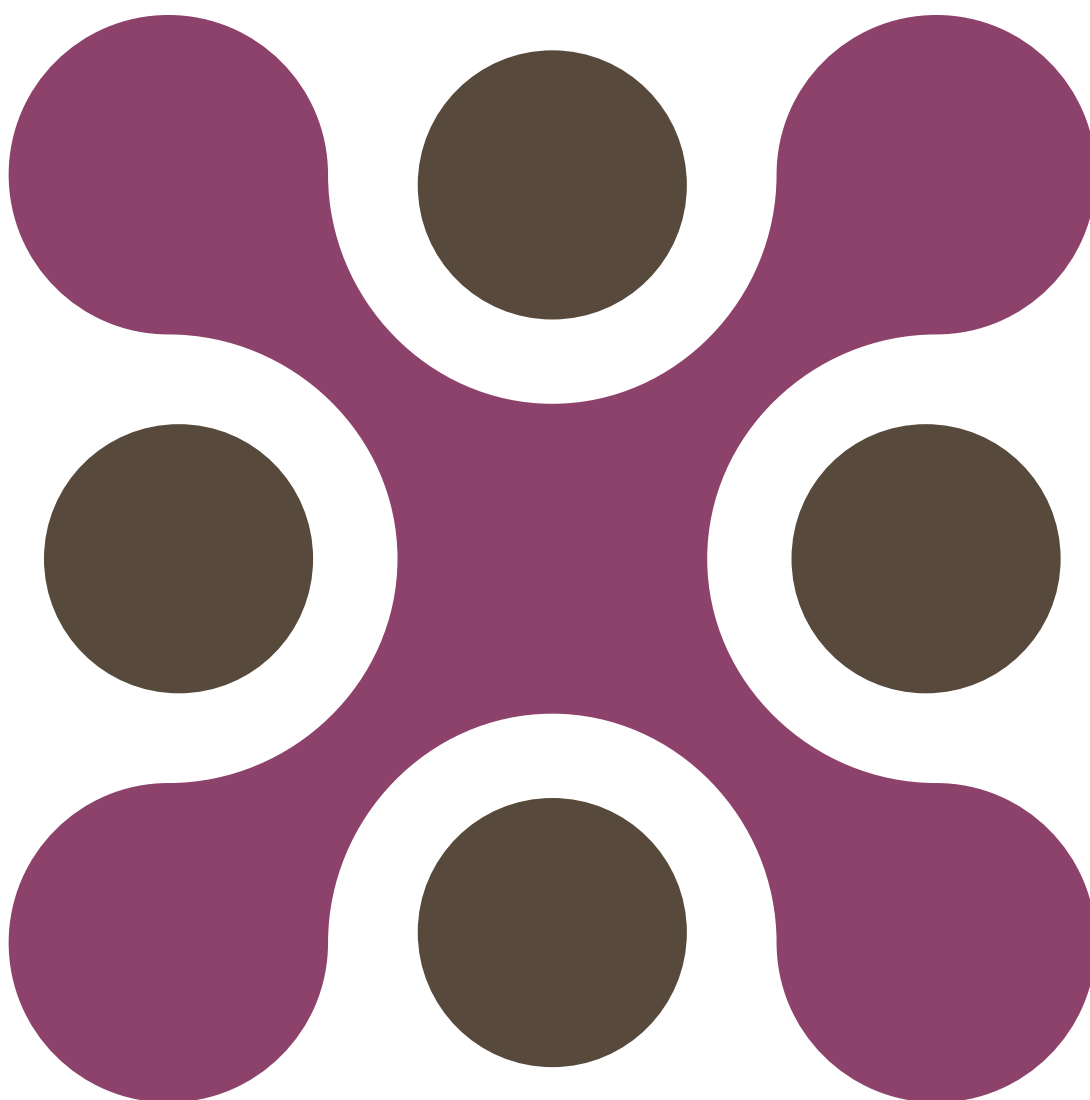


THE COLLECTIONS PLAN 2006-2009



• LINKING THE NATION'S MEMORY





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Collections Council of Australia Ltd

PO Box 263

Rundle Mall SA 5000

Australia

Tel: + 61 (8) 8207 7287

Fax: + 61 (8) 8207 7207

Email: info@collectionscouncil.com.au

Website: www.collectionscouncil.com.au

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INTRODUCING THE COLLECTIONS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA LTD

What is it?

The **Collections Council** is a national not-for-profit organisation established as a company limited by guarantee in September 2004. It was initiated, and is supported, by the federal, state and territory governments of Australia through the Cultural Ministers Council.¹ The **Collections Council** is constituted² to operate independently of government, and is not a grant making body.

Why has it been established?

The overall aim of the **Collections Council** is to advance the stability and sustainability of the collections sector throughout Australia. It has been established to provide a single voice for Australia's collections sector. It intends to build new collaborative relationships within the sector, with government, and between the sector and other areas. It plays a vital role in:

- Developing long term strategies to address issues facing collections
- Undertaking industry support, particularly through development of a profile for the sector at a national and international level

- Implementing initiatives to address cross-sectoral issues.

The Council's purpose is to assist collecting organisations achieve their potential, and to connect collections sustainably with their current and future communities.

How does it work?

The **Collections Council** has identified three broad strategies for action in the achievement of its goals and objectives. The strategies are (1) research and development, (2) networks and collaboration, and (3) communication. These strategies acknowledge the distributed nature of collections (many are located in regional and remote parts of Australia), the variety of communities that have actual or potential involvement with collections, and the resources available to the Council and its staff. The Council acknowledges the many groups and individuals that have interests in the collections sector, including its four major domains (archives, galleries, libraries and museums). The **Collections Council** is committed to working cooperatively with its stakeholders and with relevant peak bodies in other sectors.

Who's involved?

The **Collections Council** is governed by a Board of twelve Directors, with four positions filled by the Chairs of the key industry councils in the four domains. The other eight Directors are appointed either for their specialist knowledge of the collections sector, or for other important skills that they bring to the Board. The Council employs a staff of three: a Chief Executive Officer, a Development Officer and an Information Officer. Where resources permit, the Council encourages the involvement of interns and volunteers.

Where is it?

The office of the **Collections Council** is located in Adelaide and is kindly hosted by the Libraries Board of South Australia with the support of Arts SA.

What does it do?

The **Collections Council** has developed a 3-year plan for the financial years 2006-2009 that defines the broad directions for the Council's activities. The plan also defines a number of specific projects that the Council is undertaking. The plan will be reviewed annually at the conclusion of each financial year.

Values

The **Collections Council**:

- believes in the importance of collections to the Australian sense of identity and community life, to our cultural, social, environmental and economic sustainability, and to our intellectual and creative well-being;
- sees Australia's Indigenous peoples, their histories and traditions with the land as a unique component of the nation's heritage and highly significant to all Australians;
- understands that collections have the capacity to enhance all Australians' ability to enjoy, learn and be inspired;
- recognises the role of communities in the care, management, research and interpretation of their collections;
- values expertise, research and scholarship that increase access to and understanding of collections;
- respects the unique characteristics and histories of individual organisations;
- acknowledges the diversity and nationwide distribution of significant collections;

- promotes and upholds professional practices and ethical principles in the governance of organisations, and in the management and use of collections;
- encourages collaboration;
- is committed to sharing ideas and resources across the sector; and
- is a fair and equitable employer.

Mandate

The **Collections Council** speaks with one voice for collections in Australia to foster collaboration and to provide leadership to ensure the sustainability of the collections sector.

Vision

The Council's vision is for collections in Australia to be a source of knowledge, ideas, understanding, inspiration and creativity. We will work with our partners and the community to see that collections are widely accessible, clearly defined, actively connected to the communities they represent, recognised for their significance, used collaboratively, and managed for sustainability.

Purpose

The purpose of the **Collections Council** is to assist collecting organisations achieve their potential, and to connect collections sustainably with their current and future communities.

Goals

- 1 to advocate collections as a powerful means of achieving cultural, social, environmental and economic sustainability;
- 2 to develop capacity and efficiencies within the collections sector;
- 3 to develop links between the collections sector and the wider community;
- 4 to use the governments' investment in the **Collections Council** to leverage independent funding for strategic projects and initiatives.

Collections in Australia

The collections of Australia are central to the Australian sense of identity and are at the core of community life. From the long history of Australian Indigenous peoples to the recent history of migration to the country, and the emergence of electronically networked global communities, our collections represent the essence of the past, present and future memory of the country; they shape our psyche, record our diversity and development, provide insight into our national spirit, and inspire us for the future.

Australia's collections are widely distributed. They can be found in community, corporate or civic spaces; in scientific and educational organisations; and

also in the private sector. They may be brought together under different names such as archives, galleries, libraries and knowledge centres, museums, Indigenous cultural resource centres and keeping places, historical societies, visitor centres and heritage places. Collections are composed of things that may be movable, or fixed in location. These things may be real and tangible, or may exist in digital format in a virtual realm. Botanical and zoological collections may include living things.

The collections sector includes four major domains: archives, galleries, libraries, and museums. Each domain is diverse in nature, different in

structure and at a different stage of development. Each has unique issues but there are also commonalities of purpose and need associated with the collection, preservation, study and presentation of the nation's heritage. There is significant potential for collecting organisations to work collaboratively — with each other, and with their communities — to achieve better identification and access points for current and future Australians to the nation's heritage no matter where they live.

Collections and sustainability

Collections help people understand changes occurring over time in cultures, societies and the environment. Careful additions to collections will help future generations gain new perspectives on these changes. Australia's collections have been identified as 'an important national asset and a legacy for future generations'.

This praise is, however, qualified by a warning: 'they may become a future liability if we fail to collect, conserve and document with our long-term obligations and liabilities in mind.'³

The responsible care, development and use of collections by their custodians involves recognition of the main principle of sustainable development — 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.⁴

Community involvement in decision-making about matters that will affect future

generations is regarded as a powerful way of ensuring diversity and intergenerational equity, as well as currency and relevance to the changing nation state.

Hawkes argues that there are four essential pillars of sustainability: culture, society, environment and economy.⁵ Progress towards achievement of sustainability can be assessed against each of these pillars. A recent set of Australian guidelines³ for sustainability policy and practice in museums and galleries demonstrates how collecting organisations can contribute to cultural, social, environmental and economic sustainability by adhering to a number of general sustainability principles. The guidelines also make suggestions for sustainable development in areas such as collection management, decision-making and advocacy, education and role-modelling (for communities and the workforce), and in operational

fields like buildings and grounds, procurement, and the management of waste, water, energy, motor vehicles, and pollution.

The **Collections Council** has been established at a time when the concept of sustainability has been closely defined for ecology and the environment. Important to this work is the understanding that we cannot postpone action while awaiting 'full scientific certainty'⁶ that serious or irreversible damage is occurring to the environment. In the case of culture and society — two of the four pillars of sustainability — now is also the time to act in the spirit of existing definitions of sustainable development to guide us to equitable short and long term solutions that preserve social well being, cultural diversity and cultural collections.

STAKEHOLDERS

The **Collections Council** believes that all Australians, in one way or another, are stakeholders in the nation's collections.

The key stakeholders of the **Collections Council** are identified as:

Community	Individuals or groups as visitors (actual and virtual) to collections, donors to collecting organisations, students and researchers, members of special interest groups and learned societies, families, owners and custodians of significant collections.
Government	Members of the Cultural Ministers Council; elected representatives, and departmental and agency personnel, in Commonwealth, state and local jurisdictions.
Collecting organisations	People who work for collecting organisations as staff, volunteers, managers, members of governing and fundraising bodies, and the membership of friends or members groups.
Professional organisations	Subscribers to membership organisations that represent the personnel, institutions and professional interests of the collections sector e.g. Australian Library and Information Association, Australian Society of Archivists, Museums Australia, Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material, Australian Registrars Committee, etc.
Industry councils in the collections sectors	Peak bodies formed by the alliance of organisations with shared interests e.g. Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities, Council of Australasian Museum Directors, Council of Australian Art Museum Directors, National & State Libraries Australasia, Council of Australian University Libraries, Council of Heads of Australian Botanic Gardens, Council of Heads of Australian Herbaria, Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria, Regional Cultural Alliance, Federation of Australian Historical Societies, Australian Council of National Trusts etc.
Industry councils in other sectors	Peak bodies in areas of interest such as education and tourism, including regional and Indigenous cultural tourism organisations
Service providers –individuals	Independent / freelance workers in the collections sector, operating as contractors or consultants.
Service providers –institutions	Organisations that supply services to collecting organisations e.g. conservation, education, training, information and communications technology, design, display, marketing, tourism, ticketing, transport, catering, retail, curriculum development, publishing, construction, etc.
Media	People working in print media, radio, TV and the web.
Funding bodies	Public, corporate and philanthropic entities.
Collections Council of Australia Ltd	Members, Directors and staff.

STRATEGIES

The **Collections Council** has identified three broad strategies for action in the achievement of its goals and objectives.

These strategies acknowledge the distributed nature of collections (many are located in regional and remote parts of Australia), the variety of communities that have actual or potential interest in collections, and the resources available to the Council and its staff.

1 Research and development

While considerable research has been completed in the professional fields aligned with each of the four collecting domains, there is little available that draws together the whole collections sector. Information is required about the sector's needs, about emerging trends and issues, about responsibility for digitisation of information and the preservation of digital content, and about the guidelines that underpin sustainable development for the collections sector. The **Collections Council** will play an important leadership role by gathering and analysing new and existing data that can inform decision-making by stakeholders, and will assist in measuring progress towards sustainability.

2 Networks and collaboration

Physical and virtual networks offer a means for supporting and resourcing those who work with collections, for linking collections with other collections, for connecting communities of audiences and users with collections, and for stimulating collaborative projects. Physical networks facilitate personal exchanges that lead to learning and development; virtual networks such as the internet make current, consistent and timely information available. Collaboration helps to strengthen physical and virtual networks and to build connections across the collections sector and with communities. The **Collections Council** will, where resources permit, foster collaboration and assist with the establishment, development and maintenance of physical and virtual networks for the collections sector.

3 Communication

The diversity of the sector is such that it will require commitment from all three levels of government, the private sector, local communities and the organisations comprising the collections sector to ensure stability and sustainability for collections. The **Collections Council** will advocate on behalf of collections to gain this commitment. The Council will prepare submissions on issues of relevance to the sector, will disseminate and promote information concerning the sector, and will act as a forum for ideas and initiatives that bring together communities and collections.

GOAL 1

Advocate collections as a powerful means of achieving cultural, social, environmental and economic sustainability

via Research and development

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Undertake research into the ability of collections to contribute to sustainable development

Achieved by:

Exploring the relationship between collections and sustainability

Developing reporting indicators for measuring sustainability achievements in collecting sector organisations

Collaborating with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Cultural Ministers Council Statistical Working Group to improve longitudinal data collection and analysis for the collections sector

Commissioning research and developing case studies into the value of collections to communities

via Networks and collaboration

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Meet and liaise with peak sector organisations, governments, educational, professional and other relevant bodies to identify and jointly address challenges

Achieved by:

Monitoring and responding to letters, phone calls and submissions to the “Tell Us” page of the [Collections Council](#) website

Facilitating the formation of cross domain and cross sectoral problem solving groups

Linking into environmental and ecological networks to keep abreast of sustainability developments in those fields and to inform them of developments in the collections sector

GOAL 1

via Communication

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Serve as source of consolidated advice on challenges and trends in the collections sector

Achieved by:

Making **Collections Council** staff, website and reports available to stakeholders and other interested parties

Reporting on the outcomes from the Conservation Survey 2006

Serving on relevant advisory committees

Preparing reports and submissions for government enquiries, agencies and Ministerial Councils on the role of collections and the work of the **Collections Council**

Consulting to cultural and other organisations in Australia and overseas

OBJECTIVE 1.4

Promote understanding among the community, government, funding bodies and the media of challenges affecting collections and the collections sector

Achieved by:

Disseminating **Collections Council** research findings via public presentations, published reports and the **Collections Council** website

Introducing public awards to celebrate innovative and successful practices and initiatives involving collections and sustainability

Advocating the use of collections by researchers

GOAL 2

Develop capacity and efficiencies within the collections sector

via Research and development

OBJECTIVE 2.1

Develop strategies to address the issues facing the collections sector

Achieved by:

Identifying priorities and strategic issues facing the collections sector

Responding to issues that affect the collections sector, including those identified by the 2002 Key Needs Study⁷

Expanding opportunities for research within the collections sector

Developing policies on the creation of digitised content and the preservation of digital data and technologies

Identifying the conservation needs of the collections sector

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Support education, training and development as a means of achieving high standards of performance and efficiency throughout the sector

Achieved by:

Convening a summit on education and training for the collections sector

Researching the uptake and usefulness of on-line training materials for the sector

OBJECTIVE 2.3

Develop and promote guidelines and benchmarks for the care and management of collections

Achieved by:

Examining the role of standards in achieving efficiencies

Developing a guide to existing standards and guidelines in the sector, as a resource for publication on the [Collections Council](#) website

Reviewing the nature and availability of support to collecting organisations, based on a stock-take of existing programs

Advising on requirements for collections infrastructure, based on an audit of the capacity and condition of existing regional and metropolitan facilities

Compiling case studies of collaborative projects, in particular the development of cultural precincts & shared/co-located collection facilities

Partnering the publication 'Collecting Institutions Law'

Coordinating a revised edition of 'Significance: A guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections'

GOAL 2

Examining models for the effective functioning of a Regional Hubs program that will foster collaboration across the collecting domains in regional Australia, encourage integrated strategic planning for collections across the different collecting domains, and contribute to the sustainability of collections

via Networks and collaboration

OBJECTIVE 2.4

Encourage innovative practice including collaborative initiatives to develop significant and accessible collections and collecting organisations

Achieved by:

Convening roundtable meetings with selected stakeholders to examine strengths and weaknesses in their areas and to explore solutions

Encouraging the development of a Regional Hubs program to foster collaboration and strategic development

Exploring the potential of thematic studies as a framework for collaboration and the identification of significant objects and collections

Documenting and promoting case studies of innovative collaborative projects

Encouraging the development of strong digital networks

Strengthening links between Australian collecting organisations and the International Committee for the Blue Shield

via Communication

OBJECTIVE 2.5

Sponsor or otherwise contribute to programs which are necessary and desirable to further industry development.

Achieved by:

Encouraging the 'Visions of Australia' program to support applications that foster collaboration across the four major collecting domains

Participating in conferences, lectures and other industry development forums of and for the collections sector

Enhancing access to the internet by community collecting organisations

Convening an annual Summit on matters of relevance to the collections sector, according to industry needs

Promoting discussion of convergence and collaboration in the collections sector

GOAL 3

Develop links between the collections sector and the wider community

via Research and development

OBJECTIVE 3.1

Investigate and develop strategies to connect the collections sector with the wider community

Achieved by:

Identifying and characterising the wider community through market research

Researching the relationships between collections and their stakeholder communities

Developing a Communications Strategy for the **Collections Council** with respect to all stakeholders

via Networks and collaboration

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Provide nation-wide access to virtual and physical collections knowledge

Achieved by:

Providing access to collections sector knowledge in the identification, management, preservation, interpretation and presentation of community collections through collaborative projects and assessment of collections

Collaborating with existing portal websites in the collections sector in order to optimise access, interconnection and commercial opportunities

Forming strategic links with peak educational and community bodies

Working with governments, communities and the collections sector to identify and protect significant objects and collections at risk

via Communication

OBJECTIVE 3.3

Foster broad public understanding of the value, purpose and use of collections

Achieved by:

Developing, publishing and distributing materials that introduce primary school children and their teachers to Australia's collections

Promoting the use of collections as a means of life long learning

Enhancing access to and knowledge of the significance of collections and their potential to interpret distinctive themes in Australia's history

Encouraging the production of cultural maps which focus on collections

GOAL 4

Use the governments' investment in the Collections Council to leverage independent funding for strategic projects and initiatives

OBJECTIVE 4.1

Deliver value for the investment made by the Cultural Ministers Council

Achieved by:

Providing organisational infrastructure to enable delivery of independently-funded projects and initiatives.

Providing reports for the Cultural Ministers Council

Managing the company's finances soundly and in accordance with the terms of relevant funding agreements

Involving volunteers and interns in the work of the Collections Council

OBJECTIVE 4.2

Obtain independent funding for selected Collections Council's projects

Achieved by:

Gaining recognition as a Deductible Gift Recipient

Identifying strategic projects suitable for private sector funding, and seeking sponsorship or philanthropic funding

Winning financial support from relevant funding sources

Undertaking consultancies relating to collections and sustainability

Examining commercial opportunities

OBJECTIVE 4.3

Retain the confidence of funding bodies in the management of the Collections Council's operations

Achieved by:

Meeting effectively all requirements for the governance of the Collections Council

Meeting efficiently all legal, regulatory and reporting obligations

Further developing a highly-skilled, motivated and professional team of staff members

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