

Tamworth Region Museum and Archive Strategy 2024/25 – 2029/30



Tamworth Regional Council acknowledges the Gamilaroi/Kamilaroi people, who are the Traditional Custodians of this land. In presenting this Museum and Archive Strategy, we would like to pay respect to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in and visiting our region.



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Executive Summary

This Tamworth Region Museum and Archive Strategy for 2024/25 – 2029/30 outlines a framework for the support of ten public museum, archive and social history collections located in the Tamworth Regional Council catchment area and associated with Tamworth Regional Council. The intention of the document is to create a blueprint for the ongoing support and development of each unique collection and to identify the most effective way for Tamworth Regional Council to support and resource the preservation of the region's heritage.

As a regional strategy, this document identifies common needs and priorities across the collections and complements, rather than replaces, plans and documentation relating to individual collections and organisations.

The strategy was developed via consultation with key stakeholders in early 2024 and is supported by prior research and consultation contained in existing collection and community documentation, including Collection Significance Assessments, Strategic Plans, the Community Strategic Plan, the Tamworth Region Creative Communities Plan and various other council planning documents.

The focus of the strategy is to consolidate work completed by all of the partners to date and to strengthen networks across the region.



Vision and Purpose

To provide access to heritage and cultural resources that inspires, enriches and informs the community; enhances experiences through our museums and archives; and is a model in the delivery of cultural services to the community.

We will deliver this Vision through an integrated approach which fosters:

- Sustainability
- Curiosity
- Collaboration



Importance of the Museums and Heritage Collections to Tamworth

The combined collections of Tamworth tell stories about the region's communities and convey community aspirations. They provide a sense of place and historical, contemporary and future contexts for communities. They record the region's history, generate and support creative processes that contribute to economic, social and health-related wellbeing, and help to build resilient and sustainable communities.

These collections combine, like pieces of a jigsaw, to provide a clear overview of our origins and contribute to the community's collective memory. They are tourist attractions, research centres and social hubs, and are a part of essential cultural infrastructure. The Tamworth Region Museum and Archive Strategy will assist us to explore our region's identity by working in partnership with our volunteer-run museums and archives to explore what is unique and significant in our local history and museum collections. This strategy can assist to:

- tell the unique stories in each museum's collection that explore local identity and place, as part of the wider story of our region's history
- transport the viewer from passive observation to active participation by providing engagement with exhibitions and their collections
- engage specialists in the field to generate innovative exhibition design, technology components and exhibition content
- provide opportunities to investigate each museum or archive collection and to be exposed to their associated collection stories
- capture new audiences who would not typically seek out exhibitions or collections and provide exposure to and engagement with meaningful exhibitions and programs
- provide access to and engagement with each museum or archive collection in order to educate and create greater community understanding.

Our Outgoing Strategy

– Summary of Achievements

The outgoing strategy has provided a strong foundation on which the Tamworth region museum and archive network can build into the future. It is noted that the five key focus areas outlined in the inaugural strategy (2019–2024) remain current for museum development in the region and thus are carried forward in this updated strategy document.

This document replaces the 2019–2024 Tamworth Regional Museums Engagement Strategy, under which the Tamworth museums community attained impressive results. The following are key achievements obtained under the outgoing strategy.

- The establishment of the Tamworth Regional Museums Advisor Program as a support for collection custodians
- The creation and implementation of a Hub and Spoke model to support museums throughout the LGA.
- The migration from manual cataloguing to a digital Collection Management System (CMS) has provided online accessibility to collections. The resulting continuity of software has established a community of practice in the region.
- Successful digitisation funding through Create NSW RCF and the establishment of a permanent ongoing digitisation role at Council supporting heritage collections.
- The transfer of the Australian Country Music Hall of Fame collections and management to Council has secured valuable collections for the region.
- Support for volunteer-managed collections has increased through dedicated training and networking opportunities.
- Risk minimisation has been achieved through comprehensive collection documentation and subsequent insurance coverage across all Council-owned collections.
- Consolidation of the TRC Museum Operations and Visitor Engagement Officer position to support museum operations and audience engagement.
- The generation of a combined TRC museum and archive collection policy and associated procedures
- The facilitation of strategic plans for volunteer-managed collections
- Capital works projects to support exhibition extension and storage at several sites, made possible with external funding sourced by Council
- Targeted audience development and promotional initiatives, such as the annual Tamworth Heritage Festival.



The Collections – Areas of Operation

Despite a broad geographical spread and disparate material composition and collection content, common themes are evident across the ten collections. These include themes of City of Music, City of Light, and Mining and Minerals.

Across the collections, each museum model is slightly different, with organisational structures ranging from Section 355 Committees through to independent, incorporated bodies, and some co-locating with Visitor Information Services, as demonstrated below:

- Tamworth Powerstation Museum (Council Owned)
- Australian Country Music Collections (Council Owned)
- Nandewar Historical Society (Incorporated Body)
- Manilla Heritage Museum (Incorporated Body, Co-located with a Visitor Information Outlet)
- Rocks, Gems, Minerals and Fossil Collections (Council Owned, Co-located with a Visitor Information Outlet)
- Moonbi Museum (Section 355 Committee)
- Tamworth Regional Film and Sound Archive (Section 355 Committee)
- Tamworth Historical Society (Incorporated Body)
- Tamworth Regional Astronomy Club (Incorporated Body)
- Tamworth and District Family History Group (Incorporated Body).

Collections Overview

The **Tamworth Powerstation Museum** celebrates the history of Tamworth becoming the first town in Australia to be lit by municipal electric street lighting in 1888. Established in 1988, the museum is located on the site where the 1888 steam engines powered the street lighting system. The 1907 Power Station/Municipal Electric Showroom building has been refurbished to display a range of electrical exhibits.

The **Australian Country Music Collections**, including the Australian Country Music Hall of Fame, the National Guitar Museum and the Country Music Wax Museum, which exhibit an unmatched collection of memorabilia from Australian country music artists, including clothing, musical instruments and other collectibles from the earliest pioneers of Australian country music. (All Collections Council owned since 2020.)

The **Nandewar Historical Society** in Barraba exists to preserve the history of Barraba and the surrounding district and encompasses the history of early pioneering families and the area's mining, agricultural and military heritage. In recent years, TRC has offered significant support to the Society in the form of upgrades and refurbishment of the museum buildings.

The **Manilla Heritage Museum** houses the collections of local history buffs, including stories, documents, artefacts and memorabilia. The museum complex includes the historic Royce's House (built in 1884), Manilla Rural Museum, Yarramanbully Schoolhouse, Harry Burrell Memorial Garden and Manilla Chinese Memorial Garden.

The **Rocks, Gems, Minerals and Fossils Collections** comprise the Gil Bennet Collection at Nundle and the Chris Bowman Collection. Gilmore Thomas Bennet spent years collecting the unique and wondrous selection of fine stones and rocks on display. The Chris Bowman Collection includes exceptional mineral specimens collected between the late 1800s and early 1900s from the New England/Tamworth district. It is currently on display at the Tamworth Regional Astronomy Centre. Many of the specimens are of great historical importance.

The **Moonbi Museum** displays history from Moonbi and environs. It includes photos and implements from the time of settlement in 1856 to the present day. The museum is located at Gill Street.

The **Tamworth Regional Film and Sound Archive** preserves the region's film and sound heritage. It houses about 8000 film cans and cassettes of locally and regionally produced visual material and over 20,000 items on the database, plus historical audio material. Tamworth and regional material dates back to 1916 and includes many local collections of significant objects.

Calala Cottage was built in 1875 by Tamworth's first mayor, Philip Gidley King. It is furnished mainly in the late Victorian style. The **Tamworth Historical Society** museum displays memorabilia relating to the establishment of Tamworth as a city. Bequests from notable local families include clothing, portraits, photographs, furnishings and machinery. The shepherd's hut, built in about 1840, is Tamworth's oldest-surviving building.



The goal of the **Tamworth Regional Astronomy Club** is to provide educational opportunities for people of all ages to learn more about astronomy. It has worked in partnership with the TRC to develop the *Tamworth Astronomy and Science Centre*, Planetarium Theatre and a Roll-off Roof Observatory at Victoria Park. The new facility was built in 2020, and the Club continues to care for and exhibit the collection.

The **Tamworth and District Family History Group** began in 1983 with a membership of 16. Membership is now 160-plus, and the group has links with some 80 other Family History Groups and societies. Membership is by paid subscription.

The TRC supports a number of other heritage sites in the region in a variety of ways, including through the **Annual Tamworth Regional Heritage Festival** and the Destination Tamworth website and tourism publications. These sites include the state government-funded *Old Court House Museum* in Nundle and the *Tamworth Hospital Nursing and Medical Museum* at Tamworth Regional Referral Hospital, private museums such as the *Powerhouse Motorcycle Museum* and the *Mount Misery Gold Mine Museum* in Nundle, and historic building complexes such as Wombramurra Homestead and Garden, and Goonoo Goonoo Station.

TRC recognises the importance of collecting artefacts and objects that relate to our strong First Nations heritage. As the regional Indigenous community have identified a preference for collecting, housing and managing their own cultural materials, this strategy does not cover the collection of such items. Consultation with First Nations communities has identified the need for a long-term keeping place for our region. TRC has endorsed this initiative and, while it will continue to offer support and assistance to the Aboriginal community wherever possible, as requested by the community it will not actively collect Indigenous heritage.

Most importantly, TRC will support self-determined cultural expression of First Nations People and work with the **Tamworth Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (TACCO)** to establish an Aboriginal Cultural Centre/ Keeping Place.



“Stories are powerful. The best ones can freeze-frame time and steal our breath. They can stop us from feeling alone, remind us that we’re part of something bigger, give us a sense of our shared humanity. They can build bridges and expand horizons, deepen empathy and dissolve division.”

Jo Mitchell – Head of Partnerships
at ACT Oxford, 2016

Delivery Methodology and Governance

A hub and spoke partnership model is used to enable an equitable and sustainable approach to the delivery of programming and support services across a diversity of collections and partners in the region.

The hub and spoke model ensures the best use of limited resources, with Council acting as a lead or coordinating agency (the 'hub') and the many collections and collection custodians representing the 'spokes' who are directly linked to the hub. This allows every entity to act independently while also sharing skills and resources across the region as appropriate.

For projects such as the Regional Digitisation Project undertaken from 2021 to 2023, this model enabled Tamworth Regional Council to act as project manager and lead, with partner museums and historical societies sharing equipment and expertise to digitise significant objects.

TRC is the direct manager of several collections across numerous venues, including those at the Powerstation Museum, National Guitar Museum, Country Music Wax Museum and the Australian Country Music Hall of Fame, plus the Chris Bowman Mineral and Fossil Collection and the Gil Bennet Rocks, Gems and Minerals Collection.

Furthermore, Council is also responsible for the Section 355 committees overseeing the Moonbi Museum and the Tamworth Regional Film and Sound Archive. All other museums, and archives are independent incorporated bodies with their own management and governance. At the time of drafting this report, the ten public collections outlined in this document are all housed in council-owned or leased assets, TRC is responsible for the management of five of these collections.

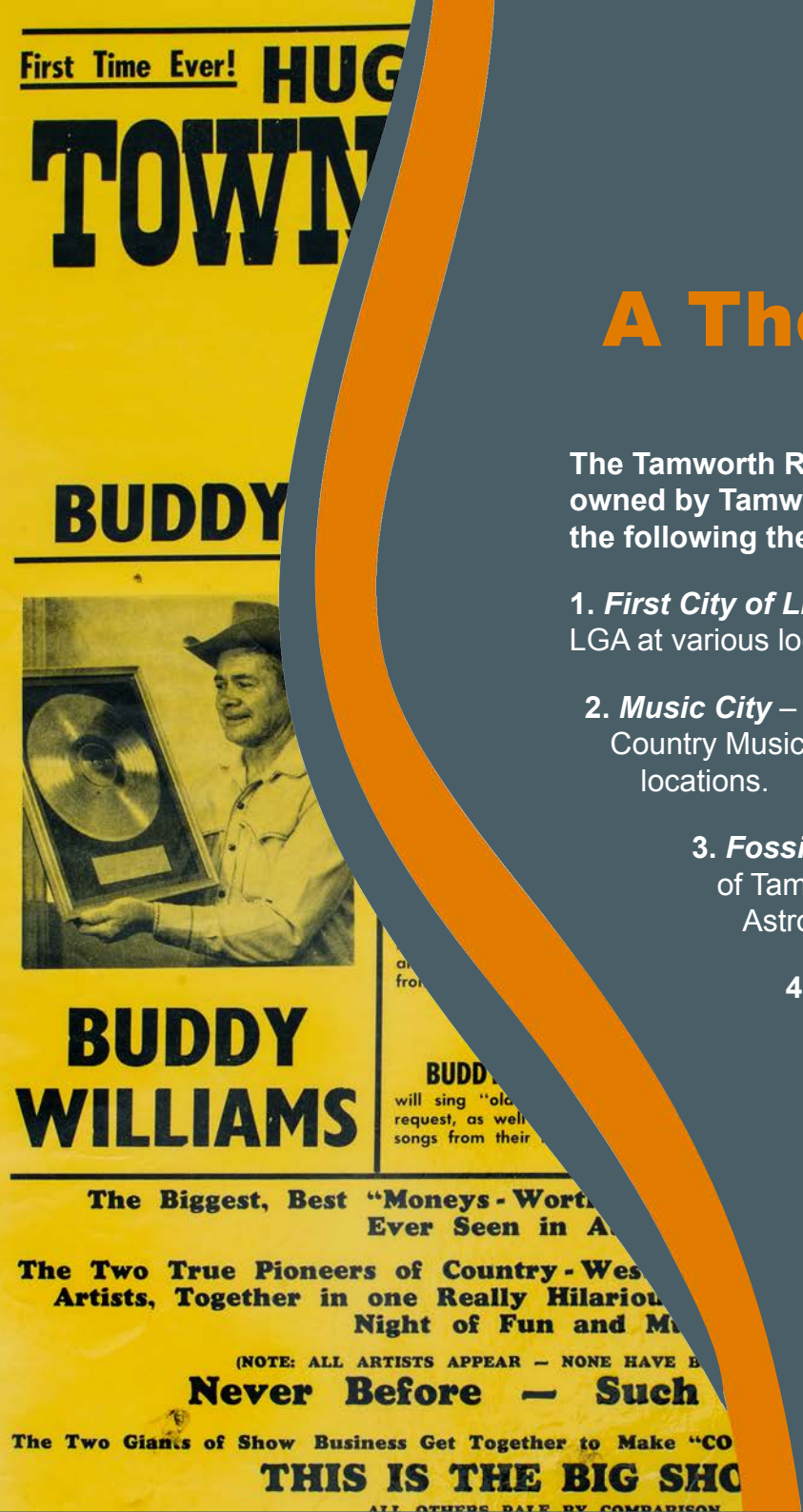


A Thematic Collecting Principle

The Tamworth Regional Museums Collection comprises significant objects and collections owned by Tamworth Regional Council and which reflect Tamworth’s iconic cultural heritage via the following themes:

1. *First City of Light* – exemplified in the Tamworth Powerstation Museum, and throughout Tamworth’s LGA at various locations.
2. *Music City* – exemplified in the Australian Country Music Hall of Fame, National Guitar Museum, Country Music Wax Museum and throughout Tamworth’s local government area (LGA) at various locations.
3. *Fossickers Way* – representing the rocks, gems, minerals, fossils and mining history of Tamworth and the regional display in Nundle and the exhibit at Tamworth Regional Astronomy and Science Centre.
4. *Tamworth in Film, Photography and Sound* – through the Tamworth Regional Film and Sound Archive and several other collections.
5. *The Social History Story of Tamworth and Region.*

This thematic premise for collecting aims to strategically enhance the depth and importance of the region’s collections. It achieves this by approaching collecting in a manner that reflects the Tamworth region as a single entity. It is this principle that has underpinned Tamworth Regional Council’s Regional Museums Collection Policy adopted in 2020.



Tamworth Collections – Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges common to all the collections occur in the areas of collection documentation, volunteer succession planning and sustainability, collection storage, exhibition development/curatorship and networking/collaboration. As a result, these are the key areas of concern addressed within the strategy, alongside structural adjustment and risk minimisation strategies.

The key challenges and opportunities identified during the consultative process are listed below:

| Challenges | Opportunities |
|---|---|
| <p>Collection Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of collection documentation • Lack of dedicated and suitable collection storage areas • Access to resources and information <p>Volunteer Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to training opportunities • Equity of support to organisations and volunteers • Need for long-term resources for curatorship and programming <p>Exhibition and Program Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to current technology and exhibition engagement tools for museum audiences • Ensure priority groups, and our diverse community, is engaged • Working collaboratively and generating promotions across the LGA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing access to collection management systems/database and appropriate training/support • Development of a distributed storage strategy to ensure collections can be housed appropriately • Access to a climate-controlled collection storage facility specifically designed to house fragile collections (paper, textiles, etc.). This will require external funding. • Continuation of the Regional Museum Advisor position to support volunteer museums and assist with the delivery of this strategy • Combining resources to support the development of Visitor Experience Centre/s • Continuation of collaborative promotions and partnership projects between museums • Interactive exhibition development for new audiences • Engaging more frequent public programs for diverse audiences |

For Council, challenges exist in ensuring equity of support to organisations and their volunteers, the resourcing of collection support services, risk minimisation and developing/maintaining support networks. Maintaining excellence in museum practice for those collections directly under the care of Tamworth Regional Council is an ongoing challenge for the small, dedicated staff in the face of competing priorities and regional needs.

Opportunities exist to focus on different levels of servicing relating to need, to risk minimisation, and to making structural adjustments accordingly with partner collections.

Dedicated TRC staff positions for the care and support of museum collections currently equate to approximately 2.8 FTE staff positions. This comprises support received directly via TRC's Museum Operations and Visitor Engagement Officer, the Digitisation Officer, Gallery and Museum Technician, Visitor Experience Officers, and the Director of Tamworth Regional Gallery and Museums, in addition to indirect support contributed via Section 355 Committee support mechanisms, the TRC Communications team, and Council's building and maintenance departments.

There are five key focus areas (KFAs) for this strategy

1. Sustainability of Collections – Documentation and Storage
2. Succession Planning and Sustainability for Volunteers
3. Quality Exhibition Development and Cultural Tourism
4. Strategic Partners and Developing a Coordinated Museums Approach
5. Creating a Level Playing Field – Structural Adjustment and Risk Minimisation



Key Focus Areas, Goals and Impacts

| | Key Focus Areas | Goals | Impacts/Outcomes |
|----|--|---|---|
| 1. | Sustainability of Collections – Documentation and Storage | To ensure best practice care and sustainability of Tamworth’s collections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved collection systems and facilities • Improved facilities, including exhibition, storage and workshop spaces • Collection sustainability |
| 2. | Succession Planning and Sustainability for Volunteers | To ensure ongoing support for volunteers and staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training opportunities and capacity building • Adequate resourcing • Providing social opportunities for volunteers |
| 3. | Quality Exhibition Development and Cultural Tourism | To use Tamworth’s stories, embedded in dynamic quality exhibitions, to engage with our audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased attendance • Improved visitor experience • Excellence of exhibitions and programs • Increased appreciation of significant heritage stories and collections |
| 4. | Strategic Partners and Developing a Coordinated Museums Approach | To maintain collaboration between volunteers, council staff, external networks and other key stakeholders by fostering a coordinated museums approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building and developing networks • Meeting expectations of stakeholders • Sharing resources and information • Communication • Creating sustainable networks |
| 5. | Creating a Level Playing Field | To invest in our collection stories and collaborating for a sustainable future | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimising risk • Equity of support for heritage collections • Strong operational models and clear governance |

Although the table indicates impacts and outcomes in relation to key focus areas, it should be noted that what is outlined is a base case scenario. In most cases, impacts and outcomes can be applied far more broadly than indicated above.

KFA 1: Sustainability of Collections

– Documentation and Storage

Documenting a collection is vital to a museum's role in managing its key asset, no matter what the focus of the collection. The reasons for cataloguing and documenting are many and varied, but they all contribute to enriching the collection's cultural value and enhancing its administration.

Museum records allow custodians to properly care for and access collections. Records prove ownership, describe the material in the collection, document loans and locate objects. Museum records ensure that museum collections are physically and intellectually available for collections management, interpretation, exhibition, and research. They provide accountability for the collection.

In short, documenting the collections:

- identifies collection content
- isolates common themes and important narratives
- allows us to assess the value of the collection – both culturally and financially
- assists us to communicate the value of our stories.

Since 2019, collections in the Tamworth region have benefited from the introduction of new and updated collection policies in conjunction with the facilitation of strategic planning documentation for individual collection custodians across the region. Council has also:

- adopted a unified collection policy and associated procedures for those collections it owns
- led the establishment of a Digitisation Hub for the Tamworth region, with funding received from the NSW Government, and subsequently increased permanent staffing levels to allow the ongoing documentation of fragile collections across the region.

Most TRC public collections report continuing challenges in relation to storage and the appropriate housing of collections. Almost all of the collections include fragile items such as textiles, paper and film and most are housed in unsuitable conditions. Some museums have their entire collection permanently on display due to storage restrictions. Council has worked collaboratively with many of the collections to address storage requirements; however, the need for climate-controlled and secure space is demonstrably strong. The majority of proposed infrastructure projects require external support and investment in project development and scoping is required, ensuring that the projects are truly 'shovel ready' with accurate costings and detailed plans pre-prepared and ready for funding opportunities as they arise.



Current Collections Snapshot

- A conservative estimate of the combined size of the collections outlined in this report is approximately 85,000 objects.
- A variety of systems are used to document the collections, although collection custodians are increasingly using eHive. This Content Management System has increased capacity for cross-collection support and training.
- Museums across the region are at different stages of collection documentation and digitisation. The Regional Digitisation Hub Project has increased the digitisation of collections; however, collections not owned by TRC remain largely undigitised
- All collections face challenges in relation to being appropriately housed, since many objects are significant and fragile.
- Although progress has been made, almost all collections retain the need to undertake a strategic deaccessioning program. This need is especially relevant to collections with larger objects, such as the Powerstation Museum.

Council has previously:

- upgraded the digitisation equipment required for the Tamworth Regional Film and Sound Archive collection storage area
- completed capital works projects at the Moonbi, Manilla and the Barraba Museum buildings
- provided a collections storage shed at 218 Peel Street for the Powerstation Museum.
- completed Significance Assessments for all ten collections identified in this document



Goal 1: To ensure best practice care and sustainability of Tamworth's collections

| Objectives | Actions | Timeline | Key Performance Indicators |
|--|--|----------|---|
| To facilitate best practice collection management policies and procedures throughout all collections | Implement adopted First Nations protocols developed in partnership with the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Lands Council | 2024/29 | KPI: Collection sustainability KPI: Improved collection systems |
| | Seek funding to increase the digitisation of independently owned collections in the region, via collaboration with external partners (NENW Future Histories Precinct Project–UNE) | 2027/28 | KPI: Collection sustainability KPI: Improved collection systems |
| | Engage an external independent valuer to value the TRC owned collections for accurate information and collection knowledge | 2024/25 | KPI: Collection sustainability KPI: Improved collection systems KPI: Risk minimisation |
| | Generate an asset management plan for all TRC owned collections and Council-wide collection facilities | 2024/25 | |
| To create and support sustainable systems for documenting collections | Consistent, continuous cataloguing, documentation and digitisation | 2024/29 | KPI: Improved collection systems KPI: Collection sustainability |
| | Identify and address the ongoing digitisation and online storage needs for the documentation and digitisation of collections | 2024/25 | KPI – Improved collection systems KPI - Collection sustainability |
| | Documentation intensive in collaboration with tertiary education providers and Museum Studies interns | 2025/27 | KPI: Improved collection systems |
| To develop appropriate storage areas and environmental conditions to cater for fragile and significant objects | Investigate the best approach for the establishment of an archive collection store for fragile and significant objects | 2024/29 | KPI: Improved facilities, including exhibition, workshop and storage spaces |
| | Develop a comprehensive infrastructure framework to address 'fit for purpose' collection storage requirements – current and future – for all collections | 2024/27 | |
| | Upgrade existing workshop and storage facilities at PSM to allow for better collection documentation and storage (Create NSW funding received) | 2024/26 | KPI: Improved facilities, including exhibition, workshop and storage spaces |
| | Seek appropriate locations in which to house the fragile TRFSA collection and workshop facilities and invest in ensuring projects are shovel ready when the opportunity for external investment arises | 2024/29 | KPI: Collection sustainability KPI: Improved facilities, including exhibition, workshop and storage spaces |
| To rationalise holdings to ensure collection sustainability and address preservation needs | Undertake a strategic deaccessioning program across collections on a needs basis | 2024/29 | KPI: Collection sustainability KPI: Improved collection systems |
| | Continue our commitment to 'active' collecting | 2024/29 | |
| | Investigate the need for Preservation Needs Assessments and conservation for our fragile collections | 2024/28 | KPI: Collection sustainability |
| | Seek funding to undertake conservation and digitisation of the Veness Letter Book | 2024/25 | KPI: Collection sustainability |
| | Generate Disaster Plans for Museum and Archive sites | 2024/26 | KPI: Collection sustainability KPI: Improved collection systems |

KFA 2: Succession Planning and Sustainability for Volunteers

Volunteers are an essential part of keeping the doors open at many museums and the collections at Tamworth are no exception to this rule. Volunteers help to enrich our activities and events and the exchange of skills and knowledge. There are over 200 volunteers working on collections across the museums network in the Tamworth Regional Council area, with a total of 21,332 volunteer hours recorded annually (equivalent to approximately 11.7 full-time employees).

Volunteers assist with documenting and displaying the collections. In many cases, the volunteer workforce are the custodians for the collections, and Council needs to ensure that they are adequately supported and acknowledged as a major asset. Volunteers should feel valued and appreciated, and thus it is recommended that an annual volunteer function be held to thank museum network volunteers for their work in helping to conserve the region's heritage – regardless of a museum's structure and independence from Council.

Some collections are co-located with Visitor Information Outlet Services, allowing for increased support and shared resourcing; others are completely independent and self-reliant. Council employs a Museum Operations and Visitor Engagement and Digitisation Officer who provides additional support and resourcing for all of the collections and works in partnership with the TRC Volunteer Coordinator to provide training and networking opportunities for volunteers.

All museums report increasing challenges in the area of volunteer recruitment and succession planning and are likely to require increased support over time. Council will need to be mindful of ensuring adequate resourcing and staff levels to provide sustainable outcomes. Council will also need to provide leadership in seeking new and diverse ways to engage with the community to increase volunteerism across all the museums.

Council currently facilitates:

- volunteer training, six-monthly in conjunction with the TRC Volunteer Coordinator
- ongoing collections support via the TRC Museum Operations and Visitor Engagement Officer and Digitisation Officer
- volunteer recognition/awards via the annual Heritage Festival activities and Local Legends Awards
- ongoing support for collection custodians via the Museum Advisors program



Goal 2: To ensure ongoing support for volunteers and staff

| Objectives | Actions | Timeline | Key Performance Indicators |
|--|--|----------|---|
| To support a rewarding and enjoyable experience for volunteers | Regular program of networking and social activities (minimum two events annually) | 2024/29 | KPI: Providing social opportunities for volunteers |
| | Support organisations to collaboratively plan and develop a shared vision with their constituents via regular updates of key planning documentation | 2024/29 | KPI: Communications KPI: Creating sustainable networks KPI: Collection sustainability |
| | Support ongoing rewards and recognition programs e.g. Heritage Festival Awards | 2024/29 | KPI: Creating sustainable networks |
| | Work with the Centre for Volunteering to develop new strategies to increase our volunteer base and resource volunteer committees | 2024/29 | KPI: Creating sustainable networks |
| | Work collaboratively with TRC's Volunteer Coordinator to increase volunteer participation in the sector, and trial new methods of engaging and diversifying participants | 2024/29 | KPI: Creating sustainable networks |
| To support museums to ensure good management practices and modern workplace conditions | Ensure that First Nations protocols are responsibly developed, understood and respectfully implemented in collections management | 2024/29 | KPI: Creating sustainable networks KPI: Training opportunities and capacity building KPI: Minimising risk |
| | Collaborate with First Nations partners to offer Cultural Awareness Training to all collection custodians in the region | 2025/26 | KPI: Training opportunities and capacity building KPI: Minimising risk |
| | Offer opportunities for training and capacity building/professional development (two training sessions annually) | 2024/29 | KPI: Training opportunities and capacity building |
| | Provide committees with assistance to ensure safe workplaces via regular site inspections by TRC Risk Management staff | 2024/29 | KPI: Minimising risk KPI: Training opportunities and capacity building |
| | Support succession planning for skilled volunteer roles – e.g. running of the steam engines at the PSM | 2024/29 | KPI: Training opportunities and capacity building |
| | Undertake maintenance and repair programs for rural machinery collections – e.g. the steam engines at PSM | 2026/28 | KPI: Sustainable collections KPI: Minimising risk |
| To ensure that TRC staff are adequately resourced to support the museum volunteers | Provide succession planning opportunities and career pathways for staff | 2024/25 | KPI: Training opportunities and capacity building KPI: Minimising risk |
| | Provide mentorship opportunities for staff and volunteers | 2025/27 | KPI: Training opportunities and capacity building KPI: Minimising risk |
| | Continue participation in the state-wide Museum Advisor Program to support the TRC Museums Team | 2024/29 | KPI: Adequate resourcing KPI: Minimising risk |
| | Work in partnership with the TRC Placemakers to support museums throughout our towns and villages | 2024/29 | |

KFA 3: Quality Exhibition Development and Cultural Tourism

The generation of engaging content that conveys authentic local stories and experiences provides quality cultural tourism experiences and is a major driver for visitation. The ten collections surveyed in this document contribute a significant economic stimulus to the region via annual visitation across the sites by conveying their unique and distinctive stories.

A new major cultural tourism project is being explored and will add to the region's offerings, inspiring visitors to stay longer and to explore further through the creation of a new Visitor Experience Centre (VEC), establishing Tamworth as the 'Capital of Country' and encouraging visitors to explore the entire region.

The proposed VEC will house a significant portion of Tamworth's country music collections (integrating the Country Music Hall of Fame, Wax and Guitar museums), reimagined and augmented with engaging exhibitions and immersive experiences. The case for change to a modern, revitalised VEC is strong and includes better visitor amenity, improved visitor experience, and more viable, sustainable asset management for Council.

The initiative will re-engage audiences with Tamworth's City of Music Collections and provide the opportunity to showcase its unique heritage. The impact of the VEC will be seen in increased length of stay and greater visitor dispersal, allowing other museums and collections within Tamworth and the region to leverage from this opportunity.

Exhibition displays across the LGA will also be refreshed and revitalised, especially targeted at the Tamworth Astronomy and Science Centre and Nundle Gil Bennet Rocks, Gems and Mineral Collection. The focus of actions in this section is therefore dual: to ensure curatorial excellence in the new VEC, and to foster and support a strong and engaging offering for visitors from all collections across the region.



Current Snapshot

Council has already made great progress in this area, with recent initiatives including:

- development of the 'Case for Change' and concept planning for the **Tamworth Visitor Experience Centre**
- exhibition development support for the **Tamworth Astronomy and Science Centre**
- successful external funding and planning for the relocation of the **Rocks, Gems and Minerals Collection** in Nundle to ensure best community access
- delivery of the 'Take Me Home to Tamworth' exhibition in celebration of the Country Music Collections
- redevelopment of **City of Music** exhibits at ACMF, the National Guitar Museum and acquisition of 'The Golden Guitar'
- coordination of the **Heritage Festival** exhibition (annually since 2016).

Goal 3: To use Tamworth's stories, embedded in dynamic quality exhibitions, to engage with our audiences

| Objectives | Actions | Timeline | Key Performance Indicators |
|--|---|----------|--|
| To develop exhibitions of excellence and engaging visitor experiences | Build capacity via a joint exhibitions program and shared resources | 2024/29 | KPI: Increased attendance KPI: Improved visitor experience |
| | Undertake a regional Oral History project as a key interpretive tool | 2025/27 | KPI: Improved visitor experience KPI: Increased appreciation of significant heritage stories and collections |
| | Investigate and support exhibition development at the proposed Visitor Experience Centre (VEC) | 2024/28 | KPI: Excellence of exhibitions and programs KPI: Improved visitor experience |
| | Oversee the exhibition development at the Rocks, Gems and Minerals Collection relocation in Nundle | 2024/25 | KPI: Excellence of exhibitions and programs KPI: Improved visitor experience KPI: Increased attendance |
| | Support a Curator in Residence Program for the Tamworth Regional Astronomy Centre | 2025/26 | KPI: Excellence of exhibitions and programs |
| | Investigate and identify resources to support museum curatorship and public programs across collections | 2024/29 | KPI: Excellence of exhibitions and programs KPI: Improved visitor experience |
| | Develop and deepen First Nations narratives at the ACMF with a guest First Nations Curator to assist with exhibition refresh and public programs | 2024/26 | KPI: Increased appreciation of significant heritage stories and collections KPI: Excellence of exhibitions and programs KPI: Improved visitor experience |
| To invite our visitors on a journey to discover our stories by visiting a network of museums across the region | Develop an exhibition trail and shared education resources for the museums/collections. | 2025/27 | KPI: Increased attendance KPI: Improved visitor experience KPI: Increased appreciation of significant heritage stories and collections |
| | Facilitate pop-up exhibition opportunities at high-profile locations (e.g. library) to be shared between all collections | 2024/29 | |
| | Engage our visitors in regional narratives via the development and presentation of interactive exhibitions across the LGA | 2026/28 | |
| | Continue the production of well-targeted and well-presented, exhibition-specific flyers, in partnership with Tourism organisations | 2024/29 | |
| | Promote and maintain the TRC Museums Instagram account to facilitate digital exhibitions and increased social media presence for museums | 2024/29 | KPI: Excellence of exhibitions and programs KPI: Increased attendance KPI: Maintaining sustainable networks |
| To develop and maintain industry partnerships to support the development of excellent tourism product | Improve access to support and quality information for museum visitors | 2024/29 | KPI: Excellence of exhibitions and programs KPI: Improved visitor experience KPI: Increased attendance KPI: Maintaining sustainable networks |
| | Maintain co-location of Visitor Information Outlets and, where possible, expand this collaboration | 2024/29 | |
| | Foster a closer relationship and information sharing with Visitor Information Centre services and staff | 2024/29 | |
| | Investigate the relocation of the ACMF and Country Music Collections to the proposed VEC. Work in partnership to develop effective and engaging visitor experiences | 2024/29 | |

KFA 4: Strategic Partners and Developing a Coordinated Museums Approach

The benefits of collaboration often include sharing of resources, talent and knowledge, alongside the capacity to create a larger impact and to further leverage funding. Partnerships frequently bring greater success from funding bodies, generate new ideas, and offer support and informal networking opportunities.

A hub and spoke partnership model has been used across the Tamworth museums network to enable an equitable and sustainable approach to the delivery of programming and support services across a diversity of collections and partners in the region. The hub and spoke model ensures the best use of limited resources, with Council acting as a lead or coordinating agency (the 'hub') and the many collections and collection custodians representing the 'spokes' who are directly linked to the hub. This model allows every entity to act independently while also sharing skills and resources across the region as appropriate.

Strategic partnerships extend beyond the museums industry to other stakeholders, including education, tourism, history, government and so on. TRC is to be commended for its support of heritage networks to date; however, the ongoing challenge for the museums and for Council is in resourcing and supporting these networks. Council's dedicated Museums Team will require support to deliver on the actions contained within this document. For this reason, the document recommends additional programming support and resourcing in this area and participation in the Museum Advisor Program to support outlying collections and regional networks.

Current Snapshot

To date, Council has:

- created a hub and spoke framework through the Create NSW Digitisation grant that now continues throughout the region
- established a new, permanent Digitisation Officer position
- maintained the position of TRC Museum Operations and Visitor Engagement Officer
- updated the Strategic Plan for Tamworth Powerstation Museum
- facilitated new Strategic Plans for the Manilla and Barraba Historical Societies as well as for the Tamworth Regional Film and Sound Archive.
- Implemented the 'Australian Country Music Hall of Fame 2020-2024 Strategic Plan' and transfer of the collection



Goal 4: To maintain collaboration between volunteers, council staff, external networks and other key stakeholders by fostering a coordinated museums approach

| Objectives | Actions | Timeline | Key Performance Indicators |
|--|---|----------|--|
| To build and develop sector networks | Supporting a local Museums Network – Hub and Spoke model | 2024/29 | KPI: Creating sustainable networks |
| | Undertake joint strategic projects across TRC region museums such as the <i>Identity and Place</i> Pilot Project and the <i>Endless Access</i> Digitisation Project | 2024/29 | KPI: Building and developing networks KPI: Sharing resources and information |
| | Support a Regional Museums Advisor position through Museums and Galleries NSW | 2024/29 | KPI: Meeting expectations of stakeholders KPI: Building and developing networks KPI: Sharing resources and information |
| | Develop a Museums' Marketing Plan and grow external relationships | 2025/29 | KPI: Creating sustainable networks KPI: Sharing resources and information |
| | Acknowledge Arts North West as a key partner and work collaboratively to build capacity and develop creative interpretation projects | 2024/29 | KPI: Creating sustainable networks KPI: Sharing resources and information |
| | Develop partnerships with tertiary providers to enable further collection documentation projects and public programs | 2025/27 | KPI: Creating sustainable networks KPI: Sharing resources and information |
| To foster a coordinated museums approach | Build and maintain relationships with First Nations communities to ensure culturally appropriate collection management and exhibition development for all museums in the region | 2024/29 | KPI: Creating sustainable networks KPI: Sharing resources and information KPI: Meeting expectations of stakeholders |
| | Support the development of an Aboriginal Keeping Place in Tamworth and provide specialist collection management support where appropriate | 2024/29 | KPI: Sharing resources and information KPI: Communication |
| | Contribute to the development of regional plans and projects across sectors – such as by seeking opportunities to contribute to work in partnership | 2024/29 | KPI: Meeting expectations of stakeholders KPI: Building and developing networks KPI: Sharing resources and information |
| | Investigate external resources to support curatorial development in museums and public programs for greater visitor engagement | 2024/26 | KPI: Communication KPI: Sharing resources and information KPI: Creating sustainable networks |
| | Work in partnership with all private and public museums and archives in the LGA | 2024/29 | KPI: Building and developing networks KPI: Sharing resources and information |

KFA 5: Creating a Level Playing Field

In assessing/making recommendations for the adjustment of ownership and/or the responsibility for museum collections and governance structures, two key elements have been taken into consideration:

- **individual governance structures and resulting risk minimisation for TRC and the broader Tamworth community**
- **collection theming in relation to regional and/or local narratives and the responsibility for protecting/preserving these community stories.**

1. Structural Adjustment and Risk Minimisation

Tamworth Regional Council is inescapably linked to all of the collections in the region and provides significant ongoing support to all collection custodians.

- Council is **100%** responsible for the museum buildings/built assets, with the exception of the Tamworth Visitor Information Centre.
- Council is currently **50%** responsible for the museum collections (Powerstation Museum, Country Music Collections, Rocks, Gems, Fossils & Minerals Collections, Moonbi, TRFSA).
- Council is currently **50%** responsible for the museums' management structure and governance
- There are **four** types of management structure, in addition to the partnerships with the Visitor Information Outlets, with each museum having a slightly different model.

Across the ten collections reviewed in this document, each museum model differs slightly, with a mix of independent incorporated bodies and Section 355 Committees. Council's support has been tailored accordingly. This has unintentionally resulted in a varied approach to the support of partner museums, and Council is mindful of ensuring consistent and equitable support across the network.

Where management changes for the ACMF and Wax Museum have ensured the ongoing sustainability and preservation of material relating to key collecting themes for Tamworth, other collections might be better managed at a community level, enabling local decision making and collection development in line with local priorities and interests. This is especially relevant for local social history collections, such as the Moonbi Museum.



When a club or community group incorporates, it becomes a ‘legal person’ – that is, a legal entity that stays the same even if its members change. It can enter into contracts in its own name; for example, to borrow money or buy equipment. This status of the association protects its individual members from legal liabilities. While there are benefits to be gained from incorporation, there are also obligations. These include annual reporting obligations, and maintaining minutes, proper financial and membership records, and registers.

Under sections 355 and 377 of the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW), Council is able to delegate some of its functions to a Committee of Council. Council uses this delegation and appoints community people to manage facilities or functions through a Section 355 (S355) Community Committee. Committees of Council act on behalf of Council. Legally, the committee is ‘Council’, and any action it undertakes is Council’s responsibility. No committee or individual member is permitted to act outside of the delegated function of the specific S355 Committee. As the S355 Committee is a Committee of Council, all its assets and liabilities are Council’s.

It should be noted that consultation has indicated that all the incorporated bodies highly value their independence and have no desire to modify this structure.

It is recommended that:

- Council enter any future, local history–based collaborations with the community as a partnership with an incorporated body, thereby discouraging the formation of new Section 355 heritage–based committees and eliminating the creation of unsustainable precedents
- Council support a process for the transfer of the Moonbi Museum, a local history Section 355 Committee, to an independent structure.

It is vital that TRC continues to offer strong support across the entire network of collection custodians, so that all museums will be well served by ensuring that organisational resources are allocated equitably. For Council, it is imperative that consistency of support is applied across differing governance structures to avoid unsustainable precedents and minimise organisational risk.

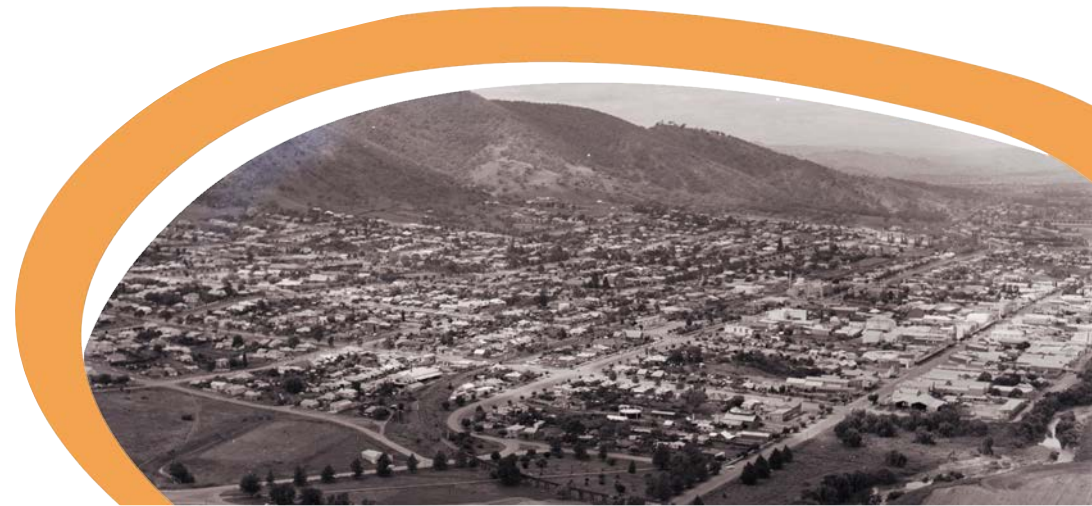


2. Collection Theming in Relation to Regional and/or Local Narratives and Ownership

Across the museums network, distinct ‘tiers’ of collections appear in line with collection theming (hero themes of ‘City of Music’, ‘City of Light’, ‘Mining and Minerals’) and those whose focus comprises local social history.

| ‘City of Music’ | ‘City of Light’ | ‘Mining and Minerals’ | Regional Resource |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Guitar Museum & Country Music Wax Museum (Council Owned) Australian Country Music Hall of Fame & Walk a Country Mile exhibit (Council Owned) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tamworth Powerstation Museum (Council Owned) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gil Bennet Rocks, Gems and Mineral Collection (Council Owned) Chris Bowman Mineral and Fossil Collection (Council Owned) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tamworth Regional Film and Sound Archive (Section 355 / Council Owned) |

These collections tell the broad stories of the region and reinforce regional identity and belonging for all of the Tamworth communities. There is a logic in Council securing these assets as key collections for the broader community due to collection content, themes and compatibility with key tourism and economic development messages. Currently, TRC bears the responsibility for all of the collections listed above, either as the outright owners or as partners with Section 355 Committees.



Collections which are driven predominantly by local social history content include:

- Nandewar Historical Society (Barraba Museum) (Incorporated Body)
- Manilla Historical Society (Manilla Museum) (Incorporated Body)
- Moonbi Museum (Section 355)
- Tamworth Historical Society (Calala Cottage) (Incorporated Body)
- Tamworth and District Family History Group (Incorporated Body).

The Moonbi Museum is an anomaly in the above list of local themed collections, with the structure of a Section 355 Committee. Council has consulted with the Moonbi Museum Committee in regard to the feasibility of transitioning to an incorporated structure as per the recommendations outlined above.

It is believed that structural adjustment will eventually provide greater equity of support and consistency of resourcing.

Council has already:

- transitioned the management of the ACMF site and collections to a council owned model
- transitioned the Wax Museum into Council ownership
- undertaken conversations with Moonbi and other key partners to explore structural alternatives to Moonbi's current Section 355 status
- developed strategic plans for a number of TRC and independently managed collections
- commissioned the development of a Regional Museums and Archive Strategy (this document)
- consulted with internal expertise as part of the review of Section 355 Committees and risk management
- commissioned Significance Assessments of all Council owned collections, completed 2021
- commenced and maintained the Museum Advisor Program



Goal 5: To invest in our collection stories and collaborating for a sustainable future

| Objectives | Actions | Timeline | Key Performance Indicators |
|--|---|----------|--|
| To continue to recognise the importance of key themes (City of Music, City of Light, and Mining and Minerals) to Tamworth and region | Work collaboratively with strategic partners to ensure exhibition presentation, interpretation and public programs support the tourism and community cultural development access strategies | 2024/29 | KPI: Increased attendance KPI: Sustainability of collections relating to key themes – ownership, access and collection care KPI: Minimising risk KPI: Excellence of product |
| | Investigate opportunities to further the case for change for a new Visitor Experience Centre (VEC) and the co-location of the Country Music Collections | 2024/27 | |
| To support strong ongoing, two-way communication between TRC and museums | Undertake ongoing consultation with all collection custodians and advocate on their behalf to key stakeholders, including external funding bodies and state and national governments | 2024/29 | KPI: Equity of support for heritage collections |
| | Ensure that museums have a voice within Council and dedicated channels of communication via the TRC Museums Team | 2024/29 | KPI: Equity of support for heritage collections |
| | Facilitate museums networks and ensure that staff are available for advisory and support services | 2024/29 | |
| To ensure equity of resources and to create sustainable precedents | Support structural adjustment to ensure equity of resource distribution e.g. electricity and water bills for incorporated bodies | 2024/26 | KPI: Equity of support for heritage collections KPI: Strong operational models and clear governance |
| | Revisit discussions with Moonbi Museum regarding the most effective organisational structure for the future | 2024/26 | KPI: Risk reduction achieved |
| | Ensure that collection premises offer the best possible facilities for collections and their custodians by pursuing joint storage facilities and monitoring conditions across all venues | 2024/29 | KPI: Risk reduction achieved |
| To minimise risk for TRC, museum collections and volunteers | Consolidate responsibility for museums through the implementation of this strategy | 2024/29 | KPI: Equity of support for heritage collections KPI: Risk reduction achieved |
| | Increase TRC's capacity to manage cultural assets via the development and implementation of the Museums Asset Management Plan | 2024/26 | KPI: Equity of support for heritage collections KPI: Risk reduction achieved |
| | Review TRC museums-related policy and procedures on a regular basis | 2024/29 | KPI: Equity of support for heritage collections KPI: Risk reduction achieved |

Future Regional Museums Development

Key recommendations for future development of collections across the TRC area focus on the maintenance of a partnership approach, with appropriate resourcing and capacity-building opportunities for volunteer collections. Every attempt has been made to ensure that goals and strategies are realistic, achievable and sustainable. It is acknowledged that Council's increased commitment to the region's museums has been significant.

Museum development for the Tamworth region is in good hands, with a strong foundation established and a committed Council who are undertaking a strategic approach to supporting heritage collections in the district. The passion and dedication of the entire community is evident and will bode well for the future of collections in the region.



Tamworth Region Museum/Collection Consultations

- Tamworth Regional Film & Sound Archive Consultation- February 2024
- Tamworth Regional Museums Consultation Workshops held in Manilla/Barraba, Moonbi/Nundle, Tamworth (x2)- July 2024

Consultation with Other Partners and Stakeholders

- TRC Staff Workshop, March 2024
- Tamworth Regional Museums Visitor Satisfaction Survey. January-June 2024
- TRC Councilor Workshop, June/July 2024

References

Collections Council of Australia, *Significance 2.0: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of the Collection*

Significance Assessments:

- Roslyn Russell, Gil Bennett Collection Nundle, Significance Assessment
- Roslyn Russell, Manilla Heritage Museum, Significance Assessment
- Roslyn Russell, Nandewar Historical Society Barraba, Significance Assessment
- Roslyn Russell, TRFSA Significance Assessment
- Crozier and Schutt Associates, PSM Significance Assessment

Strategic Plans:

- Australian Country Music Hall of Fame Strategic Plan 2020–2024
- Tamworth Powerstation Museum Strategic Plan 2021–2024
- Nandewar Historical Society Strategic Plan 2023–2027
- Manilla Heritage Museum Strategic Plan 2023–2026
- Tamworth Regional Film and Sound Archive Strategic Plan 2024–2028

Tamworth Regional Museums Engagement Strategy 2019–2024

Tamworth Regional Council's Community Strategic Plan 2020–2024

Tamworth Region Creative Communities Plan 2024–2029

Blueprint 100 Our Community Plan 2023–2033

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