

# Wellington Museums Trust - Collections Policy

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## 1. Preamble

The Wellington Museums Trust Incorporated (the Trust) is a Council Controlled Organisation of the Wellington City Council (the Council) and was established by Trust Deed on 18 October 1995. The parties to the Trust Deed are the Council and the Trustees of the Wellington Museums Trust.

In accordance with the Trust Deed, the Trust's purpose in respect of Collections is:

- to acquire and manage the Collections for the benefit of the residents of Wellington and the public generally; and
- to develop acquisition, de-accession and Collection development policies for the Trust.

This Collections Policy and accompanying Collection Management Procedures describe the Trust's responsibilities and processes in respect of the Collections in its care as prescribed by the Trust Deed.

The Policy will be reviewed by the Trust every five years.

## 2. Delegations

The Trust Board shall delegate authority to carry out this Policy to the Chief Executive, who may further delegate authority to staff as is deemed appropriate provided that the Trust Board is consulted on the acquisition of items for the Collections which will have significant financial implications for the Trust in terms of their conservation or storage or exhibition. The Trust Board will also be consulted on the de-accessioning and disposal of 'unclassified assets' or 'significant items' as defined below.

### ***Agreement for Transfer of Assets***

In addition, the Trust will obtain the written consent of the Council (whose consent will not be unreasonably withheld) prior to disposing of an item from the Wellington Maritime Museum Collection defined as an 'unclassified asset' (Clause 4.4(b) of the Agreement for Transfer of Assets (the Agreement) refers) between the Trust, the Council and the Wellington Maritime Museum Trust.

'Unclassified asset' in this context means any item as set out in Schedule 5 of the Agreement and is valued in excess of \$500.

### ***Trust Deed***

The Trust will also obtain the written consent of the Council (whose consent will not be unreasonably withheld) prior to the exercise of any power to 'dispose of any significant item forming part of the collections' (Clause 7.1.1.[a] of the Trust Deed refers).

'Significant item' in this context means any item which does not meet the accession criteria of this *Collections Policy* and the accompanying *Collection Management Procedures* but has been held by the Trust as part of the Collections and is valued in excess of \$500.

## 3. Collection management principles

Museums and their collections are part of the collective wealth of society and help to shape its unique identity. A critical role of museums is to collect and preserve items that society values for their historical significance or as representative of their time, for future generations.

The Trust draws from its Collections for both permanent and temporary exhibitions and for research purposes within its institutions. The Trust makes its Collections available to institutions for lending and for public research purposes. The focus of the Collections is the heritage and histories of Maori and other peoples of Wellington - Te Upoko o Te Ika a Maui.

The Trust has particular interest and desire to recognise Maori values through working with Maori of the Wellington region including Te Ati Awa, Taranaki, Ngati Ruanui, Ngati Tama and Ngati Toa in the care of Taonga entrusted to it.

Further, the Trust collects on the civic, social, cultural, maritime, and transport history of the region.

The Trust's Collections:

1. are an integral part of the Trust and contribute to the achievement of its vision;
2. help to shape Wellington's unique identity;
3. support and underpin many of the activities of the Trust's museums; and
4. establish and identify museological obligations and create opportunities.

### **3. Custody, ownership and repatriation**

The Trust seeks where appropriate to obtain clear legal title for all items that are to be acquired for the Collections.

With regard to the material culture of Maori, the Trust is kaitiaki (guardian) and may hold items in custody on behalf of traditional owners rather than seek the transfer of ownership to the Trust. The Trust will develop and maintain a contact list of owners and/or their descendants and will hold the same level of documentation as other items, such as those that have been fully accessioned.

In the event that Maori or their representatives seek the return of items held by the Trust, the Trust will consult and seek guidance as appropriate and enter into discussions with concerned parties in good faith.

### **4. Existing Collections**

The Trust Collections are currently arranged in the following categories:

1. Taonga
2. Works of art
3. Charts/Plans
4. Ephemera
5. Library
6. Objects
7. Photographic images
8. Textiles

The Collections were established through the transferral of material from the Wellington Maritime Museum Trust, the Colonial Cottage Trust and the Wellington Cable Car Museum. Collections include:

- Wellington Maritime Museum Collection including:
  - The Wellington Harbour Board Collection
  - The Union Steamship Company Collection
- Museum of Wellington City & Sea Collection including
  - The Wellington Historical & Early Settlers Association Collection including the Pain Collection
  - The Ship & Marine Society Library Collection
- Colonial Cottage Museum Society Collection
- Wellington Cable Car Museum Collection

The Trust Collections also include a small archive.

The Trust has a memorandum of understanding with the United Services Medal Trust to store and care for its collection.

## **5. Criteria governing future collection development**

The Collections have grown through private and institutional donations plus strategic purchases for either permanent or temporary exhibitions.

The geographical focus of the Collections is generally the greater Wellington region, with a particular focus on the heritage and histories of Maori and other peoples of Wellington - Te Upoko o Te Ika a Maui.

Collection development activities are focused on two themes:

- The settlement of Wellington, and
- The history of Wellington including its social, cultural and economic development.

These two themes represent the key areas in which the Trust will build the Collections on behalf of the people of Wellington.

## **6. Collections Plan**

The Collections focus will be developed through a Collections Plan that considers present and future exhibition activities across the Trust. The Collections Plan will detail quality, relevance, usefulness and appeal to our communities of interest and be used to guide decision making particularly in accepting new items into the Collections. The Collections Plan will be approved by the Board on the recommendation of the Chief Executive and reviewed every three years.

## **7. Limitations on collecting**

The Trust recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its Collections, to ensure that care of Collections, documentation arrangements and use of the Collections meets the requirements recommended in the New Zealand Museums Standards Scheme. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by the resources available such as staffing, storage and care of Collections arrangements.

## **8. Collecting policies of other museums**

The Trust will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialization, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Specific reference is made to the following institutions:

Other Wellington City Council institutions:

- Wellington City Archives

National institutions:

- Alexander Turnbull Library and the National Library of New Zealand
- Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
- Archives New Zealand

Regional institutions including:

- The NewDowse
- Pataka
- The Police Museum

## **9. Access to the Collections**

The Trust will make the Collections as accessible as possible within operational constraints and without detracting from standards of good care:

1. Members of the public, including researchers, shall have access to the Collections subject to any legal conditions agreed when the item came into the care of the Trust, or conditions imposed by the Trust.
2. Members of the public shall have physical access to the Collections under controlled

conditions and with due regard to the condition and accessibility of the material.

## **10. Ethics**

The Collections should be maintained in accordance with standard museological practice and the professional standards set out in Museums Aotearoa Code of Ethics for Governing Bodies of Museums and Museum Staff (2003) and the New Zealand Museums Standards Scheme (2002).

The Trust will adhere in its collection management, to:

1. The laws of New Zealand, and
2. The UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property 1970.

As Kaitiaki (guardian) of Taonga the Trust acknowledges the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi and will be guided by it in decisions relating to Taonga in its care.

All Trust staff and Trustees shall regard the Collections as being held in trust for the public and shall act in a manner consistent with this view.

## **11. Acquisitions not covered by the policy**

Acquisitions outside the current policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the Trust Board, on the recommendation of the Chief Executive.

## **12. De-accessioning and disposal**

The Trust undertakes the de-accessioning and disposal of collection items as part of its collections management strategy. De-accessioning and disposal of material is governed by the Trust's Collection Management Procedures.

## **13. Collection management procedures**

The Collection Management Procedures document sets out the operational systems and procedures used in the collections development activities of the Trust. It includes details of the processes used to identify items for acquisition, including targeted collecting; the object assessment process, procedures and documentation; and the Trust approval and transfer of ownership process. Templates used in proposing, assessing and documenting collections, including guidelines for targeted collecting, are included.

## **14. Review procedure**

The Collections Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the Policy is next due for review is noted below.

Approved by: Trust Board	Date: 4 February 2009
Date of next review: February 2014	Responsible: Chief Executive