

DEACCESSIONING GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC ART IN DAREBIN

Purpose of Guidelines

The City of Darebin's vision and approach to public art, or art in the public realm, is guided by its *Public Art Framework 2019*. The internal process for commissioning, display, acquisition, and maintenance of public artworks and objects is directed by *Darebin's Public Art Guidelines 2021*. This Deaccessioning addendum to those documents provides criteria and a series of steps for artworks to be removed safely when required, and with respect to the artists and communities involved.

To deaccession an artwork or object from a public collection is to officially remove it from the registered holdings of the collection, either for sale, donation or disposal.

Deaccessioning is an integral part of collection management and enables the evolution of the collection and the best use of available resources. Deaccessioning is not a method for raising revenue, and any money generated by the sale of deaccessioned works will be used for the care and development of the collection. Councillors, Council staff, volunteers, advisory committee members and their families are prohibited from purchasing, or otherwise obtaining, an object that has been deaccessioned from the collection.

In cases where an artwork poses an immediate risk to public health and safety, it may be removed without consultation.

Public art

Public art is defined as art specifically created to be experienced in the public realm outside the internal walls of a gallery or museum context. The work can be permanent such as sculpture, temporary or ephemeral such as an installation, a performance, or an event-based work. By its nature public art is accessible, free and available for all individuals and communities to experience and enjoy. The development of public art is a creative process led by the artist.

Criteria for Deaccessioning Public Art

The Darebin Public Art Collection will be subject to periodic review to assess its relevance to the Public Art Framework 2019.

Works will be considered for deaccessioning against the following criteria:

- **Artistic merit:** The item does not align with the Darebin Public Art Framework 2019, would not be commissioned today, is irrelevant and/or lacking in originality and craftsmanship.
- **End of life:** The item is beyond its intended lifespan; the lifetime of the artwork has expired.
- **Poor condition:** The item is compromised by theft, loss, vandalism, damage or serious deterioration in condition and/or is damaged beyond repair.

- **Conservation:** The restoration costs are ongoing, greater than 50% of the value of the work and/or are beyond the means of Darebin Council.
- **No known provenance:** The item lacks a clear legal title or supporting information to enable proper identification and establish its relevance to the collection.
- **Context:** Significant changes to the environment in which the item is placed compromise the original intention and artistic integrity of the work.
- **Copies:** The item is a duplicate or reproduction of work already in the collection.
- **Exchange:** There is an opportunity to upgrade the item through exchange.
- **Ownership:** The artist makes a well substantiated request for the return of the item, or the item should be returned to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or other community it came from.
- **Safety:** The item poses a risk to public safety, which cannot be mitigated or resolved.

Works that demonstrate multiple criteria listed above may be prioritized for deaccessioning. Among the listed criteria, *safety*, *poor condition* and *conservation* may be more heavily weighted than other criteria in the assessment of an artwork.

Steps for Deaccessioning Public Art

1. Nomination by Council's curator of a registered item for deaccessioning with a clear rationale provided for their recommendation.
2. Gather evidence to support the proposal, which may include a professional assessment of the item by a public art expert.
3. Consult with internal stakeholders to determine if there are any impediments to the removal of the item, the best method for its removal, and if there are other works being planned for that precinct.
4. Contact the artist, copyright holder and/or donor (in writing) to advise them of the recommendation and determine whether they would like the item returned to them.
5. Determine community interest and consult with external stakeholders who may be impacted or will need to be informed.
6. Confirm the method of removal of the item; transfer, recycle, return, sale, or destruction, and the budget required.
7. Draft a deaccession report which includes:
 - Full details of the artwork
 - Reasons for the recommendation & alignment to deaccessioning criteria
 - Assessment by external public art expert (if required)
 - Internal stakeholder consultation, including contractors

- External stakeholders, including the artist
 - Method of removal and budget
 - Community consultation and/or notification plan
 - Total budget required and funding options
 - Images, if relevant
8. Present the Deaccession Report to the Darebin Art & Heritage Advisory Panel for assessment and approval.
 9. Present a report to ELT and/or Council outlining the recommendation to deaccession the item.
 10. Finalise and deliver a communications plan including community consultation or notification actions as required. This may include:
 - Signage at the site
 - Letterbox drop
 - Website information
 - Social media
 - Your Say Darebin
 11. Undertake photographic documentation of the item for archival purposes and upload a record of the provenance and deaccessioning documentation to the appropriate archive files and the Darebin Arts website.
 12. Deaccession the item from the collection and remove the item from the public domain.

Methods of Removal

The removal of a deaccession item will be determined on a case-by-case basis, and may include:

- Transfer to an appropriate public gallery or collection by gift
- Return to the original donor
- Return to the artist or their family
- Sale by public auction with monies set aside for future acquisitions through the acquisitions budget
- Use as an educative / interpretive tool
- Destruction or recycling

References

This document was developed with reference to approaches taken by other Councils, museums and galleries, and professional associations.