

Williamstown Historical Society 2023

COLLECTION POLICY



WILLIAMSTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

5 Electra Street, Williamstown | (03) 9397 1534

COLLECTION POLICY

Williamstown Historical Society (2019)

1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OR MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Williamstown Historical Society and Museum is to preserve the history of Williamstown, Newport and Spotswood for future generations through the collection, discovery, identification, study, understanding, classification, documentation, preservation, exhibition and interpretation of objects and documents of historical significance relating to Williamstown, Newport and Spotswood.

Its aim is to grow the membership of the Williamstown Historical Society and to work with other like-minded local organisations..

The Museum is a source of knowledge, ideas, stories and memories. It is developed and managed as a community resource to inspire, educate and inform the community and visitors, and to contribute to the conservation of the history and heritage of the district.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION POLICY

This collection policy aims to define and guide the approach and procedures to be followed by the Williamstown Historical Society and its Museum in the acquisition, exhibition, preservation and management of objects which can best represent aspects of history which are most significant, important and interesting to the Williamstown district.

The region that the Williamstown Historical Society will concentrate on is Williamstown and its immediate surrounding suburbs, those being Newport and Spotswood.

3. WHAT THE MUSEUM WILL COLLECT

The Society will only retain or accept into the collection those objects, artworks or archival materials which are relevant to and consistent with the stated aims of the Museum focusing on the following subjects specific to the Williamstown district:

- Indigenous history
- Early settlers and residents and convicts
- Domestic and social life
- Industries – e.g.local shipping, rail, wool and supporting businesses
- Communications, transport
- Archival material / documents
- Contemporary history, including photographs and local newspaper articles
- Environmental data

The collection, records and archival material will be available to be accessed by all members of the public by appointment and in some instances may incur a fee for this access.

4. HOW THE MUSEUM WILL COLLECT

4.1 METHOD OF ACQUISITION

The Museum shall acquire objects for the permanent collection by purchase, donation, bequest or transfer. The Museum will only accept acquisitions of unrestricted gifts wherein free and legal title shall be obtained without restriction as to use, exhibition, or future disposal.

1. Purchases shall be made from current budget allocations, monetary gifts for such purposes, income from designated funds, or special allocations by the Committee from operating or unrestricted funds
2. Donations for the collections will be accepted if they conform to the conditions outlined in "Section 3 – What the Museum will Collect". When appropriate, staff will discuss with donors the monetary resources necessary for processing, conserving, and maintaining their gifts.
3. WHS encourages all bequests, but is under no obligation to accession property bequeathed to the Society. Accessions will be determined based on the general collecting policies of the Society. Bequests that are not accessioned may be 1) renounced or 2) accepted and disposed of by the Society at its sole discretion.
4. Items may be acquired by transfer to WHS from the collections of another museum, library, or other type of collecting institution.

4.2 ACQUISITION COMMITTEE

The Acquisition Committee will consist of four WHS members nominated by the Williamstown Historical Society Committee . The Acquisitions Committee will have the authority to purchase 'works' for the collection and archive with a value up to \$200.00 without prior authorisation from the Committee. Any 'works' over that amount must receive prior approval from the Committee before they can be acquired. All works acquired by the Acquisition Committee will be documented and formally ratified at a future meeting of the General Committee.

4.3 ACQUISITION CRITERIA

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

- **Relevance**
The Museum will only collect objects that relate to the museum's purpose and key collecting areas. The Museum may accept materials not directly related to the history of the area but which reflect the known social environment of the district which either supplement the Museum collection and archive or can be used in education activities.
- **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 add 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 accepts objects where the donor/vendor has legal title to the object.

5. LEGAL / ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS

5.1 ABORIGINAL ARTEFACTS

The Williamstown Historical Society will consider the following when collecting or borrowing Indigenous material:

- 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.

5.2 PROHIBITED WEAPONS

The Museum owns a number of prohibited weapons listed under on the Victoria Police website: https://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=25574. The Museum will ensure these items are stored and displayed securely.

5.3 FIREARMS

The Museum owns a number of firearms that fall under the **Firearms Act 1996**. The Museum will ensure these items are stored and displayed securely.

5.4 SHIPWRECK MATERIAL

The Crown controls all Historic Shipwreck artefacts through the **Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976** which allows a museum to be in custody of historic shipwreck artefacts but not formally own them. Should the Museum hold any Shipwreck Material it will ensure that it conserves the items and prevents them from deterioration and will not sell or tamper with them in any way.

6. COLLECTION CARE: DOCUMENTATION, CONSERVATION & STORAGE

6.1 DOCUMENTATION & RECORD KEEPING

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.

The Museum will follow the guidelines below when acquiring material:

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.

6.2 STORAGE & CONSERVATION

The Museum aims to achieve high standards of collection care and storage by adhering to the following procedures:

- Storage areas must remain clean, secure and sealed against the weather.
- Temperature and relative humidity should be kept as stable as possible.
- Access to storage areas is to be controlled.
- Ultra-violet light should be excluded from storage areas. When storage areas are not in use lights must be turned off.
- Archival quality storage materials should be used for all significant material.
- Storage areas must be regularly checked for pests and other problems.
- Objects are not to be stored on the floor
- Untrained personnel should never attempt to clean, treat or restore museum objects.

7. DEACCESSIONING AND DISPOSAL PROCEDURES

7.1 CRITERIA FOR DEACCESSIONING

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.

7.2 DEACCESSIONING PROCEDURES

The procedure to formally de-accession something from the collection is as follows:

- The object identified for removal from the collection must come before the Acquisition Committee for consideration with close reference to the criteria stated above.
- Once identified, the object is referred to the General Committee to be formally de-accessioned.
- The object identified for de-accession must be held for up to six months before it is finally disposed of.
- Staff, volunteers, committee members and their families are prohibited from purchasing, or otherwise obtaining, a de-accessioned object, unless the items/s are sold via public sale.
- Any funds acquired from the sale of the de-accessioned item can be used at the discretion of the Williamstown Historical Society Committee.

7.3 DISPOSAL PROCEDURES

The procedure to formally dispose of an object, in priority order the object must be:

1. Offered to be returned to the donor or family. If after a thorough search this is impossible, or the donor or donors family does not want it, the object should be;
2. Offered to be 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.

8. WINDING-UP PROCEDURES

The procedures should the Museum be wound up or cancelled are as follows:

- The Association may be wound up voluntarily by special resolution.
- 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 Association.
- 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.
- 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:
 - i. Gifts of money or property for the purpose of the organisation;
 - ii. Contributions made in relation to an eligible fundraising event held for the principal purpose of the organisation, and;
 - iii. Money received by the organisation because of such gifts and contributions.

9. LOANS

9.1 LOAN PROCEDURES

The Williamstown Historical Society's loan procedures are as follows:

- The Museum will lend and borrow material to help meet its purpose
- Permanent and long term loans will not be accepted by the Museum.
- The Museum holds separate forms for inward and outward loans.
- The maximum loan period is 12 months.

9.2 INWARD LOANS

- Inward loans shall only be accepted for specific exhibitions or research and for fixed periods of time.
- Inward loans shall be recorded in a separate Loans Register
- A representative of both the Museum and the lender will be required to sign an agreed inward loan form. Each party will hold a copy of this agreement. This form will record conditions of the loan and the period of the loan.
- The Museum agrees to exercise the same care with respect to loans as it does for its own collection
- Loans shall remain in the possession of the Museum for the time specified on the form.
- The Museum can request to renew loans if required. Documentation recording renewal must be signed by a Museum Officer and the lender.
- A sample inward loan form is attached.

9.3 OUTWARD LOANS

- The Museum will lend objects to other museums and organisations holding collections. It will not lend to private collectors.
- Borrowers and a representative from the Museum will be required to sign two outward loan agreement forms. Each party will hold a copy of this agreement. This form will record condition of the loan and the period of the loan.
- The borrower must exercise care in the handling, storage and display of the loan object and must be prepared to meet the conditions outlined in the outward loan agreement.
- The borrower will provide a secure display and/or storage area.
- The maximum loan period is 12 months. Applications for extension of this period must be made prior to the loan expiry date. All loans will be recorded on the loans data base.
- Objects cannot be treated or altered in any way without the written permission of the Museum.
- Loans will remain in the possession of the borrower until returned to the Museum.
- A sample outward loan form is attached.

10. ORAL HISTORY POLICY

When an Oral History is recorded for the collection:

- 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 Oral History, if recorded, is transcribed for archival purposes.
- The Museum abides by the Guidelines of Ethical Practice of the Oral History Association of Australia.

11. ACCESS

The Collection and collection records are accessible to the public through regular opening hours of the Museum and by appointment. In certain instances fees may apply to either access the collection or if research is carried out by members of the Williamstown Historical Society researchers. Images of selected collection items are accessible through the Museum website.

12. REVIEW OUR COLLECTION POLICY

The Museum will review its Collection Policy every three years.

Date of next review will be April 2026

13. DATE OF ENDORSEMENT

This Collection Policy was endorsed on the following date:

At the committee meeting of the Williamstown Historical Society, 17th May, 2023

Name: Janet Long

Signature: 

Position: WHS President