

## Making Decisions

Before deciding what to donate, what to keep and what to throw away, always seek advice. Material you may consider unimportant may be of historical significance or monetary value. You can seek advice from any of the institutions listed in this guide. The Australian War Memorial and Shrine of Remembrance are both happy to discuss wartime heritage objects.

It is recommended you think carefully about donation. With most objects, the best option is keeping things in the care of family or friends. Speak to your family first. There may be someone who wants to take care of the artefact.

## Will my material be accepted?

Institutions are under no obligation to accept donations. While your object may be of great significance to you, a museum or archive may not be able to accept it into a collection. Institutions often have storage constraints and tend to focus on acquiring material in particular areas according to a collections policy, and it may already hold an example of your object.

Before making a decision about offering an object to a museum or other collection, there are a few questions you should think through.

- 1 What do you know about the item? Do you know who it relates to? Can you tell that story?
- 2 Why do you think it should be in a public collection? Why is it important to others?
- 3 How did you come to have it? Can you confirm you are the legal owner?
- 4 Where do you want it to be cared for? Are you certain that the organisation you've chosen has the expertise to care for your object/s? Will it ever be sold? If the organisation closes or amalgamates, what will happen to your object/s?
- 5 Do you really want to donate it? How attached to the item are you? When you donate an artefact into a collection, it is a permanent donation. While it should be taken care of, it may not be put on display, but instead kept in storage. Usually you must make an appointment to view the object, if possible at all.

## What does 'donation' mean?

When you 'donate' heritage material it is important to be clear about what 'donation' means.

Definitions can vary greatly. It is advisable to get written clarification before entering into any donating arrangement.

- Will the institution document the donation through a formal legal agreement?
- Are you transferring ownership and all your private property rights, including any intellectual property rights?
- Can the institution sell your object(s) without your permission in the future?

If your object is a photograph or diary or artwork, you may be able to have a professional reproduction made before donation (this can be expensive - ensure your object has been accepted for donation first). It's also a good idea to photograph or record any object you plan to donate, both for yourself and to help a museum to assess it.

Another option is to offer your artefacts to museums for temporary loans for exhibitions. It's useful for our public museums, archives and libraries to know about your artefacts - they can provide advice - and following the loan you will get the object back. Remember that when you make an offer of donation, you are not bound to that offer. The offer may be declined, or you may change your mind about the donation.

## If you choose to donate

Seek independent legal advice if you choose to make a donation.

## National

**The Australian War Memorial (AWM)** accepts tens of thousands of items into its collection each year, which tell the story of Australians at war and the impact on our country and the people at home. Amongst its collections of millions of items, the AWM has managed to collect copies of journals, diaries, uniforms, gas masks, flags, helmets, medals, pins, photos, maps, audio visual records and more. The AWM has limited storage and display space, and for this reason the AWM now generally accepts only objects which are not already represented in the collection unless there is an important story attached.

If you contact the AWM to offer an object for donation, you will need to describe the item, and inform the donations team of its story. Do not send the object to the AWM until you have heard from a curator.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/donations/>

The **National Library of Australia** supports research, and is interested in a wide range of materials including personal and organisations records, books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, maps, photographs and artworks, digital publications, unpublished sound and folklore recordings, advertising posters and theatre programs. You can make an offer to the NLA here:

<https://www.nla.gov.au/support-us/donate-collection-material>

The **Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House** tells the story of democracy in Australia, including protest, parliament, campaigns, and events which have impacted the course of Australian history. This includes the peace movement, conscription debates, votes and protests. The Museum of Australian Democracy is interested in objects of local, national and regional significance. The Museum is currently undergoing some online changes, but you can make an offer of donation via phone:

**02 6270 8222**



## Victorian

**Museum Victoria** tells the story of Victoria, its people and its development, both pre and post European settlement. It holds nearly 17 million objects, documents and specimens. All donations are assessed through the Discovery Centre, which unfortunately cannot hold your items while they are under assessment. If you would like make an offer you can contact the Discovery Centre at Museum Victoria. Either complete the online form:

<https://museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/ask-us-a-question/donations/> or call **13 11 02**.

The **Shrine of Remembrance** does not have a policy to collect. It holds a small collection and curates numerous temporary and travelling exhibitions. The majority of objects on display at the Shrine belong to the Australian War Memorial on loan. You can make an offer of donation to the Shrine via email:

[exhibitions@shrine.org.au](mailto:exhibitions@shrine.org.au)

The **State Library Victoria** holds a diverse collection, holds exhibitions and does not collect only books. The SLV welcomes offers of physical and digital material, including books, manuscripts, pictures, paintings and photographs, maps and charts, magazines, journals, newspapers, objects, printed and recorded music. You can make an offer of donation via the SLV donation form:

<https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/help/donating-items-collection>

The **Royal Historical Society of Victoria** is dedicated to collecting, preserving, exhibiting and interpreting Victoria's history. It accepts donations that adhere to the RHSV collection aims. Generally, the RHSV is interested in collecting materials that are concerned with Victorian history. You can find out more information and read the RHSV guide to donating here:

<http://www.historyvictoria.org.au/support-us/donate-items>

You can also find a longer listing of institutions to consider for donation, and more information on Victoria's war heritage at

<http://veterans.vic.gov.au/heritageandhistory>

*Disclaimer: The material contained in this guide is for general reference only and should not be relied upon as the sole basis for a decision to donate heritage objects. Independent legal advice should be sought. The Victorian State Government does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of the information and disclaims all liability for any loss or damage that may be caused by reliance upon it. Provision of names of suppliers or websites does not imply that a supplier is endorsed or approved by the Victorian Government.*