

Volunteers policy

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1. Title

Volunteers 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 Office for the Arts which is within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Museum's building on Acton Peninsula, Canberra opened in March 2001.

3. Scope

The National Museum of Australia encourages the full involvement of volunteers in its mission to promote an understanding of Australia's history and an awareness of future possibilities.

Volunteers involved in all programs and activities of the Museum and serve at all levels of skill and decision making. Volunteers will not be used to displace the work of paid employees.

3.1 Description

This policy provides a best practice framework for the management and involvement of volunteers at the National Museum of Australia.

3.2 Purpose

The Museum provides an environment where:

- volunteering is rewarding, interesting and enjoyable
- volunteers are involved in activities that enhance and assist the programs of the Museum, activities that would not otherwise be available through the existing resources and general funding of the Museum
- it is recognised that resources are required to support volunteer involvement
- volunteers are treated in a professional manner and, where possible and appropriate, will receive the benefits and privileges enjoyed by paid staff
- volunteers are regularly recognised for their commitment and contribution to the programs and projects of the Museum.

3.3 Rationale

Volunteers are important to the Museum; they enhance its programs beyond the skills and resources of staff. Additionally, through the engagement of volunteers, the Museum is able to further its reach out to the community, facilitating the two-way transfer of skills and knowledge.

4. Principles or guidelines

All strategies for managing volunteers are derived from the values described in the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement in Not for Profit Organisations*. Volunteers are an integral part of the Museum and will:

- a) be treated as equally and fairly as our paid staff
- b) be valued for their input, and called upon for their opinions
- c) be consulted on all matters that substantially affect the performance of their work
- d) have the opportunity to effect change in the organisation through their suggestions and involvement in planning and management
- e) be expected to provide feedback and input to their supervisor (team leader) regarding their work with clients.

4.1 Volunteer recruitment

The recruitment of volunteers is conducted in a similar way to paid staff. The procedure for recruitment of volunteers includes a general position description, an application, and interview and engagement process.

Volunteers are recruited:

- a) with the intent of broadening community involvement in the Museum through volunteering and according to the principles contained in the Workplace Diversity Plan
- b) on the basis of their suitability to perform a task on behalf of the Museum without any conflict of interest, perceived or real
- c) after passing a police check
- d) through an interest in a specific function or a general interest in volunteering later matched with a specific function.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and people from culturally diverse backgrounds are encouraged and supported to apply for volunteering positions. This is reflected in all recruitment advertising.

4.2 Museum staff as volunteers

Museum staff cannot become volunteers while they are paid employees of the Museum. Former employees are eligible to apply for volunteer positions but must volunteer in a section other than the one in which they were employed. In the case of former employees, managers particularly ensure they perform within the agreed volunteer position description and do not undertake additional work, regardless of their capabilities, experience or knowledge.

4.3 Volunteer learning and development

All staff and volunteers who work in public areas are required to undertake customer service training. The Museum provides core training and educational opportunities for all volunteers.

Each volunteer is required to participate in an orientation program which provides an understanding of how volunteers contribute to the Museum's vision, mission and values.

The Museum acknowledges that the two-way transfer of the skills and knowledge between staff and volunteers supports the organisational commitment to lifelong learning and volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge where ever possible.

All Volunteers are made aware of and work to the service level defined by the Client Service Charter.

4.4 Volunteer supervision

The Museum recognises the importance of supervision and adequate feedback on performance. Discussion about work planning or completion is undertaken on a one-to-one basis by the Volunteers supervisor. Performance management of volunteers broadly follows the Museum's staff Workplace Conversations model.

Other key elements of volunteer supervision include:

- the assessment of performance based on the volunteer job description
- establishing individual goals linked to the Museum's Strategic Plan and Business Priorities as well as the Visitor Services and Volunteers Business Unit Plan, observing the volunteer's activities, and providing guidance to maximise the achievement of the goals
- assessing progress, identifying problems and planning for future training and personal development opportunities
- evaluating the performance, providing feedback, addressing performance issues
- being receptive to feedback on ways to improve the volunteer program
- encouraging the free and confidential expression of volunteers' thoughts, opinions and doubts.

The level of supervision for each volunteer depends on a number of factors including:

- how long they have been with the Museum
- how often they work
- the frequency of communication through telephone and emails
- the type and location of their work.

Outcomes of supervision sessions are confidential with a record on kept on file.

4.5 Volunteer insurance

For the purposes of safety, rehabilitation and compensation, volunteers are considered employees.

While volunteers are providing assistance to the Museum, they are covered by Comcare insurance. This does not include travel to and from home to the location of the Museum program for which they are volunteering time and skills.

For insurance purposes, accurate sign-on and sign-off records are kept for each volunteer.

4.6 Reimbursement of expenses

At the commencement of his or her duties, the supervisor provides general guidance on the kind of expenses volunteers can occur, that prior approval must be sought for reimbursement and the procedure for claiming such expenses. Appropriate records and/or receipts are kept and given as supporting evidence for any claims for reimbursement.

4.7 Occupational health and safety

The Museum strives to promote and maintain an environment which protects the health, safety and welfare of employees at work, including volunteers.

4.8 Working with children

To provide a safe environment for children, all volunteers are required to undergo an Australian Federal Police Criminal History Check to determine their suitability to work with children.

On engagement, volunteers undergo induction and training specifically in relation to working with children including:

- appropriate behaviour guidelines such as:

- not touching or picking children up
- encouraging positive behaviours in children in a positive way
- lost and found procedures
- discussing sensitive content with children.

4.9 Volunteer responsibilities

Volunteers are expected to behave in a way that upholds the Australian Public Service Values and the Museum's Code of Conduct.

The key document which defines volunteer responsibilities is the 'Volunteer Agreement', negotiated at the commencement of his or her duties with their supervisor, assisted by the Volunteer Coordinator. The Agreement includes a detailed position description and key points from this policy.

Volunteers are encouraged to discuss regularly their performance with their supervisor. In the case of issues or complaints volunteer supervisors are the first point of contact. If resolution cannot be reached, the Museum's procedure for handling grievances is followed.

Volunteers do not make public statements or speak on behalf of the Museum.

5. Definition of terms

Formal volunteering

Formal volunteering takes place primarily in not-for-profit organisations and is undertaken:

- to be of benefit to the community and the volunteer
- of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion
- for no financial payment
- in designated volunteer positions only.

Community

Groups of people who share characteristics or bonds such as ethnicity, religion, or experience of a location or event.

6. Definition of responsibilities

Manager, Visitor Services and Volunteers

- has strategic management and overall direction of the Volunteers business unit
- oversees the development and delivery of volunteer projects.

Volunteers Coordinator

- manages the implementation of this Volunteers policy
- assists with identification, development and delivery of new and established volunteer projects
- promotes volunteering both within the Museum and to the wider community
- monitors compliance with this Volunteers policy.

Volunteer Roster Coordinators

- are the first point of contact for new volunteers
- assist with the development and delivery of volunteer projects

- monitor compliance with this Volunteers policy.

Business unit managers

- identify and establish rewarding volunteer roles
- ensure compliance with this Volunteers policy
- ensure adequate supervision of volunteers in their section.

Supervisor of Volunteer

- ensures that volunteers are adequately supervised and trained to perform their duties
- assists with development and delivery of training programs for volunteers
- is the first point of contact for existing volunteers in their business unit
- ensures sufficient tools and materials are available for performance of volunteer tasks.

Volunteer

- performs assigned duties in a diligent, timely and professional manner.
- adheres to relevant Museum policies and guidelines
- attends training as required or directed.
- actively participates in discussions about their volunteer role.
- openly discusses personal and professional needs and goals with their supervisor.

7. References

National Museum of Australia Act 1980

Strategic Plan 2011/12–2015/15, National Museum of Australia, version 1, March 2011

Client Service Charter, National Museum of Australia 2003

National Museum of Australia Workplace Diversity Plan 2005–2008

Volunteering Australia, *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-For-Profit Organisations*, Melbourne, Volunteering Australia Inc, September 2001

Volunteering Australia, *National Standards Implementation Guide for Involving Volunteers in Not-For-Profit Organisations*, Melbourne, Volunteering Australia Inc, September 2001

The Code of Conduct, section 10, *Public Service ACT 1999*

The APS Values, section 10, *Public Service ACT 1999*

Code of Conduct Guidelines, National Museum of Australia, 2005

8. Implementation

8.1 Coverage

This policy applies to all volunteers in all programs and projects undertaken by, or on behalf of, the Museum and to all Museum sections and sites of operation.

8.2 Other related policies

Audience development policy
 Communication policy
 Cultural diversity policy
 Education and learning policy
 Environmental management policy
 Interpretation policy
 Occupational health and safety policy
 Recordkeeping policy

8.3 Exclusions

None

8.4 Superseded policies

This policy supersedes:

Former policy/ies title	Version no.	Version date	Approval date
Volunteers policy	1.0	Jan 1995	Jan 1995 (by Council)
Volunteers policy	2.0	14 Jun 2006	14 Jun 2006

8.5 Monitoring

The Visitor Services and Volunteers Business Unit monitors implementation of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed in March 2013.