

DRAFT POLICY FOR COMMENT:  
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# **COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICY**

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

This policy outlines the overarching principles for the management and use of the Powerhouse Collection and objects in Powerhouse custody or care. Powerhouse manages its collection in a manner that balances the long-term preservation and integrity of the collection, and its accessibility by present and future generations. This approach reflects the obligations of Powerhouse, outlined in the *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act 1945* (NSW), to acquire, maintain, conserve, develop and display the collection.

## 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 will ensure the collection and objects in its care are managed on terms that are ethical, sustainable and visible to public scrutiny. Powerhouse is committed to facilitating and supporting a sound understanding of collection management principles by those who work with and around the collection, and recognises this as a fundamental strategy in caring for the collection. Powerhouse and its staff will be informed by and contribute to contemporary research and thinking about collection management.

The museum will not seek to acquire or borrow First Nations secret/sacred, culturally restricted material or human remains but acknowledges there may be a legal and ethical responsibility for Powerhouse to accept or hold such material on occasion.

No objects will be knowingly acquired or borrowed that have been unlawfully imported into Australia, or if not yet imported, that would not be eligible to be lawfully imported into Australia.

Powerhouse commits to embedding culturally sustainable collection management and conservation practices in line with industry best practice and the Caring for Country Principles of Knowledge, Respect and Stewardship in the Powerhouse Climate Action Plan 2022–2025.

## 4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff are responsible for ensuring the collection is managed to the highest standards of ethical and professional practice. Further:

The Chief Executive is expected to:

- review and approve proposed custodial arrangements.

The Collection senior leadership team is expected to:

- ensure that the Powerhouse Collection is managed in accordance with this policy and related legislation, policies, plans and procedures and accepted best-practice standards.

Staff are expected to:

- ensure the responsible management and use of the Powerhouse Collection in accordance with legislation, and in line with accepted best-practice standards.

## 5.0 DEFINITIONS

**First Nations:** First Nations or First Nations peoples, also known as Indigenous peoples, refers to the world's First Nations peoples, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia, within the broader context of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Although the museum's primary engagement with First Nations peoples and cultures relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia and Pacific peoples, the museum's collections also include material from other First Nations peoples.

**First Nations cultural material:** Objects and associated material and intellectual property of, or relating to, First Nations peoples that have artistic, ethnographic, spiritual, scientific, archaeological and/or historic value, including but not limited to films, sound recordings, artworks, manuscripts, images and objects. First Nations cultural material may contain objects that are produced by First Nations peoples or have cultural significance to First Nations peoples including natural objects and modified objects.

## 6.0 PRINCIPLES

### 6.1 DUE DILIGENCE

Powerhouse will undertake due diligence before proposing an object for acquisition, incoming loan or outgoing loan in order to establish provenance and authenticity.

No object will be knowingly acquired or borrowed that has been collected through unauthorised or unscientific excavation of archaeological sites; the destruction or defacing of ancient monuments, historic places or buildings; or theft from individuals, museums or other repositories. No object will be knowingly acquired or borrowed that has been suspected of being looted or illegally obtained during periods of conflict, civil unrest or environmental disasters.

### 6.2 CUSTODIANSHIP

Powerhouse recognises that there may be extraordinary circumstances in which it will take possession of objects without acquiring legal title or in accordance with the Incoming Loans Policy, for example in situations where there is a:

- significant risk of damage, loss or destruction of the object
- statutory or legal requirement
- request from First Nations communities or other Traditional Owners
- need to hold objects on behalf of another institution on a temporary basis.

When not able to be administered as incoming loans, including situations where ownership is uncertain or disputed, such arrangements will be managed as custodial relationships. Powerhouse will enter such arrangements on the basis of sound, considered professional and ethical judgements or where required to do so in compliance with statutory obligations.

Objects held in custody will be provided with the same care as similar objects from the Powerhouse Collection. Custodial arrangements will be periodically reviewed, and decision-making regarding the continuation of such arrangements by Powerhouse and the owner or depositor will be documented and formalised through correspondence or a contract, as appropriate.

### 6.3 CONSULTATION

Powerhouse recognises that community consultation and engagement contribute to the sound management of the collection. Consultation will be undertaken with the aim of creating genuine relationships of recognition and reciprocity with relevant individuals, groups and communities.

## **6.4 COLLECTION ACCESS**

Powerhouse has a commitment to facilitating and supporting access to the collection through display, loan, research and other methods including exhibitions, public programs, archival and library research services and digital initiatives.

Building knowledge and connecting with the community are fundamental to Powerhouse's approach to the management and access of its collection. Powerhouse therefore works to maintain a balance between its obligations to preserve the State's heritage and the provision of access to the collection through diverse programs.

## **6.5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

Powerhouse is committed to undertaking strategies to identify, assess and manage risks to objects in its collection and care. Powerhouse will adopt a strategic and considered approach to managing risks in a sustainable, responsible and publicly accountable manner.

## **6.6 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

Powerhouse will actively manage the risks posed by an object, either in the collection or Powerhouse care, that are suspected or known to contain materials hazardous to other objects, staff or members of the public. The presence of materials that pose a significant hazard will be a consideration in the acceptance of proposed acquisitions and incoming loans and may be a consideration in the deaccession and disposal of objects from the collection.

Storage, handling and transport of objects containing hazardous materials will be managed in accordance with relevant legislation, regulations and codes of practice.

## **6.7 HIGH-SIGNIFICANCE OBJECTS**

Objects in the Powerhouse Collection are assessed and categorised according to their significance. This categorisation assists Powerhouse in appropriately managing the collection according to risk management principles.

High-significance objects are managed with additional consideration and risk mitigations in relation to documentation, conservation, storage, object movement, display and loan, stocktaking, deaccession, and emergency and incident response.

Objects may be classified in relation to their individual item status, significance to the State of New South Wales, and their significance as part of a larger collection. Objects may be reassessed and reclassified as appropriate on the basis of curatorial assessment and relevant approvals.

## **6.8 VALUATION**

Collection objects are classified as heritage and/or cultural assets for accounting and valuation purposes. They are therefore valued in accordance with NSW Treasury Guidelines and the Collection Valuation Procedure.

This classification calls out the unique cultural, historical and scientific attributes of the collection and enables Powerhouse to meet its objectives to provide a social and cultural, rather than financial, service to the community in terms of the exhibition and preservation of, education about and research into the collection. As a public cultural collection, there are limitations and restrictions imposed on the use and/or disposal of the Powerhouse Collection.

## **6.9 STOCKTAKING**

To ensure effective and targeted use of available resources, a risk management approach to collection stocktaking is employed. For a variety of reasons, including its size and physical complexity, legacy documentation issues arising from the age and scope of the collection, and changes in collection management and documentation practices over time, the Powerhouse Collection is not inventoried in its entirety.

Informed by an analysis of risk, some locations and collections are identified as requiring programmed, cyclical stocktakes, and other locations and parts of the collection are subject to stocktakes based on a random sampling methodology.

Stocktaking is undertaken on a scheduled basis, with alterations to the established schedule informed by program and resource commitments. Stocktaking is conducted in accordance with collection stocktaking procedures ensuring consistency, accuracy and transparency of stocktake findings.

Stocktake results are recorded and retained for audit purposes. Results are analysed to ensure appropriate strategies are identified to address any issues arising, including location tracking, documentation and compliance with other collection management procedures.

#### **6.10 INSURANCE**

The collection is indemnified against loss and damage to property by the New South Wales Treasury Managed Fund (TMF). The TMF is an indemnification scheme administered by the Treasury of the State of NSW for and on behalf of NSW Government Agency members, including Powerhouse.

Unless a Lender elects to maintain their own insurance coverage or does not accept the TMF, Powerhouse will indemnify incoming loans for loss and damage through the TMF for an amount agreed and documented with the Lender.

#### **6.11 INCIDENT REPORTING AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Staff are required and trained to report all incidents and risks to the collection and objects in Powerhouse care promptly in accordance with established procedures. Prompt incident and risk reporting contributes to Powerhouse's ability to mitigate and appropriately address concerns.

#### **6.12 COURIERS**

Powerhouse may elect to use couriers to oversee the transit, condition reporting or installation or de-installation of collection objects, or the transfer of responsibility for incoming loans. Where a courier is deemed necessary, Powerhouse will consider accessible virtual and technology options in place of physical couriers where appropriate, in line with developing industry standards.

The courier may be a Powerhouse staff member, or another person approved by Powerhouse. Couriers will be appropriately qualified, experienced in object handling and transport procedures, and briefed on courier responsibilities.

### **7.0 RECORD KEEPING**

Powerhouse is committed to making information about its collection available to the public. Powerhouse will work to enhance and promote knowledge of the collection through research and documentation. External researchers, students and other interested parties will be encouraged to engage with the collection and to access primary and secondary sources held in collection files and the Collection Management Information System (CMIS), Archives and Research Library in line with relevant State Government legislation.

### **8.0 POLICY OWNER**

Director, Collection

## 9.0 AMENDMENT HISTORY

VERSION	DATE ISSUED	NOTES	BY
1	02/04/2012		Executive
2	21/07/2016		Executive
2.1	2020 (draft)	Updated onto new policy template. References to new policies, procedures and guidelines added.	Registration Manager
3	15/11/2023	Update MAAS to Powerhouse. s.12 references to virtual couriers / Climate Action Plan added.	SLT
4	01/2025	Policy principles reviewed and updated. Policy transferred to new document format	Executive Team