

sustainable  
**collections**  
project

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**CENTRAL NSW**



## Draft Museum Status Report

### Stage 1

March 2008

arts nsw 

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**Museums  
& Galleries  
NSW**

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## Executive Summary

The Sustainable Collections Project is a joint initiative of Cabonne, Blayney and Orange Councils, supported by funding from Arts NSW. The project is designed to assist museums with the documentation and assessment of their collections, and provide strategic advice to councils on collection and museum planning. A key element of the project is the employment of a collections project officer to work directly with the museums, documenting their collections, establishing a sound collection management framework and assessing the significance of the collections. This is essential work to protect the integrity, meaning and value of the collections today and for future generations.

Anne Vincent was engaged as the collections project officer and began work in November 2007. This museum survey report, researched by Collections Project Officer, documents the current status and needs of the museums at the outset of the project. It provides a benchmark from which to measure progress on the key tasks of collection documentation and assessment. It also underlines the urgent need for this project, as nearly all the museums have major weaknesses in their collection management processes. Key issues identified through the survey and analysis of the collections and museum operations include:

- Limited or non existent collection documentation; less than 20% of the collections are catalogued and some have virtually no records
- Collections are largely unprovenanced
- Lack of storage and collection working space
- Some collections are at risk of theft in poorly designed exhibition areas, exacerbated by incomplete collection records
- Exhausted and aging volunteers, 45% of volunteers are over 70 and only 4% are under 45
- Not enough volunteers to make up the backlog in collection documentation work, or sustain museum operations
- Some museum buildings are in a poor state of repair and many offer few amenities to make volunteering in the museum more comfortable
- Competition for volunteers with other community groups that can offer a more rewarding volunteer experience with less responsibility
- Poor museum environments are damaging collections through exposure to dust and light, and lack of suitable storage to enable rotation of organic items
- Lack of space and resources to change and update displays
- Most of the historical societies are operating on very small budgets raised from membership fees and admissions
- Lack of basic research on objects, despite the good record of museum volunteers in local history research
- With a few exceptions, most of the museums have limited opening hours, restricting public access and service to tourists
- Duplication of collection themes, due to the ad hoc accumulation of collections without planning, policies or coordination
- A substantial numbers of objects in poor condition, incomplete, lacking a provenance or story relevant to the district, and generally unworthy of being in a museum, meaning the museums need a careful program of deaccessioning

- Most museums lack phone and internet connections at a time when the web is changing museum practice and marketing. An enormous amount of museum advice is only available on line.
- Lack of resources and skills to properly present and interpret collections, meaning that visitors and the community do not appreciate the significance of the collections.

These issues have been building over the last 30 years and will not be solved in a hurry. However the project has begun with the resources to make a real difference to the state of the collections, so they can be passed to the next generation in better shape than would otherwise be the case. The assistance of the collections project officer has been warmly welcomed by museum volunteers, who carry heavy responsibilities with few resources and little support to meet their obligations to the collections.

Immediate priorities for the collection documentation work include:

Molong and District Historical Society: a stock take of their collection, reconciling incomplete collection records and lists, dismantling displays and packing costumes into conservation boxes, moving items at risk, identifying loan items for return and items in poor condition for possible deaccessioning.

Canowindra and District Historical Society: update accession records, check each item is numbered and photographed, research on the provenance of the most significant objects, continue developing object files, statements of significance, identifying items for possible deaccessioning, assessment of the archives.

Eugowra: establish accession register, complete accession sheets, number and photograph items, research provenance, identify donors, establish object files for the most significant items, and adopt a collection policy.

Yeoval: update/complete accession register, accession sheets, number and photograph each item, identify and research the most significant items, draft and adopt a collection policy.

Cudal: develop accession register, number and photograph items, identify significant items, draft and adopt a collection policy.

Orange and District Historical Society: reconcile and upgrade basic accession records, create an accession register, accession sheets, photographing and numbering objects and identifying items for deaccessioning before moving part of the collection into new storage.

To support this program of work targeted training and workshops will be offered on assessing significance and related priorities. The first workshop was held in February with good feedback from participants.

## **1. Background to the Sustainable Collections Project**

Over many decades, hundreds if not thousands of volunteers have built important collections and museum enterprises in the towns and villages of central NSW. Their work has created what is now a significant community, cultural and financial asset. Museums are places that hold important family and community memories that reflect the distinctive identity, people and places of their locality. However few volunteer-managed museums have the human and financial resources to actively manage and maintain their collections to sustain their value into the future. Many museums deserve to reach a wider audience to fulfill the educational and tourism potential inherent in their collections. By harnessing new resources and improving planning and coordination, museums can play a more dynamic role in the economic development of their region, supporting tourism, and new education and creative enterprises.

There is recognition of the need to assist museums with the documentation and assessment of collections, and to work with councils to improve the planning and coordination of museums. Arts NSW and Cabonne, Blayney and Orange Councils have agreed to support a sustainable collections project, planned to operate over three to four years. Each Council is contributing \$12,000pa, with Arts NSW providing \$22,000 for year 1 of the project. The 2008 Cultural Grants Program through Arts NSW has generously provided \$46,000 for year 2.

Most of the funding is earmarked to engage a Collections Project Officer to work closely with participating museums on the documentation and assessment of their collections. With support from Orange City Council's museum adviser, the project will also prepare a museum development plan for the Councils, working closely with the museums and Councils to identify key needs and ways of supporting the sustainable development of region's important collections.

This project is designed to resonate with current policies for museums and collections, policies which are encouraging museums to work in networks, to share resources and collaborate with other collection domains such as libraries. With greater cooperation between councils in central NSW there is an opportunity to improve and coordinate museum planning, producing benefits for collections and communities. The Sustainable Collections Project will explore practical ways to enhance tourism, cultural and economic opportunities to enable collections to sustain their value into the future.

Following advertisement of the Collections Project Officer position, Anne Vincent was appointed to the position as a consultant for year 1 of the project from late 2007 through to mid 2008.

## 1.2 Sustainable Collections Project Aims 2007-10

- Work with museum volunteers to research, document and assess the significance of the collections
- Identify distinctive themes and stories in each collection, analysing the collections in relation to broader historical themes shaping the development of the region (this helps to identify strengths, duplication and omissions in the collections and understand how well the collections reflect the wider history of the region)
- Analyse the condition and needs of the collections
- Improve collection management and interpretation through expert advice, training and support
- Identify priority projects and assist museums with funding applications
- Harness advice and support from state and national collection organisations
- Liaise with Aboriginal groups and improve the documentation and interpretation of Aboriginal collections
- Explore ways of linking museums, libraries, archives and galleries into a cooperative network to share resources, link collections and develop collaborative programs
- Link museums with heritage themes, places and trails, and with councils' arts and cultural plans
- Align future museum developments with tourism and economic goals
- Consult with communities about the future of their museums and collections
- Planning for museum themes and content to meet the needs of communities and tourists
- Provide advice to councils about strategic developments, and collection and museum needs and opportunities
- Prepare a strategic plan for the region's collections and museums, identifying opportunities to share resources, improve community access, and link museums and collections to wider cultural, social, educational and tourism goals
- Develop a combined museums and collections web site with online educational resources about local collections, history and heritage for use by schools in the region, and by tourists
- Enhance community access to the collections and improve interpretation

### 1.3 Sustainable Collections

Museum collections are held in trust for the benefit of communities today and into the future. The idea of keeping collections in perpetuity is fundamental to the concept of what a museum is. However critical analysis of the state of collections in Australia is highlighting concerns about the long term sustainability of collections.

There is growing recognition of the importance of sustainability principles<sup>1</sup> in the sound management of museums and collections. A number of peak bodies in the collections sector have adopted sustainability policies and the issue figures in high level discussions about the future of collections in Australia. Museum and government policies on sustainability recognise that Australia's distributed national collections are an asset and legacy for the future. But they may become a future liability if we fail to collect, conserve and document collections with our long term obligations and liabilities in mind.<sup>2</sup>

For the volunteer-managed museum sector sustainability has particular resonance as they struggle to balance limited funding, often decrepit museum buildings, dwindling numbers of aging volunteers, and collections that have not been documented in a way that protects their integrity or records the provenance<sup>3</sup> of items. This means that the collections may be passed to the next generation of custodians without the history and associations that make the objects significant in their local context. With the first generation of volunteers who built museums and collections now aging and dying, poor collection documentation is jeopardising the meaning and significance of collections, and creating risks for the security of collections.

Other dimensions of sustainability for the region's collections include the deterioration of collections that have been on permanent display, poor quality display environments which are damaging collections, the lack of adequate storage or collection working space, the accumulation of objects of low significance, the growth of museums and collections without regard for sustainability, or consideration of what is a manageable size for the collection in relation to available resources.

This project will open a debate with museum volunteers, Councils and other stakeholders about the sustainability of museums and collections so that we can plan for and protect the legacy of donors and volunteers into the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; Norwegian Prime Minister Brundtland. The concept of sustainability means living on earth's income rather than eroding its capital. See also Museums Australia's *Museums and Sustainability Guidelines*.

<sup>2</sup> M. Birtley, *A Study into the Key Needs of Collecting Institutions in the Heritage Sector*, Deakin University, 2002; R. Russell and K. Winkworth, *Significance, a Guide to Assessing the Significance of Cultural Heritage Objects and Collections*, Commonwealth Government for the Heritage Collections Council, 2001, p8

<sup>3</sup> Provenance means the chain of ownership of the object and its life history. It is integral to the significance of historical and scientific collections. Objects without a provenance are generally of lower significance. Once those who owned or collected the item have died it is very difficult or even impossible to recover the provenance.

## **1.4 The Museum Survey**

As outlined in the project brief, the survey aims to research, profile and review the current status of museums and collections, preparing a report describing the museums and collections, significant objects and themes, key needs and issues affecting the collections. The survey provides a benchmark from which to measure progress on the key tasks of collection documentation and assessment. Information from the survey will also guide museum planning in the next stages of the project.

A survey form was given to each museum/ collection and follow up interviews with museum volunteers were undertaken by the consultant. The survey sought responses from museums in the following areas:

### **Museum operations**

- Opening hours and admission charges
- Visitor numbers
- Volunteers
- Exhibition themes
- Museum buildings
- Finances

### **Collection**

- Themes
- Documentation
- Policies
- Security
- Working space

### **Key Needs in the areas of**

- Collection
- Volunteers
- Building

It is encouraging that a number of museums have recorded reasonably good figures for the state of their collection catalogue. However figures may change with further in-depth work on the collection records. Self identified surveys can skew results if volunteers are confused about the difference between simple accession lists and a museum-standard catalogue description.

## **Participants**

### **Orange City Council Area**

Orange and District Historical Society  
Orange City Council

Orange is also home to the Marsden Memorial Rural History Research Centre which is a community organisation dedicated to the research and publication of rural history and the preservation of significant woolsheds and farm buildings.



### **Cabonne Council Area**

Canowindra Historical Society and Museum Inc.  
Molong Historical Society and Museum Inc.  
Eugowra Historical Museum and Bushranger Centre  
Yeoval Historical Society and Museum  
Cabonne Food and Wine Cultural Centre (Cudal)  
Age of Fishes Museum Inc. (Canowindra)

### **Blayney Shire museums and other collections – to be added**

Initial work in the project is focused on formally organised museum collections and related organisations. In addition to the collections listed above, other potentially significant collections are held throughout the region by community organizations such as the RSL, Bloomfield Hospital and private museums such as the Manildra Mill and Rail Museum. Depending on resources, some of these collections may be added to the project as work unfolds. There are also a number of highly significant family or private collections held insitu as part of a significant heritage site. Some of these collections have evolved through generations of the one family and are potentially of state or national significance. While the Collections Project Officer's work is focused on public or community collections, workshops and advice on the care and management of collections are open to all interested individuals.

## 1.5 Summary of Key Issues

The survey results compiled into this document underline the rationale and urgent need for this project, as nearly all the museums have major weaknesses in their collection management processes.

Not all the issues below have been identified through the survey and interviews, but are apparent from analysis of the data and collections. Few museum volunteers will say they need a deaccessioning program, but they may say instead they need another shed or more storage. The real need may be a combination of both.

The issues listed here do underline a quiet crisis in the state of the collections. However it is important to recognize this crisis is not particular to central NSW, but is found in volunteer managed collections throughout Australia. Museum volunteers have done an heroic job in building museums and collections for their communities. While it is now clear that these collections need urgent assistance, this does not imply any criticism of the work of the volunteers. Museum standards in collection documentation and interpretation have risen dramatically over the last 20 years, as have the costs of managing museums and collections. Moreover, there has always been a mismatch in museum volunteer skills between the hands-on work of building sheds and restoring collections, and the book work, computer skills and research required for 21<sup>st</sup> century collection management.

- Limited or non-existent collection documentation; less than 20% of the collections are catalogued and some have virtually no records
- Collections are largely unprovenanced
- Lack of storage and collection working space
- Some collections at risk of theft in poorly designed exhibition areas, exacerbated by incomplete collection records
- Exhausted and aging volunteers, 45% of volunteers are over 70 and only 4% are under 45
- Not enough volunteers to make up the backlog in collection documentation work, or even sustain museum operations
- Some museum buildings are in a poor state of repair and many offer few amenities to make volunteering in the museum more comfortable
- Competition for volunteers with other community groups that can offer a more rewarding volunteer experience with less responsibility
- Poor museum environments are damaging collections through exposure to dust and light, and lack of suitable storage to enable rotation of organic items
- Lack of space and resources to change and update displays
- Most of the historical societies are operating on very small budgets raised from membership fees and admissions
- Lack of basic research on objects, despite the good record of museum volunteers in local history research
- With a few exceptions, most of the museums have limited opening hours, restricting public access and service to tourists
- Duplication of collection themes, due to the ad hoc accumulation of collections without planning, policies or coordination
- Substantial numbers of objects in poor condition, incomplete, lacking a provenance or story relevant to the district, and generally unworthy of being in a museum, meaning the museums need a careful program of deaccessioning

- Most museums lack phone and internet connections at a time when the web is changing museum practice and marketing. An enormous amount of museum advice is only available on line
- Lack of resources and skills to properly present and interpret collections, meaning that visitors and the community do not appreciate the significance of the collections

## **1.6 Report Authors**

Museum survey researched by Anne Vincent. Draft report by Anne Vincent, Alison Russell, Community Liaison Adviser, Orange City Council, and Kylie Winkworth, museum adviser to Orange City.

## Map of Orange Cabonne Local Government Area



LGA	Population	Area in Sq.kms
Orange	37,790	285
Cabonne	13,000	6,026

## 2. Cabonne LGA Museums and Collections

### 2.1 Cabonne Council

Cabonne Council is in Central West NSW, covering the towns, of Canowindra, Cargo, Cudal, Cumnock, Eugowra, Manildra, Molong and Yeoval. The area is home to the site of Australia's first gold rush and is famous for ballooning, food and wine, agriculture and mining.

Cabonne Country is over 6,000 sq. km and home to some of the most beautiful and bountiful county in New South Wales. Including the magnificent Mt Canobolas - the highest point west until Africa!, Borenore Caves, a 360 million-year-old fish fossil find and now museum in Canowindra, three National Parks, and endless amounts of bushranger history.

The 2001 Census found the Cabonne Local Government area had an estimated resident population of 12,558 people. There are 5,070 dwellings with an average occupancy rate of 2.47 people per dwelling.



## **2.2 Canowindra & District Historical Society and Museum (C&DHS)**

This society was founded in 1967 and the first stage of the museum opened in 1970 with help from a Captain Cook Bicentennial Grant when the former Murga School building was relocated in the corner of Memorial Park in Gaskill Street, under the auspices of the Boree Shire Council. This building was gradually extended north by voluntary labour on former railway land. In 1988 the stationmaster's house, Railway Cottage, was acquired with money from a Bicentenary Grant and restored with help from local service clubs as part of the museum complex.

The Museum's collection, which is listed on the Collections Australia Network, illustrates the development of Canowindra from an 1840s frontier township at the very limits of official settlement, to its growth as a rural centre. It is a well developed collection comprising, costumes, machinery, moved buildings, books, photographs and maps. It holds vehicles of the horse drawn era and farm implements that reflect the importance of wheat, lucerne and wool to the growth of the central west. A slab shepherd's hut (pictured above) a woolshed and a tiny weatherboard shop have been relocated to save them from demolition and now house thematic displays. The main building displays wedding gowns, a dental surgery, bedroom, nursery as well as household items, photographs and memorabilia.

Over the years Canowindra's members have researched and published approximately 15 books relating to the history of the area as well as pamphlets, brochures and excursion notes. The Society actively promotes Canowindra's history by organising displays, events and museum open days.

C&DHS operates on a budget of under \$4,000 and its income is derived from sales of its publications, rent from the flat in Railway Cottage, annual functions, membership and admission. The main changes in the budget over the last five years reflect differing maintenance costs associated with Railway Cottage.

Volunteers endeavour to open the museum to visitors for 4 hours each weekend but falling volunteer numbers means that this is not always possible.

Canowindra's collection documentation is reasonably well developed, partly because of the Society's stability but also as a result of having had the benefit of advice from Museum Advisor Kylie Winkworth. Collection documentation priorities at Canowindra centre around archive documentation, recording of object stories and the continued development of object files. In common with all collections developed over a forty year period, deaccessioning is also a priority, to remove unprovenanced items and objects in poor condition.

Canowindra's major concerns and collection needs relate to the building. Whilst the site is secured by a high boundary fence, the Museum building is not insulated and is without any climate control system. Annual temperatures in Canowindra range from -6 to 45 degrees and prolonged exposure to this variation is causing the deterioration of items in the collection. Sheds are open to dust which promotes corrosion and damage to original paint and surfaces. There is insufficient storage for the collection and archives and the space is not fireproof nor is water connected to the museum building. Very limited collection workspace and storage space compounds the difficulty of caring for the collection and means many of the objects must remain on permanent display.

Facilities for volunteers working in the museum are very poor. There is no on site toilet or water. Volunteers and visitors must use public toilets in the adjacent park. The lack of space and toilet facilities is not conducive to volunteer comfort nor does it assist in recruiting new volunteers.

A site master plan prepared in 2006 proposes a number of options to improve facilities for visitors, volunteers and the collection, but upgrading the current sheds and buildings, or adding a new building will require significant grant funding.

#### Themes

Domestic history. costume including wedding gowns, dental surgery, school room, agriculture, bushrangers, photographs and local history archives

**Table 1 - Museum Operations**

Opening Hours	Entry Fee	Out of Hours Service	Annual Visitor No's	School Program	Item Types	On CAN	Phone /Internet
Sat. am 2 hours Sunday pm	\$3 adult \$1 child	Yes	500	No	Objects, maps, photos archives machinery, buildings	Yes	No

**Table 2 – Finances**

Financial members	Joined last 12 months	Budget	Main source of income	Changes in last 5 years
100+	10	\$4,000	Books, functions, m/ship fees, admission, cottage rental, funding	Differing annual maintenance costs

**Table 3 – Collection documentation**

Number of items	% on display	% accessioned	% catalogued	% numbered	No. Object files
3350	85%	85%	85%	85%	20

% Photographed	Statements of significance	Collection Policy	De-accession Policy	Mosaic Software	Items on Mosaic
5	0	Yes	Yes	Yes	0



## 2.3 Molong Historical Society and Museum (MHSM)

The Molong Historical Society was founded in 1965 and the collection has been housed at the current address in Riddell Street since 1970. This heritage listed building was built as a hotel, parts of which date to 1856, on land owned by James Mortal Junior. The hotel was sold to John Smith of Gamboola and over the years has been used for many purposes including the doctors' surgery.

For 25 years the society printed a bi-monthly publication *The Molong Historian* under the editorship of David Rutherford, a foundation member and president for many years. The *Historian* published research on many of the district's pioneers, properties, businesses and buildings.

Molong Museum is also home to a significant collection of photographs and memorabilia from Fairbridge, one of the farm schools to which British child migrants were sent from 1938-1973. Fairbridge Farm is an important part of local and national history and is the controversial subject of a recently written book by former ABC chief David Hill, himself an old Fairbridgian.

Until May 2007, periodic rental of part of the museum building to restaurant operators generated some additional income for the Society. Since the last restaurant operator vacated their rooms the Society and Museum has had no regular income, although several project grants have been received. Molong has approximately 20 volunteers 3 of whom are under 40 and 7 of whom are over 70. At present some of the members are finding it difficult to continue because of aging or ill health.

The beautiful heritage listed building is owned outright by the Molong Historical Society Inc. which carries all the associated expenses of ownership including utilities. Cabonne Council gives the Society a partial reduction in rates. The building is now well over 100 years old and has some major problems. Repairing the building is now beyond the financial reach of the Society. The poor condition of the building is contributing to the deterioration of the collection and makes basic housekeeping extremely challenging. In addition, the layout of the collection in a series of small rooms, with much of the collection on open display is problematic for the security of the collection.

Molong respondents identified their key needs as being assistance with cataloguing and documentation, statements of significance, more volunteers, fundraising, building maintenance and new exhibitions.

Recently, major maintenance issues, insufficient funding, aging members and falling volunteer numbers, have caused the temporary closure of the museum. Collection documentation is fragmented and many items are privately owned and on loan to the museum. The current situation at Molong is critical and the collection is at risk.

Collection documentation priorities include setting up collection working space to conduct a complete audit of the collection, photographing and reconciling items against existing lists, setting aside items of low significance for future deaccessioning and eventual revision of the collection policy and return of items on loan. Some items of costume need to be put into boxes/ storage to minimise further deterioration from light and dust after decades on display.

Themes

Fairbridge Farm, clothing, medical, agriculture, domestic, dolls, lace clothing.



**Table 1 - Museum Operations**

Opening Hours	Entry Fee	Out of Hours Service	Annual Visitor No's	School Program	Item Types	On CAN	Phone /Internet
Currently not open	\$3 adult \$1 child	N/A	Not available	No	Objects, photos archives	Yes	No

**Table 2 – Finances**

Financial members	Joined last 12 months	Budget	Main source of income	Changes in last 5 years
20	0	\$3,000	Grants	Rent from restaurant (2 years) no income since May 2007

**Table 3 – Collection documentation**

Number of items	% on display	% accessioned	% catalogued	% numbered	No. Object files
2000	90%	0	0		0

% Photographed	Statements of significance	Collection Policy	De-accession Policy	Mosaic Software	Items on Mosaic
5	0	Yes	Yes	No	0



## 2.4 Yeoval & District Historical Society and Museum

This Society comes under the umbrella of the Yeoval Progress Association. Yeoval is a small community with a village population of approximately 400 and all members of the historical society are actively involved in many other community organisations. Yeoval is well known for its association with Banjo Patterson who spent a good part of his youth there. The remains of his childhood home can still be seen there.



The museum opened in 2006 and was purchased with a loan from Cabonne Council. The premises have had a long history of use as a saddler and boot-maker's shop with adjacent cottage and when purchased contained a large number of domestic objects and objects relating to the trade of boot-making.

The museum is being set up as rooms in a house and the boot-maker's shop will also be restored when maintenance issues are resolved.

Items have not been fully sorted to determine significance and to date the collection is only partially documented and without a collection policy. Further development of the museum has been delayed by building maintenance problems and associated funding applications. The YPA is repaying a loan from Cabonne Council at \$7,500 pa and also pays the contents insurance and electricity. Until the loan is repaid Cabonne Council owns the land and the building and therefore covers rates, water rates and building insurance.

Yeoval respondents identified the collection's key needs as being cataloguing and documentation, statements of significance and building maintenance and to this end priorities would include development of a collection policy, continued accessioning of collection objects, significance assessment of objects and development of object files.

### Themes

Bootmaker/saddlery, domestic life, commercial

**Table 1 - Museum Operations**

Opening Hours	Entry Fee	Out of Hours Service	Annual Visitor No's	School Program	Item Types	On CAN	Phone /Internet
10.00am – 2.00pm 1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturday	\$2 adult	Yes	300	No	Photos, maps, archives objects	No	No

**Table 2 – Finances**

Financial members	Joined last 12 months	Budget	Main source of income	Changes in last 5 years	Funds owing
18	0	\$23,000	Fundraising selling scrap steel	Museum opened 2006	\$7,500 to Cabonne Council

**Table 3 – Collection documentation**

Number of items	% on display	% accessioned	% catalogued	% numbered	No. Object files
1000	30%	50%	50%	50%	0

% Photographed	Statements of significance	Collection Policy	De-accession Policy	Mosaic Software	Items on Mosaic
10%	0	No	No	No	No

## **2.5 Cabonne Food, Wine and Cultural Centre Cudal (CFWCC)**

Cudal is a small village with a population of approximately 450. The Centre is located in a heritage building which was built in 1900 as Parker's Commercial Exchange and is now known locally as Corden's Store.

In more recent times the building was used as part of Cabonne Shire Council's works depot. It was very run down until its recent restoration by this community group. Following negotiations with Council and a successful application for funding from the State Government, the building was restored for use by the community as a cultural centre. The federation building, with its hip hung corrugated iron verandah extending over the footpath, has been a focal point of Cudal's landscape for more than 100 years and is a fine example of a country general store.

The building is large, spacious and has been restored with appropriate facilities for volunteers and customers. It now operates as a cultural centre which hosts and caters for functions, provides tourist information, a café and retail outlet, and venue for community groups and has phone and internet access. Cabonne Shire Council owns the building, but the CFWCC is responsible for the payment of utilities, insurance and reduced rates.

The organization was founded in October 2001 and the centre opened in November 2002. Opening hours are Friday – Sunday from 10.00am until 4.00pm with approximately 1500 visitors per year. The centre's main source of income is from catering and sales in the shop and café.

The centre has no paid staff and is operated by a team of approximately 25 volunteers most of whom are in the 45-70 age group and are also involved in other community organisations, so have limited time available.

The centre holds a small collection of historical items, some of which relate to the history of the building, such as the Lamsen 'flying fox' cash manager (pictured left), and some are part of the centre's décor. The collection comprises historic photographs, maps, objects, memorabilia and local history. Many of the internal shop fittings have been salvaged including cedar counters and shelving. Key needs identified by the respondents were assistance with cataloguing and collection documentation. At the time of the survey the collection was undocumented and there was no collection policy.

### **Themes**

History of Cordons Store, domestic, military and agriculture.



**Table 1 - Museum Operations**

Opening Hours	Entry Fee	Out of Hours Service	Annual Visitor No's	School Program	Item Types	On CAN	Phone /Internet
10.00am – 4.00pm Friday – Sunday	Nil	Yes	1500	If requested	Photos, maps, objects, memorabilia	No	Yes

**Table 2 – Finances**

Financial members	Joined last 12 months	Budget	Main source of income	Changes in last 5 years
N/A	N/A	\$28,000	Sales from shop, café and functions	No

**Table 3 – Collection documentation**

Number of items	% on display	% accessioned	% catalogued	% numbered	No. Object files
100	95%	0	0	0	0

% Photographed	Statements of significance	Collection Policy	De-accession Policy	Mosaic Software	Items on Mosaic
0	0	No	No	No	No

## 2.6 Age of Fishes Museum Canowindra (AOF)

Following the discovery in 1993 of thousands of Devonian fish fossils near Canowindra, the Age of Fishes Museum was built to house and display the fossils, and opened to the public in 1998. The museum and land is owned by Cabonne Council, the fossil collection is owned by the people of NSW.

The AOF is in a slightly different situation because of the scientific nature of the collection, and the funding and support received during the establishment of the museum. The collection is housed in an architect designed building which provides disability access and facilities. The building has telephone and broadband access with a small computer network and is well represented online with a dedicated website and comprehensive coverage through the Australian Museum's website. The Museum also receives annual funding from Cabonne Shire Council for one full time staff member and a permanent casual cleaner. Of all the museums in the study the Age of Fishes Museum is a beacon of excellence in its operations, community service and presentation. It is an important exemplar for other museums in the study.

The variation in volunteer numbers over time reflects the general pattern of volunteering in regional NSW, but a small core of dedicated workers enables the museum to open seven days from 10.00 – 4.00pm. This core is complemented by a larger group who periodically assist with working bees, ground and building maintenance and special events. The AOF endeavours to return support to the community by sponsoring awards and prizes for schools and participating in local events and programs.

The scientific collection is completely accessioned as part of the Australian Museum in Sydney. It is described in great detail and that information is available in a variety of formats and media. There is a Statement of Significance for the collection and the significance of individual specimens is well documented. The fossil slabs are large and unwieldy, some weighing around ½ tonne, which makes changing displays difficult and limits the space available for travelling or temporary exhibitions. The AOF is the only organisation surveyed which has a completely documented collection. It is also the only organisation surveyed which has paid staff.

The museum's main source of income is from Cabonne Council, grants, admissions and shop sales, Friends of the Fossils program and donations. It has worked towards developing a range of AOF souvenirs and literature in the form of pamphlets, information packs and a children's book, and it is also the only Accredited Level II Visitor Information Centre in Cabonne Shire. In spite of its ongoing development the Age of Fishes experiences some difficulty in attracting funding for annual operating expenses.

Respondents indicated that the key needs were development of areas such as fossil storage, outreach education programs and group marketing which are largely ignored due to lack of funding and staff resources. A five year financial plan is currently with Cabonne Shire Council in an effort to secure stable core funding for staff, building maintenance and capital works. The Age of Fishes is also in need of more volunteers and new exhibitions.

Themes:  
Evolution





Interior Age of Fishes Museum

**Table 1 - Museum Operations**

Opening Hours	Entry Fee	Out of Hours Service	Annual Visitor No's	School Program	Item Types	On CAN	Phone /Internet
10-4 Seven days	\$7.70 A \$5.50 P \$3.30 C \$19.50 F	Yes	4500	Yes	Devonian Fossil Fish	No	Yes

**Table 2 – Finances**

Financial members	Joined last 12 months	Budget	Main source of income	Changes in last 5 years
80	8	\$80,000	Funding, admission, shop	Loss of some salary funding

**Table 3 – Collection documentation**

Number of items	% on display	% accessioned	% catalogued	% numbered	No. Object files
100 slabs 3,600 specimens	20%%	100%	100%	100%	0 all data published

% Photographed	Statements of significance	Collection Policy	De-accession Policy	Mosaic Software	Items on Mosaic
100%	1	Yes	Yes	No	No



## **2.7 Eugowra Historical Museum and Bushranger Centre**

This collection has been located in a variety of premises with a number of owners/ caretakers over the past 40 years. It is now overseen by volunteers, and is under the umbrella of the Eugowra Promotion and Progress Association. It comprises elements of previously privately owned collections, donations and items on loan. Since 2003 the collection has been housed and displayed in the current museum premises, which is the rebuilt Douglas' Skins and Hides shed in the main street of Eugowra and air conditioning has been installed. The bulk of the costs for renovations to the building were covered by grants with some minor costs being met by donations and other EPPA fundraising.

Eugowra is well known as the scene of the biggest gold escort robbery when bushrangers Frank Gardiner, Ben Hall, John Gilbert and their gang held up the coach carrying £14,000 worth of gold and cash from the Forbes gold fields to the bank in Orange.

Eugowra is a small village and the volunteers are involved in many other organisations but still aim to open the Museum from Wednesday to Sunday each week from 10.00am until 4.00pm. However, occasionally the museum remains closed due to unforeseen circumstances.

The museum building is owned by Cabonne Shire Council and held in trust for the community of Eugowra. The building is reasonably secure as the windows are barred and there is a second set of full length wooden doors which close over the half glass entrance doors when the museum is not open. The main themes of the displays are pioneer, military, bushrangers, Aboriginal and town and district history.

The museum's collection is well displayed but is not catalogued in any way and documentation is scarce. At the time of the survey volunteers were unsure whether if there is a collection policy. Like all the museums surveyed, the provenance and history of most items in the collection is not on paper, but may be in the heads of the volunteers and local identities, some of whom are aged and in poor health.

Respondents identified the key needs as assistance with cataloguing and documentation, more storage space, fundraising, maintenance and development of buildings and improved collection workspace.

Collection documentation priorities include preparation of an accession register, cataloguing, researching the history and provenance of the most significant items, preparing objects files, a collection policy, and deaccessioning of items of low significance.

Themes

Bushrangers, Aboriginal artifacts, military, domestic, clothing



Eugowra Museum

**Table 1 - Museum Operations**

Opening Hours	Admittance Charge	Out of Hours Service	Annual Visitor No's	School Program	Item Types	On CAN	Phone Internet
10-4 Wednesday to Sunday	\$2 adult .50 child	Yes	400	No	Photographs, archives, objects, memorabilia	No	No

**Table 2 – Finances**

Financial members	Joined last 12 months	Budget	Main source of income	Changes in last 5 years
10	0	\$3,000	Admission, donations	Moved to new premises 2004

**Table 3 – Collection documentation**

Number of items	% on display	% accessioned	% catalogued	% numbered	No. Object files
2000	95%	0%	0%	0%	0

% Photographed	Statements of significance	Collection Policy	De-accession Policy	Mosaic Software	Items on Mosaic
0	01	No	No	No	No

### 3 Orange LGA Museums/ Collections

#### 3.1 Orange City Council Collection (OCC)

Orange City Council's museum and collection work is guided by its Museum Development Plan, organised under four key goals. These are:

Developing a Regional Museum  
Developing Local Collections and Promoting Awareness of Significant Objects  
Interpreting People, Places, Cultures and Identity  
Strengthening Museum Networks, Developing Collaborative Programs, Partnerships and Museum Skills

The Sustainable Collections Project fits into each of these key goals.

Orange City Council provides approximately \$150,000pa for museum and collection projects, including employment of a museum adviser, with funding assistance from Museums and Galleries NSW. The museum program undertakes a range of museum and collection projects, as well as providing training and other support for museum and heritage volunteers in the region. In addition, Council also provides free accommodation for Orange and District Historical Society and storage of their collection, and free accommodation / meeting space for the Marsden Memorial Rural History Research Centre.

Key projects in the museum program in the last few years include the *Watermarks* exhibition and website, and the publication, exhibition and website *Half a World Away, postwar migration to the Orange District, 1948-1965*.<sup>4</sup> These exhibitions were developed in collaboration with Orange Regional Gallery and Library, and with a range of individuals and community groups from Orange and surrounding areas. Council is planning to develop a museum wing in the cultural precinct with the Orange City Library and Gallery.



<sup>4</sup> [www.watermarks.com.au](http://www.watermarks.com.au) and [www.halfaworldaway.com.au](http://www.halfaworldaway.com.au)

## Orange Regional Library Art Gallery (ORLAG)

The growth of Orange over the last 30 years and the improvement and replacement of buildings and services has meant that the Council has become the custodian of many heritage items relating to local history and Council's work and services. These items are additional to the collection of photographs, maps, books and documents which are already accessioned in the Library's Local Studies collection. A heritage collection policy (2005) provides a structured framework for the strategic development of Council's heritage collections, with a particular emphasis on complementing collection themes that are well covered by other museums and historical societies in the district.

Orange City Council's heritage collection is held throughout its buildings and in a range of Council departments. Parts of the collection are on display in various locations and items are also used for temporary exhibitions in the Library, Gallery and Visitor Information Centre. There is a small exhibition called *Fruitful Landscapes* in the Visitor Information Centre, and a large display case with heritage items and civic gifts in the foyer of the main Council building. Temporary exhibitions such as the *Watermarks* project, exploring the centrality of water in the region's development, have been instrumental in identifying heritage items related to Council's work and services. Some of these items are on Council's website or related exhibition websites.

While Orange City Council has a strong policy and planning framework for its collections, heritage items held in various locations around Council's offices and sites remain substantially undocumented. The priority is to locate, accession, number and photograph all items in the collection and document this information in an accession register, through object files and onto the Mosaic Database which will be an important community resource for local and regional studies. This will make Council's distributed collections more secure, and facilitate access to the collection on line, with linkages with related research and exhibition projects.



Half A World Away Exhibition held at the Orange Regional Gallery



### 3.2 Orange & District Historical Society (O&DHS)

The Orange & District Historical Society was formed in May 1949 and met at members' homes before moving to the Cultural Centre (old infants' school) in 1968 where the first museum was established. The Society moved to McNamara Lane in 1986 in the former library building, and the museum operated there until 1999 when the site was sold for redevelopment. The collection has been in storage for approximately 8 years, held partly in a store at the rear of their current base in March Street, with larger items held at another site, pending consolidation of the collection at March Street. Some of the smaller items such as books and photographs are stored in the March Street cottage.

The Society participates in a range of community and heritage activities including Heritage Week, Australia Day and Banjo Patterson's birthday and it works closely with other history groups such as The Marsden Group and Orange Family History Group and the National Trust.

The Society's cottage premises in March Street are owned and maintained by Orange City Council and are fully alarmed with window bars and deadlocks on the doors. The Council has also paid for collection storage to date and the building of a collection storage facility at the rear of the March Street premises. O&DHS is responsible for half the utilities, ie. electricity, gas, water. The Society operates on a small budget of approx. \$2,000 derived mainly from membership fees, research, donations and the occasional grant.



March Street, Cottage.

The Society holds items of local and national significance relating to the discovery of the first payable goldfield in Australia, which led to the beginning of the Australian gold rushes and the development of this region and Australia. It also holds many objects relating to the history of Orange and its development as a centre of agriculture and commerce. The collection will not be on permanent display in the foreseeable future, but items are used for temporary exhibitions from time to time.

The current fragmented status of collection documentation reflects the disjointed history of the Society's location and circumstances, resulting in a variety of catalogues and numbering sequences most of which do not interrelate. There is no accession register and little documentation of the history and provenance of the collection. O&DHS has a financial membership of 38 but has experienced a drop in volunteer numbers due to aging and ill health. Approximately 8 members volunteer on a semi-regular basis but this number also



varies and remaining members are having difficulty in dealing with some aspects of collection management to ill health and other demands on their time.

Key needs for the collection were identified as assistance with cataloguing and documentation, statements of significance, more volunteers, more storage space, fundraising and exhibition space.

The process of moving the objects from the current storage site and relocating them at the March Street premises is an opportunity to develop a coherent set of collection records, including an accession register, photographs of each item and statements of significance for key items. Improved catalogue records will facilitate collection analysis and deaccessioning of items of low significance, as well as improving access for further research of object provenance and history.

Themes

Domestic, people, business and gold mining.

**Table 1 - Museum Operations**

Opening Hours	Entry Fee	Out of Hours Service	Annual Visitor No's	School Program	Item Types	On CAN	Phone/ Internet
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Volunteer visits to schools	Objects, maps, photos archives machinery, buildings	No	No

**Table 2 – Finances**

Financial members	Joined last 12 months	Budget	Main source of income	Changes in last 5 years
38	12	\$2,000	Membership Fees, research and donations	No changes

**Table 3 – Collection documentation**

Number of items	% on display	% accessioned	% catalogued	% numbered	No. Object files
2000 ?	0%	0%	10% ?	?	8

% Photographed	Statements of significance	Collection Policy	De-accession Policy	Mosaic Software	Items on Mosaic
10%	0	Yes	Yes	Yes	400 books

## **4 Survey Analysis**

### **4.1 - Museum Operations**

The volunteer run organisations' collections fell broadly into two groups; those established more than 40 years ago; Orange, Molong, Canowindra and Eugowra, and those established within the last 5 years; Yeoval and Cudal.

Apart from the Age of Fishes Museum in Canowindra, which has a full time manager and a cleaner, participating organisations were entirely volunteer run. Those with collections on display attempted to open their museums to visitors for a few hours most weekends, although respondents indicated that this was not always possible. The exception was Eugowra which currently opens 5 days each week from 10am – 4 pm. All respondents indicated that collections were made available to visitors and researchers out of hours.

The collections of Orange and Molong Historical Societies are not currently on display and Molong Museum is temporarily closed for maintenance.

All respondents indicated that opening the museum to visitors was only a small part of the necessary work which included, cleaning, compiling rosters, maintaining and changing displays, fundraising, building and ground maintenance, research and organising special events.

Phone and internet connections were not available in most of the small museums. Respondents indicated that costs were prohibitive and not all volunteers were familiar with computers and internet access.

## **4.2 - Collection Themes**

Many areas of duplication in collection themes were indicated in the surveys (Table 1) and better collection documentation will undoubtedly reveal duplicate objects held within each collection as well as across the region. Identifying this duplication will enable museums to deaccession duplicate objects thereby making better use of the space and resources available. Key areas of duplication include domestic life, farming technology and medical.

Current political boundaries did not exist in the historical context of these collection objects. The characters, stories and themes are often common to more than one town or region and better collection documentation will enable these commonalities to be identified and allow museums to work collaboratively towards better exhibitions and displays.

**Table 1 Museum operations and Collection themes**

Museum	Opening hours	Entry Fee	Out of hours services	Annual visitor numbers	School program available	Item types	Collection themes (will be clarified as project proceeds)	On CAN	Phone/ Internet
Orange Historical	Not open	n/a	n/a	n/a	Volunteer visits to schools	Objects, maps, photos, archives, large items	Domestic, garden, people, business, gold mining	No	No
Orange City Council	Library and VIC hours	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Objects, maps, photos, archives	Domestic, garden, public services & buildings	No	Yes
Canowindra Historical	2 hours Sat. am 2 hours Sunday pm	\$3 adult \$1 child	Yes	500	No	Objects, maps, photos archives machinery, buildings	Wedding gowns, dental surgery, school room, agriculture, bushrangers, domestic, clothing	Yes	No
Molong Historical	Not open	\$3 adult \$1 child	n/a at present	not given	n/a at present	Photographs, archives, memorabilia, objects	Fairbridge Farm, clothing, medical, agriculture, domestic, dolls, lace, clothing	No	Soon
Eugowra Historical	10-4 Wednesday to Sunday	\$2 adult .50 child	Yes	400	No	Photographs, archives, objects, memorabilia	Bushrangers, Aboriginal artifacts, military, domestic, clothing	No	No
Yeoval Historical	10-2 1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturday	\$2 adult	Yes	300	No	Photographs, maps, archives, objects, memorabilia, large items	Bootmaker/saddlery, domestic, commercial	No	No
CFWCC Cultural	10-4 Friday to Sunday	Nil	Yes	1500	If requested	Photographs, maps, objects, memorabilia	History of Cordons Store, domestic, military, agriculture	No	Yes
AOF Scientific	10-4 Seven days	\$7.70 A \$5.50 P \$3.30 C \$19.50 F	Yes	4600	Yes	Devonian Fossil Fish	Evolution	No	Yes

### 4.3 - Finances

As can be seen from Table 2 below, most of the small museums list membership fees, admissions and donations as among their main sources of income and operate on a small annual budget of less than \$4,000. Notable exceptions are the CFWCC at Cudal which operates as a cultural centre and the AOF at Canowindra which is open 7 days a week and operates a retail outlet on the premises.

Yeoval Progress Association has purchased the museum premises with a loan provided by Cabonne Council and has a commitment to meet repayments and Molong Historical Society had the added income from rental of part of their premises to a restaurant for two years. Otherwise most organisations experienced no significant changes in their annual budget over the last 5 years but all cited urgent building maintenance as being beyond their financial reach.

**Table 2 - Finances**

	Financial members	Joined last 12 months	Budget	Main source of income	Changes in last 5 years
Orange Historical Society	38	12	\$2000	M/ship fees, research, donations	No significant changes
Orange City	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Canowindra Historical Society	100+	10	\$4,000	Books, functions, m/ship fees, admission, cottage rental, funding	Differing annual maintenance costs
Molong Historical Society	20	0	\$3,000	Grants	Rent from restaurant (2 yrs), no income since May 2007
Eugowra Progress Association	10	0	\$3,000	Admission, donations	Moved to new premises 2004
Yeoval Progress Association	18	0	\$23,000	Fundraising, selling scrap steel	Museum opened 2006
Cabonne Cultural Centre	n/a	n/a	\$28,000	Sales shop, café, functions	No significant changes
Age Of Fishes – Fossile Museum	80	8	\$80,000	Funding, admission, shop	Loss of some salary funding

#### **4.5 - Collection documentation**

Results of the survey indicated that collection documentation, if it exists at all, is incomplete and fragmented in most cases. From a total of approximately 18,000 items held in 7 collections, less than 20% has been catalogued. Three organisations have collection and deaccession policies, however, none had deaccessioned any items during the last 12 months.

Three museums have the Mosaic software and, of those, Orange has catalogued approximately 300 books, Canowindra has not yet catalogued anything and Orange City Council's program will commence as part of this Project.

Respondents were unsure of how to assess the significance of objects and often had differing opinions about the most significant objects in their collections. Canowindra HS and Orange HS have commenced compiling object files for their most significant items but the only historical statement of significance in the region relates to an item in Orange City Council's collection.

Volunteers expressed concern at the high percentage of objects which had to remain on permanent display due to lack of appropriate storage space. They are concerned about the deterioration of objects, such as clothing and leather, being continually subjected to extremes of temperature, light, dust and insects.

They were also concerned about the security of the collection when museums were opened without sufficient volunteers to supervise visitors as they move around the displays. Many indicated that alternative exits had to be blocked or some displays closed off to limit opportunities for theft. In some cases this creates further health and safety issues in buildings which are ill equipped to cope with emergencies.

Much of the provenance and history of objects held in these collections is oral and has not been recorded. Many volunteers expressed regret at the loss of information resulting from long term volunteers leaving the area or dying, taking with them the only information about items in the collection. Poor collection documentation makes the retrieval of that lost information almost impossible.

The collection of the Age of Fishes Museum comprises approximately 100 fossil slabs, some weighing in excess of ½ tonne. It has a well researched and documented collection with collection and deaccession policies and a Collection Statement of Significance. Information regarding the significance of individual specimens and the collection as a whole is available in a range of printed formats and online.

**Table 3 - Collection Documentation**

Estimate	OHS	OCC	Canowindra	Molong	Eugowra	Yeoval	Cudal	Total	AOF*
<b>Number of items in collection</b>	9000	200 (?)	3350	2000	2000 (?)	1000 (?)	100	17650	100 slabs, 3600 specimens
<b>Percentage of collection on display</b>	0	?	85%	90%	95%	30%	95%		20%
<b>Percentage accessioned</b>	0	0	85%	0	0	50%	0	3340	100%
<b>Percentage catalogued</b>	10%	0	85%	Old lists	0	50%	0	3430	100%
<b>Percentage numbered</b>	Old	0	85%	?	0	50%	0	3340	100%
<b>Number of object files</b>	8	6	20	0	0	0	0	28	0 all data published
<b>Number photographed</b>	10%	Unknown	5%	5%	0	10%	0	1250	100%
<b>Statements of Significance</b>	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Collection policy</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unsure	No	No	3	Yes
<b>Deaccession policy</b>	Yes	Yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	3	yes
<b>Mosaic software</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	3	No
<b>Items on Mosaic</b>	400 books	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		n/a

NB \* Figures for the Age of Fishes Museum have not been included in the estimated totals for collection documentation. Its circumstances differ substantially from other volunteer run historical museums and inclusion of those figures would skew the result considerably.

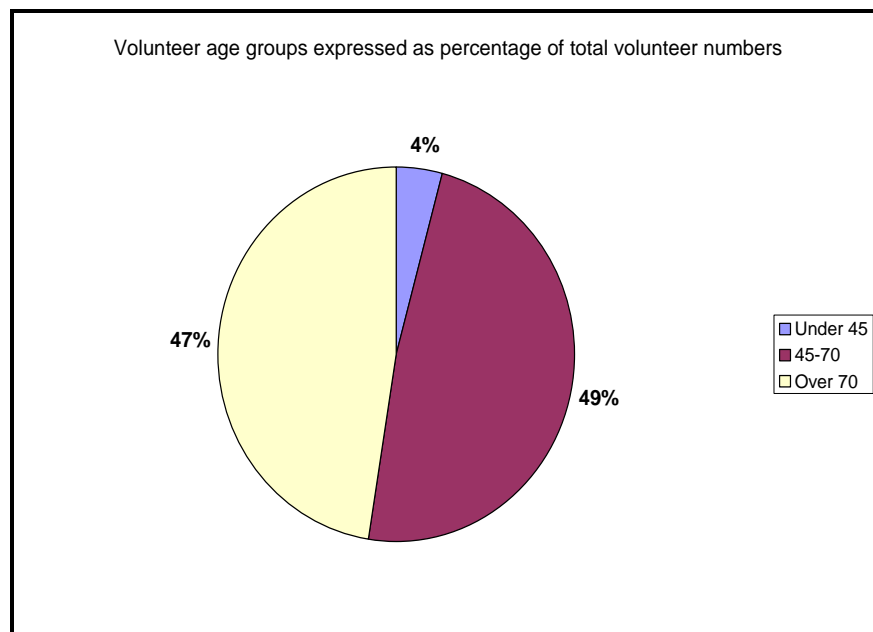
## 4.6 Volunteers

Competition for volunteers is extreme, especially in smaller communities. Volunteering in museums is onerous, often uncomfortable and volunteers are asked to work in spaces that are dirty, hot in summer, freezing in winter, lacking basic amenities. The work required is overwhelming in the scale, range of jobs and lack of resources to meet minimum standards museum practice. At the same time professional standards and expectations are rising, enlarging the gulf between expectations and reality. Volunteering in community museums is in many cases unrewarding as many volunteers lack the skills and resources to do the range of work that is now expected.

Very few museums are attracting new volunteers and many lack the skills and education for the demanding tasks involved. Older volunteers are often more interested in staffing the desk and interacting with visitors and often lack the skills and interest in collection research and documentation.

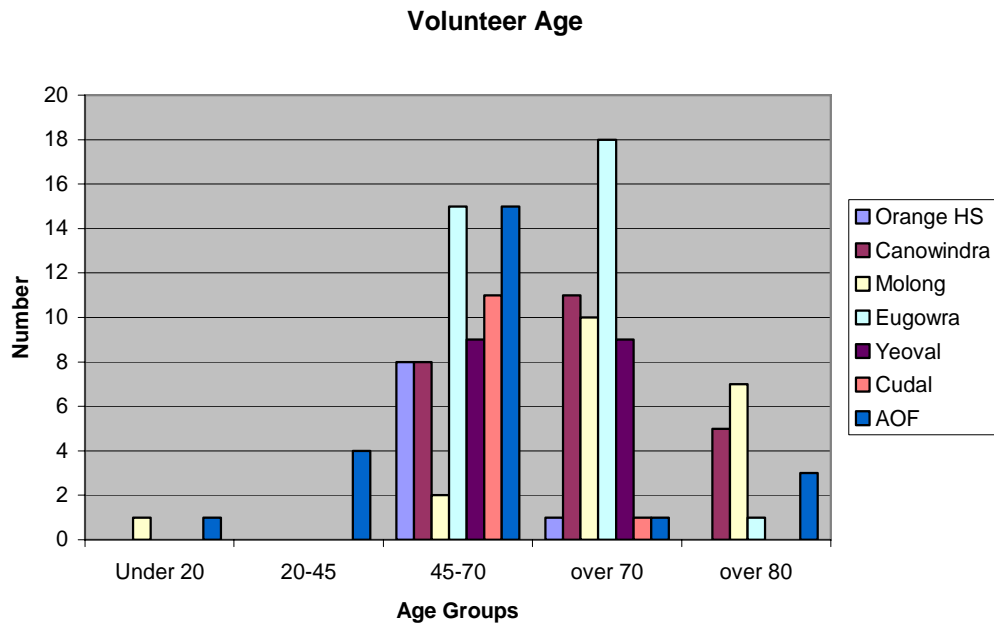
Volunteers from all participating organisations were overworked, involved in other community organisations and in some cases exhausted. The survey indicated that only 4% of volunteers were under the age of 45 while 47% were over 70 (and a substantial number [Chart 2] were over 80). As volunteer numbers drop due to aging and ill health the workload increases. All respondents acknowledged a need for better collection documentation but some were daunted by the size of the task, exhausted and desperate to retire completely or at least to the back benches.

**Chart 1 Volunteer Age Groups as a percentage**





**Chart 2 below –Volunteer Age Groups**



It was felt that this air of desperation was possibly transmitted to potential volunteers, and when added to the formidable workload, unsuitable work space and lack of facilities, served to deter newcomers. However, inappropriate working conditions are not the only issue, as is indicated by survey. The Age of Fishes Museum has very modern facilities but still has difficulty attracting long term volunteers. This reflects a general trend throughout regional NSW where the next generation of volunteers is still working, traveling or caring for other family members. The few potential new recruits have many community organisations clamouring for their support and often choose to volunteer on a one-off casual basis such as working bees.

## **4.7 Buildings**

Many of the museums are based in significant heritage buildings. Heritage buildings do attract visitors to the museums, but they can also add to their problems. Depending on the building, these problems may include:

- Small spaces that make supervision of the exhibit areas and collections difficult, exacerbating security risks to the collection
- The age of the buildings means they need higher levels of maintenance and repair
- Maintenance and repairs to heritage buildings can be more expensive and require careful planning and supervision if the significance of the building is to be retained
- There is limited grant funding for work on heritage buildings, especially those of local significance
- There may be conflict between the needs of the museum and the heritage values of the building, leading to unsympathetic adaptations over time
- The museums do not have the funds or skills to manage a program of asset maintenance

The most serious building problems are facing Molong Historical Society where the poor condition of the building is putting the collection at risk.

## **4.8 Interpretation**

Almost all the museums need professional assistance to improve the interpretation of their collections. In many museums the interpretation is extremely basic, amounting to simple labelling of objects rather than the interpretation of a theme or story relevant to the mission of the museum.

While a number of the museums have a brief for the collecting and interpretation of local history in their mission, this rarely translates into a coherent presentation of local history in the museum. However the collections do hold many items of great significance for the history and heritage of their area. As the Sustainable Collections Project develops, the opportunity is to work with the museums to identify and research these items and plan for new displays that will do justice to the distinctive history and identity of each community.

#### 4.9 Key needs

Results of this section of the survey replicate the areas of needs identified by Kylie Winkworth<sup>1</sup> in 2005 as being critical to the development of sustainable collections in regional NSW, and ensuring their cultural and economic value into the future.

See 1.5 for summary of key issues

**Table 4 – Key Needs**

	Orange	Orange City	Canowindra	Molong	Eugowra	Yeoval	Cudal	AOF
<b>Cataloguing &amp; documentation</b>								
<b>Statements of Significance</b>								
<b>More volunteers</b>								
<b>More storage space</b>								
<b>Fundraising</b>								
<b>Building maintenance</b>								
<b>Improved facilities</b>								
<b>New exhibitions</b>								
<b>Volunteer training</b>			Mosaic					Customer service

Without exception, respondents indicated a need for assistance with historical collection cataloguing and documentation, significance assessment and Statements of Significance. The Age of Fishes, Canowindra, Eugowra and Molong Museums also listed building maintenance as one of the collection's key needs.

<sup>1</sup> Winkworth, K. *Fixing the slums of Australian Museums*, Museums Australia Conference, 2005

The collections of Canowindra and Eugowra Historical Societies are housed in smaller premises. These respondents indicated an urgent need for improved collection work

space and storage facilities and in Canowindra facilities for the volunteers, such as running water, toilets and temperature control.

Volunteer training was not considered to be important to most organisations at this time although Canowindra requested Mosaic training as there is only one volunteer with that knowledge. However, at the time of the survey, they were unable to name any other volunteer available to participate in the training. This highlighted another issue which is quite common among older volunteer groups; many are not computer literate and have no desire to be. The Age of Fishes indicated that volunteer training in customer service would be appropriate for their organisation.

Orange, Canowindra and Molong all expressed the need for more and younger volunteers. These societies have been in operation for more than 40 years and in some cases their volunteers are the original founding members. (See Volunteer Section 2.6 ).

## 5 Preliminary Conclusions and Recommendations

Survey results indicate that there is an urgent need for development of collection documentation and management in the majority of organisations surveyed as well as a need for attention to maintenance and facilities in the museum premises.

Of particular urgency are the needs of collection with the historical Molong and Orange Historical Societies wherein collection documentation is fragmented, there is a great deal of unrecorded oral history, and the depletion of volunteer numbers may threaten the future significance of those collections.

Eugowra is a collection without any documentation and for that reason also requires urgent attention, but the volunteer situation at Eugowra is slightly more buoyant.

The new collection at Yeoval is gradually being accessioned but volunteers need guidance with assessing the significance of objects as many of the newly acquired items may be of low significance and need not be accessioned to the collection.

CFWCC holds a very small collection and is capable of progressing towards complete documentation with minimum guidance and assistance.

Documentation of the collection of the Age of Fishes is complete but the organisation will benefit from future collection collaboration and museum networking.

Documentation of the collection of Orange City Council will commence as soon as possible as part of Stage One of this Project.

### 5.1 Recommendations – for further discussion

Molong and District Historical Society: a stock take of their collection, reconciling incomplete collection records and lists, dismantling displays and packing costumes into conservation boxes, moving items at risk, identifying loan items for return and items in poor condition for possible deaccessioning.

Canowindra and District Historical Society: update accession records, check each item is numbered and photographed, research on the provenance of the most significant objects, continue developing object files, statements of significance, identifying items for possible deaccessioning, assessment of the archives.

Eugowra: establish accession register, complete accession sheets, number and photograph items, research provenance, identify donors, establish object files for the most significant items, and adopt a collection policy

Yeoval: update/ complete accession register, accession sheets, number and photograph each item, identify and research the most significant items, draft and adopt a collection policy.

Cudal: develop accession register, number and photograph items, identify significant items, draft and adopt a collection policy.

Orange and District Historical Society: reconcile and upgrade basic accession records, create an accession register, accession sheets, photographing and numbering objects and identifying items for deaccessioning before moving part of the collection into new storage.

To support this program of work targeted training and workshops will be offered on assessing significance and related priorities. The first workshop was held in February with good feedback from participants.

## **Glossary**

### **Accession**

To register an item into a collection

Accessioning is the process of registering an item into a collection. This generally includes entering the item into a bound register with a sequential numbering system, numbering the item with the same number from the register, briefly describing the item so it can be readily identified, and recording the details of the donor or vendor, including name, address and date of acquisition.

### **Catalogue**

To document and describe an item in a collection, or the record of a collection

Cataloguing creates a detailed record of an item in a collection so it can then be used and retrieved for a variety of purposes. Information documented in the catalogue usually includes the item number, the appearance of the item, materials, maker, design, date of manufacture, history and provenance, condition, exhibition history, acquisition details, index terms and location record.

### **Collection Policy**

A publicly accessible document that guides the development and management of a museum's collection, specifying why, what, where, how and when the museum collects, and how and why items may be deaccessioned from the collection

The collection policy includes a range of clauses or policy statements that provide an ethical framework for making sound decisions about the development and use of the collection.

### **De-accession**

To de-register an item from a collection

Deaccessioning is the process of de-registering an object from the collection for clearly stated reasons, and disposing of it in accordance with approved policies and procedures spelt out in the collection policy or in a separate deaccessioning policy.

### **Interpretation**

All of the ways of presenting the significance of an item or collection, from simple object labels to exhibitions, education programs and web-based resources.

### **Mosaic**

A proprietary computer-based cataloguing program and database for small museum collections

### **Provenance**

The documented chain of ownership of an item or collection, or more broadly the life history of an item including previous owners, origin, and context of use.

Provenance is crucial to establishing the historical significance of items in local collections. Unprovenanced items are generally of lesser significance than equivalent provenanced items.

#### Significance

The meaning and values of an item or collection or what makes it important.

Significance is the historic, aesthetic, scientific and social values that an object has for past, present and future generations.

#### Statement of Significance

A reasoned readable summary of meaning, values and importance of an object or collection.

A statement of significance makes the importance of objects and collections accessible to a wide audience.