



# MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY POLICY

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Museums Australia is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

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## PREAMBLE

Australia is a culturally diverse nation. Current Commonwealth Government policy affirms the following Principles of UNESCO Multiculturalism as a statement of fundamental rights and obligations for multicultural Australia today.

Multiculturalism is both a description of Australia society and a policy for managing the consequences of diversity in the interests of the individual and the wider community.

The Commonwealth Government affirms Principles of Multiculturalism as a statement of fundamental rights and obligation for multicultural Australia today:

- I. the obligation that all Australians should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, its interests and future first and foremost;
- II. the obligation of all Australians to accept the basic structures and principles of Australian society – the Constitution and the rule of law, tolerance and equality, Parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language and equality of the sexes;
- III. the right of all Australians to equality of life chances, treatment and opportunity including participation in decisions that directly affect them;
- IV. the right of all Australians to have access to and an equitable share of government resources;
- V. the right of all Australians to live in a society free from barriers of race,

ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender and place of birth;

- VI. the opportunity for all Australians to acquire and develop proficiency in English and languages other than English, and to develop cross-cultural understanding;
- VII. the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;
- VIII. the obligation to accept that the right to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their vies and values;
- IX. the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background; and
- X. the obligation of all institutions to acknowledge, respect and respond to Australia's cultural diversity.

Museums Australia acknowledges that cultural diversity extends beyond ethnicity to include race, gender, class, religion and sexuality. Whilst this policy promotes the broader understanding of cultural diversity, it should be read in conjunction with other policies of Museums Australia, such as

*Previous Possessions – New Obligations: Museums and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.*

*Gay and Lesbian Policy Guidelines for Museum Programs and Practice.*

*Women's Policy Guidelines For Museum Programs And Practice.*

### **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Museums Australia accepts as a general principle that all Australians have the right to see elements of their culture preserved and interpreted in museums.

Museums accept their obligation to effect this principle through all programs areas and in relevant museum practices.

The following principles apply to specific functions of museums.

### **COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT**

- 1 Museums will ensure that their collection policies include material culture that reflects the diversity of Australian society, both past and present.
- 2 Museums recognise that many Australians may wish to retain ownership of the objects that are an important part of their history and/or cultural diversity. Museums should assist communities to preserve material evidence in situ to the best of their ability.
- 3 Museums acknowledge that much important information concerning material culture resides outside the museum with individuals and community groups. In seeking such material, museums should work closely with keepers of community knowledge to ensure that this knowledge is preserved and documented and that it informs the development of collections and collection policies.

### **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

- 4 In devising public programs, museums should promote

understanding, acceptance and tolerance of cultural difference.

- 5 In developing public programs, museums are encouraged to consult widely with groups whose cultural experience is to be presented. Wherever possible, opportunities for active participation should be provided.
- 6 Over time, museums should aim to reflect a range of different cultures, perspectives and interpretations.

### **EQUALITY OF ACCESS**

- 7 Museums Australia endorses a general commitment to equality of access by all community groups to museums services and programs.
- 8 Wherever possible, museums should provide information in other languages as well as English.

### **STAFFING AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

- 9 In recruitment, selection and promotion, museums should ensure that their policies and procedures promote diversity and equity and are free from bias.

### **GOVERNANCE**

- 10 Museums should attempt to ensure that their boards and committees reflect a diversity of cultures and views.