

POLICY

Policy Statements

This series of policy statements form the National Conservation and Preservation Policy as endorsed by the Cultural Ministers Council in 1995.

Policy Statement 1

The Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments affirm the importance of Australia's heritage collections to the life and well-being of the people of Australia.

Policy Statement 2

The Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments acknowledge the diversity of cultures of the Australian people which should be reflected in the definition and identification of heritage collections.

This diversity includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, as well as the range of cultures reflecting the history of immigration which has brought people from many places to Australia.

Policy Statement 3

The Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments recognise the need to define the significance of heritage collections as a way of guiding conservation and preservation strategies and actions.

Developing general criteria and defining the significance of movable cultural heritage will provide a sound basis for a range of management decisions related to conservation, preservation and access. It will also facilitate the delivery of targeted programs, such as local or national programs.

Policy Statement 4

The Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments recognise the need to conserve and preserve Australia's heritage collections.

The conservation and preservation of Australia's movable cultural heritage will be achieved by a variety and combination of means including: the provision of education and awareness programs; collection management planning; the development and implementation of standards, policy and legislation; the availability of professional training and development; research; the provision of appropriate storage and display environments; the treatment of vulnerable and endangered material; and reproduction.

While the conservation and preservation of heritage collections frequently involves difficult issues, the heritage created using relatively recent electronic technology poses a new set of challenges.

Policy Statement 5

The Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments recognise the important right of the Australian people to have a reasonable and an equitable opportunity of access to their heritage collections, subject to cultural restrictions or sensitivities.

The proposed national database will provide one opportunity for access to information about the Distributed National Collection.

Policy Statement 6

The Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments recognise that conservation and preservation are essential to provide ongoing access to Australia's heritage collections for current and future generations.

Heritage Collections are almost always in a form which will decay over time. Providing access to heritage collections contributes to the processes of decay, sometimes in a very major way. Conservation and preservation extend the life of heritage collections, in some cases indefinitely, and therefore the opportunities for access. This may include reproducing heritage collections. For example, reproducing a manuscript can preserve indefinitely the information it contains while at the same time providing wide opportunities for access for current and future generations.

Policy Statement 7

The Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments recognise the need for a coordinated approach involving governments and the private, community and non-government sectors to achieve the improved conservation and preservation of, and access to, Australia's heritage collections.

Conserving, preserving and providing access to the Distributed National Collection requires a coordinated approach. Governments alone are not able to achieve these goals. However, both governments and the private, community and non-government sector own the Collection and have resources which can contribute to the achievement of these goals. Coordination, including networks and partnerships between individuals and organisations in governments and the private, community and non-government sector will enhance strategies and actions.

Community and professional organisations concerned with heritage collections can play a special role in establishing and fostering networks and partnerships which are valuable for coordination.

Policy Statement 8

The Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments recognise the need to raise the level of general understanding about Australia's heritage collections to achieve improved conservation, preservation and access.

Improving general understanding, including education within the community is a key factor in achieving the conservation and preservation of Australia's heritage collections. It promotes an appreciation of appropriate conservation and preservation for heritage cared for by individuals. In addition, raising the level of general understanding encourages a broader awareness of the nature, importance and challenges facing Australia's heritage collections.

Policy Statement 9

The Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments recognise the need for coordination of community-wide skills development, training and education of those involved in the conservation and preservation of Australia's heritage collections.

Coordinated community-wide skills development, training and education, including the establishment of related standards, is essential to achieving best practice in conservation and

preservation. Professional organisations and training providers have a key role to play in this area.

Policy Statement 10

The Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments recognise the need to carry out research related to Australia's heritage collections to achieve improved conservation, preservation and access.

The scale and nature of the problems confronting the conservation and preservation of heritage collections are generally not well understood. Practical and inexpensive solutions are yet to be developed for many problems which are, in many cases, unique to Australia. In addition, new forms of heritage pose new challenges. Research into materials, storage, display, methods and treatments is vital to developing both better and new solutions to ensure a future for Australia's heritage collections