

Museums Australia (Victoria) 2014

# COLLECTION POLICY TEMPLATE



## Collection Policy Template

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### How to use this template:

You can use this template as a reference, either to compare with an existing document, or as background reading for preparing a new document.

You can also use this template to create your own document by following the steps below.

1. Insert the name of your museum at the beginning of the document and change the title of the document and the footer at the bottom of the document (to the name you want to call the document, and the date or version of the document).
2. The governing body will need to read the explanatory notes and examples (these are shaded in the template), discuss each section and formulate the key points for your museum.
3. The template can then be typed into directly under the relevant section. Press the 'insert' key before you start each line and the underlining will disappear as you type. There is no typing limit but the lines give an indication of how much space you might allocate for each section.
4. Finally, delete all the instructions in the shaded areas.

### Notes

- *Some of the examples (in italics) are there to explain the section - such as the examples relating to the Key Themes - and you will need to write these from scratch. Other examples are more like guidelines for standard clauses in Collection Policies - such as steps for de-accessioning - and you may wish to adopt some of these examples directly into your policy. The easiest way to do this would be to make any changes to the text or formatting, then remove the shading, and then delete the rows with the lines.*
- You may wish to make changes to the template eg change terminology or re-order or re-group information to suit the way you do things – as long as each section is covered you can create a useful guiding document for your museum which meets recognised museum standards.

## COLLECTION POLICY TEMPLATE

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### 1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OR MISSION STATEMENT

**A statement of purpose is a formal, written statement which defines the museum's most basic goals.**

It ensures that the objectives of the museum remain clear and understood by all involved. Including it here will place your policy in the context of the museum's overall objectives. See the Forward Plan Template for guidelines and examples for a Statement of Purpose.

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### 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION POLICY

**What will the document be used for?**

*e.g. As the guiding document for the development and management of the collection.*

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### 3. WHAT THE MUSEUM WILL COLLECT

**Identify the key themes and stories of the museum and the types of objects which the museum will collect.**

Consider the categories below to help formulate your collection areas.

#### **Key Themes**

Define the major themes and stories of your collection. What makes your collection special? Include important people, businesses or social groups, and also important changes over time. Refer to the building or site if they relate to the museums key themes. *e.g. Maryborough Chinese camp, Development of the local wine industry and of winery tourism, the history of the Fitzgerald garden.*

#### **Historic period/time period**

Define the time period that your collection covers, *e.g. from 1900 to present.* Certain parts of your collection may relate to different time periods, *e.g. domestic life in the district 1900-1940s (to support interpretation of a house museum depicting a particular families' residency)*

#### **Geographic area/region**

Define the geographic region that your collection covers *e.g. Shepparton and District*

#### **Physical items to be collected**

Describe the type of material that your museum will collect, *e.g. Maps, books, three dimensional objects etc.*. This section will reflect your storage and display restrictions. For example, if you do not have the facilities to store large agricultural material then your collection policy should state this.

#### **Access**

Include general statements about making the collection and collection records accessible to researchers and the general public. Briefly describe how you provide access, *eg through displays, talks, collection records available to researchers by appointment etc.*

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## 4. HOW THE MUSEUM WILL COLLECT

### 4.1. METHOD OF ACQUISITION

#### How does the museum acquire objects for the permanent collection?

*e.g. The Museum shall acquire objects for the permanent collection by donation, bequest, purchase or transfer. Note: Conditional donations restrict museum activities. It is not advisable for museums to accept donations with conditions attached, you may wish to include a policy statement on this issue e.g. The Museum will not accept conditional donations.*

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### 4.2. ACQUISITION COMMITTEE

#### Who decides if a donation will be accepted?

Detail who and how many museum members make up the Committee. *E.g. The Acquisition Committee will consist of the President/ Curator and two-four Committee members. All recommendations made by the Committee will be documented and retained by the Museum/Society.*

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### 4.3. ACQUISITION CRITERIA

#### What criteria guide the collection of museum objects?

e.g. The Committee will consider the following criteria before approving acquisition of an object:

- **Relevance**  
*The museum only collects objects that relate to the museum's purpose and key collecting areas*
- **Significance**  
*Priority is given to objects which are significant for their historic, aesthetic, scientific/research or social/spiritual value.*
- **Provenance and Documentation**  
*Priority will be given to objects where the history of the object is known and associated documentation and support material can be provided.*
- **Condition, intactness, integrity**  
*The condition of the object must be taken into consideration when acquiring material. Badly damaged material will not normally be accepted into the collection.*
- **Interpretive Potential**  
*Objects that tell a story that adds to the interpretation of museum themes will be prioritised.*
- **Rarity**  
*Objects may be prioritised if they are rare examples of a particular kind of object*
- **Representativeness**  
*Objects may be prioritised if they are an excellent representative example of a particular kind of object*
- **Duplications**  
*Objects that duplicate items already in the collection will not be accepted unless they are of superior condition and/or historic value. In such a case the duplicate may be considered for deaccessioning.*
- **Legal Requirements**  
*The museum only accept objects where the donor/vendor has legal title to the object*

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## 5. LEGAL / ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS

### 5.1. ABORIGINAL ARTEFACTS

**Does the museum own or have in its possession Aboriginal artefacts?**

e.g.

- *The Committee acknowledges that it has a mandatory obligation under the **Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006** to register Victorian Aboriginal collection items in its possession with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV).*
- *In instances where the provenance of certain Aboriginal artefacts is unknown, advice will be sought from Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.*
- *The Committee acknowledges that it is illegal to buy, sell or harm traditional Aboriginal objects without a cultural heritage permit.*
- *The Committee acknowledges that it is illegal to remove Aboriginal objects from Victoria without a cultural heritage permit, excluding loans between interstate museums*
- *The Committee acknowledges that while in most cases Aboriginal artefacts will remain the property of the museum, under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 human remains, and secret and sacred material legally belong to the traditional owners and should be repatriated.*
- *In accordance with Museums Australia Guidelines (ICOM Code of Ethics?), requests from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities for the return to them of cultural items held by the museum will be given serious consideration.*



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### 5.3. FIREARMS

#### **Does the museum own possess firearms, including antique and or historic firearms?**

Firearms, including longarms, pistols and handguns, fall under the *Firearms Act 1996*.

Longarms made before 1900, where no commercially ammunition is available, are exempt from licensing and registration requirements under the *Act*.

Handguns are exempt from the licensing and registration requirements under the *Act* if they:

- Are made before 1900 and:
- Use percussion as a means of ignition, and
- Do not take commercially available ammunition
- or**
- Are a single shot antique handgun.

Any organisation possessing firearms made after 1900, or other than that specified as exempt in Section 3(4) of the Firearms Act, must apply for an exemption (see Museums Australia (Victoria) Firearms resource sheet: [http://www.mavic.asn.au/assets/Info\\_Sheet\\_15\\_Firearms.pdf](http://www.mavic.asn.au/assets/Info_Sheet_15_Firearms.pdf)).

Regardless of exemptions collecting organisations are obligated to ensure all firearms (and prohibited weapons) are appropriately stored and displayed as specified in Schedule 4 of the *Act*:

- All firearms must be stored (or displayed) in a locked receptacle, of sturdy construction.
- Display cases or storage cabinets must be constructed of hard wood or steel and be not easily penetrable.
- Receptacles weighing less than 150 kilograms when empty must be fixed to the frame of the floor or the wall of the premises where the firearm is kept in such a manner that it is not easily removable.
- Display cases should be locked at all times and made with toughened glass or Perspex.
- Items fixed to the wall must be done so in a way that they cannot be readily removed.
- Museums with more than 15 firearms on the premises must have an approved intruder alarm system installed (the specifics of which are explained in Schedule 4 of the Firearms Act 1996).

While there is yet to be definitive legislation with regards to museums possessing or displaying live and or decommissioned ammunition, following consultation with Victoria Police and the Department of Justice, it is recommended that museums store and display cartridge ammunition separate from where firearms are stored and according to those requirements outlined in Schedule 4, Item 5 of the Firearms Act.

Museums enrolled or accredited with the Museum Accreditation Program (MAP) have an exemption to hold imitation firearms under Section 8B of the *Act*.

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## 6. COLLECTION CARE: DOCUMENTATION, CONSERVATION & STORAGE

### 6.1. DOCUMENTATION & RECORD KEEPING

**State how you will manage your object documentation.**

*e.g. The Museum aims at all times to maintain an effective documentation system. Donor forms, receipts, Museum Registers, and catalogue information will be kept at the Museum.*

**Outline guidelines for acquiring and processing collection material.**

*e.g. The Museum will follow the guidelines below when acquiring material:*

Note: These examples are at their most detailed and you may need to refine them for your organisation.

1. *Owner or agent brings the object to the Museum.*
2. *A receipt is issued to the owner recording the object name, address of the owner and contact number and date. The same information is written on a tag and attached to the object.*
3. *This records that the museum is holding the object and does not mean or imply the object has been accepted as part of the permanent collection.*
4. *Notes on the history and associations of the object will be taken, for the Acquisition Committee to consider when assessing the object..*
5. *The Acquisition Committee meets to assess the donation for inclusion in the Museum collection. Their decision is documented.*
6. *Refused objects are returned to the owner with an explanatory letter. If the object is not claimed within 90 days it will become the property of the Museum and may be disposed of.*
7. *If the object is accepted donors sign two copies of the Donor form, one for the museum and one to keep. A letter of thanks is sent to the donor.*
8. *The object must be registered, numbered and catalogued. Where documentation relating to the significance of the object is available, an object file will be kept.*
9. *The object and object number is listed under the name of the donor in the of donor book/files.*







## 7. DEACCESSIONING AND DISPOSAL PROCEDURES

Deaccessioning is the administrative process of removing an item from the collection.

### 7.1. CRITERIA FOR DEACCESSIONING

For what reason can an object be removed from the collection?

*e.g. An object can be deaccessioned from the Museum's collection if*

- *It does not comply with the current collection policy of the museum*
- *It is damaged beyond repair*
- *The conservation and storage costs for it are beyond the means of the museum*
- *It is a lesser quality duplicate of an object the museum already owns*
- *It lacks any supporting information to enable proper identification or to establish its relevance to the collection*
- *A substantiated request for the return of the object to its original owner/donor is received. This could be the return of sacred material to Indigenous peoples.*



### 7.3. DISPOSAL PROCEDURES

#### What is the correct process to remove an object from the collection?

e.g. In priority order the object must be:

1. Returned to the donor or family. If after a thorough search this is impossible, the object should be;
2. Transferred to another appropriate institution
3. Sold by public auction, where appropriate
4. Used as an educative/interpretive tool
5. Destroyed or recycled if appropriate

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### 8. WINDING-UP PROCEDURES

Any association with assets of more than \$10,000 must be wound up in accordance with the *Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001*.

Often included in an organisation's constitution or founding document, it is also a good idea to include a museum's wind up clause in its Collection Policy so that staff are aware of how the collection should be legally and ethically dealt with in the event the organisation ceases to operate. This is also in accordance with the *National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries (A1.1.3 & A1.1.4)*.

A museum wind up clause should also differentiate between 'assets' that may be sold and the museum collection, which should be disposed of according to recognised museum ethics (*NSFAMG, A1.1.4*). In addition to this, museums registered as **deductible gift recipients (DGRs)** or the **Cultural Gifts Program** are required to include specific wording to define their 'wind-up' procedures in their constitution as it is illegal to return collection items to donors who have received a tax benefit.

The following example is based on the Model Rules supplied though Consumer Affairs Victoria in accordance with the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*:

**76 Winding up and cancellation**

*(1) The Association may be wound up voluntarily by special resolution*

*(2) In the event of the winding up or cancellation of the incorporation of the Association the surplus assets of the Association must not be distributed to any members or former members of the Associations.*

*(3) Subject to the Act any court order made under section 133 of the Act, in the event of the Association being wound up:*

*a) The collection, consisting of acquired articles, documents, photographs and records, that have been formally catalogued, those awaiting cataloguing in a collection management system shall be dealt with as follows:-*

*i) Any item that has been loaned shall be returned to the lender,  
ii) The collection of the Association shall be transferred to a similar institution to which tax deductible gifts can be made*

*b) Any surplus assets remaining after the payment of the Association's liabilities shall be transferred to another organisation with similar objectives to which income tax deductible gifts can be made.*

*(4) If the endorsement of the organisation as a deductible gift recipient is revoked the following shall be transferred to another organisation to which income tax deductible gifts can be made – any surplus*

- Gifts of money or property for the purpose of the organisation*
- Contributions made in relation to an eligible fundraising event held for the principal purpose of the organisation, and*
- Money received by the organisation because of such gifts and contributions*

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## 10. ORAL HISTORY POLICY

### Do you collect oral histories?

### What conditions apply for the collection of oral histories?

If you don't collect oral histories your Collection Policy should make a statement such as *The X Museum does not collect oral histories.*

If you do collect oral histories include an your oral history policy statement, e.g.

- *An Oral History Agreement is signed by the person interviewed, which clearly states the purpose and intended uses of the interviews and what copyright provisions apply.*
- *The museum abides by the Guidelines of Ethical Practice of the Oral History Association of Australia.*

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## 11. ACCESS

**Include general statements about making the collection and collection records accessible to researchers and the general public etc. Briefly describe how you provide access.**

*e.g. The Collection is accessible to the public through regular opening hours and by appointment. The collection records are accessible for research purposes by appointment. Images of selected collection items are accessible through the museum website.*

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**12. REVIEW YOUR COLLECTION POLICY**

**Decide on an appropriate period to review your collection policy.**

*e.g. The Museum will review its Collection Policy every three years.  
Date of next review – December 2017*

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**13. DATE OF ENDORSEMENT**

**Date the plan was endorsed, and the names, signatures and roles/positions of the people responsible for this**

*e.g. 2 December 2014, Committee Meeting of the Brindel Historical Society  
Signed **Mary Rose Panas**, President*

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