**The Sutherland Shire Museum Collection Policy**

Revised September 2021

**Contents**

1. Statement of purpose
2. History of The Sutherland Shire Museum and its Collections
3. Collection Aim
4. Acquisitions
5. Cataloguing and Registering Collection Items
6. De-accessioning
7. **Statement of purpose or mission**

In broad terms the Sutherland Shire Historical Society, through its various activities is a vehicle through which historical, social, cultural and economic activities of the Sutherland Shire can be gathered, researched, interpreted and recorded for the present and the future.

**Our vision:**

***to lead, educate, engage and inspire the community through vibrant and entertaining exhibits, programs, publications and events. Our archives and collection serve as a comprehensive and accessible resource for interested public, researchers, educators and students.***

**To achieve this we will:**

* Provide a welcoming and satisfying social environment whereby the public and volunteer members can express their interests in learning about history through a variety of mediums including discussions, tours, lectures, performances, exhibitions and publications.
* Record and preserve in physical and virtual forms, aspects of our natural, cultural and social history for interpretation by present and future generations.
* Develop a range of informative, educational and socially stimulating programs and events that involve the wider community.
* Target local groups for visits:

School students in the shire, including Local school next door.

Pre-school students. Pre-school across the road and one around the corner.

Social groups and community groups, such as Probus, Rotary, etc.

Retirement homes. Four nearby.

Parents of school students.

Members of the Historical Society.

This document is a guiding policy for the development and management of the Sutherland Shire Museum.

1. **History of the Sutherland Shire Museum and its Collection**

Since early 2021 the Sutherland Shire Museum has been located on the corner of Venetia Street and Holt Road, Sylvania Heights in a small refurbished building originally opened in 1969 as a Baby Health Centre. It is sited on a 700square metre Crown Land block administered by Sutherland Shire Council. It is adjacent to another larger vacant Crown Land parcel not administered by Sutherland Shire Council, and to Sylvania Heights Public School.

The Sutherland Shire Museum is an arm of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society which was established in 1966. From its establishment there has been an affiliation with Sutherland Shire Council. A museum was established in 1986 when the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts (SMSA), built in 1922 and dedicated to the men from C Riding who participated in World War I, was renovated by Council. Two exhibition rooms and a storage room were dedicated for use as a regional museum under the jurisdiction of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society. All maintenance and utilities costs were born by Council and no rent was charged. Changed Council policies regarding use of the SMSA led to extensive consultation between Sutherland Shire Council, Sutherland Shire Historical Society, Museums and Galleries and the museum committee. The museum closed in 2020. Following a period of uncertainty, it will be reopened in late 2021 in a refurbished building and in a new location.

The museum is constrained by space and location limitations and significantly increased financial costs.

As with many regional museums run by amateur historical societies, the financial, regulatory and staffing responsibilities of running a museum have resulted in some councils assuming the management under Cultural Development Departments with related and complementary facilities including café’s, retail, tourism and art galleries (note: Bathurst, Orange, Lithgow, Katoomba) The Sutherland Shire Historical Society ultimately sees this model established by Council and professionally curated as the most desirable model.

1. **Collection Aim**

The collection aim of the museum is the acquisition and preservation of materials relevant to defined collections supporting the history of the Sutherland Shire. This includes original research, the collection of physical objects, Indigenous and cultural material, audio and film material, books, maps and manuscripts.

Key themes

A specific focus is items representing the Indigenous history, early European history, pioneering infrastructure, and post war growth.

Display and storage limitations are key considerations in limiting the size of the collection.

The 2020 Museum had several significant collections relating to these themes including:

* Indigenous physical and cultural artefacts
* Cook and First Fleet (European Imperialism)
* 19th Century settlement – Thomas Holt
* Childhood items
* Photographic
* Literature (books, maps, documents, posters etc)
* Shire art
* Social, industrial, economic- pre and post war

It is anticipated that the new museum will highlight these themes:

* Aboriginal culture and history
* Exploration – Cook expedition; Bass & Flinders
* Early landholders, especially Thomas Holt and the Holt-Sutherland Company
* Expanding the Shire
* Farming
* Commerce & industry
* Essential services, including electricity, water, toilets, health
* The Coming of Suburbia
* Migrant stories
* Surfing
* Science & research
* Murder & Mayhem
* Local government, Sutherland Shire Council
* Environmental disasters – bushfires, beach erosion, sandhills

Collecting Criteria

Core Collection

The museum will collect items for their core collection if they fit all of the following criteria:

* The item fits within the museum’s purpose, collection aim and collection areas
* The item is historically significant
* The item has clearly established provenance
* The item is in good condition
* The item can be adequately looked after and stored
* The intending donor has legal title to the item
* The item does not unnecessarily duplicate items already in the collection

Non-Core Collection

In addition to the main, or core collection, the museum will maintain a secondary, or non-core, collection. The non-core collection will consist of items that are duplicates or that lack specific provenance and will be used by the museum as display props or for ‘hands-on’ activities.

Photographs and Printed material.

These will be accessioned, with all photographs and printed material kept in filing cabinets organised by subjects and suburbs. All books and pamphlets will be accessioned and catalogued by the Dewey Decimal Classification system.

Collecting process

Items will be acquired by the following methods:

* Donation
* Bequest
* Purchase
* Transfer

1. **Acquisition**

Materials will only be acquired when the Museum can provide appropriate resources and storage to ensure their safety.

No materials should be acquired with conditions or restrictions on the way they might be used or displayed in the future. The Museum does not accept conditional donations.

The Museum collects objects that are relevant and have provenance to the Sutherland Shire or to people closely associated with the area at key periods.

Acquisition Procedure

The first point of contact is the Museum Manager.

The Manager will appoint a museum committee which includes an archivist to ensure record keeping.

The donor will be required to record the history, associations, context and significance of the object by completing a Donation Form. The Museum Manager will appraise the object against the Collection Criteria for its suitability to the collection. On approval of the proposed donation the donor is required to sign a Gift Acknowledgement Form that assigns legal ownership for the object to the Museum.

A Letter of Thanks is issued to the donor. In some exceptional cases, objects may be acquired without provenance to a Sutherland Shire family, place, person, institution or firm if the object was typically used in the Shire or if the object elucidates taste or style associated with or unique to the Shire.

Objects without provenance in rare circumstances will only be accepted where they assist in the interpretation of the Region’s history, via one of the identified criteria and/or have an educational role.

The primary assessment criteria are:

• historic, aesthetic, scientific, social or spiritual significance

• condition, intactness, integrity

• provenance

• rarity

In rare circumstances objects may be acquired by purchase where the item has specific relevance or rarity.

The 2021 Members of the Sutherland Shire Museum committee:

Peter Moore, Museum Manager

Graham Burton

Elizabeth Craig

John Doherty

Bruce Howell

Carol McDonald

Creo Moore

Cheryl Spencer

1. **Cataloguing and Registering Collection Items**

Only items to be part of the Core Collection will be listed, accessioned, catalogued, described. Other items to be part of the Non-core Collection will be recorded.

All items will be catalogued as soon as possible after acquisition.

The Museum Manager will be responsible for ensuring all items acquired are catalogued.

Numbering system.

All items in the core collection will be recorded in an accession’s register as follows:

Accession number, location, subject, brief description, donor (if known), value (if known). Photograph of each item.

Numbering items.

All items will have an accession number attached so reference can be made to the accessioned register. Fragile items should be boxed with a number attached to the box.

Outdoor items and stored items should be tagged with an accession number on a key tag attached to the object.

Object Files

A file will be kept of all donations and acquisitions giving the accession number and data on how the item was obtained. These files should not leave the museum. Two backup copies will be kept off site with members of the SSHS museum committee.

1. **De-accessioning**

De-accessioning is the process of de-registering an object from the collection for a clearly stated reason and disposing of it in accordance with approved policies. In the longer term, de-accessions will be minimised through careful, strategic collection.

Only the Museum Manager, on consultation with the Museum committee, has the authority to de-accession an item from the collection.

An item may be de-accessioned from the museum’s collection for the following reasons:

* The item is not relevant to the current collection policy of the museum
* The item has deteriorated to the point where it cannot be ‘saved’
* The item lacks historical authenticity
* There is a better or duplicate example available
* The item cannot be stored or looked after properly
* There is an alternative or more appropriate custodian for the item

The procedure for de-accessioning an item is as follows:

* + Return to donor or donor’s heirs
  + Transfer to another museum or like-minded collection
  + Sale. Transparency required if volunteers or committee express an interest in purchasing items
  + Transfer to the museum’s non-core collection
  + Destruction.

Review of collection policy

Review in three years after move to Venetia Street premises.