

HISTORIC HOUSES TRUST OF NEW SOUTH WALES

EXHIBITIONS POLICY

1. GENERAL

The Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales (HHT) considers that the development of an active temporary exhibition program is a primary vehicle (together with publications, public and education programs and property presentation etc) by which it can fulfil its mission to inspire appreciation of Australia's diverse histories and cultural heritage for present and future generations by conserving, interpreting and managing with integrity, places of cultural significance in the care of the Historic Houses Trust.

1.1 Definitions

1.1.1 *Exhibitions*: in this document exhibitions refers to temporary exhibitions that are generally of a duration of two to six months, but may also extend to 12 months duration at the Justice & Police Museum and longer at the Hyde Park Barracks Museum. The HHT's Exhibitions & Publications Unit coordinates all exhibitions and 'major displays' in collaboration with both the senior curator of the property and the relevant General Manager. These exhibitions generally require:

- museum standards of environmental control
- high security
- purpose-built display equipment and special lighting
- significant loan material
- graphic design support
- continuous monitoring for security, presentation and environmental control
- a multi-disciplinary approach involving many of the HHT's specialist staff and other external experts
- long-term planning
- significant financial and personnel resources including curatorial direction and project management.

1.1.2 *Displays*: these are smaller scale 'exhibitions' that are usually of a duration of 2 to 12 months and are generally very property specific. Displays are the responsibility of the curator and:

- would include less than 15 objects or one to two separate loans
- would involve minimal graphic design and display requirements.

Displays provide an opportunity for:

- the development of property orientation displays
- display of collections generally held in storage
- junior curators to gain experience in exhibition development
- interpretation of particular aspects of a property
- promoting the work of the HHT.

Displays are held from time to time at most properties. They are not the subject of this policy.

2. TYPES OF EXHIBITIONS

2.1 Reasons for holding Exhibitions

Exhibitions may be held for a variety of reasons as indicated below, in no particular order:

- to stimulate public interest in cultural heritage by presenting issues and ideas that are of relevance to the HHT both through its properties and from the issues that arise from its properties
- to interpret aspects of history and cultural heritage
- to explore issues that are of relevance to the HHT, and where the HHT considers it can make a meaningful contribution to community debate
- to expose the HHT's research, collections and scholarly endeavours
- to enrich the visitor's experience of HHT properties
- to attract visitors and/or income
- to increase the profile of the HHT and its activities
- to provide cross-marketing opportunities
- to develop mutually beneficial collaborative relationships between the HHT and other institutions and organisations.

2.2 General Criteria for Exhibitions

In considering the types of exhibitions the HHT should hold, consideration will be given to the following, listed in no particular order:

2.2.1 Primary Criteria

- 2.2.1.1 relevance of the subject to the HHT's aims and interests
- 2.1.1.2 appropriateness to the HHT's venues (including consideration of conservation or other constraints, policies affecting the property, themes appropriate to the place etc)
- 2.2.1.3 advancement of knowledge and scholarship within the fields of the HHT's concern

- 2.2.1.4 whether the subject matter would be better dealt with in another medium eg. book, film etc
- 2.2.1.5 programming balance across HHT venues.

2.2.2 Other Considerations

Other factors will impose on the consideration of individual exhibitions to a greater or lesser extent depending on circumstances. These may include:

- 2.2.2.1 exposure of the HHT's collections and research interests
- 2.2.2.2 the Trust's *Country/Regional Involvement Policy* which requires that periodically the HHT will develop a project or exhibition with a relevant country/regional theme.
- 2.2.2.3 opportunities for accompanying public programs, publications, merchandising and schools programming
- 2.2.2.4 standard of the material to be displayed
- 2.2.2.5 availability of staff and financial resources
- 2.2.2.6 development of a balanced exhibition program eg touring show vs HHT-curated; popular vs limited appeal
- 2.2.2.7 sponsorship potential
- 2.2.2.8 opportunities for travelling the exhibition
- 2.2.2.9 the exhibition programs of other institutions
- 2.2.2.10 marketing opportunities
- 2.2.2.11 longer-term relevance such as research, furthering knowledge, associated catalogues and books
- 2.2.2.12 the benefits to be derived from developing collaborations with other institutions, organisations and individuals.

3. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

- 3.1 The HHT will honour Museums Australia's *Code of Ethics* that recognises the need for co-operation and consultation between all museums with similar or overlapping interests and collecting policies.
- 3.2 The HHT will take particular care to develop exhibitions co-operatively and not in conflict with the other major state cultural institutions in NSW.
- 3.3 The HHT will aim to actively develop relationships with other organisations and individuals to co-operatively develop exhibitions, research and associated publications and public programs and to share resources.

4. SPECIFIC EXHIBITION VENUES AND POLICIES

4.1 Museum of Sydney on the site of first Government House (MOS)

The Focus Gallery at MOS provides the HHT with its best temporary exhibition space in terms of environmental and security standards, exhibition delivery and preparation facilities, lighting, and purpose-built showcases. Additional exhibition furniture is designed and constructed as required to meet the specific demands of each new exhibition. Exhibitions at MOS are project managed by the Exhibitions & Publications Unit

Since opening in 1995 MOS has held on average four temporary exhibitions each year in the Focus Gallery. These have helped to define the nature of the museum and to develop its character.

Exhibitions at MOS will take account of Part 2 of this policy and will be of relevance to Sydney. They will generally expand on the primary themes of:

- 4.1.1 colonial history and culture
- 4.1.2 indigenous history and culture
- 4.1.3 historical Sydney topics in a contemporary presentation
- 4.1.4 contemporary Sydney issues in their historical context
- 4.1.5 issues that have their genesis on the site of the first Government House.

4.2 Hyde Park Barracks Museum

The Greenway Gallery at the Hyde Park Barracks Museum provides the HHT with a significant space for exhibitions. It has reasonable environmental and security standards although the air conditioning needs significant work to guarantee acceptable standards. Exhibition furniture is designed and constructed as required to meet the specific demands of each new exhibition.

Exhibitions at the Hyde Park Barracks Museum will accord with Part 2 of this policy. Exhibitions held in the Northern and Southern Gallery rooms of the Greenway Gallery will:

- 4.2.1 expand on the primary theme of convicts and convictism
- 4.2.2 present an understanding of Sydney as the convicts of Hyde Park Barracks knew it
- 4.2.3 respect the fabric and integrity of the Barracks

4.3 Elizabeth Bay House

Three domestic scaled rooms are available on the first floor of Elizabeth Bay House. The rooms currently have no environmental control and are inappropriate for exhibitions, which require a high standard of

environmental control. Security and lighting are reasonable. There is limited and difficult access to the exhibition rooms upstairs, limited preparation areas and no purpose-built display equipment. Sets have generally been used for each exhibition.

Elizabeth Bay House has held many exhibitions over the past 30 years, which have generally had a focus on NSW social and architectural history. Some material loaned in the past would now be considered inappropriate due to the higher environmental standards now required by the museum profession. .

Exhibitions at Elizabeth Bay House will take account of Part 2 of this policy and will generally:

- 4.3.1 be of a type of material considered appropriate to display in the conditions that prevail at Elizabeth Bay House
- 4.3.2 explore themes related to domestic architecture, interiors, gardens, decoration, domestic life, social history etc and will have particular reference to the HHT's Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection
- 4.3.3 be limited in number and determined as appropriate
- 4.3.4 require less staff and financial resources to exhibitions at the major exhibiting venues.

4.4 Justice & Police Museum

The Justice & Police Museum exhibition program has established a good reputation and has built a niche audience with a more popular youth approach and strong education focus. The museum is the repository for a large and diverse, but very specialised collection. Upgraded collections management storage and cataloguing systems have made the collection more accessible. Exhibitions have given the museum a visibility and an income that has been important to its operation and have enabled the collection to be exposed to the public.

The exhibition rooms have reasonable environmental control but there are no special preparation areas or custom-made exhibitions furniture.

Exhibitions at the Justice & Police Museum will accord with Part 2 of this policy and generally:

- 4.4.1 be designed for the popular market to attract the maximum visitation
- 4.4.2 only be of subjects that are relevant to the themes in the museum
- 4.4.3 be one major exhibition per year at a time favourable for maximum visitation.

5. EXHIBITIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Trust has an Exhibitions Advisory Committee (EAC) to act as an advisory body to the Director on the HHT's exhibition program. The committee provides advice on the following issues:

- Exhibition proposals
- Ideas for potential exhibitions
- Assessment of completed exhibitions

The Exhibitions Advisory Committee Governance Framework is attached as Appendix 1.

6. EXHIBITIONS PLANNING PROCESS

There can be no set rules since exhibitions emerge in very different ways. However for exhibitions curated by the HHT the following process will be broadly followed:

- All exhibitions ideas will be placed before the Exhibitions Advisory Committee.
- A brief **exhibition proposal** will be developed for presentation to the Exhibitions Advisory Committee that will include the idea, themes, content, significance for HHT, possible partnerships.
- The proposal will again be presented to the Staff Exhibitions Advisory Committee for their comment.

The Staff Exhibitions Advisory Committee will comprise:

- Director
 - Deputy Director
 - Assistant Director, Marketing & Business Development
 - General Managers, Properties
 - Head, Exhibitions and Publications
 - CMU Loans Manager
 - Head of Public Programs
 - Senior Education Officer
 - Head Curator, Museum of Sydney
- If approved by the Director, following receipt of advice from the Staff Exhibitions Advisory Committee, the proposal will be developed into an **exhibition plan** which will include a general list of contents, timetable, preliminary budget, publication proposals and any other significant components of the exhibition 'package'.
 - The HHT will endeavour to work between 15 to 30 months in advance in planning its exhibition program in order to better manage resources and maximise marketing opportunities.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following is an outline of the primary roles and responsibilities of the major parties involved in the development of exhibitions:

Trustees

- to determine broad policy as defined in this policy
- to review, on an annual basis, adherence to the policy
- to appoint the external members of the Exhibitions Advisory Committee.

Exhibitions Advisory Committee (see 5.1 above)

Director

- to determine an exhibition program in accordance with this policy
- to ensure the resources are available to deliver the program
- to refer to the Trust any exhibitions which have the potential to cause public controversy before they are committed

Staff Exhibitions Advisory Committee

- to advise the Director on the development and implementation of the exhibition program especially in relation to resources, programming and marketing

Deputy Director and Head, Exhibitions & Publications

- to ensure delivery of the program on time and on budget and to a high standard

General Managers, Properties

- to work with the Head, Exhibitions & Publications, and property curators ensure appropriate resource management

Curator and Project Manager

- every exhibition will have a designated Curator and Project Manager (drawn from the Exhibitions & Publications Unit) who will be jointly responsible for the detailed development of individual exhibitions and will work in a small project team with other relevant units and divisions of the HHT in particular the Design Unit and Collections Management Unit, but also the Education Unit, Public Programs Unit, Marketing Manager, Retail Manager, Sponsorship Manager, HHT Foundation and staff of the host property.

Exhibition Working Party

- to manage the detailed internal processes to achieve individual exhibitions. This group will comprise the Deputy Director (Chair), General Managers, Properties (as appropriate), Exhibitions & Publications Unit staff, individual exhibition Curator, and representatives from the Education Unit, Collections Management Unit, Marketing & Business Development Division and from the host property.

Assistant Director, Marketing & Business Development

- to ensure the maximum exposure is obtained for each exhibition and that opportunities for merchandising and cross promotion are taken.

Sponsorship Manager

- to solicit sponsorship separately and in conjunction with the HHT Foundation for appropriate exhibitions.

8. FINANCES

- 8.1 Each exhibition will operate on a project budget as approved by the Director. This budget will be presented to the Trust for approval with the annual budget papers.
- 8.2 The Director may use the resources of the Exhibition Endowment, consistent with his/her approved financial delegations, for the purposes of providing seeding funds to develop exhibition proposals, and to meet shortfalls if anticipated sponsorship funds are not forthcoming when an exhibition has been committed.

9. REPORTING AND REVIEW MECHANISMS

- 9.1 After each Exhibitions Advisory Committee meeting the Director will report to the Trust advising it of the Committee's deliberations.
- 9.2 The Trust will receive an Annual Report of the Exhibitions Forward Program and Exhibition Evaluation Forms, including the cost of associated publications, for the previous year at the February meeting.
- 9.3 This policy will be reviewed triennially in conjunction with other Trust policies.

APPENDIX 1

HISTORIC HOUSES TRUST OF NEW SOUTH WALES

EXHIBITIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE

1. AUTHORITY

The Historic Houses Trust will have an Exhibition Advisory Committee (EAC) convened as a subcommittee under Section 9(1) of the *Historic Houses Act 1980*.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the EAC is to be an advisory body to the Director on the HHT's exhibition program. The committee will provide advice on the following issues:

- Exhibition proposals
- Ideas for potential exhibitions
- Assessment of completed exhibitions

3. COMPOSITION AND APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE

3.1 Members

The EAC will consist of

- two (2) Trustees
- the Director or his/her representative as an ex-officio member
- the Deputy Director
- the Head Exhibitions & Publications
- up to eight (8) other members from outside the HHT who have expertise in history, material culture, exhibitions development, public relations and other relevant expertise and are approved by the Board.

3.2 Executive Officer

The Executive Officer for the EAC will be the Head Exhibitions & Publications or a member of the Exhibitions & Publications Unit appointed by them.

3.2 Committee Chair

The Chair of the EAC will be the Director or Deputy Director.

3.3 Term of Appointment

EAC members will be appointed for a period of three years but may be considered for reappointment.

Membership of the EAC will be reviewed by the Trust each February in conjunction with other Trust standing and subcommittees.

4. QUORUM

A quorum for the EAC shall consist of two HHT representatives and at least three external members.

5. FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Meetings will be held on a quarterly basis unless the Chair deems it necessary to hold additional meetings for specific issues that may arise.

6. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

6.1 Exhibition Budget

Each exhibition will operate on a project budget as approved by the Director. This budget will be presented to the Trust for approval with the annual budget papers.

6.2 Exhibition Endowment

The Director may use the resources of the Exhibition Endowment, consistent with their approved financial delegations, for the purposes of providing seeding funds to develop exhibition proposals and to meet shortfalls if anticipated sponsorship funds are not forthcoming when an exhibition has been committed.

7. REPORTING

After each EAC meeting the Director will report to the Trust advising it of the Committee's deliberations.

The EAC will report to the Trust each February and the report will include the exhibitions forward program and exhibition evaluation forms, including the cost of associated publications, for the previous year.

8. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed triennially in accordance with the timetable for all Trust policy reviews.