



National Museum of Australia
07-08 Annual Report

**National Museum
of Australia 07–08
Annual Report and
Audited Financial
Statements**





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National Museum of Australia 07–08 Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements

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Australian Government

**Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts**





Garden of Australian Dreams, National Museum of Australia.



The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP



The Hon Tony Staley AO

Chairman's letter of transmittal

The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP
Minister for the Environment,
Heritage and the Arts
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Council of the National Museum of Australia, I am pleased to submit our annual report for the financial year ended 30 June 2008. The report is presented in accordance with Section 9 and Schedule 1 of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*, and it has been prepared in conformity with the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies (Report of Operations) Orders 2008.

This year has seen the Museum recognised as an emerging national institution with a growing international reputation. Visitation numbers to the Museum in Canberra, to our travelling exhibitions around Australia and to our website have increased. An exhibition of the works of Emily Kame Kngwarreye presented and developed by the Museum for the Australian Government was well received in Japan.

Permanent exhibitions now include more objects from the Museum's National Historical Collection, which was strengthened with important additions. The Centre for Historical Research added to the depth of knowledge about the collection. The rotating theatre, Circa, has been refurbished and offers an innovative introduction to the Museum.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the support of my fellow Council members in guiding the Museum towards the successes it has achieved during the year.

I would also like to express the Council's appreciation for your ongoing support and that of Senator the Hon George Brandis, as portfolio ministers.

Finally, all members of the Council join me in congratulating the Director and staff on the Museum's continuing success.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Staley AO
Chairman of Council
National Museum of Australia
August 2008

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Part one:
Executive
summary





Vision

A recognised world-class museum exploring Australia's past, illuminating the present, imagining the future.

Mission

To promote an understanding of Australia's history and an awareness of future possibilities by:

- developing, preserving and exhibiting a significant collection
- taking a leadership role in research and scholarship
- engaging and providing access for audiences nationally and internationally
- delivering innovative programs.

Values

The National Museum of Australia operates with the highest ethical standards. It embraces truth and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and recognises the importance of aesthetic considerations. The Museum acknowledges the contributions of all Australians to the country's historical development and accepts a fundamental requirement for fairness and equity in its activities.

In operating within the framework established by such values, the National Museum of Australia:

- develops and preserves the National Historical Collection
- upholds scholarly and professional integrity
- makes best use of its resources
- values and is open-minded to new ideas
- promotes continuous learning
- strives to be innovative and creative
- anticipates and responds to its diverse audience's needs.

Record visitation was achieved by the Museum this year with a total of 2,529,782 visitors enjoying exhibitions, programs and online experiences.



Director Craddock Morton

Director's review of operations

Last year saw a period of considerable success for the Museum, as we continued to provide a wide range of programs and activities that foster a better understanding of Australian history for the Australian public, and the opportunity for meaningful material history exploration through our Centre for Historical Research.

At the same time we have been engaged in a significant review of all our activities as we confront the challenge posed by the Government in its requirement for an increased efficiency dividend for the forthcoming financial year. We have used the opportunity to better match our resources to our highest priorities and are confident that the programs we are putting into place for 2008-09 and beyond will maintain our pre-eminent position among Australian museums. We have been able to achieve this without any forced redundancies, although a small number of people have accepted early retirement. The containment of staffing costs remains crucial for the Museum and will be an area that is kept

under close review in 2008-09, particularly in regard to temporary employment.

Our primary concern remains the limitations of the exhibition space available to us. While we recognise that it is possible to show only a small percentage of the Museum's collection at any one time, we are nonetheless aware that our available exhibition area is small by Australian, let alone world, museum standards. We have therefore embarked on the planning for a major display and accommodation project, which aims to reconfigure space within the existing Museum footprint that is currently used for other purposes and convert it to new exhibition galleries. As the first part of this project, we would extend our current administration wing to provide accommodation for those staff displaced by the new exhibition space. Our intention is to fund this extension from within existing resources.

The new galleries will follow on from our current Museum Enhancement Program, which has proceeded successfully during 2007-08. Stage 1, the refurbishment of the Circa theatre, has been completed, with the theatre now providing an introduction to Australian history and the Museum galleries by highlighting objects held in our collection. The response to the Circa redevelopment has been overwhelmingly positive.

Stage 2, the development of a new gallery, Australian Journeys, will be available for public viewing before the end of 2008. Detailed content planning is underway for another new gallery, Creating a Country. This is Stage 3 of the project, which is currently planned for delivery by 2010 although it may be slightly later if we expand into the reconfigured space referred to above.

A record 1,007,856 people visited the Museum's exhibitions nationally and internationally this year, with travelling exhibitions and temporary exhibitions performing extremely well. The touring of *Utopia: The Genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye* at the National Museum of Art in Osaka and at Tokyo's National Art Centre this year not only cemented Emily Kame Kngwarreye's international reputation but signified the Museum's status as a producer of world-class touring exhibitions. Our exhibition program for the next five years shows a strong mix of international buy-ins and in-house productions. I am confident that some of the latter will attract interest from overseas venues, and all will tour within Australia, although some will require modification to fit the venues that seek to host them.

This year the Museum's website also achieved record visitation, increasing from 797,368 visits last year to 1,521,926 visits this year. This increase in website visits was largely due to the addition of three comprehensive online exhibitions and ongoing use of online education resources. Unfortunately the production of new website



Exterior, National Museum of Australia. Photo: John Gollings

content is one area where we will feel the effect of the increased efficiency dividend. There will be a reduction in such material until we can reallocate greater resources than are currently available for this activity.

The Museum spent a total of \$2.762 million on acquisitions for the National Historical Collection this year, including \$1.064 million from a special acquisitions fund provided by the Australian Government. Significant acquisitions included *Banks' Florilegium*, a book comprising botanical line engravings that record the plants collected by Sir Joseph Banks and Dr Daniel Carl Solander when they accompanied Captain James Cook on his first voyage across the Pacific; and an eighteenth-century French neo-classical bust of Captain James Cook attributed to the circle of Augustin Pajou.

Storage of our collection remains a major concern. While we have taken steps to improve conditions in our existing leased premises, our failure to secure government support for a new purpose-built facility will now require us to seek to extend our existing leases and we might need to undertake further remedial work to these facilities.

In the first full year of operation of the Centre for Historical Research, staff numbers grew from three to 12 and included five senior research fellows and five research fellows. Highlights were the staging of successful conferences on matters as diverse as historical skills for amateur historians and Pacific

museums collection issues. Research fellows at the centre authored several books and journal articles. The Museum's research profile was further enhanced with the publication of our well-regarded journal *reCollections*.

We have also negotiated a three-year agreement with our staff and relevant unions to govern salary and conditions from October 2008. We anticipate that there will be a strong positive vote for the agreement in early 2008–09. This agreement will help keep the Museum strongly competitive in the collecting institutions market.

I acknowledge the government's support for the Museum and am also grateful for the continuing support and assistance of the Chairman of Council, the Hon Tony Staley, and of other Council members.

The Museum's achievements reflect the continuing dedication of our people, the commitment of the Friends of the National Museum of Australia and our many volunteers who give up their time to assist us. I also wish to thank and congratulate every staff member for their commitment and contributions this year.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'C. Morton'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large, sweeping 'M' and a long, trailing flourish.

Craddock Morton
August 2008



Visitors at the *Utopia: The Genius of Emily Kngwarreye* exhibition in Tokyo, Japan, May 2008. Photo: Sonja Balaga

The year at a glance

Highlights of the year

The Museum's performance this year was outstanding with highlights including:

- record numbers to our exhibitions and programs at the Museum and 11 exhibitions that travelled around Australia and to Japan
- substantial expansion in numbers accessing the National Historical Collection through an enhanced publications program and website
- a significant increase in scholarly and research activity
- the opening of the refurbished Circa revolving theatre.

Achievements against agreed outcomes and outputs

The National Museum of Australia is a statutory authority within the Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio. The Australian Government funds the Museum to achieve an agreed outcome through a series of outputs and associated performance indicators, as specified in the annual Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS). The Museum's outcome is:

Australians have access to the National Museum's collections and public programs to encourage awareness and understanding of Australia's history and culture.

(National Museum of Australia, Portfolio Budget Statement, 2007–08)



Visitors at *Papunya Painting: Out of the Desert* admiring *Tjunyinkya* (1977) by Johnny Scobie Tjapanangka and Turkey Tolson Tjupurrula.

Outcome: Financial summary, measured against PBS

The price of outputs was \$47,979,000 (anticipated \$48,759,000). Departmental appropriations were \$40,764,000 (anticipated \$40,952,000) and revenue from other sources was \$7,386,000 (anticipated \$7,807,000).

Outcome: Performance summary, measured against PBS

Relevance of acquisitions

The target of 100 per cent for the proportion of acquisitions acquired in accordance with the Collection Development Framework was achieved.

Accessibility of collections and programs

The target of 1,150,000 for the number of visitors or users of Museum exhibitions and programs (including

web) was exceeded (1,007,856 visitors or users and 1,521,926 web visitors: a total achievement of 2,529,782).

The extent to which awareness and understanding of Australia's history and culture is increased

The target of 75 per cent for the proportion of visitors and users who indicated the Museum's exhibitions and public programs contributed to a new or different awareness or perspective on Australia's history or culture was exceeded (81 per cent achieved).

Output Group 1.1: Collection development and management – Financial summary, measured against PBS

The price of Output 1.1 was \$7,628,000 (anticipated \$12,220,000). Departmental appropriations were \$9,003,000 (anticipated \$9,050,000) and revenue from other sources was \$1,244,000 (anticipated \$3,170,000).



Circa was redeveloped to provide visitors with a fresh and engaging introduction to the Museum.

Output Group 1.1: Collection development and management – Performance summary, measured against PBS

Quality

The estimate for the percentage (75 per cent) of the National Historical Collection being packed or stored at, or above, appropriate museum standards was achieved.

Quantity

The Museum acquired 113 collections as part of the National Historical Collection. The number of conservation treatments completed was 2289, against an estimate of 1000 treatments. Against the anticipation that documentation for 10,000 collection items would be made available on the Museum's website, 8466 were made accessible.

Output Group 1.2: National exhibitions, programs and services – Financial summary measured against PBS

The price of Output 1.2 was \$40.351m (anticipated \$36.539m). Departmental appropriations were

\$31.761m (anticipated \$31.902m) and revenue from other sources was \$6.143m (anticipated \$4.637m).

Output Group 1.2: National exhibitions, programs and services – Performance summary measured against PBS

Quality

Visitor satisfaction (94 per cent) exceeded the target of 85 per cent, and the satisfaction (98 per cent) of schools with the Museum's schools programs meeting core curriculum requirements also substantially exceeded the target (80 per cent).

Quantity

The target of 1,150,000 for the number of visitors or users of Museum exhibitions and programs (including web) was exceeded (1,007,856 visitors or users and 1,521,926 web visitors: a total achievement of 2,529,782).

Achievement of strategic and business priorities

Strategic and business priorities: Summary of activities and achievements, 2007–08

1. Key strategic priority: Enhance exhibitions, programs and services

The National Museum of Australia strives to ensure that Australians have access to its collections and programs and to encourage awareness and understanding of Australian history and culture. The Museum will achieve this by developing and delivering exhibitions and activities that are audience-focused, object-centred and rich in content.

BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR 2007–08	REPORTS
1.1 Deliver the new Circa audiovisual program	Circa opened to the public over the first week of April on a preview basis to enable technical testing and adjustments. <i>See pages 29–30.</i>
1.2 Deliver the new Australian Journeys gallery	The gallery concept was finalised in September 2007, with content development and developed design completed in December 2007 and May 2008 respectively. <i>See page 30.</i>
1.3 Continue development of the new Creating a Country gallery	Significant progress in the development of this new exhibition gallery included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research undertaken on its key themes • identification of collections to be acquired. <i>See page 30.</i>
1.4 Develop and deliver a temporary gallery program	The temporary gallery program promotes knowledge of Australian history and provides access to Museum collections throughout the country. This year the Museum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivered two major temporary exhibitions of greater than 600 m² (<i>Papunya Painting</i> and <i>League of Legends</i>), which attracted 89,348 visitors, and one exhibition of more than 250 m² (<i>70% Urban</i>) • presented two buy-in displays • opened a major exhibition in two Japanese venues (Osaka and Tokyo) and continued planning to host two major international exhibitions at the Museum. <i>See pages 31–3.</i>

2. Key strategic priority: Develop the National Historical Collection and improve collections storage

The National Museum of Australia is mandated to develop and maintain a national collection of historical material. The Museum will continue to develop its acquisitions program, maintain its collections to the highest possible standards and improve its collections storage.

BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR 2007–08	REPORTS
<p>2.1 Develop the collection through key acquisitions and targeted collecting projects</p>	<p>The Museum’s Council approved 113 significant collections for inclusion in the National Historical Collection. All were acquired in accordance with the Collection Development Framework as set out in the PBS performance indicator. Targeted collecting projects supported gallery development and future exhibitions. A series of operating procedures concerning collection assessment and documentation were reviewed and improved procedures were implemented.</p> <p><i>See pages 23–5.</i></p>
<p>2.2 Develop storage and management plans that ensure the long-term preservation and sustainability of Museum collections</p>	<p>A detailed functional design brief and strategy for collections storage was completed.</p> <p>The Museum implemented its conservation work plan, and exceeded PBS performance indicators, with 2289 objects treated for all purposes by conservators.</p> <p><i>See page 79.</i></p>
<p>2.3 Increase the quantity, quality and accessibility of collection information</p>	<p>Collection information was increased as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4175 objects were accessioned • 13,904 object records were added to the collections database • approximately 9115 object records were digitised and uploaded to the Museum’s website. <p><i>See pages 25–6.</i></p>

3. Key strategic priority: Strengthen research and scholarship

The National Museum of Australia aims to be a centre of excellence for research and scholarship, and to contribute to the body of knowledge about Australian history and culture. The Museum will significantly develop its research and scholarship activity over the coming years.

BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR 2007–08	REPORTS
<p>3.1 Establish the Centre for Historical Research and devise a program of research, conferences and publications</p>	<p>Research and scholarship continued to be fundamental to Museum activities. Highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued development of the Centre for Historical Research and recruitment of nine staff • continuation of the Visiting Fellowships program • strengthening of the relationship with The Australian National University • progress on four Australian Research Council projects • publication of two issues of the scholarly e-journal <i>reCollections</i>. <p><i>See pages 46–50.</i></p>
<p>3.2 Integrate the operations of the Centre for Historical Research into existing Museum research in history, museum studies and material culture</p>	<p>The Centre for Historical Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formed a strong working relationship with other divisions and sections of the Museum, particularly Public Programs, Friends and curatorial sections • provided speakers or chairs for several public events, and worked harmoniously and productively on several gatherings in the course of the year, notably the ‘Australian museums since 1970’ workshop, the Pacific Museums conference and the Collections Symposium • jointly organised a history workshop with the Friends to foster historical skills among amateur historians • worked closely with the National Museum of Australia Press in producing <i>reCollections</i>. <p><i>See pages 46–50.</i></p>
<p>3.3 Establish research partnerships with academic and institutional partners</p>	<p>Research partnerships were established with the following partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Griffith University (environmental history) • Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and CSIRO (Gould collection of birds) • Menzies Centre, London (joint programming) • University of Tasmania (use of Your Story software on the university’s heritage site). <p><i>See page 49.</i></p>

4. Key strategic priority: Enhance national and international profile

The National Museum of Australia's vision is to be a recognised world-class museum. The Museum will continue to develop as a national institution of international standing through leadership in museum practice, by fostering partnerships and delivering effective, engaging outreach programs.

BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR 2007–08	REPORTS
<p>4.1 Build relationships and collaborations with the museum sector in Australia and internationally</p>	<p>Relationships and collaborations established or continued during the year included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Museum, London (Indigenous collections) • American Museum of Natural History, New York (<i>Darwin, Water</i> exhibitions) • Australian Museum, Sydney (<i>Papunya Painting</i> exhibition) • Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart (<i>Tayenebe</i> exhibition) • Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin (<i>Yalangbara</i> exhibition) • National Museum of Art, Osaka; National Art Center, Tokyo (<i>Utopia</i> exhibition). <p>See pages 31–2, 38–9, 46.</p>
<p>4.2 Deliver travelling exhibitions and other outreach programs</p>	<p>High quality outreach programs delivered to the Australian community included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nine Museum exhibitions, which travelled to 26 venues in six states across Australia, including 11 metropolitan and 18 regional centres, and one rural location, attracting more than 300,000 visitors • the development and delivery of an international touring exhibition, <i>Utopia: The Genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye</i>, shown at two venues in Japan to 69,765 visitors • programs such as Talkback Classroom and Snapshots, as well as a series of books titled <i>First Australians: Plenty Stories</i> developed for education audiences around Australia • significant new online content including exhibitions, audio on demand and interactive programs. <p>See pages 36–46, 58–9.</p>

5. Key strategic priority: Develop staff, business practices and infrastructure

The National Museum of Australia will continue to review the way business is conducted. The Museum will operate in a way that utilises better practices and provides an environment to assist staff to undertake their work.

BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR 2007–08	REPORTS
5.1 Develop staff accommodation plan	A staff accommodation planning exercise, aiming to identify current pressures, provide baseline data and analyse future accommodation planning, was completed. <i>See page 79.</i>
5.2 Support workforce diversity and skill retention	The Museum continued to implement the Workplace Diversity Plan 2005–08, with a focus on recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff. Corporate training concentrated on building capability in cultural awareness, contract management and leadership. <i>See pages 83–4.</i>
5.3 Augment and upgrade the Museum's information technology infrastructure	Key achievements included the implementation of new or upgraded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asset management of software products • systems to ensure the availability of business applications and information technology services in the event of hardware failures • security service to further protect the Museum from internet-generated threats such as viruses, spam, spyware and inappropriate content. New online business system projects were completed, enabling web-based recruitment and web access to the Museum's collection management system. A Request for Tender for the supply and implementation of network switch infrastructure was completed. <i>See page 61.</i>
5.4 Commence negotiations for the next Certified Agreement	A Certified Agreement Working Group, comprising representatives from management, staff and the Community and Public Sector Union, commenced negotiations on 4 March 2008, and finalised a draft agreement for assessment and endorsement by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts by June 2008. <i>See pages 79–80.</i>