

## **NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA REPATRIATION PROGRAM**

### **REPATRIATION OF HUMAN REMAINS**

#### **ADVICE TO APPLICANTS**

The National Museum of Australia recognises that human remains are significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For this reason the Museum has made a commitment to the repatriation of human remains.

#### **How do we apply for the repatriation of human remains?**

Applications should be in writing. E-mail correspondence is also encouraged.

Potential applicants will be provided with information regarding any human remains known to be derived from their country. The applicants can then use this information to prepare a formal application.

In providing information the National Museum does not enter into an exclusive relationship with an applicant group. Other individuals, groups, and representative organisations are entitled to make application both for the same information and for repatriation of remains.

The Museum has a responsibility to ensure that human remains are returned to the persons, groups, or communities entitled by tradition or custom to be the custodians of those remains. Applicants are thus encouraged to clearly state the basis of their claim.

Information that assists in supporting an application for the repatriation of remains includes:

- The identities of the persons, groups, or community on whose behalf the application is made
- The specific remains requested
- Letters of support for the application from local ATSIC representatives, Land Councils, Native Title Representative Bodies, Legal Services, Government bodies, or other community organisations
- Where an organisation is making the application, a statement of support from members of the relevant group.
- A statement that the applicants are entitled by the traditions and customs of their community to make application for the materials
- The relationship of the applicants to the remains requested
- Contact addresses for other groups or organisations that support the application
- Any other issues or information that may assist in the application (eg specific geographic locations)

#### **What happens to our application?**

When an application is received it will be allocated to a member of the Repatriation Program team who will act as case manager. The case manager consults with the applicants, other interest parties, and carries out any further research and consultations where necessary. The officer then oversees the return of the human remains to a successful applicant or management of the remains in accordance with instructions from the applicant.

### **What conditions are applied to human remains that are returned?**

When human remains are delivered the applicant will be required to sign a receipt. They may also be asked to sign a statement that they are the persons, or representatives of the persons, entitled as of tradition to take responsibility for the remains.

Once the remains have been formally returned the Museum no longer has any legal claim to the remains or responsibilities for its management. The applicants and communities are thus able to deal with the remains as they see fit.

### **What other assistance is available?**

The Museum can offer a number of services to applicants. These include:

- Information regarding the number and provenance of remains in the applicants area of interest.
- Assistance with travel for applicants to view the remains.
- Visits by Repatriation Program Officers to discuss the process.
- Assistance with funding for ceremonies associated with the final disposal of the remains.
- Assistance with obtaining more detailed advice into characteristics of the remains.
- Community report. This is a plain English report describing the remains and providing such information as the age, sex, and health of the individual.

### **What if we cannot accept the remains right away?**

The Museum understands that it is sometimes inconvenient for a community to take receipt of remains straight away. For this reason the Museum will house repatriated human remains in secure conditions upon request. Although housed within the Museum the applicants are the owners of the remains.

The Museum may also be able to assist with arranging housing of the human remains in a repository more convenient to the owners (eg State Museum, Land Council, Keeping Place)

### **Further information**

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