

# Volunteers Policy

POL-G-033

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Contact	National Museum of Australia GPO Box 1901 CANBERRA ACT 2601 Tel: (02) 6208 5000 Email: <a href="mailto:information@nma.gov.au">information@nma.gov.au</a> Website: <a href="http://www.nma.gov.au">www.nma.gov.au</a>

## 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 Arts portfolio. 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 may be involved in all programs and activities of the Museum and serve at all levels of skill and decision making. Volunteers will not however displace any paid employees from their position.

### 3.1 Description

To provide a framework based on best practice for the management and involvement of volunteers at the National Museum of Australia.

### 3.2 Purpose

Through a documented volunteers policy and volunteer procedures based on best practice, the Museum will create 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 to the community, facilitating the two-way transfer of skills and knowledge.

## 4. Principles or guidelines

The National Museum of Australia will develop all strategies for managing volunteers founded on the values of the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement in Not for Profit Organisations* – as described in ‘The Model Code of Practice For Organisations Involving Volunteers’, ‘Volunteer Rights’ and ‘Principles of Volunteering’:

Volunteers are an integral part of our organisation and will:

- always be treated as equally and fairly as our paid staff.
- be valued for their input, and called upon for their opinions
- be consulted on all matters that substantially affect the performance of their work
- have the opportunity to effect change in the organisation through their suggestions and involvement in planning and management
- be expected to provide feedback and input to their supervisor (team leader) regarding their work with clients.<sup>1</sup>

### 4.1 Volunteer recruitment

The recruitment of volunteers at the Museum will be conducted in a similar way to paid staff. The procedure for recruitment of volunteers will include a general position description, an application, interview and engagement process.

The Museum will recruit volunteers with the intent of broadening community involvement in the Museum through volunteering and according to the principles contained in the National Museum of Australia’s Workplace Diversity Plan.

Volunteer recruitment will be based on suitability to perform a task on behalf of the Museum without any conflict of interest, perceived or real. A police name check will also be conducted. Volunteers may be recruited through either an interest in a specific function or through a general interest in volunteering, which will later be matched with a specific function.

### 4.2 Volunteer learning and development

The Museum will undertake to provide appropriate training and educational opportunities for all volunteers.

Each volunteer will be required to participate in a Museum orientation program. This will provide an understanding of the general work of the Museum and how volunteers contribute to the Museum’s vision, mission and values.

The Museum acknowledges that the two-way transfer of the skills and knowledge of both staff and volunteers supports the Museum’s commitment to lifelong learning. Volunteers will be encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge through training and development opportunities.

All volunteers working in the Museum will be aware of and work to the service level defined by the Client Service Charter. Volunteers who work in public areas of the Museum will be required to undertake customer service training.

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<sup>1</sup> *National Standards Implementation Guide for Not for Profit Organisations Involving Volunteers*, Volunteering Australia, 2001.

### 4.3 Volunteer insurance

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

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

For insurance purposes it is essential that accurate sign on and off records are kept for each volunteer.

### 4.4 Occupational health and safety

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

### 4.5 Volunteer responsibilities

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

At the commencement of his or her duties with the Museum each volunteer will be required to sign a Volunteer Agreement. This will include a detailed position description. The volunteer, their supervisor and the Volunteers Coordinator will negotiate Volunteer Agreements. Agreements will adhere to the guidelines contained in this policy.

Volunteers will be encouraged to regularly discuss their performance with their supervisor. In the case of any issues or complaints, volunteer supervisors will be the first point of contact. If resolution cannot be reached, the procedure for solving grievances will be followed.

Volunteers are not to make public statements or speak on behalf of the Museum. Official statements must only come from approved National Museum of Australia officers.

## 5. Definition of terms

### Formal volunteering

Formal volunteering is an activity, which takes place in not for profit organisations or projects 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

### Visitor Services and Volunteers Manager

- Strategic management and overall direction of Volunteers unit
- Oversee the development and delivery of volunteer projects

### **Volunteers Coordinator**

- Manage the implementation of the Volunteers Policy
- Assist with the identification, development and delivery of new and established volunteer projects
- Promote volunteering both within the Museum and to the wider community
- Monitor compliance with the Volunteers Policy

### **Volunteers Roster Coordinator**

- First point of contact for new volunteers
- Assist with the development and delivery of volunteer projects
- Monitor compliance with the Volunteers Policy

### **Business unit managers**

- Identify and establish rewarding volunteer roles
- Ensure compliance with the Volunteers Policy
- Ensure adequate supervision of volunteers in their section

### **Supervisor of volunteer**

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

### **Volunteer**

- Perform assigned duties in a diligent, timely and professional manner
- Adhere to relevant Museum policies and guidelines
- Attend training as required or directed
- Actively participate in discussions about their volunteer role
- Openly discuss relevant personal and professional needs and goals with supervisor

## **7. References**

*National Museum of Australia Act 1980*

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

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**

Cultural Diversity Policy

Occupational Health and Safety Policy

Interpretation Policy

Record Keeping Policy

Communication Policy

Education and Learning Policy

Environmental Management Policy

Audience Development Policy

### **8.3 Exclusions**

None

### **8.4 Monitoring**

The Visitor Services and Volunteers business unit will monitor implementation of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed in January 2008.