

REPORT TO THE PARLIAMENTARY PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON ARTS AND CULTURE

20 NOVEMBER 2007

NATIONAL MUSEUM
BLOEMFONTEIN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Museum, Bloemfontein has a responsibility to collect, conserve and hold in trust our natural and cultural heritage, as part of the national estate, not only for the benefit of future generations, but also as a source of education and enlightenment. Founded in 1877, the Museum is a diverse institution, focusing on natural sciences (nine research departments), human sciences (four research departments) and fine arts, and incorporates the following satellite museums: Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Florisbad Quaternary Research Station, Freshford House Museum, First Raadsaal Museum and Wagon Museum.

The National Museum continues to provide professional services in the key activities of collection, conservation, research and education, of benefit to the broadest possible spectrum of the community. The presentation to be made on 20 November 2007 will highlight aspects relating to the Museum's activities during the 2006/2007 year.

Collection & Conservation

Although adequate accommodation for research collections remains a concern, these holdings continue to receive curatorial attention of a high standard from dedicated curators and collections managers. Numerous items have been added to the various collections, including the significant donation of 295 repatriated South African artworks from the Haenggi Foundation Inc. in Switzerland.

Research

The Museum continues to make significant contributions in the field of museum research, illustrated by the numerous publications and conference contributions of its researchers, ongoing research, including numerous co-operative projects, and research articles reviewed by its staff for reputable scientific journals. Oral history represents a new research focus.

Education & Public Programmes

Educational programmes included lectures, demonstrations, workshops and conducted tours of the various displays and facilities at the Museum and its satellites. A total of 187 426 visitors were welcomed to the Museum and its satellites during the year. Special events, including temporary exhibitions and outreach activities, were arranged to coincide with the celebration of International Museum Day, National Science Week, Women's Day, Heritage Day, African Origins Month and World Space Week. Oliewenhuis Art Museum hosted and curated 19 excellent temporary art exhibitions during the year.

Marketing and publicity

Marketing and fund-raising activities enabled the Museum to carry out a number of projects, art workshops and other activities involving the Mangaung/Bloemfontein community.

Human Resources

Further vacancies have been filled, a number with applicants from designated groups. With increased funding provided by the Department of Arts and Culture, it was possible to positively realign remuneration levels of a number of staff categories.

HIV/AIDS Awareness & Health Promotion Programmes

Planning for HIV/AIDS awareness training for all staff took place, with training workshops scheduled for early in the 2007/2008 financial year. The Museum's Education Department presented lessons on health and healthy living for pre-primary, primary and secondary school learners.

Skills Development

Learning opportunities for Museum staff cut across all occupational levels and ranged from formal higher-level learning to targeted short courses and in-house training. The Museum was also involved in the development of skills at various levels in the communities it serves.

Utilization of outside funds

Limited outside funds have been used for training, upgrading of exhibitions and for research projects.

Maintenance, repairs, renovations & improved access

Although major maintenance, repair and renovation projects at the National Museum and Oliewenhuis Art Museum premises have been disruptive, these will result in much improved facilities. The 1st floor exhibition areas of the National Museum will soon be accessible to disabled visitors, with the installation of an elevator underway and to be completed in 2007/2008.

Comment on Audit Report findings

Although the Museum achieved an unqualified audit, the Auditor-General drew attention to various aspects which will be reported on.

RJ Nuttall
DIRECTOR: NATIONAL MUSEUM