



Department of **Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions**

**Western Australian Herbarium**

## Western Australian Herbarium Deaccessioning and Specimen Disposal Guidelines

The purpose of this document is to set out the principles and rationale that guide the deaccessioning and disposal of material from the Western Australian Herbarium (PERTH) collections and to ensure that such disposals are neither unwarranted nor haphazard.

The Western Australian Herbarium recognizes that the ability to deaccession and dispose of material from the collection is an essential part of an effective collection management program. These guidelines cover the deaccessioning and disposal of material from PERTH's collections. This document does not cover the disposal of non-collection assets.

### **Deaccessioning**

Is the formal process by which items in the Herbarium's collection are removed from the collection and are made ready for disposal. Deaccessioning is part of collection management.

### **Disposal**

The action taken to remove a collection item from the Herbarium's ownership, control or possession once the item has been deaccessioned. This action may take the form of gift or exchange, return to donor, or destruction.

### **Provenance**

The full history and chain of ownership of an item from the time of its discovery or creation to the present day, through which authenticity and legal title are determined.

### **Significance**

The historical, aesthetic, scientific or social values that a Herbarium object or collection has for past, present and future generations.

### **Guidelines for de-accessioning of material**

Any herbarium officer may nominate material for deaccessioning, on the grounds that it is of no demonstrable scientific or historical value due to:

- its unidentifiability,
- an absence of any useful collection data,
- its exact taxonomic and geographic duplication by other and phenologically better specimens,
- excessive damage to and degradation of the specimen,
- the specimen is sterile,
- the specimen does not exhibit unusual morphology,
- the taxon is not of high conservation significance,
- or any combination of these.

*The Western Australian Herbarium acknowledges the Custodians of the lands and waters from where our collections have been gathered, and pays respect to their Elders past and present.*

Material identified as meeting one of these criteria will be passed onto the Collections Manager. The Collections Manager shall assess the material nominated for deaccessioning and disposal, in consultation with group experts at PERTH or elsewhere when appropriate.

Deaccessioning is inadvisable in cases where the specimen:

- is subject to a legal impediment or have conditions attached expressly or by implication which prohibits deaccessioning,
- may, by law, be required to be retained or otherwise dealt with in accordance with heritage, archival or other similar legislation,
- is a voucher for Living Collections or Seed Bank accessions for which live material is still held,
- is a voucher for a photograph housed in an image library,
- is a cited voucher for a published scientific work,
- has been formally labelled or otherwise annotated, indicating it has been used for a scientific study,
- is an extinct, rare, endangered and vulnerable species,
- is of historical, cultural or provenance significance,
- is from a site from which further material cannot be collected, and
- label data are in the public domain, such as in the Australian Virtual Herbarium, Atlas of Living Australia, Global Biodiversity Information Facility, or other data aggregators.

A specimen missing from the collection can not be disposed of, and deaccession can therefore not be completed. In the WAHerb database, the specimen record should be annotated to indicate the object cannot be located.

If the Collections Manager approves deaccession and disposal, the following procedure is required prior to disposal of the specimen:

- deaccession and the action taken shall be documented in the Herbarium accession files,
- in the WAHerb database, the record is not deleted but shall indicate 'deaccessioned',
- in the WAHerb database in the *Other Notes* field add "Specimen discarded due to XXXX, on DATE, DEACCESSIONER'S NAME" (e.g., Specimen discarded due to lack of fertile material on 27/04/2001, J. Smith),
- specimens to be redistributed shall be labelled as Ex PERTH,
- specimens to be destroyed must have any numbers or other marks that identify the object as Herbarium property removed and disposed of following quarantine guidelines.

Specimens may also be deaccessioned for permanent transfer to another national or international herbarium, upon request.

### **Permanent loans and bulk deaccessioning**

Indefinite or permanent loan of material to other recognised institutions may be authorised by joint decision of the Curator and Program Leader. Such transactions are to be registered as loans, not deaccessions, and the material is subject to recall as needed.

Bulk deaccessioning of whole taxa (or other classes of specimens) is allowable in exceptional circumstances where the Curator, Program Director, and Executive Director are jointly agreed that the material is of no practical use to PERTH as either reference or research material. In general, this will apply only to higher-level taxa on which PERTH staff do not and will not be conducting research. Such bulk deaccessions should only be done as donation to other institutions, preferably in exchange for a donation of similar size or importance and of more relevance to PERTH. A taxonomically representative subset should be retained by PERTH in such cases.