

Cultural diversity policy

POL-C-027

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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 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 Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs' policy *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity*. The four principles which underpin this policy are:

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.

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.

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.

Benefits for all

All Australians benefit from productive diversity, that is, the 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 Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs' *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* and reports annually on access and equity initiatives.

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 '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 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 which 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.

5. Definition of terms

Access

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs' definition of access 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.' For the Museum access 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 Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs' definition of equity is 'Government services should be developed and delivered on the basis of fair treatment of clients who are eligible to receive them.' For the Museum equity is the process by which the Museum strives to distribute cultural, intellectual and physical resources as fairly as possible.

6. Definition of responsibilities

The General Managers 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 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, 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 2004-2007, National Museum of Australia, version 1.2, 2004

8. Implementation

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 Monitoring

Implementation of this policy is monitored regularly by the General Managers.

This policy will be reviewed in February 2007.