

DRAFT POLICY FOR COMMENT:
JANUARY 2025

DATE APPROVED:
FEBRUARY 2025

DATE FOR REVIEW:
JANUARY 2026

CONSERVATION POLICY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 PURPOSE.....3

2.0 SCOPE.....3

3.0 COMMITMENT3

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES.....3

5.0 DEFINITIONS.....3

6.0 PRINCIPLES4

6.1 CONSERVATION4

6.2 RISK MANAGEMENT4

7.0 RECORD KEEPING.....4

8.0 POLICY OWNER4

9.0 AMENDMENT HISTORY.....5

1.0 PURPOSE

The *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act 1945* (NSW) charges Powerhouse with collecting, researching and preserving objects and providing access to its diverse collection. This policy outlines the principles by which Powerhouse will conserve the collection in accordance with legislative requirements and accepted national and international best practice and codes of ethics for conservation of cultural materials.

2.0 SCOPE

All persons working for or engaged by Powerhouse in either a paid or unpaid capacity must comply with this policy. This includes:

all staff including ongoing, temporary and casual and those on secondment
Trustees and committee members
contractors and agency staff engaged to perform work for, or on behalf of, Powerhouse
work experience students and volunteers and interns

- consultants who undertake public official functions.

3.0 COMMITMENT

Powerhouse's conservation decisions are guided by national and international best practices incorporating the consideration of tangible and intangible significance, cultural sensitivities, ethical principles and sustainable practices.

Powerhouse understands that any use of the collection has a potential risk to change the condition of an object. Powerhouse remains committed to minimising that risk with the use of risk assessments, exhibition guidelines, appropriate packing and handling procedures, staff training, strict protocols for operational objects, and insurance for objects on loan and in transit.

Powerhouse also commits to optimising all collection storage through the use of storage planning, appropriate storage buildings, efficient and safe storage layouts, good-quality shelving and storage systems, and safe access equipment, as well as by monitoring and advising on optimal environmental conditions.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff are responsible for ensuring that the collection is preserved in accordance with legislative requirements and accepted national and international best practice. Further:

The Collection senior leadership team is expected to:

- promote the preservation, conservation, storage and protection of the collection.

Collection staff are expected to:

- work collaboratively to preserve, conserve, store and protect the collection
- monitor the collection and assess the need for conservation intervention, helping to inform the conservation program
- promptly report incidents and risks to enable any concerns to be appropriately addressed.

5.0 DEFINITIONS

Collection Management Information System (CMIS): The system maintained by Powerhouse to document, track and communicate information, documentation, metadata and details of the management and use of the collection and objects in the care of Powerhouse.

Conservation treatment: All actions directly applied to an item, or a group of items, aimed at arresting current damaging processes or reinforcing their structure. These actions are only carried out when the items are in such a fragile condition or deteriorating at such a rate that they could be lost in a relatively short time. These actions sometimes modify the appearance of the items.

Preventive conservation: All measures and actions aimed at avoiding and minimising future deterioration or loss. They are carried out within the context or on the surroundings of an item, but more often a group of items, whatever their age and condition. These measures and actions are indirect – they do not interfere with the materials and structures of the items. They do not modify their appearance.

6.0 PRINCIPLES

6.1 CONSERVATION

Powerhouse seeks to balance the long-term collection preservation with the provision of access to the collection. Accordingly, the collection is maintained in conditions intended to preserve the physical integrity of the objects. Conservation and maintenance schedules reflect the needs of the objects, public access requirements, research and exhibition needs, funding and staff resources.

Preventive conservation measures and actions, informed by up-to-date scientific and analytical research methods, aim to avoid or minimise future object deterioration or loss. Such measures are indirect and help to identify, maintain and improve the preservation and treatment of the collection without modifying the appearance of objects.

Where conservation treatment is required, it will be undertaken to preserve individual objects or groups of objects, giving consideration to the functionality, history and significance of the object, its cultural context and the object's intended life span, in accordance with ethical guidelines. Such actions are only carried out when the items are in such a fragile condition or deteriorating at such a rate that they could be lost in a relatively short time. These actions sometimes modify the appearance of the items.

6.2 RISK MANAGEMENT

All activities that involve the use of the collection carry a potential risk to the integrity and condition of the objects. Such risks are mitigated where possible to ensure that the collection remains accessible and usable for current and future generations. Risk management strategies include:

- appropriate environmental and display conditions
- appropriate packing and handling procedures
- ongoing collection condition monitoring, including the identification and appropriate management of any hazardous materials in the collection
- ensuring the appropriate training procedures and advice are in place for the use, access and emergency recovery of collection objects
- minimising the handling of objects and their exposure to light, particulate and gaseous pollutants, and pests where possible
- ensuring that the appropriate equipment and techniques are used by experienced staff and contractors.

7.0 RECORD KEEPING

All conservation treatment work is documented and recorded in the CMIS, and other electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS) operated by Powerhouse.

8.0 POLICY OWNER

Director, Collection

9.0 AMENDMENT HISTORY

VERSION	DATE ISSUED	NOTES	BY
1	04/04/2011	Approved	Executive
2	21/07/2016	Approved	Executive
3	27/01/2022	Approved	Executive
4	01/2025	Policy principles reviewed and updated. Policy transferred to new document format.	Executive Team