

interests, State, Territory and Federal Governments, museum organisations and other organisations active in the areas dealt with in this policy.

Outcomes

- 7.2 In these discussions, the outcomes should be in accordance with the principles in the Policy Statement of 18 May 1993. Whilst local conditions may lead to differences in some details, a commitment to the overarching principles of satisfying varying interests and recognition of the special interests of the culturally diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, whose living cultural heritage we are dealing with, should guide all decision-making.

BACKGROUND TO THIS DOCUMENT

The need for a uniform statement of policy has emerged as an increasingly significant issue over the last 15 years. A policy formulated in 1984 by the Council of Australian Museum Directors which is made up of directors of major museums (other than art museums) has been in place but deals only with the matter of human remains. There is a clearly perceived need for policies which address the entire range of issues concerning relations between museums and indigenous people.

To those most closely involved in framing this present policy the need for urgent attention became evident over the last five years. By 1991, it was clear that some museums, especially but not only the South Australian Museum, had policies in place and because of their experience were being consulted by museums and by indigenous people from around Australia. The view was taken that every major museum in each State ought to be able to serve the needs of the people in its own State and Territory.

At a meeting between Des Griffin, Lester Russell (then Director of the South Australian Museum) and Chris Anderson (then Head of the Department of Anthropology at the South Australian Museum) in June 1991, it was agreed that CAMA, as the Australia-wide body concerned with museums of all kinds, should be approached to develop such a policy.

In August 1991, Phil Gordon (Heritage Liaison Officer at the Australian Museum), Des Griffin and Andrew Reeves (then CAMA Vice President and Director of Human Studies at the Museum of Victoria) met to examine the kinds of principles that should be included in a document and reach a preliminary appreciation as to where there were differences of opinion between museums and between museums and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A draft statement was drawn up as a result of that meeting and circulated in September 1991 in the first instance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff of museums for their comment. Some of those staff took the document to the November 1991 meeting of the Conference of Australian Museum Anthropologists.

Simultaneously the Board of CAMA agreed that a Committee be established to draw up an appropriate policy. The committee included Aboriginal people known to have a special interest in museums and their dealings with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural property. The names of the Committee are listed elsewhere in this document.

In November 1991, Griffin, Karen Coote and Chris Anderson (who had attended the COMA Conference), all members of the CAMA Committee, discussed the reactions received from the conference and from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff of museums and agreed on amendments to the document in order for a second draft to be distributed more widely.

In November 1991, the revised draft was circulated to all major museums holding significant collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural property seeking their comments as well as to interested associations and individuals. The draft was discussed also at the meeting of the Council of Australian Museums and a preliminary position on the various views was reached by them.

Through June 1992, various responses were received from those to whom the policy draft had been sent. It became apparent at a very early stage that discussions would have to take place at a State and Territory level in the first instance. Accordingly people from each of the state museums who were members of the Committee were asked to co-ordinate the consultations.

On 25 July 1992, the full CAMA Committee, together with representatives of the Museum of Victoria's Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Council met at the Museum of Victoria to discuss the draft document circulated November 1991 and the comments received to date. At that meeting an important decision was reached that a set of principles be established from which the detailed policies would flow.

A revised policy was formulated and distributed to the Committee and the Board of CAMA. CAMD also considered the revised draft Policy Statement including the Principles in October 1992 in New Zealand and endorsed them.

In November 1992 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in and associated with museums and those who were members of the CAMA Committee met. Chris Anderson was also present. That group developed a set of principles which they felt should guide the policies of museums. A group entitled the interim Aboriginal and Torres Strait People and Policies Action Committee (ATSIPPAC) was established with Ms Lori Richardson (Aboriginal Adviser to the National Museum of Australia) as convenor.

Following discussions between the CAMA Committee and ATSIPPAC convenor Lori Richardson a meeting of representatives of both groups (from the CAMA Committee Karen Coote, Des Griffin and Richard Robins and from ATSIPPAC Phil Gordon and Lori Richardson) and Dr Jim Specht of the Australian Museum was held in early February 1993. Refinements to the principles formulated by the two groups were made and development commenced of a final draft policy statement for release on 18 May 1993, International Museums Day in the International Year for the World's Indigenous People. That meeting agreed that, having regard to the need for as full consultation as possible, attempts to get all the detailed policies discussed and agreed to before 18 May would be not sensible. Further comments continued to be received, notably from a number of Aboriginal Land Councils.

The Commonwealth Government Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, the Hon Robert Tickner, MP, was sent copies of the draft statement late 1992 and of the final Policy Statement in May 1993.

Discussions with officers of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) were held from late 1992 through May 1993.

A draft of the Policy Statement was sent to major State Museums holding collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural material in April 1993.

The final Policy Statement was placed before the CAMA Board on 1 May and, following discussion, adopted subject to any necessary minor amendment. Endorsement was received from a number of organisations including both the Council of Australian Museum Directors and its art counterpart, the Council of Australian Art Museum Directors (CAAMD); CAAMD had considered the draft Policy Statement at its meeting in late April 1993.

The final version of the Policy Statement was determined in discussions between Des Griffin, Chris Anderson, Phil Gordon, Bernice Murphy (Chief Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art and President of the Australian National Committee of ICOM), Lori Richardson, Lester Russell, Jim Specht and other members of the CAMA Committee on 6 May 1993.

The launch of the Statement took place at 9:00am 18 May outside Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art at Circular Quay West, a place of significance to the history of Australia for both indigenous and non-indigenous people.

In June and July 1993, the detailed policies together with the Policy Statement were circulated to University museums and regional and local museums of all kinds. Further responses were received.

A meeting of representatives of the CAMA Committee (Chris Anderson, Karen Coote, Des Griffin and Gaye Sculthorpe) and ATSIPPAC (Phil Gordon) together with Jim Specht was held October 13 to consider final wording of the detailed policies and necessary amendments to the full document. It was noted that a number of groups had not responded to the invitation to comment. But the view was taken that a policy should be launched and submitted for comment to all communities and interested parties with a review date of October 1995. Policy is evolutionary.

The semi-final draft was circulated 25 October to all members of the CAMA Committee, Lori Richardson and Phil Gordon of ATSIPPAC and Jim Specht; museums and organisations which had not responded were also asked if they wished to have comments included in the list of responses.

The present document has been developed from the October 13 meeting and has been considered by all members of the CAMA Committee.

The members of the Committee established by the CAMA Board to formulate this policy comprises:

Christopher Anderson, previously Head of the Division of Anthropology and now Director, South Australian Museum, Adelaide

Wally Caruana, Curator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, Australian National Gallery (nominated by the Art Museums Association of Australia)

Julia Clarke, Head, Exhibition & Design, Western Australian Museum, Perth (formerly Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart; nominated by the Museums Association of Australia Inc)

Karen Coote, Conservator, Division of Materials Conservation, Australian Museum, Sydney

Des Griffin, President of CAMA and Director, Australian Museum, Sydney (Chair)

Bill Jonas, Principal, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra

Andrew Reeves, Vice President, CAMA and Director, Western Australian Museum, Perth (formerly Director of Human Studies, Museum of Victoria, Melbourne)

Richard Robins, Curator of Anthropology, Queensland Museum, Brisbane

Gaye Sculthorpe, Senior Curator, Indigenous Studies, Museum of Victoria, Melbourne (nominated by the Museums Association of Australia)

Ted Wilkes, Trustee, Western Australian Museum, Perth

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Organisations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)

Numerous discussions concerning draft policy being prepared for Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council (AAAC) and points out the emphasis given to ownership of items of cultural material of religious and cultural significance including human remains, secret/sacred material and items of significant historical significance. Comments on the role of the Commonwealth Government and the States with respect to museums in Australia and material held in overseas museums.

Art Gallery of South Australia (Jane Hylton, Curator of Australian Art)

Comments on implications of the policy in relation to multiple prints and similar items, urban art and holding of material in trust.

Artlab Australia, Adelaide (Ian Cook)

General comments; support for the principles on which the document prepared.

Art Museums Association of Australia (Ms Susan Abasa, Executive Officer)

Supports the document and recommends involvement of indigenous people on the Committee.

Art Museums Association of Australia (Mr Leon Paroissien, President)

"Art Museums in Australia have in recent years worked closely with Aboriginal people in developing an understanding and appreciation of Australia's unique indigenous culture...The policy document represents a positive statement...but also prepares museums for a future in which community partnerships permit multiple accounts of history and identity."

Australian Museum Trust, Sydney (Dr Des Griffin, Director)

Endorsed the policy as the basis for the formulation of its own policies.

Conference of Museum Anthropologists (COMA) (at its annual meeting in November 1991)

Numerous comments on all aspects of the draft, questions as to the need for a national policy, the importance of consultation at a local level and regional differences, the relevance of federal legislation, importance of each museum

developing consultation practices. Comments on the fact that most major museums have policies and programs and that the focus of the document should be that museums have material in which different people have different rights and how national policy concerns custodianship and how material is stored, researched, exhibited and repatriated. Stressed the fact that Aboriginal people seek more than anything else, information on what museums hold.

Council of Australian Art Museum Directors (CAAMD) (Chairman Doug Hall, Director, Queensland Art Gallery)

"More than ever, art museums are now more responsive to an increasing demanding and discriminating range of constituencies...Members...endorse the policy as one which provides a clear cultural and intellectual framework in which the museums will be able to continue and expand programs..."

Council of Australian Museum Directors (CAMD)

Considered drafts of the policy on two occasions: Chairman Peter Hiscock confirmed endorsement by Executive of Council in May 1993.

Department of Aboriginal Affairs, South Australia (David Rathman, Director-General)

Generally supported the policies; comments on relations between Aboriginal peoples and museums, especially with respect to care of collections and their documentation, determination of significance of human remains for scientific research, display of human remains and training of Aboriginal people.

Gladstone Regional Art Gallery and Museum (Pamela Whitlock, Director)

"The detailed policies appear to be reasonable and appropriate in regard to the material, the relevant communities and the museum".

Expresses concern that policies written with national and state institutions in mind. Small museums with some professional staff are generally aware of implications of museum practice in collections management, but privately funded or administered ones run by amateur groups or individuals may not be as aware of the implications of the material held or of their responsibilities in regard to it. This should be reflected in the policy's guidelines on Governance.

Gulf Regional Council (Shirley George, Chairperson)

Welcomes the policy as recognising Aboriginal people as the rightful owners of the culture...the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as having

special...primary rights..."Pleased with the inroads taken and the positive steps climbed."

Interim Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policies and Priorities Action Committee (ATSIPPAC) (through Ms Lori Richardson, convener)

Proposes a set of principles, expresses concern about consultation, emphasises issues of ownership.

Kimberley Land Council (Mr Peter Yu, Director)

Comments on importance of forging new relationships that respects Aboriginal peoples' history, rights and interests. Importance of correspondence between principles and policies. Urges statements committing museums to support of Aboriginal self-determination and right of Aboriginal people to ultimate control of and responsibility for their cultural heritage - past, present and future. "Negotiations should be undertaken so that Aboriginal people have a proper say in how the Aboriginal component of any museum is run...powers and resources should be redirected to appropriately constituted Aboriginal bodies...Community centred approaches are important...The policy should be identified as the key priority for all museums and government ministers to implement".

Migration Museum, Adelaide (Viv Sekeres, Director)

No hesitation in supporting and endorsing the principles.

Museum of Victoria (Graham Morris, Director)

"The Museum...supports the principles and policies...They are in line with the detailed policies which are being developed by this institution...The Museum has developed a detailed policy on restricted material and on the general management of Aboriginal culture within the Museum. This is being done in close association with the Museum's Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee."

Museum of Victoria Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Council

Detailed comments on the draft policies including the role of Boards of Trustees and advisory councils; participated in discussions with the Committee in July 1992 and in the discussion of November 1992.

Museums Association of Australia Inc. (Ms Mary-Louise Williams, President)

"The Museums Association of Australia is pleased to see the development of a positive and thoughtful museum policy for the collection, documentation and care of cultural

and historical material relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. This policy is long overdue. When finally completed it will provide guidance for the hundreds of small museums and communities throughout regional areas as well as larger city-based institutions. The next step is to ensure wide-spread circulation and discussion of the issues it raises"

Museums Association of Australia Inc., ACT Branch (Ms Linda Young, President)

Strongly endorses policy as positive statement and provides guidance for future interactions between museums and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Northern Land Council (Mr Michael Dodson, Director)

Broad direction of the policy welcomed; Aboriginal people consider themselves to be and should be treated as the owners of secret/sacred material. Sought assistance in approaching museums overseas for return of secret/sacred material.

Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville (Mr Ross Searle, Director)

Endorses statements relating to acquisition, ownership, research, access and documentation as applying to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material and statements relating to promotion of understanding of cultural traditions and in interpreting items from collections.

Pitjantjatjara Council (Mr Ushma Scales)

Outlines concern about the process for return and storage of sacred objects and the appropriateness of some items being seen by some people but not by others, control and management of human remains, the appropriate way for museum staff to work with "Anangu", practicality of seeking out the "right" people to consult.

National Museum of Australia (Ms Margaret Coaldrake, Director)

The Museum's Council [has] resolved to welcome the initiative taken by CAMA in developing a draft policy statement. Referred the statement to its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee.

Queensland Museum, Brisbane (Dr Alan Bartholomai, Director)

Policy noted by the Board as being generally in accord with Queensland Museum policies. Comments on Principles, expresses difficulties with some aspects of policy on human remains as to policies concerning all cultures; also on secret/sacred items, collections in general and governance and management.

South Australian Museum (Mr Lester Russell, Director)

Supports the policies and the process through which they were developed.

Tandanya: National Aboriginal Cultural Institute (Ms Doreen Mellor, Visual Arts Co-ordinator)

Endorses policy, especially so far as attention to contemporary art is concerned and expresses appreciation of the consultation process.

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart (Ms Pat Sabine, Director)

Adopted by the Board of the Museum.

Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Culture and Heritage (Barry Watson)

Notes many important points relevant to the cultures of indigenous peoples. Comments on need for sensitivity in considering return of human remains and in dealing with secret/sacred items.

Visual Arts & Archaeology School of Humanities, Flinders University, Adelaide (Professor JVS Megaw)

Comments on specific statements in the draft circulated in late 1991.

Western Australian Museum Board (Andrew Reeves, Director)

Trustees of the Western Australian Museum unanimously endorsed the CAMA policy statement in the recognition that the policy would assist the Museum in its changing focus, especially in relation to work in the area of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Individuals

Aboriginal staff of the South Australian Museum

Wide-ranging comments on responsibilities of museums, role of and respect for the rights of indigenous people in decision-making, the attitudes of some archaeologists, the contribution of future research on human remains, secret/sacred material, the need for financial resources, the importance of consultation and the role of governing boards and advisory committees.

Dr Kim Akerman (Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory)

General (oral) comments most supporting the Policy Statement and detailed policies.

Ms Julia Clark (member of the CAMA Committee)

Numerous wide-ranging comments on matters of both principle and detail concerning all aspects of the policies.

Denise Donlon (Australian Archaeology Association)

Detailed comments on human remains concerning consultation with Aboriginal communities, importance of human remains for scientific study and the process of determining return of remains, the fact that it is not only age which determines scientific importance, as well as the matter of Aboriginal communities making decisions about scientific importance.

Ms Fiona Foley (artist-in residence, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney)

Supports the policy: "...I welcome the new direction of a policy document...As one of the everyday people of Aboriginal cultural background in Australia..."

Dr Amar Galla (University of Canberra)

Wide-ranging (oral) comments on many aspects of the policy and the importance of reaching agreement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Dr Michael K Green (Australian Archaeology Association)

Numerous comments on human remains and their importance in archaeological studies, how museums deal with them and their return including the importance of establishing a clear policy on the issue of ownership and decisions regarding disposition of them in the context of the various interests in them.

The Hon. Dr John Hewson, MP (Leader of the Federal Opposition)

Commends the document.

Senator Cheryl Kernot (Senator for Queensland, Leader of the Australian Democrats)

"Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is timely and necessary...A pleasing feature of the policy is the level of consultation that precedes it."

Senator the Hon. Bob McMullan (Minister for Arts and Administrative Services)

"I believe the...policy statement is an important step in addressing [the] issue of support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, particularly the return of significant cultural property to rightful owners"

"It is important to note that the statement was developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and provides for a stronger role for indigenous people in policy making, management and care of their cultural property in public collecting institutions..."

The Hon. Peter Nugent, MP (Federal Member for Aston and Shadow Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs)

The objectives place due recognition upon the different concepts of "ownership". They also stress the importance of working discretely with each indigenous community in recognising their views and priorities and recognise the significance of a constantly adaptive partnership.

Dr F Donald Pate (Australian Archaeology Association)

Numerous comments including statements on support by Aboriginal communities for research on human remains and the importance of future research.

Mr Christopher Puplick (Trustee, Australian Museum)

Detailed comments on the full policy in draft, particularly with respect to the responsibilities of Boards and Trustees of Museums

Professor Barrie Reynolds (James Cook University of North Queensland Material Culture Studies Unit)

Objects to timing of release of policy statement, deplores lack of early consultation with University museums, objects to gender specificity re principle 4; asserts that endorsement by associations affiliated with CAMA is required & suggests establishment of a new committee.

Mr Aden Ridgeway (Trustee, Australian Museum)

Comments (oral) on general principles underlying the policies, relationships of policies concerning cultural heritage collections to land.

The Hon. Helen Sham-Ho, MLC (NSW Legislative Council)

Commends CAMA for initiating such a policy.

Ms Anne Skates, Education Division, Australian Museum

Numerous comments on most aspects of the draft policy.

Dr Jim Specht, Division of Anthropology, Australian Museum and colleagues.

Numerous comments on almost all aspects of the draft policy on several occasions from their initial circulation to their finalisation, especially as to collections of all kinds.

Mr Geoff Speirs (Old Parliament House - State History Centre, History Trust of South Australia, Adelaide)

Tries to comment from point of view of small museums: about 55 of the 170 in South Australia have collections of Aboriginal artefacts. Suggests policy will meet with mixed reception among smaller museums with private museums and some in towns where relations between [Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal] people "are at flashpoint". Comments also on collection management, assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and employment and training.

Dr John Stanton (Curator, Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia)

Supports the policy: expresses concern at the suggestion that indigenous people were passive receptors of colonial activities and were not in control of their actions. Comments on training opportunities and possibility that some indigenous people may not wish to progress to employment in museums. States that "ethnographically modified human remains" should be identified as a distinct category and the policy should not specify that the display of these items is always inappropriate. Questions meaning of the term traditional in the context "traditional custodian" since customs change over time. Notes that requests for replicas may be appropriate in some circumstances.

The Hon. Robert Tickner, MP (Minister assisting the Prime Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs)

Discussion of involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in formulating the policy; asserted importance of recognition by museums of ownership of cultural heritage by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Refers to consideration of these issues by the AAAC Taskforce.

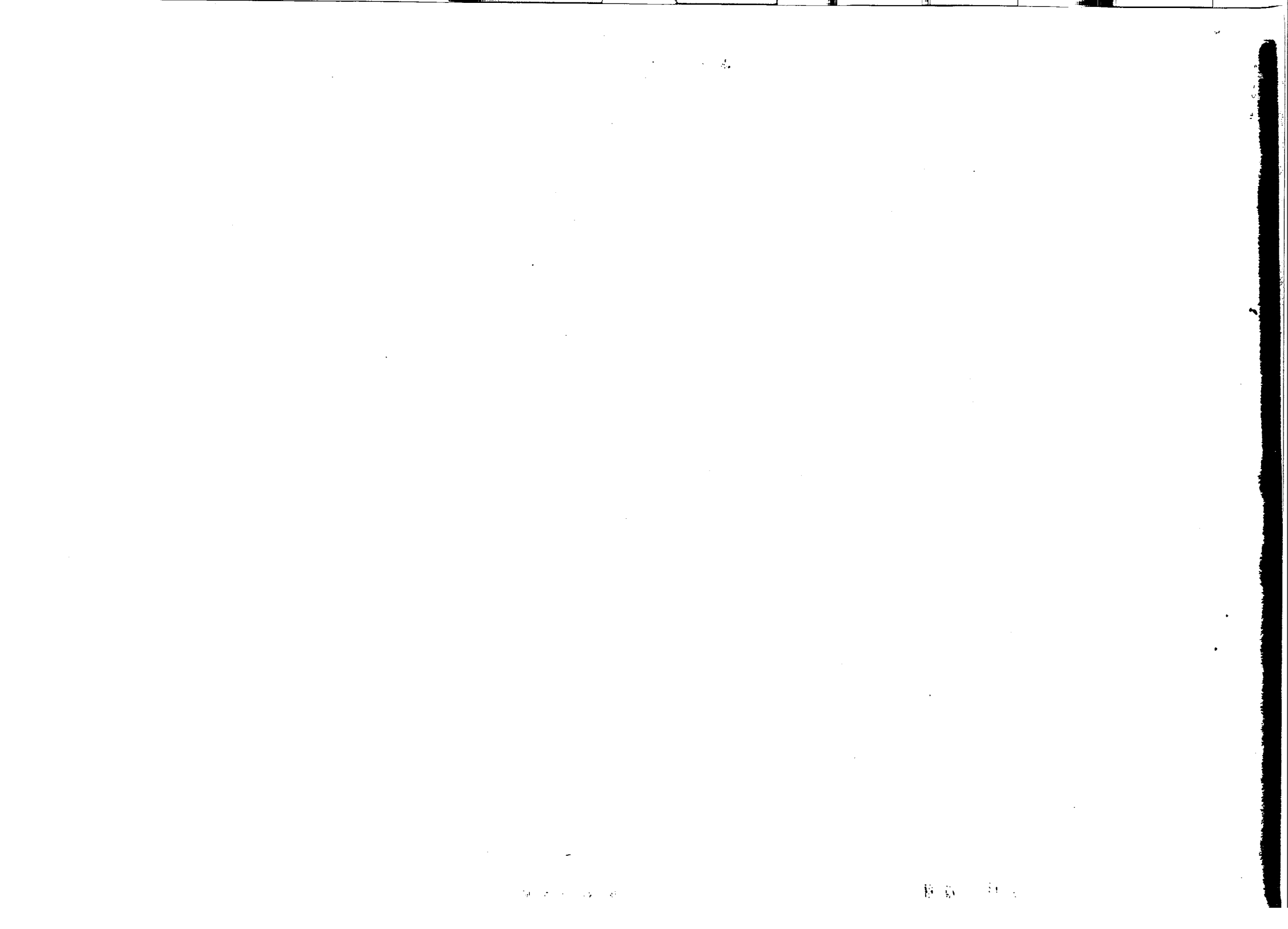
Ms Margie West (Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory)

General comments generally supporting the policy; agrees with involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all aspects of collection management. Does not see need to single out women - men, women and children should be equally covered in terms of special needs and interests. Urges caution in returning items of historical significance to remote communities unless the community has adequate facilities, a local representative willing to take responsibility and Museum has resources to regularly monitor collections preservation. Expresses the hope that these principles will be worked towards in the near future.

The Board of CAMA comprises representatives of affiliated associations. At least one representative of the following affiliates was present at the times when the policy was discussed and endorsed:

Art Museums Association of Australia Inc., Australian Federation of Friends of Museums, Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material, Australian National Committee for ICOM, Council of Australian Art Museum Directors, Council of Australian Museum Directors, Museum Education Association of Australia and the Museums Association of Australia Inc.

Other affiliates include the Australian Museum Shops Association and the Australian Heritage Parks Association.



THE FUTURE OF THIS POLICY

These principles will be subject to review commencing September 1995. That review should take approximately two months and should include a survey of actions that have been taken by museums of all kinds in the areas covered by this document.

In the meantime CAMA will distribute the policy widely throughout Australia and will seek to encourage the adoption and promulgation of individual policies by museums, governments, and communities consistent with the principles and policies enunciated here.

In doing so, CAMA is aware that other discussions are continuing, at a State and Commonwealth Government level, through the Task Force of the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, on policies which deal not only with the matters covered here but with return of material now held in overseas museums. CAMA and some individual museums and museum people have been involved in some of those discussions. It is not possible to say definitely at this time what the outcome of those discussions will be. A statement of principles was adopted by the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council at its meeting in Brisbane in November 1993.

CAMA believes that this Policy Document released today addresses the issues to the fullest extent possible at this time. This document constitutes CAMA Policy and has been established after comprehensive negotiation and consultation. CAMA urges it's acceptance by all institutions holding cultural material of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is hoped that in the next two years further progress will be made so that indigenous Australians can truly say that they are partners in the way in which museums deal with their cultures and heritage and that they, the indigenous peoples, have achieved appropriate levels and degrees of control and self-determination in respect of their cultural heritage.

[Ultimate responsibility for any errors or omissions in this document is taken by Des Griffin, Australian Museum, 6 College St, Sydney]