

# Public programs policy

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## 1. Title

Public programs 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

Public programs are a vital part of the Museum's engagement with audiences, fostering an awareness and understanding of Australian history, culture and society through creative and innovative programs that stimulate, engage and inspire people.

### 3.1 Description

This policy outlines the Museum's approach to public programs and the framework within which public programs are managed. Audiences participate in onsite, offsite and website programs that educate and entertain them using a diversity of interpretive strategies appropriate to the various needs and interests of the participants.

### 3.2 Purpose

This policy provides a framework within which:

- the public gains greater access to the National Historical Collection and the themes of the Museum
- programs are delivered for diverse audiences including those who visit the Acton site in Canberra and those in remote, regional or urban places who engage with the Museum through outreach programs or through the Museum's broadcast studio or website
- new and existing audiences are attracted, maintained and increased
- diverse programs are developed to meet the needs and expectations of different audiences
- a national focus is ensured
- innovative approaches are pursued, including creative use of new technologies
- public programs are based on research relating to both content and methods of interpretation.

### 3.3 Rationale

The *National Museum of Australia Act 1980* outlines the organisation's broad responsibility:

*To disseminate information relating to Australian history and information relating to the Museum and its functions.*

The *Strategic Plan 2004-2007* defines the Museum's mission as follows:

*To promote an understanding of Australia's history and an awareness of future possibilities by ... engaging and providing access for audiences nationally and internationally and delivering innovative programs.*

## **4. Principles or guidelines**

Public programs support the Museum's endeavour to build a national and international reputation for high quality research and interpretation and the enhancement of well informed public discussion.

### **4.1 Diverse audiences**

The Museum's public programs are developed for a broad range of audiences with different needs and interests. Audiences include families with children, adults, youth, seniors, preschool children, culturally diverse groups, Indigenous Australians, academics and museum specialists.

### **4.2 Onsite, offsite and website delivery**

Programs are delivered on the Acton site for visitors from Canberra and the local region as well as for national and international tourists.

Outreach programs are delivered in remote, regional and urban places across Australia, to enhance public awareness of the Museum and to increase audience numbers. As part of its outreach strategy, the Museum takes into consideration people who are not traditional museum visitors.

In addition, for people who cannot visit the onsite or offsite programs, the Museum's website and broadcast studio offer an alternative form of public programs delivery.

### **4.3 Variety of formats**

Different programs are required to meet the needs of diverse audiences.

The Museum's public programs include but are not restricted to lectures, seminars, forums, conferences, panel and public discussions, workshops, presentations, storytelling, festivals, theatrical, musical and dance performances, youth events, film screenings, community web-based projects and innovative activities exploiting new and emerging technologies.

Programs can be formal or informal and aim to provide audiences with experiences combining lifelong learning and leisure activities.

### **4.4 Innovation and technology**

The Museum's public programs strive to be innovative, engaging and continually seek new ways to stimulate and inspire its many audiences. In keeping with the Museum's aim to be at the forefront of museological practice, the content and the methods of interpretation and delivery of public programs are based on sound research. The use of new and emerging technologies is a feature of the Museum's approach.

### **4.5 Partnerships**

The Museum's public programs benefit from active partnerships with cultural institutions, government and non-government organisations, other museums, community organisations, the media and sponsors.

### **4.6 Programing**

The Museum balances resources between audiences who are relatively easy to reach and those who are more inaccessible, between programs which attract large numbers and others which meet minority needs, and between initiatives which seek to encourage repeat visitation by existing audiences and those which aim to attract new audiences.

### **4.7 Audience and market research**

Researching audiences and markets enhances the Museum's understanding of the behaviour, motivation and satisfaction levels of public program participants. Research helps develop appropriate programs and evaluation identifies successes and areas for improvement. Research also assists in encouraging repeat visitation and attracting people

who have not yet visited the Museum. It gives the Museum a competitive advantage in the leisure, culture and education markets.

## 5. Definition of terms

### **Access**

The process by which people from all backgrounds and cultures engage with the cultural, intellectual and physical resources of the Museum.

### **Audience and market research**

The discipline which includes visitor surveys, focus groups, interviews, segmentation studies and program evaluation.

### **Audiences**

The people who make up the Museum's public including visitors, researchers, volunteers, the media, institutions, donors, sponsors and all consumers or users of its products.

### **Community**

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

### **Cultural diversity**

The expression of life in Australia through ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, politics, philosophy, religion, community identity and subcultural activity. The term encompasses a philosophy that appropriately allows and encourages maintenance of cultural identity whilst sharing common ideals and equality of opportunity.

### **Interpretation**

The process of engaging with audiences to create understanding.

### **Learning**

The active process of acquiring knowledge or skill through study, experience or teaching, leading to possible long-term changes in understanding, attitudes or behaviour.

### **Lifelong learning**

The concept that the education of an individual begins at birth and continues throughout life.

### **Outreach**

Experienced away from Acton, Canberra, outreach programs and activities connect the Museum with local, regional, national and international audiences. Outreach includes public and schools programs, print and electronic publishing, community-based projects and travelling exhibitions.

## 6. Definition of responsibilities

### **General Manager *Public Programs and Audience Development***

Manages the implementation of this policy.

### **Manager *Public Programs and Events***

Assists in implementation of this policy and is responsible for developing and delivering the Museum's public programs.

## 7. References

*National Museum of Australia Act 1980*

*Strategic Plan 2004-2007*, National Museum of Australia, version 1.2, 2004

## **8. Implementation**

The General Manager *Public Programs & Audience Development* represents the Museum in managing 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  
Cultural diversity policy  
Education and learning policy  
Interpretation policy  
Outreach policy  
Research and scholarship policy  
Sponsorship and development policy  
Temporary and travelling exhibitions policy

### **8.3 Exclusions**

None

### **8.4 Monitoring**

This policy is monitored regularly by the General Manager *Public Programs & Audience Development* and the Manager *Public Programs & Events*.

This policy will be reviewed in January 2008.