

# Exhibiting Evidence: A Case Study\*

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**RÉSUMÉ** Cet article présente des critères de réussite pour les activités d'expositions. L'auteure examine ensuite le cas de l'exposition des Archives nationales d'Australie « Between Two Worlds » afin de comprendre les éléments qui ont contribué au succès des activités de cette exposition. Elle soulève enfin la question de savoir si les expositions doivent être au centre ou à la périphérie des activités des centres d'archives.

**ABSTRACT** This article presents criteria for successful exhibition activities. It then introduces a contextualized case study of an Australian archive exhibition (the National Archives of Australia's "Between Two Worlds" Exhibition) in order to understand the components that contribute towards successful exhibition activities. The issue of whether exhibitions should be valued as peripheral or core activities in an archive program is also addressed.

What makes an archive exhibition successful? It is likely that in order to be outstanding, an exhibition must be both engaging and dynamic. Yet, there are probably other factors that will contribute towards its success. The purpose of this article is to introduce a contextualized case study of an archive exhibition in order to understand the components that contribute to successful exhibition activities. The issue of whether exhibitions should be valued as peripheral or core activities in an archive program is also addressed.

The exhibition selected for this case study is the *National Archives of Australia: Exhibition for the International Year for the World's Indigenous People: Between Two Worlds – The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part-Descent in the Northern Territory*. One of the

\* This article is based largely on my Masters thesis, "Outreach on the Edge: An Exploration of the Concept of Outreach and the Consequences of its Marginalization Within the Australian Archive Programs Between 1998 and 2000." This thesis was submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Information and Management Systems (Honours) degree, Monash University, August 2000. I would like to thank the National Archives of Australia (NAA), in particular Gabrielle Hyslop, Hilary Purdie, and Merryn Gates for providing photographs and information about the *Between Two Worlds* exhibition. I would also like to thank Jan Getson, Karen Rogers, and Jon-Paul Williams for their assistance and ideas.

main purposes of this exhibition was to further the process of reconciliation within Australia as well as helping to celebrate the 1993 International Year for the World's Indigenous People.

The material in this exhibition included personal accounts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who had been removed from their families and placed in camps. The exhibition was presented in a range of different media including oral history tapes, film footage, photographic records, and copies of government documents outlining the policies and attitudes that would shape the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were treated by the authorities.

The exhibition opened in 1993 and travelled for over six years through every state in Australia.<sup>1</sup> This exhibition was chosen as a case study because of the substantial amount of information available about its development, construction, promotion, and evaluation.<sup>2</sup> This article is not an exhibition review, and it should be noted that the author did not get an opportunity to view the

1 Tour dates: October – November 1993, Australian Museum, Sydney; December 1993 – January 1994, Parliament House, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory; April – May 1994, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, Northern Territory; July – August 1994, Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences, Darwin, Northern Territory; August – October 1994, Tandanya Centre, Adelaide, South Australia; October – November 1994, Western Australian Museum, Perth, Western Australia; December 1994 – January 1995, Queens Park Theatre, Geraldton, Queensland; May – June 1995, Dubbo Regional Art Gallery, New South Wales; July – August 1995, Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria; May – October 1996, Newcastle Regional Gallery, New South Wales; February – March 1997, Pinnacles Gallery, Townsville, Queensland; May – July 1997, Cairns Regional Gallery, Queensland; August – September 1998, Salamanca Arts Centre, Tasmania; September – October 1998, Gold Museum, Ballarat, Victoria; December 1998 – April 1999, Parramatta Heritage Center, New South Wales; July – Oct 2000, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory; February – August 2001, National Archives of Australia, Darwin, Northern Territory.

2 Sources include: National Archives of Australia, *National Archives of Australia and National Archives of Australia Advisory Council Annual Reports 1998–99* (National Archives, Canberra, 1999); Australian Archives, *Exhibition for the International Year for the World's Indigenous People: Between Two Worlds – The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part-Descent in the Northern Territory. Exhibition Brief as at 6 July 1993* (National Archives, Canberra, 1993); Australian Archives, *Exhibition Text and Summary of Contents: Between Two Worlds – The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part-Descent in the Northern Territory: An Australian Archives exhibition* (National Archives, Canberra, n.d.); Australian Archives, *Between Two Worlds: The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part-Descent in the Northern Territory. An Australian Archives Exhibition. List of Items on Display* (National Archives, Canberra, n.d.); Market Attitude Research Services, *Evaluation of the "Between Two Worlds" Exhibition: A Social and Marketing Research Report prepared for Australian Archives* (1994). In 1997–98, the Australian Archives name changed to the National Archives of Australia. As the name change occurred during the time this exhibition was traveling, it was decided that the latter title would be used when referring to this institution in the main text.

exhibition. Instead, the author investigated the available resources in order to ascertain the key components of successful exhibitions. The key components were then used as criteria against which the case study exhibition was compared, in order to draw conclusions about the role and value of the exhibition, to the archive program that produced it and to its target audience.

The next section outlines how the available literature defines and/or describes outreach<sup>3</sup> and equivalent activities, including exhibitions. The author makes the assumption that exhibitions are a typical outreach activity. Therefore, unless stated otherwise, any general statements about “outreach” or “public programming” in the texts outlined below are assumed to include exhibitions.

A number of texts have been consulted in order to learn more about the nature of archives program exhibitions.<sup>4</sup> Although each of the texts consulted had a slightly different approach towards the identification and analysis of exhibition activities, there were a number of common themes presented throughout.

3 The author defines outreach as “marketing the mission of the archive program to its defined community.” The author acknowledges that other professionals and authors define this term differently, and often prefer to supplement the word “outreach” with other words of a related or similar meaning, like “public programming,” “educational activities,” “promotional activities,” etc.

4 Some of these texts included: Gabrielle Blais and David Enns, “From Paper Archives to People Archives: Public Programming in the Management of Archives,” *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990–91), pp. 101–113; Gail Farr Casterline, *Archives and Manuscripts: Exhibits* (SAA Basic Manual Series) (Chicago, 1980); Terry Cook, “Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on the Theoretical Underpinnings of Archival Public Programming,” *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990–91), pp. 123–134; Barbara L. Craig, “What are the Clients? Who are the Products? The Future of Archival Public Services in Perspective,” *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990–91), pp. 135–141; Sharron Dickman, *The Marketing Mix: Promoting Museums, Galleries and Exhibitions* (Melbourne, 1995); Timothy L. Ericson, “‘Preoccupied with our own gardens’: Outreach and Archivists,” *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990–91), pp. 114–121; Elsie Freeman, “Education Programs: Outreach as an Administrative Function,” in M.F. Daniels and T. Walch (eds.), *A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice* (Washington, DC, 1984), pp. 281–288; Elsie T. Freeman, “In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the Users Point of View,” *American Archivist* 47, no. 2 (Spring 1984), pp. 111–123; Helen Nosworthy, “Reaching Out: A Core Program for Australian Archives,” in Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott (eds.), *The Records Continuum: Ian Mclean and the National Archives First Fifty Years* (Melbourne, 1994), pp. 64–77; Ann Pederson, “User Education and Public Relations,” in *Keeping Archives*, 2d ed. (Melbourne, 1993), pp. 306–349; Ann E. Pederson and Gail Farr Casterline, *Archives and Manuscripts: Public Programs* (SAA Basic Manual Series) (Chicago, 1982); Joan Rabins, “Archival Exhibits: Considerations and Caveats,” in M.F. Daniels and T. Walch (eds.) *A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice* (Washington, DC, 1984); Carol Scott, “Mapping the Terrain: Evaluation and Visitor Research in Museums,” *Museum National* 4, no. 1 (August 1995), pp. 7–10; Carol Scott, “Evaluation and Visitor Research in Australia and New Zealand: Developments and Trends,” *Museum National* 5, no. 4 (May 1997), p. 5.

The following points were identified as being key elements of successful exhibition activities:

- clearly defined goals and objectives;
- an understanding/knowledge of the target audience;
- evidence of an evaluation process;
- application of strong design/presentation skills;
- a realistic and well organized use of available resources;
- support from marketing activities, in particular publicity activities.

Each of these points will now be examined in further detail. They will be used to assess the case study, to determine if the exhibition met the criteria for successful exhibition activities as identified by the literature.

### Clearly Defined Goals and Objectives

The literature highlights the ad-hoc nature of activities such as exhibitions in many archive programmes and suggests that such an ad-hoc approach is a key factor in activities being inefficient or unsuccessful. According to Pederson and Casterline, successful outreach activities (including exhibitions) require a clarity of purpose,<sup>5</sup> that should be linked to the broader goals of the programme or organization. Nosworthy's article is in agreement with this premise as she notes that public programming activities are just as essential as appraisal, control, description, preservation, storage, and reference services.<sup>6</sup> Nosworthy also believes that public programming activities should be valued as a core function of the archives program, and emphasizes that public programming activities must reflect the overall goals and objectives of the organization.

The exhibition brief as of 6 July 1993,<sup>7</sup> for the *Between Two Worlds* exhibition demonstrated that the exhibition had a number of primary objectives,<sup>8</sup>

5 Pederson and Casterline, *Archives and Manuscripts: Public Programs*, p. 23.

6 Nosworthy, "Reaching Out," p. 70.

7 Australian Archives, *Exhibition Brief as at 6 July*. (Please note that this Brief does not contain page numbers.)

8 "The primary objectives of the exhibition are: 1) to fulfil the requirements of the Government for [NAA] to arrange an exhibition of its records relating to Aboriginal people, and which supports the theme of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People (IYWIP) (in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups); 2) to support the UN and Australian aims for the IYWIP, in particular the aim of furthering the process of reconciliation within Australia. The exhibition will do this by providing an opportunity for visitors to become better informed about some aspects of the social and political history of Australia's indigenous peoples throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and thereby to increase their understanding of the issues affecting Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders today; 3) to give insight into the impact of Commonwealth government administrations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and into the increasing involvement of Aboriginal Australians

including supporting “the theme of the International Year for the World’s Indigenous People (IYWIP) (in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups),” as well as providing “Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders with a better understanding of what records about them and their people were likely to be held by [NAA] or Commonwealth departments.” The *Between Two Worlds* objectives can then be matched against core components of the NAA’s overall goals (which includes making “archives accessible to users to meet their needs”<sup>9</sup>). Although a listing of exhibition objectives is not a sign of success in itself, the *Between Two Worlds* example does demonstrate that such objectives provide direction for the exhibition. For example, a list of objectives can help to define the target audience of the exhibition, as well as providing something to measure the success of the exhibition against later.

Another benefit of clearly defined objectives is that they instantly make the exhibition relevant to the core business of the organization. As demonstrated in the objectives of the *Between Two Worlds* exhibition and the objectives of the NAA as a whole, there is a clear purpose to make records accessible to users. Clearly defined exhibition objectives assist the NAA in achieving its mission. The significance of this achievement will be examined in the latter part of this article, which explores the concept of the archive exhibition as a core function of the archive program.

### **An Understanding/Knowledge of the Target Audience**

The literature also highlights that an understanding of the target audience is an important component of successful exhibition activities. In some instances, the target audience may be undefined or very broad (e.g., anyone who walks through the door *could* be defined as the target audience). In most instances the target audience will include some members of the archive program’s defined community. The target audience may also include people who fall outside the archive program’s defined community. Nosworthy for example, defines a public program at the NAA as a collection of activities devoted to raising the image and awareness<sup>10</sup> of the archive programme in the community. Nosworthy’s definition of “community” includes the general public, public servants, ministerial advisors, and parliamentarians.<sup>11</sup>

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in this process in recent years; 4) to give Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders a better understanding of what records about them and their people are likely to be held by [NAA] or Commonwealth departments; 5) to be relevant, stimulating and challenging; 6) to raise awareness of the existence and purpose of [NAA] and to convince visitors of its significance.” Ibid.

9 National Archives, *Annual Report 1998–99*, p. 2.

10 Nosworthy, “Reaching Out,” p. 76.

11 Ibid, p. 71.

The target audience for the *Between Two Worlds* exhibition included “all Australians.” Although this broad target audience was defined into more specific groups including indigenous people (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders), upper primary and secondary school students, recent immigrant groups, and people who had an intrinsic interest in NAA holdings (e.g., historians, archivists, former and current public servants, and tertiary students). The audience also included overseas visitors.

Identifying the target audience allowed the NAA to plan for some of the pitfalls and potential sources of controversy relating to the exhibition topic. For example, the use of words like “mixed-descent,” “part-descent,” and “caste” were recognized as being derogatory to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Although the wording “children of Aboriginal descent” would have been preferred by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, it was important that the exhibition remained uncensored. The language itself provided evidence from the past, and to fully understand the events being depicted in the exhibition, people needed to see the language that was used – even if it was offensive and upsetting.

Therefore, if exhibition activities are developed with a specific target audience in mind, they are more likely to be successful. When done properly, the specific needs and interests of the target audience can be taken into account and reflected in the scope and nature of the exhibition. Information about the target audience can make the exhibition more focussed and structured.

### **Evidence of an Evaluation Process**

Understanding the purpose and target audience are important components of any exhibition. To ascertain if the goals of the exhibition have been achieved some evaluation of the audience (target or otherwise) also needs to take place. Evaluation is important for accountability purposes and for discovering more about the needs of the defined community.

In the museum field, work on the role and importance of visitor research and evaluation has been steadily growing for some time.<sup>12</sup> Although it is not the intention of this article to draw comparisons between the museum and archive fields, it is perhaps relevant to look at the museum literature on this issue, because to date so little has been written about it in the archive literature. Carol Scott identifies a number of key factors in evaluation practices, including:

... as public section institutions, museums are increasingly being made to account for the public monies that they receive ... parallel to accountability is the equally important recognition of the active role of the visitor in the interpretation of material ... find-

<sup>12</sup> Scott, “Evaluation and Visitor Research,” p. 5.

ing out what the visitor already knows and feels about a subject and using this information in the development of an exhibition or program provides the museum with important knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

As documented in the literature, evaluation of outreach activities can take many forms, and may include anything from a formal market survey to informal observations of visitors while they view an exhibition.

The *Between Two Worlds* exhibition underwent a number of different forms of evaluation. Firstly, visitor statistics were recorded, and in total, over 500,000 people visited the exhibition.<sup>14</sup> Overall, it was understood that the various methods of evaluation revealed that the records displayed in the *Between Two Worlds* exhibition had a strong impact on the broad range of Australian and overseas visitors who came to see it.

In her article, Helen Nosworthy claims that “many more Australians have seen the records on display in this exhibition than have seen almost any other archival records in Australia.”<sup>15</sup>

Part of the extensive evaluation process included the commission of the *MARS Report*,<sup>16</sup> in January 1994. The purpose of this report was to “provide a consultancy to help [the NAA] develop an exhibition program and a marketing strategy to develop and sustain achievement of positive visitor interest and message outcomes from such exhibitions.”<sup>17</sup>

This consultancy and its report were also commissioned in order to find out if any elements of the exhibition needed improvement. The *MARS Report* was not a front-end evaluation because the exhibition was already “on the road” when the evaluation took place. The evaluation results in the *MARS Report* suggested:

- the inclusion of larger, more visible arrows [to highlight particular passages of text];
- that copies of documents should be used for display, instead of originals;

13 Ibid.

14 The following is a breakdown of visitor numbers: Australian Museum, Sydney: 42,449; Parliament House, Canberra: 206,967; Araluen Centre, Alice Springs: 1,806; Northern Territory Museum of A&S, Darwin: 14,580; Tandanya Centre, Adelaide: 6,521; Western Australian Museum, Perth: 67,237; Queens Park Theatre, Geraldton: 8,029; Dubbo Regional Art Gallery: 1,946; Museum of Victoria, Melbourne: 47,083; Newcastle Regional Gallery: 73,536; Pinnacles Gallery, Townsville: 3,571; Cairns Regional Gallery: 7,095; Salamanca Arts Centre: 1,489; Gold Museum, Ballarat: 12,157; Parramatta Heritage Center: 4,500; National Archives of Australia, Canberra: 38,505; National Archives of Australia, Darwin: 385; Total: 537,856.

15 Nosworthy, “Reaching Out,” p. 64.

16 Market Attitude Research Services, *Evaluation of the “Between Two Worlds” Exhibition*.

17 Ibid., p. 3.

- that changes to the video design were required, in order to overcome difficulties experienced in listening to the oral histories.<sup>18</sup>

The *MARS Report* was useful in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the physical appearance of the exhibition, and it was able also to highlight the demographics of the main visitors to the exhibition at the time and place of the evaluation. For example, in Sydney, more than one in two visitors were below forty years of age, typically female, and a resident of Sydney or an overseas visitor. The *MARS Report* also spent time analyzing the responses to the exhibition and its content.

Visitors' books also accompanied the exhibition on its schedule across Australia. Although there is information in the visitors' books that can be difficult to condense into an easily digestible form, its strength lies in the depth and volume of personal comments contained within. The books represent the many different responses that the exhibition was able to elicit from its visitors. The books were present at a number of locations as the exhibition travelled around Australia. The research for this paper focussed on three books and seven locations.<sup>19</sup>

Each book contained approximately 1000 individual responses. There were three types of responses to the exhibition. Some people just signed their name; other visitors wrote a single word comment; and others wrote sentences or paragraphs, even pages in some cases, about the impact that the exhibition had upon them.

Among the many issues raised in the longer responses was the matter of reconciliation. For example, by the time the exhibition had reached Cairns in 1997, direct references were being made to Australian politicians in the visitors' books. Some visitors called upon the Prime Minister of Australia to visit the exhibition. Another visitor wrote: "Reconciliation must continue, still waiting for an apology John Howard!"<sup>20</sup>

There was also a sense in the comments of some visitors that the evidence presented in the exhibition was so overwhelming and outrageous that all Australians should be made to view it. For example, one person wrote: "As the Germans were compelled to walk through the concentration camps ... so white Australians should be obliged to view what has been done here – so recently."<sup>21</sup> Another angry visitor noted that: "No country founded in such

18 Ibid., p. 36.

19 Visitors books: Araluen Centre Alice Springs (April – May 1994); NT Museum of Arts & Sciences, Darwin (July – August 1994); Dubbo Regional Art Gallery (May – June 1995); Museum of Victoria, Melbourne (July – August 1995); Newcastle Regional Museum (May – October 1996); Pinnacles Gallery, Townsville (February – March 1997); Cairns Regional Gallery (May – July 1997).

20 From Cairns visitors' book, 1997.

21 From Cairns visitors' book, 1997.



injustice can prosper we also had our residential schools – we must put it right.”<sup>22</sup>

The above comment was written by a visitor from New Zealand and has been singled out as being representative of many overseas visitors comments. Although the exhibition aimed to make Australians aware of the issues depicted, it also had an effect on a large number of overseas visitors, who were not aware of the issues. Some visitors, like the one above, made comparisons between the issues or events from their own countries.

The majority of the single word responses were classified on the basis of a content analysis methodology devised from literature from the library science field.<sup>23</sup> After some initial consultation with professionals from the Powerhouse Museum and Monash University, a decision was made by the author to group the findings based around a content/keyword methodology.

The longer responses were too difficult to classify and consequently they were recorded separately. They were written out in full and arranged together depending on which book they came from.

The visitors' books provided a fascinating insight into individual, and in some cases, personal responses to the exhibition. A large percentage of responses included words like “good” and “great.” This was consistent across all states, and these types of positive comments far outweighed the occasional negative comment about the exhibition.

As previously noted, the feedback indicated that the exhibition was well received. Some of the visitors' book analysis and some areas of the *MARS Report*, as well, support the notion that the exhibition was able to meet some of its core objectives. For example, the *MARS Report* states that:

... after experiencing the exhibition, many visitors could articulate that [the NAA] had the task of retaining and presenting Australian history ... Australian residents, particularly could articulate this view after experiencing the exhibition. This finding indicates that such exhibitions are a useful way to promote [the NAA].<sup>24</sup>

These results from my research and from the *MARS Report* indicate that the NAA's exhibition objective of raising awareness of the existence and purpose of the NAA and its ability to convince visitors of its significance was met. Although the results from the visitors' books are quite subjective, there is a general consensus from the visitors' book analysis<sup>25</sup> that many people were greatly moved by the display of material presented in the exhibition.

22 Ibid.

23 Two of the most useful texts were Bernard Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (New York, 1971) and Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology* (California, 1980).

24 Market Attitude Research Services, *Evaluation of the “Between Two Worlds” Exhibition*, p. 22.

25 C.V. Nicholls, “Outreach on the Edge – An exploration of the Concept of Outreach and the Consequences of its Marginalisation Within Australian Archive Programs Between 1998 and 2000,” (Masters Thesis, Monash University, 2000), pp. 111–125.

Another form of evaluation for the exhibition came through informal feedback. At the *Unlocking Museums: 4<sup>th</sup> National Conference of Museums Australia Inc. Darwin Australia, 6–12 September 1997*, a session was held entitled “The Politics of Interpretation: A Case Study of the [NAA’s] exhibition – Between Two Worlds.” At this session, a representative from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community noted that the [NAA] was sheltered from criticism about the exhibition. Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islanders who had concerns about the exhibition, may not have felt comfortable approaching the institution directly about it. Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people felt that their own story was more heart-wrenching or relevant than the one being told. There was also some bitterness that only some institutions were represented in the exhibition. Some didn’t understand that non-government institutions couldn’t be represented, including mission homes. It was felt that if one story was told, then the lot should have been represented. Yet, for another member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community present at the session, there was a lot of positive feeling about the exhibition. For some, bringing the story to light lessened the “shame” associated with being in the homes.

### **Application of Strong Design/Presentation Skills**

According to the literature review, another important component of a successful outreach activity like an exhibition is its ability to demonstrate a high level of design and presentation skills. For example, Pederson writes: “... all successful [user education and public relations activities] are characterised by an appealing presentation. Materials and projects for clients, whether internal or public, must be attractive and evoke interest and participation.”<sup>26</sup>

Other issues that affect the design and presentation of an exhibition include whether it is appropriate or not to include photographic records and artifacts in the presentation. In her article, Nosworthy states that: “There are many practical issues to resolve. Our collection consists almost entirely of written records ... can these records form the basis of exciting as well as informative exhibitions?”<sup>27</sup>

Nosworthy’s comment implies that paper records on their own (i.e., without the assistance of photographic records or artefacts) may not have enough visual impact to attract and interest exhibition visitors. This view is supported by Gail Farr Casterline, who wrote:

One of the most effective ways to encourage viewers to read exhibited manuscripts is to couple them with good images of the events or scenes described. Pertinent maps, photographs, prints, cartoons, paintings, or other pictorial materials are worth the proverbial thousand words.<sup>28</sup>

26 Pederson, “User Education and Public Relations,” p. 314.

27 Nosworthy, “Reaching Out,” p. 74.

28 Casterline, *Archives and Manuscripts: Exhibits*, p. 17.



Towards the end of its long and successful tour, the exhibition returned to Canberra, where it was well received. Curator Rowena MacDonald (centre) stands beside leading Aboriginal musicians Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter at the opening of the “Between Two Worlds” exhibition at the National Archives in Canberra, 24 May 2000. The poster board featured behind them was used to promote and publicize the exhibition during its tour. (Source NAA)

Although there is evidence in the literature that photographic records and artifacts are relevant components of a successful exhibition, there is also the implication from Casterline, in particular, that although visual material can *improve* the presentation of an exhibition, its inclusion is not *essential* to its success.

The *Between Two Worlds* exhibition consisted of 15 panels, eight modules which included documents, photos, oral history tapes, and film footage. Its size was approximately 150 to 300 square metres and it was accompanied by brochures, a media kit, posters, an education kit, and a video.

The exhibition largely consisted of NAA records. The wall text was written in brief, simply-worded sentences. All exhibited items were labelled as to their source, and acknowledgements were made to lending individuals, institutions, or holders of copyright where relevant.

Original documents were exhibited at the first few venues the exhibition visited, but later, facsimiles were substituted. Where a simple replica of a document was needed the NAA had colour laser copies made. Where some image manipulation was required, e.g., because an original was difficult to read, or because the NAA wanted to emphasize a specific segment of text from a whole page, say by highlighting one paragraph, this was done photographically. Large format colour transparencies were made from the documents, and Cibachrome prints were produced from them. There were also some identification or “dog tag” medallions in the exhibition for which facsimiles were made as well. The originals were cast bronze discs, a bit larger than a 50-cent coin, with identity numbers engraved into them. The replicas of these tags were made by conservators at the Australian War Memorial.

The NAA chose to use facsimiles when touring the exhibition because many smaller organizations could not provide the security and conservation arrangements necessary to allow inclusion of originals. The NAA wanted to be able to reach small and remote venues, and using copies made this possible. It wouldn't have been possible for the NAA to exhibit original documents for the six-year period of the exhibition's tour.

The *MARS Report* also contributed to the NAA's decision to substitute originals with copies, as it states:

... of most significance is that copies of original documents could be used in such exhibitions (if the advantage of copies over original documents was adequately explained to visitors) ... We suggest such a recommendation as only four in 10 visitors stated a need for original documents ... our experience is that visitors would accept copies as a substitute.<sup>29</sup>

Although the NAA exhibition featured identification tags in the form of medallions, artifacts were not a major feature of the exhibition. The *MARS Report* noted that 95% of the visitors surveyed were satisfied with the in-

29 Market Attitude Research Services, *Evaluation of the “Between Two Worlds” Exhibition*, p. 36.

clusion of the photographs.<sup>30</sup> This section of the report concluded that "... despite some areas of dissatisfaction, visitor comments did suggest that the integration of oral histories, the video, original documents, and photographs, made the whole exhibition a more realistic situation."<sup>31</sup>

The use of a motif of a small distressed Aboriginal boy on the exhibition's merchandise (t-shirts, posters, etc.), provides an example of how a well-designed motif is able to suggest an idea in the viewer's mind about the theme and overall message of the exhibition. The *MARS Report* confirms that the *Between Two Worlds* exhibition was considered by most who saw it at the time they were interviewed to be well designed. The *Report* surveyed visitors on a range of service elements,<sup>32</sup> which included how they felt about the general layout of the exhibition and "... overall, visitors were satisfied with most service elements. The exhibition content, photographs, general appearance, and information were most pleasing to visitors."<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, the evaluation results demonstrate that the well thought-out design and layout (as well as the inclusion of a variety of formats) of the exhibition were all contributing factors to its success.

### **A Realistic and Well Organized Use of Available Resources**

The role of available resources in determining an exhibition's success is a concern to many of the writers in the literature. In particular, comments were made about the responsible use of finances and the management of time. For example, Rabins comments that sufficient lead time is vital,<sup>34</sup> while Pederson notes that no educational activity can function without a commitment of resources of various kinds.<sup>35</sup>

The project officer for the *Between Two Worlds* exhibition was Helen Nosworthy, and Rowena MacDonald was the curator. Dr Peter Read (an historian at the Australian National University) was influential in the choice of topic for the exhibition. It was understood that the topic of the stolen generation created by the policy of removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and placing them under government care would be manageable (in one sense of the word) because it was known that the records of government actions (as well as some records of the response to the actions) were held by the NAA. There were also available networks of people who might be will-

30 Ibid., p. 27.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., p. 25. Service elements included, "content, information on labels, format on labels, general appearance, ability to see historical documents, general layout, lighting, video, photographs, oral histories, brochures."

33 Ibid.

34 Rabins, "Archival Exhibits: Considerations and Caveats," p. 293.

35 Pederson, "User Education and Public Relations," p. 312.

ing to discuss the issues as they had been personally affected by them. The topic also appealed to the NAA because it was personal, and as a documentary archive, it felt that it had a responsibility to represent this issue.

The consultation process between the NAA and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders was a vital part of the process. The exhibition was put together in six months. The process involved a large amount of consultation with the people from the aforementioned networks. Most of this consultation process involved sitting down and listening to the personal stories of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. On at least one occasion, this involved sitting cross-legged on the floor in a house in Alice Springs, where no formal meeting agenda or meeting structure was required!

In terms of the budget, the project received a special government grant (\$248,000) for the 1993 International Year for the World's Indigenous People (IYWIP) and touring support (\$39,000) from Visions of Australia.

### **Support from Marketing Activities, in Particular Publicity Activities**

Much has been written about the role of marketing in museums and related cultural institutions,<sup>36</sup> although it was difficult to find references to the word "marketing" in the archival literature. Helen Nosworthy's article is the exception, as she embraces the concept of using marketing techniques to further enhance the archive program's public programming activities (including exhibitions). For example, she writes in regard to the NAA's public programme that "... exploiting traditional marketing concepts is likely to be an important part of our success."<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that marketing is not a one dimensional activity, as it can consist of "... advertising, publicity, public relations, working with local community groups, and with the tourism industry."<sup>38</sup>

In relation to exhibitions, a number of marketing activities can be employed to contribute to their success. For example, advertising can take the form of a media release, hosting VIPs to visit, or simply holding a special event like an opening/official launch.<sup>39</sup>

The *Between Two Worlds* exhibition not only utilized promotional activities it also claimed that the exhibition itself was an example of a successful public relations activity for the archive program. Specific references to the visitors' awareness of the NAA after seeing the exhibition can be found in the *MARS Report*. For example, the *MARS Report* asked its survey participants the fol-

36 For example, Dickman, *The Marketing Mix* (p. 24), makes references to other sources including Sue Runyard, *The Museum Marketing Handbook* (London, 1994).

37 Nosworthy, "Reaching Out," p. 71.

38 Dickman, *The Marketing Mix*, p. 6.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

lowing question: “What is your opinion of [the NAA] presenting these documents about Aboriginal history?”<sup>40</sup>

The response from most visitors was a strong “public endorsement of such an initiative by [the NAA].”<sup>41</sup> This indicates that most visitors to the exhibition, (at that point at least), appreciated the role and significance of the archive program after seeing the exhibition. Inviting Michael Long, a high profile Aboriginal Australian Football League footballer, to the opening of the exhibition in Melbourne, led to a front page story in the Herald Sun in 1995,<sup>42</sup> which was perhaps the most famous example of free publicity received by the exhibition.

### **Was the Exhibition a Peripheral or Core Part of the Archive Program’s Objectives?**

To summarize, the exhibition had clearly defined objectives that not only helped define a clear target audience, but were also connected to the organization’s overall goals and objectives. The exhibition was well designed. Staff resources were also used appropriately. There is evidence that while the exhibition required its own marketing activities (including media releases, merchandise etc.), the exhibition was also able to assist the archive program in meeting its own marketing objectives. The ability to rate the exhibition’s success in achieving these goals is reflected in the substantial amount of evaluation that was conducted during and after the exhibition’s tour through Australia.

There is also evidence, however, to suggest that this particular exhibition was a core component of the archive program’s overall goals and objectives. This notion has been briefly explored in the strong relationship between the objectives of the exhibition and the overall objectives of the NAA.

As noted the *Between Two Worlds* exhibition had a purpose to fulfil for the Commonwealth Government archive program which is responsible (among other things) for maintaining, preserving, and providing access to records documenting past government actions and activities. The federal government of the day was the main institution involved in instigating many of the acts depicted throughout the exhibition. What makes the exhibition so powerful, is the inclusion of official documents from the government’s own archives program that provides evidence of how the government of the day related to the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders of the time.

In the case of the *Between Two Worlds* exhibition, the organization’s mem-

40 Market Attitude Research Services, *Evaluation*, p. 22.

41 Ibid.

42 Cheryl Critchley, “Tears for the Stolen Family,” *Herald Sun* (1995). The article refers to the NAA’s exhibition as “The Museum of Victoria’s Two Worlds”; it notes that the exhibition “traces the lives of six Aborigines taken from their parents.”

ory (e.g., government documents) was presented alongside the individual's memory (personal stories of people affected by, or part of, the stolen generation). In many cases the exhibition was viewed and valued primarily for its ability to present evidence of past actions, attitudes, and events.

If the essence of an archives program's mission is to preserve and provide access to evidence of the past for both historical and accountability reasons, then exhibitions of the nature of the *Between Two Worlds* discussed in this case study may have to be reconsidered and valued as core archive functions, containing an outreach component. Clearly, the *Between Two Worlds* exhibition achieved success through being challenging and thought provoking. However, since it was also successful because it was well constructed and helpful in marketing the role and purpose of the NAA, the exhibition has gone a step further and managed to incorporate itself into the core components of the archive program's overall goals and objectives.