

APPENDIX 1

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Appendix 2

This appendix has been reproduced from the *National Conservation and Preservation Policy for Movable Cultural Heritage* which was published in 1995.

It contains an overview of the key issues of the time which led to the development of the policy.

Cultural Diversity

Collections reflecting Australia's diverse cultures are not well represented in institutions; however, better collections exist at community or individual levels. The publication, *A plan for cultural heritage institutions to reflect Australia's cultural diversity* (1991) examined collecting policies of institutions and issues of access, representation, collection, display and consultation with community groups. Collection institutions are still in the initial stage of responding to this plan.

Cultural diversity issues include: a critical concern about significance and diversity; the role of intangible heritage; cultural reclamation and development; the private and public interest in this heritage, including its appropriate location and care; cultural restrictions and sensitivities, especially related to access; and acknowledging the desire of many individuals and communities to retain objects and collections within their own immediate access and care.

The Commonwealth Government's Office of Multicultural Affairs deals directly with cultural diversity matters. The Office, in turn, funds the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia. Extracts from the Federation's *Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy* of particular relevance to the conservation and preservation of heritage collections are:

As the community cultural development mechanism of [the Federation], the Arts Culture and Heritage Network will:

- 1.1 Lead, advocate and facilitate the promotion of community cultural conservation, cultural continuity and cultural democracy in a multicultural Australia;
- 3.1 Identify, preserve and make accessible the oral, written and tangible documentary heritage of Australians of non-English speaking backgrounds;
- 3.2 Assist in the assessment of significance, identification, preservation, presentation and accessibility of heritage collections of Australians of non-English speaking backgrounds;
- 3.4 Recognise, preserve and disseminate folklife and other intangible aspects of heritage as an integral part of Australia's multicultural life that reflects and represents the beliefs, practices and traditions of every strata and section of Australian society;
- 3.5 Assist and participate in the development of appropriate criteria of significance, methodologies and a community user-guide for the nomination of places of significance to be preserved and also work towards community education and interpretation;
- 3.11 Promote and assist in the identification, preservation and continuation of language heritage of Australia.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs commissioned the publication *Heritage Curricula and Cultural Diversity* (Galla 1993).

Relevant recommendations include:

3. That the Cultural Ministers Council, through the federal, state and territory governments, [the Council of Australian Museum Directors] and [Museums Australia], and representative indigenous and multicultural organisations, establish a working group to consider the in-house approaches of various institutions and develop a national framework...for best policies and practices relating to heritage collections as an implementation mechanism for The Plan.

6. That the Museum Training Taskforce of Arts Training Australia encourage all museum studies and cultural heritage management programs to offer a current issues academic unit

encapsulating the specific Australian experiences in the preservation, conservation, continuation, presentation and management of heritage collections in indigenous and multicultural Australia.

8. That state and territory Ethnic Affairs Commissions and Ethnic Community Councils, local government authorities and other appropriate agencies, in conjunction with state and territory departments for arts, establish local Arts, Culture and Heritage Development Groups with the primary objective of developing policies consistent with integrated community cultural development and heritage management.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage

Museums have particular obligations to conserve and preserve the heritage collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities and peoples. Collections in Australian museums are relatively small, often fragile and therefore vulnerable (Anderson 1991). It is essential the priority needs of these collections are recognised.

The relevant points raised in *Previous Possessions/New Obligations* (CAMA 1993, items 2.6, 3.1, 3.3, 3.5, 5) for the policy are: the focus on consultation and decision making with the informed consent of custodians; acknowledgment of their right to decide who carries out any conservation and preservation work; the acknowledgment that without due process of consultation, objects of a sensitive nature may not undergo a conservation or preservation process despite potential deterioration; and that training custodians in areas of museum practice will assist them in the management of heritage collections.

The Commonwealth Department of Communications and the Arts (DCA) released two draft publications (received December 1994): *Guidelines for the Protection, Management and Use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage*

Places; and *Protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Places*. It is anticipated that the final publications will influence strategies and actions developed in relation to the policy.

Museums

'The silent, scarcely visible damage to items in Australian museums...' (Piggott 1975) remains at crisis point almost 20 years after the Inquiry on Museums and National Collections.

While it can be argued that there have been significant improvements particularly in the area of training conservators, and within many of the larger museums, recent research has shown that collections in Australian museums are still in a perilous condition (Anderson 1991). Remedial action taken to date has simply been too little. The renaissance experienced by museums since the mid 1970s, and the dramatic growth in the number, range and quality of museums and programs in Australia has compounded the problems associated with the conservation and preservation of collections.

The major portion of the nation's heritage collections is held in State museums including art museums. However, these institutions constitute less than 5% of the total number of organisations caring for heritage collections.

While museums continue to collect they have a backlog of heritage in need of treatment. None of these institutions has adequate resources to meet their in-house conservation and preservation needs (Arts Victoria 1991-92). Often those who have responsibility for collections regularly make

decisions and handle significant objects although they have not always been trained in preventive conservation.

Within museums the level of expertise in all areas of museum practice varies enormously. Many rely on volunteers to sustain the enterprise and the majority are not trained in preventive conservation. Yet the majority of collections are in urgent need of conservation. Preventive conservation is not practised universally and there are insufficient resources to address conservation and preservation needs (Museums Association of Australia—NSW 1991).

Another particular issue concerns regional and local collections. It is generally acknowledged that conservation and preservation must be considered a part of overall collection management planning. However, at the regional and local levels there is a tendency for conservation and preservation to be seen in isolation from collection management planning (Piggott 1975 and Anderson 1991).

Private and Corporate Heritage

Heritage collections in private hands forms part of the Distributed National Collection. It may belong to large multi-national corporations or individuals. The private sector also includes: the creators of culture, including artists; publishers; software publishers; and the media industry

There is no process to ensure the conservation and preservation of heritage collections held within this sector. One objective of the policy is to raise the level of awareness of the private sector of conservation and preservation issues.

Society of Archivists, friends of museums, regional historical societies, genealogical societies, Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material and Museums Australia. Funding programs which may provide useful models include Community Heritage Grants and ESSO Scholarships.

Community-wide Skills Development, Training and Education

With the proliferation of tertiary courses including those training librarians, archivists and curators, and museum studies and heritage management, there has been an associated increase in preventive conservation studies. The training of conservators at the University of Canberra has built a strong professional base and many of these conservators now teach in tertiary institutions.

The incorporation of lectures on preventive conservation in teaching practical studio arts and crafts skills is still piecemeal and inadequate. Similarly with museum studies courses, preventive conservation is not taught to a significant extent. Programs to ensure a basic level of knowledge are important for all those involved in the care of heritage collections including staff and volunteers.

The use of the Arts Training Australia Competency Standards for Museums and Libraries will be fundamental to the establishment of conservation and preservation courses that reflect the needs of those organisations charged with the care of heritage collections.

The demand for lectures and short courses on conservation and preservation issues by community groups is growing. The model of open learning appears very useful in this area. The Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material and various branches of Museums Australia have provided community workshops across the country.

In recent times, the HCC of the Cultural Ministers Council has coordinated conservation workshops targeted at isolated communities. There is considerable scope for development by rationalising and focusing current efforts.

GLOSSARY

AHC Australian Heritage Commission

AIC American Institute of Conservation

AICCM Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material

ALIA Australian Library and Information Association

AMOL Australian Museums On Line is a collaborative project between Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and the museum sector on the task of increasing access to Australia's heritage collections. Contact HCC Secretariat for further details.

ARC

Australian Research Council

ASA

Australian Society of Archivists

ATSIC

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Australia's Heritage

The sum of all heritage collections of significance to the nation,

Collections including cultural heritage collections and objects which are in the custody of a wide range of organisations and individuals, including governments and the private, community and non- government sectors. (Also known as Distributed National Collection.)

AVCC

Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee

CAMA

Council of Australian Museum Associations, now Museums Australia.

CCT

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

CM&CWP

Collections Management and Conservation Working Party

CMC

Cultural Ministers Council

collection

The body of acquired objects held in title by the collecting organisation; or the accumulated items held by a collector.

collection management

All activities related to the care of a collection from the time an object is acquired to its eventual disposal. Collection management covers documentation (registration, accessioning, cataloguing); handling (storage, conservation, display); loan and disposal of objects.

conservation

All actions aimed at the safeguarding of cultural material for the future. Its purpose is to study, record, retain and restore the culturally significant qualities of an object with the least possible intervention.

conservation plan

A strategy for the long-term care of collections. Developing a conservation plan involves identifying the conservation needs of collections, sorting them into priority order, and allocating resources to deal with them.

conservation standards

Degrees of care agreed upon as needed for the long-term conservation of collections.

cultural heritage

A tradition, habit, skill, art form or institution that is passed from one generation to the next.

Cultural Ministers

A group made up of the Federal, State and Territory Ministers and the New Zealand Minister with responsibility for the arts and culture. The relevant Minister from Papua New Guinea and a representative from Local Government are invited to attend meetings with observer status.

CWP

Conservation Working Party

DCA

Department of Communications and the Arts

DEETYA

Department of Employment Education Training and Youth Affairs

disaster preparedness

Being prepared to implement practices which will speed the reaction and recovery phases after a disaster. More generally, disaster preparedness refers to the entire process of planning and equipping for a disaster. It includes anticipating the sorts of disasters which could occur and having procedures in place to deal with them, usually in the form of a counter-disaster or disaster control plan.

Distributed National Collection

See definition for Australia's heritage collections.

FECCA

Federation of Ethnic Communities Council Australia Inc.

Heritage Collections

The Heritage Collections Council replaced the Heritage Council (HCC) Collections Committee in 1997 to ensure Australia's heritage collections become more accessible to all Australians.

Heritage Collections

A sub-committee of the Cultural Ministers' Council, comprising Working Group (HCC) representatives of the Commonwealth Government, State Governments and museum professionals, set up in 1990 to recommend on means of improving access to the nation's material heritage. The Heritage Collections Working Group completed its work in 1993 and was replaced by the Heritage Collections Committee. The Committee was replaced by the Heritage Collections Council in mid 1997.

ICOMOS

International Council on Monuments and Sites

moveable cultural

Any reasonably portable item of notable historic, social, scientific, heritage technological and/or cultural relevance (see Commonwealth Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage Act 1986, section 7). Also known as heritage collections.

Museums Australia

The national association of museums, art museums, other collecting institutions and those who work in them, including those who work in a voluntary capacity. Membership is open to those who subscribe to the ethics and aims of the association. Museums Australia was formed in 1993 from the amalgamation of the Council of Australian Museum Associations (CAMA) with other art and museum related bodies. Museums Australia is administered by a national Council and by Branches in each state. It produces a quarterly journal, holds a national annual conference and, at State level, administers extensive programs for local museums.

national significance

See Significance

NIC

National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property

PADI

Preserving Access to Digital Information, an Internet site for cultural institutions found at www.nla.gov.au/padi/

preservation

All actions taken to retard deterioration of or prevent damage to cultural material. Preservation involves controlling the environment and conditions of use, and may include treatment in order to maintain an object, as nearly as possible, in an unchanging state. In the case of archival material, moving image and sound, this may include transfer to another medium.

preventive conservation

The discipline and practice of managing the prevention of deterioration of cultural material and collections through manipulation of the environment.

significance

The historical value attached to objects, sites, activities, or ideas by communities at a local, regional or national level.

strategic planning

Sometimes called forward or long-range planning, this process integrates the physical, financial, philosophical and educational goals of the organisation. It is based on systematically outlining the long term aspirations of an organisation, and determining strategies to achieve them.

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