**Bendigo Historical Society (BHS) Collection Rationalisation Project 2019**

**Public statement**

The aim of this article is to inform all BHS members and the Bendigo community about an important project that is being undertaken by the Committee of the BHS.

It is important that members understand that the BHS is following well established procedures for managing its Collection. The local community has supported the BHS by donating many significant items over the years. This has contributed to the development of a rich ‘community collection’ that is in the custodianship of the current BHS Committee of Management.

The BHS has been operating for over 60 years. During that time, it has amassed a large collection of artefacts from a variety of sources. Many are of great significance to the history of Bendigo. However, there are some items that have little or no relation to Bendigo and these are now occupying valuable storage space. As BHS members would be aware, limited storage space is a major issue for the Society.

The latest report on the storage needs and condition of the Collection was made to the City of Greater Bendigo Council in 2017. This report and others before it, recommended that the Collection be reviewed with the aim of removing items that have no connection to the history and heritage of Bendigo. Volunteers at the Nolan Street storage facility are in the process of identifying items that should be removed from the Collection.

Our Deaccessioning Policy states that deaccessioning may occur when

* The item is clearly owned by the Society.
* The item does not comply with the Collection Policy.
* The item is of no further relevance or use to the purposes of the collection.
* The item is damaged beyond repair.
* The item has been stolen with no hope of return.
* The Society has an identical item of higher quality, with identical provenance.
* The item in question has no provenance nor known local connection
* There is no Deed of Gift for the item and there is a reasonable and substantiated request for return from the donor.
* Conservation and storage costs for the item are beyond the means of the Society.
* All legal requirements are met.

Non-compliant items consume valuable resources and it is the best possible museum practice to rationalise the Collection by removing non-compliant items.

The BHS is rigorous in its processes regarding the selection of non-compliant items. Our ‘Deaccessioning Policy’ requires us to establish a transparent process for removing items from the Collection. Most of the items that will be considered for deaccessioning have no documentation, records of acquisition or provenance. This information is essential for historical collections.

The project, after preliminary research, will begin in September/October 2019 and should take about six months to complete. There is a strict protocol that determines how the items will be disposed of, once they are de-accessioned. Further information will be provided as the project progresses.