

Research and scholarship policy

POL-C-008

Version 4.0 18 Jan 2005

Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. Title..... | 3 |
| 2. Introduction..... | 3 |
| 3. Scope | 3 |
| 4. Principles and guidelines..... | 3 |
| 5. Definition of terms | 5 |
| 6. Definition of responsibilities..... | 5 |
| 7. References | 5 |
| 8. Implementation..... | 6 |

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| ID | POL-C-008 |
| Version | 4.0 |
| Type | Council approved |
| Approval date | 25 November 2004 |
| File | 95/0156 |
| Availability | Public and all staff |
| Keywords | Research, scholarship, centre of excellence, program, collection development |
| Responsible officer | Senior Curator <i>Research</i> |
| History | Research policy version 1.0 approved by Council 15 October 1993 Research policy version 2.0 approved by Council 17 May 1995 Research policy version 2.0a presented to Council 3 May 2001, Council requested changes Research policy version 3.0 approved by Council 10 August 2001 |
| Review date | November 2006 |
| Related documents | Triennial research plan |
| Contact | National Museum of Australia GPO Box 1901 CANBERRA ACT 2601 Tel: (02) 6208 5000 Email: information@nma.gov.au Website: www.nma.gov.au |

1. Title

Research and scholarship 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 the Museum's approaches to research and scholarship and the framework within which these activities are undertaken.

3.2 Purpose

This policy provides the framework within which an active and ongoing research program is to be continued and further developed.

3.3 Rationale

Research helps to develop the Museum as a centre of excellence for the understanding of Australian history and society. An active and ongoing research program contributes to:

- developing sound scholarship that underpins the Museum's core functions
- producing high quality Museum programs
- establishing the Museum as a centre for innovation and creativity
- raising the profile of the Museum among peer communities.

Research is also a statutory responsibility under section 6(1)(c) of the *National Museum of Australia Act 1980*.

4. Principles and guidelines

4.1 The focus of research

The principal focus of the Museum's research and scholarship are the Museum's collections, their nature as historical evidence, and their role in creating understandings of the past. This focus for research includes:

- the collections, understood as objects which are in some way evidence about the past or of historical experience
- the people, communities, ideas and events that comprise historical experience and that are documented and represented by the collections
- practices of interpretation and visitor experience, such as exhibitions, public programs and conservation activities, through which the collections are used to create understandings of Australian history and society.

The exact areas of research to be pursued at any time will depend on current institutional priorities. Research activities will be prioritised according to strategic directions and will build on existing strengths.

4.2 Research framework

To facilitate research the Museum provides the following research framework:

Research funding

The Museum allocates specific funds for research. The amount of funding may vary from year to year.

Staff research support

The Museum provides direct support to staff to undertake research. This is intended to address research priorities and to develop and enhance essential research skills among Museum staff. There are two forms of staff research support:

- **Staff research fellowships** — these provide an opportunity for staff to undertake full-time research for an approved project
- **Approved staff research projects** — these provide institutional backing for approved staff research but not direct funding.

Fellowships

The Museum awards a number of research fellowships to external scholars to undertake research projects in identified priority areas. There are two forms of scholarly research fellowship:

- **Senior museum fellowships** — for scholars of significant standing, who would receive financial support from the Museum
- **Museum visiting fellowships** — for scholars, at all levels, who seek Museum affiliation and access to Museum collections, who would receive limited financial support from the Museum.

Collaborations and partnerships

The Museum will act collaboratively in research with other institutions, organisations, Indigenous communities and individuals where there are benefits. In particular, this will be where such collaboration results in outcomes that neither party could produce as effectively or efficiently had it undertaken the activity on its own. There are two major forms of research collaboration:

- formal links with scholarly and cultural institutions including museums and universities
- collaborative research projects under the aegis of external grant schemes.

4.3 Building on research

The Museum wants to ensure that its collection development, exhibitions, programs, conservation and publications all reflect the best and most up-to-date scholarship and make use of its research output. To do this it is necessary that the Museum's research and scholarship outputs and outcomes find public expression and are tested by peer review.

4.4 Dissemination of research

The Museum seeks to ensure that the development of its collections, exhibitions, publications and other activities all reflect the highest quality of research and scholarship. The Museum also recognises that its research and scholarship outputs must be communicated in innovative and effective ways to both peer and general public audiences, to enhance the authority of the institution. The Museum therefore disseminates its research outputs in a range of media including conferences and publications in both hard copy and

electronic formats. The Museum particularly encourages the publication of research outputs in peer-reviewed journals and monographs.

The Museum assists staff in disseminating research outputs by publicising the research undertaken by its staff and affiliated researchers. It acknowledges and publicises the use of original research in its exhibitions and programs.

Nothing in this policy prevents the Museum itself, or in partnership, from publishing the results of its research.

4.5 Measuring research

The Museum will produce a triennial rolling research plan and will measure research outputs and outcomes on an annual basis.

4.6 Building capacity

The Museum supports the development of research and scholarship skills among its staff and the growth of a research culture within the organisation. The Museum recognises the necessity for building public recognition of its research achievements.

5. Definition of terms

Research

Research is creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications¹.

It is the nature and level of the inquiry that determines whether or not an activity is research, not the subject matter being researched or the status of the individual undertaking it. The inquiry must be systematic and the outcome must be novel. The result of research has a value beyond its functional use to the Museum.

Scholarship

Scholarship is the critical mastery of an existing body of knowledge, its sources, nuances, and historical and intellectual context and its use to inform, educate and explain.

6. Definition of responsibilities

Executive team

The Museum's executive team is responsible for the strategic management of the Museum's research activities.

Senior Curator Research

The Senior Curator *Research* will coordinate and manage information relating to research proposals and activities.

7. References

National Museum of Australia Act 1980

¹ This definition is the OECD definition of research. It is used by the Department of Education, Science and Training as the definition of research for the Australian 'Research Industry'. Department of Education, Science and Training, *Higher Education Research Data Collection: specifications for the collection of 2003 data*. Canberra, December 2003, p.5

8. Implementation

8.1 Coverage

This policy applies to all areas of the Museum.

8.2 Other related policies

- Collections development policy
- Community networking policy
- Intellectual property policy
- Networking with Aboriginal and Torres Strait
- Islander communities policy
- Publications policy

8.3 Exclusions

None.

8.4 Monitoring

All research projects must generate measurable outputs. Outputs include monographs, book chapters, refereed journal articles and conference proceedings,

The Museum will maintain statistical data on the number of projects funded or otherwise approved under this policy and on the number of books, book chapters, refereed journal articles and refereed conference proceedings that are produced as a result.

The quality and effectiveness of the Museum's research activities will be further evaluated by an annual assessment of how the Museum has made use of its research output in its collection development, exhibitions, programs, conservation and publications.

This policy will be reviewed in November 2006.