertaken by staff titled Curators, and as is noted above, in some cases the Curators also retain a direct responsibility for collection management. The South Australian Museum has both Curators and Research Scientists.

The outputs of the research vary somewhat in their emphasis between museums and between museums and art galleries. In general, art gallery curators focus the greater part of their research activity into exhibitions and related products such as catalogues. While this is also an important role for curators at science museums, they tend to publish more in specialist journals than do most art curators. There is a prevailing belief within the museum community that museum research staff should also be producing popular articles for a broad audience.

As a composite of art gallery and human studies/natural history museum, it might be expected that the MAGNT will display considerable variety in the research outputs of its curators. Reference to the publication lists for the MAGNT from 1998 confirms this. Listed publications include research publications (usually published in refereed journals); books (either all or in part); research reports; popular articles; exhibition catalogues and brochures; and web publications (which can be popular or specialist). Staff and associates at the MAGNT are producing between 30 and 55 publications a year, of both a scientific and popular nature. The research publications of the MAGNT in 2002/03 are listed in Appendix 7 to give the reader an indication of the range of outputs. The number of true popular articles is rather low that year; other years have had more products for a general readership.

A significant portion of the publications are by associates. Maintaining a network of active research associates can substantially expand the output of primary research and thus all museums in Australia have associates who are treated very much like defacto staff members.

The MAGNT produces its own journal of research publication, The Beagle: Records of the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences. This is a respected refereed journal that is regarded as a suitable conduit for primary research of national and
international standard. A number of the state museums, especially the science museums, produce their own journal (eg. Records of the Australian Museum, Records of the WA Museum, Records of the SA Museum, Memoirs of the Queensland Museum; the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery has recently re-established its own journal, Kaparunina). The Consultant cannot comment on the costs of producing The Beagle but if its continuity is to be reviewed at some stage, then consideration must be given to the value of the publication in terms of exchange to other libraries. With spiralling costs of professional publications, the cost of publishing a journal may be considerably offset against the cost avoided in journal purchase.

The MAGNT has a Research and Consultancy Policy that informs the nature and approaches to research undertaken by staff. It is good practice to have such a policy. The Stanton Partners Report (January 2004) notes that there may be some concerns that the policy is not being adhered to but the Consultant received no comments to that effect for this Review.

As a broad overview, the type of research activities and the type of research products of the MAGNT are in keeping with the research activities of other museums and galleries in Australia. Scientific research is considered further in Section 5. In that section, some comparison is attempted of MAGNT scientific output relative to other museums.

### 3.5 Facilities management

Though not strictly scoped into this review, facilities management justifies a brief comment.

There is a strong concern in the MAGNT that management of facilities is very much in a reactive, rather than proactive mode. ‘Crisis management’ was an expression used by one staff member. There does not appear to be a confirmed Strategic Asset Management Plan in place for the MAGNT, and strategic maintenance of the facilities must take second place to emergency events. Without a SAM Plan in place, and resources to support its implementation, the aging facilities of the MAGNT will continue to decline and the number of emergency events will increase.
4 A discussion of the MAGNT outputs relative to national and international trends in museums and galleries

4.1 Overview

The operating environment of the MAGNT is unique. The MAGNT is sited in the Northern Territory with its unique regional location and tropical setting and the agency delivers a unique blend of programs to that constituency and visitors to the Territory. However many of the drivers and challenges facing the MAGNT are similar or indeed common to those facing other major museums in this country and internationally. There are naturally differences in detail and degree.

Australian museums are well regarded internationally. Museums in this country have a good reputation for innovation and commitment to exploring new goals and methods while maintaining core values.

The modern expectations of museums are somewhat paradoxical. In many minds, museums remain repositories of dead things in dusty cases. Market research undertaken by several museums in Australia (eg Australian Museum research, pers.com.) shows that this attitude is still strong in some quarters, in spite of the fact that museums have in the past two decades embraced many new methodologies and many new programs for audience engagement. It should be noted that a recent review of the Natural History Museum in London makes reference to this same problem of perception (Travers et al, 2003).

Museums in Australia and internationally have made great advances in diversifying their products and responding better to public desires. This is reflected in far greater audience evaluation and feedback, and some museums have committed audience research units (in Australia, the Australian Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, both in Sydney, are notable in this respect).

There are multiple trends to museum practice in Australia and overseas. Museums are as diverse as any generic group of organisation, and more diverse than many. One thing is certain … museums cannot expect to retain or grow audiences unless they are able to evolve as attractions. Recent research (yet to be fully published but in pre-release in Museums Journal December 2004, London counts the true value of lottery cash and free entry) concludes:

‘...it is inevitable that museums that do not significantly improve their offer to visitors by opening a capital development, introducing free admission where they previously charged, or making their programming more appealing will experience a fall in attendances … it’s not enough to just stop the structure decaying – museums have to keep getting better…It is not just about refreshing old cases and redecorating the loos every so often. They have to innovate as well.’

This message is as valid for Australia as it is overseas.
Certain overall changes have been and continue to be reflected in broader museum practice and some major trends are noted in Box 15 below.

**Box 15. Some key trends in international museum practice in the last ten years**

- Better understanding the needs of the audience(s) and being more audience-focused (note: the audience of museums is very diverse; it is not merely the people who walk through the doors)

- Providing more products that reflect the changing needs of the community ie. being more responsive to the community through diversifying products

- Being more involved in community-partnered projects, working *with* communities rather than unilaterally telling their stories *for* them

- In particular, great strides (not enough but still significant) have been made in better partnerships with Indigenous and First Nations peoples

- Developing products for special interest and traditionally under-serviced groups as well as the mainstream and traditional audiences of museums

- Using a wide array of methodologies to tell stories underpinned by a better understanding of the learning processes in museums

- Acting as forum points, places for debate and discussion rather than simply presenting ‘facts’ and objects

- Presenting a plurality of views and perspectives rather than a single ‘grand narrative’ of events as perceived by the dominant social class

- Greater awareness and canniness in commercial activities, when they are complementary to the core functions and integrity of the museum

- As an extension of the above, closer partnerships with business in joint programs

The above list is not intended to be exhaustive but gives an overview of some of the key directions in recent museum thinking. As a general comment, one of significant challenges for modern museums is to respond to the dual expectations of continuing to maintain or in fact increase access to museum products for all members of the community for the public good of society (the public good paradigm); and increasing revenue from innovative and entrepreneurial activities, including commercial activities in line with the best practice in the private sector, and sponsorships (the commercial paradigm). It is not enough for a major museum to merely be active or even effective in both paradigm contexts. Having ‘a foot in the two camps’ is not sufficient. The common demand is to excel as both a public good and commercial agency concurrently and this is difficult to achieve.
The performance of the MAGNT is now discussed against each of those trends identified in Box 15.

4.2 Better understanding the needs of the audience(s) and being more audience-focused

The MAGNT’s current six year Strategic Plan identifies within its value statements the commitment to ‘stimulating and engaging the community’ and ‘fostering a love of museums within the community’. It also aims to ‘provide unique tourist attractions’.

The museum runs a biannual self-completing Visitors Exit Survey (wet and dry seasons) which elicits responses from a subset of visitors to a short series of questions about the background of the visitor, nature and frequency of visits and impressions of the visitor experience. These reports are bound and kept as internal records (MAGNT Visitors Exit Surveys). To enhance its understanding of visitors and their needs, the MAGNT contracted a somewhat more comprehensive Visitor Intercept Survey from McGregor Tan Research in August 2004 (reported in September 2004). This improved method will be used into the future.

The precise results of those surveys can be read in the relevant reports themselves and reference is made to these data in other parts of this Report. Of relevance here is the fact that the MAGNT has committed itself to undertaking such surveys and allocated scarce resources to that end. Audience research is variously undertaken by museums and galleries. As is noted above, some larger agencies allocate significant resources to this end but smaller museums and galleries are rarely able to dedicate major funding to this. The MAGNT is giving practical testament to its commitment to audiences by establishing and recently expanding its audience research.

The data being collected are basic data but they are useful and can assist in informing decisions about programming. There is much that is not considered in the current surveys however. Certain useful variables are not being recorded. For example, there is no information on local residency that might be considered by postcode records. There is also no information on the ethnic background of visitors. This may seem a sensitive matter, but in a Territory where almost 30% of the population is Indigenous it would be very useful to know what proportion of visitors is comprised of Indigenous people.

These are not challenges for the MAGNT alone. The National Museum of Australia was criticised for its visitor survey methodologies in the large scale review of its exhibitions and public programs (Carroll et al, 2003). The NMA was condemned for using satisfaction ‘yes/no’ responses and for not investigating the effectiveness of the learning experience. The MAGNT approach improves upon a simple satisfaction affirmation via its scaled ratings. However there is little in the surveys that explores the impact of the experiences in raising the visitor’s understanding of display topics, and that should be considered for future surveys.

Surveying visitor views is of little purpose if there are not the feedback loops that ensure the survey data are considered, analysed and as appropriate incorporated into
decisions about the visitor program and facilities. The MAGNT should ensure it has a formalised process of interpreting the visitor data and a tracking process that documents what has been considered and incorporated into resource allocations. For example, a common issue in the visitors’ comments is the need for improved way-finding within the museum*. This may involve better signage, more extensive use of floor plans/maps, guides on the floor, and any combination of these and other techniques. Once an issue like this has been identified from visitor comments, MAGNT management need procedures to ensure the matter is addressed, with a resource allocation if appropriate. Surveys are only as good as the quality of their data and only as useful as the extent to which the data are used.

(*As a matter of interest, visitor orientation is one of the commonest problems facing museums and is not as easy to address as some might imagine. The way-finding approach at the $300 million Te Papa Museum of New Zealand had to be completely rethought on the basis of visitor responses.)

It is the Consultant’s view that for its size, the MAGNT is making a good effort to better know its visitors. The surveys offer a basic but sound evaluation that in some ways is superior to that used by the far better resourced National Museum of Australia.

Of course, visitors are only a part of the potential audience. The Consultant would advise that obtaining information about those who do not visit the MAGNT is also important to know the marketplace. This is understood by senior staff at the MAGNT and options may be considered in future for gathering information on the non-visiting public. There is some reference to this in the MAGNT’s Marketing Strategic Plan 2003-2008.

From discussions with management and staff, there is clearly a culture within the MAGNT of awareness of the audience and a desire to enhance the visitor experience. This has been factored into the proposed Five Year Building Masterplan and Business Development Plan.

One potentially major component of the audience that is not being well served is the remote audience, defined here as those who are not visiting the MAGNT site(s). This is discussed in sections below.

4.3 Providing more products that reflect the changing needs of the community ie. being more responsive to the community through diversifying products

As is noted above, there appears to be a culture within the MAGNT of commitment to serve a wide and diverse audience. The visitor expectations of museums continue to evolve. While there is still a firm place for static displays of objects behind glass cases (as a matter of security and object care if nothing else), the typical museum experience today is characterised by many types of experience.

By its very diversity of collections and disciplines, the MAGNT is providing a fairly diverse range of products in so far as topics and themes. There are few museums in Australia or anywhere in the world where one visit to one site can expose the visitor to natural history, Indigenous art (and to a lesser extent culture), non-Indigenous Australian art, at least some of the history of the locality, maritime history and regional (Southeast Asian) exhibitions, with a short term exhibition or two often available as well.
There are inherent challenges in being both a ‘true’ museum and art gallery. While the generic practices of the two types of museum overlap substantially, there are differences especially in the emphasis on methods and approaches to providing the visitor experience. There are also significant differences in the traditional audiences for the two types of institution. As we have seen (Box 1), there are relatively few examples of art gallery-museum combinations amongst the state and national agencies but the largest in the region is Te Papa Museum of New Zealand. Soon after its opening in early 1998, the museum was motivated to review and increase its allocation of gallery space to what might be called traditional art displays, in the face of criticism that it was not adequately serving as the national gallery.

There appears to be little public expression of concern about the nature and balance of the MAGNT experience. At least, visitor exit surveys and discussions with stakeholders reveal no groundswell of protest about any lacking in the public program at the MAGNT. The thematic and collection area that is certainly under-represented, and that has been identified as such by at least a percentage of visitors, is the broader social history of Darwin and the Top End. A sound case can be made for expanding significantly the coverage of Territory history. There is some evidence to suggest that at least an element of the Darwin public would like to see a greater area committed to non-Indigenous Australian art, and this is certainly a view of a number of MAGNT stakeholders.

In recent years the MAGNT has introduced several new initiatives to provide more diversity to the visitor. The Discovery Centre is one example and is discussed at more length in the section on new methodologies below.

Education and holiday programs have been enhanced at the MAGNT to value-add for schools and teachers. These programs include education kits for many of the major exhibitions and floor talks for teachers and secondary students.

As is noted above, the MAGNT has an audience research approach that can be tailored in the future. Having mechanisms to introduce the messages from that research into the museum’s programs supports a responsive environment to audience needs.

4.4 Being more involved in community-partnered projects, working with communities

The MAGNT has engaged with the Indigenous community at various levels, which is appropriate and essential given the very large Indigenous population of the Northern Territory (c. 25-30% of population depending on the source of data, compared to about 2.2% for Australia). At the ‘upper’ end of that engagement is the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award, an event of truly national significance and proportions. There are few regular awards or events hosted by museums and galleries in Australia, regardless of size of the institution, which are of comparable standing and profile. (One might suggest the Archibald Prize at the Art Gallery of New South Wales as being one of the few that attracts nation-wide attention and interest.) If nothing else did so, the delivery of this program by the MAGNT lifts it from a regional status to an institution of national standing.
The Telstra NATSIA Award is high profile and important, but not truly a community product. These are ones that are generated by communities, often in partnership with an organisation that can give tangible form to the product. Museums are increasingly assuming a vital role in assisting community groups to have a voice and a public presence that would otherwise be impossible.

The MAGNT has a relationship with the Larrakia Nation that is described by its Coordinator as a positive one over the last three years. Prior to that, there was seen as little interaction with the MAGNT. Since 2002, MAGNT has worked with Larrakia Nation on a Cultural Awareness Program held over six weeks each year. There have been fruitful discussions regarding partnerships between the MAGNT and Larrakia Nation regarding the proposed Larrakia Cultural Facility (that may be located in close proximity to the museum).

Hopefully the above partnerships will continue and evolve but even if they did not, there is good reason for the MAGNT to work to involve Aboriginal people in the operations of the institution. This was commented on by several of those people interviewed for this Review. Museums and Indigenous people have a chequered history that largely reflects past practices but also current perceptions. The unfortunate history of collecting that has contributed to the collections of some older museums is less an issue for a young museum like the MAGNT. But the attitude of Indigenous people to museums, in Australia and overseas, is still largely one of indifference at best and active animosity at worst. There are very fine exceptions, such as the National Museum of the American Indian in the United States, and museums around the world are working to redress past wrongs. In Australia, the museum community has adopted the Museums Australia policy document *Previous Possessions New Obligations* (first drafted 1993 and currently being revised and updated as *Continuous Cultures Ongoing Responsibilities*).

A comment from an Indigenous observer for this Review was that ‘museums are not seen as living places’ and that ‘most young Aboriginal kids wouldn’t even think of visiting a museum’. This was a comment regarding the MAGNT but would have relevance to most museums (and galleries), even those with large displays of Aboriginal cultural material. The perception of museums as a lingering embodiment of a dominant cultural psyche – a white institution displaying sometimes unethically collected Indigenous objects for a white audience - and as having little relevance to Indigenous peoples today, are two key reasons for this disconnection. (For a longer discussion of this issue, the reader is referred to Griffin, 1996).

Given the strength of the MAGNT’s Aboriginal collections and the high percentage of Indigenous people and richness of Aboriginal culture in the Territory, the MAGNT’s commitment to work with Indigenous people must if anything grow. The opportunity to break down the traditional barriers between Indigenous people and western cultural institutions is one that the MAGNT could, and given its context, should adopt as a *cause celebre* as it were. This will take real commitment from the museum, its Board and Government. The outcome could be an experience that expands the high quality but static exhibitions of Aboriginal art into a living experience of art-culture-people that could set the Northern Territory as a national leader and provide residents and tourists with the finest experience of Aboriginal culture in this country.
With respect to other community groups within the Northern Territory, it is clear that Darwin is a cosmopolitan centre with a highly diverse population. The MAGNT’s collections and displays of Southeast Asian culture and art are well regarded. There would be scope to have more engagement with the ethnic communities of Darwin (and not only the Asian communities) in delivering a Community Access Program (CAP) of changing events and small displays. There is a resource implication to this but CAP type products are at the low end of the exhibition budget spectrum. The main demands on museums can be staff time, assistance with some infrastructure (display cases, labels) and an area of a gallery.

The CAP outcome is not just a changing program of displays. It is a strengthening of the relationship between the museum and communities, and the enabling of communities to speak for themselves and tell their own stories through their cultural materials and collective memories.

In short, the Consultant observes that the MAGNT has been active in this area, especially with Indigenous groups, and particularly so in the last three years. There is room for this aspect of the MAGNT’s program to be substantially expanded, and while resourcing would be needed it may not require inordinate funding to make some significant advances.

4.5 Developing products for special interest and traditionally under-serviced groups as well as the mainstream and traditional audiences of museums

To some degree, this trend overlaps with the one discussed above.

Indigenous groups are traditionally under represented in museum audiences because museums by and large are not seen as welcoming places and are lacking in perceived relevance. In the Northern Territory over 25% of the residents are Indigenous people, more than ten times the national average. Visitor statistics (Exit and Intercept Surveys) taken by the MAGNT do not reveal the numbers of Indigenous visitors but the general and almost certainly accurate observation is that the numbers are low (and certainly very far from 25% of visitors).

It must be said that the MAGNT is not alone in this. The Consultant is not aware of any museum in Australia that has significant visitation from Aboriginal people. In New Zealand, Te Papa Museum of New Zealand achieved high success with Maori visitors. Maori people comprise 15-16% of the New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand). The establishment of Te Papa involved extensive consultation with Maori around the country. The museum committed to being a truly bicultural organisation and this was to reflect not only in its exhibitions (presenting stories from a Maori and Pakeha* perspective) but also in its way of carrying out corporate business. To that end, in a possibly unique innovation, two Chief Executive positions were established, one to address the ‘western’ way of doing business, and one (the Kahiha) to address the Maori. In practice, the western head was the CEO as we would know it; the Maori Kahiha had a vital role in carrying forward the biculturalism externally and internally. On its opening, Te Papa attracted a slightly higher than per capita percentage of Maori visitors and continues to be a major attractor for Maori people with 11% of its audience identifying themselves as Maori.
in 2003/04. Te Papa is seen as a relevant institution to the Indigenous people of New Zealand.

*Western

To provide products that are truly relevant to Aboriginal visitors will require significant review of the overall composition and balance of MAGNT operations. It will also require real commitment from the Board and Government. Yet if it is to be achieved anywhere in Australia, where better than the Northern Territory where the number of Aboriginal people is so high (and growing) and the key strengths of the state museum and gallery include Aboriginal collections? While programs would need tailoring for the target audience of Indigenous people, as is noted above the ancillary benefits can include a visitor experience that is more diverse and alive than is currently the case. The net product could be not only of greater relevance to Indigenous Australians; it could be a unique experience of Aboriginal culture that tourists are hard pressed to find anywhere in Australia.

This discussion has focused on the Indigenous dimension because of their uniquely high representation in Northern Territory society. They are by no means the only special interest group that may be considered. With an aging population, museums around Australia are looking at special programs for older people. At the other extreme, special programs and dedicated areas for pre-schoolers are being developed by a number of museums, with notable examples being the Children’s Museum of the new Melbourne Museum (Museum Victoria) and Kids Island at the Australian Museum. Museums in the United Kingdom have embraced some pioneering programs for youth at risk, which in the Northern Territory context, will probably overlap significant with Aboriginal youth. While postcode data are not yet recorded, there is a strong view that the MAGNT is not making effective contact with the people of Palmerston. This may require a targeted market research program as to why those residents are not regarding the MAGNT as a destination of choice.

4.6 Improving the learning experience by the use of a wide array of methodologies

While real objects, text and graphics remain the staples of museum interpretation, more and more is made of new methods such audio-visuals and multimedia, live performance, web products and other ancillary products. This trend extends in part from the commitment of museums to make contact with new audiences and partly from recognition that learning in even traditional museum audiences can be enhanced by effective use of a variety of methods.

Museums are informal learning environments. The best outcomes are achieved where the visitor can direct their own enquiry and can advance in their own experience via curiosity, observation and activity (Ramey-Gassert, et al, 1994). Museums give a special opportunity to learn via experiencing real objects, but real objects in themselves may not result in a meaningful learning experience. This paper cannot engage at any length with the body of literature on learning in museums. The warning here is that new methods in themselves may not work any better than old methods. They must be supported by an understanding of how people learn in museum-type environments. For further discussion on learning in museums the reader is referred to Falk & Dierking, 1992; Ramey-Gassert, et al, 1994; Hein, 1995; Griffin, 1999).
The examples of the use of new technologies and exhibition techniques in museums and galleries are legion. No one will have entered a museum in the last ten years and not have observed the use of methods that are not strictly defined by the objects on display. Audio-visual devices have been in common use for many decades. The use of computer interactives is widespread and few large long term exhibitions will be developed by museums today without the use of both AV and computer technology. Personal audioguides (mobile headphones or wands) are often employed to add information over that available in text labels and panels. Mechanical interactives have been the stock and trade of science centres but more and more museums are using this approach to give physical presence to the theories or concepts under display. A price to all of these is not only that of establishment. There are overheads in the maintenance of interactive devices. Everyone will recall visiting museums where computers were ‘down’ and mechanical interactives ‘out of order’. It is not a pleasing effect. If such devices are used, there must be a commensurate commitment to their upkeep and maintenance within performance standards and times.

Museums reach out from the walls of their institutions via outreach products. These include touring exhibitions and modules to other museums and schools. The use of the internet as an interactive learning tool is now standard practice for museums and many galleries. Websites have been designed to be engaging and user-friendly. The web products can enhance and expand upon the real gallery experience, providing additional levels of information or virtual access to collections that cannot be physically placed on display.

The discovery centre is now the norm rather than the exception in museums. By whatever name, this is an area or areas set aside for hands-on interaction with objects relating to the museum’s collections. Sturdier and less valuable collection objects can be touched and manipulated. Additional objects are commonly accessible through drawers and/or cabinets that allow the visitor to explore at their own pace. Computers are a standard component. These areas are particularly popular with children and family groups.

This use of hands-on exploration need not be confined to specific zone. Museum galleries are commonly fitted out with drawer systems so the visitor can dig deeper into more objects than can be comfortably or aesthetically placed on prominent display. Examples of note include the Museum of Sydney and the National Museum of Australia, although this is common practice now. Many people speak fondly of exploring the drawers of the Victoria and Albert Museum; so this is not an altogether new approach to self-directed engagement with the collections.

Live animals are now a typical component of natural science museums, either in discovery centres or occasionally in exhibition galleries. Entire faux ecosystems with living plants and animals can be established as they have at Te Papa Museum of New Zealand (‘Bush City’) and the Melbourne Museum (Forest Gallery).

With all of the new technology and addition of non-traditional elements, human engagement is still a vital part of museums and the enhancement of displays via tour
guides, docents, talks and seminars, and performance (music, dance, art/craft displays etc) is well received by visitors.

As part of the extended museum experience, giving visitors a peek behind the scenes has been variously employed by museums. At its simplest, this can be tours of back of house areas and periodic open days where selected areas of operations are available to the public. More established examples include the Australian National Maritime Museum’s Wharf 7, that allows guided tours giving insight into curatorial and materials conservation areas. Perhaps the most ambitious example is at the Natural History Museum in London, where the recently opened Darwin Centre is a purpose-built collection and research facility with public access designed into the building. Visitors can simply browse the glass walls into collection storage areas, engage with the PC interactives or hear a talk from a researcher. If they wish to be further emersed in the museum’s collections, they can take a guided tour of parts of the storage areas. The £30 million first stage of the Darwin Centre has been a success and stage two will be developed at twice that budget.

Generally speaking, art galleries are a little less likely to run back-of-house tours although some certainly do provide this option (eg. the In Touch at the Gallery touch tours run by the Art Gallery of New South Wales). Galleries are more likely to provide floor talks relating to the works on show.

It must be emphasised again that none of the above methodologies is a formula for a quality visitor experience. They are tools that can be used well or poorly. Content and context will still be the key determinants to a successful exhibition but the ‘new’ methodologies can encourage interaction with the ideas and concepts and thus enhance learning outcomes.

How does the MAGNT perform against the above, by no means exhaustive, list of methodologies? On balance, well in some areas and poorly in others.

The use of simple audio-visual devices in galleries need not be very expensive but multimedia in the form of computer interactives can be costly. The MAGNT has no computer interactives in any of its galleries. The budgets for exhibition development at the MAGNT are low (refer Section 6). The only major long term gallery developed in the last five years is Transformations, developed at a cost of $700 per square metre. It relies on the objects and creative design rather than multimedia enhancements. On such a budget, incorporating multimedia is not very viable. Would the use of multimedia have enhanced the exhibition? The answer is that it most certainly could have, with opportunities for the visitor to move further into topics and see related materials that could not be on display. Interactive quizzes about the evolution of the fauna of the Top End could have added value to visits for children and families. Another example of possible use would be in the Aboriginal art gallery where interactives would allow the visitor to find more information about individual art works and artists, or the cultural background of a school of art, or have an artist tell the story of the art in her or his own words.

The MAGNT’s website is described in the Internal Review of March 2004 as ‘modest’. This might be regarded as something of a euphemism for a website that, in terms of delivery of museum products, is very poor. The website is flat and lacks any
attraction to encourage the visitor to explore, which perhaps is just as well as there is little to find there if one does. Basic information about the MAGNT is the extent of the coverage. If the audience of the MAGNT is seen to be those who cannot visit it as well as those who can, then a functional web presence is a priority. This can serve to encourage visitation and it can provide access to information about the MAGNT’s collections and programs that can make the museum a tool to people all around the Northern Territory and farther afield. This discussion can be seen as linking that of the interaction with Indigenous Territorians (see above), as contact with the MAGNT via the web may be the primary way kids in remote communities can engage with museum programs. Good web products can also make their way to schools all around the Territory. Most of the large museums and art galleries in Australia now run very engaging websites. The most visited is the Australian Museum website (www.amonline.net.au) which is attracting over 5 million user sessions per year (the number of ‘hits’ is many times this) (Australian Museum annual report, 2002/03). For another highly interactive web product, linking to the schools curriculum, the reader is recommended the Land and People virtual exhibition on the Western Australian Museum website (www.museum.wa.gov.au). This virtual exhibition is supported by a Schools Working Kit that is sold at a small fee to teachers to support classroom use.

The Discovery Centre at the MAGNT is a highly regarded resource. It drew praise from a number of those interviewed for this review. It is particularly popular with children and family groups, as is the case at other museums. The mix of hands-on materials, reference materials and live animals makes for an engaging component of a museum visit. In comparison with other major Australian museums, it is a very modest facility in terms of area and fitout.

Hands-on components to other galleries are not generally available at the MAGNT. A possible exception could be seen as the Maritime Gallery where the visitor can touch the boats and watercraft. A recent innovation is the introduction of touch trolleys that are mobile sites for hands-on activities. They are staffed by Education Volunteers at busy times, notably in the Transformations gallery. No self-guided audio tours are available.

Guided tours and floor talks are presented at times but not on a regular basis. Talks in the theatrette by staff and visitors are apparently quite popular with the public when they happen and are promoted. It is some years since there was an Open Day giving visitors behind-the-scenes tours of the MAGNT.

The Consultant’s view of the MAGNT in terms of use of new and ancillary methods to enhance visitor experiences is that it is limited but where attempted has proven successful. There is enormous potential for expansion of these programs, but major expansion would require resourcing for equipment/hardware, software, fitout and maintenance, and some staff.

It must be emphasised that the use of wide ranging methods must by underpinned by a focus on improved outcomes in learning. That is, the techniques must either attract new audiences who would not otherwise have come and/or provide a learning environment that cultivates better self-directed learning for the visitor.
4.7 Acting as forum points, places for debate and discussion

A now widely used descriptor of museums is as ‘Safe places for dangerous ideas’. The concept of forum is part of that interaction with ideas in a safe environment.

Being a forum means more than holding talks and seminars, although they can be an important element of the delivery. Being a forum means encouraging debate and the presentation of various views (see discussion on plurality below) and facilitating the public to engage with those debates and views. Museums are seen as ethical and responsible institutions, places of integrity, and thus are well placed to be active forums for discussing major issues facing society.

The MAGNT operates a 110 seat theatrette. Most of the state and national museums and galleries have small theatres as this is seen as a useful infrastructure to enhance the visitor’s experience and to attract additional visitors for special events. There can be some (usually fairly modest) income earned from hiring out the theatre, although where the museum can package the theatre with conferences and business meetings, that income can be more significant. (The new Maritime Museum in Fremantle, part of the Western Australian Museum, is leveraging its striking location and new facilities to maximise income from venue hire, with the theatre a common component of the hire package.)

The forum model can be advanced through conferences and workshops and seminars. This requires the essential infrastructure if the museum is to be the host. The MAGNT has the theatre but it is identified as needing substantial upgrade and improvement in AV equipment (Internal Review March 2004). Currently, the MAGNT is not running a very active program of talks or seminars.

The notion of forum can also be embraced in the broader public program. In this, exhibitions can develop ideas in such a way as to encourage the visitor to think and arrive at their own views about issues that affect them. In particular, this can be enacted through social history programs that are not currently a major exhibition strength of the MAGNT but should be a priority in the future.

4.8 Presenting a plurality of views and perspectives rather than a single ‘grand narrative’

Benign as it may seem at first reading, this is one of the most contentious issues facing history research and presentation in Australia today. The so called ‘history wars’ that have attracted substantial media attention over recent years are being fought as much on this battlefield as any other. A key point of dispute is what constitutes acceptable historical record. The dispute has embroiled the National Museum of Australia and was partly responsible for precipitating the Review of its public programs (Carroll et al., 2003). To some extent at least, this issue contributed to the effective professional termination of the then Director of the NMA.

There is a view that written history, which is largely the western view and record of history, is the only reliable source for historical documentation. Oral histories are highly suspect in this view or are to be discounted altogether. The primary hotspot for this debate has related to black-white history and in particular, the extent and nature
of frontier conflict in Australia. The writings of Keith Windschuttle have both embodied the single written account model and enlivened the debate in the popular press.

It is not the place of the Consultant to discuss the relative accuracies of Australia’s historians. The point here is that history is a dynamic subject, open to interpretation and informed from various perspectives. The history of the victor is not always the same as that of the victim. At the very least, their perspectives and views of that history will be very different.

This is the environment that museums are operating in, and museums have a role in setting history within a framework relevant to multiple audiences. Museums are more and more presenting stories from different angles rather than the traditional single narrative of the old style school text book. At the very least, this is elevating history from a dour and sometimes irrelevant image to a more vibrant and living discipline. History as something that informs the present and can prepare us for the future is the history that museums must reveal in their public programs.

In a sense, this is more an issue for the MAGNT of the future than of today. The history exhibitions at MAGNT are largely focused on Cyclone Tracy, an important event in the history of Darwin but not one laced with diverse views about what actually happened. If the MAGNT is able to expand its social history program in the future, then it will have to consider very seriously how it presents the history of the Territory and from which perspectives it tells the many stories that weave together to form that history.

4.9 Greater awareness and caniness in commercial activities

The commercial imperative for museums has grown significantly over the past two decades. This has reflected a general reduction in government funding in real terms relative to the increase in costs of operations. As well, there is a philosophic foundation that suggests people do not value as much things they get for free. There has been in this period much debate within the museum sector regarding the relative merits of charging versus free general admissions (refer discussion in Section 3.3.7).

Museums and art galleries now typically operate shops, cafes and venue activities (although these may be directly managed or leased); they charge admission to special exhibitions and experiences, even if their general admission is free; they operate or support various types of Friends/Membership Societies which have at least a partial role in income generation; they offer charged consultancies in their areas of expertise; they sell some types of data and images to commercial buyers; and run assorted other business related functions (such as the Documentary Unit of the Western Australian Museum). They enter into many and varied agreements and partnerships, formal and informal, that can generate funds otherwise unobtainable by the museum (this can include research grants such as ARC Linkage projects and commercial agreements such as the bioprospecting involvement of the MAGNT).

The commercial activities of the MAGNT are discussed in various sections of this Review. In terms of this discussion, it can be said that the MAGNT is certainly aware of the need for income generation and has entered various arrangements and contracts
to generate funds. There are a number of areas where potential exists for growth in commercial income, including:

- shop operations
- lease of the café; and
- venue hire (constrained by building limitations)

### 4.10 Closer partnerships with business in joint programs

There was a time when museums and galleries regarded too close an association with the private business sector as threatening to the independence and integrity of the organisation. To some degree, this attitude was supported by a degree of independence in public funding that allowed a high level of autonomy from external sources of funds. Since the 1970’s, that situation has been changing in Australia, and a roughly similar tightening of public funds has occurred around the world. This has encouraged museums to look at how they can partner with industry, in ways that do not compromise the mission of the organisation and yet can value add to the agency’s programs.

At the same time, businesses have looked to give themselves credibility and profile through association with publicly respected organisations. The situation in Australia is very different from that of the United States of America, where private philanthropy is a mainstay for many cultural institutions. Sponsorship in Australia is a highly competitive field. High profile sporting events and teams still command the attention of the Australian business sector. Nonetheless, companies looking for a diverse range of partnerships frequently consider a cultural/arts dimension to their portfolio. Bodies such as the Australian Business Arts Foundation are active in assisting cultural agencies and companies to link in appropriate partnerships.

The MAGNT has the advantage of being both an art gallery and museum in pursuing business partnerships, but the disadvantage of being located in the least populated part of Australia. The Telstra partnership for the NATSIA Award is a major and successful ongoing relationship but there are few large companies with major or head offices in Darwin. With only 200,000 residents in the Territory, there are also relatively few potential individual donors. Given its location, the MAGNT will always face significant challenges in securing large sponsorships from the private sector. To some degree at least, being placed within a Department will make the MAGNT’s task even more difficult, as there can be reluctance to sponsor activities and sectors seen as being part of Government.

The generation of funds from science research involving external support is discussed in Section 5.
5 A consideration of the scientific focus of the MAGNT in terms of
a) its management and outcomes relative to other museums and
b) its contribution to Northern Territory economic activity and
Government programs

5.1 Introduction

Before considering scientific management and outcomes, one must first define
‘science’. It is appropriate to define the scientific outputs of the MAGNT as those
produced by the natural science division. However archaeology may also be regarded
as a scientific discipline (many of its practitioners would regard it as so). As well,
there are elements of scientific procedures in maritime archaeology. For this Review,
the natural science outputs will be primarily considered but some comments will also
be made about MAGNT’s archaeological areas of endeavour.

There are generic contributions that natural science museums and collections can
make to society. Several papers dealing with both broad contributions and specific
eamples, as well as discussing the future for such museums, are Berry (1991),
Griffin (1993) and collected works in Slézec (1999).

5.2 Management and outcomes of science relative to other museums

Natural Science comprises a major section of the MAGNT (Appendix 6). Science is
structured at other Australian museums in various ways. Perusal of the corporate
structures of the large museums reveals no consistent pattern, other than a broadly
hierarchical relationship of major operational units devolving from the
CEO/Director/Executive Director, and from the CEO up to the Board of Governance
and/or the Government. Science (by various titles) is commonly either a second or
third tier structural unit. Given not insignificant variation exists, the Consultant sees
little purpose in further detailed analysis of the structure of science management in
Australian museums. Rather, the approach to managing, and the outputs of, that
science will be considered.

The MAGNT science section comprises an Assistant Director (now restructured as
Assistant Director for Research and Collections) with seven curators/researchers in
the disciplines of geology, palaeontology (fossils), coelenterates (jellyfish, corals etc)
mollusces (snails, bivalves, squids etc) and echinoderms (sea stars, feather stars etc),
annelids (worms), fishes and terrestrial vertebrates. In addition, there are a collections
manager, five technical officers (one position vacant) and a preparator. The MAGNT
Library with its two staff has been managed as part of the science section but serves
the broader reference needs of the MAGNT.

The generic outputs of science staff are collection-related activities (development and
management), research for publication and content input to the public program in all
of its forms. The latter can see the staff supporting exhibitions, responding to public
quiries, producing inhouse popular publications and giving talks to the public and
schools.
Box 16 shows a comparison of the natural science staff numbers and disciplines covered at the major natural science museums of Australia. Staff included are those directly involved in science including the senior manager of science, curators, technical officers and staff involved in collections management. Administrative staff and library staff are not included, nor are associates.

**Box 16. Comparison of natural science staff (established positions) and disciplines at Australian museums**

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</table>


A perusal of Box 16 might suggest that there is significant overlap between the natural science disciplines of the state museums. At a higher taxon* level, that is true. The state museums, or their respective Boards as the case may be, have been established in legislation with very similar broad terms of reference. For natural science museums, this invariably includes collecting and researching the state’s fauna. All of the agencies have attempted to have a reasonably broad coverage to ensure that state collections are solid in most faunal groups.

*A taxon is a ‘group’ in taxonomy. It can be as precise as a species or as large as a phylum which might contain millions of species.

However there certainly are differences in collections strengths and at lower taxon or specialist levels the research activities tend to diverge. This reflects the relative paucity of taxonomists in Australia and the need for them to work together in complementing each other’s efforts. In recruiting research staff, museums take into account what expertise exists at other museums in order to minimise overlap of skills in a small employment pool.
Certain museums have established specialised areas of strength. For example, a number of museums have special evolutionary units which undertake enzyme and DNA analysis on tissue samples. The South Australian Museum, Australian Museum and Museum Victoria are notable in this regard. Many museums are developing large frozen tissue collections which are not a significant part of the MAGNT’s holdings. The Museum Victoria has recently established a Science Communication stream within its science program, to study the processes of science communication in an informal learning environment (such as museums). The Queensland Museum has a research and collection stream in parasitic protozoans, rather atypical for museum holdings.

Box 16 also illustrates that the natural science of the MAGNT is in keeping with the disciplinary activities of other museums. That is, there is nothing about the broad disciplinary coverage of research at the MAGNT that would raise questions as to why the museum should be pursuing such streams. The Northern Territory covers 1.35 million square kilometres and has 7,200 kilometres of coastline that abut one of the biologically richest regions of the world. Australia is itself a mega-diverse country in terms of its biological assemblages. Museums and herbaria remain the primary institutions for biosystematic* research in this country and overseas. The need for MAGNT research in taxonomy and the recognition of its importance was evident from the responses of external stakeholders in the interviews undertaken for this Review (refer Appendix 4).

*Biosystematics is the study of the evolution and relationships of species of plants and animals. Taxonomy is the descriptive subset of this broader field.

Thirdly, Box 16 shows that if anything, the MAGNT has a slightly narrower range of natural science disciplines covered by its research staff than most of the state museums. Setting aside relative sizes of the institutions and their constituencies, it could be said that the MAGNT is less equipped and resourced to provide an acceptable range of taxonomic coverage than are other state museums. The only museum with fewer staff engaged with natural science research and collections is the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. (It should be noted that in Tasmania, the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, run by Launceston City Council, also has collections in geology, zoology and botany and undertakes some research in zoology especially in freshwater invertebrates. In the Northern Territory, there is no similar overlap between the MAGNT and another museum or like body.)

As is noted above, museum researchers are expected to channel the results of their research into a variety of communications. Some of this communication is of a scientific nature and published in refereed journals and presented at professional conferences. Museums, arguably more than universities, regard the communication of science to a broader public as a fundamental role, and this like all things is done better by some researchers than others.

As is noted by Travers et al in their 2003 review of the Natural History Museum (London), ‘objective evaluation of research is a notoriously difficult subject ...’. Their study of the NHM reinforced the importance of taxonomic research undertaken by museums. As a measure of scholarly output, they compared the number of refereed publications of NHM research staff in a given year (2001/02) with the output of staff from several United Kingdom universities. Their finding was that the NHM compares
favourably with university outputs on a per staff member basis. This is an admittedly
rough guide to research achievement but it is of some use. There are few other
measures that have been used for such comparisons.

Box 17 tabulates the publication output of science staff at the MAGNT against the
outputs of several other Australian natural science museums. The Australian Museum
has the reputation of being the most productive natural science research museum in
this country and has the largest science staff. The Natural History Museum London is
included for comparison. As a measure of ‘scholarly’ output the Consultant has
attempted to compare publications in refereed or similarly robust professional
publications. Several years are tabulated for the MAGNT set against the eight
research staff. (Note: research associates are excluded). This may be seen as a type of
productivity ratio. Where a paper has two or more staff as authors, it is assigned as a
publication to each of the authors (in accord with Travers et al, 2003). The figures
must be read recognising that there is a degree of arbitrariness in this assessment and
different museums report their publication output in somewhat different ways.

**Box 17. Comparison of scientific publication output (average number of refereed
research articles per research staff member) at several large Australian natural
science museums and the Natural History Museum (London)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MAGNT ¹</th>
<th>WAM²</th>
<th>MV²</th>
<th>AM²</th>
<th>NHM³</th>
<th>UK Us⁴</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>publications</td>
<td>2001/02: 2.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002/03: 2.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003/04: 1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WAM: Western Australian Museum
MV: Museum Victoria
AM: Australian Museum
NHM: Natural History Museum (London)
UK Us: UK universities average

Sources:
1. Inhouse records of the MAGNT (based on eight research staff including the Assistant Director)
2. Annual reports

The Australian Museum figures are based on an assumption that about half of the museum’s science
staff are active researchers (the remainder being technical staff).

From Box 17, it can be seen that the MAGNT performs at a level roughly comparable
to or perhaps somewhat lower than other large natural science museums in terms of
published scientific scholarship. The average publication rate dropped in 2003/04 but
in preceding years was at a level only slightly below that at the Natural History
Museum for 2000. The NHM is one of the top four natural science museums in the
world and by the standards of Australian museums, extremely well resourced for its
research activities.

Box 17 does not include consideration of publications by research associates as
calculating a productivity ratio would not be valid unless one averaged publications
across all associates. Nonetheless, output by associates is an important part of the
scientific productivity of museums. In 2003/04, staff of the MAGNT produced eight
scientific publications, the lowest number for some time. In the same year, associates
of the MAGNT published another 14 publications. The establishment and maintenance of a productive network of associates is an important dimension to museums, and the MAGNT appears to have a number of very productive associates in that network.

The MAGNT produces its own refereed journal, *The Beagle*, which is discussed in Section 3.4 of this Report.

In terms of popular publications, there are some museums that have achieved quite a niche in harnessing their intellectual property for publicly accessible products. Three museums of note are the Queensland Museum with its series of publications on the wildlife of Queensland (the ‘Wild’ Guides); the Western Australian Museum with its ongoing series of field guides of animals of Western Australia; and the Australian Museum for its glossy *Nature Australia* magazine. There is considerable scope for the MAGNT to move more into this area of production. Linking such publications with web products that serve to promote the field guides can enhance take-up rates. Given the resident population of the Northern Territory is small, consideration would need to be given to the tourist marketability of any popular books on the natural and cultural heritage of the Territory. If well priced, they can be attractive as mementos and gifts.

The MAGNT has established a Research and Consultancy policy that sets priorities for natural science and other research within the institution. The policy emphasises the core strengths of the museum’s science in taxonomy and systematics. The museum’s collections are recognised, rightly, as being of national and international significance. As is noted on a number of occasions through this report, the MAGNT is regarded by its sister museums as an equivalent to the state agencies and its collections are considered to be an irreplaceable resource for biodiversity studies of tropical Australia and its region (various museums, pers. com.).

As well as policy and procedural documentation on research and collections, the MAGNT has some other research-related documents such as the Diving Procedures for fieldwork. This type of documentation is appropriate to good practice and reflects a recognition of OH&S issues affecting research staff and others assisting in research.

One final comment relates to the partnerships of the MAGNT in science, which are considered in Section 5.3 below. The MAGNT has a close working relationship with Charles Darwin University in several faculties. Some Australian museums have taken this type of relationship further, and have established joint positions. The South Australian Museum is a leader in this respect. The MAGNT should look closely at opportunities for such jointly funded staff positions in future, especially as curatorial positions become vacant.
5.3 Contribution of MAGNT science to Northern Territory economic activity and Government programs

Certain attitudes to the MAGNT’s science are clear from stakeholder responses summarised in Appendix 4.

Overall, external partners regard the MAGNT’s research staff and collections as a vitally important resource to the Northern Territory. There was some concern expressed that the MAGNT had not positioned itself as well as it might as a provider of useable information to government. There was also some concern that in its desire to raise funds to support its operations, the museum had not always maximised its returns from partnerships. However, the general view was that the MAGNT was now trying to make its expertise both relevant and seen as relevant, and to get the best benefit for it and the Territory from doing so. There was a view that the MAGNT may have disadvantaged itself to some extent through a perception in quarters of a past indifference to stakeholder needs but that this had substantially changed and there was now a real willingness to be part of cross-government initiatives. The skill base of the MAGNT was seen as unique, needed and not replaceable by other agencies. In its science, the MAGNT’s past and present capacity in marine biosystematics was particularly noted.

This type of input serves as qualitative data of the contribution of the MAGNT to the Northern Territory. Quantifying that contribution is much harder. The Consultant is not aware of any museum that has quantified the contribution of its research to economic activity. The London School of Economics study of the Natural History Museum (Travers et al, 2003) attempted an estimate of economic contribution of the museum to the United Kingdom through its employment of a large staff body, its turnover (general operations) and its role as an attraction to locals and tourists. That study did not attempt to assess any economic effect of the research activities of its 220 research staff.

The reason is that the economic effects of museum-type research are obtuse and imprecise. The product of the research is rarely if ever a patentable good with an identifiable market value. Museum science is heavily taxonomic, or descriptive, and underpins much of the ecological, environmental, fisheries and bioprospecting research dependent on identification of organisms. Often the economic value of the research is delivered via the use of the information by numerous secondary parties.

Box 18 lists a number of recent (1998-2004) projects that the MAGNT has undertaken that were underpinned by the museum’s scientific resources. It notes the amount and source of funds and the major partners.

The range of projects in Box 18 demonstrates a rolling program of largely collaborative research projects, with external funding from various sources. There is a preponderance of marine studies reflecting the strength of the MAGNT is this area of expertise. Much of the funding is from the Commonwealth and a significant amount is from international partners. Research partners include Northern Territory agencies, departments and agencies in other States and the Commonwealth Government.
### Box 18. Major projects of the MAGNT natural science branch, 1998-present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Funding agency</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Partners</th>
<th>Funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Port of Darwin survey</td>
<td>Dep. of Transport &amp; Works</td>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>CSIRO (CRIMP*)</td>
<td>$360,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estuarine fish monitoring of Kakadu National Park</td>
<td>Parks Australia North</td>
<td>1999, 2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>$24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bioprospecting</td>
<td>US National Cancer Institute via Coral Reef Research Foundation</td>
<td>2001-2006</td>
<td>CSIRO, Murdoch University, Queensland Fisheries, Fisheries WA</td>
<td>$1.5 m over 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey of brackish and freshwater elasmobranchs (sharks) of northern Australia</td>
<td>Natural Heritage Trust</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>CSIRO, Murdoch University, Queensland Fisheries, Fisheries WA</td>
<td>$130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep-water fishes of the Timor-Arafura Seas: stage 1 review of existing data and collections</td>
<td>National Oceans Office</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
<td>$7,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bioregional study of fishes of the Australian continental slope</td>
<td>National Oceans Office via CSIRO</td>
<td>2002-2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>$8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of key species groups in the Northern Planning Area</td>
<td>National Oceans Office</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Northern Territory &amp; Queensland Governments, CSIRO, AIMS, Queensland University, James Cook University</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep River aquatic survey</td>
<td>Western Australian Government</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Murdoch University</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine biodiversity surveys of the eastern Van Diemen Gulf and Arnhem Land coast</td>
<td>National Oceans Office, Parks Australia North</td>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>DIPE, DBIRD, Northern Lands Council, Aboriginal Ranger groups and traditional owners</td>
<td>$106,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gove Harbour survey</td>
<td>Alcan Gove</td>
<td>Yet to start</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fee for service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*CRIMP: CSIRO Research on Introduced Marine Pests*
Where funding for research projects is from a non-Northern Territory Government source, those funds can be seen as direct contributions by the MAGNT and its partners to the Northern Territory economy. The museum is marketing its expertise, either alone or in partnerships, and attracting funds into the Territory to support activity that would otherwise be impossible. The projects in Box 18 represent $2.26 million worth of activity in and around the Northern Territory of which $1.9 million was funded from external sources. It is assumed that the greater part of this funding is spent in the Northern Territory. Economic impact studies often use multipliers to assess flow-on effects to the community. Multipliers of 2.0 or higher are commonly used but the study on the Natural History Museum (Travers et al, 2003) was more conservative, employing a multiplier of between 1.5 and 1.7 for the impacts of general museum expenditure. If the middle of that conservative range (1.6) is used here as a multiplier, then the MAGNT has been an active or lead partner in research projects since 1998 generating an impact of $3.62 million, $3.04 million of which has been from non-Territory funding.

There are other economic impacts that are impossible to measure but are potentially enormous. By way of example, let us look at the Port of Darwin survey. That study resulted in the report, ‘Baseline Survey of the Port of Darwin for Introduced Marine Species’, Russel & Hewitt (2000). That report was referred to in Parliament by the tabling Minister as: ‘This report ... represents a major milestone in marine scientific research for the Territory and ... will be an invaluable reference source document for the marine research community nationally.’ The identification of marine species for this survey was led by the MAGNT with support from its network of specialists at other museums across Australia. One of the revelations was the infestation of black-striped mussel in Cullen Bay. This notorious exotic fouling species had colonised 100% of hard surfaces in the bay. Its detection allowed eradication and the avoidance of its progression into other Territory waters. The savings or avoided costs to the Territory and possibly Australia cannot be measured but this type of infestation can cause many millions of dollars of damage to shipping, ports and marine-based industry (including mariculture), not to mention marine habitat destruction, if undetected and unchecked.

A similar story can be recounted in Western Australia, where the research staff of the Western Australian Museum identified several potentially devastating exotic fouling species on the dredge brought from overseas for recent port works at Geraldton Port. If one or more of those species had become introduced into the marine system, the potential costs of environmental degradation, impacts on industry and attempts at remediation are unimaginably high.

Such examples show how the expertise of museums can be applied in unpredictable ways. Research projects can be planned and undertaken in a strategic way, funds permitting, as shown in Box 18, and the MAGNT is participating in that type of strategic research. But as well, there will be times when the expertise in species identification will be needed urgently. The urgent requests cannot be predicted but if the resource of expertise is not available, and at short notice, than the potential for major negative and extremely costly impacts is high.

One of the key trends in research in Australia over the past two decades has been an increase in collaborative projects that link States and Commonwealth, and government agencies with universities and the private sector. Box 18 shows that the MAGNT is engaged in a range of scientific ventures spanning various combinations
of partnership but this reflects only the major natural science projects of the MAGNT since 1998. There are other linkages between the MAGNT and partners in government, universities and industry. Box 19 lists a range of partnerships involving the museum and availing of the expertise of its science staff. Also shown are some of the cross-government programs to which the MAGNT is contributing.

While the Council of Heads of Australian Faunal Collections (CHAFC) is noted in Box 19, the initiative called OZCAM (Online Zoological Collections of Australian Museums) is not mentioned per se. This is a partnership between the natural science museums and some other organisations with large faunal collections to link their collection databases and provide better access to that information. Museums lag behind herbaria in both databasing collections and provision of easy access to the information related to them. This reflects in part the relative sizes of the holdings: museum collections are much larger and many parts of those collections inadequately identified and catalogued. MAGNT has also been collaborating with the Western Australian Museum and the Queensland Museum in placing collection data into the WAM’s Faunabase framework, which has been designed to make for a user-friendly access tool to summarised data on the faunal collections. The MAGNT has identified the need to integrate its science collections in a new Collections Information Management System to better enable it to participate in the above initiatives.

Box 19. Partnerships and cross-government programs supported by MAGNT natural science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical and scientific advice to Government (specialist taxonomic identification, collaborative and joint research programs including field survey work, involvement in a range of Government policy and scientific advisory committees):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Arafura Timor Research Facility (ATRF) Scientific Oversight and Advisory Committee (NT Government representative).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arafura-Timor Seas Experts Forum (National/International).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Australian Society for Fish Biology Threatened fishes committee (NT representative, advises both NT and Commonwealth Governments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Council of Heads of Australian Faunal Collections (NT representative).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Darwin Harbour Technical Advisory Group– now Ecological Research Group (NT Government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interim Board of the North Australia Molecular Biology Facility (Charles Darwin University/NT Government).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NT Bioprospecting Committee (NT Government).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NT Coastal and Marine Management Policy Sub-Committee (NT Government).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NT Threatened Species Review Committee (NT Govt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technical Advisory Committee on dredging in Darwin Harbour (NT Government).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working relationships and networks within the NT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ATRF;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Charles Darwin University;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Darwin Ports Corporation;
Department of Business Industry and Resource Development – Fisheries, Business Development branches;
Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environment – Natural Resources, Parks and Wildlife, and Heritage branches;
Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (ERISS – Department of Environment & Heritage, Darwin and Jabiru)
Park Australia North (Department of Environment & Heritage)
Power Water Corporation;
private sector - EWLS and other environmental consulting companies;

**Working relationships and networks interstate:**

- Australian Biological Resources Survey;
- AIMS;
- CRC Reef Research;
- CSIRO Marine Research (Hobart and Cleveland);
- Department of Environment and Heritage;
- James Cook University;
- Murdoch University;
- museums in all states;
- National Oceans Office (NOO);
- private sector - URS Corporation and other environmental consulting companies.

**Working relationships and networks internationally:**

- Coral Reef Research Foundation, Palau;
- FAO Fisheries, Rome;
- Indonesian Institute of Sciences - Pusat Penelitian Oseanografi, Jakarta;
- National Cancer Institute, Maryland;
- National University of Singapore;
- South African Institute of Aquatic Biodiversity, Grahamstown;
- The Nature Conservancy, Bali;
- University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur;
- University of Taiwan; Taipei.

The science collections themselves warrant some further comment. Numbering around a quarter of a million lots* (and over a million specimens), this is a collection comparable in significance to those of other large state natural science museums. It is especially strong in tropical northern Australian representation, which can be a weaker aspect of other museums’ collections given the distance from those museums and the costs involved in sampling there. The collections are reference tools to the scientific staff and associates at the MAGNT and to researchers around the country and overseas. Researchers visit the museum to work on the collection and material is lent to research bodies around the world (59 outward loans of specimens in 2002/03 alone). Collections include voucher material of past survey and environmental studies.
so that results can be cross-referenced into the future. Taxonomic study and identifications of species relies heavily on collections of this sort. They are an essential resource and overhead to biodiversity and ecological studies and can be invaluable resources to research in pharmacological (including bioprospecting) and health sciences, and agricultural and introduced pests.

* A ‘lot’ is a holding of specimens with the same collecting data (site, time etc). In natural sciences, this may be one specimen (as it often is for vertebrate holdings) or multiple specimens of the same species (as it often is for invertebrate holdings). Hence there can be a significant difference between numbers of lots and numbers of specimens.

There are legislative areas of responsibility for the MAGNT that impact on its science. For example, the Northern Territory Meteorites Act (2000) sets the MAGNT Board as responsible for all meteoritic material found in the Northern Territory. Retaining at least collection management resources in this area is required to address this responsibility.

Several external stakeholders interviewed (refer Appendix 4) expressed fears that the MAGNT had diminished in its capacity to contribute to research activity because of the reduction of staff and resources. There are a number of curatorial/research in science positions that remain vacant. In part, this will reflect the internal management decisions of the MAGNT; all organisations must make prioritisations regarding how to allocate their funds. The positions identified for establishment and redesign, funds permitting, in the Internal Review March 2004 and the Five Year Business Development Plan for the museum do not include any further research positions in science. While recognising the diminution in some previous areas of research strength, even the MAGNT’s senior science manager identified public programs as a higher priority for enhancement. This reflects in part recognition that the MAGNT has been able to augment its inhouse science skills via external funds for contract positions.

While this discussion was scoped to focus on science, other disciplines of the MAGNT were also identified by stakeholders as contributing to government programs. The MAGNT is the Territory’s key repository of archaeological materials. There is no longer an archaeologist on staff and this was regretted by at least one external respondent, given the richness of the archaeological heritage of the Northern Territory.

The MAGNT is the entry way to Aboriginal heritage for many visitors to the Northern Territory. There are active programs of partnership with Indigenous groups. As is noted in Box 18, this can include research programs (eg. surveys of Van Diemen Gulf and Arnhem Land coast). Closer to Darwin, these partnerships can advance community development by assisting in reinvigorating traditional cultural activities (refer section, Larrakia partnerships). The MAGNT is contributing at a national level to recognition of, and consequently revenue generation from, Indigenous art, most notably through the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award. It is beyond the scope of this review to quantify the impact this award has had on Aboriginal art sales in general but its profile and status has contributed to the growth in recognition and interest in of Indigenous art.
An area that may justify consideration by Government is the linkage of MAGNT with trade and industry in the region. There are opportunities for trade and Government delegations to enhance their advocacy through the addition of cultural elements. The MAGNT might be commissioned to develop complementary small touring displays on the Northern Territory to visit countries in the region. Small exhibitions on neighbouring countries could be mounted at the MAGNT when relevant delegations are visiting Darwin. This would require well advanced planning to be incorporated into the MAGNT forward program and also adequate funding but need not be excessively costly.

A further area worthy of consideration is the possibility of joint curatorial/research appointments with tertiary institutions such as Charles Darwin University. This is noted in Section 5.2.
6 A comparison of per square metre exhibition costs at the MAGNT relative to those of other institutions

Exhibition development is a foundation activity of museums and galleries in supporting their core function of public programs that inform and entertain. Exhibition development includes several stages, from planning (concept brief and concept development), to approval (usually in several steps), content development (including text and graphics), object selection, appropriate treatment and preparation of objects before display, fabrication of the exhibition, installation and ongoing management and maintenance of the exhibition. Ideally, there is a parallel process of market research and evaluation. For touring exhibitions, there is also the cost of repeated dismantling, transport and re-installation. More and more museums are developing virtual packages to accompany and enhance the ‘real’ exhibition; the internet is the ideal medium for such virtual packages. Each of these stages and any optional extras have associated costs.

Art galleries and museums can mount very similar types of exhibition, where the objects are nearly the entire focus and are presented either ‘on the wall’ for two-dimensional pieces, or in display cabinets for delicate and valuable three-dimensional pieces. These are accompanied by text and perhaps some limited graphics. Art galleries can have permanent/long term galleries of destination art works (eg. the permanent display at the Art Gallery of New South Wales) but have most of their galleries supporting a changing program of exhibitions. Museums have a typically greater proportion of their galleries devoted to permanent/long term displays, with a commensurately greater investment in exhibition infrastructure and ancillary components such as multimedia and interactives (mechanical and/or computer). Thus, the costs of establishing exhibitions can be extremely variable, especially if comparing museum and art gallery exhibition budgets.

The most commonly used comparator of long term museum exhibition costs is the cost per square metre of an exhibition, which should include a component for all the stages involved (as noted above). However, museums are not consistent in how they cost their exhibitions. There is considerable variation in costing the contribution of permanent staff; the salary costs of permanent curators and exhibition staff are rarely included in exhibition costings. Further, corporate overheads in exhibition development are also usually excluded from the exhibition development budget. Most museums and galleries cost an exhibition on the basis of dedicated costs such as contract staff, materials and fitout costs, and often (but not always) the costs of object preparation and conservation. It is often not possible to confirm precisely what has and has not been included in quoted exhibition costs.

Box 20 shows a range of recent exhibition costings on a per square metre basis for several large museums in Australia. It must be interpreted with cognisance of the qualifications noted above. What is being attempted here is some reasonably informed comparison of the expenditure of the MAGNT on exhibitions, with similar exhibitions at other institutions. The comparisons are for long term exhibitions for which the per square metre costing is most valid. Art gallery exhibitions often rely on far less infrastructure as is noted above and the costs of hanging can be relatively minor even allowing changing gallery colours on occasion.
**Box 20. Some comparative costs per square metre for exhibition development and installation of a long term museum exhibition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAGNT</th>
<th>WAM</th>
<th>MV (M)</th>
<th>MAAS</th>
<th>ANMM</th>
<th>AWM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Transformations</em> (2001): $697/m²</td>
<td><em>Diamonds to Dinosaurs</em> (2000): $733/m²</td>
<td>Average $2,800/m²</td>
<td>Average $2,700/m²</td>
<td>Average $2,850/m²</td>
<td>Average $2,700/m²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WAM: Western Australian Museum  
MV(M): Museum Victoria, Melbourne Museum  
MAAS: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Powerhouse)  
ANMM: Australian National Maritime Museum  
AWM: Australian War Memorial

Note: As is discussed in the text, a strict comparison is difficult given the inconsistent inclusion of all costs in exhibition delivery. The above ranges serve as indicative however. Where dates are included they are those of exhibition opening.

Sources: MAGNT internal budget papers; personal knowledge and personal communications for the WAM; Review of Melbourne Museum Visitor Experience and Exhibitions, AMBS, 1998 for the MV, MAAS, ANMM and AWM.

Even allowing for the variation of included costs, it is evident from Box 20 that there is a significant range in exhibition costs in Australian museums. Generally, long-term/permanent gallery fitouts are accorded the highest budgets, given these galleries are the backbone of the museum experience and their longevity makes such investment cost-effective. Large touring exhibitions can be similarly expensive, and have the added complexity of being fabricated for mobility. The so called ‘blockbusters’ involving often highly valuable objects and sophisticated presentation techniques exemplify this. At the other costing extreme are the relatively small scale community programs and temporary art displays that may see exhibitions mounted for little more than staff costs and gallery overheads.

Box 20 does not address the source of funds for the exhibitions noted. Museums and galleries rely heavily on government funding for key functions, but sponsorships are an important additional funding source for the public programs. For example, at the Western Australian Museum, *WA: Land and People* was funded for all dedicated costs by the State Lotteries Commission (now Lottery West). In contrast, the new *Katta Djinoong* Aboriginal Gallery was funded by the State Government as part of relocation costs of moving from a building with unacceptably high safety risks.
MAGNT’s allocation to exhibitions on a square metre basis is low. There is only one major long term/permanent gallery that the MAGNT has been able to develop in the past five years, that being the Transformations Gallery (natural science). This was opened in December 2001. The gallery occupies 330 square metres and the exhibition had a $230,000 budget from Minor New Works. This covered dedicated costs noted above; curatorial and exhibition staff input was not costed. This translates to a per square metre cost of $697. Generally, eastern states museums aim to spend around four times that amount on a long term exhibition. (Note: This is an average figure for what those museums would regard as an acceptable result. To that extent, it is really something of a minimum target budget for long term exhibitions. Actual allocations to certain exhibitions can be much higher. For example, some parts of the National Museum of Australia exhibitions approached $10,000 per square metre in cost.) The WA Museum is somewhere in between with a wide range in long term exhibition budgets ($730-2,400 per square metre). In the case of the WAM, the higher exhibition budgets have been possible where a significant dedicated capital fund was available, either from Government or from a sponsor.

When advising museums today as to what is a reasonable budget to allocate to exhibition development, the Consultant advises that somewhere around $3000 per square metre should be a target figure for a basic but quality fitout. It is certainly possible to deliver an exhibition for less but if quality fittings and display furniture are to be used (for longevity and possible reuse) and some multimedia and drawer/interactive systems included, then the $3000 per square metre is a good baseline figure. If more extensive sophisticated techniques are used, the costs can be higher (indeed, much higher). If resources permit, future MAGNT exhibitions should apply a similar budget.

The quality of outcome achieved in Transformations is high given the funding level. At this budget level, options such as multimedia and interactives are not possible but the MAGNT staff have delivered a visually pleasing exhibition, quite rich in collection objects and with a mix of interpretive styles. Audience exit surveys since June 2002 have yielded a 92-95% rating of good to very good for the exhibition, which is a more than acceptable response given the small size of the budget.

The Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award is mounted by the MAGNT each year. Of the total available budget of $244-264,000 ($50-70,000 from the MAGNT; $194,000 from Telstra), the actual expenditure on installing the exhibition is very low, around $15,000 (for display furniture, development, framing, graphics and hanging/demount) (2004/05 budget allocation, MAGNT). No more than this can be afforded. The profile and significance of this event is high but the MAGNT is finding it increasingly difficult to assign a workable budget to the NATSIAA. Various elements are under-funded and no additional staff can be employed to oversight the event causing significant stress on existing staff and resources.

As is noted elsewhere in this Review, the MAGNT does not have any virtual exhibitions. Development of this type of product should be considered as part of the redesigned web presence. For examples of state-of-the-art virtual products that complement and expand the audience experience of the ‘real’ exhibitions on display,
the reader is recommended the websites of the Western Australian Museum, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Powerhouse) and the Australian Museum.
A comparison of the acquisition budget of the MAGNT relative to those of other institutions

Collection objects are acquired by museums and galleries via purchase/commission, donation/bequest, exchange or direct acquisition via field work. As a near universal rule, art galleries spend more on collection acquisition than do museums of a similar size, although the comparison is often of different acquisition methods. Art galleries purchase many of their new acquisitions, the remainder being donated/bequested to the institution (a major source of works for many of Australia’s and international galleries). State museums in Australia characteristically buy relatively little of their new acquisitions, and purchase is more common for objects of historical significance than for those of natural science. Natural science and archaeological objects are commonly acquired through field work of the museum staff and to a somewhat lesser extent by donation from other agencies, collectors and researchers. Thus acquisition costs for natural science specimens are usually subsumed within other cost centres such as research or field costs, rather than recorded as a separate acquisition line item.

Some figures will demonstrate this. In 2002/03, major Australian museums acquired 500,400 items for their collections. Of these, 77.0% were collected in field work, 22.7% were donated and only 0.3% were purchased. (CAMD Survey data 2002/03). In that year, of the 8,192 items acquired by the MAGNT, 98.6% were from fieldwork, 0.8% donated and 0.6% purchased.

The Queensland Museum reports that in 2001/02 and 2002/03, no new collection items were purchased, and in 2003/04 $26,000 was spent on collection acquisition. The Western Australian Museum and Australian Museum have not had acquisition funds for many years but have acquired tens or hundreds of thousands of items, largely natural science specimens, annually. As some measure of contrast, the National Museum of Australia spent $565,000 in 2003/04 on purchases for the collection.

In 2002/03, the median number of items acquired across the CAMD museums was 1,884 and the average number 23,829. These figures reflect the very big differences in acquisition numbers for natural science museums on the one hand and history museums on the other.

Art gallery acquisition numbers and budgets are the most readily compared but even here, there are very significant differences in terms of both allocations and sources of funds. Box 21 sets down the art acquisition allocations for several galleries or, more accurately, the value of art works acquired through a combination of acquisition processes. Annual reports of institutions do not clearly identify sources of funds (in some cases, this can be seen as confidential and sensitive information) and there is some reluctance in institutions to reveal some details of their acquisition budgets.

Even allowing for the variation in sources of funds, the art acquisition budget of the MAGNT can be seen to be extremely small, in recent years normally around $40,000 per year but on occasion being higher (eg. $87,000 in 2003/04) with a further $30,000-50,000 from sponsors. There is no dedicated budget allocation from
Government; MAGNT decides this allocation considering all corporate priorities. The Art Gallery of Western Australia has a $230,000 annual acquisition budget which is regarded by that gallery’s director as being very small. That fund is a dedicated capital fund from Government. The Art Gallery of NSW receives no dedicated funding from Government for acquisitions but has acquired over $100 million in art works over the past 12 years, largely through donations and bequests. At the other extreme, Te Papa Museum of New Zealand and the National Gallery of Australia have dedicated funds of $3 million and over $4 million pa respectively for art acquisitions.

Box 21. Art acquisition budgets (or value of art acquired) for several Australian art galleries demonstrating range of capacities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAGNT</th>
<th>AGWA</th>
<th>AGSA</th>
<th>AGNSW</th>
<th>NGA</th>
<th>Te Papa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No dedicated funding</td>
<td>Dedicated (capital) fund $0.23 million pa</td>
<td>$4.8 million acquired in 2002/03 (mix of donations, bequest and purchase)</td>
<td>No dedicated funding</td>
<td>Dedicated fund $4.0 million+ pa</td>
<td>Dedicated (capital) fund $3.0 million (03/04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0.04 (to 0.09) million pa allocated</td>
<td>$0.03 million pa from Telstra</td>
<td>$8.8 million allocated in 2000/01</td>
<td>Average of $8-9 million pa over past 12 years (combination of allocation and gifts)</td>
<td>$8.8 million allocated in 2000/01</td>
<td>$8.8 million allocated in 2000/01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0.03 million pa from Shell (to end 2003)</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>Plus $0.95 million in gifts in 2000/01</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AGWA  Art Gallery of Western Australia  AGNSW  Art Gallery of New South Wales
AGSA  Art Gallery of South Australia  NGA  National Gallery of Australia
Te Papa  Te Papa Museum of New Zealand

Sources: Annual reports, internal papers of MAGNT, personal communications

The circumstances of the art galleries of Australia are as different as their acquisition budgets. While it might be said that the MAGNT is similar to the AGNSW in not having significant funding from Government for art works, the AGNSW has 130 years of history and networks, based in Australia’s largest city and State. This cultural catchment has richly supported the collection acquisition processes of that institution and doubtless will continue to do so into the future. The MAGNT does not have that cultural or population catchment to rely upon for donations and bequests.

Regardless of their Government appropriations, all galleries rely on donations and bequests for supporting their collection development. The Foundations (or equivalents) of the galleries are often active in securing funds for this purpose. In 2002/03, 77% of all collection acquisitions by the AGWA were received as gifts.

Galleries in Australia today find it increasingly difficult to compete with private or overseas buyers in the art market. The growth in prices for Aboriginal art over the past decade has been particularly steep. Given the competition and market prices for art works in vogue, it is doubtful that any viable increase in the MAGNT’s budget will make it remotely competitive on the open market for major international art
works or works of many of the recognised Australian artists. However, a moderate increase in funding would allow the MAGNT to be able to focus on some key works by developing artists and occasional works by more established artists. Less expensive but niche areas of collection could also be targeted, such as early colonial art. Increased acquisitions funding is discussed further in Section 8.

While there is a feeling within the MAGNT that there is need for a dedicated budget allocation from Government for acquisitions, and some art galleries have such a fund, the Consultant is less committed to that view. If there is adequate operational funding assigned to the MAGNT, then the Board and Management can determine the allocation to acquisitions, as they would for any other of the strategic priorities.
PART C POSSIBLE BUDGET SCENARIOS

8 A discussion of three budget scenarios for the MAGNT with their consequent service outcomes

8.1 Overview

Three funding scenarios have been scoped into this Review. They are:

a) Current funding allocation
b) 2003/04 funding plus additional $1.5 million per year recurrent
c) Increasing 2003/04 funding by an additional $5.5 million over 3-5 years and then an amount to be determined per year recurrent.

Funding scenario three might be interpreted in two ways. The first interpretation is that an additional $5.5 million in total is allocated to the MAGNT over a 3-5 year horizon. This would see an average annual allocation between $0.4 million less and $0.3 million more than scenario two. The second interpretation is that recurrent funding is increased over 3-5 years until there is an additional $5.5 million in annual recurrent funding. The Consultant has confirmed with the Department that the second interpretation is the relevant one and this is clearly a significant enhancement in funding over scenario two.

In consultation with the Department, it has been confirmed that these funding scenarios relate to MAGNT recurrent operational expenditure, supporting programs, staff costs and day-to-day upkeep of facilities.

In this context then, the additional funds in scenarios two and three are not considered for allocation to capital works. However, in many cases, allocation of significant additional funds to operational activities will have a direct impact on capital programs. Many of the strategic and priority challenges and opportunities facing the MAGNT are project-based with operational and capital components, and funding one without the other is not viable. In some cases, the associated capital costs then generate additional recurrent costs. For example, new staff may be employed to enhance programs as an operational expense, but may require new accommodation built as a capital cost, which in turn has additional recurrent costs in terms of overheads. Where there is a commensurate capital cost associated with the operational funding allocation, that is noted with some indicative figures given for those associated capital costs.

In discussing the three scenarios, the Consultant will consider a number of variables and criteria. The first are some generic parameters against which the options may be assessed. In order of broadly decreasing priority they are:

1. Visitor safety
2. Staff occupational health and safety
3. Collection care and safety
4. Visitor utility (at roughly the current level of visitor experience)
5. Enhancing the visitor experience and services to the public
6. Enhancing the back-of-house operations and outputs

Visitor safety and staff OH&S are only separated because in general staff will be better informed about the infrastructure and operations of the museum and thus able to avoid risks. There is no suggestion that the safety of staff is any less important than the safety of visitors. Secondly, collection care is placed before visitor utility because of the obligation of the Board to care for the heritage of the Northern Territory. Thirdly, in the case of parameters 5 and 6, addressing the latter (back-of-house operations) may in fact contribute to achieving the former (better service to the public). Indeed, none of the above can be seen as entirely separate.

The second comparators are the Five Year Business Development Plan and Five Year Building Masterplan that have been endorsed by the MAGNT’s Board. The Plans are set down in the Internal Review March 2004 although costings are not included. (The Consultant understands that no detailed costings have been done at this time; securing the services of a Quantity Surveyor is noted as a first step in the Five Year Building Masterplan.) As these Plans reflect the recommended position of the Board, it is appropriate to ask to what extent can the three funding scenarios deliver on the Five Year Plans?

8.2 Changes in MAGNT funding in past years

It is germane to this discussion to consider the trend in MAGNT funding over recent years. The Stanton Partners Report (January 2004) was scoped to focus on the current funding of the MAGNT, assess whether current budget levels were adequate for current activity, look at options for reducing costs and increasing revenue, consider workloads of staff, determine funding required to continue current programs and discuss how to manage a deficit funding situation.

The Stanton Report dealt at some length with options for reducing costs and increasing revenue and many of the suggestions in this respect are sound. The other scoped aspects of the review were more cursorily addressed.

The primary budget issue identified in that report was a ‘decrease of 24% in the total budget (of the MAGNT) and a reduction of 42% in the operating budget on a CPI adjusted basis’ since 1992/93. This budget reduction is subsequently referred to in the Internal Review March 2004. The methodology used by Stanton Partners in calculating this budget trend is not described. A budget reduction of this magnitude over ten years would be very significant indeed. MAGNT’s achievement in delivering on increasing audiences over that same period would be even more laudable than it is in any case.

However discussion with stakeholders has revealed that this quantification of decreasing resources is misleading. The operating environment of the MAGNT has changed substantially in the period since 1992/93. In 1997 the MAGNT ceased its statutory authority status and was incorporated into a new Department of Arts and Museums. Corporate services functions and budgets of the MAGNT and several other agencies were integrated within the Department. Subsequent budgets for the MAGNT were reduced by the commensurate amount but the corporate services (HR, Finance,
IT) were still available to it. There were some later changes under the ‘Planning for Growth’ initiative of Government in 1998 that required some savings to be made across government.

The net effect of the above is that any direct comparison of 1992/93 and current budgets for the MAGNT will fail to reflect the changes in budget management and cost centres in that time.

This should not be interpreted as meaning that resources have not decreased to the MAGNT in real terms. There is a general recognition that increases in costs including fixed costs have not been met with a commensurate increase in resources and that discretionary funds have declined as a result (Mitchell Report July 2004). As well, the amalgamation and centralisation of resources (such as corporate services) may result in improved, stable or diminished servicing. (The view amongst some staff of the MAGNT is that there are greater administrative expectations on them since the amalgamation. This may well be correct, and it could reflect fewer resources being available to the MAGNT or it could reflect a more contemporary expectation of managers in the public service.)

In a very practical demonstration of budget pressures, the MAGNT has shown a budget shortfall in 2003/04 and 2004/05. The deficit in each of those two years has been in the order of $600,000. One of the objectives of the Stanton Partners Review was to consider options for managing a funding deficit if the funding base was inadequate but not likely to be increased. It is not evident that this was considered in that Report although a range of actions that may result in cost savings or additional revenue are discussed. Senior Management of the MAGNT has made executive decisions regarding program reductions to deal with the c $600,000 shortfall in the past two financial years. In both years, it has been possible for the Department to allocate additional funds to alleviate the need for those decisions to be implemented.

The parameters used by MAGNT Senior Management in considering program reductions to address the funding shortfall were:

1. Public safety
2. Occupational health and safety
3. Custodial and legislative responsibilities for the collection; and
4. Staff morale.

The first three of these agree well with the parameters set for this Review (see above). This Review recognises staff morale as an important issue but one for management rather than budget decisions per se.

Given that it is not possible to interpret the quantum of budget decline reported in the Stanton Partners Report, the $600,000 annual shortfall is probably the best indicator of budget decline below the level of current operations. Given too that MAGNT Senior Management has used parameters for decision making that correlate closely with those used in this Review, there is no reason why the Consultant would fundamentally disagree with the program reductions suggested by the MAGNT.

In short, this Review does not assume any quantified figure for relative budgets or budget reductions over the past ten years. It does assume that budgets are being hard-
pressed to meet the delivery of museum programs, and that current operating levels are about $600,000 in excess of current annual funding.

8.3 Scenario 1: Current funding allocation

For reference, the current total budget (2004/05) for the MAGNT is noted in Box 22.

Box 22. 2004/05 budget for the MAGNT

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>$4,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating</td>
<td>$2,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation/amortisation</td>
<td>$ 957,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$ 200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Services Dep/DCSI</td>
<td>$1,441,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate support</td>
<td>$ 473,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs &amp; maintenance</td>
<td>$1,610,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$11,081,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Including $150,000 from Bioprospecting project.
2. Including $100,000 from Bioprospecting project.
3. This figure is for R&M for other portfolio agencies in addition to the MAGNT (MAGNT pers.com.)

Source: DCDSCA Output costings 2004-05 Budget

This discussion will focus on the funds available for personnel and operating costs ($6.4 million), with some reference as well to maintenance costs.

The recognition that the MAGNT is struggling to maintain its current program on its current budget motivated this Review. The challenges posed by current funding levels are reflected in the $600,000 deficit budgets run by the MAGNT in at least the past two financial years. It is the Consultant’s view that the current funding level places doubt over achieving much in the way of progress against any of the parameters noted in the overview above.

Operations

If the MAGNT is currently operating at $600,000 over its annual budget, then the first implication of continuity of current funding is that current operations in discretionary (non-fixed) cost centres will have to scale back. There is some potential for further cost savings and greater income generation, as discussed in this Report and in the Stanton Partners Review. Areas considered include:

- Shop income
- Café lease
- Admission fees
- Donations and sponsorship
- Venue operations

Neither this Review nor the Stanton Report have attempted to quantify possible net returns from these, however, any net gains will not be achievable immediately and are very unlikely to approach the $600,000 pa shortfall. Some areas that are currently
generating external funds to support activities, such as research, may conceivably generate more funds in future but this income is usually heavily tied to the research outputs themselves.

An immediate question to pose is whether or not there are any readily identifiable products that the MAGNT is currently delivering that are not appropriate to a state museum and art gallery. As is discussed in this Report, particularly in Sections 3 and 4, the MAGNT’s programs accord well with those of other state museums in Australia and efforts are being made to align them with broader trends in museum services in this country and internationally. There is no major area of MAGNT activity that one would identify as being unusual for a state museum or gallery to deliver. Indeed, there are some areas of activities that other museums are pioneering or now regarding as staple that the MAGNT does not do to any extent.

Although the absolute number of its visitors is at the lower end of the range for state museums in Australia, the MAGNT is attracting a high visitation relative to the population size of the Northern Territory. Significantly, visitation has defied the downward trend in tourist numbers in recent years (refer Section 3.3.3). While this is obviously a good outcome, this type of success comes at a cost. More visitors mean more wear-and-tear on facilities, galleries and exhibitions*. With free-for-entry sites such as the MAGNT at Bullocky Point, increased visitation (30% in the last year) does not generate a commensurate increase in revenue to compensate for the additional costs. There is likely to be some correlating increase in turnover in the shop but it would be optimistic to expect shop returns to match the wear-and-tear on facilities.

*The best longevity of facilities is via the ‘Yes Minister’ scenario – a functioning hospital with no patients or a museum with no visitors.

Current funding is likely to result in a continued decline in the museum’s infrastructure (buildings, exhibitions, internal fittings etc). While not old (by museum standards), the 1981 buildings at Bullocky Point are showing the inevitable impacts of more than 20 years in a tropical maritime climate. Maintenance costs will continue to increase. While the site does not have extreme safety issues such as asbestos contamination which has plagued some other museums (eg. recent closure of a major public and staff building at the Western Australian Museum’s Perth site), various reports including the Internal Review March 2004 have collated issues that relate to risks to visitors, staff and collections. Addressing issues relating to the car park/precinct, offices/laboratories and collection storage will require capital works funding (see below). Some operational improvements to collection storage have freed up space but it will be only an interim delay to inevitable overcrowding.

In an operational sense, it will be difficult on the current budget to attend in a substantial way to any of the risk management issues above.

Visitor utility at current levels has a number of limitations. The Internal Review March 2004 discusses the current visitor experience at some length. A few points are noted here. The entry foyer while not unduly small is rather awkwardly shaped for multiple uses. There is no real space to orientate the visitor before entering galleries or for large groups to gather. There are staff concerns about the size and location of the shop, but in the Consultant’s view, while not large, the shop is not so badly
located given its adjacency to the main entrance/exit. A careful review of stock/merchandise would be justified although it is certainly true that the limitation on floor space restricts the range of stock that can be provided. Overall, the visitor responses indicate that there is some variation in visitor enjoyment of different galleries – as one would expect – but there is no glaring evidence of failure to make contact. That is, there is no display area that is highly dysfunctional or sub-standard in the view of the visitor and visitor responses are overall very positive (refer Exit Surveys and Intercept Survey August 2004).

One gallery that clearly does fall short of museum environmental standards is the Maritime Gallery. This large (2,300 square metre) gallery constitutes 47% of the gallery space at Bullocky Point and is not airconditioned or humidity controlled which for wooden objects falls well short of industry best practice. There is little that can be done to significantly improve these environmental standards without capital works expenditure.

There are some weaknesses in display thematics (such as Northern Territory social history, Australian art) that are discussed in other sections of this Report. If the MAGNT is to be a true entryway to the Northern Territory, these themes need addressing. The current budget provides very little capacity to do so. At best, current funding would permit some iterative changeover of parts of exhibitions so that they do not remain entirely stagnant.

In short, current funding should allow the current visitor experience of long term galleries to remain pretty much as it is, but with the ongoing aging effects and resultant deterioration of displays and galleries. It is proving difficult for the MAGNT to fund a changing program of exhibitions including touring exhibitions to Darwin, which means residents of the Territory will be less often exposed to the type of experiences readily available in the eastern capitals. The net effect is that the visitor experience will be rather static and unchanging and progressively more tired in its impact. A changing program is important to attract repeat visitation from residents so the MAGNT may struggle to maintain its attendances by locals. Residents will doubtless still bring their out-of-Territory visitors to the MAGNT, as long as the standard does not slip too much. Tourists will still come – there is little in the way of direct competition to the MAGNT in Darwin – but one might expect the number of negative comments to increase as the exhibitions look more run-down.

A highlight of the MAGNT's public program is the annual Telstra NATSIA Award. Although significantly supported by Telstra, this type of high profile event is costly and complex to organise, including the tour components. MAGNT has very limited capacity to direct resources to the event, and has no staff dedicated to its organisation. Unless corporate sponsorship can be increased, current MAGNT funding levels will see a continued pressure on the NATSIAA with likely diminution of quality and impact of the event.

Current funding will not support any significant enhancement or expansion in the visitor experience. Any such enhancement would presumably have to be based on external funding being secured via sponsorships or business partners. Cost recovery is difficult for exhibitions, even for special exhibitions for which an admission fee is
charged. In practice, admission charges to special exhibitions normally only recover a portion of the costs associated with staging (and touring) exhibitions.

Neither will current funding support any significant improvements in back-of-house operations. Issues of collection crowding, cramped conditions for materials conservation and so forth will remain unchanged or worsen as collections grow. There is only so much in collection storage that can be improved through operational changes.

Research activities including fieldwork to acquire natural science specimens are already heavily dependent on external funding. This will continue into the future. There is likely to be a continued slow attrition of curatorial positions as funds become stretched and inadequate to fill vacated positions. The perceived decline in curatorial expertise was regretted by a number of external stakeholders interviewed for this review. Overall however, with current funding levels, other areas of MAGNT operations would have to take priority and research will need to be substantially self-funding. This is not unique to the MAGNT. The move towards self-funding of research is shared with a number of other museums in Australia. If scientific research cannot increase its generation of income, under current funding levels the MAGNT may have to review the extent and nature of this program (see below).

Insofar as the proposed Five Year Plans for the MAGNT as endorsed by the Board, some minor operational advancement may be possible in the Business Development Plan notably in relatively cost neutral activities such as policy and procedures development. Any operational changes will have to be based on trade-offs and this would probably require some further and progressive reduction in activity across-the-board.

The MAGNT has shown a commitment over the past several years to review its operations, align them better with the needs of audiences and Government and to generate funds from external sources. This is commented upon in the body of this Review and is observed by a number of external stakeholders including those in other Government agencies. While there is still some scope for further innovation, the capacity for significant cost savings in operations is limited unless the scope of services is reduced. Savings opportunities in day-to-day operations include the recent Energy Audit (August 2004) which identifies energy saving measures that could payback upfront investment over 2 years.

Funding at current levels into the future would necessitate hard decisions by the MAGNT Management and Board regarding public programs and research activity (other than activities fully funded from external sources). Those decisions would need to be cognisant of how to deliver the most cost effective returns to the people and Government of the Northern Territory.

Continued attrition across programs cannot be sustained indefinitely. Some options for program termination may have to be considered. Three examples suggested here for consideration would be science, secondary sites and collection acquisitions. Continued attrition of curatorial positions is likely at current funding levels as increasing costs mean ongoing diversion of funds to other cost centres such as the public program. Perhaps the MAGNT should consider cessation of scientific research

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for purposes other than public programs and essential collection care. While the MAGNT is generating funds for its research from non-Northern Territory sources, and these are having a positive impact on both the knowledge base and economy of the Northern Territory (refer Section 5), they do not fully pay for all staff costs nor generate net profits to the organisation. Cessation of inhouse scientific research and reduction in curatorial positions would lessen pressure on office accommodation and the need for laboratories, both expensive capital costs for the future. A core collection management staff would be retained to safeguard and manage the scientific collections and to make them available to external researchers such as those at other state museums.

The Consultant is not recommending this option, merely flagging it. It is the Consultant’s view that the MAGNT would be severely diminished as an organisation of credibility and knowledge generation with the reduction or loss of its science base, and the Northern Territory would be deprived of unique expertise. Nonetheless, it is one of the hard options that will have to be considered.

A second option could be closure of some of the lesser sites of the MAGNT. Running multiple sites is demanding on management and resources, even if the staffing levels of those sites are low. This option would see some savings in staff and operational costs to the MAGNT, but may not see significant real savings to Government if the sites remain under Government management.

A third option would be the cessation of collection acquisitions in disciplines that are facing capacity in storage areas. The wet (alcohol) collection has room to grow but many other collection sectors are reaching the capacity of their storage. This includes the art collection. There are clearly serious ramifications to ceasing collection acquisitions making it an unpalatable notion but if no suitable storage is available for new acquisitions, options become very limited.

**Capital costs**

Thankfully no life-threatening visitor risks at the Bullocky Point site are apparent to the Consultant although the car park has some hazards that are noted in the Internal Review March 2004. A number of the office/laboratory areas do not meet modern compliance standards and pose OH&S risks however. Collection storage is becoming critical and may be exhausted within 2-3 years for parts of the collection, although recent reorganisation of the collection has freed up some space for a while. Offsite storage conditions (the McMinn Street store) are poor, especially in a climate such as that of Darwin. Without major and expensive modification, McMinn Street would not be suitable for most of the MAGNT collection.

While some ongoing minor maintenance and changeover of small parts of exhibitions and galleries may be achieved in general operational budgets, significant improvements will require capital funding (eg. major gallery environmental improvement, new exhibition fitouts, construction of new galleries).

Of the current galleries, the Maritime Gallery has the worst environmental conditions. Any improvement to that environment (including installing airconditioning, better insulation and humidity control) will be an expensive capital works project.

Regarding new exhibition fitouts, one example may serve to illustrate the order of magnitude of funding needed. Telling the history of the Northern Territory will
require additional gallery space and additional funds. One option would be to replace the Cyclone Tracy exhibition in its current space (298 square metres) with a broader historical exhibition. This area is not large for such a sweeping topic (the Western Australian Museum’s *WA: Land and People* Exhibition is two and a half times that size) but could be made to function if there were no alternative. As is discussed in Section 6, exhibition fitouts should begin at around $3000 per square metre for contemporary best practice outcomes (and can be significantly more expensive than that). If somewhere between $2000 and $3000 per square metre (which would be regarded as a very conservative funding level) were allocated to a 300 square metre exhibition on the history of the Territory, a budget of $600,000 to $900,000 would be required to fitout the display. Given the current level of operations is already $600,000 under-funded, it is hard to see how this could be achieved on current funding even if spread over several financial years. Delivery would require additional funding, through either a capital allocation from the Territory Government, a Commonwealth grant or a major sponsorship (securing a sponsorship of this magnitude in the Northern Territory is unlikely).

Staff accommodation in standards that do not meet modern building compliance is undesirable and must be factored into any planning for new facilities. There are basic issues of office-laboratory adjacency that cannot be addressed without significant capital works. Operational changes have ameliorated the collection storage overcrowding but the problems are likely to become critical in two to three years unless additional storage space is found. This could be on-site or off-site, or a combination of the two. In either case, additional capital works funding would be needed. The quantum of this funding will depend on the final solution decided upon. Leasing of additional space as an operational cost may be possible but the environmental needs of collections are extremely high and unlikely to be met in any existing premise, thus necessitating capital investment in infrastructure in privately-owned facilities.

Overall, no meaningful advancement on the MAGNT’s Building Masterplan will be possible with current funding. Even further planning input from consultants, project managers and Quantity Surveyors would be difficult to fund without additional resourcing.

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**Summary:** Funding scenario one will result in ongoing decline in the quality of the infrastructure of the MAGNT and progressive decrease in programs across the core functions of public programs, collection care and research. Cessation of some program areas will have to be considered.
8.4 Scenario 2: 2003/04 funding plus additional $1.5 million per year recurrent

An additional $1.5 million per year in recurrent funding would assist the MAGNT to address at least some of the iterative increases in its fixed and operating costs over the past decade. It would also permit attention to some staffing needs in areas that are currently over-stretched to deliver on the public program. An additional $1.5 million pa would increase the current operational budget (staff and programs) by 24%.

Allocation of the additional funds could consider the parameters noted in the Overview of this section and be set against program delivery (collection care, research, public programs), associated priority staff positions, some minor infrastructural and maintenance/upkeep of facilities. There is a near-infinite range in the possible mix of allocations between these and again the Consultant will make reference to the Board’s Five Year Plans.

As is discussed above, the one ‘defined’ quantum for a budget deficit at the MAGNT is the $600,000 shortfall in funding in each of the past two financial years. The simplest assumption is that $600,000 of the $1.5 million additional recurrent funding would be required to maintain operations at roughly the current level; any enhancements would be dependent on the remaining $900,000 pa.

Operations

The operational programs suggested for additional funding reflect areas that are identified by the Consultant as being under particular stress through lack of funds or staff. Funding enhancements in these areas can make significant improvements to the services of the MAGNT to the Northern Territory but largely (although not entirely) within existing facilities. Reference is also made to the MAGNT’s Five Year Plans.

Box 23 gives an indication of priority areas for allocation of recurrent funds and a suggested scale of funding. As well, there is indication of capital costs associated with the operational enhancements. There is reference to which of the parameters noted in the Overview of this section will be addressed by the operational and associated capital expenditure. All costings are approximate. In the case of the associated capital costs, they have not been subject to QS review and must be seen as indicative only.

The new staff positions noted in Box 23 are those identified as priorities in the MAGNT Five Year Business Development Plan. The Consultant has costed the positions at current Public Sector salary rates plus 20% on costs. For reference those positions are:

- Assistant Director Research and Collections (redesigned position)
- Manager Business and Commercial (redesigned position)
- Manager Exhibitions (redesigned position)
- Marketing and Promotions Manager (new FTE)
- Publications Manager (new FTE)
- Venue Hire Coordinator (new FTE)
- Website Officer (new FTE)
- Assistant Curator Visual Art (new FTE)
- Exhibition Support Officer (new FTE)
- Public Programs Officer (Education) (new FTE)
- Executive Support Officer to Directorate (new FTE)
- Building and Services Officer (new FTE)
- Facilities Maintenance Officer (to be seconded within existing staff resources)
- Education Volunteers Coordinator (to be seconded within existing staff resources)

Box 23. Suggested priorities for allocation of the $1.5 million recurrent of funding scenario 2 to operational activities with an indication of associated capital costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Parameters addressed</th>
<th>Operational costs pa</th>
<th>Associated capital costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff (9 new FTEs&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>$0.52 million</td>
<td>Accommodation (c.$3.6 million&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website development</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>c. $0.01 million (operations) (Staffing in staff above)</td>
<td>Website setup (c.$0.25 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary exhibition program</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>$0.30 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmed upgrades of long term galleries</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$0.25 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection acquisitions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$0.25 million</td>
<td>Expanded and improved collection storage will be required (c.$7.0 million&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous operations</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>$0.17 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$1.50 million</strong></td>
<td><strong>c. $10.85 million</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Full time equivalents. Based on positions identified as priorities in the MAGNT Business Development Plan, costed at NT Public Sector salary rates (levels from Internal Review March 2004) plus 20% on costs.
2. While this figure reflects some indication of projected costs from the MAGNT, the Consultant regards this figure as possibly generous. If laboratories/offices were costed at $10,000 per sq metre for construction and fitout, this would yield 360 sq metres of laboratories/offices.
3. An approximate costing for c. 1000 sq metres of storage (identified in MAGNT Masterplan), at a notional $7,000 per sq metre for construction and fitout.

Sources: Internal budget papers of the MAGNT; Internal Review March 2004

In the Consultant’s view, particular priority might be given to a subset of the above positions, notably:
- Assistant Director Research and Collections (the upper level restructuring is required to allow other positional placements such as the Manager of Business and Commercial; the Assistant Director Research and Collections is effectively in place now)
- Manager of Business and Commercial Operations (to improve revenue from the shop and café lease and to explore across-the-board revenue opportunities),
o one of the Building/Facilities positions (to enhance building and infrastructural maintenance),

o an additional Marketing/Events Manager (also revenue related, and that section is clearly understaffed to meet current demands including the Telstra NATSIA Award),

o a Public Programs/Education Officer* (this operational area also appears poorly staffed), and

o a Web Manager (on-line delivery is identified here and by other reports as a priority).

*There has been some discussion of approaching the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) for financial or in kind support for the education program (eg. Stanton Partners Review January 2004). In the Consultant’s experience it is wise not to assume success in such an approach and that option is not assumed here.

In practice, filling all of the identified staff positions may be impractical if suitable accommodation cannot be found for them. Accommodation needs and related capital costs would be a direct associated cost to the staff positions and link with the MAGNT’s Five Year Building Masterplan.

One of the new staff positions is a Website Manager/Officer. The web development is seen as a priority as the MAGNT has relatively little in the way of an outreach program at present. In lacking a product-rich website, an entire dimension of modern museum practice is lacking. A dramatically improved website would allow the MAGNT to make contact with people around the Territory, including schools, regional museums and those living in remote communities (including Indigenous communities). It could also see the MAGNT providing its intellectual resources to people around the country and overseas, encouraging further contact with both the museum and the Northern Territory. There is a one-off cost associated with set-up of the website that is noted in Box 23 and discussed briefly in capital costs below.

Funding is suggested for a temporary exhibition program (for both inhouse development and bringing exhibitions from other sources) ($300,000), a rolling program of long-term exhibition gallery enhancements ($250,000) and for collection acquisitions ($250,000). In considering how to address current funding shortfalls, MAGNT Management had identified areas of the public program that would have to wind back or cease. The sums suggested here are not large but would make a marked improvement on the MAGNT’s current capacities and address a significant component of current operating shortfall. In total, these three programs would be funded an additional $800,000 per year.

The MAGNT currently provides a changing exhibition program at the lower end of the range for Australian state museums and galleries (refer Section 3.3.5). Combining a program of temporary exhibitions with a progressive if incremental upgrade of long term galleries will mean the MAGNT can offer a changing visitor experience, that if adequately promoted can continue to build local audiences. The temporary exhibitions will be less significant an attractor for tourist visitors but they too will appreciate the maintenance of the long term galleries. Part of the funding for changing exhibitions can be used for supporting the Telstra NATSIA Award.

The suggested collections acquisition figure is not as high as has been mooted in some MAGNT papers (eg. the business case for the Indigenous Arts and Culture Unit). It
will however provide the MAGNT with the capacity to selectively acquire works of significance to the Northern Territory (refer Section 7) to an extent well above its current capacity. It is arguable as to whether or not this acquisitions budget should be allocated to the MAGNT as a dedicated fund or simply as part of general recurrent funding which the MAGNT can allocate as priorities require.

Within miscellaneous operations would be an allocation to curatorial departments/curators to support some basic ongoing research activities, collection management and conservation consumables, some staff travel costs and some administrative overheads. Some increased allocation to building infrastructure maintenance might also be addressed from these funds. If no dedicated funds for planning for capital works are forthcoming from Government, some allocation to further refinement and costing of the MAGNT’s Building Masterplan is required and could be part-funded from these miscellaneous operations funds.

A number of projects with significant strategic opportunity for the MAGNT cannot be supported in the above allocation. Those suggested by the Consultant to be of particular note are:

- a new Collections Information Management System
- an Indigenous Arts and Culture Unit, and
- a new History of the Northern Territory Gallery

These projects will have both operational and capital costs and are discussed in scenario three.

Some expansion of the MAGNT’s Indigenous program will be possible in scenario two. This can be achieved through the increased funding for a changing public program and increased funding for acquiring objects and art works for the Northern Territory collection. As well, if funding is not available for a comprehensive Indigenous Unit as is discussed in scenario three, the MAGNT might consider a smaller contingent of Aboriginal staff and traineeships from the additional operational funds of scenario two. This would mean an offset against the priority staff positions noted above.

**Associated capital works**

Several of the operational expenditures have an associated capital cost (Box 23).

Staff accommodation has been identified in previous studies as a capital priority for the MAGNT and the current failure to meet modern compliance standards would support that position. Within the MAGNT Building Masterplan, new offices and laboratories are flagged for construction but are not yet costed. Other documents (such as the business case for the Indigenous Arts and Culture Unit) suggest a figure of around $3.6 million for these works. There will also be increased operational costs (overheads) with any major new facilities.

Collection storage is becoming a critical issue within the existing Bullocky Point facilities with estimates based on current collection growth rates (of c. 2%) of reaching capacity in 2006. If the MAGNT is better resourced to acquire collection
objects as a result of budget scenario two, then pressure on storage will increase even further. The greatest pressure is on ‘dry’ collections as the nearby wet (alcohol) store is projected to have capacity until 2016. The MAGNT Building Masterplan identifies an additional 1000 square metre collection storage within a new facility on site. If new storage is not onsite in purpose built facilities, an offsite (either built or modified) facility will be required (and possibly a combination of the two). At a notional all-up budget of $7,000 per square metre for construction and storage systems, this would translate to approximately $7.0 million in capital works. An allocation to increased operational costs (including power) associated with new collection storage would also be needed.

Designing a complex website is a specialist task. This has not been costed in any MAGNT documents seen by the Consultant, but it is suggested here that a high quality platform and design could be achieved for $200,000-250,000 (this would be in line with the quality and complexity of the Western Australian website at www.museum.wa.gov.au). A web manager is costed into the priority staff positions.

Certain areas of priority capital works and/or minor new works are not included in Box 23. These include the car park/precinct works and an allocation to improved existing collection storage to maximise effective use of current space. Car park and precinct works will address the parameter of visitor safety and are thus a high priority. Costings already done suggest a figure of $270,000 for precinct works.

While it is not scoped into this study, the Consultant would observe that if additional funds were considered for allocation on a project basis, rather than a strictly operational basis, then some progress on key capital projects such as collection storage and new staff accommodation would be achievable, albeit it on an extended timeline.

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Summary: Funding scenario two would address the shortfall in operational funding evident in the past two years and would allow some attendance to key priorities in programs and enhancing the core functions to the extent possible. Areas of critical staffing deficit could be addressed. The overall public program of the MAGNT would be enhanced with a more dynamic exhibition program and collection acquisition program. A number of the operational elements have capital costs associated with them (approximately $10.9 million in associated capital costs especially for staff accommodation and collection storage).
8.5 Scenario 3: Increasing 2003/04 funding by an additional $5.5 million *recurrent* over 3-5 years and then an amount to be determined per year recurrent

This reflects an average annual increase of $1.10 million (over five years) to $1.83 million (over three years) in recurrent funding. Full allocation of the additional $5.5 million in recurrent funding to operational activities would see an increase of 86% on the current operating budget.

This is a very large increase in operational funds and would doubtless have major positive impacts in various operational areas. There are risks however in considering this allocation disjunct from capital costs. Given a number of the strategic projects require capital as well as operational funds, holistic delivery is only possible if both are addressed. Increasing the available funds to operational programs does not *necessarily* result in improved products, and certainly not necessarily to an extent commensurate with the extra funding. For example, the MAGNT can run a dynamic and exciting program of exhibitions with the additional $550,000 pa noted in scenario 2 for temporary exhibitions and long term gallery revamps. Tripling that amount would not necessarily mean a program three times as effective. There are only so many exhibitions that can be mounted in a given year in the existing facilities and only so much that a given staff body can achieve. If the staff numbers are increased further to achieve more, then there is need for additional staff accommodation (a capital cost). In like vein, increasing the acquisitions budget may result in an improved quality and number of collection purchases, but if the collection storage space for those items is exhausted they cannot be appropriately housed.

*Operations*

In funding scenario 3, all that is achievable in scenario 2 can be delivered, and a lot more. Overall, operational outcomes in this scenario would include:

- new staff positions to relieve the workload on current staff and deliver improved service outcomes, increased revenue potential and new products (such as an effective web presence); staff positions identified for scenario two can be filled together with additional positions for a major outreach program and certain curatorial disciplines
- a temporary exhibition program that will be changeable and inclusive of some of the ‘higher end’ products from other sources that are currently not affordable
- ongoing improvements to the long term galleries, with the capacity to progressively incorporate diverse interpretive methods and technologies such as sliding drawers, hands-on components and multimedia;
- a collection acquisition program that, while not of the magnitude of the larger Australian art galleries, would at least allow the MAGNT to strategically acquire significant works and build the state collection to an extent impossible now
- general operations being maintained significantly above current levels, including support for researchers, collection consumables and conservation, and infrastructural upkeep.
Several major programs could be added. These include the Collection Management Information System, an Indigenous Arts and Culture Unit and a new History of the Northern Territory Gallery. Approximate costings are shown in Box 25.

A new Collection Information Management System will be of very significant functional and strategic value to the MAGNT. It will facilitate management and movement tracking of the collections, and in its implementation, the gaps in current documentation of the collections (including for the art collection) can be addressed. Once the CIMS is in place, the MAGNT will be better able to provide information on the collections to Government, other agencies, research institutions and researchers, other museums and galleries, and to the general public. The CIMS costing is based on a whole-of-Department system for all major datasets relating to heritage collections held within the Department of Community Development, Sport & Cultural Affairs which is said to be the most cost effective approach. A system solely for the MAGNT would be less expensive. The Consultant’s immediate reaction to the Departmental costing is that the recurrent costs seem high, but they have not been subject to review here.

A significant improvement in the MAGNT’s service delivery of Indigenous art and culture products to Indigenous Australians and general visitors will be possible. This Review has emphasised the importance of, and opportunities for, the MAGNT taking an even stronger leadership and partnership role in nurturing, encouraging and presenting Aboriginal art and culture. The MAGNT could position itself as Australia’s leading public centre for Indigenous culture, especially northern Australian Indigenous culture, as part of a network involving Indigenous community groups across the Northern Territory (and arguably beyond). In budget scenario three, directing resources to this end would be strategic. An Indigenous Arts and Culture Unit is referred to in the Internal Review March 2004. No costing for this initiative is included in the body of that document but the Consultant understands that a figure of just under $10 million over five years has been suggested. It is the Consultant’s view that this costing warrants some further explanation and justification for scale and numbers (for example the number of employed staff and traineeships). Its delivery under current plans would require capital works for staff accommodation but this is linked with the construction of new laboratories and offices as per the MAGNT’s Five Year Building Masterplan. Even allowing for these qualifications, the thinking on the Indigenous Unit is seen as a sound basis for considering how the MAGNT might achieve its potential as an Indigenous cultural centre of excellence.

A new History of the Northern Territory Gallery is identified as a priority for long term exhibitions. The rationale for this is that currently the MAGNT is a social history museum (in part) that does not tell the story of the Northern Territory, a fundamental failing in its public program. Cyclone Tracy is an important event to profile but only one in the rich history of the Territory. In this funding scenario, the new exhibition would be delivered within existing gallery spaces of the MAGNT (unless additional capital funds were forthcoming). As noted in scenario 1, if the Cyclone Tracy area were used, and fitout was budgeted at $3,000 per square metre (a basic industry standard), then the cost would be approximately $900,000. This would allow the use of some multimedia and interactives as well as long-term and quality display systems. As a negative, the exhibition space would be rather small for such a broad topic and a
larger space would be desirable. This could be compensated for to some extent with some ‘high end’ experiences that would lift the cost somewhat (see Box 24).

If capital funding for the MAGNT’s Building Masterplan can be sourced at some time in the future, then the new History of the Northern Territory Gallery could be delivered in more suitable space.

**Box 24. A suggested interactive module in the new history gallery**

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**Exhibition scenario: The Cyclone Tracy Experience**

You are walking through Territory Stories, the History of the Northern Territory Gallery. You have been through sections on Aboriginal history before white arrival, the early explorers and black-white contact, colonial expansion, land rights, new industries, World War II and so on. You find yourself now in Darwin on Christmas Eve 1974. Streetscapes are created with photomontages and some diorama effects. You are in a bustling community of 45,000 people. You enter a small house. Inside are various household effects of the day. On the wall, a clock shows the passing time (time is accelerated). There is a large picture window. You either stand or take a seat in one of the lounge chairs or the sofa facing the window. The room darkens. The picture window comes alive with scenes of the outside (film footage). A wind is building. Simultaneously, sound effects within the house create the effect of wind outside. The sound grows and the film footage shows the onset of the cyclone. The sound becomes a roaring cacophony of noise. And the house begins to shake and shudder with the force of the wind. You can see the houses outside unroofed and trees uprooted. A small window above you suddenly swings inward with the sound of breaking glass. Someone screams. Then the storm abates. The noise drops and the house stops shuddering. The window shows things outside have settled. You step out of the house through the other door into a gallery of desolation. Photos show the damage, dioramas show destruction, fallen trees, roofs, rubble etc. You have passed through the Cyclone and survived.

The Cyclone Tracy experience would be set within the gallery space. The experience builds on the engagement with audio, video, tactile stimulation (the shaking house) and possibly simple robotics (such as windows blowing open). The entire experience might last only 3-5 minutes. It would be a repeating process throughout the day. The house might accommodate (say) 20 people at a time (with half sitting). Parts of the old fitout from the current Cyclone Tracy Gallery might be reusable in the associated gallery.

This type of high attractor could be a destination in itself. What residents of Darwin would not bring a visitor to experience it? Local children will love the ‘sensaround’ effect. Construction would be costly, and there would be maintenance in keeping it running, but it could be a component of the MAGNT experience no one will forget, and that people would come specifically to be part of.
Some costs noted in Box 25 as capital might be considered within operational budgets. The set-up costs of the CIMS could arguably be covered by operating budgets, although they are not a recurrent cost. While capital funding would arguably be more appropriate for establishment of the new NT History Gallery, this one-off cost could be regarded as part of the MAGNT’s progressive gallery refurbishment program. In both cases, the impact on recurrent budgets would be short term.

However, if we continue to consider solely the recurrent operating costs, adding the $2.65 million in recurrent costs for the above three projects to the $1.5 million already identified for scenario 2 (Box 23) sees an allocation of $4.15 million in additional recurrent funding over current levels. Approximately $1.35 million recurrent remains to be allocated in funding scenario 3.

Box 25 suggests a breakdown of possible funding in the scenario of full allocation of $5.5 million to MAGNT operational activities. If these funds are allocated to operational programs, then the suggested public program and general miscellaneous expenditure, including collection consumables and infrastructural upkeep could be significantly enhanced.

Public programs on site (temporary exhibitions and gallery upgrades) are allocated an additional $400,000 to lift funding by $950,000 over current levels, which would see a state-of-the-art exhibition program, certainly better resourced than most of the other state museums of Australia. An additional $250,000 is allocated to collection acquisitions, taking this budget to $500,000 (reflecting the suggested figure for Aboriginal art acquisitions in the MAGNT’s business case for the Indigenous Unit).

In Box 25, the Miscellaneous Operations in Box 23 have been split into components given the available additional funds. Funds are allocated to collection care/consumables; research (including some travel and field work); and facilities management and maintenance. In this scenario, a staged forward plan of building upkeep (minor works) should be achievable. If no additional capital funding is available for advancing the MAGNT Building Masterplan, then an allocation should be made towards this for planning consultants and QS input. While this may not be seen as an ongoing operational expense, there will be several years of planning required to confirm the nature and scale of the MAGNT redevelopment.

As well, there is the opportunity to do more in outreach services. Several stakeholders commented that the MAGNT would desirably be doing more in working outside its walls. The new Website will be an invaluable outreach tool as is discussed at length in the Report. There is also a very valuable role for ‘traditional’ museum products to tour to non-Darwin communities including schools around the Territory, a MAGNT ‘On-the-Road’ so to speak. With an integrated program, there can be a ‘real-virtual’ product mix, whereby small touring educational packages are complemented by a web based product, so that the learning experience links the best of real objects with the capacity to explore extra layers of information. The touring packages can include more robust and/or replaceable objects from the collection, with educational kits. The school user then logs onto the website to expand the experience.

It is suggested here that a significant outreach program could be established with a new staff position in each of Education and Exhibitions (two salaries at level AO4 c.
$100,000 including on costs), $200,000 pa for product development (real and virtual) and $100,000 to tour the real products to schools and communities, including Aboriginal communities. A total sum of $400,000 in recurrent funding would see a sophisticated and professional outreach program.

**Box 25. Suggested priorities for allocation of the $5.5 million recurrent of funding scenario 3 to operational activities with an indication of associated capital costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Parameters addressed</th>
<th>Operational costs pa</th>
<th>Associated capital costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff (13 new FTEs$^1$)</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>$0.75 million</td>
<td>Accommodation (c.$3.6 million$^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website development</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>c. $0.01 million (operations) (Staffing in staff above)</td>
<td>Website setup (c.$0.25 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary exhibition program</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>$0.50 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmed upgrades of long term galleries</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$0.45 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection acquisitions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$0.50 million</td>
<td>Expanded and improved collection storage will be required (c.$7.0 million$^3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection care/ consumables</td>
<td>3,6</td>
<td>$0.10 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; travel (incl fieldwork)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$0.04 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities maintenance</td>
<td>1,2,4,6</td>
<td>$0.15 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masterplanning</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>$0.05 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection Information Management System$^4$</td>
<td>3,5,6</td>
<td>c.$1.40 million</td>
<td>Set-up (c.$0.37 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Arts and Culture Unit$^5$</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>c.$1.23 million (includes staff)</td>
<td>Accommodation (see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New History of the Northern Territory Gallery$^6$</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$0.02 million (maintenance)</td>
<td>$0.90 million (development and installation) Allow an extra $0.10 million for high end experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach program</td>
<td>5,6</td>
<td>$0.30 million (staff included above)</td>
<td>Accommodation (see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$5.50 million</strong></td>
<td><strong>c.$12.22 million</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Full time equivalents. Based on positions identified as priorities in the MAGNT Business Development Plan, plus two staff for outreach program and two new curators, costed at NT Public Sector salary rates (levels from Internal Review March 2004) plus 20% on costs.
2. While this figure reflects some indication of projected costs from the MAGNT, the Consultant regards this figure as possibly generous. If laboratories/offices were costed at $10,000 per sq metre for construction and fitout, this would yield 360 sq metres of laboratories/offices.
3. An approximate costing for c. 1000 sq metres of storage (identified in MAGNT Masterplan), at a notional $7,000 per sq metre for construction and fitout.
4. This costing is based on a Departmental system to service the MAGNT, Strehlow Research Centre, Indigenous Knowledge Centres and Araluen. Servicing the MAGNT alone would be cheaper but may be less cost effective across the Department.
5. Based on MAGNT budget papers.
6. Based on refit of the Cyclone Tracy Gallery; c. 300 sq metres @ $3000 per sq metre

Sources: Internal budget papers of the MAGNT; Internal Review March 2004

Funding scenario three would also allow strengthening in curatorial expertise that has diminished over past years. Two possible areas for support would be archaeology and aquatic invertebrates. The MAGNT no longer has a curator in archaeology, something noted by several external stakeholders as a notable decline in expertise. Replacing this position would allow the MAGNT to re-engage with this discipline in a part of Australia rich in archaeological materials and sites. The additional aquatic invertebrate curator might have expertise in crustaceans or other taxa such as sponges. Re-securing research skills in these disciplines would strengthen the capacity of the MAGNT’s marine survey group which is a recognised area of competitive strength for the museum. Two curators at level P2 would cost approximately $130,000 pa including on costs. These are factored into the new staff positions in Box 25.

Associated capital works

For the allocation of $5.5 million in recurrent funding to operational programs, there is an associated capital cost in excess of $12.0 million. That capital figure must be regarded as indicative only.

There are also capital costs not directly associated with the operational allocations. Some have been discussed for funding scenario 2. For example, an allocation to improve the car park and precinct will enhance visitor safety. Precinct works have been costed at $270,000 as part of minor new works planning.

There are significant elements of the MAGNT’s Building Masterplan that are not addressed above. These elements are noted in the Internal Review of March 2004. In summary, they include extensive refurbishment works to the existing building (including the Maritime Gallery) and construction of a new additional facility. The new collection storage facility and offices/laboratories for staff are noted above, but other components are not considered as they do not devolve directly from increased operational funding. However, with the above scenario for significantly increased exhibition programs and collection acquisitions, delivering the additional new public facilities (including new galleries for touring exhibitions, visual art, and Northern Territory History) would see the enhanced operational funds put to best effect.

The MAGNT Building Masterplan is discussed briefly in Section 8.6.
The consideration of allocations within funding scenario three reflects the scope of the brief, namely that all of the funds should be considered against recurrent operational costs. Should there be some greater flexibility in the use of the additional $5.5 million pa, then it would be possible to make advances on several of the major priority projects with both operational and capital costs. This would require deferral of some recurrent operational expenditure while one-off expenditure was addressed.

**Three and five year timeframes**

In scenario 3, the increased recurrent funding is allocated over ‘3-5 years’. What is the difference in total allocation for this time range? Box 26 gives a simple comparison of the cashflow over the two extremes of three and five years, if the allocation is averaged across those times.

**Box 26. Difference in funding to the MAGNT if funding scenario three were introduced over 3 years or 5 years, based on an average across the years of introduction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Increase over 3 years</th>
<th>Increase over 5 years</th>
<th>Difference in funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 (current)</td>
<td>$x</td>
<td>$x</td>
<td>$0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$x + 1.83 million</td>
<td>$x + 1.10 million</td>
<td>$0.73 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$x + 3.67 million</td>
<td>$x + 2.20 million</td>
<td>$1.47 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$x + 5.50 million</td>
<td>$x + 3.30 million</td>
<td>$2.20 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$x + 5.50 million</td>
<td>$x + 4.40 million</td>
<td>$1.10 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$x + 5.50 million</td>
<td>$x + 5.50 million</td>
<td>$0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>$x + 22.00 million</td>
<td>$x + 16.50 million</td>
<td><strong>$5.50 million</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

x: current funding level

If the increase in recurrent funding is introduced at a constant rate over five years, then the MAGNT receives $5.50 million less in funds than if introduced over three years. This calculation is based on an average increase per year. If most of the funding increase occurred in the early years of the five year option then the difference would be less.

Given the above calculation is based on averages, and the allocation of funds need not be on an average per year, there is little point in attempting any detailed assessment of the effect of these two extremes. The net effect of the different periods of introducing the increase in funding will be that the MAGNT would have to phase in increases in recurrent expenditure more gradually in the five year option than in the three. If all the funds are allocated to recurrent operational activities, then this simply means that some programs are introduced more slowly.

On the other hand, if the funds could also be used for one-off or capital expenses, then there is potentially an additional $5.50 million available in the three year option that is not available in the five year option. This could be used for such one-off costs as gallery refurbishments (eg. the new History of the NT Gallery) or setting up the new website.
There is another important consideration for scenario three. The scenario refers to a subsequent review of the ongoing recurrent funding after 3-5 years. This discussion has assumed that the $5.5 million would be at least ongoing after years 3-5. If the recurrent allocation to the MAGNT should reduce after the $5.5 million pa has been reached then the above discussion becomes invalid in the longer term. Programs established over that period would require review and scaling back. Should this be a likely option, then staff appointments should best be on contract rather than as permanent positions.

_________________

Summary: Funding scenario three would result in very significant enhancement of the MAGNT’s program delivery across all areas of its core functions. The public program would be resourced to a degree comparable to or exceeding other Australian state museums and art galleries and the collections acquisition funding would be adequate to build a state collection of significance. Research and collection care functions would be improved, within the limitations of current facilities. Many of the operational elements have associated capital costs (approximately $12.2 million associated with the increased operational activity). A project-based approach to expenditure would allow advancement on some of the priority capital/one-off costs.

_________________

In considering the three funding scenarios, it is the Consultant’s view that a funding increase somewhere between scenarios two and three would place the MAGNT soundly for delivering on its dual role of state museum and art gallery. Given the relative size of the Northern Territory, scenario three would be a generous allocation on a per capita basis, although the dual museum-art gallery roles of the MAGNT must be considered. Scenario three would certainly result in very significant improvements in public service delivery assuming associated capital costs could also be addressed.

8.6 How big is a $30 million capital works program?

The MAGNT’s Building Masterplan (refer Internal Review March 2004) is split into refurbishments to the original buildings and construction of new facilities. The Consultant is not qualified to attempt a costing refurbishment costs and many elements are rather vague within the current preliminary Plan. For example, improving existing galleries could be new coat of paint for the main galleries or a complete rehousing for the Maritime collection (the cost of substantially improving the environment of the Maritime Gallery would be very high).

Insofar as the suggested new facilities, the MAGNT Building Masterplan has not been subject to a QS assessment and the Consultant is loathe to suggest a budget for the various items. The Masterplan has 3,100 square metres of new public facilities (foyer, three new galleries, shop, café) and at least 1,500 square metres of new back-of-house facilities (collection storage, loading bay, exhibition preparation). The MAGNT has indicated a notional budget of $19 million for these new facilities on the Bullocky Point site (internal budget papers) and a further $12 million for refurbishment of existing buildings, totalling $31 million.*
*The above costings are indicative only. It is understood that some informal input has been sought from a Quantity Surveyor in arriving at these figures so they should have some sense of reality to them. Caution should be exercised in any assumption as to their accuracy however given they are very notional. The Consultant has also informally discussed the notional areas with a QS and the advice for building in Darwin was that a higher figure might be appropriate. A figure of around $6,500 per square metre for construction has been suggested which would arrive at a cost of c. $30 million for the new construction alone (plus an escalation of around 10% per annum). This does not factor in a consideration of exhibition fitouts etc, which can be costed conservatively at a further $1500 to $3000 per square metre for complex displays. It may be that this advice is generous but it illustrates the need for properly detailed QS advice to be secured as soon as possible.

Elements of the Masterplan are to the Consultant’s mind generous. For example, the Masterplan includes a new touring exhibitions gallery which in itself is justifiable. To set it at 1000 square metres places it at the upper level of touring galleries in any museum in Australia, comparable to facilities at the new Museum of Melbourne and National Museum of Australia. Even if the space is able to be partitioned into smaller areas, conformation of the need for such a large area is required in value managing the Masterplan. Other components of the plan are more defendable. Within existing facilities, a new history exhibition on the Northern Territory will be constrained in size (using the Cyclone Tracy gallery). Having a larger gallery space would be very desirable for such a complex theme.

While this Review was not scoped to look in detail at the capital works plans of the MAGNT, it may be informative to compare a notional $30 million capital works program that could deliver the MAGNT’s Five Year Building Masterplan against some other museum projects of recent years. In this one can compare both absolute costs (in short, what it costs to achieve an outcome at an acceptable standard) and relative costs (setting the budget within the community environment). By way of example of a relative environmental criterion, if comparing a project in two states of Australia or in New Zealand, one might use the respective constituent populations as a criterion of relative project size.

For this exercise, two recent museum projects will be used as comparators. One, the Western Australian Maritime Museum is the most recent significant museum capital works project in Australia, opening in late 2002. At $36 million it was a medium sized museum project and of a similar scale to the notional capital works budget for the MAGNT’s Five Year Building Masterplan. The other is Te Papa Museum of New Zealand, a very large museum-art gallery project that opened in 1998. At almost $NZ350 million it was one of the largest museum-gallery projects anywhere in the world over the past 10 years. How do these projects compare in absolute and relative scale to the notional MAGNT Masterplan?

On an absolute comparison, the MAGNT Masterplan would deliver a medium-sized museum project, quite comparable in scale to the WA Maritime Museum. On a relative scale (per resident population), the MAGNT Masterplan would be a very large project, rather more costly per head than Te Papa Museum of New Zealand.
Box 27. Some comparisons of two recent museum developments (one medium sized, one large) with the MAGNT Masterplan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WA Maritime Museum</th>
<th>Te Papa Museum of NZ</th>
<th>MAGNT Masterplan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost</strong>¹</td>
<td>$AUS36 million</td>
<td>c. $NZ350 million</td>
<td>$AUS30 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(notional: c. $18 million new, $12 million refurbishment)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opened</strong></td>
<td>December 2002</td>
<td>February 1998</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area (total)</strong></td>
<td>5,060 sq m (all public areas)</td>
<td>36,000 sq m (public and back-of-house)</td>
<td>4,600 sq m new facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost per capita</strong></td>
<td>$AUS18.70</td>
<td>$NZ94.60</td>
<td>$AUS150.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
1. Published budget figures and MAGNT draft capital works plan

While comparison is valid, there are also significant environmental differences between these projects. The MAGNT is a unique cultural facility in the Northern Territory and Darwin, and is the equivalent of the state museum and art gallery. In Western Australia, there are several parts to the WA Museum, of which the Maritime Museum is just one, and in addition there is a State Art Gallery. In short, the MAGNT is equivalent to much more than the WA Maritime Museum in terms of scope and services to the people of the Northern Territory. As well, the new WA Maritime Museum is an entirely public facility; the MAGNT development would be more complex, including public facilities and back-of-house functions.

In these respects, the MAGNT is more akin to Te Papa which is also a museum-gallery combination, albeit at a national level (there are no equivalents to states in New Zealand). The Te Papa project delivered front-of-house and back-of-house facilities, on arguably the most spectacular site on Wellington Harbour. There are many other significant museums and galleries in New Zealand, although not funded primarily from the Government. The other cultural institutions of New Zealand are operated by local authorities with some grant support via the National Government. Nonetheless, it can still be said that the MAGNT has fewer comparable institutions in its operating environment than do either the Western Australian Museum (and Maritime Museum) or Te Papa Museum of New Zealand.

In terms of the final outcome, the notional areas within the MAGNT Building Masterplan include an additional 2,300 square metres of gallery space (not including a 500 square metre new foyer). Adding this to the existing 4,900 square metres of galleries at Bullocky Point would see a total gallery area of 7,200 square metres. Referring to Box 12, this gallery area would be amongst the largest of any museum in Australia, larger even than the National Gallery and the National Museum. In
considering the implications of this, it is germane that the MAGNT is both state museum and state art gallery.

To deliver a project of the scale of the MAGNT Masterplan in the Northern Territory, with a population of 200,000, would require the recognition of two things. Firstly, that a given standard of delivery of complex museum operations requires a certain level of resourcing, regardless of the resident population size (that is, museum and gallery standards are not a relative measure). Secondly, that the outcome would be of national, and international, significance and not merely a local resource.

Such a project could capture the unique dimensions of the Territory and be a destination attraction for visitors to the Top End. It could be Australia’s premier centre for Aboriginal arts and culture and Australia’s premier focus point for linkage with the cultural catchment of Southeast Asia. Its services to Territory residents would be of a scope and quality to rival those provided to the residents of the more populous states in the east and south. The new MAGNT would be a statement of Northern Territory culture and identity.
PART D  SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

9  Summary of recommendations

The Executive Summary distils the key observations and advice of this Review. Throughout the body of the document, a number of suggestions and recommendations have been made, that are summarised below.

MAGNT outputs relative to those of other state museums and galleries

Collections

Recommendations:
- An annual semi-random inventory of collections should be an audit function for reporting to the Board.
- Criteria should be developed for prioritising conservation works on the collection and included in the collection management procedures.
- When resources permit, a new Collection Management Information System should be implemented as a priority.
- Areas of the collection requiring strategic development through acquisitions include the social history and Australian art collections.
- When resources permit, new collection storage should be acquired/constructed as a priority.

Public programs

Recommendations:
- The precinct around the MAGNT buildings should be interpreted as part of the visitor experience.
- Precinct works to address visitor safety should be a priority.
- The social history of the Northern Territory should be significantly expanded in MAGNT exhibitions. Expansion of the Aboriginal cultural experience should also be explored.
- Resources permitting, the Discovery Centre would benefit from investment in more diverse interactive infrastructure.
- Resources permitting, the environmental conditions of the Maritime Gallery should be significantly enhanced.
- Increasing donations from visitors should be a priority action. Applying a suggested donation is recommended.
- Recruitment of senior commercial expertise is recommended as a strategic investment for the MAGNT.
- Exploration of enhanced venue hire is suggested with greater use of the grounds an option for exploration.
- While not within the scope of this review, the long term relationship of the MAGNT to its secondary sites should be reviewed, in parallel with development of a Strategic Asset Management Plan.
Facilities management

Recommendation:
  o A Strategic Asset Management Plan for the MAGNT should be developed and funding committed to it.

MAGNT outputs relative to national and international trends in museums and galleries

Better understanding the needs of the audiences and being more audience focused

Recommendations:
  o Future visitor surveys should attempt to gauge the impacts of the exhibitions on the audience i.e. does the visitor feel they have learnt something and what has that been?
  o There should be a formalised process that ensures audience data are inserted into planning processes within the MAGNT, and actions should be tracked and recorded against those data.
  o Resources permitting, surveys of non-visitors should be implemented to gain information on why people are not visiting.

Being more involved in community-partnered products

Recommendations:
  o The MAGNT should build on its already strong reputation in Indigenous arts to establish new products for and about Indigenous people and their culture. There is the opportunity to be a national leader in this regard.
  o A Community Access Program could be established with relatively small additional resources.

Developing products for special interest and under-service groups

Recommendations:
  o An improved and expanded Aboriginal cultural program is recommended above.
  o Consideration should be given to identifying a number of demographic groups (e.g. young children, older people) and a program developed to provide focused products (this may require additional resources).

Improving the learning experience by the use of a wide array of methodologies

Recommendations:
  o If additional resources can be secured, there should be a program of exhibition enhancements that incorporate a range of methods and technologies to enhance learning. This should apply to the main galleries and the Discovery Centre.
  o A rich and engaging website which provides a range of services and information should be developed as a priority.
**Acting as forum points for debate and discussion**

Recommendation:
- The MAGNT should explore more actively its role as a forum for public debate and this principle should be incorporated into future delivery of an expanded history exhibition and program (resources permitting).

**Presenting a plurality of views and perspectives**

Recommendation:
- The MAGNT should be exploring a plurality of perspectives whenever possible in its programs, and in particular, in planning for any future expanded program on the history of the Northern Territory.

**Greater awareness and canniness in commercial activities**

Recommendation:
- The areas of commercial activity noted above should be subject to review, in tandem with securing senior commercial expertise.

**Consideration of the scientific focus of the MAGNT**

**Science management and outcomes relative to other museums**

Recommendations:
- The MAGNT should explore opportunities for producing more popular publications on the natural history of the Northern Territory and consider tourists as a significant part of the market.
- The MAGNT should explore opportunities for joint staff appointments with Charles Darwin University (or other possible partner agencies).

**Comparison of per square metre exhibition costs at the MAGNT relative to those of other institutions**

Recommendations:
- If additional resources are available in future, the MAGNT should be directing more funds to exhibition development and refurbishment utilising a range of industry standard methods. Quality long term exhibitions should be funded at $2,500 to $3,000 per square metre of gallery space.
- Additional resourcing should be found to support the changing exhibition program including the Telstra NATSIAA.
- Virtual exhibitions should be developed in parallel with the new website.
Comparison of the acquisition budget of the MAGNT relative to those of other institutions

Recommendation:
- The MAGNT should be better resourced to acquire collection objects, especially works of art, to build a collection commensurate with the status of a state collection. (Acquisition budgets are suggested in the budget scenarios.)

Discussion of three budget scenarios for the MAGNT with their consequent service outcomes

**Scenario 1: Current funding allocation**

Recommendation:
- If recurrent funding remains at current levels, the MAGNT should consider cessation of some program areas rather than ongoing attrition across all core functions.

**Scenario 2: 2003/04 funding plus an additional $1.5 million per year recurrent**

Recommendation:
- With $1.5 million increased recurrent funding, it is suggested that these funds are directed to key strategic staff positions, website development, a temporary exhibition program, progressive upgrades of long term galleries, collection acquisitions and miscellaneous operations (collection care, research, facilities management).

**Scenario 3: 2003/04 funding plus $5.5 million recurrent over 3-5 years and then an amount to be determined per year recurrent**

Recommendation:
- With $5.5 million increased recurrent funding, it is suggested that the areas noted in scenario two are further resourced, together with several additional staff positions, a collections information management system, an Indigenous Art and Culture Unit, a History of the Northern Territory gallery and a substantial outreach program.

Recommendation on budget scenarios:
- In considering the three funding scenarios, it is the Consultant’s view that a funding increase somewhere between scenarios two and three would place the MAGNT soundly for delivering on its dual role of state museum and art gallery. Given the relative size of the Northern Territory, scenario three would be a generous allocation on a per capita basis, although the multiple roles of the MAGNT must be considered. Scenario three would certainly result in very significant improvements in public service delivery assuming associated capital costs could also be addressed.
How big is a $30 million capital works program?

Recommendations:
  o  The MAGNT Building Masterplan requires ongoing planning, refinement and costings which should be addressed as a priority.
  o  In considering the quantum of the masterplan, the dual role of the MAGNT as state museum and art gallery must be considered as should opportunities to establish an iconic statement of Northern Territory identity.
PART E SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

10 Sources of information

Internal MAGNT and Department reports and papers

Budget review of Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, January 2004, Stanton Partners.

Review of the Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, Bullocky Point, Fannie Bay, Darwin, for the Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs, internal review March 2004.


Internal budgetary papers for the MAGNT and Department of Community Development Sport & Cultural Affairs

Internal policy, procedural and planning documents of the MAGNT

Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory Strategic Plan (2004-2009)

Council of Australian Museum Directors Survey results (2001/02, 2002/03)

General resources

Australian Bureau of Statistics website

Northern Territory Government website

Northern Territory Tourism Commission website

Statistics New Zealand website

Annual Reports of museums and art galleries of Australia (online and hard copy)

Websites of the major museums and galleries of Australia

Specific references


Personal input

Staff and stakeholders of the MAGNT provided essential information without which this report would have been impossible.

Senior staff of a number of museums and galleries in Australia provided information not available in the public record.
11 Acknowledgments

The Consultant acknowledges the assistance of the Department of Community Development, Sport & Cultural Affairs; all those persons who participated in the interviews for background information pertinent to this Review; staff of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory for their provision of a diversity of inhouse reports and information on policies and operations; and the Western Australian Museum for use of its Reference Library.
Postscript

The MAGNT does not produce its own Annual Report. Instead, the MAGNT is subsumed within the Annual Report for the Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs, as part of the Arts Museums and Libraries Division. This is reported as one Output Group and the amount of information about the MAGNT contained in this format is minimal. The effect is that there is very little information about the MAGNT’s operations readily available and easily accessible in the public domain. It might be viewed that this is not achieving a degree of transparency that would be desirable. By way of immediate example, this Review relied heavily on comparisons of museums using public information available in annual reports of the state and national museums of Australia, amongst other sources such as their websites. No such review could be undertaken including the MAGNT if it relied on annual report data, or indeed on any data readily available to the public.
PART F APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Scope of Services of the Review (selected extracts from the Request for Tender, Project D04-1158)

3.1. Overall objective
To provide an independent assessment of the performance of the Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory as a state level scientific and cultural institution.

3.3 Specific objectives
1. Assess the output of MAGNT against the standard activities of collection development and management, public programs and research in comparison with that of other state level museums and art galleries interstate;
2. Identify current trends in museums and art galleries and assess the appropriateness of the current focus of the MAGNT in comparison with overseas and interstate trends;
3. Assess the manner in which the scientific focus of the MAGNT contributes to Territory economic activity and Government programs and how management of scientific research and outcomes compares with that in other museums;
4. Provide succinct advice on what the service outcomes of the following budget scenarios would be:
5. Comparison of per square metre costs of exhibitions mounted by the MAGNT with those of comparable state level institutions; and
6. Comparison of relative acquisitions budgets with comparable state level art galleries and museums

3.4 Scope restrictions
The review will examine only the activities of the MAGNT at Bullocky Point.

3.7 Review outputs
A written report addressing the specific objectives and scope of the Review, and including:
- An assessment of the performance of the Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory as a state level institution and cultural institution;
- Documentation of any inconsistencies in management practices at MAGNT compared with other like organisations; and
- Succinct advice on what the service outcomes of the following budget scenarios would be:
  o Current funding allocation only
  o 2003/04 funding plus an additional $1.5 million recurrent
  o Increasing 2003/04 funding by an additional $5.5 million over 3-5 years and then an amount to be determined per year recurrent
3.8 **Review outcomes**
The Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs will have detailed information to inform future directions for the MAGNT, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its operation, to identify any gaps, and to put sound funding proposals to Government if necessary by way of a Cabinet submission.
Appendix 2. Persons interviewed for this review

Persons interviewed in Darwin, 21-26 November 2004

Senior Government representatives

Ms Sylvia Langford  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Department of Community Development Sport & Cultural Affairs  
GPO Box 4621  
DARWIN NT 0801

Mrs Diana Leeder  
Executive Director Arts Museums & Library Services  
GPO Box 1774  
DARWIN NT 0801

External stakeholders

Mr Steve Sutton  
Director  
Heritage & Conservation Branch  
Department of Infrastructure Planning & Environment  
GPO Box 1680  
DARWIN NT 0801

Ms Julie Roberts  
Fine Arts Building  
Charles Darwin University  
DARWIN NT 0909

Mr Kelvin Costello  
Chairman  
Larrakia Development Corporation  
GPO Box 2698  
DARWIN NT 0801

Dr Greg Leach  
DIPE Natural Resources  
PO Box 496  
PALMERSTON NT 0831

Mr Murray Hird  
Department of Business Industry & Resource Development  
GPO Box 3000  
DARWIN NT 0801

Professor Bart Currie  
Menzies School of Health Research  
PO Box 41096
Internal stakeholders

Mr Colin McDonald QC
Chairman MAGNT Board
GPO Box 4369
DARWIN NT 0801

Dr Sylvia Kleinert
Fine Arts Building
Charles Darwin University
DARWIN NT 0909
(Board member)

Mr Rod Meyers
President MAGNT Foundation
PO Box 41672
CASUARINA NT 0811

MAGNT staff:

Ms Anna Malgorzewicz
Director

Dr Barry Russell
Assistant Director Research and Collections

Ms Angela Keith
Exhibitions & Communications Manager

Ms Ricci McDonald
Facilities & General Services Manager

Ms Kate Smith
Education Manager

Ms Daena Murray
Curator Visual Arts

Other persons interviewed for review:
Senior managers of several state museums and galleries
Appendix 3. Questions for stakeholders for MAGNT review

Background

The interviewee was given a background/history of this Review if required.

General

- Begin with your name, position and relationship (including length of your association) with the MAGNT.
- Start by your overall impressions. How do you regard the MAGNT in terms of delivery on its statutory responsibilities and general programs?
- What are its strongest attributes?
- What are the key areas you’d identify that need attention/improvement? Are these all about resources or are there other issues in your view?
- What areas of activity would you like to see grow? Are there things that are not done at all that you think the MAGNT should do?
- Are there any areas of activity that you feel could be reduced? Are there things the MAGNT is doing that would better be done by another agency?
- How is the MAGNT regarded by the general community? By government? Are any concerns primarily ones of advocacy/marketing, or are they more fundamental?
- How do you see the MAGNT balancing its public good and commercial functions?

For staff

- Do you like being part of the MAGNT? How much do you enjoy what you do? Why?
- What would you change about your job/role if you could? What would you do more of? Less? Why?

For other stakeholders

- Is there more that the MAGNT could be doing with your agency/department? What would be the mutual benefits of that? How could it be effected?
- Do you think the MAGNT is contributing as well as it can to the NT’s future?

Finally ….

- If the MAGNT could be like any other institution in the world, what would that institution be? What would be the ultimate benchmark model?
- If the MAGNT can do more good things if it is better resourced, what is the key message that has to be conveyed to government to make this case?
- Are there any other matters you’d like to raise that haven’t been covered or a final point you’d like to emphasise?
Appendix 4. A summary of views expressed in the interviews with stakeholders.

A summary of the views and suggestions expressed by those persons interviewed is presented here under category headings.

The participants in the process of review were all stakeholders of the MAGNT in some way, and most if not all must be regarded as generic friends or allies of the institution. Those who work for the MAGNT have a stake in enhancing their work environment and organisational delivery. Those who support it in various ways (eg on the Board or Foundation) are clearly committed to the agency’s advancement or would not devote their time as they do. Staff in other Northern Territory agencies that work with the MAGNT will, presumably, benefit if the museum can deliver a better range or quality of services. Museum leaders around the country have a shared desire to see museums and galleries better resourced. Thus it is not surprising that the overall input from stakeholders was highly supportive of the MAGNT and desirous of improved conditions and resources for it.

This Review did not attempt any form of broader community consultation. There is however input gained from the Exit Surveys that the MAGNT undertakes biannually and the larger scale Visitor Intercept Survey (McGregor Tan Research, September 2004). These documents are not referred to here, but are discussed at several points within the body of this Review.

Overview of stakeholder comments

The general observations of the MAGNT by those interviewed were overwhelming positive. This was particularly so regarding the public programs run by the institution. It was regarded as a high quality resource to the people and Territory, especially when the size of the population of the Northern Territory is considered. Those who commented from an external perspective regarded the MAGNT as having a ‘great public front’, the displays were described as anywhere from good to ‘magnificent’ and that the MAGNT ‘punches above its weight’ in terms of delivery of visitor experiences. ‘Darwin is very fortunate to have the MAGNT’, was a view expressed in various terms. In short, for a museum/gallery of its size, it was doing well, although there were areas perceived as being under-represented (eg. Northern Territory history, Australian art).

The MAGNT was regarded as a unique resource to the Northern Territory. The lack of any similar attractions or facilities was seen to distinguish the MAGNT from its sister agencies in other parts of Australia, especially in the eastern States where there are multiple large and medium sized museums and galleries in the larger cities and towns.

Most external and all internal respondents expressed concerns at what they perceived as a lacking, and reduction, in resources, that was impacting on the MAGNT’s program delivery.

This view of achieving a lot for a little was held by staff and those stakeholders with knowledge of the agency’s budget and internal operations. The achievement of a quality visitor experience was a paramount concern for staff and overall the feeling
was that this was being achieved within the very tight resources. The lack of a meaningful virtual delivery (via the internet) of public programs was identified as a key weakness by several staff.

A number of people, internal and external, commented on what they saw as the MAGNT having moved more and more to create a diverse and customer-focused experience, especially in recent years.

Regarding the collections and research, the overview was mixed, according to the individual’s knowledge of the MAGNT’s activities. There were some concerns that the museum’s research may not be adequately focused or not adequately promoting its own relevance. Several people felt the MAGNT had been reduced in its performance and standing in some areas, including terrestrial faunal studies and survey and archaeology. One person described themselves as ‘saddened at the diminution of the MAGNT’s capacity’ and that the MAGNT was a ‘shadow of its former self’ in some disciplines of former strength. Another felt that the MAGNT was so desperate to earn external funds now to support its research that it was not always thinking through all of the strategic and legal aspects of maximising the returns from that research.

No one questioned the overall quality and commitment of the MAGNT’s research and collections staff. A number of research partners commented on the importance and value of the research and one observed that it was ‘critical to have that expertise in the Northern Territory’. However, there were also views that the MAGNT had not capitalised adequately on its expertise and had not aligned its research as well as it might with the needs of Government.

If there was a widely held view it was that the time had come to turn the MAGNT from a period of ‘contraction into expansion’.

**Perceived key strengths and deficiencies of the MAGNT**

**The public program**

The capacity to deliver a vibrant public program was a commonly identified strength, and those who were aware of resourcing emphasised the very limited resources available to that program. The perception was widely that the public program was now more creative than it had ever been with quality presentation and graphics (largely done inhouse). As well, new initiatives such as the Discovery Centre and increased holiday programs were seen as very effective in enhancing the public educational outputs. The Education Volunteer program was seen as a strength.

The Telstra NATSIA Award was raised by several people as an outstanding event, although there were comments that the available gallery space is too small for a good profile of entries. There was also the comment that the Award night had become a ‘bit too sanitised’ in recent years and had less contact with and involvement of Indigenous people.

Free admission to the Bullocky Point site was seen as a great advantage in attracting locals and tourists alike. The best mix of maximising access and commercial nous is
part of this discussion, in so far as what is charged for and what is free. (See Commercial mix below).

Operating pleasant airconditioned public facilities in a warm to hot tropical climate was identified by a (surprisingly) high number of people as a key attractor to visitors.

In terms of public program facilities, several people referred to the inadequacy of gallery space to deliver on a true state museum and state art gallery program. In particular, non-Indigenous Australian art and the history of the Northern Territory were seen as poorly covered in exhibitions. This was seen as reducing the value of the MAGNT as a resource for students, as well as a facility for the general public.

The near absence of an outreach program was noted by several people as a weakness and the lack of a well structured and interactive website was noted by even more of the respondents. These are both relating to remote delivery of products, beyond the walls of the institution, to people who may not be able to visit in person or who seek information relating to MAGNT programs.

One respondent noted that community based exhibitions were rather lacking.

**Art gallery-museum mix**

The combination of art gallery and museum programs was seen as a strength by several people, most notably amongst internal stakeholders. This combination was seen to give the MAGNT opportunities for a more flexible program of synergistic products, although there was some admission that in practice relatively few truly synergistic products had been delivered.

In contrast, some external stakeholders wondered whether that combination was in fact to the advantage of the institution, that is, was it trying to be and do too many things and that in such a mix, some areas will inevitably be ‘losers’ in terms of resourcing. For example, one external stakeholder felt that natural science had for some time been the ‘poor cousin’ to arts at the MAGNT (but noting that this view can extend to finer levels of detail, for example another view was that the fine arts may have been the ‘poor cousin’ to Indigenous arts).

**The site and buildings**

The site at Bullocky Point was identified by both internal and external respondents as a strong attribute for the MAGNT. Several people felt that not enough was being done with the site however and that better use of the surrounds for things such as external art installations would enhance the visitor experience. Closer links with precinct neighbours such as the Botanic Gardens was raised as a sensible strategy.

The wider location of the MAGNT was also seen as a plus, in so far as its placement as the primary museum and gallery of northern Australia, adjacent to Southeast Asia. This was seen as a defining attribute, one that the MAGNT has, and should continue to, exploit as a unique niche.
The original buildings on the site date from 1981 and one respondent commented on their increasing problems of age-related maintenance, exacerbated by a tropical climate and inadequate funding. This was seen as leading to a ‘crisis management’ approach rather than strategic building management. Several persons noted the buildings were looking tired.

**Public regard and marketing**

It was generally felt that the MAGNT did a good job now of marketing itself and communicating its public programs to the residents of Darwin. The high percentage of tourist visitors suggested that effective contact was being made with that sector as well (although there is also a view that tourists simply ‘do’ the MAGNT as part of the Darwin visit). Nonetheless, senior MAGNT staff would like to create better awareness of the institution and its program via targeted advertising. As well, it was noted by one person that more needs to be known about why people do not visit, as well as the views of those that have.

The MAGNT Foundation has recently refocused its activities with the aim of making better contact with general members of the community.

As is noted further below, the respect and affection of the community was seen as a strong attribute by many of those interviewed. The MAGNT was described as ‘critically important in the cultural life of the Territory’.

**The collections and research**

There is a general consensus that the MAGNT’s collection strengths are in Aboriginal art, regional cultural material (notably of Southeast Asia and to a lesser extent Oceania) and the fauna of the Northern Territory and northern Australia. There seemed less confidence regarding other areas of the art collection and the history collections. The non-Indigenous art collection was described as ‘severely lacking’ by one respondent. The maritime collection drew varied comment, ranging from accolades for its strength and reflection of regional (notably Southeast Asian) maritime heritage to a measure of concern as to its strategic purpose and costs of holding and maintenance.

It is a common view that the MAGNT today is ‘less lassez faire’ in its approach to research and collecting than was once the case. The attitude of several respondents was that past administrations and curators acted in a degree of isolation in their collection and research pursuits, and that this has (generally for the better) become more focused and corporatised over the years. Both internal and external interviewees expressed concern that the research activities of the MAGNT should be, and be seen to be, relevant to Government and the broader community of the Northern Territory.

There are now in place a number of collections policies and procedural documents, that define the range and nature of collection-related activities. The view of those aware of these documents was that they were a solid advance in focused collection practices.
The lack of adequate inventory and documentation of major parts of the collections was identified by several people as a serious weakness. The disparate and inadequate collection information management systems were a source of common complaint.

The reduction in research and curatorial strength in several disciplines, one of which referred to by several people being archaeology, was seen as a significant weakening of the MAGNT’s capabilities. Even more generally expressed was the view that collection storage conditions and space were reaching a critical stage. The MAGNT ‘desperately needs more storage’ was the expression of one staff member.

The staff

The MAGNT staff were seen as a strong resource (by both external respondents and the staff themselves). One respondent expressed this as the MAGNT and its staff ‘having the capacity to deliver’. Even where some external stakeholders raised some concerns about certain areas of activity, they were at pains to emphasise their respect for the commitment and skills of the institution’s staff. Several respondents commented on the more friendly face to the museum via its visitor service staff. The high expectations on staff were also noted and those who were aware of resourcing observed that staff were often trying to do more than could reasonably be required of one position. The achievements of the current director in re-motivating and energising the organisation – ‘taking (the institution) to another level’ as one person described it - over the past four years were noted by several people, both internal and external. The relationship between management and the Board appears to be very sound.

There was a view raised that at least some of the MAGNT staff may not have adapted to change as quickly as might have been desirable and that there is a perception in some quarters that some museum staff are still very focused on traditional pursuits, perhaps to the detriment of being more proactive in exploring new and more relevant activities. In tandem with this observation was the comment that for some of the more arcane activities, such as biosystematic research, the real value of the work was not well appreciated across the community or within government.

There is a palpable feeling of strain amongst some of the MAGNT staff, reflecting what they see as growing expectations that they must deliver on a range of increasing administrative duties as well as maintain (or grow) a viable museum/gallery program with limited (and indeed reducing in real terms) resources. The concern at sacrificing strategic thinking and planning in order to focus on day-to-day administration was variously expressed by several senior staff. Nonetheless, the overall expression from staff was one of high morale, internal harmony and respect for the current management.

Resources

The majority of those interviewed referred to inadequate resources at least once in their discussion, and many referred to this repeatedly. The ability to deliver good programs on a small budget was considered a great capacity of the MAGNT but it was felt by all interviewed that programs had been progressively curtailed or even dropped because of reduced available resources.
Interestingly, there was little suggestion from anyone that the MAGNT had made fundamental errors of judgment in resource allocation – a common complaint against management of agencies that are stretched for resources and having to make hard decisions.

**The Act and position within Government**

This is always a delicate issue for museums and galleries. Within the MAGNT, there is some concern regarding the Museum and Art Galleries Act (1999) which is seen as being ‘very broad’ and does not define the MAGNT per se. (The ACT defines the powers and roles of the Minister and Board.) These concerns were not particularly shared by non-staff members interviewed.

As a related issue, there was substantial concern expressed by a number of respondents that the bureaucratic model currently in place for the MAGNT was not conducive to the effective delivery of cutting edge cultural, art and scientific services. There was significant criticism of what was perceived to be a heavily vertical structure (with several senior positions between the Director and the responsible Minister), the lack of adequate and appropriate administrative resourcing to the MAGNT and the lack of understanding of and empathy for the MAGNT’s functions within a large multi-facettted Department. Many respondents yearned for more direct and regular contact between the MAGNT and the Minister. (These are common concerns amongst staff and boards of museums and galleries around the country, especially where the museum has a significant science component but sits within a cultural/arts department. In the case of the MAGNT, these concerns tend to be compounded by the non-statutory authority status of the agency.)

**What could be improved and enhanced; what could be reduced or ceased?**

**Commercial activities**

Some replies noted that more could be done regarding commercial activities in a clever way and that enhanced commercial management and leadership would be desirable. The stock of the shop was raised by a number of people, as to whether it was adequately capturing the local and tourist markets as well as it could. The location and size of the shop was raised by some staff as less than ideal.

The Cornucopia Café was seen as a strength to the MAGNT but the lease relationship was a matter of concern to some who were aware of the matter. There was a strong feeling that the MAGNT should be getting a better return on its investment in the café infrastructure (also identified by the Stanton Partners report, January 2004).

(Refer also to the Public good/commercial balance discussion below).

**Entrance and foyer**

Several persons regarded the entrance to the MAGNT as being obscure and failing to create an entry statement. The design of the foyer was also problematic in the view of a number of people.
New and expanded public programs

The lacking in gallery space was an issue raised by several persons interviewed. It was felt this constrained the MAGNT in its dual role of state art gallery and state museum. Notably, long term galleries for Australian/Northern Territory art and social history were identified as areas requiring expansion.

Some respondents noted that it was harder now for the MAGNT to mount large scale touring exhibitions as it had in the past, *Life and Death under the Pharaohs* being mentioned as an example. The reduction in resources was identified as the underlying cause of this diminution.

A number of specific options were raised as deserved of more focus. Open days and public talks/seminars were flagged as successful ways to link with the public, but irregularly held in recent years. Guided tours were suggested as a desirable adjunct to the visitor experience. These ancillary packages should be well advertised in advance. Expanding the ‘static’ museum and gallery experience with living culture was raised, which might see performances of Indigenous dance and craft as part of the MAGNT package. Partnerships with other agencies were suggested as assisting this enhancement. An artist in residence program was also suggested.

Market research was noted by more than one person as needing expansion, and this in part was noted as a resourcing issue both in dollars and staff.

It was suggested that opportunities for community-partnered programs could be explored further, with the advantage of building links with community groups as well diversifying the public program.

Indigenous visitors

There is a lack of data on the number of Indigenous visitors but it was observed that the numbers in galleries was typically low and that more consideration might be directed to how the Indigenous visitation might be increased. The option of designated areas for Indigenous visitors was raised. This issue links with the matter of Aboriginal staffing noted below.

Site

As is noted above, the site is seen as a strength to the museum (refer the Consultant’s discussion if site/location in the body of the Report as the site has its weaknesses as well) but was not adequately part of the MAGNT experience. Suggestions included having more interpretive materials, open air sculptures and an Indigenous garden.

While not the subject of this review, the challenge of operating other sites as well as the Bullocky Point main facility was noted by several staff members. Some of those sites were seen as having greater potential than was currently being exploited but the lack of time and resources to address them restricted advancement.
Outreach and publications

Enhancing the outreach program was identified as a key need by a number of those interviewed with the development of a new and improved website a priority. Some forms of touring products were seen as desirable by at least one respondent.

The current website is regarded by staff and some others as very basic and does not deliver on the types of products available from other museums and galleries. This was seen as an important area requiring enhancement.

The current level of publication was seen by a number of people as requiring enhancement. This would see a broader range of museum-related publications for the general public. Field guides of local fauna was one area identified as having potential.

Research and collections

As is noted above, the refinement in definition of activity in these areas via a number of policy and procedural documents was seen as a significant improvement in the MAGNT’s focus. Some of those interviewed considered that further review of research activity and outputs was justified. There are several areas of former activity that no longer have a dedicated curator, including archaeology and crustacean systematics. Both were missed by some respondents who suggested that their addition would allow better activity of the MAGNT in two areas of particular importance (early human settlement and cultures and the marine ecosystems of the Northern Territory).

In biological research, it was opinioned that the MAGNT was not adequately involved in DNA/genetic studies and was currently poorly equipped to do so.

There was a view amongst some external stakeholders that the MAGNT had not been, and while improving, still was not sufficiently orientated to making its research expertise available to Government for decision-making. (This is further discussed under Partnerships below).

A number of people considered the poor quality of collection documentation and information access to be critical, requiring a substantial upgrade of the collection information management system (database).

Several respondents noted the need for a meaningful acquisitions fund to allow strategic purchase of objects, especially works of art. In expanding on this, two interviewees felt that with funds available, targeted purchases in certain areas, for example early European images of the Northern Territory, could see the collection assume a unique perspective of Australia’s north.

Staff

The need for more Indigenous people on the MAGNT staff was noted by at least one respondent. The difficulties in achieving this were recognised but achieving a user-friendly place for Indigenous visitors would be assisted with a stronger Indigenous staff presence.
An increase in staff across several areas of operations was identified as needed by several external and internal interviewees. (Positions referred to feature in the draft staffing plan for the MAGNT, refer Internal Review March 2004). Staff often feel under significant pressure to deliver without what they see as adequate staffing support. Several staff see themselves (justifiably it might be said) as doing multiple jobs.

**Reductions**

Many of those interviewed could not think of any current area of activity that the MAGNT should reduce, let alone cease. The question often elicited the reiteration that expansion of programs was what was needed, not reduction. In addition to the comments regarding progressive reduction in available resources for core programs, there were several references to the negative impacts of a number of deaccessions of collection objects due to the lack of funds to adequately maintain them.

Some people suggested that the areas of MAGNT’s research might be reviewed and confirmed, but did not make that comment with a strong suggestion that anything should be dropped. In a similar vein, there was a suggestion that the respective roles of the MAGNT, State Library and Archives in managing documentary heritage might justify some review, in order to achieve the most effective and efficient use of resources in this important area of heritage management.

The management of several heritage and historic sites was noted as not being core museum business and that having to do so diverted resources and attention from the important roles of collection care and public education.

The MAGNT acts as a granting body for the Regional Museums Grant Support Program. This was questioned as a MAGNT area of responsibility by more than one respondent, suggesting that another arm of the Department may be better able to serve this role.

It would be an accurate summary to say that, apart from some specific issues noted above, no one interviewed suggested that any major areas of the MAGNT’s activities should, or even could, be taken over by another agency in the Northern Territory.

**Perceived attitude of the public and Government to the MAGNT**

**Public**

There was a consistent view among respondents that the MAGNT was well, or very highly, regarded by the public of the Northern Territory. A common observation was that the MAGNT was a place that locals would bring visitors, presumably reflecting the public view that the facility was something to be proud of and of having visitor appeal. The relatively high visitation figures for the Bullocky Point site would support this view.

Certain questions were raised. There was a view that while the community was positive towards the MAGNT, it ‘probably does not rate so highly in people’s minds’.
Some of those interviewed felt that the pleasant physical conditions of airconditioning and the attractive grounds may be as important attractors as the actual public programs. The high Indigenous population of the Northern Territory was noted by several people, who observed that the numbers of Indigenous visitors appeared to be very low (other than to special events such as the NATSIAA). The lack of contact with Palmerston residents was also noted. (Visitor statistics are not sufficiently detailed to analyse the demographics of visitors.)

Some people felt that the public would respond well if certain dimensions of the public program were enhanced, notably if a permanent display of Australian (non-Indigenous) art were available. An improved social history coverage of the Northern Territory was also seen by some as likely to be well received by the public. Suggested public program enhancements are also noted in above sections.

The need to maintain or grow the repeat visitation by residents was noted by a number of staff, which in turn must inform a changing public program of events.

**Government**

There was a feeling amongst the staff and Board that the MAGNT was not well understood by Government but was nonetheless seen by Government as a positive part of the Northern Territory for residents and visitors alike. The MAGNT ‘can make the Government look good’, was one view expressed.

A common concern is that the contributions of the MAGNT are not necessarily seen across whole-of-government priorities and are instead pigeon-holed within the rather small portfolio of cultural affairs. These views of not being well understood link with those noted above regarding the operating relationship between the MAGNT and Department. Overall however, the working and communication relationship between the MAGNT and Departmental staff seems to be one of generally mutual respect. In particular, the relationship between senior MAGNT management and senior staff in the Department seems very sound.

As a related issue, one external person observed that the attitude of Government in the past may have been that the MAGNT was something of a maverick agency, with insufficient controls over it.

There is a (sometimes begrudging) acceptance by MAGNT advocates that Government has many competing priorities and that the onus is on the MAGNT to make a case for resources that can ‘stack up’ (words of one respondent) against those other priorities. There is some feeling that perhaps the MAGNT has not enunciated its case as well as it needed to in the past.

In common with other museums and galleries around the country, the MAGNT’s achievements on a low budget can in some ways work against it. In this respect, the institution can be ‘its own worst enemy’ (quote from a respondent) in that a good program continues to be run with declining available funds. In that environment, why would Government direct additional funding to a museum/gallery when crucial areas of public infrastructure (housing, roads, hospitals) are clearly demanding costly attention? This is an eternal conundrum for museums and galleries.
Partnerships with other areas of Government are noted below.

**Partnerships, including with other areas of government**

External and internal respondents felt that the MAGNT was making a real effort to be involved in partnerships and across-government initiatives. There was general consensus that the institution had moved away from being highly individualistic to being more of a team player. There were several stories about one former Director in particular, with both criticism and respect for what was achieved in those early days of the independent museum. ‘A history dominated by personalities’ was the way one person appraised the past activities of the MAGNT.

Current senior MAGNT staff in particular see the need for establishing and maintaining partnerships and direct a significant part of their working time to this end.

External partners universally regarded the contribution of the MAGNT as important or ‘critical’. A common observation was that the Territory needed the expertise of MAGNT staff available and if it wasn’t there, finding alternatives would be difficult. There was a consistent view that the skills of the MAGNT complemented those of partner agencies.

Several people felt that there were very good opportunities for partnerships involving the MAGNT to expand in future. This could include partnerships relating to biomedical research and tropical systems.

In certain areas, partnerships are in effect legislated onto the MAGNT. For example, the MAGNT has responsibilities for maritime heritage under the Commonwealth Historic Shipwrecks ACT (1977) and the Northern Territory’s Heritage Conservation Act (1991, under review). The Meteorites Act (2000) also requires the MAGNT through its Board to take responsibility for meteorites in the Territory, necessitating working relationships with other departments.

Several external stakeholders commented on the dwindling capacity of the MAGNT to enter into meaningful partnerships however. One person described this as a ‘willingness on the part of MAGNT to provide input but its resources seem to have dwindled’. Areas of identified diminution included archaeological input and terrestrial faunal biology and survey. In the case of archaeology, one respondent bemoaned the diminishing base of expertise in a part of Australia where Indigenous cultural heritage was so important. Regarding terrestrial biological survey, one external observer felt that the MAGNT may have ‘missed the boat’ regarding marketing its expertise as other agencies, notably the DPIE, had better positioned themselves to be the main adviser to Government. This was seen to reflect a lack of awareness at the MAGNT that its activities had to be seen as relevant and applied to hands-on and current management decisions, rather than merely be academically worthy. Other agencies were seen as more responsive providers of information. This attitude is perceived as changing in that the MAGNT is more likely today to see the need and value of making its research relevant to Government. Getting the collections databased with information available in meaningful ways was seen as vital to enhancing the relevance of MAGNT collections.
The MAGNT’s strength in marine biosystematics was seen as a particularly relevant base for growing partnerships. The MAGNT was described as still being a ‘powerhouse in marine taxonomic expertise’, even though some curatorial disciplines (e.g. crustacea) remain unstaffed. With the Government focus on marine protection including marine parks there would be a real role for a responsive MAGNT to be a key partner with other government departments. The continued opportunities in biomedical and bioprospecting activities, especially associated with marine fauna, were seen to offer the MAGNT real potential for significant roles.

In addition to other Northern Territory Government agencies, Charles Darwin University (CDU) and the Australian Institute of Marine Studies were the most commonly referred to partners for the MAGNT. This was not only in scientific research. CDU and the MAGNT have established an Art History Internship program that will be initiated in 2005. MAGNT staff have co-supervised CDU post-graduate students and this was regarded as a valuable contribution to the Territory’s tertiary education program. With the Australian National University, CDU and the MAGNT are collaborating on a Visiting Scholars program in Indigenous art.

Partnerships with the Indigenous community were seen as any area of potential growth by several respondents. The Larrakia Nation for example is keen to build on an already sound relationship with MAGNT to partner in the development of a Larrakia Cultural Facility. The lack of a ‘living’ dimension to the Aboriginal exhibitions at the MAGNT is noted above. There was positive comment regarding the Cultural Awareness Program that has been held in a Larrakia Nation-MAGNT partnership each year since 2002. Discussions with MAGNT regarding the National NAIDOC celebrations in Darwin 2006 have also been ‘positive’ to date. Partnerships for training and employment of Indigenous people at the MAGNT would be desirable (also noted above).

In considering ways to address resource shortfalls, the MAGNT would like to explore the option of negotiating support from the Department of Education for staffing placements.

In considering its possible partnerships, one respondent suggested the MAGNT should not limit its horizons and should explore linkages with major overseas partners, leveraging off the MAGNT’s placement as a tropical base within a developed world country.

The balance of public good and commercial activities

A number of those interviewed felt they could not comment in an informed way about whether or not the MAGNT had achieved an effective balance of the above broad deliverables. The strong consensus was that the MAGNT had to be commercially aware and explore options for revenue generation, and that it had made efforts to do so. Several areas were noted as having potential for improved revenue.

A number of people considered the Museum Shop an underperforming resource. Issues such as stock choice including the dearth of certain types of merchandise were
raised. The size and location of the shop were noted by a number of staff as less than ideal.

The Cornucopia Café is seen as a successful facility, and one of the attributes of a visit to the Bullocky Point site. The lease arrangement with the MAGNT is seen as needing review however, to achieve a better return to the Museum.

No one raised the option of charging for general admission to the MAGNT at Bullocky Point and when this option was suggested to them, the response was generally negative. It was seen as likely to have a major negative effect on visitation and would not be popular with the Museum Board or Government. There were comments that there have been relatively few special exhibitions for which an admission fee has been charged. Looking closely at how donations are pursued was suggested, in order to better encourage a contribution especially from tourists. There was also some speculation as to whether or not a different charging regime should apply for tourists and for local residents.

Revenue generation through consultancies and commissioned research activities can often be an extension of establishing working partnerships (see section on Partnerships above). Consortia of agencies can often lever outcomes impossible to any one agency. One external view was that the MAGNT had to be very careful not to undersell itself in its dealings in areas of significant commercial potential, such as bioprospecting. The importance of having a well constructed contractual arrangement that maximised returns to the MAGNT and the Northern Territory was emphasised. The Department of Business Industry and Resource Development is available to provide advice in such matters.

Few of those interviewed referred to sponsorships as an area of potential growth. Where it was discussed, the feeling was the Northern Territory was a small place with limited potential for major new sponsorships. One person did suggest that perhaps an ‘adopt a boat’ program might be considered, to assist in the high costs of management of the large objects such as the maritime collection. The Foundation has recently restructured itself to be more a membership organisation (something of a Friends group) in order to make better contact with, and derive income from, general members of the public as well as Benefactors (Bronze, Silver, Gold).

Suggested benchmarks for the MAGNT

This was an interesting question and the responses were correspondingly diverse. In fairness, it would probably have been justifiable to prompt those interviewed in advance that this was to be asked, and that may have assisted them to consider models for the MAGNT. A number of respondents, especially external stakeholders, did not feel adequately informed to make any suggestions.

The responses ranged from the very grand examples of the museum world, such as Te Papa Museum of New Zealand and the Guggenheim Bilbao, to quite intimate and personal experiences that respondents recalled of museums and galleries. A sample of the suggestions were (in no particular order):
o Te Papa Museum of New Zealand: for its biculturalism and cross-disciplinary elements, as well as the four discovery centres
o Blasket Island cultural centre, Ireland: for its effective approach to text and graphics based interpretation
o Tate Modern London and Brisbane Powerhouse: for their effective conversions of industrial premises to a cultural use; and for the Tate, its thematic approach to displays
o Victoria and Albert Museum, London: for its engagement with objects … the power of drawers of specimens
o Djamu, Sydney: a now closed extension of the Australian Museum that attempted to link Indigenous collections with the best in art presentation
o Jewish Museum, Berlin: for the striking architecture linking the building to the public experience
o Museum of Music Automatons (Musee Suisse), Seewen: for its intellectually interactive approach to engagement with musical instruments
o History Museum of Basel, Switzerland: for the effectiveness of its highly diverse displays of Basel history
o Powerhouse Museum, Sydney: for its multidisciplinary exhibitions
o Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain: for the combination of spectacular design and functional internal spaces
o National Gallery Victoria international galleries: for the spectacular progression through time from ground floor upwards
o Art Gallery of South Australia: for its functional facilities and the effective packaging of events and marketing
o The Metropolitan Museum (‘The Met’), New York: for the inspiring exhibitions
o Queensland Art Gallery: for its quality galleries and presentation
o San Francisco Art Institute: for the quality of its resources and facilities and linkage to schools
o Art Gallery of New South Wales: for its teachers program
o Melbourne Museum: for its community research facilities
o And Musee d’Orsay, Paris: because everyone loves d’Orsay!

Some respondents gave quite different models. There was a suggestion that the MAGNT should be more like a Government Business Division and operate more like the Territory Wildlife Park.

There was also the suggestion that the MAGNT should be the model for a medium sized museum and gallery and the must-see destination for all visitors to the Northern Territory. And that is a very fine model indeed.

**Suggested messages to Government**

Not all the respondents could identify any one message to convey to Government regarding the MAGNT and its future. A sample of those suggestions that were made serves to illustrate some key points that warrant consideration in any approach.

- MAGNT must demonstrate its relevance to the Northern Territory.
- MAGNT must ‘sell its potential’ for information use to Government.
MAGNT must show its link to the ‘Knowledge Economy’ of the Northern Territory.

MAGNT is and should be seen to be a unique institution of national significance and a key institution to the Northern Territory.

MAGNT is a significant contributor to the economy of the Northern Territory.

MAGNT can assist Government in delivering on key areas and cross-government commitments.

‘In the 21st century, culture is the cement of society’… and … ‘the MAGNT is critically important in the cultural life of the Northern Territory’.

MAGNT ‘represents diverse cultures (of the Northern Territory) to ourselves to remind us of who we are and to present that diversity to visitors to the Territory’.

‘What if the MAGNT were not a successful museum and gallery for residents and tourists? What if the MAGNT were not there at all?’

‘The MAGNT discussion is not just about expansion … it is about survival.’

Decisions have to be made now about what type of institution the MAGNT will be.

The above may be paraphrased by saying that the MAGNT must argue its worth to the Northern Territory and the time has come to ‘stop the decline’.
Appendix 5. Functions of the Minister and Board under the Museums and Art Galleries Act 1999.

Section 5. Functions of the Minister:

a) to establish and acquire museums and art galleries in the Territory;
b) to manage and maintain the museums and art galleries so established or acquired or otherwise placed under the Minister’s control
c) to establish, develop and maintain cultural and scientific collections;
d) to promote the appreciation of culture and learning by –
   i. Displaying cultural and scientific collections;
   ii. Organising lectures, demonstrations and other educational activities;
   iii. Publishing educational material, whether in printed form or by audio, audio-visual or electronic means; and
   iv. Any other means that the Minister considers appropriate

e) to conduct, and to assist other persons to conduct, research in relation to the matters referred to in paragraphs c) and d).

Section 10. Functions of the Board:

a) to hold the cultural and scientific collections referred to in section 5 c) on behalf of the Territory;
b) to provide advice to the Minister in relation to the performance or exercise by the Minister of his or her functions or powers;
c) to promote community involvement in museums and art galleries in the Territory;
d) any other functions conferred on the Board by the Minister.
Appendix 6. Corporate structure of the MAGNT

ARTS, MUSEUMS & LIBRARY SERVICES DIVISION
MUSEUMS & ART GALLERIES NT – BRANCH
(MAGNT)
Overview

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ARTS, MUSEUMS & LIBRARY SERVICES

DIRECTOR MAGNT

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Registry
(Outsourced)

DIRECTORATE

EDUCATION

FACILITIES & GENERAL SERVICES

VISITOR SERVICES

NATURAL SCIENCE

HISTORY & CULTURE

EXHIBITIONS & COMMUNICATIONS

ADMIN OFFICER

RECEPTIONIST
Appendix 7. Publications of MAGNT staff 2002/03

Note: Staff and Associate’s names in bold

RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS


RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY REPORTS


POPULAR ARTICLES AND WEB PUBLICATIONS


http://toroa.otago.ac.nz/pubs/spencer/Molluscs/

REVIEWS

Appendix 8. Short profile of the Consultant

Gary Morgan has been a senior manager and CEO of large state and national museum/gallery institutions in Australia and New Zealand over more than ten years. This experience includes a thorough knowledge of all major heritage collection sectors (natural science, anthropology, history, fine arts) and research and curatorial practices associated with those collections. He also has a direct and thorough experience of managing public programs in the museum/gallery context, from project concept through development of the brief, preparation and installation, and evaluation of effectiveness and impact.

As a museum manager, Gary has overseen large and diverse staff bodies, with commensurate diversity in expectations and values, and complex multi-program outcomes including significant capital works projects (including the development of several new museums). He has led major strategic planning processes including the development of new conceptual frameworks and Corporate Strategic Plans.

Gary has current and up-to-date understanding of the museum and gallery sector of Australia, and of its relativities to the international scene

As well as museum experience, he has direct management experience of in situ heritage conservation through work with the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Gary Morgan is now based at Baudinup, a five acre property 100 kilometres south of Perth where he and his wife Sue are renovating the house and revegetating the block. He is pursuing interests in heritage consulting and writing.