

Title	City of Yarra Collection Policy
Description	The City of Yarra Collection Policy sets out the principles and practices that guide decision-making about the City of Yarra Art and Heritage Collection (the Collection): how it is to be developed, documented, conserved, interpreted and made accessible.
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The area now known as the City of Yarra stands on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, the Traditional Owners of this country. Yarra City Council pays tribute to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Yarra, and gives respect to the Elders past and present.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

The City of Yarra was formed in 1994 through the amalgamation of the cities of Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond.

Yarra City Council (Council) strives to make arts and culture an everyday experience in the municipality, and the City of Yarra Art and Heritage Collection (the Collection) is an integral part of this commitment.

The City of Yarra Collection Policy (Collection Policy) sets out the principles and practices that guide decision-making about the collection: how it is to be developed, documented, conserved, interpreted and made accessible.

The Collection Policy is for councillors, council staff and community committees whose roles and/or portfolios interact with the collection, for the arts and heritage communities in the municipality and all residents interested in Council programs.

1.2. Context

The Collection Policy sits within Council's social, cultural and planning frameworks.

Related Council documents may include:

- Aboriginal Partnerships Plan
- Arts and Cultural Strategy
- Council Plan
- Economic Development Strategy
- Heritage Strategy
- Inclusion Strategy
- Multicultural Partnerships Plan
- Occupational Health and Safety Strategy
- Procurement Policy
- Risk Management/Minimisation Strategy
- Strategic Advocacy Framework
- Yarra City Council Public Art Policy 2015-2020 and Guidelines for Public Art in Private Development in Yarra

1.3. Policy Development

This Collection Policy is the product of a review of two earlier policies: The City of Yarra Collection Management Policy (2011) and The City of Yarra Collection Management Policy Operational Guidelines (2012).

The Collection Policy is informed by broad community consultation via a *Your Say Yarra* City Council online survey; a benchmarking survey conducted with local government authorities;

discussions with staff from Council's Arts & Cultural Services Unit and with its Visual Arts Panel (VAP); and a review of national and international standards for museum collection management.

1.4. Glossary of Terms

Acquisition – a process by which Council may legally and formally accept items into its collection.

Collection Care – methods of storage and handling and display of collections items as well as basic approaches to condition reporting, environmental monitoring and pest control.

Cultural Gifts Program – an Australian Federal Government program allowing approved organisations to receive gifts of money or property for which the donor may claim a tax deduction.

De-accessioning – a process by which Council may legally and formally remove items from its collection.

Exhibitions – a curated display of the City of Yarra Art and Heritage Collection items and may include items on loan from an external organisation or individual.

Loans – processes by which items in a collection may be temporarily exchanged between approved institutions or organisations. Outward loans refer to works **lent from** a collection; inward loans refer to works **brought into** an institution or organisation.

Preventive conservation – part of collection care and is undertaken to slow deterioration of or prevent damage to cultural material.

Restorative conservation – part of collection care and undertaken to modify the existing material and structure of an object to represent a known earlier state. All restoration treatment applied to an object must be easily detectable and if possible, removable.

Visual Arts Panel - an expert panel of volunteer community members appointed on fixed term and guided by Terms of Reference.

2. City of Yarra Art and Heritage Collection

2.1. Vision

The artistic, cultural, social, environmental and political life of the City of Yarra – its vibrancy and evolution, its past and its present – is reflected in the City of Yarra Art and Heritage Collection.

The collection:

- Invites the community to access, appreciate and identify with the municipality's history;
- Recognises that the City of Yarra is a home to artists and is enriched by their creativity; and
- Engages with local artists and local communities.

2.2. Strategy

Council achieves this vision for its collection by:

- Adopting clear and accountable collection management processes;
- Applying storage standards that ensure the stability of the Collection;
- Commissioning conservation assessments and treatments as needed;
- Developing guidelines for exhibiting, displaying and interpreting the Collection in Council's public spaces and buildings;
- Promoting co-operation between Council departments to cohesively document, preserve and interpret the heritage of the City;
- Providing opportunities for the public to access and engage with the Collection and to understand the social, historical, artistic, cultural and environmental development of Yarra.

2.3. Scope

The City of Yarra has a rich cultural heritage. It was the site of seminal Australian artist collectives and cultural institutions and continues to be the home of established and emerging artists. Yarra Council recognises the importance of documenting our local cultural heritage and the city's unique history and people as an inherent responsibility, and is committed to the ongoing preservation, development, management and accessibility of the city's Art and Heritage Collection.

The Collection was founded in 1994, based on the range of artworks and cultural artefacts that the City of Yarra inherited when the municipalities of Collingwood, Richmond and Fitzroy amalgamated. Consisting of over 900 items, the Collection is a unique document of the history and people of Yarra, comprising a diverse range of historical and contemporary indoor and outdoor works of art, objects, sculptures, murals, memorials, monuments and multimedia installations.

Some items, including original fittings and furniture housed in the Richmond, Fitzroy and Collingwood Town Halls date from the middle of the 19th century, while contemporary works demonstrate a focused and considered approach, with emphasis on local subjects, local practitioners and a consistently high level of quality by professional Australian artists. The representation of Indigenous artists also continues to be actively developed.

Inheriting a range of public artworks at amalgamation, Council continues to commission a number of fixed works as part of major redevelopment projects and in high profile, well-utilised and publicly accessible open spaces within the municipality. The Percentage for Art directive within the Yarra City Council's *Public Art Policy 2015-2020* is one of the ways this part of the Collection continues to grow.

2.4. Collection Categories

The City of Yarra Art and Heritage Collection consists of indoor and outdoor items divided into three main categories; Civic, Public Art and Art.

2.4.1. Civic Collection

The civic collection comprises items from town halls and those with a provenance in council business. This includes:

- Original fittings and furniture from and/or in use in the Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond town halls in the conduct of council business;
- Decorative and ceremonial objects including illuminations, mayoral robes and chains, stained and etched glass and sculptures, mayoral and councillor portraits;
- Archival material such as maps and plans, documents and ephemera;
- Monuments, memorials, fountains and plaques deemed unique and relating to civic, ceremonial and commemorative events and people in the municipality's history.

2.4.2. Public Art Collection

Public art consists of fixed or semi-permanent contemporary artworks in any medium, planned and executed outside a gallery context and intended specifically for exhibition within public spaces. They are designed to stimulate the community and enhance a sense of place. Public spaces are generally open and accessible to all. They can be indoors – such as foyers – or outdoors such as forecourts, parks, squares or plazas.

Public artworks may include illustrations, paintings, photographs, and portraits, digital art, site-specific artworks, installations or art performances, artistic concepts integrated into the design of urban or public spaces, the fabrication of unique features for public spaces, mosaics, murals, and sculptures. Council's *Public Art Policy 2015-2020* provides a framework for the acquisition of public art through commission, purchase, donation or transfer.

2.4.3. Art Collection

The art collection comprises artworks that best illustrate historical and contemporary aspects of the physical, social, cultural and artistic development of the municipality and beyond. Works are intended for display and exhibition within publicly accessible spaces in Council buildings. Works are specifically acquired, donated or commissioned by Council through curatorial and formal art acquisition processes. Included in this category are works on paper, paintings, photographs, textiles, sculptures, installations and digital media.

3. Collection Development

Collection development refers to the reviewing and refining of the collection through acquisition and deaccession.

3.1. Acquisitions

Council acquires items for the collection by purchase, donation, bequest, commission or transfer. If applicable, donations may be submitted to the Australian Federal Government's Cultural Gift Program. Public art works commissioned for a specific and limited time may be administered as part of the public art collection for the nominated period. Details regarding the commissioning of these works are found in Yarra City Council's *Public Art Policy 2015-2020*.

Items can be proposed for acquisition by members of the community, the Visual Arts Panel, Councillors or Council officers. The management of acquisitions will be managed by Council in consultation with the Visual Arts Panel.

3.2. Visual Arts Panel

The Visual Arts Panel (VAP) is a voluntary group of artists and industry professionals providing a formal mechanism for Council to seek specialist advice regarding the acquisition of items, objects and artworks into the collection. Their role is advisory only in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

The VAP offer recommendations and advice on:

- The allocation of funds towards the purchase of one or more works for the collection.
- The acceptance of donations, gifts and bequest into the collection.
- The de-accessing of artworks in the collection.
- The strategic direction of the collection.

3.3. Acquisition Funds

Funding for acquisitions may come from:

- Council's operational or capital works budgets;
- External funding such as grants from other government departments, agencies or philanthropic trusts and foundations;
- Partnerships and sponsorship with industry and the private sector;
- Partnerships with the local community;
- Donations, bequests and gifts of money for the collection or for specific commissions and;
- Funds generated from the sale of de-accessioned works from the collection.

3.4. Acquisition Proposals

Proposals for acquisition by the general public must be submitted with the following information and where appropriate, made available for a studio or gallery visit.

- Image of work;
- Title of the work, name of artist and date of production (if known);
- Description of the item;
- History and provenance of the item;
- Significance of the work and relevance to the Collection;
- Associated costs such as storage or display requirements;
- Expert recommendations and valuations;
- Conservation report (where necessary);
- Market value cost;
- Date acquisition commitment required; and
- Attachments as required.

A report of the item's suitability in meeting the vision of this policy and acquisition criteria will then be developed for VAP consideration.

3.5. Acquisition criteria

Items considered for acquisition must meet the *Vision* of the Collection Policy and **all** the *General* criteria below. This applies to all three categories of the collection: Civic, Art and Public Art.

3.5.1. General Criteria

- Fill a gap or build upon the strength of items and/or areas in the collection;
- Be in sound and stable condition and not require extraordinary conservation, restoration or storage. Rare items in poor condition may be acquired if they are assessed as significant to the collection;
- Have display or exhibition and interpretive capacity;
- Have clearly established provenance;
- Be offered unconditionally and without restrictions, including the right to deaccession.

Items must also meet at least **one** of the *category* criteria below:

3.5.2. Category Criteria

- Increase the representation of works in the collection by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists;
- Be innovative, relevant and high quality by a respected emerging, mid-career or established artist/s who live, work or have a significant connection to the City of Yarra;
- Contributes to contemporary art practice and theory;
- Is relevant and appropriate to the context of the proposed site for installation and consistent with planning, heritage and environmental policies of the City of Yarra; including other artworks in the vicinity;
- Is significant to the social and cultural history of the City of Yarra and/or Yarra City Council;
- Commemorates a group or individual that has contributed significantly to the artistic, cultural, economic, political or social aspects of Yarra's development, or commemorates a significant anniversary of an event unique to Yarra's history and development.

3.6. Acquisition Report

Acquisition reports will be developed for VAP consideration that addresses the acquisition criteria. Reports should include an item description, provenance, a statement of significance and current market value for insurance purposes. Valuations on donations that go through the Cultural Gifts Program (CGP) are the donor's responsibility; however, Council may choose to cover these valuation costs.

3.7. Acquisition Recommendation Report

New acquisitions for the Collection will be discussed with the VAP at scheduled meetings for the purposes to making recommendations for Council. Where proposals are a unique opportunity or one which requires an immediate response, VAP may be informed retrospectively.

All members of the VAP must declare any real or perceived conflict of interest prior to consideration of proposed acquisitions. This declaration will be documented in the minutes and members will abstain from participating in the assessment process of that item.

The VAP must reach a consensus to recommend an acquisition. This will be noted in the meeting minutes.

3.8. Acquisition Formalisation

Recommendations for acquisition by the VAP are to be authorised in accordance with Council's procurement policy and delegated authority.

Donated works recommended by the VAP for accession are subject to approval by the Business Unit Manager of Arts, Culture and Venues.

All new works accessioned into the Collection will include permission from the artist/owner to reproduce an image of the item in print and online for collection management, educational and promotional purposes.

3.9. De-accessioning

De-accessioning is the process by which the Council may formally remove items from its Collection as part of responsible collection management.

De-accessioning is not a method for raising revenue and any money raised from the sale of de-accessioned works will be used for the care and development of the Collection. The ICOM Code of Ethics is referred to as the guiding document.

3.10. De-accessioning criteria

Items proposed for de-accessioning must have no relevance or fall outside the scope of this Collection Policy and meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Poor condition or have suffered irreparable damage;
- No known provenance, or have a legal ownership other than that of Yarra City Council;
- Pose a risk to public safety, which cannot be mitigated;
- Lost or stolen without possibility of recovery; or
- Copies, duplicate or reproductions of items already in the collection.

Items cannot be proposed for de-accessioning:

- On purely aesthetic grounds;
- If they have been in the collection for less than five years;
- If they have a legal encumbrance that prohibit them being de-accessioned; or
- If they have a contested provenance.

3.11. De-accessioning procedures

- A report will be developed for the VAP for consideration. A majority of members in the VAP must vote on or resolve a motion to recommend the de-accessioning.
- The report is then approved by the appropriate Council officer.

- The item is to be held within the Collection for a twelve month 'cooling off' period. This 'cooling off' period allows Council time to contact the creator, donor, or the creator's estate and discuss options for *disposal*.
- If de-accessioned, the item must be de-registered. A record of the object's provenance and de-accession documentation must be retained, and the electronic record marked 'de-accessioned' but not deleted.

3.11.1. Disposal

- The item is returned to the artist, estate or donor, is offered to a more appropriate institution, arranged for sale, or dismantled and/or destroyed as a last resort.
- If a gift or donated item is sold, funds raised by the sale must be redirected towards new acquisitions which, with consent, may be attributed to the original donor.

4. Collection Management

Council's Arts and Cultural Services Unit is responsible for the day to day management of the collection and is provided an annual operational budget by Council ensuring it is documented, handled, stored, preserved and shared in accordance with this Collection Policy.

4.1. Record keeping and documentation

Records required for best practice collection management include:

- Acquisition proposal template (for all methods of acquisition);
- Art and Heritage Collection Asset Register (including loans);
- Acquisition acknowledgment form (including copyright permission);
- Commissioning form/contract;
- Deaccessioning proposal template;
- Loan template (inward and outward).

4.2. Registration and Cataloguing

All items are formally processed and registered into an asset register to ensure their status as the property of the City of Yarra is legally substantiated. Council should expand on these basic registration records by:

- Researching and documenting the significance of relevant items;
- Recording detailed exhibition and access history for each;
- Maintaining up to date movement and storage records for each item;
- Ensuring appropriate copyright agreements are in place and any restrictions or conditions relating to the item or to the moral rights of the artist are fully documented in the register.

4.3. Accessioning

Accession numbers will be allocated in chronological order to each item in the collection. Where an item consists of more than one integral part, those parts will be allocated a letter which will follow the sequential number.

Each item will be identified with a Yarra City Council label or tag attached to the back of the item (if applicable), which states artist name, title of work, date, medium, dimensions and accession number.

4.4. The Asset Register

The Asset Register serves as the Collection Catalogue located in Tech One and is maintained by the Arts and Cultural Services Unit. It is the primary collection management tool and records detailed information for all items including provenance, date of acquisition, conservation status, valuation and object storage location. The record also includes visual documentation and reference images.

4.4.1. Content Manager

Records and documents relating to items in the collection are also filed in Council's record management system Content Manager. These files are administered by the Arts and Cultural Services Unit and managed by the Records Unit. Prior to 2020, hard copy files were produced to contain hard copy documents relating to the acquired work and artist. In line with Council's move to paperless processing, hard copy files have now ceased with documents to be scanned and attached to the file relevant to the item recorded in the Asset Register and Content Manager whenever possible.

4.5. Image Library

Each item within the Collection will be digitally photographed for security, promotional and educational purposes and recorded in the asset register with its file name corresponding to the item's accession number.

4.6. Moral Rights and Copyright

Copyright shall be reserved by the artist (or their estate) for the item housed in the Collection. An agreement for the usage of images of the item for collection management, educational and promotional purposes in print and online will be entered into with the artist (or their estate). In doing so the use shall not contravene any laws including those governing copyright, intellectual property or moral rights or conflict with any commitments made by the Council in agreements with artists or donors. The artist/maker/creator and title of item will be attributed wherever and whenever an image or the item is displayed.

4.7. Aboriginal Material

Council acknowledges that it has a mandatory obligation under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* to register Victorian Aboriginal collection items in its possession with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV).

In instances where the provenance of certain Aboriginal artefacts is unknown, Council will seek advice from AAV.

Council acknowledges that it is illegal to buy, sell or harm traditional Aboriginal objects without a cultural heritage permit.

Council acknowledges that it is illegal to remove Aboriginal objects from Victoria without a cultural heritage permit, excluding loans between interstate museums.

Council acknowledges that while in most cases Aboriginal artefacts will remain the property of Council, under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* human remains, and secret and sacred material legally belong to the traditional owners and should be repatriated.

In accordance with Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) guidelines and other international guideline requests from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for the return to them of cultural items held by Council will be given serious consideration.

4.8. Collection Valuation and Insurance

Council's Risk Unit manages insurance for the collection with the value of new acquisitions forwarded to the Risk unit when acquired and before the end of each financial year. It is optimum that the collection is revalued by qualified and accredited art professionals on the recommendation of Council's Risk manager and advisor.

4.9. Winding Up

The Collection is recognised as an asset of Yarra City Council. In the event of a local government restructure, the treatment of any assets would be in accordance with the Local Government Act.

4.10. Collection Care

In order to identify deterioration and reduce potential hazards and risk, an annual audit of the Collection is the responsibility of the Arts and Cultural Services Unit.

4.10.1. Preventative Conservation

Council is committed to the preventive conservation of the Collection according to recognised museum standards. Council only engages qualified and accredited conservators and approved contractors to advise and work on the care, repair, maintenance, display and exhibition of the collection.

The Arts and Cultural Services Unit is responsible for day to day preventive conservation by:

- Ensuring the physical safety and security of collection items in storage and on display;
- Providing and managing secure and environmentally controlled collection storage within resource and budget constraints;
- Maintaining a secure list of storage locations, their access arrangements and a floorplan of each collection store noting numbered or labelled storage units;
- Minimising risk to the collection by monitoring storage conditions and addressing risks as required;
- Inspecting incoming material to ensure it is pest-free and arranging appropriate treatments;
- Establishing an annual object inspection and condition schedule for each item in the

collection;

- Developing an annual collection maintenance schedule and budget in consultation with approved conservators;
- Coordinating and managing all movement, handling, relocation and installation of collection items according to industry handling practises.

4.10.2. Restorative Conservation

The Arts and Cultural Services Unit is responsible for commissioning and documenting all restorative conservation work on the Collection. Treatments and priorities are determined by curatorial staff in consultation with the relevant artist and/or approved conservators. Conservation work will be undertaken within the levels of priority and budget parameters.

4.10.3. Damage Reporting

If an object belonging to the Collection is damaged or appears to be at risk the following damage reporting procedures must be carried out:

- Damage should be reported immediately to the Arts and Cultural Services Unit.
- Where possible, the damaged item should be left in situ together with all broken parts and cordoned off until it can be assessed by a member of the Arts and Cultural Services Unit or an approved conservator. In such circumstances, consideration must be given to the safety of the work as well as public safety and access issues.
- A photograph is to be taken of the item as soon as possible in the state it was found to provide a record of the event and to document the condition of the item; and
- Damage is to be documented on the Collection database. The altered condition of the object is to be clearly documented as well as a description of the conservation treatment applied.

4.11. Storage

Collection items not on display will be housed in appropriate storage facilities. Collection items that require special care will be suitably framed if applicable and protectively stored according to the item's needs. Identification labels will be placed on storage boxes and shelves and linked to the Collection records to further reduce handling.

4.12. Occupational Health and Safety

Council has a commitment to ongoing OH&S training for current and new collection staff and to observing Council's OH&S procedures in every aspect of managing a mixed collection including exhibition and display installation, as well as object movement and handling. This includes:

- Wearing gloves to avoid touching objects where applicable.
- Using transport aids such as trollies to minimise risks and assist with awkward and heavy items.
- Organising workstations for safe handling to minimise the potential for falls and breakages.
- Hiring specialists for the transportation and installation of artworks where required.

5. Collection Access

Council is committed to making arts and culture an everyday experience in the municipality and to enriching the community's understanding of Yarra's social and cultural history. Exhibiting and interpreting the collection and developing an online catalogue, accessible through Council's website, are some of the ways Council does this.

5.1 Display

Display and allocation of artworks is the responsibility of the Arts and Cultural Services Unit.

Priority areas for display within Council premises is given to areas with high levels of public and staff access, such as Council foyers and meeting rooms. Artworks will be displayed in community meeting rooms and Council offices where suitable hanging arrangements exist. For artworks currently not on display or online, members of the public can contact the Arts and Cultural Services Unit to view items by appointment if permissible.

Rotation of artworks within Council premises is based on incoming staff, office changes and refurbishments, best art conservation practice and resources. The monitoring and review of the location, an item's condition and its' interpretation will be undertaken on a regular basis.

5.2. Exhibitions

Works from the Collection and other projects of cultural and social interest will be involved in a regular exhibition program within Council's key civic buildings and dedicated arts spaces. Exhibitions from the Collection are to be developed in accordance with the *vision* of this Policy.

5.3. Lighting

Council acknowledges the limitations of displaying artworks with limited resources and within a non-museum environment and will, where possible meet best industry practice in displaying items appropriately lit for optimal viewing and within conservation standard guidelines.

5.4. Interpretation

All works on display must be acknowledged with a label and shown in the best possible display conditions. Wall labels will include the following:

- Artist name
- Accession details
- Title of work
- Medium
- Dimensions
- Acquisition/donation details
- Collection acknowledgement

5.5. Loans

From time to time Council lends items from its Collection on a temporary basis to other institutions or organisations for exhibition and community engagement (outward). It also may borrow items from other

institutions, organisations and individuals for similar purposes (inward). Council does not lend works from its Collection to individuals.

All loan requests will be reviewed and approved by the Coordinator, Arts and Cultural Services Unit. Loan requests will be treated on a case by case basis.

All loans (inward or outward) will be subject to the terms and conditions set out in the Loan Agreement form and agreed between Council and the lending/borrowing organisation. Council reserves the right to forfeit this agreement if terms and conditions are in breach.

6. References

This Collection Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents generated by the City of Yarra:

- Significance Assessment, City of Yarra Art and Heritage Collection, 2012
- Visual Arts Panel Terms of Reference
- Yarra Arts Advisory Committee Terms of Reference
- Yarra City Council Public Art Policy 2015-2020

And by the following documents guiding best practice in the museum and collection sector (accessed in late June and early July 2019).

- Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, <https://acca.melbourne/education/resources/public-art/what-is-public-art/>
- The Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material, <https://www.aiccm.org.au>
- International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics for Museums 2017 <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOM-code-En-web.pdf>
- International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) <https://australia.icomos.org/about-us/australia-icomos/>
- National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries Version 1.5 September 2016 https://amagavic.org.au/assets/National_Standards_1_5.pdf
- The Burra Charter, 2013 <https://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Burra-Charter-2013-Adopted-31.10.2013.pdf>
- Significance 2.0
- <https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1761/f/significance-2.0.pdf>

