

Maitland Regional Art Gallery

Acquisition and Collection Management Policy

Date Adopted: 17 June 2025

Version: 1.0

Policy Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the development and management of the Maitland Regional Art Gallery (MRAG) Collection.

Policy objectives include:

1. Ensuring guidelines by which all acquisitions for the collection (including purchases, donations and commissions) and all deaccessions are managed with probity and good governance at all stages and in accordance with Council policies, procedures and systems.
2. Ensuring organisational excellence in art museum collection management in accordance with national standards for Australian Museums and Galleries.
3. To support the objectives of Maitland's Community Strategic Plan (Liveable Maitland - Welcoming communities) by developing a collection of artworks that enhance community connections and celebrate diverse communities.
4. To support the objectives of Maitland's Community Strategic Plan (Achieving Together - Trusted Services), through transparent decision-making processes and informed planning to manage and develop the gallery collection sustainably, making sound financial decisions aligned with Maitland's risk management framework.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to the artworks and objects within the MRAG Collection and the management and development of the MRAG Collection by Maitland Regional Art Gallery.

Policy Statement

This policy documents the process for delivery of Gallery services related to the development and management of the MRAG Collection. It aligns with MRAG's vision and mission, the Maitland Community Strategic Plan and international standards of ethical and responsible stewardship of museum collections.

1. Acquisitions

1.1 Collection principles

Through the acquisition of new artworks, Maitland Regional Art Gallery will continue to develop a significant and meaningful collection that enhances the gallery's exhibitions, programs and stories for the Maitland community and gallery visitors now and into the future. MRAG's Collecting principles are aligned with the two key principles outlined in the National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries:

- a) The collection represents the significant stories and interests of its diverse and changing communities
- b) MRAG preserves its significant collection for future generations.

The gallery acquires significant artworks through purchase, commission, donation or bequest.

Considerations for acquisitions are guided by the MRAG Acquisition and Collection Management Policy, [International Council of Museums \(ICOM\) Code of Ethics](#), Museums Australia Code of Ethics, the [Australian Government's Australian Best Practice Guide to Collecting Cultural Material](#), [The National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries](#), and the [Australia Council for the Arts Protocols for using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts](#).

1.2 Criteria for Acquisition

Works of art are considered for the MRAG collection assessed against the following criteria:

- Artworks with high aesthetic, historic, cultural, social and/or national significance.
- Artworks that represent a high standard of artistic achievement within contemporary Australian art practice.
- Significant artworks with a relationship or connection to Maitland.
- Significant artworks by artists who have a relationship or connection to Maitland.
- Artworks that enhance the stature and relevance of the existing collection.
- Artworks in excellent/exhibition ready condition (or, if conservation required, consideration is given for the significance and financial value of artwork in relation to conservation costs).
- Artworks that can be stored, handled, displayed and cared for safely and securely within current resources.
- Artworks with a clear provenance and the validity of legal ownership is not in question and can be transferred to MRAG.
- Artworks that are not considered secret or sacred by Indigenous peoples and is not the subject of religious or cultural sanctions.

1.3 Process

- Proposed acquisitions are evaluated by the internal MRAG Acquisition Reference Group which is a curatorium comprised of the Gallery Director, Gallery Collections Lead, Deputy Director and Senior Curator. Proposed works are assessed against Criteria for Acquisition in this policy.
- All artworks approved to be acquired into the MRAG Collection are accessioned into the MRAG Collection and catalogued as per industry recognised processes.
- All artwork details, related documentation and activities are recorded and managed in the Collection Management System (CMS) VERNON CMS.
- Funding for the direct acquisition of artworks into the collection resides the capital expenditure program of Maitland City Council.
- Works proposed for donated into the collection through bequest, unencumbered donation or through the Commonwealth Cultural Gifts Program, are subject to the same acquisitions process above.

2. Deaccessioning

Deaccessioning is the process of permanently removing an artwork (or related material) from a collection. The aim of deaccessioning is to enable the Gallery to maintain a collection of the highest possible quality and the greatest relevance to the Collection Policy through the sensitive removal of artworks.

2.1. Criteria for Deaccession

When determining whether to deaccession an artwork from the MRAG Collection the following criteria are considered:

- The work no longer meets the current MRAG Acquisition and Collection Policy and criteria for acquisition.
- The significance and/or aesthetic merit is below the general level of the collection.
- The condition of the work is poor, or has deteriorated to an extent, that it is no longer able to be exhibited, is unable to be restored, or the cost of restoration outweighs its value to the collection.
- The work can no longer be suitably stored.
- The ongoing costs for the care, management and storage of the work is not viable (in relation to its cultural value).
- The work's creator is not identified or incorrectly attributed.
- The work has no provenance information, or there is no provenance documentation available.
- The Gallery does not have clear legal title to the ownership of the work.
- The work is a duplicate of another artwork in the collection.
- The possession of the work is not consistent with legal and/or ethical principles outlined in the National standards for Australian Museums and Galleries.
- The work is an object of significance to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community or Indigenous community in another country and should be returned.
- The work presents a risk to people, the gallery building or other collection items.

2.2. Process for Deaccessioning

- Proposed deaccessions are evaluated by the MRAG Acquisition Reference Group, coordinated by the Gallery Collections Lead, and are assessed against Criteria for deaccession in this policy.
- All deaccessions are subject to risk assessment and treatment and tabled with the Director, City Services.
- All deaccessions are managed as per industry recognised processes with risk controls in place. All deaccessions will adhere to International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics and Museums Australia Code of Ethics and may include:
 - a) Transfer of the item to another public collection
 - b) If in agreement, returning the item to the donor (with exception of works donated through the Commonwealth Cultural Gifts Program).
 - c) Sale of the work at public auction or by tender guided by transparent process whereby no Maitland City Council or MRAG officers are permitted to engage in the purchase.
 - d) Consideration to destroy a deaccessioned work will only be taken in the circumstance where a work of art is damaged beyond repair following a formal evaluation process and advice from a conservation specialist. These recommendations are then approved/declined based on written approval from the artist or artist's estate (if known) and approved/declined through the MRAG Acquisition Reference Group and written approval from the artist if living, or estate of the artist if known.
- Funds received from the deaccessioning and disposal of collection material must be used for the benefit of the gallery's collection, including collection care, storage and management.
- All deaccession details, related documentation and activities are recorded and managed in the Collection Management System (CMS) VERNON CMS.

Policy Definitions

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| MRAG | Maitland Regional Art Gallery |
| MRAG Collection | All items formally accessioned into the Maitland Regional Art Gallery Collection. |
| Accessioning | The process which formally acknowledges an item as part of the collection. |
| Artwork Commission | A formal process through which an artist is engaged to create a work of art. |
| Provenance | The provenance of an artwork tells us the history of the work's ownership from the time the work is created to when it is acquired by the gallery. Provenance is used to help confirm legal ownership of a work of art. |
| Deaccessioning | The formal process of the removal of an artwork from the collection. |
| Curatorium | A curatorium is a collaborative body that guides the curatorial vision and activities of a museum, rather than relying on a single curatorial voice. |
| MRAG Acquisition Reference Group | Reviews and approves, or declines, proposed acquisitions and deaccessions. |

Policy Administration

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| Business Group: | City Services |
| Responsible Officer: | Gallery Director |
| Council Reference: | Ordinary Council Meeting 17 June 2025 – Item 12.1 |
| Policy Review Date: | Three (3) years from date of adoption |
| File Number: | 35/1 |
| Relevant Legislation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) Copyright Amendment Act 2000 |
| Related Documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maitland Regional Art Gallery Business Plan Maitland City Council Community Strategic Plan International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics Museums Australia Code of Ethics Australian Best Practice Guide to Collecting Cultural Material 2015 The National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries The Australia Council for the Arts Protocols for using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program Guidelines |

Policy History

| VERSION | DATE APPROVED | DESCRIPTION OF CHANGES |
|---------|---------------|------------------------|
| 1.0 | 17 June 2025 | New policy adopted |
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