

# MAAS Conservation Policy

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<b>POLICY SUMMARY</b>	
<b>POLICY DETAILS</b>	Title: <i>MAAS Conservation Policy</i> Date: 27 January 2022 Review Date: January 2024
<b>KEY MESSAGES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>MAAS Conservation Policy</i> documents the principles used to preserve and conserve objects in the MAAS Collection.</li> <li>• Identifies the overarching legislative and best practice principles and guidelines that inform conservation of cultural material</li> <li>• Sets out the approach and strategies used to manage risk associated with collection access including incident reporting and emergency response</li> <li>• Explains the differing approaches of preventive conservation and conservation treatment</li> </ul>
<b>SCOPE</b>	This policy applies to all MAAS employees (ongoing, temporary and casual) who are responsible for the preservation and conservation of the MAAS collection.
<b>USE</b>	This policy must be used to guide the conservation management of the MAAS collection and objects in MAAS custody and care.
<b>COMPLIANCE</b>	<p>This policy should be read in conjunction with, but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian ICOMOS – <i>Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Conservation Policy</i> 1988</li> <li>• Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material – <i>Code of Ethics and Code of Practice</i> 2000</li> </ul> <p>MAAS policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) Protocol</li> <li>• Collection Management and High Significance Objects Policies</li> <li>• Hazardous Materials in Collections Management Policy</li> <li>• Incoming Loans Policy</li> <li>• Integrated Pest Management Plan</li> <li>• Outgoing Loans Policy</li> <li>• Storage and Access Policy</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY OWNER</b>	Strategic Collections team, Curatorial, Collections and Programs Department. This policy is for publication on the MAAS website.

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of the Conservation Policy is to ensure MAAS fulfils its obligations to conserve the collection in line with the *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act* (NSW) and the MAAS Strategic Plan.

This policy outlines how the Museum will:

- monitor the condition of the collection
- manage risks to the collection
- uphold best practice in the conservation of the collection
- manage the conservation of the collection by provision of appropriate storage and display environments
- facilitate access to the collection through the conservation process, research, scientific investigation, display, outward loans and public engagement.

## 2. Policy Statement

Established by the *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act 1945* (NSW), MAAS is charged with collecting, researching, preserving and providing access to its diverse collection.

This policy outlines how MAAS will preserve, conserve, store and protect the collection in accordance with legislative requirements, the MAAS Strategic Plan and accepted national and international best practice and Codes of Ethics for conservation of cultural materials.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to MAAS employees (ongoing, temporary and casual), contractors and volunteers who are responsible for the preservation and conservation of the MAAS collection as outlined in this policy.

This policy applies to the conservation management of objects in the MAAS collection, and in so far as it is applicable, objects in MAAS custody and care, in accordance with the Strategic Collections Policy Framework.

## 4. Collection Conservation Principles

- 4.1 MAAS seeks to balance long term collection preservation and the provision of access to the collection.
- 4.2 Conservation decisions are guided by national and international best practice guidelines which incorporate consideration of tangible and intangible significance, cultural sensitivities, ethical principles and sustainable practices.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 The Curatorial, Collections & Programs department monitors the collection and assesses the need for conservation intervention which helps inform the conservation program.

## 5. Risk Management

- 5.1 All activities involving the use of the collection carry a potential risk to the integrity and condition of objects.
- 5.2 MAAS aims to manage and mitigate risks to an acceptable level, ensuring the collection remains accessible and usable for current and future generations.
- 5.3 MAAS manages risks through a number of strategies, including:
  - a. assessment of potential acquisitions
  - b. provision of appropriate training for staff working with and around the collection
  - c. monitoring the condition of the collection
  - d. advising on, and monitoring optimal environmental conditions for the collection in storage, on display and in transit
  - e. documenting changes in collection condition

- f. assessing conservation treatment options
- g. implementing integrated pest management strategies
- h. advising on collection use and access
- i. ensuring procedures are in place to safeguard and salvage the collection in the event of an emergency.

## **6. Preventive Conservation**

- 6.1 MAAS aims to provide and monitor environmental conditions for storage and display that reflect accepted national and international best practice.
- 6.2 All materials, furniture and packaging used in association with the collection and objects in MAAS care must be of an appropriate standard to prevent damage or deterioration of the objects.
- 6.3 Conservation maintenance of operational objects is scheduled at agreed intervals.
- 6.4 Objects are displayed under controlled lighting, natural or artificial, according to their sensitivity, and light levels are monitored and recorded.
- 6.5 Exposure of objects to particulate and gaseous pollutants is managed through appropriate object housing and storage, filtration of circulated air and good display design.
- 6.6 MAAS accepts a level of pest presence across all MAAS sites; this is managed by operation of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Plan which outlines the regime for inspection of incoming objects and regular monitoring and inspections of collection stores, galleries and other display spaces.
- 6.7 In the design and implementation of object display, MAAS will consider the safety of the object and the public, lender display requirements as well as the terms of the Collection Management Policy and Collection Management of High Significance Objects Policy and the audience experience.
- 6.8 The movement, handling and packing of objects by qualified and experienced staff and contractors is planned, scheduled and coordinated to identify and manage risks to both people and objects. Minimal and careful handling using appropriate equipment and techniques will be reviewed and improved in accordance with industry best practice.
- 6.9 Staff and contractors involved in functions and events will be made aware of the risks to objects that may arise during an event and trained in appropriate mitigation of such risks. In consultation with appropriate Strategic Collections staff, response strategies will be employed for all events and functions at MAAS.

## **7. Conservation Treatment**

- 7.1 Conservation treatment is undertaken to preserve individual objects or groups of objects. Treatment decisions must be guided by the functionality, history and significance of the object, its cultural context and the object's intended life span in accordance with ethical guidelines.
- 7.2 Conservation treatment is negotiated with the relevant curator in consideration of the purpose for which the object is to be used.
- 7.3 Conservation treatment of operational objects is designed to enable continued use or demonstration of those objects where possible.
- 7.4 Scientific and analytical research methods are used to identify, maintain and improve the preservation and treatment of the collection.
- 7.5 All conservation treatment work is documented and recorded in the CMIS and other electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS) operated by MAAS.

## **8. Hazardous Materials**

- 8.1 Conservation work with collection staff to monitor identify and manage collection items for potential hazardous materials.
- 8.2 In accordance with the Hazardous Material in Collections Management Policy, associated guidelines and relevant legislation, MAAS will actively manage risks posed by an object in the collection or in MAAS care that is either suspected or confirmed to contain materials hazardous to other objects, staff or members of the public.

## 9. Staff

- 9.1 Collection objects are handled and moved with full consideration for workplace health and safety (WHS) by trained staff, with collection movements assessed to ensure risks to the objects are minimised.
- 9.2 Conservation work with collection staff to ensure staff, volunteers and contractors are appropriately skilled for the work expected of them at MAAS.
- 9.3 MAAS will ensure all staff or volunteers working with the collection have appropriate training in and understanding of collection management principles in order to ensure the effective care and stewardship of the collection.

## 10. Collection Development, Use and Access

- 10.1 MAAS accepts that any use of the collection may result in change to an object. Risk is minimised through 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.
- 10.2 MAAS will optimise 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.

## 11. Incident Reporting and Emergency Management

- 11.1 The Emergency Management Plan provides a framework for the management of emergencies affecting MAAS sites, in order to achieve a response that is prompt, coordinated, targeted and effective. In addition, MAAS will maintain a Collection Incident Response Plan and Procedure.
- 11.2 Staff are required and trained to report all incidents and risks to the collection and works in MAAS care promptly in accordance with established procedures. Prompt incident and risk reporting contributes to MAAS ability to mitigate and appropriately address concerns.

## 12. Roles and Responsibilities

**Conservation Manager:** Oversight of the operation of the Conservation team to ensure that it preserves, conserves, stores and protects the collection in accordance with this policy, related policies, plans and procedures and in line with accepted national standards.

**Conservators:** Work collaboratively to preserve, conserve, store and protect the collection in accordance with this policy, related policies, plans and procedures and in line with accepted national standards.

## 13. Definitions

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

**MAAS Collection or collection:** The acquired collection of material and objects owned by MAAS.

**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.

**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.

**Integrated Pest Management:** The practice of monitoring and managing pest and environmental information with pest control methods to prevent pest damage to collections and cultural heritage.

#### 14. Related Museum plans, policies and/or procedures

- Acquisition and Accession Policy
- Archives Policy
- Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) Protocol
- Collection Development Policy
- Collection Management Policy
- Collection Management of High Significance Objects Policy
- Deaccession Policy
- Disposal Policy
- Emergency Management Plan
- Hazardous Materials in Collections Management Policy
- Incoming Loans Policy
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Plan
- Outgoing Loans Policy
- Research Library Policy
- Research Policy and Framework
- Security Policy
- Storage and Access Policy
- MAAS Food and Drink Guidelines

The latest version of any Policy or legislation referred to will apply.

#### 15. Relevant legislation and external context

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Australian Government, Attorney General's Department, Ministry for the Arts – *Australian Best Practice Guide to Collecting Cultural Material* 2014
- Australian ICOMOS – *Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Conservation Policy* 1988
- Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material – *Code of Ethics and Code of Practice* 2000
- Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material – [Environmental Guidelines for Australian Cultural Heritage Collections](#) 2018
- Department of Communications and the Arts & Cultural Ministers Council – [National Conservation and Preservation Policy and Strategy: Australia's Heritage Collections](#) 1998
- International Council of Museums (ICOM) – *Code of Ethics* 2004
- International Council of Museums (ICOM) – Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC) – [Terminology to Characterize the Conservation of Tangible Cultural Heritage](#) 2016
- International Council of Museums – Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC) & International Institute for Conservation (IIC) – [Environmental Guidelines Declaration](#) 2014
- *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act 1945* (NSW)
- Museums Australia – *Code of Ethics* 1999
- Museums Australia – *Continuous Cultures Ongoing Responsibilities: A Comprehensive Policy Document and Guidelines for Australian Museums Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage*, Museums Australia 2005
- Museums Australia – [Museums and Sustainability. Guidelines for Policy and Practice in Museums and Galleries](#) 2003
- Museums Australia – *National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries v1.4* 2014

- Pacific Islands Museums Association – *Code of Ethics for Pacific Museums and Cultural Centres* 2006
- United Nations – *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* 2007
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW)

The latest version of any Policy or legislation referred to will apply.

## 16. Responsible Officer

Conservation Manager

## 17. Responsible Department and Unit

Curatorial, Collections & Programs department, Strategic Collections team

## 18. 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