



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **CLEAN UP AFTER VICTORIAN FIRES WELCOMED WITH A CAUTION**

The Collections Council of Australia today welcomed the news that the Victorian and Federal Governments will fund the Victorian bush fires clean-up.

Margaret Birtley, CEO of the Collections Council of Australia, cautioned that it is, however, crucial to work with conservators to find out the best way to salvage family heirlooms and community collections.

“Conservators are greatly experienced in recovering memorabilia that appears lost for ever.”

“It is also vital to allow time and have a great deal of patience to remove memorabilia safely from homes and businesses.

“Our experience after the Canberra bushfires in 2003 shows that much which was thought to have been destroyed was able to be put back together.”

“Don’t be too hasty when putting damaged items into the skip. Our website provides conservators’ tips on salvaging burnt material.”

The Collections Council of Australia is the secretariat for Blue Shield Australia, the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross, which works to protect the world’s cultural heritage threatened by wars and natural disasters. Both the Collections Council and Blue Shield Australia acknowledge the leadership of government agencies in the reconstruction and recovery effort.

Blue Shield Australia publishes advice on salvaging cultural heritage materials from sites affected by disasters. It also helps individuals and organisations locate resources to assist with the recovery of damaged cultural heritage places and items.

Blue Shield Australia is now preparing for its May Day campaign when archives, galleries, libraries, museums, cultural heritage sites and organisations are urged to perform at least one disaster-preparedness task during the month of May.

“The recent bushfires in Victoria and floods in Queensland, Cyclone Larry in 2006, and other freak weather events show that this geologically stable continent is no stranger to environmental emergencies,” said Ms Birtley.

“These are extreme cases, though.”

“From the faulty electrical wiring in the building next door to the impact of burst water mains pipes on basement storage areas – these are the real and more likely risks for much of Australia’s cultural heritage,” said Ms Birtley.

The Collections Council is Australia’s national peak body representing the shared interests of archives, galleries, libraries and museums. The organisation was initiated and is supported by the Cultural Ministers Council.

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