



ANNUAL REPORT

**International Council of Museums
Australia National Committee**

2025

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2025 Annual Report of the ICOM Australia Committee

1. Chairs Report

I am happy to share that it has been a productive year for the ICOM Australia Committee. Throughout 2024 and 2025 ICOM Australia focused on improving member services, strengthening ASEAN networks and domestic advocacy for the museum sector. ICOM secured funding from SAREC (Strategic Allocation Review Committee) to commission research into Pacific museums and cultural collections with a view to future partner programs in the region. This funding resulted in a dedicated research trip undertaken by Sione Napi Francis with support from Aunty Sana Balai to visit communities, museums and cultural facilities in Fiji, Tonga and Rarotonga to discuss challenges and opportunities for Pacific cultural heritage across diverse and complex topics such as financial resourcing, colonisation, migration and climate change. In the spirit of strengthening connections and resources across the ASEAN region, ICOM Australia will continue to develop networks between Australia and our neighbours in Moana Oceania and we extend our gratitude to Sione Napi Francis and Aunty Sana Balai for their guidance and focus on real community outcomes.

Around the world we have seen seizure and destruction of cultural heritage due to ongoing conflict in Ukraine and Gaza. Our international Blue Shield colleagues have assisted with the moving of cultural collections within the Gaza strip that have been under threat, whilst ICOM Ukraine has reported continuing theft of collections and destruction of museums and historic sites.

The Committee has advocated strongly to the federal government for their proposed review of the National Cultural Policy to better include heritage, the humanities and history and a stronger commitment to international standards and engagement. The Committee has also made media statements in support of colleagues in the United States, over the assault on history at the Smithsonian Institution, and more generally.

I am pleased to report a continuing rise in our membership and positive responses by members to our advocacy.

2. Executive Board

The ICOM Australia Board, 2024 - 2025, comprised:

Chair	Jessica Bridgfoot	Director, Bendigo Art Gallery
Vice-Chair	Alex Marsden	Principal, Alex Marsden Cultural Services
National Secretary	Vicki Northey PSM	
Treasurer	Lisa Walters	Managing Director, Lorica Partners
Membership Secretary	Dr Lynda Kelly	Managing Director, Lynda Kelly Networks
Ordinary Members		
	Justine van Mourik	National Engagement Manager, Cultural Collections Storage, Castledex
	Ophelia Rubinich	Acting Director, Collection Development & Care, AIATSIS
	Cameron Auty	Director, Operations, Museums and Collections, University of Melbourne
	Paul Donnelly	Deputy Director, Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney
Ex-Officio		
	Seb Chan	Australian Museums and Galleries Association
	Katie Russell	Australian Museums and Galleries Association

Membership Administration		
	Jade Lalor	Bendigo Art Gallery
	Elizabeth Cummins	

Many thanks to previous Board members who retired or resigned during the period: Samantha Hamilton (May 2024 - 2025), Robyn Van Dyk (June 2022 - Feb 2025), Toner Stevenson (2019 - 2024), and Linda Byrne (2022 - 2024).

3. Year in Summary

3.1 Membership

During the 2025 membership year we experienced a steady growth in both Individual and Institutional members. As of 30 September 2025 we have 724 Individual members (3% increase from 2024) and 55 Institutional members (17% increase from 2024). A focus of the Board for 2026 will be increasing numbers of Institutional members, particularly the bigger organisations across capital cities and large regional centres.

A detailed summary of membership activities for the year is outlined below.

3.2 Sector Collaboration and Advocacy

ICOM Australia also supported the work of the **Australian Museums and Galleries Association** with a significant contribution to the 2024 national conference, **(un)Common Ground: Collisions, Convergence, Conversations**, held on Wadawurrung land in Ballarat, VIC from 17-20 September. ICOM Australia supported the attendance of the conference keynote speaker **Esme Ward**, *Director of Manchester Museum*. ICOM Australia also supported the conference Remote Access initiative – providing free virtual access to the program for Pacific Island museums, staff and volunteers.

ICOM Australia continued to support its involvement in **Blue Shield Australia**, and **GLAM Peak** (which brings together leaders across the galleries, libraries, archives and museum peak bodies). In addition, members of ICOM Australia served on a series of working groups and standing committees.

ICOM Australia continued to advocate for standards, ethics and inclusion of diverse cultures and First Nations, both nationally and internationally. The committee issued media statements on the US administration's funding cuts to history, museums and libraries, and the directives to the Smithsonian Institution, made submissions to the Australian Parliamentary Inquiry on the National Cultural Policy, and to the Office for the Arts on the proposed update of Australia's national standard for collections management, *Significance 2.0*.

3.3 ICOM General Assemblies and Conference

With funding from SAREC (Strategic Allocation Resources Committee), ICOM Australia was represented in Marseille in June 2024 at MUCEM for the **ICOM Annual Meeting**, including the **39th Ordinary General Assembly** which saw the new **Strategic Plan** adopted and the **96th session of the Advisory Council**. The meeting provided an invaluable opportunity to engage with Chairpersons of National and International Committees, Regional Alliances, Affiliated Organisations and ICOM members.

The 27th ICOM triennial general conference will be held in Dubai and take place in 2025. The conference will be centered around the theme of ***The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities***, focusing on change, recovery, accessibility, and transparency.

3.2 ASEAN Initiatives – Singapore and the Pacific

In collaboration with ICOM **New Zealand** and Pacific Island Museum representatives, ICOM Australia engaged **Sione Napi Francis** to develop a proposal for a Pacific Cultural Collections Program. Focused on decolonising practice and climate awareness, the program would aim to build practical, relationship-based

skills and cultural exchange across the Pacific collecting communities. Supported by matched funding from **ICOM SAREC** in 2024, Sione undertook field research in Fiji, Tonga and the Cook Islands and prepared a report summarising the findings.

The December 2024 report identifies shared pressures such as rising living costs, climate risk and migration, as well as recurring themes of disconnect between communities and cultural institutions.

Priorities identified include revitalising PIMA, realigning tertiary training, partnering with NGOs and local knowledge holders, and strengthening Indigenous leadership and IP protections. The program is envisaged as a long term (10+ years) initiative led by on-the-ground relationship holders. Work on the project is ongoing and future outcomes will be shaped by consultation and resourcing.

4. Working / Standing Committee Representation

4.1 International Engagement

This year saw the continuing consultations and advocacy regarding the review of the ICOM Code of Ethics.

4.2 International Museum Day 2025

ICOM Australia was pleased to join with others around the world to celebrate International Museum Day, and to focus on the theme ***The future of museums in rapidly changing communities***. We look forward to the announcement of the theme for 2026.

4.3 Australian Museums and Galleries Association Relationship

ICOM Australia continues to work with AMaGA to advocate for the Australian Museum industry and complements the work of AMaGA by providing an International network of resources and networks in the sector.

5. Awards & Fellowships

5.1 Fellowships

In 2024 the ICOM Australia Travelling Fellowship was awarded to Briar Holt from the University of Melbourne for her project titled '***Global Perspectives in Arts Management: Exploring Museum Commercial Strategies and Governance***'. Briar travelled to institutions across Europe to explore best practice examples of museum management and to attend the 2024 Arts & Cultural Management Conference in Vienna.

A full Travel Fellowship Report from Briar can be found on the ICOM Australia website.

5.2 ICOM Australia Awards

The ICOM Australia Awards acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding contributions made by individuals and Institutions in Australia that have strengthened international relations and enriched the cultural landscape of museums and galleries.

Each year ICOM Australia presents two awards, one to an institution and one to an individual museum professional who are considered to have made a significant impact on a global scale.

The ICOM Australia 2024 award winners were announced at the 2024 AMaGA awards held on 17 September 2024 in Ballarat.

Individual Award for outstanding contribution to international engagement in museum and galleries

Ruth McDougall from the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art for her work with artists, institutions, and communities across Oceania and her role in caring for stories, artworks,

relationships and conversations across the Pacific for more than 20 years. A key member of the curatorial team for six Asia-Pacific Triennial exhibitions, she has curated major exhibitions and written significant publications on Pacific Art and textiles. A Churchill Fellow in 2013, she was most recently nominated for the 2024 Creative Australia Asia Pacific Art Awards for Innovation in the curation of the APT9 Women's Wealth project with colleagues Sana Balai and Taloi Havini.

Institutional Award for outstanding contribution to international engagement in museum and galleries

The **Chau Chak Wing Museum** at the **University of Sydney** for demonstrating outstanding international perspectives and commitment to working with museums in the Pacific, delivering the 2023 International University Museums & Collections (UMAC) Conference on site and virtually and for demonstrating leadership in the repatriation of Indigenous culture. Their research into the display of human remains and other highly relevant ethical issues in partnership with communities and the generosity demonstrated through the sharing of their research with other Australian museums places them at the forefront of museology.

Annual Membership Report 2025

Prepared by: Dr Lynda Kelly, ICOM Australia Membership Secretary

Date: 1 October 2025

1. Membership update

During the 2025 membership year we experienced a steady growth in both Individual and Institutional members. As of 30 September 2025 we have 724 Individual members (3% increase from 2024) and 55 Institutional members (17% increase from 2024).

While membership fees were unchanged in 2025, the ICOM Australia Board has agreed to apply a 12% surcharge to all memberships for the 2026 membership year (as detailed below)

A focus of the Board for 2026 will be increasing numbers of Institutional members, particularly the bigger organisations across capital cities and large regional centres. Dr Kelly will be attending the Triennial in Dubai (November) and will meet with the ICOM Paris membership team specifically for an update on progression of the planned digital membership card, and check on any other planned changes to membership, including fees.

2. Operations

In late 2023, ICOM Australia modified our business model which saw membership administration performed in-house.

During 2024-2025 this role was undertaken by Jade Lalor, Bendigo Art Gallery, with costs covered by the Gallery and the considerable workload undertaken on a part-time basis by Jade and supported by Dr Lynda Kelly, who took over the role of Membership Secretary from March 2025.

This focused approach resulted in both an increase in member communications and in membership numbers, identifying the need to create an official Membership Administrator role, a position dedicated to the day-to-day management of new and renewing members.

Following an Expression of Interest (EOI) process, Elizabeth Cummins was appointed as Membership Administrator in July 2025 and has been doing a wonderful job in the role.

Annual membership fees are recommended by the ICOM Executive Board and approved by the General Assembly. In addition to this membership fee, National Committees reserve the right to impose a surcharge to support the functioning and operations of the NC. After much consideration, the ICOM Australia Board elected to implement a 12% surcharge to all memberships for the 2026 membership year.

This surcharge is necessary to support the ongoing administrative requirements of ICOM Australia as we see our highest membership numbers to date. This includes rising costs of postage, international exchange rates and the appointment of the Membership Administration role.

The 2025-2026 Membership subcommittee is composed of Dr Kelly (Membership Secretary); Vicki Northey (ICOM Australia Secretary) and Ophelia Rubinich (Board member) who consider new applications, and is supported by Liz.

3. International Committees

It is obligatory to join a specialist international committee when members join ICOM to ensure that members have relevant global network connections and know about conferences, publications and activities of their interest group. 66%% of Australian ICOM members have nominated a National Committee (compared to 55% in 2024). The most popular, in order, are Museology (ICOFOM); Fine Arts (ICFA); Conservation (ICOM-CC), Education, Cultural Action (CECA) and University Museums (UMAC), unchanged from 2024. An important benefit of ICOM is the international committees, and we encourage all members to consider joining one.

4. A note of thanks

Thank you to members for their understanding and patience during our recent administrative changes and the introduction of the administration fee.

A big vote of thanks to Jade Lalor, Bendigo Art Gallery, for all her work in the Administration role which was undertaken on a voluntary basis at the same time as her very busy day-to-day role at the Gallery. Jade also prepared a comprehensive procedures manual and trained both Lynda and Liz in the ICOM membership and email systems.

Also thanks to Robyn van Dyk who was the previous Membership Secretary from 2024-March 2025.

Our website contains a list of institutional offerings within Australia for ICOM card holders. We encourage Institutional members to reach out to our Membership Administrator to ensure your listing is up to date. We plan to publish more ICOM member testimonials including travel stories and other experiences, so let us know if you have something to share!

ICOM Australia Financial Year Report

Prepared by: ICOM Australia Treasurer

Date: October 2025

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Audited Accounts for the year 2025 be adopted;
- 1.2 That Mr Anthony Wilson be re-appointed as Auditor for 2026; and
- 1.3 That the Reports of the Treasurer for the year to date be noted.

2. Audited Accounts for 2025

This was the first year for ICOM in adopting a 30 June financial year end. The report covers the 18 month period for 1st January 2024 to 30 June 2025. Going forward the financial year will be the regular 12 month period.

2.1 Statement of Comprehensive Income

The accounts for 2025 have been audited by Mr. Anthony Wilson, Principal of AccountAbility. ICOM Australia recorded an operating deficit of \$31,372 in 2025, compared to an operating surplus of \$33,475 in 2023.

Members' equity has decreased from \$112,659 to \$164,419. Subscriptions to Paris increased to \$189,400 in 2025 (\$102,772 in 2023), with membership subscription revenue improving from \$176,080 (2023) to \$182,471 (2025).

A notable change in the 2025 Accounts is removal of the AMAGA Secretariat costs related to services incurred, \$22,471 in 2023. These services were managed internally in the past financial period. In 2025 an external provider has been appointed to provide these services for FY2026.

There was a notable increase in interest received due to an increase in cash balances combined with an increase in interest rates.

Additional expenditure occurred with investment in the Pacific Project, an initiative aligned with the Strategic Plan.

2.2 Statement of Financial Position

The accrued cash and cash equivalents as at 30 June 2025 \$167,441, compared with 31 December 2023, \$204,809. The cash deposits held at 30 June 2025 consisted of a term deposit holding \$85,110.37 as well as \$82,321 in Cash Management Accounts with ANZ Bank and Bank Australia. The drop in cash holdings reflects the expenditure in the Pacific Project, a strategic project.

2.3 Copies of the Auditor's Report are available for consideration and adoption

3. Appointment of Auditor for 2025

3.1 Mr Anthony Wilson has been our auditor for several years. He continues to provide good service at a reasonable cost and is willing to be re-appointed as auditor for 2026.

3.2 I recommend that he be reappointed as Auditor of ICOM Australia for 2025.

4. Treasurer's Report for year-to-date 2026

4.1 At the time of writing, ICOM Australia has a budgeted operating deficit for 2026 of approximately \$25k. The actual result will depend significantly on future fluctuations in the value of the Australian dollar versus the Euro

4.2 As at 3 October total cash held by ICOM Australia stood at \$181,253. This balance reflects the initial transfer to Paris. Future expenditures will include costs associated with the ICOM Awards, the audit, and support for the conference.

4.3 I would like to acknowledge the secretariat support from Jade Lalor during 2024/25