

QMN POLICY: Deposition of Archaeology Collections (Cultures & Histories Program)

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this Deposition Policy is to outline the conditions under which the Queensland Museum Network will consider accepting archaeological material into the QMN Collection.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Ancestral remains refer to skeletal remains, soft tissue or hair samples of deceased Aboriginal People or Torres Strait Islanders. It also includes any plaster casts of Aboriginal People or Torres Strait Islanders remains.

Accessioned Items are Objects or Specimens or Specimen Lots that have been incorporated into the State Collection through the formal process of Registration (numbering), and Accessioning (recording locality and other contextual information in an electronic database).

An **archaeological specimen** is a product of manufacture, alteration or use that may have been modified by or deposited due to human activities. It is primarily of value for its prehistoric, historic, cultural or scientific significance, and discovered on or beneath land or submerged or partially submerged beneath the surface of any water course or permanent body of water. Such objects may derive from Indigenous, historical, maritime, prehistoric or classical contexts, including stone, plant, faunal, ceramic, glass, metal, charcoal, sedimentological or other materials.

Burial goods or **grave goods** refer to items found with Ancestral Remains such as bark coffins and other objects.

A **Collection item** is an Object or Specimen and associated data that has been formally acquired by QMN.

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.

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.

An **Item** is an interchangeable term used for an Object, record, Specimen or Specimen lot.

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).

An **Object** is a human-made item, often manufactured or created from naturally-occurring materials and made for use in a cultural context. This term differentiates human-made collection items from those acquired in nature (Specimens).

QMN means the Queensland Museum Network

QMATSICC is the Queensland Museum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Committee, a group of community representatives which has the responsibility of advising the QM Board of issues, and to consult with communities.

Secret Sacred objects are objects with intrinsic cultural significance to Aboriginal Peoples and/or Torres Strait Islanders. This material is traditionally subject to restrictions and/or protocols regarding interpretation, storage, access and use.

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.

A **site** is a discrete geographical location from which a group of artefacts has been collected using a rigorous methodology enabling the context of the artefacts to be reconstructed and researched.

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

State Collection is the official collection of Items registered by QMN through Acquisition or Transfer. It is the sum total of all Accessioned items of scientific or historical significance vested in the Board of QM.

3.0 SCOPE

This policy assists staff in the Cultures & Histories Program by outlining the processes involved in the potential deposition of archaeological collections and material.

4.0 PRINCIPLES

The QMN policy relating to the deposition of archaeological material outlines:

- The legislative authority on which the Queensland Museum accepts or refuses any archaeological material
- The significance assessment criteria which the Museum will use to evaluate archaeological material, and
- The Museum's capacity to accept archaeological material – based on the availability of Museum resources and the ability of the lodging party to comply with the Museum's requirements in relation to preparing items prior to lodgement.

(The QMN supports the repatriation of ancestral remains and Secret/Sacred material back to Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders communities. Under some circumstances the Museum may agree to temporarily store this type of material on behalf of Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders communities, however these circumstances fall outside the scope of this document and are instead governed by the procedure *QM59: Repatriation and Management of Ancestral Remains, Burial Goods and Secret Sacred Objects.*)

All documentation associated with the deposition of archaeological material 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 CRRRC located in the QM&S Library or a campus / Collection specific repository) in accordance with *QM319 Collections and Research Record Keeping Procedure.*

5.0 ELEMENTS

5.1 Legislation

The Queensland *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*, the *Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003*, the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* and the Australian *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* provide for the protection and management of archaeological material which may include a wide range of items associated with occupation such as domestic items (cooking vessels, crockery, bottles), metal objects (coins, weapons), items of personal adornment (jewellery, buttons, clothes), culturally modified trees, stone artefacts, shell middens, rock art, earth mounds, hearths and grinding grooves. Only material which has been collected in compliance with the relevant legislation (local, state and federal heritage laws and regulations) and any permit conditions will be considered for deposition; and the onus is on the depositor to provide sufficient documentation to prove this prior to lodgement.

The *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act* and the *Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act* both nominate the Queensland Museum (in Part 2, Division 5, Section 22 of each Act) as one of the potential repositories for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, governed by the legislation of the *Queensland Museum Act 1970*. However, it is not mandatory that this material has to be lodged with the Museum, as a number of other options are available, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander keeping places, where traditional or familial links to the cultural heritage exist. (If material governed by this legislation is proposed to be lodged with the Museum, the depositor will be required to provide evidence of consent from the relevant representatives of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Communities.)

In addition, the *QM78 QMN Collection Policy* outlines the underlying legislation and general requirements relevant to the application and interpretation of this policy. Specifically that no material will be accepted with encumbrances which restrict the Museum's ability to use, treat, store or transfer the material.

5.2 Significance assessment

The QMN operates under a number of resource constraints and therefore cannot accept all archaeological material that might be proposed for lodging at the Museum. In order to assist in determining what archaeological material can be accepted, a method of significance assessment is employed; in order to ensure the collection develops in a sustainable way whilst providing significant outcomes for the Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders community, archaeologists and the public in general. Significance can be either Primary and / or Comparative and is determined by staff at the Museum, although outside expertise may be sought if necessary.

5.2.1 Primary Significance

Historic Significance

An archaeological object or collection may be historically significant for its association with people, events, places, themes, science and technology. Historically significant objects range from those associated with famous people and important events, to objects of daily life used by ordinary people. They include objects that are typical of particular activities, industries or ways of living. Historically significant items may be mass produced, unique, precious or handmade.

Aesthetic Significance

An archaeological object may be aesthetically significant for its craftsmanship, style, technical excellence, beauty, demonstration of skill and quality of design and execution. It might include innovative or traditional objects from Indigenous or folk cultures or high art. Aesthetically significant objects may be unique or mass produced.

Scientific or Research Significance

An archaeological object or collection may have research significance if it has major potential for further scientific examination or study. Archaeological artefacts and collections may have research significance if they are provenanced, and were recovered from a documented context, and if they represent aspects of history that are not well reflected in other sources.

Social or Spiritual Significance

Archaeological objects have social significance if they are held in community esteem. This may be demonstrated by social, spiritual, or cultural expression that provide evidence of a community's strong affection for an object or collection, and of how it contributes to that community's identity and social cohesion.

Some objects have intrinsic spiritual qualities for particular groups of people and belief systems, and are referred to as sacred objects.

5.2.2 Comparative Criteria

Provenance

Archaeological material must desirably be provenanced to a particular site, and to an exact stratum and location within that site. Archaeological material removed from a site without having had its archaeological provenance recorded has little value, unless it has other significance

Representativeness

An archaeological object may be significant because it is a good representation of a particular category of object, or activity, way of life or historical theme.

Rarity

An archaeological object may be significant as a rare, unusual or particularly fine example of its type.

Condition, intactness and integrity

An archaeological object may be significant because it is unusually complete, or in sound, original condition. Objects with these characteristics are said to have integrity. Changes and adaptations made in the working life of an object do not necessarily diminish significance, and in fact are also recognised as an integral part of the object and its history.

Interpretive potential

Archaeological objects and collections may be significant for their capacity to interpret and demonstrate aspects of experience, historical themes, people and activities. To some extent, interpretive potential represents the value or utility the object has for a museum as a focus for interpretive and educational programs. It may also be significant for its links to particular collection themes, histories or ways of seeing the collection.

5.3 Museum capacity

The Museum must assess potential collections against the level of resources required in relation to registration, curation, conservation and storage. Material must be added to the Collection without reducing the standards of collection care or level of documentation. In order to facilitate this process the depositor will be required to lodge the material in accordance with the deposition process as outlined in detail in *QM312 Procedure for Deposition of Archaeology Collections*; which requires consistent methods of labelling,

boxing and documentation by the depositor, as well as provision of copies of all fieldwork documentation and datasets.

5.4 Access

Access to the archaeological collection for research, education, display and public programs is encouraged. Access can be provided to archaeologists, students, Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders Communities and the general public through visits, via the web, external loans and exhibitions; so long as that access does not interfere unduly with the normal operations of the Museum and that it does not compromise:

- security and integrity of the objects (see *QM303 Procedure for Destructive Analysis*)
- any ethical or confidentiality considerations, and
- any cultural sensitivities.

6.0 DOCUMENT HISTORY

| VERSION | DATE | AMENDMENT |
|---------|---------------|--|
| 1.0 | May 2015 | Initial draft circulated for comment |
| 1.1 | December 2015 | Incorporated comments from Archaeology Curators. |

7.0 MORE INFORMATION

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Policy owner/creator: | Head, Collection Services |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|

8.0 AUTHORISATION

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Approved by: | Prof. Suzanne Miller |
| Title: | CEO, QMN |
| Signature | |
| Approval date: | 11 th January 2016 |

9.0 REVIEW PROCESS

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

Once printed this document is no longer a controlled document.