

Exploring social change over time 1945–2000

Through a travelling exhibition developed and presented by the National Museum of Australia:

MISS Australia

A NATION'S QUEST



TO TEACHERS

This unit considers social change in Australia from 1945–2000 through an exploration of source material — objects, images, and documents — presented in the *Miss Australia: A Nation's Quest* travelling exhibition.

The Miss Australia Quest (from 1992 known as the Miss Australia Awards) ran continuously from 1953 to 2000 and was arguably the longest running, most popular and most successful charitable enterprise in Australia's history. From humble beginnings in magazine and newspaper-sponsored contests of the early twentieth century, the quest for Australia's ideal woman evolved to become the premier fundraising vehicle for the Australian Cerebral Palsy Association. Over its lifetime, the Miss Australia competition reflected many of the changes that took place within Australian society: changing views on disability and women's roles; the influence of migrants and 'New Australians'; and the representation of Australia and Australians overseas.

The exhibition, open at the Museum of Brisbane from October 2006, will go on show at the National Museum in Canberra from March 2007.

This unit can be used to support a class visit to the exhibition, or as a self-contained classroom-ready unit for those who are unable to see the exhibition.

Curriculum activities supported by this unit include:

- * a study of changes in social attitudes and values in post-war decades — exploring themes of gender, commercialism, attitudes to disability, charity, national identity and multiculturalism (History and English);
- * changing attitudes to the representation of women over time (Society and Environment);
- * symbols in Australian ceremonies and celebrations (Art).

This unit is structured chronologically, with each activity focusing on a different decade of the 20th century. Teachers can focus on one key decade, or they might allocate the decades to groups, who can report back and help others create the overall summary sheet on pages 8–9.

Contents:

- * The Miss Australia competition — An overview
- * Activity 1 Interrogating a museum object
- * Activities 2–8 What does a study of the Miss Australia competition tell us about social change across the decades of the 20th century?
- * Activity 9 Exploring the *Miss Australia: A Nation's Quest* travelling exhibition
- * Conclusion

The **National Museum of Australia** in Canberra is one of the nation's most important cultural institutions. The Museum employs a fresh and exciting approach to Australian history, culture and environment.

Each National Museum unit of work in STUDIES asks students to consider the stories and concepts behind Museum themes, objects and images and can be used with students in Society and Environment, History, Geography, English and Media Studies.