

QMN PROCEDURE: Procedure for Acquisition (Biodiversity & Geosciences Program)

1.0 PURPOSE

This procedure ensures that all QMN staff are aware of the processes they must follow when receiving donations into the Biodiversity & Geosciences Collection. This procedure must be used in conjunction with the *QM78 QMN Collection Policy*.

2.0 SCOPE

These procedures apply specifically to the Curatorial and Collection Management staff of the Biodiversity & Geosciences Program. However, they also have implications for all other staff who may be confronted with handling packages containing biological specimens.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Authorised Officer for the receipt of packages and handling of biological material is the qualified Collection Manager or Curator who has the specific knowledge of the nature and risks of handling particular biological material (to protect both the person and the biological material).

The **Natural Environments Collection** comprises:

- State Collection material (items of State significance);
- Research Collection material;
- Reserve Collection material;
- Specimen image collections, and
- Restricted Collection material

Biological Material includes any living or dead specimens, biologically-derived material such as tissue samples, skeletal elements or parts of specimens, or material which contains biological agents including bacteria, viruses, micro-organisms, genetically modified organisms / micro-organisms which might pose a risk to health and safety of individuals or the environment.

Collection Checklist is a list specific to each collection area based on the expert knowledge of the related Curator, which highlights any high risk issues relating to the objects or specimens being considered for loan or acquisition – such as the country of origin, the specific lending institution, or the type of item. (As outlined in *QM306: Due Diligence Procedure*.)

A **Collection Item** is an object or specimen and associated data that has been formally acquired by QMN.

Collection Management is the responsibility and functions that fosters the preservation, accessibility and utility of the collections and associated data.

Collection Management Systems (CMS) is the term used describe all QMN recognised data systems that manage and report on the Collections. It includes both electronic (Vernon CMS) and hard copy Records.

Cultural material is physical and documentary material that represents the intangible and tangible elements of individual cultures. Such material may be, may refer to, may represent or may be a component of specific practices or knowledge systems. It includes but is not limited to artistic works including visual, performing and literary works, moveable cultural property, Ancestral Remains and other sensitive materials, photographic, film, and sound recordings and all forms of documentation which include any elements of culture - past, present and future.

Curation is the process whereby Specimens are identified and organised according to discipline-specific recommendations using the most recently available scholarly literature and expertise. A primary objective of this process is to verify or add to the existing Documentation for these Objects/Specimens, and to add to knowledge.

A **Curator, Natural Environments Program** is a scientist with responsibility for use of and access to discipline-specific collections.

Deaccessioning is the formal process of removing an Item permanently from the State Collection, for sale, repatriation or other form of Disposal. Deaccessioning requires the prior approval of the Board.

Disposal is the process of removing an Item from the care and custody of QMN. In the case of State Collection material this can only be undertaken once the Deaccessioning procedure has been followed.

Documentation is supporting evidence, recorded in a permanent manner using a variety of media (paper, photographic, electronic etc.) of the identification, condition, history, or significance of an Object, Specimen or collection. This encompasses information that is inherent to the individual Object / Specimen and its associations in its environment as well as that which reflects processes and transactions affecting the Object / Specimen (e.g. Accessioning, documenting, loaning, analysis, treatment etc.). Documentation is an integral aspect of use, management and preservation of an Object, Specimen or collection. All digital and paper based documentation must be collected, maintained and stored in accordance with *QM318 Collection and Research Record Keeping Policy*.

A **Donation** is an Item given to QMN without encumbrance. Donations are to be recorded on the appropriate forms and reported to the Board. Donations may include biological material.

Due diligence all the required endeavours to establish the facts of a case before deciding a course of action, particularly in identifying the source and history of an item offered for acquisition, use before acquiring it, or for inward and outward loans.

A **Letter of comfort** is a communication from one party to another party that indicates a willingness to enter into a contractual obligation absent of the elements of a legally enforceable contract. The objective is to create a morally binding but not legally binding assurance. (Despite their nonbinding statuses, letters of comfort nonetheless provide risk mitigation because the initiating party is putting its own reputation in jeopardy.)

Lot is the term used to define a group of Specimens or Objects recovered from the same location at the same time, which are registered, accessioned, stored and documented together for efficiency reasons based on manageable quantities of Objects (e.g. multiple specimens of insects, fishes, small crustaceans).

Program Head is the Head, Biodiversity & Geosciences Program, responsible for the Biodiversity & Geoscience Collections and Research at the QMN.

QMN means the Queensland Museum Network

Provenance an objects or specimens full history from the time of its discovery or creation to the present day, through which authenticity and ownership are determined.

Record is the corresponding data entry related to an Item. Paper-based Records, including photographic prints, not yet digitally captured remain part of the Research Collection.

Registration is the process of fixing to an Item a unique number which refers to a register where data associated with the Item are entered against the matching Registration number during the Accessioning process.

Research Collection consists of Objects or Specimens for research or loan generally intended to be kept indefinitely, but not individually registered or had a significance statement undertaken (see Lot). Specimens retained for destructive analysis are managed as part of the Research Collection.

Reserve Collection items are held by various programs and campuses of QMN specifically for the purpose of public display, teaching, public education and or interpretation, non-scientific Loans, etc. The former group of Items do not meet QMN criteria for state significance, are not accessioned into the State Collection, nor intended to be held in perpetuity.

Restricted Collection pertains to a Collection Item, image, data or information, to which unrestricted access may cause offence or endanger the safety or sanctity of that Item, image, data or information, or the survival of the population from which the material was collected. Restricted Collection Items may include rare and threatened species, species of significant commercial value, secret and sacred Objects, etc.

Senior Decision Maker this will depend on which process is being undertaken (acquisition, incoming loan, international exhibition etc.) and at what level approval is being sought. It could be the relevant Program Head, Director or CEO, and may differ depending on the specific circumstances of the situation (for example, an issue may be elevated to a higher

decision making level if necessary). In some cases this role is replaced by a **Project Board** (The Project Board provides overall direction and management to a project, such as a major exhibition, and is accountable for the success of the project. The Project Board is comprised of a Project Executive (often the CEO), Senior User/s, and Senior Supplier/s. The Project Executive is the ultimate decision maker and is supported in the decision making process by the Senior User and Senior Supplier.)

Sensitive Material is anything which requires special protection from disclosure or specific treatment. It is material which can potentially cause offense, distress, embarrassment or threat to members of the community. It can be political, medical, religious, social, cultural or sexual in nature and can be in the form of information, images, the spoken word, objects or activities.

Specimen means any animal or plant, or any part, product, egg, seed, or root of any animal or plant or geological sample.

Specimen image collection refers to photographs (in all forms) that are specifically associated with particular specimens from the Natural Environments collection, having identical registrations (and generally differentiated from and not necessarily included in the QMN Image Library)

State Collection is the official collection of specimens registered by QMN through acquisition or transfer. It is the sum total of all Accessioned specimens of scientific or historical significance vested in the Board of the QMN. In practical terms the State Collection refers to specimens that have been registered and are recorded in the Collection Management System.

Type Specimen is a zoological, paleontological or mineral Item that serves as the basis for the name of the taxon (i.e. for identification of unnamed material through comparison with the type). Primary Types (holotype, neotype, lectotype etc) and secondary Types (paratype, paralectotypes etc) underpin the concept of the species and its variability in nature. QMN Type Specimens are irreplaceable Items of vital national and international significance for scientific research and identification verification.

Voucher Specimen is an Item lodged at QMN to represent (or vouch for) a larger number of putatively identical Items collected for various non-taxonomic purposes, such as published ecological surveys, or 'biodiscovery' entities, or a Specimen that is material evidence of the occurrence of a species in a particular locality or belongs to particularly important taxonomic group.

4.0 ACTIONS

4.1 Adding material to the Biodiversity & Geosciences Collection

Part of the core business of the QMN Biodiversity & Geosciences Program is to acquire material for addition to the Collection, by way of field collection, purchase, exchange, or donation. (The Museum may also accept custody and control of material without legal title. This may occur when items are transferred to the Museum as a result of statutory

requirements such as Voucher Specimens of animal material used for biodiscovery purposes.) This material ranges from glass microscope slides, frozen tissues, DNA extracts, bones and bone fragments, skins, feathers and fur samples, pinned insects, ethanol-preserved or dried whole animals, rocks, fossils, meteorites, minerals etc.

Not all material acquired will become part of the State Collection – some material may be retained as part of the Research Collection (used for research or loan including destructive analysis) or the Reserve Collection (used for public display, teaching, public education and interpretation, non-scientific loans etc) and will not be registered or accessioned through a formal acquisition process and therefore will not be recorded in the Collection Management System (Vernon).

In all cases staff must undertake **due diligence** in order to ensure the Museum only acquires material with clear provenance; where the vendor or donor has legal title or at least legal authority, the item is authentic and is not identified as having been looted or illegally obtained or exported. It applies to material acquired through purchase, gift (including via the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program), bequest or exchange. Staff are required to make professional judgements on the extent of **due diligence** required on a case by case basis based on the specific situation and the specimens in question; assessing the potential risks and balancing the resources required in each situation to mitigate those risks; in accordance with the parameters of *QM 305 Due Diligence Policy* and *QM 306 Due Diligence Procedure*.

All documentation must be scanned and attached to the relevant record in Vernon (where one exists) and hard copies must be kept in the appropriate file located in the Collections and Research Records area (whether that is the designated CRRC located in the QM&S Library or a campus / Collection specific repository) in accordance with *QM319 Collections and Research Record Keeping Procedure*.

The Specific Codes of Practice, legal requirements and ethical guidelines for receipt of collected and donated material is outlined in the *QM46 Acquisition Policy* and overarching *QM78 QMN Collection Policy*; but the main conventions which staff must be aware of are: *ICOM Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums, 2013*; *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999*; *UN Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992*; *CITES Convention, 1975* and the *Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization, 2010*.

4.2 Voucher Specimens

Under the *Queensland Government Biodiscovery Act 2004*, QMN is the authorised 'receiving entity' for the State to accept and maintain Voucher Specimens used for biodiscovery purposes by another party. The specific conditions relating to the acceptance of this type of material are outlined in the *QM46 Acquisition Policy*.

4.3 Field Collection

Specimens which are collected in the field during a QMN funded trip do not require additional approval to become part of the Biodiversity & Geosciences Collection. It is inferred through the process of approval required to conduct the field trip that the aim is to acquire additional specimens for the collection.

Specimens which are collected in the field during a trip funded by a party other than the QMN do not require additional approval to become part of the Biodiversity & Geosciences Collection. It is inferred through the process of approval acquired to conduct the field trip that the aim is to acquire additional specimens for the collection. However, in this case the specimens are considered donations.

In addition, when the specimens become registered as part of the State Collection and their information is entered into Vernon, the records are verified by the Program Head, in effect providing a second level of approval.

Those specimens collected in the field but which are designated for either the Research or Reserve Collections, do not require approval to be acquired.

4.4 Donated material

Specimens which are 'found in the field' and brought to the Museum by the public are considered donations, but as they are not deemed to be 'owned' by the potential donor, a Gift Agreement is not required. However, a *QM47 Donation Application Form / Donor Interim Receipt* needs to be completed by the appropriate Program staff member, to confirm that the specimen has changed hands. A photocopy needs to be made for the potential donor, and the signed original kept on file at QMN.

(**NOTE:** It is important that whoever receives the material at the time ensures the potential donor completes their personal details, and that some form of ID is checked to ensure the details are verified as correct; in order to ensure that the person can easily be contacted with regard to any follow up.)

It is up to the relevant Curator to determine whether the specimen should become part of the State, Research or Reserve Collection.

If at any stage, staff feel there may be a legal or ethical concern regarding the type of material or its provenance, how it was obtained, or in relation to the 'donor', they must discuss this with their Program Head. It may be advisable to contact the **Department of Environment and Heritage Protection** (DEHP) (such as the *Manager of Threatened Species* or the *Director of Wildlife Management*) to discuss the concerns further, and to follow any advice they offer. (This might entail DEHP issuing a '*letter of comfort*' to the Museum to provide moral assurance to allow the Museum to acquire the specimens or it might require the Museum to pass details of the 'donor' to the DEHP for further follow up.)

The bottom half of the *QM47 Donation Application Form / Donor Interim Receipt* needs to be completed by the staff member assessing the specimen.

In the case of any of this material becoming part of the State Collection, when the specimen is registered and the information entered into Vernon, the records are verified by the Program Head, providing approval of acquisition at that point. Those specimens which are designated for either the Research or Reserve Collections do not require approval.

Specimens which make up formal collections and are deemed to be 'owned' by a potential donor must go through an approval process prior to acquisition. This process requires the staff member to complete a *QM320 Collection Checklist* specific to the type of material being acquired, identifying any and all potential risks associated with the origin of the material (e.g. assessing the country or origin, the type of specimen, the 'donor' etc.). This document along with all collated **due diligence** documentation must be forwarded to the **Senior Decision Maker** (in most cases the Program Head) for assessment. It is then their responsibility to assess the documentation and weigh up the potential risks identified by the Program staff member in order to determine whether to proceed with the acquisition. They must document this decision and any risk mitigation requirements and return all documentation to the Program staff member for processing. Ultimately the final decision will rest with the **Senior Decision Maker**.

(If the material proposed for acquisition contains material of a specific cultural or sensitive nature, then staff must also complete a *QM322 Cultural and Sensitive Material Checklist*; which has been developed to guide staff through the process of identifying whether or not material may pose additional risks for the Museum. When doing so staff must adhere to the protocols outlined in *QM321 Protocols for Community Consultation*; this process will ensure that the Museum has consulted with relevant stakeholders in the community to whom the cultural material proposed for acquisition relates.)

If at any stage, staff feel there may be a legal or ethical concern regarding the type of material, how it was obtained, or in relation to the 'donor', they must document this as part of the *QM320 Collection Checklist* assessment. It may be advisable to contact the **Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP)** (such as the *Manager of Threatened Species* or the *Director of Wildlife Management*) to discuss the concerns further, and to follow any advice they offer. This might entail DEHP issuing a permit to allow the Museum to acquire the specimens or it might require the Museum to pass details of the 'donor' to the DEHP for further follow up. If DEHP do think a permit is required, this must be obtained prior to acquisition going ahead.

Once approval has been given, formal transfer documentation must be signed by both parties this will vary depending on the specific situation and could be in the form of an MOU or even a QMN Gift Agreement (the pink copy remains in the book, the yellow and white copies are sent to the donor, with a request that they sign both, keep the white copy for their own files and return the yellow copy which must be reattached to the original pink copy in the Gift Agreement book). All documentation must be scanned and attached to the relevant record in Vernon (where one exists) and hard copies must be kept in the appropriate file located in the Collections and Research Records area (whether that is the designated CRRC located in the QM&S Library or a campus / Collection specific repository) in accordance with *QM319: Collections and Research Record Keeping Procedure*.)

All donations which have a value over \$50,000 must be reported to the CEO and Board individually rather than as part of the general monthly Key Performance Indicators.

If the specimen is being donated as part of the Commonwealth Government's Cultural Gifts Program, the donor must be advised to seek further information via the website: http://www.arts.gov.au/tax_incentives/cultural_gifts_program. This must be done within 90 days of the donation. All specimens acquired through this process must be reported to the CEO and Board.

4.5 Unwanted donations

If a specimen is not accepted for inclusion in the collection, the appropriate staff member must contact the 'donor' and ask them to collect the specimen within 30 days. If the specimen is not wanted by the 'donor' or is not collected within 30 days, the specimen can be disposed of. On collection, the 'donor' must sign the original *QM47 Donation Application Form / Donor Interim Receipt* to indicate that the item was returned. The hard copy receipt must then be kept in the appropriate file located in the Collections and Research Records area (whether that is the designated CRRC located in the QM&S Library or a campus / Collection specific repository) in accordance with *QM319: Collections and Research Record Keeping Procedure*.)

4.6 Handling biological material

Biological material for inclusion in the Biodiversity & Geosciences Collection can arrive at the Museum in numerous ways, however, the number one principal to be acknowledged by all QMN staff is that packages that declare in writing that they contain any form of biological material must be **automatically considered to contain potential biological hazards**, and therefore must be opened and treated only by staff qualified to handle such material and in accordance with *QM101 Policy for Handling Hazards in the Collection* and *QM102 Procedure for Handling Hazards in the Collection*.

All elements of unpacking, handling and storage of biological material must be undertaken with the Physical Containment PC1 areas on Level 6, the Conservation Laboratory on Level 5, the Biological Laboratories at MTQ, or the freezers on L1 at QMSB and at Hendra.

Staff of QMN Records, the Loading Dock Officer or any other staff member who receives any kind of biological specimen must forward these directly to the appropriate Collection Manager as indicated on the packaging. Under no circumstances must packaging be opened or documentation detached from the biological material within package unless it is undertaken by an authorised officer. If it is unclear who the package must be directed to, the Program Head is the default receiver.

The appropriate Collection Manager, in consultation with Conservation Staff if necessary, will determine if fumigation is required before specimens are moved in to the collection.

4.7 Responsibilities

The Code of Conduct prescribes standards for the ethical behaviour of QMN staff and volunteers. In all activities relating to the Collections an employee must not be in conflict of interest with the purposes of QMN. If a conflict develops, the interests of QMN will take precedence.

Responsible officers:

- Collection Managers / Curators – are responsible for implementation of the QMN Acquisition Procedure in accordance with all requirements associated with due diligence.
- Program Head – is responsible for assessing potential risks and providing that information to the overall **Senior Decision Maker** who will ultimately decide whether an acquisition goes ahead.

5.0 POLICY BASE

These procedures have been developed in accordance with the principles of the *Queensland Museum Collection Policy*.

6.0 DOCUMENT HISTORY

VERSION	DATE	AMENDMENT
0.1	26/10/2010	Draft for review – assembled by Program Head
0.2	23/03/2011	Revised draft to bring in line with Acquisitions Policy – Head, Collection Services
1.1	30 th March 2011	Biodiversity and Geosciences combined
1.2	16 th August 2013	Updated to include new branding information
1.3	February 2015	Biannual review completed
1.4	September 2015	Updated to take into account Due Diligence requirements
1.5	March 2016	Updated to include comments supplied via the Ministry for the Arts
1.6	June 2016	Updated to include additional comments supplied via the Ministry for the Arts

7.0 AUTHORISATION

Approved by:	Prof. Suzanne Miller
Title:	CEO, QMN
Approval date:	December 2016
Signature:	

8.0 MORE INFORMATION

Procedure owner/creator:	Head, Collection Services
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9.0 REVIEW PROCESS

This document will be reviewed every 2 years and at other times if any significant new information or legislative or organisational change warrants a change to this document.

Once printed this document is no longer a controlled document.