

QVMAG Collection Policy

Introduction

Museums and art galleries collect, preserve, research and communicate to the wider community original evidence of our natural and cultural heritage.

The collections of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG) were begun in the nineteenth century. Since that time, they have developed as an important component of Tasmania's and Australia's natural and cultural heritage.

Principles

1. QVMAG makes acquisitions consistent with its mission, which is:

To be a leader in the intellectual and creative development of Launceston and the State by increasing our enjoyment and understanding of our natural and cultural heritage.

2. In conjunction with the mission statement above, this policy guides QVMAG's core business of managing, developing, researching and interpreting its collections.
3. It is the intention of this policy to define QVMAG's past and current collecting areas and define those collecting areas that the museum intends to develop into the future. This policy will not discuss the day-to-day management of these collections, which are instead the subject of separate procedures and guidelines. Nevertheless, this policy must stress that QVMAG has a clearly defined responsibility to acquire only those items it deems can be appropriately managed into the future as per museum best practice.
4. Since the 19th century QVMAG's collections have been made for the following purposes:
 - (a) To be an archival record of
 - (i) the artistic heritage of the people of Tasmania;
 - (ii) the material culture of the peoples who now and previously inhabited Tasmania and adjacent lands;
 - (iii) the living and past faunas and floras of Tasmania and adjacent lands and seas; and
 - (iv) the minerals and rocks that form the geology of Tasmania.
 - (b) To be a source of material for researching the fields of the arts, history and natural science.

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- (c) To be a source of materials and ideas for interpretation, namely exhibitions, educational programs, publications and digital media.
5. QVMAG's collections continue to be developed for the following purposes:
 - (a) To continue the purposes already established for its museum's collections.
 - (b) To take advantage of new and appropriate collecting trends as they arise.
 - (c) To enable QVMAG to better serve its community into the future.
 6. The City of Launceston, as owner of QVMAG, will adopt and publish a written statement of its Collection Policy in respect of works of art and museum specimens. Acquisition outside the stated policy shall only be made in exceptional circumstances.
 7. The City of Launceston endorses the principles of Museums Galleries Australia's *Code of Ethics for Art, History and Science Museums* (1999) which guide the activities of QVMAG's professional staff.
 8. The City of Launceston supports the principles of the UNESCO Convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of Cultural Property, 1970, acceded to by Australia in 1990.
 9. The City of Launceston recognises and endorses the contribution of QVMAG's Aboriginal Reference Group to this policy, a contribution which extends across all three collecting areas.
 10. The City of Launceston will not acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or work of art unless the responsible officer is satisfied that QVMAG can acquire a valid title to the item in question, and that, in particular, it has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (and/or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws or in contravention of cultural material protocols.
 11. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the City of Launceston will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of Australia or any other

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country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12. If appropriate and feasible, the same tests as are outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 above will be applied in determining whether to accept loans for exhibitions or other purposes.
13. The City of Launceston recognises the need for cooperation and consultation between museums and art galleries on joint policy matters.
14. From time to time other collection-related policies will be developed to meet QVMAG's requirements. Such policies include the current QVMAG Human Remains Policy and the future QVMAG Loans Policy.

Acquisitions

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 QVMAG has a special responsibility to preserve and exhibit material evidence of the natural and cultural history of Tasmania. The Collection Policy recognises this as QVMAG's primary responsibility, and recognises that in most collections there will be a northern Tasmanian emphasis. However, in some cases the acquisition of additional material from beyond the State may improve our understanding of Tasmania's natural and cultural heritage.
- 1.2 In developing its collections, the QVMAG will:
 - reflect the cultural, scientific and natural diversity of Tasmania;
 - reflect the histories and experiences of all Tasmanians within a national and international framework;
 - seek to document, maintain and research the collections as per museum best practice; and
 - aim to make the collections accessible to the visiting public and researchers through physical and electronic means.
- 1.3 All objects considered for acquisition undergo an assessment process proscribed by the parameters of this policy and wholly guided by the expertise of the relevant curatorial section. Acquisition will be guided by QVMAG Acquisition Procedures, as per the recommendations of the *Crowe Horwath QVMAG Collection Review* (2016). The Acquisition Proposal Form includes donations, cultural gifts, exchanges and purchases.

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In particular, the suitability of all proposed objects will be assessed against the stated selection criteria for each collection area. When proposing objects for acquisition, QVMAG will also consider whether it can adequately care for such objects as per museum best practice.

- 1.4 QVMAG recognises the need to describe the significance of new acquisitions using a consistent and accessible methodology. Objects entering the collection of QVMAG are assessed in terms of their historic, aesthetic, scientific and social values to determine their significance to achieve this. QVMAG will follow the principles and guidelines set out in *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections*, Roslyn Russell and Kylie Winkworth, available on the internet at;

<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/significance2-0/>.

2.0 Collections

QVMAG's collections are managed in four broad collecting areas:

- Natural Science
- Visual Art & Design
- History
- Library

2.1 Natural Science

Natural Science collections within the QVMAG cover three distinct areas, each with its own collection goals and spheres of specialisation. These are:

(a) Zoology

Zoology includes comprehensive collections of Tasmanian vertebrate and invertebrate fauna, including introduced species, with specialist research collections from the remainder of Australia and beyond in molluscs, spiders and mammalian ectoparasites.

(b) Botany

Botany comprises comprehensive collections of Tasmanian plants, including significant historical holdings.

(c) Geology

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Geology comprises mineral and rock collections from throughout Tasmania with important comparative material from interstate and overseas. Within Geology, Palaeontology includes a significant collection of fossils from Tasmania and elsewhere in and beyond Australia.

Collection of Natural Science Specimens

The collection supports biodiversity and nature conservation-related research, and geological and palaeontological research that helps us to understand and maintain the ecosystems that support all species, including our own. It also lets us use Tasmania's non-renewable mineral resources.

QVMAG continues to collect representative specimens of Tasmania's geology and fauna for reference, study, educational and display purposes. The primary source new material will be through collection by staff and recognised associates, and by Government Agencies. However, acquisition (by purchase if necessary) of important private or historic collections of Tasmanian natural science material, including records, will continue to be of great importance.

Relevant specimens or collections of material from elsewhere in Australia will be acquired for reference, study, educational and display purposes.

2.2 Visual Art & Design

The Visual Art & Design collection has five principal components, each of which has its own distinct collection policy. These components are:

(a) Colonial Art

This collection documents the artistic and cultural heritage of Tasmania, and Colonial Australia, from pre-European settlement until the end of the 19th century. This collection includes paintings, works on paper, sculpture and significant frames relating to this period.

(b) Modern Australian Art

This collection documents the history of Australia's postcolonial art of the 20th Century including paintings, photography, works on paper, sculpture and multi-media. Particular emphasis placed on the achievements of Tasmanian artists and contextualising these works through the collection of significant national artists.

(c) Contemporary Art

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This collection documents the work of Australia's contemporary art and culture including paintings, works on paper, photography, sculpture, multi-media and screen-based art. Particular emphasis will be placed on the achievements of Tasmanian artists and contextualising these works through the collection of significant national artists.

QVMAG has a small but significant collection of International paintings, sculpture and works on paper. This collection will be maintained and developed where appropriate.

(d) *Decorative Arts*

Within the Decorative Arts collection there are three sub-sections, each of which has a distinct collection policy. These components are:

Australian Decorative Arts

This collection documents the material cultural heritage of Australia with an emphasis on ceramics, furniture, woodwork, textiles and costumes with significant aesthetic value. The collection focuses primarily on objects designed and made in Australia, and in particular Tasmania and Tasmanian practitioners.

Contemporary Decorative Arts

This collection aims to document and promote understanding of the evolution of contemporary decorative arts in Australia since 1945 in all media. Particular emphasis will be placed on the achievements of Tasmanian practitioners.

International Decorative Arts

This collection documents the aesthetic development and evolution of British, European and Asian decorative arts through ceramics, textiles and costumes. Specific consideration will be given to the work of international practitioners where their work has influenced the development of Tasmanian and/or national craft and design. Consideration will be given to historic artworks that complement the QVMAG collection.

2.3 History

It is the primary concern of the History section to collect the material culture of the people of Launceston and Tasmania and to research,

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maintain and interpret this social history for the community. The History collections comprise:

(a) Tasmanian Social History Collection

Social History is the most broadly defined area within the History collections and is the most active collecting area. It includes convict material and the Guan Di Temple. Artefacts must be provenance to Tasmania for inclusion in the Social History Collection.

(b) Comparative Cultural Collection

This collection consists of cultural material from communities and societies from outside Tasmania, particularly from the Australian mainland and the Pacific, with incidental material from other cultures. This collecting area also responds to the global awareness of our modern community and reflects Tasmania's global relationships. This collection is primarily historical and will be augmented only as the opportunity arises.

(c) Technology Collection

This collection includes scientific instruments, machinery, tools and vehicles. This collecting area documents Tasmanian working and recreational life, its economic and business history and links Tasmania to the wider history of Australian technological development.

(d) Arms Collection

The Arms Collection consists of firearms, swords, daggers, uniforms, military equipment and accoutrements, many of which are significant from a purely technical perspective. There is a strong local history significance to this collecting area which also covers most of the major military events in Tasmanian history.

(e) Archaeological Collections

The Archaeological Collections include material from shipwrecks, and mining and convict sites. This collection has the capacity to complement the other History collection areas.

(f) Tasmanian Aboriginal Collections

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Collections comprise artefacts, many of which were collected prior to 1950. They include the Tasmanian

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Aboriginal Stone Tools Collection, a nationally significant research and interpretation collection. QVMAG also holds a significant collection of Tasmanian Aboriginal Shell Necklaces. Any further collecting in these areas will be informed by advice from the QVMAG Aboriginal Reference Group.

(g) Numismatics Collection

QVMAG has also maintained a small but historically interesting collection of coinage, tokens, medals and badges from around the world. This is not currently an active collecting area, and will be augmented only as appropriate donations are forthcoming.

(h) Archival Collections (formerly known as *Community History*)

The Archival Collections document the cultural heritage of the Tasmanian community and reflect the island's diverse and changing ways of life with particular reference to the northern region of the State. Of note are four specific collecting areas:

(i) Photographs

This collection is a comprehensive visual record of Tasmania from the 1840s and includes all photographic formats from daguerreotypes onwards. A small component of film and video supports the visual record.

(ii) Manuscripts

This collection has two principal components: manuscripts collected as single items, and collections of textual records created or acquired by an individual, family, business or organisation.

(iii) Tasmanian Ephemera

The History Section collects Tasmanian ephemera as the opportunity arises. Ephemera augments the Tasmanian Social History Collection.

(iv) Oral History

This collection consists of recorded interviews that document the working lives and achievements of Tasmanians. It also includes a small component of local radio material.

2.4 Library

(a) Rare Book Collections

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These collections include books with specific historical or cultural value, of aesthetic importance, or with a significant provenance.

(b) Special Book Collections

These collections have an association with a prominent individual or organisation and support the research endeavours of staff at QVMAG. The publications contained within are not considered to be rare.

(c) The 'working collections': The General Book Collection and Serials Collection

These collections primarily support the research endeavours of QVMAG staff. These collections contain a sizeable amount of Tasmaniana material.

(d) Maps, Architectural and Engineering Drawing Collections

These collections document the cartographic, built and engineering heritage of Tasmania through drawings and specifications.

Deaccessioning

1. Introduction

While the City of Launceston acknowledges the need for responsible deaccessioning, it is strongly of the opinion that deaccessioning is a management tool of last resort, bearing in mind the City of Launceston's responsibility to past and future donors to hold QVMAG collections in trust for the community.

QVMAG is able to deaccession material from its collections under the Local Government Act 1993. QVMAG also insists on responsible acquisition, and when acquiring items the long-term resource implications (staff, accommodation, conservation and research) will be considered. As one of the major functions of a museum is to preserve its collections in perpetuity, there is a strong presumption against the disposal of items from QVMAG's permanent collections.

The following statements mirror deaccessioning practice followed throughout Australian museums and are supported by the museum profession's governing body, Museums Galleries Australia. QVMAG's deaccessioning procedures will follow museum best practice.

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2. Deaccessioning Criteria

An item may be deaccessioned from a collection for one or more of the following reasons:

- the item does not fall within the guidelines of the QVMAG Collection Policy;
- the item duplicates material already held in the collections;
- the item is in such poor condition that it would be impossible to repair or conserve (e.g. insect infestation or other degenerative causes);
- the cost of conservation or restoration and/or storage would be prohibitive;
- the item is the property of an indigenous or other community group and should be returned as part of a national or international convention on the restitution of cultural material;
- the item is subject to legislation that prevents QVMAG holding title to the object;
- lack of documentation about the item;
- the item is unsafe (e.g. contains hazardous chemicals);
- the item or part of it is to be used for scientific research.

3. Disposal

Disposal is the method by which deaccessioned material is removed from the collection. The preferred methods of disposal beyond the institution would be by gift or exchange to another public institution (except for items which are damaged or dangerous).

The appropriate methods of disposal are:

- **internal transfer** – the transfer of items to a hands on/ education/ demonstration collection, or parts to be used in the restoration of other collection items;
- **gift** – to another museum or returned to the donor;
- **sale** – to the public by auction or tender;
- **exchange** – to another public museum in exchange for a more suitable item for the collection;
- **destruction** – when the item is extensively damaged or is not considered worthy of treatment.

PRINCIPLES:

The ethical standards that underpin this Policy are defined in both the Acquisition Code that prefaces this Policy and *Museums Australia's Code of Ethics*, which can be found at

<http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/userfiles/file/Governance/maethics.pdf>

The Council's Organisational Values apply to all activities.

RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES:

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Related Council policies include:
Museum Human Remains Policy 07-Plx-005
QVMAG Strategic Plan 2012-2017

RELATED LEGISLATION:

N/A

REFERENCES:

UNESCO Convention, which can be found at:
[http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-
URL_ID=13039&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13039&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

QVMAG Acquisition Proposal Form

DEFINITIONS:

N/A.

REVIEW:

This policy will be reviewed no more than two years after the date of approval, or more frequently if dictated by operational demands and with Council's approval.