

# CONSERVATION POLICY

## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

A museum collection is held in perpetuity, in trust for the community, for their benefit and enjoyment today and in the future. Part of managing the collection is to ensure its preservation and conservation.

This policy:

- guides the conservation management of the Museum collection and other objects in our custody and care from time to time;
- recognises overarching legislative and best practice principles and guidelines that inform conservation of cultural material, including the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material – Code of Ethics and Code of Practice (2023);
- sets out the approach and strategies used to manage risk associated with collection access including incident reporting and emergency response; and
- addresses different approaches for preventive conservation and conservation treatment.

## COLLECTION CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES

The Museum seeks to balance long term collection preservation and the provision of access to the collection. Conservation decisions are guided by best practice guidelines which incorporate consideration of tangible and intangible significance, cultural sensitivities, ethical principles and sustainable practices.

To the extent possible, the collection is maintained in conditions intended to preserve the physical integrity of objects, including consideration of the needs of objects, public access requirements, research and exhibition needs, and staff and other resources.

The Curator/s will monitor the collection and assess the need for conservation intervention, subject to available resources.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

All activities involving the use of the collection carry a potential risk to the integrity and condition of objects. The Museum aims to manage and mitigate risks to an acceptable level to ensure the collection remains accessible and usable for current and future generations.

Risks will be managed through a number of strategies, including:

- a. assessment of potential acquisitions
- b. appropriate training for staff working with and around the collection
- c. monitoring the condition of the collection
- d. advising on and monitoring optimal environmental conditions for the collection in storage, on display and in transit
- e. documenting changes in collection condition
- f. considering conservation treatment options, subject to resources
- g. implementing integrated pest management strategies
- h. advising on collection use and access
- i. ensuring procedures are in place to safeguard and salvage the collection in the event of an emergency

## **PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION**

Subject to resources and building constraints, the Museum aims to provide and monitor environmental conditions for storage and display that reflect accepted best practice.

Subject to resources, materials, furniture and packing used in association with the collection must be of an appropriate standard to prevent damage to or deterioration of the collection.

Where possible, objects are displayed under appropriate lighting and for appropriate periods according to their sensitivity.

Given its building constraints, the Museum accepts a level of pest presence. This is managed by an Integrated Pest Management approach which includes inspection of incoming objects and regular monitoring and inspection of storage areas, galleries and other display and work spaces.

The Museum will consider the safety of objects when planning and installing displays.

Movement, handling and packing of objects will be carried out by trained staff and planned and managed to avoid risks to people and objects, including minimal and careful handling using appropriate equipment and techniques in accordance with best practice.

Staff and volunteers involved in functions and events will be made aware of risks to objects and trained in risk mitigation.

## **CONSERVATION TREATMENT**

Subject to resources, conservation treatment may be undertaken to preserve individual objects. Treatment decisions will be guided by functionality, history and significance of the object, its cultural context and the object's intended life span in accordance with ethical guidelines.

Conservation treatment will be completed by a suitably qualified professional.

All conservation treatment work will be documented and recorded to the object record on the Collection Management System (CMS) including a copy of the treatment report.

## **STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

Collection items are handled and moved with full consideration for workplace health and safety (WHS) by trained staff, with collection movements assessed to ensure risks to the objects are minimised.

The Museum will ensure that all staff working with the collection have appropriate training in and understanding of collection management principles to ensure the effective care of the collection.

## **COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT, USE AND ACCESS**

The Museum acknowledges that any use of the collection may result in change to an object. Risk will be minimised through the use of risk assessments, exhibition guidelines, appropriate packing and handling procedures, training in collection management, and insurance for objects on loan and in transit.

Subject to resources, the Museum will optimise collection storage through planning, efficient and safe storage layouts, good quality shelving and the use of archival quality storage materials.

## **INCIDENT REPORTING AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

The Disaster Response Plan provides a framework for the management of emergencies, including collection safety.

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to report incidents impacting the collection and risks to the collection to enable mitigation and timely conservation responses.

## **ASSOCIATED REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

- Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM) – *Code of Ethics and Code of Practice (2023)*.
- Government of Western Australia *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* (WHS Act) and accompanying regulations.

## **POLICY REVIEW**

The Conservation Policy will be reviewed within five years of its adoption by the Management Committee of the Society. Such review will follow an initial procedure of review by the *Museum Advisory Committee* and recommendations submitted to the Management Committee for approval.

## **DATE OF NEXT REVIEW**

July 2030