



# Volunteers policy

POL-G-033

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## 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.

The Museum is a publicly funded institution governed as a statutory authority in the Commonwealth Arts portfolio. Established in 1980, it is headed by a director appointed by the Governor-General. The Council is responsible for the conduct and control of the affairs of the Museum. The Museum building on Acton Peninsula opened on 11 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 are involved in all programs and activities of the Museum and serve at all levels of skill and decision-making. Volunteers will not be used to displace the work of paid employees.

### 3.1 Description

This policy provides a best-practice framework for the management and involvement of volunteers at the National Museum of Australia.

### 3.2 Purpose

The Museum aims to provide 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 out into the community, facilitating the two-way transfer of skills and knowledge.

## 4. Principles or guidelines

All strategies for managing volunteers are derived from the values described in the [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#). Volunteers are an integral part of the organisation and will:

- 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.

### 4.1 Volunteer recruitment

The recruitment of volunteers is conducted in a similar way to paid staff. The procedure for recruitment of volunteers includes a general position description, an application and interview and engagement process.

Volunteers are recruited:

- with the intent of broadening community involvement in the Museum through volunteering and according to the principles contained in the [Diversity Action Plan](#)
- on the basis of their suitability to perform a task on behalf of the Museum without any conflict of interest, perceived or real
- after passing a police check and where appropriate a working with vulnerable people check
- through an interest in a specific function or a general interest in volunteering later matched with a specific function.

First Nations people and people from culturally diverse backgrounds are encouraged and supported to apply for volunteering positions. This is reflected in all recruitment advertising.

### 4.2 Museum staff as volunteers

Museum staff cannot become volunteers while they are paid employees of the Museum.

Approval is required from the Director or Deputy Director for former employees who apply for a volunteer position. Managers are responsible for ensuring they perform within the agreed volunteer position description and do not undertake additional work, regardless of their capabilities, experience or knowledge.

Former employees who leave the Museum due to a voluntary redundancy require approval to volunteer at the Museum. This approval can only be given by the Assistant Director and Deputy Director prior to any offers or agreements being made. There are a number of matters which need to be considered, including the type of work the person would be doing, the capacity in which they will be performing the work, and the level of security, records and/or IT access they should be granted. Additionally, consideration needs to be given as to whether the duties being undertaken should be undertaken by a paid employee, and if any capability development opportunities have been foregone by using a volunteer.

### 4.3 Volunteer responsibilities

Volunteers are expected to behave in a way that upholds the Australian Public Service Values, APS employment principles and the Code of Conduct.

The key document which defines volunteer responsibilities is the Volunteer Agreement, negotiated at the commencement of their duties with their supervisor, assisted by the Volunteers Coordinator. The agreement includes a detailed position description and key points from this policy.

Volunteers are encouraged to regularly discuss their performance with their supervisor. In the case of issues or complaints, volunteer supervisors are the first point of contact. If resolution cannot be reached, the Museum's procedure for handling grievances is followed.

Volunteers do not make public statements or speak on behalf of the Museum.

### 4.4 Volunteer learning and development

The Museum provides core training and educational opportunities for all volunteers.

Each volunteer is required to participate in an orientation program, which provides an understanding of how volunteers contribute to the Museum's vision, mission and values.

The Museum acknowledges that the two-way transfer of the skills and knowledge between staff and volunteers supports the organisational commitment to lifelong learning, and volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge wherever possible.

All volunteers are made aware of and work to the service level defined by the [Client Service Charter](#)

### 4.5 Volunteer supervision

The Museum recognises the importance of supervision and adequate feedback on performance. Discussion about work planning or completion is undertaken on a one-to-one basis between the volunteer and their supervisor. Performance management of volunteers broadly follows the Museum's staff Workplace Conversations model.

Other key elements of volunteer supervision include:

- the assessment of performance based on the volunteer job description
- establishing individual goals linked to the Museum's strategic priorities as well as the Visitor Experience business unit plan, observing the volunteer's activities, and providing guidance to maximise the achievement of the goals
- assessing progress, identifying problems, and planning for future training and personal development opportunities
- evaluating the performance, providing feedback, and addressing performance issues
- being receptive to feedback on ways to improve the volunteer program
- encouraging the free and confidential expression of volunteers' thoughts, opinions and doubts.

The level of supervision for each volunteer depends on factors including:

- how long they have been with the Museum
- how often they work
- the frequency of communication through telephone and emails
- the type and location of their work.

#### **4.6 Volunteer insurance**

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

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

For insurance purposes, accurate sign on and off records are kept for each volunteer.

#### **4.7 Reimbursement of expenses**

At the commencement of their duties, the supervisor provides general guidance on the kind of expenses volunteers can incur, that prior approval must be sought for reimbursement, and the procedure for claiming such expenses. Appropriate records and/or receipts are kept and given as supporting evidence for any claims for reimbursement.

#### **4.8 Volunteer recognition**

The Museum acknowledges the valuable contribution of volunteers with a recognition of service program. The core recognition is:

- access to the Friends Lounge while volunteering at the Museum
- complimentary 12-month Friends membership after 50 hours of volunteering in a calendar year
- volunteer name added to the Museum's Donor Wall after 20 years of volunteering
- a recognition pin for each 5 years of service and a Lifelong Friends membership at 15 years service
- end of year thank you function.

#### **4.9 Workplace health and safety**

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

All workers including volunteers:

- have a duty of care to take care of their health and safety and that of others
- must comply with safety procedures and directions
- must follow reasonable instructions
- must not wilfully interfere with or misuse items or facilities provided in the interest of health and safety
- must inform their manager or supervisor of hazards, accidents and near accidents occurring at the workplace.

#### 4.10 Working with vulnerable people

To provide a safe environment for children, all volunteers are required to undergo a National Police Check and where appropriate have a current working with vulnerable people check to determine their suitability to work with vulnerable people.

On engagement, volunteers undergo induction and training specifically in relation to working with children including:

- appropriate behaviour guidelines such as:
  - not touching or picking up children
  - encouraging positive behaviours in children in a positive way.
- lost and found procedures
- discussing sensitive content with children.

### 5. Definition of terms

#### **Volunteering**

Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.

#### **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 Experience section:**

- champions the work of volunteers throughout business units, encouraging all areas of the Museum to consider how volunteers can support their outcomes
- manages the implementation and compliance of this policy
- assists with identification, development and delivery of new and established volunteer projects
- Informs the Development and Friends team when a volunteer is eligible for a membership or Donor Wall recognition.

#### **Business unit managers:**

- identify and establish rewarding volunteer roles
- ensure compliance with this policy
- ensure adequate supervision of volunteers in their section.

#### **Supervisor of volunteer:**

- ensures that volunteers are adequately supervised and trained to perform their duties
- assists with development and delivery of training programs for volunteers
- is the first point of contact for existing volunteers in their business unit
- ensures sufficient tools and materials are available for performance of volunteer tasks
- provides feedback through the volunteer check-in process.

#### **Volunteer:**

- performs assigned duties in a diligent, timely and professional manner

- adheres to relevant Museum policies and guidelines
- attends training as required or directed
- actively participates in discussions about their volunteer role
- openly discusses personal and professional needs and goals with supervisor.

## 7. References

*National Museum of Australia Act 1980*

National Museum of Australia Strategic Plan 2018–2022

Client Service Charter, National Museum of Australia, 2013

Diversity Action Plan, National Museum of Australia, 2018

National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, 2015

Code of Conduct Guidelines, 2016

Australian Public Service Values, 2014

## 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 Exclusions

This policy does not cover interns, work experience students and named fellows.

### 8.3 Other related policies

[Audience development policy](#) (POL-C-011)

Communication and marketing policy (POL-G-078) (internal)

[Diversity and inclusion policy](#) (POL-G-061)

[Environmental management policy](#) (POL-G-021)

[Interpretation policy](#) (POL-C-007)

[Working with children and young people policy](#) (POL-C-043 )

### 8.4 Exclusions

None

### 8.5 Superseded policies

This policy supersedes:

Former policy/ies title	Version no.	Version date	Approval date
Volunteers policy	1.0	Jan 1995	Jan 1995 (by Council)
Volunteers policy	2.0	14 Jun 2006	14 Jun 2006
Volunteers policy	3.0	2 May 2011	2 May 2011
Volunteers policy	3.0a	15 Jul 2013	
Volunteers policy	3.0d	19 Nov 2019	24 Sep 2019



## **8.6 Monitoring**

The Visitor Experience section monitors the implementation of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed in July 2025.