

# **Collection Policy: Tamworth Regional Council Museums**

## **1. COLLECTION OBJECTIVES**

The Collection Policy guides the decision-making process for shaping the collections ('the Collection') of the Tamworth Regional Museums ('the Museums').

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

- enrich knowledge, understanding and experience of the history of the Tamworth region
- contribute to and foster critical historical and cultural debate
- create a sense of place
- interpret thematically the history and development of the district
- conserve heritage for the benefit of the community and future generations
- contribute to the development of an outstanding Social History collection for the Tamworth region
- provide an educational and research facility for the community.

The Collection Policy aims to strategically enhance the depth and importance of the Collection by approaching collecting in a manner that reflects the Tamworth region as a whole, single entity. With this objective, individual Museums collect objects that are relevant to each Museum's vision, mission and/or purpose.

## **2. NATURE OF THE COLLECTION**

The Tamworth Regional Museums Collection comprises significant objects and collections owned by Tamworth Regional Council and which reflect Tamworth's iconic cultural heritage via the following themes:

- Tamworth as the First City of Light
- Tamworth as a Music City
- Tamworth and the region's Mining and Mineral history
- Tamworth's cultural identity in Film, Photography and Sound
- The Social History of Tamworth and the region.

The social history of Tamworth and the region as above includes the agricultural, commercial, domestic, electrical, transport, and strong Aboriginal culture and identity in the Tamworth region.

Acquisitions may include the wider national and international social history as relevant to the themes identified above.

The Collection Policy is supported by a set of principles that guides collecting, loans and deaccessions.

The Collection Policy is a reference document that should be used in conjunction with Tamworth Regional Museums Collection Principles and Procedures and appropriate available professional expertise and resources.

The Collection Policy shall be reviewed every five years for its relevance and accuracy in relation to the International and National Standards and to ensure each Museum's strategic collecting priorities reflect the changing nature of Tamworth.

### 3. RELATED DOCUMENTS

This policy directly relates to other documents, plans and policies:

- Tamworth Regional Museums Collection Principles and Procedures
- Tamworth Regional Museums Engagement Strategy (2019–2024)
- Tamworth PowerStation Museum Strategic Plan (2016–2020)
- Australian Country Music Hall of Fame Strategic Plan (2020–2025)
- Tamworth Region Cultural Plan (2018–2023)
- NSW Heritage Office (2000) – Local Government Guidelines, 2002
- NSW Heritage Office (2004) – Management of Heritage Assets by NSW Government Agencies; Heritage Act 1977 (NSW), section 170
- AICCM Code of Ethics (2000)
- ICOMOS Australia (2013) – Burra Charter
- ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums
- 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property
- Roslyn Russell and Kylie Winkworth, *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections* (Collections Council of Australia, Adelaide, 2009).

# COLLECTION PRINCIPLES & GENERAL PROCEDURES

## 1. PRINCIPLES

### 1.1 General Principles

All collecting activity and collection management processes will be conducted in accordance with the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums and within the framework of the NSW Heritage Office Movable Heritage Principles.

The Museums will undertake targeted and coordinated collecting in order to enhance the depth and value of the Collection as a reflection of the history of the Tamworth region.

The Museums recognise that there are alternatives to collecting which will be considered in cases where collection acquisition is not appropriate.

The Museums will actively pursue non-collecting initiatives. Acquisitions, loans and deaccessions will be considered in the context of the digital age, with contemporary technology utilised where appropriate.

Materials will only be acquired when the Museums can provide appropriate resources and storage to ensure their safety.

Materials may be acquired as donations, bequests, purchases or transfers.

The Museums do not accept conditional donations. No materials should be acquired that have conditions or restrictions on the way they might be used or displayed in the future.

### 1.2 Acquisition Principles

Objects are considered for acquisition where they fall into the following categories; three dimensional objects, documents and printed material, original maps, original photographs, sound recordings, film footage, born digital materials, artworks and images that depict or are associated with people, places and events significant or unique to the Tamworth Region's history (hereafter referred to as 'Objects').

The Museums collect Objects that are relevant to the Tamworth Region, with an emphasis on items provenanced to the Region and related to people closely associated with the area at key periods in history. The Museums collect Objects that are relevant to each Museum's vision, mission and/or purpose.

To be considered for acquisition by purchase or donation, an Object must be of a quality and condition that is relevant to this Collection Policy.

Acquisition is dependent on the availability of support documentation or other evidence of the provenance of the Object.

Objects without provenance will be accepted only in the rare circumstances where they assist in the interpretation of the region's history via one of the identified criteria.

### 1.3 Acquisition Criteria

Objects will be considered for acquisition if they meet either of the following prioritised criteria.

#### 1.3.1 Historic Criteria

The Collection will reflect traditional, recent and evolving areas of the social history of the Tamworth region, its cultural diversity and personal histories. The Museums recognise the principles of Contemporary and Active Collecting and seek to represent all time periods of Tamworth's development within the Collection.

### **1.3.2 Thematic Criteria**

The Museums have an interest in particular themes, against which Objects may be considered for collection. The themes include:

1. First City of Light – exemplified in the Tamworth Powerstation Museum and throughout Tamworth's local government area (LGA) at various locations.
2. Music City – exemplified in the Walk a Country Mile exhibit, the Australian Country Music Hall of Fame, the National Guitar Museum and throughout Tamworth's LGA at various locations.
3. Fossickers Way – representing the rocks, gems, minerals, fossils and mining history of Tamworth and the regional display at the Nundle Information Outlet and the exhibit at the Tamworth Regional Astronomy and Science Centre.
4. Tamworth in Film, Photography and Sound – exemplified in the Tamworth Regional Film and Sound Archive.
5. The Social History Story of Tamworth and Region. The social history of Tamworth and the region includes the agricultural, commercial, domestic, electrical, transport, and strong Aboriginal culture and identity in the Tamworth region – exemplified in the Moonbi Museum, those museums listed above and throughout Tamworth's local government area (LGA) at various locations.

Acquisitions may include the wider national and international social history as relevant to the themes identified above.

Acquisitions may also include the equipment and/or technology required to exhibit and interpret artefacts within the collection as exemplified in Tamworth's cultural identity in Film, Photography and Sound or as the First City of Light and a Music City.

### **1.4 Deaccession Principles**

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.

Tamworth Regional Museums will undertake deaccessioning to ensure that only materials that are relevant and appropriate to the Museums' future directions will be held.

### **1.5 Deaccession Criteria**

The assessment criteria for deaccessioning are as follows:

- The Object has little or no relevance to the Collection Policy and Acquisition Criteria.
- The Object is of little or no significance.
- The Object is in poor condition or lacks provenance or documentation.
- A duplicate Object exists in the Collection or other relevant collection.
- The Museums are unable to safely store and manage the Object.
- A like Object of greater significance has been acquired, rendering the earlier acquired Object redundant.

### **Loans Principles**

Inward and outward loans of Objects may only be made or accepted for fixed periods and for specific purposes. Acquisitions to the collection are preferred and recommended if at all possible.

No Objects will be accepted on indefinite or long-term loan.

Loans will be accepted/permitted for a period of up to 24 months for the purposes of exhibition or research to/from appropriate institutions, or as determined by the relevant Tamworth Regional Council staff member. Loans will be accessed every 12 months or as required.

Loans will be accepted or made on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that all loans are returned by the date indicated on the loan documentation.

With the agreement of both parties, loans can be renegotiated prior to the return date.

The Museums reserve the right to request an Object's return if the need arises.

## **2. PROCEDURES**

### ***2.1 Acquisitions/Deaccessions Advisory Committees***

To oversee the operation of the acquisition and deaccession procedures, Advisory Committees will be formed to advise on collection matters and will specialise in thematic areas as outlined in Section 1.2: Acquisition Principles.

Each Committee will comprise the following people:

- Tamworth Regional Council Representative (minimum 1).
- Community Representative (minimum 2) – can be a volunteer.
- Suitably qualified people to represent the thematic area in question – can be a volunteer who is actively involved in collection care within the relevant theme or an independent party co-opted for their knowledge or skills set (minimum 2).

Meetings will be formally recorded, with minutes kept and outcomes recorded. Advisory Committees will meet at a minimum on a six-monthly basis or more often if required.

Once a recommendation has been made by the Committee to acquire an Object, an acquisition proposal will then be sent to the appointed Director of the Council Business Unit for approval.

### ***2.2 Acquisition Procedure***

1. The potential Donor will be required to record the history, associations, context and significance of the Object by completing a Proposal for Donation form.
2. An interim Object Receipt will be issued if an Object is received for appraisal and consideration.
3. Tamworth Regional Council Staff will appraise the Object against the Acquisition Criteria for its suitability for or relevance to the Collection.
4. The Museums Advisory Committee will make a recommendation for the acceptance or refusal on the Proposal for Donation form, based on advice of the Council Staff.
5. Recommendations for Acquisition will be forwarded to the relevant Department Director at Tamworth Regional Council for endorsement.
6. On approval of the proposed donation, the donor is required to sign a Gift Acknowledgement form that assigns legal ownership of the Object to Tamworth Regional Council.
7. Upon handover of the Object to the relevant Museum, the item is subject to a Condition Report and is assessed for conservation.
8. The Object is recorded in the Collection Management System and allocated an accession number.
9. The Object will be numbered, photographed and catalogued, and contextual information collated and added to the Collection Management System.

## **Cataloguing collection items**

Tamworth Regional Museums' staff and volunteers will catalogue core collection items as a priority. A detailed Gift Acknowledgement Form with relevant object information must be completed to transfer ownership and form the foundation of catalogue records. This information is then uploaded to the collection management database. Cataloguing should be completed as soon as possible after an item is accessioned into the collection.

### **2.3 Deaccession Procedure**

1. An accessioned Object must meet one or more of the Deaccession Criteria (see Section 1.5 above) to be selected for deaccessioning.
2. A report outlining the reasons for deaccessioning will be prepared by Tamworth Regional Council Staff and presented to the relevant Museums Advisory Committee.
3. The Museums Advisory Committee will formally endorse/not endorse the recommendation.
4. There will be a 'cooling-off period' of 90 days before disposal.
5. Following the expiration of the cooling-off period, the recommendations for deaccession will be forwarded to the relevant Department Director at Tamworth Regional Council for endorsement.
6. If deaccessioned Objects are sold, the proceeds go into each museums budget funds.
7. The accession number of deaccessioned Objects will not be reused.

The following methods of disposal are in order of descending desirability:

1. Return to the donor or donor's closest family.
2. Transfer to another museum or appropriate institution.
3. Change of status to Education Resource/Prop.
4. Sell/auction.
5. Destroy or recycle.

## **3. POLICY ATTACHMENT: EXISTING COUNCIL-OWNED COLLECTIONS**

The existing Tamworth Regional Council-owned museum collections include the Objects and Materials listed below:

- The Tamworth Powerstation Museum Collection
- The Australian Country Music Hall of Fame and the Walk a Mile Collection
- The National Guitar Museum and Country Music Wax Museum Collection
- The Gil Bennet Rocks, Gems and Mineral Collection
- The Chris Bowman Mineral and Fossil Collection
- The Tamworth Regional Film and Sound Archive
- The Moonbi Museum Collection