



29 January 2010

The Hon. Wayne Swan MP
Treasurer
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Treasurer,

SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY – BUDGET POLICY DIVISION

Thank you for providing this opportunity to contribute to the development of the 2010 to 2011 Federal Budget. Blue Shield Australia is requesting support from the Australian Government in the coming Budget, which will help Australia meet international commitments in the cultural sector.

In September 2005, the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS: the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross International) approved an application to establish an Australian national committee, now called Blue Shield Australia. The ICBS was established specifically to support UNESCO's 1954 *Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* ('The Hague Convention'), which Australia ratified in 1984. This approval indicates formal acknowledgement of the value of Australia's cultural heritage and recognises Australia's contribution to safeguarding heritage treasures in this region.

Blue Shield Australia has established an active national committee; responded with advice and practical support to emergencies in the region, most recently the 2009 Victorian bushfires; established MayDay as an annual event encouraging cultural organisations to re-examine their emergency preparedness, and put in place the framework for a major national symposium to be held in Canberra in May 2010.

This has been achieved through the support of the Collections Council of Australia (CCA), who acted as secretariat for Blue Shield Australia between 2005 and 2010. The CCA was initiated and supported by the Cultural Ministers Council. In October 2009, the Cultural Ministers Council announced that the CCA's funding would cease in June 2010. The CCA will soon terminate their Blue Shield Australia secretariat role, as they prepare to close.

This may put an end to Blue Shield Australia, unless we are able to find another source of support. Members of the Blue Shield Australia committee are volunteers; relying on the goodwill of their cultural organisation employers for their in-kind contribution of time and meeting spaces, and the CCA for the provision of a secretariat, web hosting, and MayDay project management. If Blue Shield Australia closes, not only will the Australia and the surrounding region be left without vital emergency support, our fear is that this will also send out an adverse signal regarding the value Australia places on its cultural heritage.

We ask that you consider making a new annual provision direct to Blue Shield Australia to establish an independent secretariat to replace the role currently performed by the Collections Council of Australia. We anticipate that this will require an investment of \$200,000 each year.

We believe this is a small price to pay for Australia to strengthen its international reputation and to actively support improvement of the emergency preparedness of its cultural organisations.

About the Blue Shield

The Blue Shield is the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross. It is the symbol specified in the 1954 Hague Convention for marking cultural sites to give them protection from attack in the event of armed conflict. It is also the name of an international committee set up in 1996 to work to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by war and natural disaster.

The International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) covers archives (including audio-visual archives), libraries, monuments and sites, and museums (including art museums and galleries). The ICBS is international, independent and professional.

About Blue Shield Australia

Blue Shield Australia (<http://www.blueshieldaustralia.org.au>) brings together in a federated association the knowledge, experience and international networks of the expert organisations dealing with cultural heritage in Australia:

- International Council on Archives, represented in Australia by the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities
- International Council of Museums, represented in Australia by ICOM Australia
- International Council on Monuments and Sites, represented in Australia by Australia ICOMOS
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, represented in Australia by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)

Blue Shield Australia is the only organisation bringing together peak professional bodies from across the full spectrum of the heritage sector. Our vision is to influence disaster preparedness and emergency management in Australia in relation to threats of all kinds, in order to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage in Australia's areas of responsibility and influence. Our annual 'MayDay' campaign draws public attention to the importance of effective emergency preparedness and management in local areas.

With appropriate resourcing, Blue Shield Australia can participate in improving training for emergency response, defence and cultural heritage workers. Blue Shield Australia is also able to liaise with the Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield and the ICBS to facilitate Australians' involvement in this international community. These bodies coordinate the response and mobilisation of cultural heritage experts in times of disaster and conflict.

Blue Shield Australia will be pleased to discuss this submission further, if required.

Yours faithfully,



Detlev Lueth
Chair
Blue Shield Australia