

# Cultural diversity policy

POL-C-027

Version 2.2 29 April 2011

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<b>ID</b>	POL-C-027
<b>Version</b>	Version 2.2
<b>Version date</b>	29 April 2011
<b>Type</b>	Council approved
<b>Approval date</b>	Council: 22 February 2005      This revised version Executive: 18 March 2010
<b>File</b>	09/473
<b>Availability</b>	Public and all staff
<b>Keywords</b>	Audience, access, equity, community, identity
<b>Responsible officer</b>	Assistant Director, Audience, Programs and Partnerships
<b>History</b>	This policy supersedes: Cultural diversity policy version 3.0 approved by Council 14 April 2005
<b>Review date</b>	August 2012
<b>Related documents</b>	Relevant National Museum of Australia business plans and strategies
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## 1. Title

Cultural diversity policy

## 2. Introduction

The National Museum of Australia (the Museum) is a major cultural institution charged with researching, collecting, preserving and exhibiting historical material of the Australian nation. The Museum focuses on the three interrelated areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture, Australia's history and society since European settlement in 1788 and the interaction of people with the environment.

Established in 1980, the Museum is a publicly funded institution, governed as a statutory authority in the Commonwealth Arts portfolio. The Museum's new building on Acton Peninsula, Canberra, opened in March 2001.

## 3. Scope

### 3.1 Description

This policy outlines principles to guide the Museum's approach to cultural diversity in collecting, exhibitions, programs, services and employment.

### 3.2 Purpose

This policy provides a framework for the National Museum which:

- aims to be relevant to all Australians
- reflects the past, present and future of Australia as a culturally diverse society.

### 3.3 Rationale

The Museum works within a framework established by the Commonwealth Government, and is guided by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. The four principles which underpin this framework are described below.

#### 3.3.1 Responsibilities of all

All Australians have a civic duty to support those basic structures and principles of Australian society which guarantee us our freedom and equality and enable diversity in our society to flourish.

#### 3.3.2 Respect for each person

Subject to the law, all Australians have the right to express their own culture and beliefs and have the reciprocal obligation to respect the right of others to do the same.

#### 3.3.3 Fairness for each person

All Australians are entitled to equality of treatment and opportunity. Social equity allows us to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia, free from discrimination, including on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or place of birth.

#### 3.3.4 Benefits for all

All Australians benefit from productive diversity, that is, there are significant cultural, social and economic dividends arising from the diversity of our population. Diversity works for all Australians.

The Museum also works in accordance with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* and reports annually on *Accessible Government Services for All*.

The *National Museum of Australia Act 1980* stipulates that ‘The Museum shall use every endeavour to make the most advantageous use of the national collection in the national interest.’ The Museum’s Mission Statement includes the aim of ‘engaging and providing access for audiences nationally and internationally’. The Museum’s *Client Service Charter* further guarantees the public the right to be treated with respect, to be stimulated and engaged by the exhibitions and programs, and to have fair and equal access to the Museum.

## 4. Principles

### 4.1 Developing the collections

The Museum’s Act requires the Museum to collect ‘historical material that relates to Australia’s past, present and future, including a collection of historical material relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’. Within this framework, the Museum aims to document and celebrate the distinctive characteristics and history of the nation particularly through collecting programs focused on the peopling of Australia, the creation of culture and the building and development of Australia.

### 4.2 Accessible exhibitions, programs and services

The Museum seeks to provide access to exhibitions, programs and services that are developed with regard to audience and market research and structured to meet the needs of diverse audiences.

### 4.3 Workplace diversity

The Museum is an equal opportunity employer. The Museum provides training to foster appreciation and understanding of the Museum’s obligations within a culturally diverse community.

The Museum’s Act also requires that ‘Council shall pursue a policy directed towards securing, under the Council, the development and maintenance of the Gallery and the exhibition of historical material ... by persons who are Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders or descendants of Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders.’

### 4.4 Community and identity

The Museum aims to foster an appreciation of cultural identity and the aspirations of diverse groups. The Museum works to establish strong links with communities in the interpretation, documentation and preservation of their own cultural and natural heritage. It recognises that communities have the right to involvement in the interpretation of their culture and thus play a significant role in assisting the Museum to reflect Australia’s cultural diversity.

### 4.5 Social inclusion

The Museum provides equitable access to its resources for audiences regardless of their location, education level, age, ethnicity, physical or mental ability of language. Exhibitions, services and programs are developed within a socially inclusive framework.

## 5. Definition of terms

### Cultural diversity

Cultural diversity is defined by the expression of life in Australia through ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, politics, philosophy, religion, disability, community identity and subcultural activity. The term encompasses a philosophy that appropriately encourages maintenance of cultural identity whilst sharing common ideals and equality of opportunity. This definition recognises that cultural diversity refers to culture in a broad sense.

### Access

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship’s definition is ‘government services should be available to everyone who is entitled to them and should be free of any form of

discrimination irrespective of a person's country of birth, language, culture, race or religion'; access for the Museum is the process by which people from all backgrounds and cultures use the cultural, intellectual and physical resources of the Museum.

### **Equity**

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship's definition is 'government services should be developed and delivered on the basis of fair treatment of clients who are eligible to receive them'; equity for the Museum is the process by which the Museum strives to distribute cultural, intellectual and physical resources as fairly as possible.

## **6. Definition of responsibilities**

### **Assistant Directors and Chief Operating Officer**

The Assistant Directors and Chief Operating Officer share responsibility for the implementation of this policy across the Museum.

## **7. References**

*Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness*, National Multicultural Advisory Council Report, April 1999

*Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 1998

*Client Service Charter*, National Museum of Australia, 2003

*Collections Development Policy 2005*

*Collections Framework 2002–2007*, National Museum of Australia, 2002

*Cultural Diversity Policy*, Museums Australia, 2000

*Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity – Updating the 1999 New Agenda for Multicultural Australia – Strategic Directions for 2003–2006*, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2003

*Museums and Cultural Diversity Policy*, International Council of Museums, 1997

*National Museum of Australia Act 1980*

*Report Against the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Access and Equity Report*, National Museum of Australia, 2004

*Strategic Plan 2007–2010*, National Museum of Australia.

## **8. Implementation**

A range of Museum guidelines, procedures and reporting requirements guide the implementation of this policy.

### **8.1 Coverage**

Whole of Museum: exhibitions, programs, activities and operations.

## 8.2 Other related policies

Audience development policy  
 Collections development policy  
 Communication policy  
 Interpretation policy  
 Research and scholarship policy  
 Temporary and travelling exhibition policy

## 8.3 Exclusions

None

## 8.4 Superseded policies

This policy supersedes:

Former policy/ies title	Version no.	Version date	Approval date
Cultural Diversity	1.0	April 2005	22 Feb 2005 (Council)
Cultural Diversity	2.1	Mar 2010	18 Mar 2010 (Executive)

## 8.5 Monitoring

Implementation of this policy is monitored regularly by the Assistant Directors.

This policy will be reviewed in August 2012.