

2012 ICOM Australia Award for International Relations

Dr Amareswar Galla testimony

For his outstanding individual achievement

Dr Amareswar Galla is a leading expert on museums, sustainable heritage development and poverty alleviation through culture. He has worked extensively in Vietnam, South Africa, Afghanistan, the Pacific, Europe, Asia and Australia.

Dr Galla has played key roles in many influential projects and his expertise has been acknowledged by bodies such as UNESCO, for whom he has been a Technical Advisor on a number of projects and for which his work was also cited as best practice in the 2009 World Culture Report.

Dr Galla's work demonstrates his commitment to the special opportunities of using culture as a tool in poverty alleviation projects through ecomuseums and site museums. In Vietnam, for example, he led the development of World Heritage sites in Hoi An and Ha Long Bay. The Ha Long Ecomuseum was intended to examine some of the implications and dilemmas of interpreting environmental resources and cultural heritage for visitors while protecting the significance and integrity of these same resources. The Ha Long Ecomuseum development is viewed as an exemplar for similar developments elsewhere and is an important factor in the creation of a national policy for sustainable heritage tourism in Vietnam.

Much of his time working on these projects focused on building community grounded museums with the help of his Australian graduate students. His work on the use of ecomuseology as a methodological tool for sustainable heritage development and poverty alleviation has won him the Outstanding Conservationist of the Year award from the Vietnamese government.

Dr Galla has also committed his time, energy and expertise to many cultural and museum organisations, including:

- ICOM leadership includes: President of the Asia Pacific Executive Board (1998-2004)
- Chair, Cross Cultural Task Force leading to the adoption of ICOM Cultural Diversity Charter in Shanghai (2005-2011)
- Vice President of the International Executive Council (2004-2007)
- Chairperson, Opening Keynote Session ICOM Shanghai 2010

- Founding Trustee of the Pacific Islands Museums Association led the drafting of the PIMA Code of Ethics, 2006
- Vice President of the Commonwealth Association of Museums (2011-2013).

In pursuit of his commitment to teaching and mentoring, he has provided strategic cultural leadership in Australia and the Asia Pacific Region as the first Professor of Museum Studies in Australia at University of Queensland and as the Professor and Director of Sustainable Heritage Development Programs, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.

Dr Galla founded and directed from 1985 to 1992 the National Affirmative Action programme for the participation of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in museums, galleries, national parks and World Heritage Areas in Australia, and provided technical support for similar programs in Canada, USA (especially at the National Museums of the American Indian and), Belize, Brazil, Vietnam, India, China, Norway and several small island development states.

Between 1994 and 1999 he was the International Technical Adviser for the transformation of Arts Councils, National Museums and Cultural Institutions and the National Parks Board in post-apartheid South Africa. He was simultaneously a researcher and expert adviser to the United Nations World Commission for Culture and Development and the UNESCO Stockholm Action Plan from the Inter-Governmental Conference on Cultural Policies in 1998.

Dr Galla's extensive publication record includes reports and refereed articles dealing with indigenous and multicultural engagement in museums and heritage management. His national volume on indigenous and multicultural issues and capacity building for the museums and heritage sectors in Australia, *Heritage Curricula and Cultural Diversity*, was published by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in 1993 leading to several transformative projects. He is the Editor of the 40th Anniversary publication of the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention (*World Heritage: Benefits Beyond Borders*, Cambridge University Press and UNESCO to be launched in Kyoto on 8 November 2012). It is the culmination of the first training program he facilitated for the first Aboriginal rangers in Kakadu National Park, 1985-1986.

He is also editor of three refereed academic journals: *International Journal of the Inclusive Museum* (www.museum-journal.com) Chicago/Melbourne; *International Journal on Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability* (www.sustainability-journal.com), Chicago/Melbourne; and *International Journal on Climate Change* (<http://on-climate.com/publications/journal/>) Chicago. He was the founder and second and third Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* (2007-2011) (www.ijih.org) Seoul.

Dr Galla has given keynote addresses to academic and professional conferences in over fifty countries during the past two decades. In September 2012 he is to be the keynote speaker at two major events in Australia: the OZASIA Conference by the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre at UNISA and the National Conference of Museums Australia.

Dr Galla is a champion of cultural democracy, indigenous cultural rights, intercultural dialogue and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals with an outstanding research and development record, and is a very worthy recipient of the 2012 ICOM Australia Award for International Relations.