MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY
AT OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Collection Development Policy 2026–2030

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1. Introduction

Old Parliament House (OPH) was opened in 1927 and housed Australia's Federal Parliament until 1988. In 2004 OPH was entered in the Commonwealth Heritage List, and in 2006 it was entered in the National Heritage List for its outstanding national significance and value.

The heritage values of OPH are managed under the *Old Parliament House Heritage Strategy* and *Old Parliament House and Curtilage Heritage Management Plan* (OPH HMP). The two heritage documents are legislative requirements and meet MoAD's obligations under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (*EPBC Act*).

The Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) at Old Parliament House was officially opened on 9 May 2009. In 2016 OPH was established as a corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (PGPA) (establishing OPH) Rule 2016* (OPH Rule). Section 9 of the Rule sets out OPH's functions, which include:

- 9(a) 'to conserve, develop and present the Old Parliament House building and collections'; and
- 9(b) 'to provide public programs and research activities related to Australia's social and parliamentary history'.

MoAD is therefore charged with the following key responsibilities:

- to protect, conserve and interpret our heritage building, Old Parliament House, to highlight the crucial role the building and associated people, stories and objects have played in shaping today's Australia;
- to share the story of Australia's democracy through exhibitions, programs, publications and other content to explore the nation's social and political history; and
- to enable audiences to actively explore how Australia's democratic systems work and to be inspired and equipped to participate as engaged citizens in our democracy.

2. Scope

This *Collection Development Policy* describes the rationale, collecting principles and structure of MoAD's Collection in fulfilment of the OPH Rule and key responsibilities. It defines the themes and priorities for acquisition and review and applies to all MoAD collection development processes in relation to the Moveable Heritage Collection, Democracy Collection and Learning and Interpretation Collection.

3. Purpose

This policy establishes the guidelines by which MoAD develops its collections in accordance with the OPH Rule and the *EPBC Act*. It also gives effect to the goals and objectives of MoAD's Strategic Plan.

4. Our Collection

4.1 Rationale

MoAD is connected to and located within the historical heart of Australia's federal government, on the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal, Ngunawal and Ngambri peoples. MoAD is tasked with documenting and interpreting Australian social and political history in a place where much of that history was made.

Central to our responsibilities is our Collection. It is comprised of the building, Old Parliament House, and other objects that are acquired, cared for and sometimes displayed in broad fulfilment of the museum's purpose and strategic goals. These strategic goals are:

- bringing alive the significance of democracy to the lives of Australians;
- conserving and interpreting the heritage values of the building; and
- providing relevant interpretive opportunities to learning and public programs.

MoAD's Collection captures the ideas, functions, movements, individuals and events of Australian democracy. We conserve the building and objects from the past and from contemporary times with an informed view of their historical significance with the aim to document, research, interpret and make accessible stories that enhance public understanding and involvement in the life of our nation. These objects – including the building – are kept in perpetuity on behalf of the Australian people.

4.2 Collection statement of significance

The OPH Rule sets out the functions of Old Parliament House (OPH). One function is 'to conserve, develop and present the OPH building and collections'. In fulfilment of this function, MoAD has developed a collection of national, regional and local significance.

The most prominent object in MoAD's Collection is OPH itself, the home of Australia's federal parliament from 1927 to 1988. The building provides both a physical and intangible connection with the tradition of parliamentary democracy in Australia. It is representative of Australia's parliamentary political process and has been a focus for events and decisions that have influenced the development of the democratic values, rights and obligations that have shaped the nation. The building's pivotal role in Australia's social and political history means it possesses outstanding heritage values related to its history, design, location, social values, associations and collection of moveable objects. More information about the significance of the building can be found in the OPH HMP.

MoAD's Collection features myriad other objects that document, illustrate and preserve the ideas, movements, events, personalities and processes that shape Australian politics, society and ways of life. Many collection items offer opportunities to explore and interpret a wide range of topics, such as the diverse contributions made to the development of Australian democracy by governments, prime ministers and other parliamentary representatives, political parties and movements, journalists and lobbyists, and the people of the broader Australian community. Overall, MoAD's Collection explores the spirit of democracy in a place where democracy was enacted in this nation.

4.3 Core collecting areas and priorities

MoAD's Collection is divided into three core sub-collections: Moveable Heritage; Democracy; and Interpretation and Learning collections. These three sub-collections are further organised into five collecting categories, detailed in section 5 below.

MoAD's collecting activities entail the acquisition of objects that fulfil our long-term commitment to documenting Australian stories of democracy, plus objects required for core and upcoming temporary exhibitions and other projects. The objects collected for shorter-term requirements must nevertheless satisfy the requirements of our core themes and categories.

A separate document, the *Collection Development Priorities 2026-2030*, provides more detail about the current scope and priorities. It is periodically reviewed to ensure that we collect today the objects that will be important for telling Australia's histories in the future.

4.4 Sub-collections

4.4.1 Moveable Heritage Collection

This collection comprises all the objects that have a direct association with the physical entity, OPH. These include the furniture and fittings that were designed for and used in the building, documents including plans, photographs and files that are directly related to the design, construction, use, and alteration of the Chambers and King's Hall, and other moveable heritage items that were used during the life of the place as a working parliament between 1927 and 1988. This collection forms part of the National Heritage and Commonwealth Heritage List entries for the place and is subject to the heritage provisions of the *EPBC Act*. The collection is managed in accordance with the *Heritage Strategy* and the *OPH Heritage Management Plan* and is developed using the principles established under this policy.

4.4.2 Democracy Collection

This collection of objects aligns with the purpose of OPH as a place to explore and communicate the ideas and stories around democracy, government and governance in Australia. The collection is subject to handling, care and display standards in accordance with world's best museum practice.

4.4.3 Interpretation and Learning Collection

This collection is a group of reproduction and facsimile objects and learning and display props. As with the Democracy Collection, the Interpretation and Learning Collection aligns with the purpose of OPH as a place to explore and communicate the ideas and stories around democracy, government and governance in Australia. Although this collection is an important resource, these objects do not require a high level of care and there are fewer restrictions on how they can be used to engage museum visitors; for example, through room interpretations or Learning team activities.

5. Collecting Categories

All new potential acquisitions are assessed according to five categories that assist in determining an object's significance in the national story. These five categories are:

- Category 1 – Development of democracy and the systems of Australia's federal government
- Category 2 – Prime Ministers
- Category 3 – Political influencers and movements
- Category 4 – Parliament House 1923–1988
- Category 5 – Old Parliament House 1988 to the present

5.1 Category 1 – Development of democracy and the systems of Australia's federal government

This category of objects explores the ideas of democracy, places Australia's democracy in a global context and reveals the workings of Australia's federal government.

This category documents and interprets:

- the history and practices of democratic ideas with a direct link to Australia's democracy;
- key moments in the history of Australia's democracy;
- the institutions and processes of Australia's federal government and governance; and
- responses to the institutions and practices of Australia's federal government and governance.

This category covers a wide range of topics and periods of time. Although its primary focus is on federal government and governance, a limited number of objects pertaining to the three tiers of government, including State/Territory and local government, may be acquired if the object is associated with an event or issue of national significance.

The category includes collections relating to, for example, First Nations Australians' exclusion from and inclusion in democratic rights and process; governors-general; the first federal election in 1901; the 1967 Constitutional referendum; the 1998 Constitutional Convention on the Republic; 20th and 21st century electoral material; political cartoons; and women parliamentarians including former Senators Dorothy Tangney, Jocelyn Newman and Christine Milne. Significant objects in this category include a broadside informing non-Indigenous Australians of compulsory voter registration; the ceremonial civil uniform worn by Sir Edmund Barton as a Privy Councillor; 'Kookie', a toy koala gifted to the 100,000th British post-war migrant, Isobel Saxelby; objects associated with the work of wartime government censor Tom Hoey; and a judicial wig worn by both Herbert 'Doc' Evatt and Family Court judge Dr Rodney Purvis AM QC.

5.2 Category 2 – Prime Ministers

This category features objects that document the lives and careers of Australia's prime ministers. It includes objects:

- once owned by or created by Australia's prime ministers;
- associated with the lives and careers of Australia's prime ministers; and
- created in response to Australia's prime ministers.

The development of the collection in this category complements existing collections at other museums relating to individual Australian prime ministers. MoAD's collection includes material

relating to Robert Menzies, Edmund Barton, Joseph Lyons, Earle Page, John McEwen, Bob Hawke, John Howard, Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott. Objects in Category 2 include a COVID-19 vaccine vial used in the vaccination of Prime Minister Scott Morrison in 2021; Joseph Cook's diplomatic passport and ticket to the Peace Conference at Versailles; Bryan Westwood's Archibald Prize-winning portrait of Paul Keating; Tony Abbott's bicycle; a copy of the *Clean Energy Bill 2011* signed by Julia Gillard; and a portrait by William Dargie of Robert Menzies wearing his Order of the Thistle regalia. The collection also holds numerous satirical depictions and other creative responses to Australian prime ministers.

5.3 Category 3 – Political influencers and movements

This category documents the impacts of influential individuals, organisations and political movements in Australia's democratic history. It includes material culture encompassing the purpose, activities and impacts of:

- political parties with a national presence or influence;
- leaders of political parties and movements;
- influential parliamentarians;
- key individuals and organisations associated with significant political movements;
- counter-movements or responses to political movements;
- prominent political commentators, journalists, lobbyists and well-known influencers; and
- grassroots activist and community groups.

This category features a strong collection of 20th and 21st century feminist, environmental and First Nations protest material as well as objects relating to influential parliamentarians including Neville Bonner, Arthur Calwell, Sir James Killen, Tim Fischer, Natasha Stott Despoja and Doug Anthony. Significant objects in Category 3 include a boomerang-shaped petition in support of Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians; a souvenir of a 1908 women's suffrage march in London collected by Australian suffragist Maybanke Anderson; placards from the School Strike 4 Climate movement; a pair of red satin shoes worn by Julie Bishop at her final conference as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade; a tie worn by ABC journalist and psephologist Antony Green; a rainbow flag signed by the eight senators who co-sponsored the legislation that legalised same-sex marriage; a typewriter associated with the career of journalist Laurie Oakes; an ABC press pass and contact book of journalist Heather Ewart; and campaign material from community groups in the 2023 Voice to Parliament referendum.

5.4 Category 4 – Parliament House 1923–1988

This category documents the design, construction, iconography and history of OPH to highlight the crucial role the building, its functions and occupants have played in shaping modern Australia. The category includes mostly material culture encompassing:

- the construction, official opening and physical changes to the building, architectural designs, features and fittings;
- furniture and items used in the building; and
- objects and stories (including oral histories) associated with the people employed in the building and their duties during the life of the place as a working parliament.

OPH is the largest and most significant object in this category, together with the extensive and significant collection of bespoke furniture and fittings that have remained in the building for which they were designed. Other objects in Category 4 include the Speaker's Chair in the House of Representatives Chamber and the President's Chair in the Senate Chamber, both international gifts presented to Australia to mark the opening of Parliament House. This category additionally features a substantial collection of telephonic equipment from OPH donated by former in-house Telecom technician Neil Baker. Smaller but no less significant objects include the dress of six-year-old Heather McMurtrie, who witnessed the opening of Provisional Parliament House in 1927; a typewriter and books used by Parliamentary Press Gallery journalist Warren Denning; and a pantograph machine used for signwriting by painter and foreman Pasquale Gagliardi. Oral histories of people who worked in the building, either as members of parliament or support staff, also form a substantial collection in Category 4.

5.5. Category 5 – Old Parliament House 1988 to the present

This very selective category includes objects and archival materials associated with the building post-1988. This encompasses people's continued engagement with this place, such as visiting it as a venue for the National Museum of Australia (NMA), and the National Portrait Gallery. This collection includes materials that speak to:

- the social significance imbued in the place; and
- significant events held at OPH from 1988 to the present.

Objects in this collection include two W J Mildenhall prints of Parliament House signed by former prime ministers John Gorton and Gough Whitlam to mark the reopening of the building to the public in December 1992. Another object is a poster promoting the NMA's travelling exhibition 'Women with Attitude', which was held at OPH in 1995 with the support of the Office of the Status of Women and other agencies and documents the use of OPH as a place of national cultural significance.

6. Collecting Criteria

Collecting at MoAD is directed by the museum's rationale and strategic goals, outlined in section 4.1 above. New acquisitions are assessed for acceptance into the Collection with a view to how they:

- relate to the Collection statement of significance and the five collecting areas outlined in section 5 of this Policy;
- relate to content areas nominated as collection development priorities; and
- will assist in making a lasting contribution to understanding and interpreting the ideas, movements, individuals and events of Australian democracy.

Individual objects and collections are also assessed, and decisions made, in adherence to the assessment principles, process and criteria outlined in *Significance 2.0*, a guide developed by the Collections Council of Australia and endorsed by the Office for the Arts.

- *Significance* – When assessing significance, the object or collection is considered in terms of its historic, artistic or aesthetic, scientific or research potential, and/or social, community or spiritual meaning, value and importance.

Objects and collections may hold different meanings and values for different groups and individuals. The significance assessment process may entail consultation with these stakeholders so that multiple meanings and values, where they exist, are documented and recognised in the assessment.

The degree of significance of an object or collection is evaluated using the following comparative criteria:

- *Provenance* – The origin and/or subsequent life story of the object or collection and its chain of ownership is thoroughly documented and authenticated to the highest standards as outlined in sector charters and guidelines, and consistent with ethical and legal requirements. The Museum does not acquire material reasonably suspected to have been looted or stolen.
- *Originality, rarity or representativeness* – The object or collection is unique or relatively rare, a fine example of its type, or not well represented in MoAD's collection, or in other museum collections.
- *Condition or completeness* – The object or collection is intact and in good or original (unrestored) condition for its type; alternatively, its significance, rarity or research value justify the resources potentially required to restore or maintain it. The object or collection (including born-digital material) is suitable for long-term storage, preservation and access, and possible display, with appropriate and sustainable resource outlay and consideration of whole-of-life costs.
- *Research value* – The object or collection has potential to hold evidence of what existed in the past, to add to associated stories, or to be used in comparison with other similar objects or collections.
- *Display and interpretive capacity* – The object or collection has a high potential to communicate meaning or add to the presentation of ideas and stories consistent with MoAD's vision, goals, collection priorities and exhibition and other programs.

7. Collection Development Approaches

MoAD takes a representative and selective approach to developing the collection and actively engages with communities to target specific collection needs. MoAD's Collection is developed through:

- *Donation or bequest* – MoAD receives offers from the public of objects or collections for donation. Very occasionally, the museum receives donation offers made under the Cultural Gifts Program, which offers tax incentives to encourage people to donate items of cultural significance to public gallery, library and museum sector agencies.
- *Purchase* – MoAD purchases objects at auction; through commercial vendors; by agreement with private vendors; and by commissioning the creation of objects including replicas for the purpose of display. Purchased objects are assessed to ensure acquisitions meet the collecting priorities outlined in this document.

- *Deaccessioning* – MoAD selectively deaccessions and disposes of collection objects if reasons to do so are justified. These reasons include objects that do not fall within MoAD's collection parameters; duplicate objects; and objects that are very damaged or degraded or are in such a condition that the cost of their preservation is disproportionate to their significance. Deaccessioning is a considered and deliberative process to refine the collection and is guided by MoAD's Collecting Principles and Collecting Categories outlined in this document, the Collection Management Procedures, and the OPH Heritage Strategy and HMP.

8. Collecting ethics

MoAD's collection development is governed in accordance with the OPH Rule, MoAD's *Strategic Plan*, the Old Parliament House Heritage Strategy, and the OPH HMP. The two heritage documents are legislative requirements under the *EPBC Act*.

MoAD staff abide by the codes of ethics of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) and Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) regarding collecting practices and procedures. MoAD will only acquire objects in accordance with relevant legislation such as the *EPBC Act* and the *Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage Act 1986.*

When acquiring First Nations objects MoAD staff will consult and collaborate with relevant traditional owners or the traditional owners' authorised representatives where appropriate.

MoAD also recognises and meaningfully engages with the principles of the:

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), of which Australia has been a signatory since 2009;
- Australian Government's National Cultural Policy *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*;
- *Protocols for using First Nations cultural and intellectual property in the Arts* by Dr Terri Janke and Company for Creative Australia (2019)
- *First Peoples: A roadmap for enhancing Indigenous engagement in museums and galleries* by Dr Terri Janke and Company for AMaGA (2018);
- *Australian Best Practice Guide to Collecting Cultural Material* (2015) from the Australian Government Office for the Arts; and
- *Ethics and Provenance* statement from the Council of Australasian Museum Directors (2014).

MoAD respects the moral rights of the creators of works acquired for the collections by ensuring the integrity of use and proper attribution of those works.

9. Governance

Objects in MoAD's *Heritage Collection* and the *Democracy Collection* are deemed irreplaceable and are displayed and handled according to the highest standards of museum care. The OPH Heritage Strategy and HMP specifies the high-level policy context for managing the collection. The Collection Management Procedures provide the detailed guidelines and processes for every aspect of the care

of the collections. Additions to the collection are subject to the scrutiny and procedures of the Acquisitions Committee according to its terms of reference. The Committee delegate is the Director of MoAD.

10. Evaluation and Review

The Collection Development Policy is implemented in accordance with MoAD's collection development priorities. Acquisitions are reported against the collecting areas, and an assessment made to determine their contribution to the collection vision and statement of significance consistent with the MoAD Strategic Plan. The Collection Development Policy will be reviewed in 2030.