



Practice Note No 7

MOVEABLE HERITAGE

Acknowledgment: This practice note draws on Movable Heritage in NSW, May 1997

What is moveable heritage?

Movable heritage encompasses a wide range of items of all sizes, types and materials, from large transport items to family collections and domestic objects.

Movable heritage may include:

- items in the open air such as railways, maintenance equipment, mining and transport items, and sawmilling constructions;
- items such as furniture and machinery, implements such as cooking equipment, eating utensils and vessels that may or may not now be contained in built structures;
- historical artefacts and archives, ethnographic cultural objects, books, curios, collections (domestic and those in museums and keeping places), tableware, fine art collections; and
- items that were not originally meant to be movable, such as elements of buildings and indeed whole buildings and other structures.

Application of the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995*

The Heritage Council is constrained by the requirements of the Historic Cultural Heritage Act. The Act defines "**place**" to include:

- a) a site, precinct or parcel of land; and
- b) any building or part of a building; and
- c) any shipwreck; and
- d) any item in or on, or historically or physically associated or connected with, a site, precinct or parcel of land where the primary importance of the item derives in part from its association with that site, precinct or parcel of land; and
- e) any equipment, furniture, fittings and articles in or on, or historically or physically associated or connected with, any building or item.

It can be seen from the above definition (paragraphs *d* and *e*) that the Heritage Council must reference every moveable item it places on the Heritage Register to an historically significant site or building and must establish that the moveable item gains its significance from an association with that site or building.

For further information contact

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Practice guidelines

PRACTICE	EXPLANATION
<i>Moveable heritage should be retained in situ, wherever practical to do so.</i>	<p>Where movable heritage is associated with a heritage site or building its significance may be interrelated with the values of that place, and therefore diminished by separation. The presence of movable items may enhance the significance of a place, and also make that significance more apparent and understandable.</p> <p>Although the significance of heritage collections and items is generally diminished by removal from its context, it may be justified in certain circumstances, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where the security and conservation of the item is in jeopardy.• Where the clearance of the place is necessary as part of environmental clean-up or other government permit conditions.• Where the item is donated or sold in circumstances beyond the control of the Heritage Council.
<i>The significance of an item and its relationship to its context should be assessed before any works to a heritage building or site are undertaken, unless the item is at extreme risk.</i>	<p>It is desirable that moveable heritage should be assessed, conserved and interpreted in tandem with any works to a building or site. It is much easier and more appropriate to assess the significance of moveable items in context.</p>
<i>Where an item of moveable heritage is removed from its context, it should be documented in such a way as to make reinstatement possible should circumstances change.</i>	<p>The possibility that an item of moveable heritage may be returned to its context should always be considered. Circumstances that may change at some time in the future include ownership, available resources, improvements in technological, and so on. Generally, documentation and recording will be in accordance with Heritage Council Practice Note 3, <i>Procedure for extant recording</i>.</p>
<i>Where an item of moveable heritage is removed from its context, on-site interpretation of the item should be considered.</i>	<p>This means that the significance of the entire site can be better and more appropriately demonstrated.</p>