

The City of Newcastle

Policy

Newcastle Regional Museum Education Policy

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NEWCASTLE REGIONAL MUSEUM EDUCATION POLICY



- MISSION
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The role of education is to support the mission of the Newcastle Regional Museum by promoting and expanding the range of communication between the Museum and its audience.

In pursuit of the mission, education will play a key part:

1. in promoting greater public awareness of the existence of the Museum.
2. in promoting greater public awareness of the nature and role of the Museum and its collections.
3. in making the Museum and its collection accessible to as wide an audience as possible, with priority at this stage to the regional audience.
4. in enhancing visitors' understanding of the subject matter of the collections.
5. in providing a range of leisure learning opportunities to the various sectors of the Museum's audience.
6. in encouraging the use of the Museum and its collections by schools, tertiary institutions, and youth and community groups.

OBJECTIVES

1. to ensure that the educational function is considered in all managerial decisions affecting the public service role of the Museum.
2. to ensure that all staff are aware of and sympathetic to the educational role of the Museum.
3. to provide a welcoming atmosphere for visitors to the Museum in order to break down the perception of a museum as an alien, impersonal environment.
4. to ensure that physical and intellectual access to the collection is available to as many age, ability, gender and cultural ranges as possible.
5. to interpret the collection in ways appropriate to as many age, ability, gender and cultural ranges represented in the Museum's audience.
6. to provide a range of enjoyable learning opportunities and activities appropriate to the different age, ability, gender and cultural ranges represented in the Museum's audience.
7. to maintain high standards of customer care and public information within the limitations of staff numbers and budget.
8. to be aware of new developments in formal education and to respond as necessary.
9. to encourage group visits to the Museum by schools, colleges, and youth and community groups.
10. to be aware of new developments in museum education and to respond as necessary.
11. to be aware of changing public perceptions of museums and to adapt as appropriate.

STRATEGIES

In meeting these objectives:

1. the Education Officer will attend regular planning meetings with the Director, Exhibitions Officer and Curator.
2. the Education Officer or person delegated by Education Officer will brief all staff on the educational role of the Museum, as necessary. This will include distribution of publications such as newsletters and exhibition guides to staff.
3. the Education Officer will ensure that Museum staff are aware of the voluntary nature of learning, and that learning occurs most effectively in a friendly environment.
4. the Education Officer will provide advice on:
 - the ease of physical access to exhibitions for as many ages and ability ranges as possible;
 - the ease of intellectual access to ideas and information in exhibitions, for as many age, ability, gender and cultural ranges as possible. This may include input into caption text, exhibition design, and exhibition notes, as required.
5. the Education Officer recognises the key role of guides and explainers in the interface between Museum and audience. A guide group will be established and augmented through initial training at regular guide meetings. The training will aim at a high standard of knowledge of the collection and temporary exhibitions, and the ability to respond to groups of all ages, ability, gender and cultural backgrounds.
6. informal educational needs will be met by developing a program of events and activities, such as lectures and holiday activities, which will offer enjoyable learning opportunities related to items in the collection or to temporary exhibitions.
7. exhibition notes and worksheets will be developed to meet the needs of formal educational visits.
8. the Museum will respond to the changes in school curricula and the introduction of Key Learning Areas, in particular the introduction of the Science and Technology K-6 Key Learning Area in 1991, and other Key Learning Area syllabi, as they are introduced.
9. the Museum will subscribe to appropriate professional educational associations such as the Science Teachers Association, the History Teachers Association, and the Museum Education Association of Australia.
10. the Museum will communicate regularly with schools and colleges through newsletters and the distribution of resources which shall as far as practicable be free of charge.
11. work experience in the Museum's education program will be encouraged for students at tertiary level, in particular in the disciplines of Communications and Education.
12. the effectiveness of the education program will be subject to regular evaluation through formal survey and questionnaires, and informal discussion with visitors, especially group leaders.