



CODE OF ETHICS AND CODE OF PRACTICE

Australian Institute for Conservation of Cultural Material

PURPOSE

The purpose of the AICCM Code of Ethics and AICCM Code of Practice is;

1. To provide members with guidelines for professional practice which emphasise at all times the protection and conservation of cultural material.
2. To create enforceable standards of conduct for accredited conservators in order to promote confidence and add value to the process of accreditation.
3. To promote the standing, accountability and standards of the profession and its work in the community.

The AICCM Member (both accredited and non-accredited) shall observe and adhere to the following AICCM Code of Practice and definitions together with the AICCM Code of Ethics. This Code of Ethics and Code of Practice is equally applicable to AICCM Members employed in private and public capacities.

Wherever the words 'partnership' or 'corporation' are used in these Codes they are defined as partnerships or corporations offering conservation services, either solely or in combination with other services, and having partners or directors who are AICCM members.

Where AICCM members practise as partnerships or corporations it is their responsibility to ensure that the partnership or corporation complies with these Codes; any transgression of these Codes by the partner or director shall be deemed to be a transgression by the partnership or corporation. Any transgression of these Codes by any partnership or corporation shall be deemed to be a transgression by the AICCM member or members who are partners or directors in the partnership or corporation.



DEFINITIONS

CONSERVATION The conservation profession is responsible for the care of cultural material. Conservation activities may include preservation, restoration, examination, documentation, research, advice, treatment, preventive conservation, training and education.

PRESERVATION The protection of cultural property through activities that minimise chemical and physical deterioration and damage, and that prevent loss of information. The primary goal of preservation is to prolong the existence of cultural material.

RESTORATION The treatment of cultural property through minimal intervention to enhance its interpretation. Restoration may involve the reassembly of displaced components, removal of extraneous matter, or re-integration using new materials.

EXAMINATION The investigation of the structure, materials, and condition of cultural material including the identification of the extent and causes of alteration and deterioration.

DOCUMENTATION The recording in a permanent form (text and graphic) of information derived from conservation activities.

TREATMENT Direct intervention to preserve the object by retarding or preventing its deterioration. This is aimed at prolonging its existence.

PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION Action taken to retard or prevent deterioration of or damage to cultural material by control of its environment. This is done through the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures for the following: appropriate environmental conditions; handling and maintenance procedures for storage, exhibition, packing, transport and use; integrated pest management; emergency preparedness and response; and reformatting/duplication.

CULTURAL MATERIAL Objects, collections, artworks, specimens, structures, or sites.

EMPLOYER/ CLIENT This includes but is not limited to employer, client, owner, custodian, funding agency or authorised agent.

NOTE A number of legal terms have been used throughout this Code of Ethics and Code of Practice. These have not been defined. Any ambiguity should be referred to the Purpose of this Code of Ethics and Code of Practice.



AICCM CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE PRACTICE OF CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL MATERIAL IN AUSTRALIA

Principles of ethical behaviour for all those involved in the conservation of cultural material:

1. All actions of AICCM Members must be governed by an informed respect for cultural property, its unique character and significance and the people or person who created it.
2. In the conservation of cultural material, all actions of AICCM Members must be governed by an unswerving respect for the physical, historic, aesthetic and cultural integrity of the object.
3. AICCM Members shall strive to attain the highest standards in all aspects of conservation, including examination, research, documentation, conservation advice, treatment, training and education.
4. AICCM Members shall recognise their skills and limitations when devising and implementing conservation measures and treatments.
5. AICCM Members have the responsibility of contributing to the evolution and growth of conservation practice by continuing to develop knowledge and skills, and by sharing information and experience.
6. AICCM Members shall respect the integrity of fellow AICCM Members.
7. AICCM Members have the obligation to promote understanding of and adherence to this Code of Ethics.



CODE OF PRACTICE

Australian Institute for Conservation of Cultural Material

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

1. **Conduct:** Adherence to the Code of Ethics and Code of Practice is a matter of personal and professional responsibility. The AICCM Member should always be guided by the intent of this document, recognising that specific circumstances may legitimately affect professional decisions.
2. **Disclosure:** In professional relationships, the AICCM Member should share complete and accurate information relating to the efficacy and value of materials and conservation procedures. This information should be shared with other AICCM Members, the employer/ client as appropriate. In seeking and disclosing such information, and that relating to analysis and research, the AICCM Member should recognise the importance of published information that has undergone formal peer review.
3. **Laws and Regulations:** The AICCM Member should be cognisant of laws and regulations that may have a bearing on professional activity. Among these laws and regulations are those concerning the rights of artists and their estates, occupational health and safety, equal employment opportunity, sacred and religious material, excavated objects, endangered species, human remains, and stolen property.
4. **Approach.** It is recognised that the significance of cultural material may have a bearing on conservation decisions. Accordingly, without breaching the provisions of the AICCM Code of Ethics or Code of Practice, the AICCM Member shall ensure that cultural material in their care receives levels of conservation appropriate to its significance and available resources.
5. **Cultural issues.** The AICCM member should be informed and respectful of the cultural and spiritual significance of cultural material and should, where possible, consult with all relevant stakeholders before making treatment or other decisions relating to such cultural material. The AICCM member should recognise the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as first peoples, and as key stakeholders in the conservation of their cultural heritage material. When undertaking conservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander cultural property, the AICCM member should recognise that the objects and the information relevant to them are of equal importance, and that conservation practice must adapt to cultural requirements, particularly in respect of secret/sacred items.
6. **Natural Environment:** The AICCM Member shall recognise the potential for conservation activities to cause environmental damage. Accordingly, without endangering the welfare of cultural property, they should endeavour to undertake conservation treatments, or use materials, which have the lowest potential to pollute; unnecessarily waste resources; or otherwise damage the natural environment.



7. **Practice.** Regardless of the nature of employment, the AICCM Member should follow appropriate standards for safety, security, contracts, and fees.
 - 7.1. **Health and Safety.** The AICCM Member should be aware of issues concerning the safety of materials and procedures and should make this information available to others as appropriate. The AICCM Member should ensure that their workplace complies with current state and federal occupational health and safety legislation and if employing staff or contractors ensure that they comply with these standards.
 - 7.2. **Security:** The AICCM Member should ensure that working and storage conditions are designed to protect cultural property and artworks.
 - 7.3. **Contracts.** The AICCM Member may enter into contractual agreements with individuals, institutions, businesses, or government agencies provided that such agreements do not conflict with principles of the Code of Ethics and Code of Practice.
 - 7.4. **Fees:** Fees charged by the AICCM Member should be commensurate with services rendered. The division of a fee is acceptable only when based on the division of service or responsibility. The AICCM Member shall provide each client with an estimate of fees and costs involved in each particular project before undertaking each such project and gain approval by the employer/ client before undertaking each such project. The AICCM Member shall promptly notify the employer/client if it becomes necessary to vary any estimate already provided and approved.
8. **Competition:** The AICCM Member should promote the profession and compete fairly with other AICCM Members by promoting the principle of selection of AICCM Members by clients upon the basis of merit, and not on the basis of fees alone. This provision does not preclude an AICCM Member from knowingly competing with other AICCM Members.
9. **Timeliness:** The AICCM Member shall undertake to complete projects in a timely manner. Within reason work should only be accepted when the AICCM Member has the time and capacity to complete it within an agreed time frame.
10. **Behaviour:** The AICCM Member shall not engage in any misleading, deceptive or unconscionable conduct in order to procure work or advancement. Without limiting the effect of the previous sentence, the AICCM Member shall not misrepresent the condition of cultural material in order to obtain work.
11. **Communication:** Communication between the AICCM Member and the client, owner, custodian, or authorised agent of the cultural property is essential to ensure an agreement that reflects shared decisions and realistic expectations.
12. **Accreditation:** AICCM Members who have not been duly accredited under the AICCM Constitution as “Professional Members” shall not represent that they are “Accredited” or “Professional Members” of the AICCM.



13. Advertising:

- 13.1. **Use of AICCM Name:** Advertising and other representations by the AICCM Member concerning the use of the AICCM name or the AICCM Member's membership status and accreditation should follow the guidelines in the AICCM Constitution.
- 13.2. **Abilities:** Advertising should not be misleading as to the abilities or qualifications of the AICCM Member or their firm.
- 13.3. **Misleading advertising:** An AICCM Member shall not allow their name to be associated with a misleading advertisement nor with a statement which makes an inaccurate comparison between one product and another.
14. **Consent:** The AICCM Member should act only with the consent of the employer/ client. The employer, client, owner, custodian, or authorised agent should be informed of any circumstances that necessitate significant deviations from the original agreement. When practicable, notification should be made in writing before such changes are made.
15. **Confidentiality:** Except as provided in the Code of Ethics and Code of Practice, the AICCM Member should consider relationships with an employer/ client as confidential. Information derived from examination, scientific investigation, or treatment of the cultural property should not be published or otherwise made public without documented permission.
16. **Supervision and Delegation:** The AICCM Member is responsible for work delegated by them to other AICCM Members, employees, students, interns, volunteers, subordinates, or agents and assignees. Work should be delegated or subcontracted only when the AICCM Member can supervise the work directly, can ensure proper supervision or has sufficient knowledge of the practitioner to be confident of the quality of the work. When appropriate, the employer/ client should be informed if such delegation is to occur.
17. **Professional development:** The AICCM Member shall afford to those under their direction every reasonable opportunity to advance their knowledge and experience. The AICCM Member shall continue to undertake their own professional development where possible.
18. **Promulgation of knowledge:** Within the limits of knowledge, ability, time, facilities, and their professional expertise, the AICCM Member is encouraged to attempt to publish research findings, innovative information or techniques and other new information which may be of use to the profession as a whole, subject to maintaining at all times the duty of confidentiality owed to clients, owners, custodians or authorised agents. This is especially critical where public money has been provided for the research.
19. **Education:** Within the limits of knowledge, ability, time, facilities, and their professional expertise, the AICCM Member is encouraged to become involved in the education of conservation personnel. The objectives and obligations of the parties shall be agreed upon mutually.



20. **Consultation:** Since no individual can be expert in every aspect of conservation, it may be appropriate to consult with colleagues or to refer the client, owner, custodian, or authorised agent to a professional who is more experienced or better equipped to accomplish the required work. Requests for a second opinion must be respected.
21. **Recommendations, references and testimony:** An AICCM Member may be required: to testify in legal, regulatory, or administrative proceedings; to provide a recommendation; or to provide a reference for another conservator. Any reference to the work of others must be based on facts and personal knowledge rather than on hearsay. The AICCM Member should not provide recommendations without direct knowledge of a colleague's competence and experience.
22. **Conflict of Interest:** The AICCM Member should avoid situations in which there is a potential for a conflict of interest that may affect the quality of work, lead to the dissemination of false information, or give the appearance of impropriety. Whenever appropriate, the AICCM member shall provide members of the public or internal institutional staff with the AICCM List of private conservators.
23. **Right of Refusal:** Where any conduct ordered or requested by an employer/ client would cause an AICCM Member to breach the AICCM Code of Ethics or Code of Practice, the AICCM Member shall raise this issue with the employer/ client and refer them to the relevant provisions of either Code. If no suitable alternative is agreed between the AICCM Member and the employer/client the AICCM Member shall report the issue to the AICCM National Council to be dealt with as that Council deems appropriate.
24. **Related Professional Activities:** The AICCM Member should be especially mindful of the considerable potential for conflict of interest in activities such as authentication, appraisal, art dealing or research.
25. **Credit for work:** The AICCM Member shall ensure that due credit is given to each subordinate and colleague for work, research and reports which has been performed by them. The AICCM member shall not intentionally omit reference to the relevant published or unpublished work of others for the purpose of inferring personal discovery of new information
26. **Research:**
 - 26.1. An AICCM Member should not knowingly publish or promulgate another AICCM Member's report or research without their consent; or publish or promulgate them with significant words or parts omitted or changed; or publish or promulgate them in a form which makes them inaccurate or liable to breach the *AICCM Code of Ethics or Code of Practice*.
 - 26.2. The AICCM member shall not intentionally and without authorisation take or sequester or materially damage any research-related property of another,



including without limitation the apparatus, reagents, artefact materials, writings, data, hardware, software, or any other substance or device used or produced in the conduct of research.

26.3. An AICCM Member whose research-related property is taken or damaged; or whose report or research is published or promulgated without their consent; or is published or promulgated with significant words or parts omitted or changed; or is published or promulgated in a form which makes it inaccurate or liable to breach the *AICCM Code of Ethics or Code of Practice* should first take steps to have the situation corrected. If this cannot be achieved and the AICCM Member believes a breach of the *AICCM Code of Ethics or Code of Practice* may have taken place the AICCM Member should refer the matter to the AICCM National Council to be dealt with as that Council deems appropriate.

27. **Misconduct:** Allegations of unethical conduct should be reported in writing to the AICCM National Council. All correspondence regarding alleged unethical conduct shall be held in the strictest confidence. Violations of the Code of Ethics and Code of Practice that constitute unethical conduct may result in disciplinary action.

EXAMINATION AND SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION

28. **Justification:** Careful examination of cultural property forms the basis for all future action by the AICCM Member. Before undertaking any examination or tests that may cause change to cultural property, the AICCM Member should establish the necessity for such procedures.

29. **Sampling and Testing:** To determine treatment procedures appropriate testing should be carried out. Prior consent must be obtained from the client, owner, custodian, or authorised agent before any material is removed from a cultural property. Only the minimum required should be removed, and a record of removal must be made. When appropriate, the material removed should be retained.

30. **Interpretation:** Declarations of age, origin, or authenticity should be made only when based on sound evidence interpreted in the light of professional experience.

31. **Investigation:** The AICCM Member should follow accepted scientific standards and research protocols. The AICCM Member should use, issue or publish only such treatment proposals, reports or statements that are thorough, accurate records of soundly based observation and/or experiment and logical deductions there from. Testing on unique or rare original materials/objects should be avoided where possible. Methods or materials should not be used on original materials where there is no body of evidence in existence to justify their use.

PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION

32. **Preventive Conservation:** The AICCM Member should recognise the critical importance of preventive conservation as the most effective means of promoting the



long-term preservation of cultural property. The AICCM Member should provide guidelines for continuing use and care, recommend appropriate environmental conditions for storage and exhibition, and encourage proper procedures for handling, packing and transport to a level of detail as appropriate.

TREATMENT

33. **Appropriate treatment:** Evidence of provenance and of the history of the cultural material should be preserved. The AICCM Member should only recommend or undertake treatment that is judged suitable to the preservation of the aesthetic, conceptual and physical characteristics of the cultural property, after thorough examination of all the evidence. When non-intervention best serves to promote the preservation of the cultural property, it is appropriate to recommend that no treatment be performed.
34. **Materials and Methods:** The AICCM Member is responsible for selecting materials and methods appropriate to the objectives of each specific treatment and consistent with currently accepted practice. The advantages of the materials and methods chosen must be balanced against their potential adverse effects on future examination, scientific investigation, treatment, function and ageing.
35. **Integration of Losses:** Any integration of losses should be documented in treatment records and reports and should be detectable by common examination methods. Such integration should be removable; not detrimental to the cultural property; and should not modify the known aesthetic, conceptual, and physical characteristics of the cultural property, especially by removing or obscuring original material.
36. **Treatment options:** Where possible the AICCM Member should not allow the choice of treatment method or materials to be influenced by any commercial or time considerations.

DOCUMENTATION

37. **Documentation:** The AICCM Member has an obligation to produce and provide the employer/client accurate, complete and archival records of examination, sampling, scientific investigation and treatment. Where appropriate, the records should be both written and pictorial. The kind and extent of documentation may vary according to the circumstances, the nature of the cultural material, or whether an individual object or collection is to be documented. The purposes of such documentation are:
 - 37.1. To provide an accurate description of the appearance, materials, methods of manufacture and provenance of cultural property.
 - 37.2. To establish the condition of cultural property.
 - 37.3. To aid in the care of cultural property by providing information helpful to future treatment and by adding to the profession's body of knowledge.



- 37.4. To enhance the interpretation of the cultural material by the client, owner, custodian, or authorised agent and society as a whole.
- 37.5. To aid the AICCM Member by providing a reference that can assist in the continued development of knowledge and by supplying records that can help avoid misunderstanding and unnecessary litigation.
- 37.6. To acknowledge all contributors to the examination, sampling, scientific investigation, research and treatment performed.
- 38. Documentation of Examination:** Before any intervention, the AICCM Member should make a thorough examination of the cultural property and create appropriate records. These records and the reports derived from them must identify the cultural property and include the date of examination and the name of the examiner. They also should include, as appropriate, a description of structure, materials, condition, and provenance
- 39. Treatment Plan:** Following examination and before treatment, the AICCM Member should prepare a plan describing the course of treatment. This plan should also include the justification for and the objectives of treatment, alternative approaches, if feasible, and the potential risks. When appropriate, this plan should be submitted as a proposal to the client, owner, custodian, or authorised agent.
- 40. Documentation of Treatment:** During treatment, the AICCM Member should produce documentation that includes a record or description of techniques or procedures involved, materials used and their composition, the nature and extent of all alterations, and any additional information revealed or otherwise ascertained. A report prepared from these records should summarise this information and provide, as necessary, recommendations for subsequent care.
- 41. Preservation of Documentation:** Documentation is an invaluable part of the history of cultural property and should be produced and kept in as permanent a manner as practicable. Copies of reports of examination and treatment must be given to the client, owner, custodian, or authorised agent, who should be advised of the importance of keeping these materials with the cultural property. Documentation is also an important part of the profession's body of knowledge. The AICCM Member should strive to preserve these records and allow other professionals appropriate access to them, when access does not contravene agreements regarding confidentiality.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

42. **Disaster Planning:** Where appropriate the AICCM Member should undertake disaster planning according to currently accepted practice. Handling and treatment protocols for secret or sacred materials should be defined with stake-holders as part of disaster planning.
43. **Emergency Situations:** Emergency situations can pose serious risks of damage to or loss of cultural property that may warrant immediate intervention on the part of the AICCM



Member. In an emergency that threatens cultural property, the AICCM Member should take all reasonable action to preserve the cultural property, recognising that strict adherence to the Code of Ethics and Code of Practice may not be possible.

AMENDMENTS

44. **Amendments:** The Code of Ethics and Code of Practice may be amended by resolution by a two-thirds majority of members voting at a general meeting of the AICCM.

Last amended AICCM AGM 50 October 2023