



10 December 2009

Testimonial for Professor Amareswar Galla

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am writing this testimonial in appreciation of Professor Galla's work with Indigenous peoples over the past three decades. Amar as we affectionately know him brings to any situation the appropriate and inspirational leadership with not only Australian but also extensive international experience. I have known Amar both in Australia and overseas. His seminal work establishing the Ha Long Ecomuseum as a poverty alleviation project in sustainable heritage development is internationally acclaimed as a best practice project for addressing Millennium Development Goals. It has been profiled as such in the 2009 World Culture Report of UNESCO and the report of Local Agenda 21 for Culture in Barcelona. It is part of the 2020 development of the Ha Long Bay World Heritage Area which parallels the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area in Australia. I visited the place on several occasions during my posting at the Australian Embassy in Hanoi.

I also observed with great pleasure Amar's leadership and support in the foundation meeting of the Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network in Katoomba in 2008. The traditional custodians not only brought him to speak at the meeting but also included him in all the closed meetings as an international scientific expert to assist and empower them. I understand that the Secretariat of the Network is being established in Cairns. I have also know Amar's work over the years including his seminal role in directing the national affirmative action program in the 1980's on the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in museums, galleries, national parks and World Heritage Areas.

Amar has a doctorate from the Faculty of Asian Studies at the ANU. But I would like to emphasise that his *alma mater*, the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, a post graduate national university of India. It is one of the best universities in the world for post-colonial research and sustainable development. During my time at the Australian High Commission in New Delhi, I have had the opportunity to acquaint myself with this excellent research university. Amar is probably one of the few scholars in Australia who has the rare distinction of studying and researching at two national universities of distinction: one in Australia and the other in an Asian country that has substantial research claims on the tropics. He has always advocated lifelong learning and has completed several professional development programs including at the Smithsonian Institution.

Understanding of the academic research enterprise

Amar has had a long track record of developing innovative and inclusive programs that bring together both the public and private sectors with the academy. This is a rare competency which requires excellent understanding of the research enterprise as an inter-sectorial endeavour. During the 1990's he managed to build on the national expertise dealing with research in Indigenous Australian heritage knowledge systems to establish the first affirmative action program in a science faculty in Australia. This national program brought about a transformation in the heritage industries and the academic circles with changes that are ethically grounded. His research track record, grants history and publications demonstrate an understanding of research beyond the cloisters of academy as an enterprise and significant innovation in interdisciplinary project development bringing together complex academic and industry groupings to ensure the best possible research outcomes. It is this unique ability of Amar that led the Australian Human Rights Commission to commission him recently to conduct research and develop a national discussion document on creativity and interfaith dialogue.

The skills necessary to mobilise and facilitate productive and collegial research teams

The career of Amar is significant in the sense that his work has always entailed bringing together the best possible expertise to ensure the best possible research and project outcomes. For example, his ability to establish the only international research journal on intangible Heritage bringing together some of the best experts who are all professors in various disciplines across the world makes us all proud as Australians. Moreover, he secured significant funding from the Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation to ensure that the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* is free to download from anywhere in the world. (www.ijih.org) With the accelerated pace of globalisation intangible heritage and cultural diversity, the common heritage of humanity, is under threat and needs urgent safeguarding, especially in the region with urgent need for capacity building in the Pacific and Asian countries. The journal is a major research instrument in safeguarding intangible heritage across the world and promotes the 2003 UNESCO Convention on Safeguarding Intangible Heritage. You may wish to source the submission to the Federal Government made by me urging it to become a State Party to the Convention.

One of the key equity issues in research that emerges is the cost of research outputs and access which is largely limited to rich western countries and event here to the dominant groups. The ability to source sponsorship to make research accessible to all is one of Amar's unique strengths. He has ensured the same approach as the lead editor for *Museum International* published by Blackwells for UNESCO Paris. This research journal is also provided free of cost to people from low economic indicator countries.

Amar is multilingual and has the cross cultural competency to work with research teams beyond the Anglophone world which few people can claim to be able to do so. This has enabled him to mobilise interdisciplinary research teams and generate new knowledge platforms which are exemplary. In particular these are contemporary and relevant. The knowledge platforms established by Amar are on *Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability* (www.onsustainability.com); *Climate*

Change (www.climate-change.com) and the *Inclusive Museum* (www.onmuseums.com) All the three demonstrate his ability to excel in bringing large teams of researchers and professionals together and develop productive dialogue for addressing contemporary issues of urgent concern.

Senior leadership experience and an entrepreneurial orientation

Amar's track record extends from serving as a Board Member on the Board of Directors of the SBS Radio and TV to being the Director of the National Affirmative Action Program in the 1980's such as the one referred to above. He has extensive leadership experience at the cutting edge and in transformative developments. These include the transformation of the South African National Parks and various ICOM and UNESCO projects with significant budgets.

Amar's leadership is inspirational and innovative for which he has received several awards internationally. A visit to the web pages of knowledge platforms founded by Amar demonstrates his ability to command the respect and cooperation of scholars and industry executives across the world. This comes with the senior level leadership that he has been provided internationally. It is evident that every knowledge platform founded by Amar is a knowledge enterprise that scholars buy into internationally. Donor, professional, industry and intergovernmental support for Amar's work demonstrate his innate ability to bring relevant stakeholders and inspire them.

The ability to attract international development and research funds

The donor emphasis on Aid Effectiveness from the Paris Declaration and the imperatives of ensuring transparent outcomes from projects against the Millennium Development Goals requires an ethical research practice that is driven towards alleviation of poverty and addressing indicators for sustainable development. This requires credibility, trust and a significant track record of the team leader.

Amar's track record demonstrates significant leadership in engaging the international donors in the projects where he is the senior International Scientific Adviser. The Ha Long Bay World Heritage Area attracted donor support from several sources. In particular Amar research sourced funds from NORAD, UNDP, World Heritage Centre and SIDA to develop an innovative model of the Ha Long Ecomuseum, now a National Museum, which brings together both the natural and cultural elements together in sustainable development. I understand that this project has been signed off by the Prime Minister of Vietnam as a national demonstration project. AusAID and US Aid and Ford Foundation are also engaged in projects which Amar has had a major role.

One of the most significant activities of Amar working with Donors is his role as the International Technical Adviser in the restructuring of cultural institutions and national parks in post apartheid South Africa. SIDA and Dutch donors sponsored most of Amar's work while significant research projects were sponsored through demonstration projects by DANCED (DUNIDA), Ford Foundation and Aus Aid. He was the sole facilitator working with the new National Park Board in developing the transformation plan for changing apartheid parks into democratic parks.

Amar has also led projects in Asia Pacific through the International Council of Museums as the Chairperson of its Cross Cultural Task Force. These are funded by

SIDA, Dutch, NORAD, UNESCO, Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. The extensive record in the select list of his CV demonstrates that Amar has a significant capacity to bring in donor support to where he works.

Superior networking skills

Amar is known internationally and nationally for his outstanding networking skills. His ability to seamlessly work with the offices of UNESCO across the world, especially in Pacific and Asia countries is evident in his CV. He founded the Pacific Island Museums Association which brings fourteen countries together for productive professional engagement in the context of MDGs and the location of culture in sustainable development. He is a Trustee of the Association.

Nationally Amar has assisted in the re-launching of the Federation of ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, FECCA, about ten years ago. He convened its Arts, Culture and Heritage Network to engage national and state/territory institutions to promote appropriate policy developments. He worked with the Australian Local Government Association, Planning Institute of Australia, Australian National Commission for UNESCO, FECCA, the ANU and UQ to launch and convene the Pacific Asia Observatory for Cultural Diversity in Human Development (UNESCO). The Observatories are part of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity Action Plan launched at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Observatory brings together all the countries of the Pacific and Asia focussing on the Charter of UNESCO.

He was the first Australian and the only one until now to be elected as the President of the Asia Pacific Executive Board of the International Council of Museums. He is also the founding Chairperson of the Cross Cultural Task Force of the Council in Paris. The above mentioned research platform on the *Inclusive Museum* is driven by a Board of eminent professors and museum directors from all regions of the world through his Chairmanship of the Cross Cultural Task Force. (www.onmuseums.com) I would like to emphasise that Amar's outstanding networking skills with researchers and industry leaders are critical to the research knowledge platforms and research journals that he founded.

The capacity to promote interdisciplinary research particularly in relation to the tropics

The knowledge platform on *Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability* (www.onsustainability.com) demonstrates Amar's extensive ability to bring together researchers from diverse disciplines across the tropics. The knowledge community's research conferences in the tropics from Mauritius, Vietnam, and India to Ecuador are unique. I believe that he could bring the network of research expertise across the tropics to major events.

Amar's support from donors such as SIDA, NORAD, Rockefeller, Ford and the Dutch to promote research partnerships in the tropics is significant. For instance, Rockefeller has funded so far the Museums and Anthropology forum of the Mekong Countries. He has published the major volume based on the research outcomes from this project. The Mekong is a significant part of the tropics that Australia is yet to engage with adequately.

In the light of the above, I strongly commend Professor Amareswar Galla in his future endeavours. I am happy to answer any further questions that readers may have. I am also keen to follow up on the future outcomes of his work. As Amar knows very well the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, co-hosted by the Australian Human Rights Commission, provides the coordination for all such similar Commissions and Councils in the Pacific and Asia Region. In my current and past capacity, with dual portfolios, as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner and Race Discrimination Commissioner, I have always been keen to scope the possibilities for engagement with the Pacific and Asia through Australian stakeholders bringing source and Diaspora communities together.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tom Calma', written in a cursive style.

Tom Calma
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