

# **Port Macquarie Museum Collection Policy**

## **1 Introduction and Context**

1.1 A museum collection is held in perpetuity, in trust for the community, for their benefit and enjoyment today and in the future. Developing a museum collection is an intergenerational commitment that requires careful decisions, based on awareness of the long term obligations inherent in collecting.

1.2 Port Macquarie Museum's Collection Policy establishes the ethical and thematic framework for the collection's strategic development. The collection supports the Museum's exhibition, engagement and research programs and its community initiatives around history, culture, collections and collecting.

1.3 Port Macquarie Museum's vision is to be a vibrant cultural hub where the rich history and heritage of Port Macquarie and the region is valued and celebrated through the dynamic programs developed by the Museum.

1.4 Port Macquarie Museum will achieve this vision through exhibitions, collaborative programs and cultural partnerships with the community and other agencies and organisations, including the state and federal governments and the business sector.

1.5 The Collection Policy is based on discussions held during 2019 as part of a Master Planning project to reimagine the Port Macquarie Museum as an exemplary regional community museum.

## **2 Purpose of the Collection**

The purpose of the collection is to:

2.1 Enrich understanding of the history, culture and heritage of Port Macquarie and region

2.2 Engage and educate the community

2.3 Document and interpret important themes and stories in the history and development of the region

2.4 Conserve significant cultural and heritage objects and materials for the benefit of the community

2.5 Contribute to the ongoing development of an outstanding regional museum about Port Macquarie and the region

## **3 Key Collecting Themes**

3.1 Evolution of the environment and landscape of the Port Macquarie region, including development of the urban footprint and climatic impacts

3.2 Aboriginal history and culture of the Port Macquarie region, past and present

3.3 Exploration and settlement of Port Macquarie, and surrounding localities where no other appropriate collecting institutions exist

3.4 Notable people, local businesses and industries, social, health and community services and cultural activities

- 3.5 The built environment of Port Macquarie; public buildings, homes and gardens, the penal settlement, and items associated with significant heritage places and towns, including archaeology
- 3.6 Timber, agriculture, farming, food and wine history
- 3.7 Transport and communications in the region.
- 3.8 Heritage objects made, designed or improvised in the Port Macquarie region including manufacturing and creative industries.
- 3.9 Political processes, including Federation
- 3.10 Migration heritage, including convict heritage.
- 3.11 Tourism, attractions and travel.
- 3.12 Domestic Life
- 3.13 Decorative arts
- 3.14 Costume, textiles and women's crafts
- 3.15 Photography and photographs
- 3.16 Significant events and activities, including war service and its impacts.

#### **4 Collection Principles**

Port Macquarie Museum will:

- 4.1 Maintain its heritage collections in line with national standards for museums and collections.
- 4.2 Acquire relevant objects and collections as donations, bequests, purchases, transfer, or commissions.
- 4.3 Only acquire objects that can be properly stored, documented and managed.
- 4.4 Provide community access to the collection, including online access where possible.
- 4.5 Only acquire objects that are provenanced to area, or that help to interpret themes, places and people in the history of Port Macquarie and region.
- 4.6 Build unique historical records about local people and places, industries and environments through the Collection and associated projects.
- 4.7 Identify priority themes as a focus for research, strategic collecting and documentation. e.g: tourism, timber, convict heritage, migration heritage, photography, environment, etc.
- 4.8 Collect strategically not passively.
- 4.9 Develop non-collecting initiatives, such as temporary exhibitions or programs to assist the community to document and care for heritage collections in their original context of use.
- 4.10 Foster awareness of sustainable collections and collecting practice.
- 4.11 Provide leadership and work in partnership with other museums, galleries, libraries and heritage organisations in the region, and complement their collections and collection policies.
- 4.12 Where necessary seek professional conservation advice on the storage and care of the collection. Assess significance and consult a trained conservator before any conservation work on the collection commences.
- 4.13 Not acquire objects 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.

4.14 Ensure all collecting activity and collection management processes is conducted in accordance with the International Council of Museums Code of Ethics<sup>1</sup> and within the framework of the NSW Heritage Office's Movable Heritage Principles.

4.15 Ensure no objects or collections are acquired with conditions or restrictions on the way they might be used or displayed in the future, unless there are exceptional circumstances, e.g. statutory or legislative requirements.

4.16 Ensure that if the Museum is wound up or if the endorsement of the organisation as a deductible gift recipient is revoked (whichever occurs first), any surplus assets of the gift fund remaining after the payment of liabilities attributable to it, shall be transferred to a fund, authority or institution to which income tax deductible gifts can be made.

## **5 Acquisition and Assessment Policies and Criteria**

5.1 Port Macquarie Museum will keep accurate, up to date and detailed records.

5.2 Port Macquarie Museum will ensure that significance is the basis for considering possible acquisitions, and relevance to the Museum's mission, purpose and its collection themes.

5.3 Items must be relevant to the Museum's mission, purpose and collection themes.

5.4 Criteria

The Collections Council of Australia's significance assessment method and criteria guides evaluation of potential acquisitions, and collection management.<sup>2</sup> The primary assessment criteria are:

- a Historic significance
- b Artistic or aesthetic significance
- c Scientific or research significance
- d Social or spiritual significance

The comparative criteria are:

- a Provenance
- b Rarity or representativeness
- c Condition or completeness
- d Interpretive capacity

5.5 Assessment

Objects will only be accepted or acquired if:

- 5.5.1 The item meets the collection themes, refer Section 3.
- 5.5.2 The item is relevant to the mission and purpose of the Museum.
- 5.5.3 The Museum has the capacity to store, document, exhibit and manage the item
- 5.5.4 The donor can demonstrate clear legal title
- 5.5.5 The item is significant under the assessment criteria, including condition and provenance, and warrants inclusion in a permanent collection

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<sup>1</sup> ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, International Council of Museums, 2002

<sup>2</sup> *Significance 2.0, a guide to assessing the significance of collections*, Roslyn Russell and Kylie Winkworth, 2nd edition, Collections Council of Australia Ltd, 2009

5.5.6 Assessment substantiates the significance of the item in a statement of significance (for major acquisitions).

## **6 Acquisition Procedures**

6.1 A donation form will be completed for objects submitted for possible acquisition. The form records the donor's name, address and contact details and a brief description of the item.

6.2 Where possible, the donor will be encouraged to write down the history, associations, context and significance of the object they are donating. If there is no information this may indicate the object is of limited significance and should not be acquired.

6.3 The Museum Curator or Archivist will assess the significance of the item, including a short statement of significance where indicated

6.4 If the item is approved for acquisition, a donation acknowledgment is sent to the donor. A hard copy is kept in the accession register. Copies of correspondence in digital forms will be kept in accordance with the Port Macquarie Museum's archives policy.

6.5 If the item is not accepted the item is to be collected by or returned to the donor.

6.6 For items proposed for purchase, the cost will be evaluated against prices realised for comparable items, also considering condition, provenance and significance. In the case of major acquisitions a valuation may be commissioned.

6.7 Once an item is acquired it is registered in the accession register, numbered, described, photographed or digitised, and catalogued on the Museum's collection management system in accordance with the Museum's specific acquisition procedures. Object files may be established to hold collection research and contextual information for significant items.

6.8 Except for culturally sensitive items, catalogued items will be published online.

## **7 Deaccessioning Policy and Procedures**

7.1 Deaccessioning is the process of de-registering an object from the Collection for clearly stated reasons, and disposing of it in accordance with approved policies. Caution and transparency are essential in the deaccessioning process.

7.2 Deaccessioning recommendations are proposed by the Museum Curator or Archivist and are subject to endorsement by the Management Committee either directly or through the Collection Subcommittee.

7.3 To deaccession an object from the Collection, the item should be assessed against the museum's mission and purpose, the Collection Policy and themes, and the assessment criteria.

7.4 The criteria for deaccessioning include:

7.4.1 Little or no significance – using the assessment process and criteria

7.4.2 Poor condition and lack of provenance

7.4.3 Duplication

7.4.4 Inability to safely store and manage the object

7.4.5 Lack of relevance to collection themes and policy

7.4.6 Lack of relevance to the Museum's purpose

7.5 In exceptional circumstances, items may be deaccessioned where the object is of particular cultural significance and its return will support the maintenance and renewal of cultural traditions.

7.6 In rare cases items may also be deaccessioned and transferred to another museum of cultural institution where it has more relevance, or the institution is better able to care for the item. If transferring an item to another institution, it should be consistent with their collection policy and the organisation must have the capacity to manage and care for the item.

7.7 A short statement will be prepared indicating why the object is being deaccessioned

7.8 For items where there is debate about the merits of deaccessioning, a six month waiting period may be considered to allow for further debate or investigation.

7.9 Method of disposal:

7.9.1 Return to the donor, where the original donor is still contactable, except where Clause 7.9.2 applies.

7.9.2 Where the item was gifted under the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, it cannot be returned to the donor as the donor has received the benefit of a tax reduction for the gift.

7.9.3 Items that have significant cultural value, but do not conform with the Collection Policy should where possible be placed with the most appropriate cultural institution by means of gift, transfer, sale or exchange.

7.9.4 Items that do not have significant cultural value, but do have a market value may be disposed of by sale.

7.9.5 Items that have degraded to a point where they are no longer recognisable or restorable, and which do not have any saleable value, may be destroyed or recycled for materials/components.

7.9.6 Items that cannot be disposed of in any other way, and which do not have any saleable value, may be destroyed.

7.10 Unless otherwise indicated, preference should be given to returning items to the donor, if known.

7.11 The Museum will note the reasons for deaccessioning in the deaccession register and maintain records of all deaccessioned items.

7.12 No Museum staff or volunteers may benefit, or in any way acquire objects that have been deaccessioned.

## **8 Loans**

8.1 No objects will be accepted on indefinite or long term loan.

8.2 Loans may only be arranged for fixed periods and for specific purposes.

8.3 Before accepting any loans, the Museum will photograph and record a detailed description of the object's condition.

8.4 All venues for outward loans must provide safe environmental and security conditions for the item.

8.5 Inward loans are those objects or small exhibitions that may be borrowed from lenders (individuals or institutions) for a defined period. All inward loans need to be assessed on

8.5.1 Transport costs and risks

8.5.2 Display capacity of the Museum

8.5.3 Condition of the object

8.5.4 Capacity of the Museum to manage the loan

8.6 Outward loans are these loans where an object from the Museum collection is lent for a defined period to another museum or organisation. All outgoing loans need to be assessed on:

8.6.1 Transport costs and risks

8.6.2 Display capacity, security and environmental conditions

8.6.3 Condition of the object

8.6.4 Capacity of the museum to manage the loan

8.7 All inward and outward loans will be documented in a formal loan agreement including a condition report, insurance, monitoring and duration of loan.

## **9 Exhibition and Education Policies**

Port Macquarie Museum aims to

9.1 Provide well-researched, accurate and innovative exhibitions for visitors.

9.2 Offer programs that create opportunities for a high degree of community participation

9.3 Develop opportunities for interaction with local artists, writers, historians and community groups.

9.4 Collaborate where possible with other museums in the region, and with libraries, galleries, heritage programs and community organisations.

9.5 Promote local heritage places, attractions and businesses where relevant

9.6 Develop strategies to ensure exhibition projects have long term benefits and a life after the exhibition has concluded, e.g. through publications and online exhibitions.

9.7 Work with local teachers to develop education programs and opportunities, where possible

9.8 Develop a research and publication program as part of the Museum's Strategic Plan.

9.9 Explore opportunities to mark historical events, anniversaries, commemorations, and contemporary festivals and special events.

9.10 Develop a secondary hands-on collection comprising objects of lower significance that may be used for demonstrations, hands on access, creative programs and education activities.

## **10 Management of the Collection**

Port Macquarie Museum will

10.1 Provide appropriate training opportunities and resources to document and manage the collection.

10.2 Regularly monitor the condition of the collection.

## **11 Collection Linkages**

Port Macquarie Historical Society collection

Other museums and historical societies in the region

Collections held by community organisations

**12 Future Collection Priorities**

12.1 Understand the collection scope in other museums in the region and consult where appropriate on collecting plans and priorities

12.2 Work with the community to record object stories and improve the documentation of local collections

12.3 Identify appropriate storage and management arrangements before accepting items for the collection

12.4 Develop collaborative exhibitions and collection research projects

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