



## QUEANBEYAN AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL MUSEUM COLLECTION POLICY

### OBJECTIVE

The Queanbeyan & District Historical Museum Society (QDHMS) will acquire, conserve, research, display and actively interpret the region's environmental, technical and cultural material, thereby enhancing the knowledge of and respect for our surroundings. The QDHMS will undertake scholarly research into its collection and energetically disseminate resultant information for the benefit of the community. A high standard of service to the public, scholarship, and management of the collection is paramount to this objective.

The Museum's collection is a result of a collection of disparate objects collected from the town and district in the early 1970s. Since then, the greatest increase in items has been through individual donation or long term loan. The greatest strengths within this collection are the personal effects of early settlers, a large holding of personal photographs, a large holding of district photographs and ephemera relating district events, significant pieces of domestic technology, significant collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century clothing and hand tools. Almost all of this material has local provenance or use.

Regrettably there is no accurate or continuous acquisition register of any of the collection. From 1970 QDHMS acquired a huge variety of material for the collection. The haste to establish the collection is apparent with some of this material being in poor condition of questionable historical value and in a many cases there is no provenance.

There does not seem to have ever been an acquisition policy, resulting in an ad hoc method of accepting items as gifts or loans with no finite borrowing period. The condition of the item gained does not seem to have been considered.

### POLICY STRUCTURE

This policy is based upon the commitment to collect material for both exhibition and research. The QDHMS is interested in objects that have both display and research potential and will seek to establish a collection that contains levels of information relevant to the researcher and casual museum visitor alike.

- i. The collection of the QDHMS will be representative and thematic. Where original objects are unobtainable for exhibitions, replicas, models, photographs or other graphic components may be considered as acceptable alternatives. Conversely, an artefact will not be considered valuable or useful simply because of its age.

- ii. Care will be taken to avoid thematic duplication which other local museums. Thus, institutions such as the Queanbeyan Print Museum and the Queanbeyan Sporting Hall of Fame will not find their subject area threatened by the QDHMS. Nonetheless, the regional focus of the QDHMS must be maintained which may, inevitably, lead to some thematic overlap with the major museums in the ACT. However, any such overlap will be balanced by a QDHMS's focus on its locality.
- iii. Care will, likewise, be taken to avoid duplicating material gathered by the Local History Section of the Queanbeyan City Library.
- iv. In determining the collection policy, the main concern must be to translate the QDHMS's guiding concepts into objects consciously selected for their capacity to build up a composite picture of essential themes.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

Objects will be considered for collection only when they adequately satisfy at least one of the following criterion;

- i. *Documentation*: Every object acquired for the collection must be supported by clear documentation that may, in part, define its historical significance or association. Verbal information provided by the donor detailing the origin of the object, how and who used it plus a chronological profile of its subsequent history is suitable but should be independently confirmed. Written and published information is preferable.
- ii. *Physical character*: Every acquired object must be complete to the extent that an observer could visualise a past custom or activity with which the object was associated. It is imperative that the condition of the acquired object be rated as good to excellent as items of poor condition will only be an expensive burden on the QDHMS in the future and are, consequently, of dubious historical integrity.
- iii. *Historic association*: Objects will be sought that have a proven association with a known individual, some event, or period in the history of the Queanbeyan District that is considered by the QDHMS as significant.
- iv. *Educational value*: The object must contain information or be associated with information that raises an understanding of an aspect or aspects of the history of the region.
- v. *Rarity*: The QDHMS is interested in rare or uncommon objects that relate to the region along defined lines. For example a rare object that fulfils the criterion relating to regional significance will be collected in preference to a more common item. This does not necessarily mean that the QDHMS is not interested in abundant objects.
- vi. *Representability*: The QDHMS is also interested in acquiring individual pieces as representatives of a range of objects that demonstrate principal characteristics of a range of human activities relevant to the region's past or present.
- vii. *Aesthetic value*: The QDHMS is interested in objects that demonstrate an aesthetic quality that is valued by the community or cultural group.

- viii. *Social value:* The QDHMS is interested in collecting objects that are valued by the community for their religious, cultural, spiritual, educational or social associations.
- ix. *Technological/creative value:* The QDHMS is interested in collecting objects that demonstrate a degree of technical or creative achievement for their time and that were developed within the region.
- x. *Objects will not be collected because they are old, strange, unusual or have doubtful associations or promote nostalgic or sentimental responses.*
- xi. *Objects will be collected by donation or purchase.* There will be no long-term or "permanent" loans. Short and medium-term loans will be accepted from time to time but only in association with specific temporary exhibitions.
- xii. *The QDHMS will only receive donations upon receipt of a deed of gift* (Donation Agreement Form) signed by the donor or donor's agent in the presence of a witness. The form will be legally binding and the donor will forfeit all right and title of the item so given to the QDHMS.
- xiii. *Objects collected will include both historic and contemporary materials.* The QDHMS will collect objects that are three-dimensional but will also gather some paper based records such as diaries, photographs and certificates as support material to collected objects.
- xiv. *The collection of data relevant to the defined themes is considered relevant by the QDHMS.*

## PARENT THEMES

As well as adopting specific themes within Queanbeyan's history for collection and interpretation it is vital that certain other issues are represented within these themes. Hence, "parent" or interlocking themes will be introduced to act as welding devices interfusing and unifying this broad collection. Issues contained within the parent themes span Queanbeyan society at all levels and therefore would be marginalised by allocation to one time or activity. Topics that fall under this category include;

- i. *Migration and Settlement:* Queanbeyan and District is a microcosm of Australia's cultural diversity. Since the first Anglo-Celtic immigrants arrived in Queanbeyan over 175 years ago years ago peoples with widely differing cultural backgrounds have been establishing homes, raising families and finding work in the district. The periods immediately after World War II and after the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme was completed are of great significance. It is the intention of the QDHMS to reflect, in its collection, these influences and changes where possible
- ii. *Women:* women especially in the spheres of health, education, retail, sport and politics have extensively influenced Queanbeyan. Women's traditional contribution as homemakers will also be emphasised with the different eras and with an emphasis on the development of domestic technology.
- iii. *Aborigines:* The Aboriginal language groups who once populated the Queanbeyan district have experienced immediate and severe cultural disintegration since the arrival

of white people. The collection will aim to document their downfall from an independent society, through their stages of increasing dependence on the dominant culture. Every effort will be made to document the recent burgeoning self-pride and renewed identity in modern, local Koori society.

- iv. *Environmental Issues:* The impact of people and industry on the natural environment has been profound. For example, natural flow of the river, its subsidiary creeks and swamplands have been dramatically altered. The current environmental dilemmas of waste disposal, air and water pollution and the effect of chemical fertilisers are some of the greatest challenges facing the community today. The collection, where possible, will be developed to reflect these changes to the natural environment as well as its current threats.

## SPECIFIC THEMES

The primary themes around which the collection will develop are as follows:

- i. *Farming:* Farming was the *raison d'être* for white settlement in Queanbeyan in the early 1820s and was the dominant subsequent influence until the building of Canberra. The nation's Capital has had a profound effect on the development of Queanbeyan both socially and economically, with rises and falls in wealth that isn't determined by the farming community. The collection will reflect the individuals that owned the large properties; the individual owners of smaller holdings and those employed by farmers. It will reflect the business community in the town that depended upon the farming community.
- ii. *The building of Canberra and development as a white collar town.* Queanbeyan has played a huge part in the building of Canberra from the beginning. Areas to be explored:
- the large multicultural society that brought new skills to the building trade
  - this society's preference to live where they could own their land rather than have a 99 year lease, and Queanbeyan Council's response to this influx
  - the effect of forcing public servants to live in Canberra by refusing them the Commonwealth allowance if they lived elsewhere, and the effect this had on Queanbeyan
  - the gradual re-emergence of Queanbeyan as country town with its own identity
- iii. *War:* The proximity to Queanbeyan to the Army, Navy and Airforce bases made it the natural home from home for servicemen, both Australian and Allies. The financial benefits to the town were great. Society changed to accept the absence of the town's young men, but make welcome the service folk from elsewhere.
- iii. *The Natural Environment:* While the QDHMS cannot collect definitively in all these areas it does intend to feature the environmental framework of the region in its displays and will therefore only accept donations of accurately provenanced complete and entire collections of local floral or faunal specimens.
- v. *White contact.* The Ngunnawal people of this area were a relatively small tribal group. From the time white people arrived in the area they were to become

completely subjugated, cut from their land and left to re-adapt to the dominant system. This led to their numbers diminishing at an alarming rate and the likelihood of building a detailed collection from this period is improbable but the objective must be maintained

- vi. *Rituals and belief in Queanbeyan and District:* The Queanbeyan area has an apparent predominance of church related and vocationally oriented groups and societies. Many of these are functioning albeit with changed objectives and emphases. These groups have championed moral virtue and sober living thus providing a unique window into attitudes and social values now changed. Moreover, the study of this area provides a potential welter of objects to give both collection and display a rich material base.

## CONCLUSION

Through the implementation of this policy and in conjunction with scholarly research, the QDHMS collection will become a homogeneous group of objects accurately reflecting a past (and present) of the Queanbeyan District. Through its judicious display and research the collection will combine to inform both our District audience and visitors from further afield about this past. It is an ever present objective to place the distinctive features of the region into context with the experience of the rest of Australia, thus enabling the QDHMS to accurately define selected aspects of the natural history, science and technology, and social history of our region.