

Coffs Harbour Regional Museum Collection and Conservation Policy

1 Purpose

This Collection and Conservation Policy guides the decision making process for shaping the collections of the Coffs Harbour Regional Museum (CHRM). It provides principles and criteria that guide collecting, conservation, loans and de-accessions.

The purpose of the Collection is to create a set of physical and electronic resources that can be used to:

- Enrich knowledge, understanding and experience of the history of the Coffs Harbour region;
- Contribute to and foster critical historical and cultural debate;
- Create a sense of place;
- Interpret thematically the history and development of the region;
- Conserve heritage for the benefit of the community and future generations;
- Contribute to the development of an outstanding museum for the region; and
- Provide an educational and research facility for the community.

The aim of the Museum is to reflect the social and cultural history and contemporary cultures of the Coffs Harbour region with a primary, but not exclusive emphasis, on developing collections and exhibitions reflecting relationships between the region's residents and the area's maritime and hinterland waterways.

2 Policy

2.1 General principles

All collecting and collection management processes will be conducted in accordance with the

- *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums;*
- *NSW Heritage Office Movable Heritage Principles;* and
- *Arts NSW Aboriginal Arts and Cultural protocols.*

The Museum will undertake targeted collecting in order to enhance the depth and value of its collections as a reflection of the history of the region. It is recognised that the Museum is not solely a collecting institution so this policy must be applied in the context of the broader mission of the Museum as an educational and research facility and a community space.

The Museum recognises that there are alternatives to collecting which will be considered in cases where collecting is not appropriate. The Museum will pursue non-collecting initiatives, such as assisting the community to document and care for heritage items in their original context and by collecting electronic and/or duplicate copies of materials held in other institutions or in private collections.

No objects shall be acquired from significant heritage sites and buildings where acquisition and removal would diminish the significance of the place, except in circumstances where the object is at risk.

2.2 History of the Collection

From the 1980s up to 2002 the Museum was run by the Coffs Harbour Historical Society and housed in a building leased from Council. Our community is grateful to the many volunteers who have worked for over 25 years to preserve, document and display the material heritage of the region. In 2005 the Society handed the museum to Council.

2.3 Nature of the Collection

The Coffs Harbour Regional Museum is an established Museum furnished with objects relating to the maritime history of the region with particular strengths in late 19th and early 20th century photographic holdings of the region and its peoples. A collection of wedding gowns with regional provenance and accessories are a feature of the collection. A collection of mid-19th to early 20th century garments adds to the collection strengths. Domestic objects, small business and industry collections (cedar, gold, bananas) complements the significant collections of maritime material. Indigenous artefacts (primary stone objects/tools) are currently held in trust awaiting a decision from local Indigenous families.

2.4 Acquisitions

2.4.1 Priority Collection areas

The Museum shall continue to enhance and diversify the collection by seeking to collect, by donation, bequest, purchase or transfer, items of significance to the history of the Coffs region from 1830 to today, including:

- Objects and artefacts;
- Information, documents and photographs;
- Oral and written histories; and
- Music, sound recordings, video, film and other multimedia resources.

Collecting will be in the following priority areas:

- Textiles, garments and ephemera;
- The Korff and Hardacre families; and other early settlers;
- Key local industries including maritime, timber, horticulture and tourism;
- The development of health, education, transport and communication in the Coffs region;
- Indigenous cultural heritage, including family histories and significant individuals; and
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

2.4.2 Collection Criteria

The item must have significance to the history of the Coffs Harbour region, based on one or more of the four primary criteria:

- historic;
- artistic or aesthetic;
- scientific or research potential; and
- social or spiritual.

Additionally:

- Documentation or other evidence of provenance must be available.
- The condition of the item must be reasonable.
- Storage and display conditions must be able to be provided that are suitable to the item.
- Conditional terms or restrictions on the way objects might be used or displayed in the future will not be accepted, apart from those required by specific cultural or ethical protocols.
- Duplicates will not be accepted unless with particularly relevant provenance.
- The donor must demonstrate clear legal title. A Statutory Declaration is required if the value of the object exceeds \$1,000 and the provenance of the object is disputed or unclear.
- All items are available for research or viewing; appointments may be made to view the items not readily accessible or fragile.
- The Museum will only acquire Aboriginal cultural objects of significance to the region in circumstances where the object has provenance and in consultation with the relevant Aboriginal community and Elders.

Further detail on the acquisitions process is documented in the *CHRG & CHRM Acquisitions and De-Accessioning Procedure*.

2.5 Loans

Loans will only be made or accepted for fixed periods and specific purposes. No object will be accepted on indefinite or long term loan.

- The length of short term loans will be negotiated by the lender and the borrower and will not exceed three months.
- Inward and outward loan forms must be completed for each loan.
- Time limits, as per loan form, are to be monitored by the curator.
- Short-term loans will be accepted for temporary display.
- Completed loan agreements will be kept in the appropriate exhibition folder and entered in the Collection Management System.
- Documents and photographs offered for copying and return, if appropriate, may be accepted.
- Each request for an outward loan will be approved by the Curator.
- The borrower will not modify, repair nor adapt any item loaned.
- The Museum reserves the right to request an object's return if the need arises.

2.6 Conservation

2.6.1 Preference for Preventive Conservation

While conservation treatment may be necessary to allow objects to be used, where possible, the collections are preserved by reducing the potential for deterioration and damage rather than through treatment, repair or restoration. That is, preventive conservation methods are applied in preference to invasive conservation treatments.

- Systems are provided to monitor, and measures put in place to maintain and improve the state of the collections and the environments and spaces in which they are stored or displayed.
- Guidelines are provided for the appropriate environmental conditions in which to store, handle, display, study and transport the collections.
- Measures are taken to prevent damage and minimise the risk of deterioration of objects wherever they are stored, handled, displayed, exhibited or loaned.

- The risk of damage to the collections by pests is reduced by implementing and maintaining a pest management program. Inspection of objects on display and in storage for evidence of insects, mould and other damaging agents shall be done on a routine basis.
- All museum workers will be provided with guidelines and procedures for handling and moving objects.
- Cleaning of objects shall be done in accordance with specific guidelines and only with the permission of the Cultural Collections Officer.

Preventive conservation seeks to balance, as far as possible, access and use of the collections with the need to preserve objects.

2.6.2 Conservation Priorities

The state of conservation of all objects required for study, display, exhibition or loan is assessed and surveys of the collections in storage are conducted periodically, the frequency depending on the vulnerability of the materials they contain.

The treatment of objects required for public and scholarly access or whose condition requires urgent action to prevent loss, will be prioritised over conservation of objects that are stable but not required for immediate use.

2.6.3 Conservation treatments

Conservation treatments will be undertaken by qualified conservators (or trainees under supervision) in accordance with ethical guidelines.

All treatments carried out on the collection are documented fully and the resultant records are available and understandable.

Treatment methods use safe, stable, tested materials that, where possible, compromise neither future conservation treatment or scientific examination, nor the authenticity of the object.

Materials are used that are not known to pose a current or future health hazard and that can be re-used or disposed of in a sustainable manner.

2.6.4 Remedial Conservation

Conservation work shall involve appropriate stabilisation of objects rather than restoration:

- In accordance with advice from a trained conservator.
- Shall include the provision of safe storage or display conditions and appropriate support.
- Documentary evidence of the process before, during and after is to be recorded as part of every project.

2.6.5 Restoration work

Restoration is to be considered with great care as it focuses on altering the condition of an object and may result in the loss of important information about an object's provenance and significance. Restoration work will be undertaken only:

- In accordance with advice from a trained conservator.
- After the consideration of what will/may be lost by undertaking the work, such as materials, workmanship, and evidence of adaptations, etc.
- After the work has been considered against the conservation needs of other objects.

- When adequate housing for the restored object can be provided to ensure that the work done will not rapidly deteriorate.
- If the allocation of funds for the restoration work are considered a higher priority than other conservation work that will be of greater benefit for a larger number of objects.
- If the project includes the provision of storage or display conditions and appropriate support.

2.7 De-accessioning

All disposals will be executed in accordance with Coffs Harbour City Council’s *Disposal of Assets Policy* and the *CHRG & CHRM Acquisitions and De-accessioning Procedure*.

3 Definitions

CHRG: Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery

ICOM: International Council of Museums

Item: artefact, clothing, costumes, firearms, photographs, documents or any other article.

Museum: Coffs Harbour Regional Museum

4 Key Responsibilities

<i>Position</i>	<i>Directorate</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Mayor	Council	To lead councillors in their understanding of, and compliance with, this policy and guidelines.
General Manager	Executive	To lead staff (either directly or through delegated authority) in their understanding of, and compliance with, this policy and guidelines.
Executive leaders - All Directors	All Directorates	To communicate, implement and comply with this policy and related guidelines.
Group and Section Leaders	All Directorates	To implement this policy and related procedures.
All Council officials	Council	To comply with this policy and consider its implications for related projects and programs.

5 References (laws, standards and other Council documents)

- Coffs Harbour City Council *Disposal of Assets Policy* (2013)
- *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* (2013); http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Codes/code_ethics2013_eng.pdf [retrieved on 8 March 2017]
- NSW Heritage Office *Movable Heritage Principles* (2000) <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritagebranch/heritage/infomovable.pdf> [retrieved on 8 March 2017]

- Department of Communication and the Arts, *Significance 2.0* (2009), <https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/museums-libraries-and-galleries/significance-20>
- Arts NSW *Aboriginal Arts and Cultural protocols* (2011) <http://www.arts.nsw.gov.au/index.php/news-and-publications/publications/arts-nsw-aboriginal-arts-and-cultural-protocols/> [retrieved on 8 March 2017]
- Museums Australia, *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities: Principles and guidelines for Australian museums working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage*, (2005)

6 Details of Approval and revision

- **Approval date: 23/03/2017**
- **Responsible Section: Community Programs**
- **Superseded policies/procedures: N/A**
- **Next review date: 23/03/2021**

Table of amendments

Amendment	Authoriser	Approval ref	Date