



Gloria Krope, Miss Australia 1978  
Photo courtesy of Scope

# MISS AUSTRALIA'S CROWN PRESENTED TO THE NATIONAL MUSEUM



For several generations of Australians the announcement of the winner of the annual Miss Australia Quest was the premier charity event of the year. And few Australians who were alive then will forget the excitement when Miss Australia 1961, Tania Verstak, went on to win the Miss International title in 1962.

The crown awarded to three decades of Miss Australia Quest winners was presented to the National Museum of Australia by the Miss Australia Company on 18 May, International Museum Day.

Miss Australia 1973, Michelle Downes, joined Miss Australia Company chairwoman Vici Funnell at the handover ceremony.

The crown will feature in a new National Museum travelling exhibition exploring the ways Australia's longest-running and most successful charity event reflected broader changes in Australian society and culture.

National Museum director Craddock Morton said the crown represented a much broader story about community values, disability services and the role of women in society.

'Miss Australia titleholders were celebrities at home and great ambassadors abroad. The quest helped raise valuable funds and awareness of disabilities, all the time reflecting fifty years of postwar history.'

Ms Funnell, who is also chief executive officer of Scope, formerly the Spastic Society of Victoria, was pleased the Miss Australia crown, along with a collection of other Miss Australia Quest memorabilia, had found a home at the National Museum.

'I am delighted the hard work of the many thousands of people who were involved in raising awareness and funds through the Miss Australia Quest over the years is being captured in this exhibition. We look forward to working with the Museum as it documents the experiences of Australians with disabilities over the last fifty years.'

The Miss Australia Quest raised more than \$90 million for people with cerebral palsy from 1954 to 2000. The crown was worn by titleholders from 1965 and 1991 and is made of hand-crafted silver, blue velvet and more than 800 pearls.

National Museum curator Sophie Jensen is working with former Miss Australia titleholders, community groups, spastic centres, cerebral palsy associations and Scope to document the history of the quest as part of a National Museum targeted collecting project.

The Miss Australia exhibition opens in Brisbane in August 2006 before going on show at the National Museum in Canberra from June 2007. The NMA Press is also releasing a book about the quest, *A Crowning Achievement: A Study in Australian Beauty, Business and Charitable Enterprise*, later this year.

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