



Australian Government

Department of Communications and the Arts



Indigenous Repatriation Program – Museum Grants

Guidelines

Introduction

The Australian Government is committed to facilitating dialogue between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, national and international collecting institutions and other relevant stakeholders with the aim of empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to meet their cultural obligations and contribute to a wider society.

The Australian Government, through the Indigenous Repatriation Program (the Program), facilitates the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and secret sacred objects, held in the collections of the seven major state and territory museums and the National Museum of Australia, to their communities of origin. The museums work directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to identify the origins of ancestral remains and secret sacred objects.

The Indigenous Repatriation Policy (the Policy) states the Australian Government's commitment to the return of Indigenous ancestral remains and secret sacred objects to their communities of origin and sets out the protocols and processes involved. For a copy of the policy and information on the Program go to <https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/cultural-heritage/indigenous-repatriation>.

About the Indigenous Repatriation Program

The Program facilitates the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains from overseas and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and secret sacred objects from the eight Australian museums.

Eligibility

The Indigenous Repatriation Program – Museum Grants supports existing repatriation programs undertaken by the eight Australian museums to return Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and secret sacred objects from their collections to the communities of origin¹.

The Indigenous Repatriation Program – Museum Grants provides funding support to the following museums:

- The Australian Museum;
- Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory;
- Museums Victoria;
- National Museum of Australia (NMA);
- Queensland Museum;
- South Australian Museum;
- Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, and the
- Western Australian Museum.

Objectives of the Museum Grants

- Identify the origin of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and secret sacred objects held in the eight funded museums' collections.
- Empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to be involved in the repatriation of their ancestral remains and secret sacred objects.
- Repatriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and secret sacred objects to their community of origin.
- Facilitate discussions with custodians for culturally appropriate storage and access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and secret sacred objects.
- Support the engagement and/or employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to provide assistance, support and cultural advice to progress the repatriation of ancestral remains and secret sacred objects to communities of origin.

What the Museum Grants can fund

- Activities directly connected to the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and secret sacred objects to their communities of origin.
- The provision of culturally appropriate care and access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and secret sacred objects.
- Contribution to the employment of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employee/s where these expenses can be directly attributable to measurable outputs for repatriation.
- Contribution to other salaries and expert consultant/s expenses where the position can be directly attributable to measurable outputs for repatriation.

¹ This includes working with a range of groups including cultural groups, Registered Aboriginal Parties, language groups, Traditional Owners, heritage groups, family groups and Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

Repatriation activities may include:

- Research of collection to determine provenance;
- Establishment and maintenance of appropriate records;
- Costs associated with facilitating the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the repatriation process including: travel and accommodation for Elders/community representatives to view or collect ancestral remains or secret sacred objects;
- Costs incurred by museum staff to liaise with community, including travel and accommodation;
- Costs associated with preparing items for return; and
- Ceremonial costs.

What the Museum Grants do not fund

- Purchase of assets;
- International travel; and
- Infrastructure including storage facilities and the running costs associated with storage facilities, (excluding the NMA).

Funding

The Indigenous Repatriation Program – Museum Grants is a non-competitive program. All funding decisions are considered within the limits of available program funding.

Funding terms

Museums will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement with the Australian Government. The Funding Agreement sets out the terms and conditions of funding including provision of a work plan. Funds will be paid in instalments as per the milestones outlined in the Funding Agreement.

Complaints Mechanism

The Department of Communications and the Arts (the Department) regards complaints as a way of assessing and improving performance. The Department will endeavour, where possible, to ensure that complaints are resolved promptly, fairly, confidentially and satisfactorily and that processes are improved as a result. Complaints should be directed to repatriation@arts.gov.au.