

NATIONAL RESTING PLACE CONSULTATION REPORT 2014

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR
INDIGENOUS REPATRIATION**

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1. Recommendations

1. The Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation (the Committee) recommends that as a longer term objective, all ancestral remains provenanced only to Australia should be cared for in a National Resting Place.
2. Indigenous ancestral remains that are only provenanced to a state or territory should be cared for in that state or territory as this way, they would be closer to home.
3. The Committee recommends that a National Resting Place be established in Canberra within the Parliamentary Triangle.
4. The Committee recommends a site adjacent to Federation Mall, within sight of Parliament House (refer to the map at Appendix 6.2).
5. The Committee recommends that a National Resting Place consist of three distinct places within the one site to reflect the different objectives:
 - i. The Resting Place for the ancestors where spiritual connections can be made and contemplation can be undertaken.
 - ii. The Ceremonial Space where Indigenous burial rites and associated ceremonies can be conducted.
 - iii. A Public Space where reflection and prominence for the issue can be shared with all Australians.
6. The Committee recommends that the extent of further research to be undertaken to determine provenance should be a matter for the governing authority of this place taking into account prevailing community opinion.
7. The Committee recommends that the National Resting Place be controlled and run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

2. Background

2.1 Indigenous Repatriation

For the past 30 years, the Australian Government has been involved in assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to return ancestral remains and secret sacred objects from museums, universities and private collections in Australian and overseas institutions, to their communities of origin.

This work is undertaken collaboratively, with Indigenous communities, Australian Government agencies, Australian museums, state, territory and local governments, collecting institutions and overseas governments and institutions all playing a critical role.

Where ancestors can be provenanced to a community, the Elders and Traditional Owners from that community make the decisions about their repatriation. Where they cannot be provenanced to a community they are returned to the nearest Australian museum for care. These museums are funded under the Australian Governments Indigenous Repatriation Program to conduct further investigations to uncover community origins where possible.

The eight museums funded under this program are:

1. Australian Museum
2. Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
3. Museum Victoria
4. National Museum of Australia
5. Queensland Museum
6. South Australian Museum
7. Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
8. Western Australian Museum

Historically, some ancestral remains that were provenanced to a community, state, territory or region were returned to the National Museum of Australia. The National Museum of Australia is funded through the Indigenous Repatriation Program to receive and care for these ancestors.

Where ancestral remains can only be identified as being Indigenous to Australia, the Committee provides advice to ensure these ancestors are cared for and brought closer to home. They are currently cared for 'in trust' by the National Museum of Australia.

At this stage we are aware that Australian Indigenous ancestral remains are held in numerous overseas collections, most being held in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Poland, Austria and the United States of America. The unconditional and voluntary return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains is sought from overseas governments and institutions in collaboration with the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Within Australia, the Indigenous Repatriation Program is focused on returning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and secret sacred objects held in major Australian museums, to their communities of origin. The Australian Government, state and territory governments and their major museums work collaboratively on repatriation issues that relate to Australian collections of remains and objects.

From 2012, the identified eight museums receive funding to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples directly in repatriation activities, to undertake non-invasive research to provenance ancestral remains and secret sacred objects and to work with Indigenous communities to repatriate ancestral remains and secret sacred objects.

2.2 Previous consultation on a National Resting Place

A National Resting Place for poorly provenanced ancestral remains has been discussed over many years.

Year	Actions
1993	<p>The National Principles for the Return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Property stated;</p> <p><i>‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should have access to reasonable facilities and places for the safekeeping of repatriated significant cultural property’.</i></p>
1994	<p>The Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action undertook extensive consultation that identified a need for a national keeping place for unprovenanced and other ancestral remains.</p>
1997-1998	<p>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission consulted on its policy on the return of human remains and found a national resting place was ‘wholeheartedly supported by Indigenous organisations...’</p>
2001	<p>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission policy was amended stating ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission...supports a national Indigenous repository for unprovenanced cultural property’.</p>
2003-2004	<p>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service commissioned the National Museum of Australia to undertake consultation on options regarding storage and disposal of poorly provenanced ancestral remains. Indigenous communities and museums were consulted through a questionnaire. Responses were limited, however, there was support for the development of a national resting place, most respondents preferred an alternative to continued holding of ancestral remains within museums and a common theme showed that Indigenous people want to have control and ownership of the repatriation process, especially in the management of those ancestral remains that cannot go home.</p>
2005	<p>The then Prime Minister requested advice on how ancestral remains that cannot be returned to their community of origin should be handled in a culturally appropriate manner in the future.</p>

2006	The then Commonwealth Indigenous Affairs Minister appointed an Indigenous Repatriation Reference Committee to conduct consultations in order to advise the Prime Minister.
2007	<p>The Repatriation Reference Committee recommended a community consultation process that canvassed three keeping/resting place options for poorly provenanced ancestral remains.</p> <p>The Repatriation Reference Committee's term expired without a community consultation process being conducted.</p>
2009	<p>The Office of Evaluation and Audit released its Performance Audit of the International Repatriation Program.</p> <p><i>Recommendation 4: 'develop a set of principles and procedures based on consultation...that identifies the process, roles, responsibilities and expectations regarding the coordination of international and domestic repatriations of human remains to communities, including reburial arrangements for provenanced remains and long-term management arrangements for unprovenanced remains.'</i></p> <p><i>Recommendation 5: 'institute action plans that cover the funding and other resources or infrastructure needed by communities to rebury remains and/or to resolve the long-term management arrangements for unprovenanced remains...'</i></p>
2010-2011	<p>A new Commonwealth Government Indigenous Repatriation Policy was announced which consolidated the domestic and international repatriation programs. A key initiative of the policy was the appointment of a new Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation to advise the Government on repatriation issues.</p> <p><i>Part III of the Policy states 'The role of the Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation is to provide strategic advice on cultural and management issues that affect all or many different communities including the long-term care of ancestral remains and secret sacred objects with no identified community of origin including remains and objects that are poorly, or have limited, provenance'.</i></p> <p><i>Part IV of the Policy states that 'For poorly or limited provenanced remains the Australian Government would seek the advice and guidance from the Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation'.</i></p>

2012	Members of the Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation were appointed. The Committee agree that the current arrangements for poorly provenanced ancestral remains are not culturally appropriate and further consideration be given to their long-term care.
2013	The Committee release a Discussion Paper seeking views on the long-term care and management of poorly provenanced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and conduct extensive consultations across Australia to inform their report to Government on this issue.

3. Consideration of issues

3.1 Support for establishing a National Resting Place

For more than 150 years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains were removed from their Country and placed in museums, universities and private collections in Australia and overseas.

The return of ancestors to their traditional lands is extremely important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and all Australians. It is a matter of justice and healing, and an opportunity to right the wrongs of the past. It is the first step towards honouring the ancestors' dignity and to allow them to finally rest in peace.

'The first time I held ancestors' remains I was overcome with emotion and a sense of responsibility about looking after those old people. Let's give them their dignity and a safe resting place.'

A key element to returning ancestors is identifying their community origins. Often documentation such as historical records, letters, diaries and reports give some indication about the exact location the ancestral remains were taken from. However, sometimes ancestral remains can only be identified as coming from Australia or from a state/territory or a region. There are many instances where information cannot be obtained to identify provenance beyond Australia.

Under current arrangements, the National Museum of Australia receives funding from the Australian Government to care for poorly provenanced ancestral remains that are returned to Australia through the Indigenous Repatriation Program. The National Museum of Australia currently has over 200 such remains in its care.

Each major state and territory museum also receives funding from the Australian Government to care for ancestral remains that are identified as coming from that state or territory and to repatriate them back to the rightful communities within that state or territory. There are also some ancestral remains provenanced only to Australia that are kept in state museums.

The ancestral remains returned from overseas are not accessioned into, and do not form any part of, the National Museum of Australia's (or state or territory museum's) own collection.

For Traditional Owner groups that do not have suitable land for reburial, an option is to have their ancestral remains cared for at a Government funded museum.

For some time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have expressed concern that museums, even with the best of intentions from curatorial staff, are a culturally inappropriate location for these ancestors. However, there is currently no alternative facility that has the capacity, or cultural authority, to care for these ancestral remains.

Since 1993, there have been a number of discussions and consultations that have taken place around establishing a National Keeping/Resting Place that could properly house these poorly provenanced ancestral remains in a way that recognises their deep significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In 2004, the National Museum of Australia surveyed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on behalf of the Australian Government on the future care and management of poorly provenanced ancestral remains. The survey results indicated a strong preference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have control and ownership of the repatriation process and ancestral remains that can only be provenanced to Australia.

To date no decisions have been made on whether there should be a National Resting Place and/or where it should be located.

Our Consultations

In 2012, the Committee reviewed the history of this issue and endorsed the view that museums are not an appropriate location for holding poorly provenanced ancestral remains.

The Committee resolved that one of its priority tasks should be to address this matter to give these ancestors without a voice, culturally appropriate recognition.

The Committee was also conscious that some overseas institutions have also said that they are reluctant to return ancestral remains to Australia where these remains will not be returned to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but simply stored in a museum facility. The establishment of a National Resting Place which is not associated with any museum and is controlled and managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would help to overcome such unwillingness to engage in repatriation.

The Committee recognises that the issue is complex and sensitive and that community consultations is crucial to determine a way forward that is culturally sensitive, encompasses the range of diverse cultures and beliefs and, is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations.

It was clear from the results of previous consultations that most people were in support of establishing a National Keeping Place. Accordingly, the objective of these consultations was primarily to determine the form, location and function of a National Keeping Place.

However, to gauge whether the attitudes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had changed since the last consultation on this issue participants were still asked whether they supported establishing a National Keeping Place.

In May 2013, the Committee issued a Discussion Paper canvassing the concept of a National Keeping Place for poorly provenanced ancestral remains, providing a survey for stakeholder feedback and putting forward the Committee's preliminary view that: *'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains with no known community of origin should be interred in a National Keeping Place that is located in the nation's capital, Canberra'*.

Extensive public consultations were held around Australia to engage the community and to receive direct feedback on the issues raised in the Discussion Paper. At these consultations Committee members made it clear that the Committee's view on the location was designed to elicit comment and that alternative opinions were both welcome and would be fully considered before final recommendations could be made to Government.

These consultations confirmed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do not believe that holding ancestral remains in museums is culturally appropriate. Views expressed at the consultations highlighted that the continued association of ancestral remains with the museum sector was seen as museums still having control and ownership of the remains. A number of respondents noted that museums are seen as the jailers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and using museums to care for these remains long-term is a continuation of this situation.

'I support a National Keeping Place because I believe that we need to reclaim our ancestors and provide them with a memorial to ensure they are remembered with the dignity and respect that has not been shown to them in the past.'

Both the survey and the public consultations revealed:

- Overwhelming support for a culturally appropriate place for the long-term care of poorly provenanced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains where these remains can be accorded respect and dignity and where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can care for them until their traditional family and Country can be determined.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are hesitant to visit institutions as they are unable to pay their respects to their ancestors in a culturally appropriate way. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples want to be able to visit their ancestors to pay their respects and reconnect with them.
- A preference that this place should be called a National Resting Place, rather than the earlier term a Keeping Place, to better distinguish it from a museum and to reflect its role.

The establishment of a National Resting Place was seen as a powerful statement, moving the current process for care and storage of ancestral remains away from the museum sector, and vesting the future long-term care of these ancestral remains to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Museum Sector

Early consultations focussed mainly on the ancestral remains that are currently housed at the National Museum of Australia. However, it soon became evident that there are large numbers of poorly provenanced ancestral remains being cared for at other state and territory museums.

The Committee considers that establishing one national place where all poorly provenanced ancestral remains can be cared for would reduce the need for multiple facilities to be maintained across Australia's museums and enable more information to be collected that could help provenance the remains.

Some state and territory collecting institutions while supporting a National Resting Place expressed some reservations about surrendering the poorly provenanced ancestral remains in their care to a national site. Museums indicated that they have qualified personnel with the required expertise to care for and carry out research on the ancestral remains in their care in a culturally appropriate manner. They are also of the view that transferring these ancestral remains to another establishment would weaken the connection to the people and information in the museums that a researcher would need to study when undertaking provenancing work.

The South Australian Museum has highlighted in its submission that it holds the Human Genome Collection. The Museum believes this collection will offer an opportunity to generate a genetic reference bank for Indigenous ancestors across Australia. Through a technique that requires preserved DNA to be sequenced and matched against the genetic reference bank, the Museum believes the results will enable accurate provenancing of the ancestral remains held in the South Australian Museum to the degree currently required for repatriation.

The Museum also believes this information could be used to provenance ancestral remains held in other institutions both nationally and internationally. The Museum will look to pursue this project over the next five years and is therefore unlikely to relinquish the poorly provenanced ancestral remains in its care to a National Resting Place.

Recommendations

1. The Committee recommends that as a longer term objective, all ancestral remains provenanced only to Australia should be cared for in a National Resting Place.
2. Indigenous ancestral remains that are only provenanced to a state or territory should be cared for in that state or territory as this way, they would be closer to home.

3.2 The location of a National Resting Place

The majority of survey participants indicated Canberra as their preferred location for a National Resting Place.

'Canberra is our nation's capital. Maybe having a keeping place in Canberra will raise public awareness as to the injustices inflicted on our peoples.'

Opinion at the public consultations was divided. Some groups, particularly in Northern Australia, the Kimberly and Launceston strongly favoured a site in Central Australia. At other meetings there was strong support for Canberra.

Reasons advanced for supporting Canberra included:

- 'Congress agrees in principle that a location of national focus reflects the significance and honour that these remains deserve, and as such, agrees that Canberra may be an appropriate resting place for unprovenanced ancestral remains.' – *National Congress of Australia's First Peoples Submission*
- A site in the nation's capital would raise the profile of a broader repatriation agenda that is of national significance and importance to all Australians. A Canberra site would create a greater understanding of past injustices towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, provide a beacon of conscience and be a place that encourages reconciliation.
- As Canberra is the home of many nationally significant cultural institutions it would be appropriate for a National Resting Place that is symbolic of Australia's shared past.
- As many school children visit Canberra a National Resting Place there could serve as a place of education for younger generations in learning about this aspect of their Country's history.
- Having a National Resting Place in Canberra would keep the repatriation agenda before the eyes and minds of government, decision makers and all Australians. It would provide a focus for Indigenous peoples to continue to advocate for the return of their ancestors.

- There is strong support for career pathways and employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in relevant fields of work relating to repatriation, for example archival research, anthropology and cultural heritage practices. A site in Canberra would be convenient for staff recruitment and retention as opposed to a site in a remote location.

Reasons for advancing Central Australia included:

- Alice Springs or Uluru is at the heart of the country as its geographical centre.
- There are strong traditional song lines that cross the country and link many different communities to the centre of Australia.
- Alice Springs and Uluru are centrally located and equally accessible for all Traditional Owner groups that wish to visit and pay respects to their ancestors. 'Access for all Indigenous peoples to a National Keeping Place is required, it is therefore important for the site to be located in central Australia.' – Kimberly Elders at the Consultation Forum Fitzroy Crossing
- 'Alice Springs is the home of many language groups and has great symbolism. The Desert Knowledge Precinct is also the middle of the regional economy. It is where WA, NT, SA, NSW and QLD meet in the middle.' – Mr Hampton, Desert Knowledge Precinct Representative

During the consultations some people raised the idea of having a memorial highlighting the past injustices in addition to a National Resting Place. This idea was first raised at the Launceston meeting where there was strong support for a National Resting Place in Central Australia but that a memorial should be constructed in the Parliamentary Triangle as a “beacon of conscience” to remind Parliamentarians and all Australians of the past injustices.

In subsequent meetings this concept received some support although the location of the National Resting Place was still an issue.

'It could support a national grieving process or commemorative ceremonies that are an expression of compassion and broader respect to honouring the dignity of our ancestors.'

Some people also suggested that memorials should be constructed in each state and territory as well as Canberra.

The Committee's View

The Committee carefully considered the various opinions regarding location. It believes strongly that a site within the Parliamentary Triangle in Canberra is the best location to both provide a proper resting place but also act as a beacon of conscious. The site recommended is on Federation Mall, within sight of Parliament House but secluded with the opportunity to create a special place to care for ancestral remains.

The Committee also held follow up consultations with those organisations and individuals that had a strong view for the location of the National Resting Place to be other than Canberra. The outcome of these meetings was favourable and participants in these further consultations recognised the benefits and reasons for locating the Resting Place in Canberra. It was acknowledged that no cultural place was more significant or relevant than another due to the personal, cultural and spiritual connections every Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person has with Country.

Traditional Owners

All participants recognised that a site for a National Resting Place would need the consent of the Traditional Owners of that land.

In Canberra, consultations were held with the Traditional Owners. Both the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people gave in principle support for a National Resting Place in Canberra.

The National Capital Authority

Meetings were also held with the National Capital Authority. These meetings confirmed that suitable Commonwealth owned land by Lake Burley Griffin was available for a National Resting Place. Two locations were suggested, Acton Peninsula and Yarramundi Reach. The National Capital Authority confirmed that two sites adjacent to Federation Mall, within the Parliamentary Triangle, would be suitable for a National Resting Place and confirmed that Reconciliation Place, in the Parliamentary Triangle would be a suitable location for a memorial.

Recommendations

3. The Committee recommends that a National Resting Place be established in Canberra within the Parliamentary Triangle.

4. The Committee recommends a site adjacent to Federation Mall, within sight of Parliament House (refer to the map at Appendix 6.2).

3.3 The form and function of a National Resting Place

During the consultations views were sought on the form and functions of a National Resting Place. From these meetings the Committee identified a number of common suggestions, including:

- A culturally appropriate place for the ancestors to be cared for or laid to rest.
- A place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to visit so they are able to pay respects to their ancestors.
- A nationally significant place for all Australians to remind them of past injustices, a beacon of conscience and a place to promote reconciliation.
- A place of education for younger generations.
- A place that facilitates the practice of cultural ceremonies.
- A place that enables further research to be undertaken to identify where the ancestral remains come from.
- A place where the ancestors can be permanently laid to rest or buried.
- A place that provides career pathways, employment and training for Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples in relevant areas for example archival research, anthropology and cultural heritage practice.

'It would require a facility and strategy for the collation, management, and preservation of associated documentation and research. It should support cultural values and sensitivities, for example through associated gardens, ceremony spaces and private spaces.'

The Committee has recommended a location for a National Resting Place within sight of Parliament House but sufficiently secluded to provide the peace our ancestors deserve. It is proposed that the National Resting Place consist of three distinct spaces within the one site:

1. The Resting Place for the ancestors where spiritual connections can be made and contemplation can be undertaken.
2. The Ceremonial Space where Indigenous burial rites and associated ceremonies can be conducted.
3. A Public Space where reflection and prominence for the issue can be shared with all Australians.

There were differing views about whether further research should be undertaken to identify where the ancestral remains come from or whether they should be permanently laid to rest. These views included:

- Whether research and testing should continue on these ancestral remains, preventing them from being laid to rest.
- Who will determine what forms of testing will be undertaken.
- Whether ancestral remains will be subjected to testing for a set period of time before they are eventually buried.

Recommendations

5. The Committee recommends that a National Resting Place consist of three distinct places within the one site to reflect the different objectives:
 - i. The Resting Place for the ancestors where spiritual connections can be made and contemplation can be undertaken.
 - ii. The Ceremonial Space where Indigenous burial rites and associated ceremonies can be conducted.
 - iii. A Public Space where reflection and prominence for the issue can be shared with all Australians.
6. The Committee recommends that the extent of further research to be undertaken to determine provenance should be a matter for the governing authority of this place taking into account prevailing community opinion.

3.4 The governance of a National Resting Place

Through the consultations there was strong support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have full control of the management and operation of the care of ancestral remains whose origins cannot be identified.

‘Congress agrees with the Committee that a National Keeping Place should be a sacred and symbolic memorial that acknowledges past injustices, offering the opportunity for healing and closure. Congress believes that ancestral remains that cannot be returned to their community of origin should be, as a starting point, cared for by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander institution.’

Consideration must be given to developing a governance structure that can effectively oversee such a place and ensures that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are appropriately represented.

Recommendations

7. The Committee recommends that the National Resting Place be controlled and run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

4. Survey results and analysis

4.1 The Survey

Between June and October 2013, a survey was conducted as part of the public consultation on the establishment of a National Keeping Place. The consultation aimed to investigate and address the issue of the long-term management and care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains with no known community of origin, which is an agreed priority of the Australian Government's Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation.

The survey was conducted online using Survey Monkey software. Hardcopy surveys were also distributed as part of the consultation Discussion Paper (including at community consultation meetings). Results received in hardcopy were entered manually into Survey Monkey.

4.2 Responses

142 responses were received by the October 2013 closing date. These included responses from individuals and communities across Australia; and representatives from the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, the Healing Foundation, Land Councils, the National Museum of Australia, state and territory museums and art galleries, cultural centres, heritage organisations and state government. Over half (55%) of those that responded to the survey provided their name and just under half (44%) listed a community or organisation.

4.3 Key Findings

- The survey found strong support for a National Keeping Place to provide care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains that cannot be returned home because there is no information about where they come from.
- The need to care for unprovenanced ancestral remains in a culturally appropriate, respectful, ethical and dignified way was the primary reason given for this support. Other common reasons given were: to provide a resting place, to keep ancestral remains together in one central location, and to enable further provenance research.

- There was strong support for the National Keeping Place to take the form of a central cultural repository, and a memorial building or mausoleum. There was also strong support for outdoor gardens, space for ceremony, and a natural location.
- Common reasons given for any form of National Keeping Place were: the care, safety and resting of ancestral remains and spirits; dignity, respect and cultural rights; and Indigenous control. Common reasons for a memorial form included healing, education, telling a story that needs to be heard, reconciliation, and a place to remember and pay respects.
- Whilst some respondents felt ancestral remains should be laid to rest through burial, more were of the view that they should be laid to rest symbolically, and that efforts should continue to identify and return them to their home Country.
- The primary functions of a National Keeping Place were seen to be the care and safe keeping of ancestral remains, awareness-raising, and a nationally significant memorial.
- There was strong support for this to be located in Canberra.

4.4 Summary of results

Question 1 – Support for a National Keeping Place

The first question asked whether respondents support a National Keeping Place for the purpose of the longer-term care and management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains that cannot be returned home because there is no information about where they come from.



The majority of survey respondents (87%) supported the establishment of a National Keeping Place.

The remainder of the questions asked for free text responses, so answers have been grouped according to common themes and ideas. As this is an interpretive process rather than an exact science, the figures should be considered to be approximate and should be used to illustrate trends rather than being interpreted as precise. Direct quotations have also been used to illustrate the range of responses.

Question 2 – Why do you support a National Keeping Place?

Only those that answered 'yes' to question 1 were asked this question.¹ Respect was the most common word used, appearing in over a quarter (26%) of responses. The reasons for supporting a National Keeping Place included:

- To care for unprovenanced ancestral remains in a culturally appropriate, respectful, ethical and dignified way (33% of respondents to Q2).
- To provide a resting place (14%).
- To keep unprovenanced ancestral remains together in one central place (13%).
- To facilitate increased provenancing and returns (12%)².
- To vest responsibility for their care in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as their custodians (through a National Keeping Place managed by an Indigenous body and decision making processes) (10%).
- For return to Australia – to at least their Country of origin – until a community can be identified or they can be layed to rest in the earth (8%).
- To provide a better alternative to shelves, boxes and storage containers (8%).
- To redress past injustices and bring closure and healing (7%).
- To provide a national memorial (7%).
- A place for descendants to pay respects (5%).

¹ Of those that answered 'yes' to supporting a National Keeping Place, 69% provided a reason for this support (n=84 respondents).

² Some respondents anticipated that this would occur through scientific testing, and others were adamant that methods should not be intrusive.

- A neutral place to avoid community/regional conflict (4%).
- For ceremony (4%).
- A political statement (2%).
- Reconciliation (2%).

Question 3 – What form do you think a National Keeping Place should take?

A diverse range of views on what form a National Keeping Place should take were provided,³ and in many instances these were linked to comments on function (Q4).

Suggestions regarding form included:

- A central repository /cultural institution for safe storage (29% of respondents to Q3).
- A memorial building or mausoleum (15%).
- A cemetery/burial (9%).
- A memorial park or garden (7%).

Many of the responses that referred to a physical building as either a cultural repository or memorial also suggested outdoor gardens and space for ceremony, and one respondent detailed all natural local materials for the building's construction to symbolise the connection to mother earth. Many of the respondents referred to the importance of Indigenous control and respect for culture.

One respondent suggested that the building be underground (symbolic of burial), but not allowing for actual burial which could inadvertently go against traditional cultural law.

Five respondents (7%) referred to the National War Memorial – either as a model, or as a building the National Keeping Place could be housed in. Two respondents drew parallels with the 'Tomb of the Unknown Soldier' including a suggestion to name a memorial the 'Tomb of the Unknown Warrior'. Five respondents (7%) held the view that the National Keeping Place should be a private place, not for display to the public.

³Of those that answered 'yes' to supporting a National Keeping Place, 62% provided comments on the form this should take (n=76 respondents).

One respondent suggested a memorial in each state, and one suggested an overarching peak body with regional hubs. Three respondents (4%) thought it should be a space within an existing museum or collecting institution or a section in existing collections' storage.

Question 4 – Why do you support this form?

Of those that provided comments on the form that a National Keeping Place should take, 96%⁴ provided reasons for their support of this form.

There were some common reasons given for the support of any form of National Keeping Place, which included:

- For the care, safety and resting of ancestral remains and spirits.
- To provide dignity, respect and cultural rights.
- Indigenous control.

Reasons given for supporting a memorial of some form (whether it be a memorial building, mausoleum, memorial park or cemetery) included:

- Healing.
- To educate about Indigenous culture.
- To provide a meeting place.
- To provide an Aboriginal voice telling a story that needs to be heard.
- To remind people of what happened.
- To educate.
- To enforce the tradition of respect for culture, heritage and ancestors that have passed.
- To provide dignity.
- They are easier to maintain than a cultural institution and ensure longevity and less reliance on government.
- So that ancestors are not forgotten on a shelf.
- To provide a place of remembrance and to pay respects.

⁴ n=73 respondents.

The respondents that thought that the National Keeping Place should take a form that is not accessible to the public gave the reason that this would be so that the ancestors are not exploited and are afforded peace, dignity and respect.

The most common reason given by respondents that supported a cemetery or burial was that they believed burial would lay the ancestors' spirits to rest, together with other ancestors (n=5 respondents).

However, many respondents supported a central repository, mausoleum, or a memorial garden without burial because they didn't believe that ancestral remains should be buried as part of the National Keeping Place. Reasons given for this included:

- Concerns about ancestral remains being buried on the wrong Country (n=3 respondents).
- Maintaining access to ancestral remains so that they can be returned to Country should additional information about provenance become available; and to enable research and provenancing to occur (n=6 respondents).

Question 5 – What do you think the function of a National Keeping Place should be?

Of those that answered 'yes' to supporting a National Keeping Place, 57%⁵ provided comments on what they thought the function should be. Responses included:

- The care and safe keeping of ancestors' remains (55% of respondents to Q5).
- Community engagement, education, public awareness raising (23%).
- To provide dignity and respect to the ancestors (20%).
- Repatriation activities (20%).
- A memorial to those removed from their lands/past injustices (17%).
- Provenance research (15%).
- A place for communities to access, to mourn and pay tribute (10%).
- Bringing closure and facilitating grieving and healing (9%).

⁵ n=69 respondents.

- To provide a culturally meaningful space (9%).
- Providing a sacred and symbolic space (6%).
- Information/records management (4%).
- Burial/cremation when origins cannot be determined (4%).
- To promote culture, language, stories, history, ceremony (3%).

Many respondents mentioned multiple functions. The most common response was that the National Keeping Place should provide care and safekeeping for ancestral remains (55%). Many mentioned that this should ideally be temporary, until they can be repatriated to their Country.

There was also strong support for a National Keeping Place to provide an awareness raising, and/or significant national memorial function, with respondents likening the National Keeping Place to the War Memorial, and international examples including the Te Papa Museum in Wellington, the Rock Art Institute in Johannesburg, the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the Native American museum in Washington DC, and the Kranji Memorial Cemetery in Singapore.

Question 6 – Why do you support this function?

Of those that provided a proposed function in response to question 5, 86%⁶ provided comments on why they supported that function as a response to question 6. Many respondents had already included reasoning in their previous responses.

Regardless of which functions respondents proposed in question 5, some common reasons were provided for supporting those functions. The words ‘respect’ and ‘dignity’ came up repeatedly in responses, as well as the importance of giving ancestors a resting place, the importance of culture, spiritual reasons, and that it is the right thing to do.

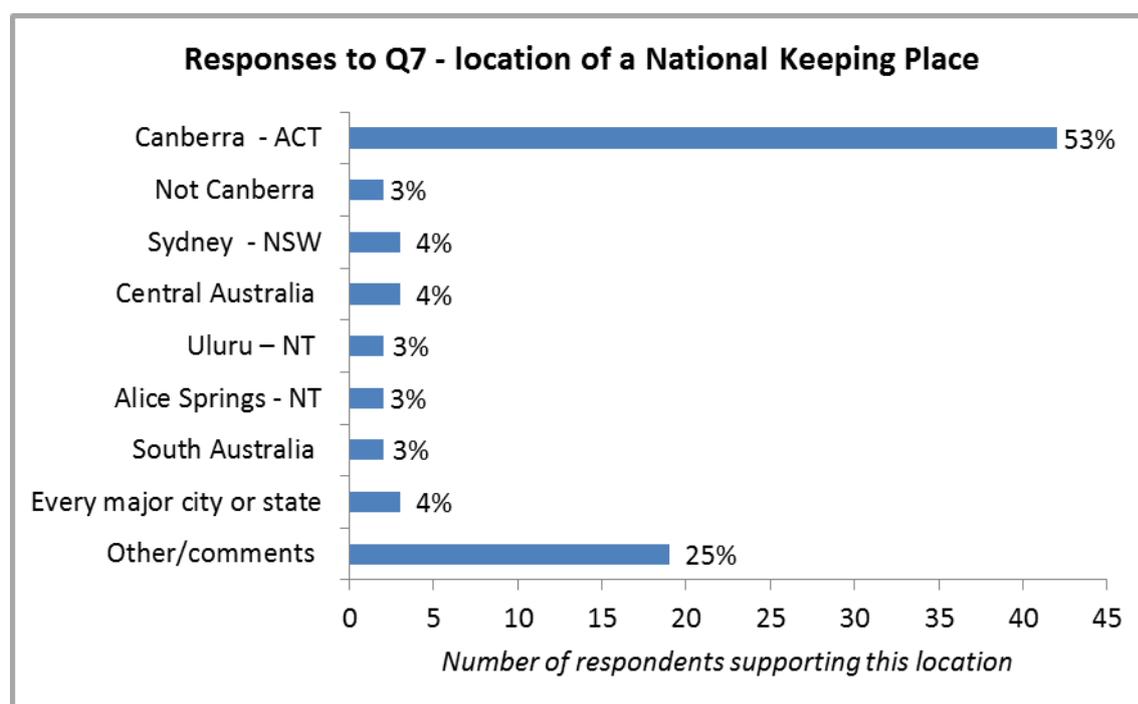
Many of those that supported a memorial or public awareness function articulated the importance of telling the story for healing and national reconciliation.

⁶ n=59 respondents.

Many of those that supported the functions of further provenance research and repatriation activities gave the reason that the overriding objective must be to return ancestral remains to their Country of origin. Those that supported reburial stated the importance of giving the ancestral remains a resting place and not leaving them on another shelf.

Question 7 - Where do you think it should be located?

62%⁷ of those that supported a National Keeping Place provided a proposed location.



There was clear support for Canberra as a preferred location. Other locations mentioned included Ernabella, the Greater Blue Mountains, Palm Valley – Finke Gorge National Park, West MacDonnell Ranges, Wiradjuri Country, near the Torres Strait.

Specific suggestions regarding a Canberra location included a natural bushland setting, or near the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. The Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies suggestion was also raised elsewhere in the survey responses, as was the

⁷ n=75 respondents. Some respondents suggested a second option.

suggestion that the National Keeping Place be attached to the National Museum of Australia or the Australian War Memorial.

A common comment provided in response to the location question referred to further consultation on this issue – that Elders should decide the location and that agreement should be sought with Traditional Owners.

The National Congress of Australia First Peoples stated: *'Congress is of the view that if during the consultation process there was considerable opposition to the National Keeping Place being located in Canberra, further talks will need to be held with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and organisations, including Congress, to determine an alternative location to Canberra. If Canberra is ultimately chosen as the location for the National Keeping Place, the exact location should be chosen in close consultation with the local traditional owners.'*

Question 8 – Why do you support this location?

Of those that suggested a location, 93%⁸ provided a reason for that support.

Reasons given for Canberra to be the chosen site included:

- National significance/high profile/it's the nation's capital.
- To be co-located with other national institutions.
- Symbolism – should have the same level of significance as the National War Memorial.
- To raise awareness about injustice and provide a vehicle for reconciliation.
- To support a national grieving process and to enable all Australians to share in the history of their Country.
- It offers a natural setting.
- It is the location of the Tent Embassy.
- A central location.
- Expertise already there (e.g. National Museum of Australia, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies).
- Infrastructure to support it.
- More neutral than other areas.

⁸ n=70.

- Accessibility – easy to travel to and many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples travel there for business.

Reasons given for other locations included:

- A spiritual and cultural home (Uluru).
- Greater accessibility than Canberra (SA).
- Dry climate and sunshine (Alice Springs or Ernabella).
- Centre of the country (central Australia).
- Largest area and first invaded after Sydney (Wiradjuri country).
- Central, culturally appropriate, many songlines (central Australia).
- Geographical centre, heart of the country, means ‘meeting place’ (Alice Springs).
- Location of first European settlement (Sydney).

Question 9 – If you do not support a National Keeping Place, what other option do you support?

There were 18 respondents that selected ‘no’ – that they did not support a National Keeping Place for the reasons mentioned in question 1. Fifteen of these respondents provided comments on other options under question 9.

The common responses were:

- There should be separate Keeping Places in each state/geographic region (four respondents), and state institutions should take the lead (two respondents).
- Further provenance research to identify the home Country for repatriation, or at least a home state or region (four respondents).
- They can continue to be cared for by the National Museum of Australia (three respondents).
- Re-burial (two respondents). One stated that there should only be a temporary Keeping Place, and after a stipulated time, remains should be laid to rest.

Other responses were:

- Bones to be distributed amongst willing communities in a designated area of each cemetery with totems surrounding the burial.
- Lore Elders/Knowledge Holders should determine the Country for repatriation.

Question 10 – Why this option?

Those that supported separate Keeping Places in each state or region gave the following reasons:

- To be closer to their homelands.
- To be closer and more accessible to the Indigenous persons concerned who wish to visit.
- To avoid permanent storage.
- For greater awareness of local politics, cultural needs and politics.

Those that thought remains should be housed at the National Museum of Australia gave the following reasons:

- They have the staff and training.
- They have the infrastructure and guidelines in place.
- The National Museum of Australia provides access to communities well.
- The money could be better spent elsewhere, e.g. repatriating knowledge held in museums – ‘use the funds for the living not the dead’.
- They will be close to artefacts and other restrictive materials that will help them rest.
- They will benefit from the involvement of living Indigenous people in the National Museum of Australia programs.

Those that wanted further research and repatriation to the home Country gave cultural reasons regarding the importance of returning to Country.

Reasons given for reburial (also mentioned in other responses throughout the survey, including those that supported the cemetery option of a National Keeping Place) were the preference of laying ancestors to rest rather than continuing to store them on shelves.

Question 11 – Where do you think it should be located?

Those that supported Keeping Places in each state or territory suggested capital cities, major country towns, regional or tribal centres, or Local Government Areas.

One respondent thought that re-burial should occur in central Australia, and one respondent thought there should be a temporary Keeping Place in a central location such as Sydney.

The remainder of responses referred to either the National Museum of Australia or repatriation to home Country.

Question 12 – Why this location?

Reasons given for decentralised locations in states or regions tended to have been outlined previously. The reason given for re-burial in central Australia was:

‘This location is central to the continent. I feel this is also a fair solution, the re-burial of remains from WA in Eastern Australia would not be fair and probably would not be endorsed by WA Communities. Communities in other states may have the same dilemma.’

The respondent that supported a temporary Keeping Place thought it should be in Sydney as this is where colonisation began, so it should also be where healing begins; and that it is more accessible than Canberra.

Question 13 – Other comments

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they wished to provide any further comments they may have. 54 respondents (38% of all respondents) provided further comments. Some respondents provided lengthy comments. These often described work the organisation is currently undertaking in the space, support for or criticism of government, impassioned statements about the importance of the repatriation or safekeeping of ancestral remains, or the importance of genuine consultation and ongoing discussion as part of this process. Select snapshots of further comments are provided here:

'If broader functions as flagged in the discussion paper are intended it is important to clarify this upfront to ensure that the work of existing cultural centres and keeping places are not unduly duplicated, and that funding and resources are not directed away from local initiatives in establishing any new National Keeping Place.. .It will also be important to clarify whether or not a National Keeping Centre will be established as an interim measure, and if so, what potential future options may be.'

'Congress agrees with the Committee that a National Keeping Place should be a sacred and symbolic memorial that acknowledges past injustices, offering the opportunity for healing and closure. Congress believes that ancestral remains that cannot be returned to their community of origin should be, as a starting point, cared for by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander institution.'

'The sooner the better to give these ancestral remains some dignity and peace and hopefully a final resting place.'

'No invasive science techniques. Safe Keeping - Aboriginal controlled facility - Aboriginal governance - duty to make every endeavour to undertake diverse historical and archival research to seek to find actual provenance or at least state/regional provenance.'

'Any place for repatriation is a better place than being left in a room to be forgotten.'

'My hope is for these remains to be returned to the earth....the sooner the better. We have so many areas in need of money (health/education) that to spend \$ on building another Keeping Place/ museum to house unprovenanced remains seems wasteful to me. We still have thousands of provenanced remains still waiting to be returned to country that will yet take years. I would love to see aboriginal Australia embrace a centralised location with permission from local mobs, delegates from every nation could contribute something from country e.g. sand, bark, ochre. Ceremony can be conducted and the remains finally laid to rest.'

'Let's get it right this time.'

'I agree that a Keeping Place is a necessary symbol that can bring closure for ancestors and act as an important memorial that would be dedicated to their memory and also act as a place to raise awareness of the injustices of our shared past and educate all Australians about Aboriginal people to facilitate reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.'

'I'd like say that I support a suggestion raised at the Dubbo meeting 2nd July 2013. To have all willing Aboriginal Communities bring with them soil from their relevant Country (tribal areas) to a central point / location and this soil used as part of reburial ceremonies.'

Additional Responses

Since the October 2013 closing date, two additional surveys were received taking the total number of survey responses to 144.

Key findings from the two additional surveys were:

- Strong support for the establishment of a National Keeping Place to provide long term care for poorly provenanced ancestral remains.
- Repatriation of ancestral remains to communities plays an important role in healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and having a culturally appropriate and safe place to care for poorly provenanced remains is critical to this work.
- Respondents suggested a National Keeping Place should be located in Canberra, noting that it is a central location where many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples visit on official business.
- Sydney was also put forward for consideration as a location that is easily accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Strong support for a National Keeping Place to be managed by an Indigenous body that has responsibility for consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples regarding future developments, scientific and other testing, that may assist with the identification of these ancestors.
- A National Keeping Place would also present opportunities for education and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

5 Appendices

5.1 Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation – roles and responsibilities

The Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation is an all-Indigenous committee appointed by the Minister for the Arts to advise on policy and program issues relating to Indigenous repatriation from Australian and overseas collections.

The Committee provides strategic advice in relation to any issue directly affecting Indigenous repatriation. This includes but is not limited to:

- repatriation policy issues and strategic directions for the program.
- feedback and advice on general issues that emerge with implementing repatriation.
- assessment of applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations for direct grants.
- issues relating to cultural protocols.
- the handling, storage and long-term care of ancestral remains and secret sacred objects with no identified community of origin including where there is poor or limited provenance.
- other advice as requested by the Minister.

As each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community advises on its own ancestral remains and/or secret sacred objects, the Committee provides strategic advice on issues that affect all or many communities.

The Committee consists of six members including the Co-Chairs - five Aboriginal and one Torres Strait Islander. Three members are drawn, on a rotating basis, from the state and territory museums' Indigenous advisory committees, and a further three are selected by the Minister.

Members must be of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent and have at least one of the following qualifications:

- an understanding of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture and traditions.
- have previous or existing involvement in Indigenous repatriation, and/or

- have experience in museum and/or cultural heritage work.
- hold a significant position or play an important role in their community in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues.

The current members are:

Mr Ned David (Co-chair)

Ms Lynette Shipway (Co-chair)

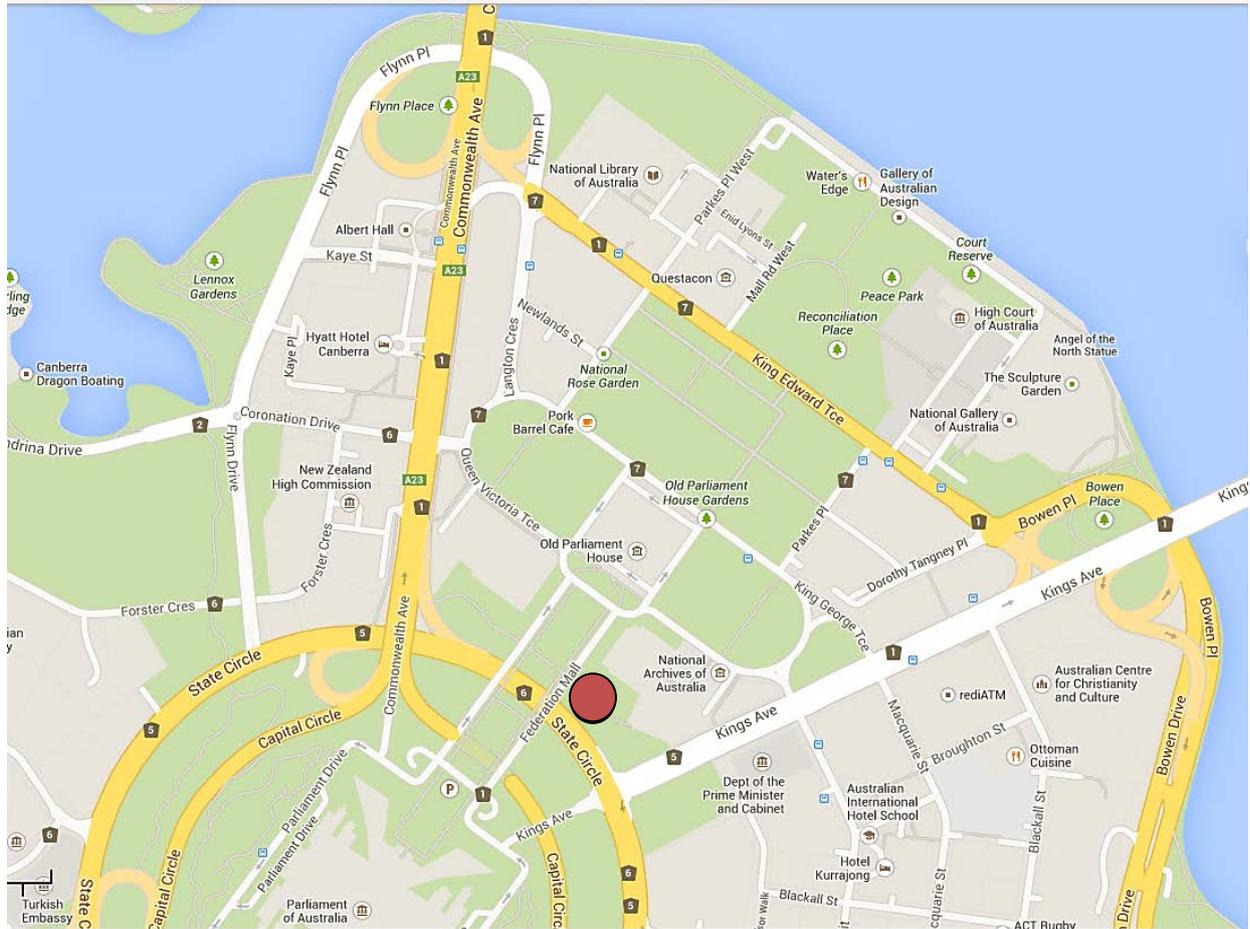
Ms Zoe Rimmer

Professor Henry Atkinson

Mr Phil Gordon

Mr Neil Carter

5.2 Proposed location of the National Resting Place



- The proposed location of the National Resting Place. This site is adjacent to Federation Mall, within sight of Parliament House.

5.3 The consultation process

In June 2013, it was announced that the Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation would undertake public consultations to seek the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and other interested stakeholders on establishing a National Resting Place for ancestral remains that cannot be returned home. The consultations would be undertaken with the assistance of the Australian Government.

The objective of the consultations was to gather input and feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other stakeholders, on establishing a National Resting Place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains with no known community of origin. Feedback collected from the consultations was used to assist the Committee in the development of advice to the Australian Government on a way forward. The aim of the consultations was to:

- determine the form, location and function of a National Resting Place.
- provide objective information and raise awareness of the issue.
- better understand the diversity of views.
- encourage and support informed participation.

Mr Neville Stevens AO was appointed to assist the Committee in formulating its report for Government. Accompanied by members of the Committee, Mr Stevens attended the public forums and private meetings with stakeholders to gain knowledge of the issues and listen to the views that were expressed to aid in drafting the report.

To ensure consideration of a wide range of views, many opportunities for public input were provided over the course of the consultation.

- On 11 June 2013 a Discussion Paper, which included a survey, was released. The discussion paper provided further information on the issue, the initial thoughts of the Committee around the form, function and location of a National Resting Place and details on how to participate in the consultation. The consultation Discussion Paper and survey is provided at Appendix 6.4 of this report.

- The Discussion Paper also included questions which could be responded to in hard copy or via an online survey. In total, 144 surveys were received. Analysis of the surveys is provided at Chapter 5 of this report.
- Coinciding with the release of the Discussion Paper and survey, a series of targeted face-to-face consultations and site visits were undertaken across Australia.
- Opportunities for input to the consultation were offered to stakeholders and interested members of the public via public forums held throughout Australia from June to September 2013. These meetings were held in:
 - Brisbane, QLD – Wednesday 19 June 2013.
 - Mt Isa, QLD – Thursday 20 June 2013.
 - Bunbury, WA – Monday 24 June 2013.
 - Perth, WA – Wednesday 26 June 2013.
 - Sydney, NSW – Monday 1 July 2013.
 - Dubbo, NSW – Tuesday 2 July 2013.
 - Coffs Harbour, NSW – Wednesday 3 July 2013.
 - Canberra, ACT – Friday 5 July 2013.
 - Fitzroy Crossing, WA – Tuesday 16 July 2013.
 - Darwin, NT – Thursday 25 July 2013.
 - Port Augusta, SA – Wednesday 7 August 2013.
 - Adelaide, SA – Thursday 8 August 2013.
 - Launceston, TAS – Thursday 15 August 2013.
 - Hobart, TAS – Friday 16 August 2013.
 - Horsham, VIC – Tuesday 20 August 2013.
 - Echuca, VIC – Wednesday 21 August 2013.
 - Bairnsdale, VIC – Friday 23 August 2013.
 - Cairns, QLD – Monday 26 August 2013.
 - Melbourne, VIC – Wednesday 4 September 2013.

The Committee also provided the public with the opportunity to make contact via teleconference to discuss the questions in the Discussion Paper and provide further ideas.

A diverse range of stakeholders participated in the consultations. Stakeholders included Indigenous communities and organisations, some with direct involvement in repatriation activities, relevant government agencies, museums and individuals who have an interest in a National Resting Place.

5.4 Discussion Paper and survey



DISCUSSION PAPER & SURVEY

A National Keeping Place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ancestral Remains with no known community of origin

The Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation seeks your views on establishing a National Keeping Place for ancestral remains that cannot be returned home because there is not enough information about where they come from.

INTRODUCTION

With European settlement in Australia came the practice of removing the remains of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family members. For more than 150 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains were transported to museums, universities and private collections in Australia and overseas.

Since the 1990s, all Australian governments have been working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to identify and return ancestral remains to their traditional lands.

The return of ancestral remains to their traditional lands is extremely important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and all Australians. It is a matter of justice and healing, and an opportunity to right the wrongs of the past. It is the first step towards honouring the ancestors' dignity. It allows them to finally rest in peace in their homelands.

In some cases, there is not enough information to identify where ancestral remains come from.

What is 'Repatriation'?

Returning ancestors home.

What is 'Provenance'?

The place where the ancestors are from.

What is 'unprovenanced' or 'no known community of origin'?

There is information to say the ancestors are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, but no information about where they come from.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR INDIGENOUS REPATRIATION (ACIR)

The Australian Government has established an all-Indigenous Advisory Committee as a way for Indigenous peoples to provide advice to Government on cultural and management issues relating to returning ancestors home. Members are Mr Ned David (Co-Chair), Ms Lynette Shipway (Co-Chair), Prof. Henry Atkinson, Mr Phil Gordon, Mr Neil Carter and Ms Zoe Rimmer.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S INDIGENOUS REPATRIATION POLICY

The Australian Government's Policy on Indigenous Repatriation outlines a commitment to facilitating the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains.

The Government acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the rightful custodians of their ancestors and believes that Indigenous peoples should determine if, when and how they are returned home.

Through the Indigenous Repatriation Program, the Australian Government supports the repatriation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains held in overseas institutions, and the repatriation of ancestral remains and secret sacred objects held in major Australian museums.

Domestically, the program provides funding to eight major Australian museums to undertake the repatriation of Indigenous ancestral remains and secret sacred objects held in their collections.

Internationally, through the Office for the Arts the Government works together with Indigenous communities, overseas governments and collecting institutions, Australian Embassies and High Commissions, other Australian Government agencies, Australian museums, and state, territory and local governments to facilitate the return of ancestral remains from overseas.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are closely involved at all stages of the repatriation process. The major Australian museums and the Office for the Arts consult directly with the Traditional Owners or their representatives.

Where Traditional Owners are unknown consultations take place with the Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation or other Indigenous advisory groups to provide advice and guidance.

CURRENT SITUATION

Where possible, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains are returned to their community of origin. Often documentation such as historical records, letters, diaries and reports give some indication about the exact location that the ancestors were taken from. Sometimes there are only vague historical records which identify ancestral remains as Australian or from a state/territory or a region. Some ancestral remains can be traced to communities, however, a significant number are from unidentified Country, that is, no information is available to help determine the exact place where they were taken from.

Under the Indigenous Repatriation Program, where there is limited historical documentation and the community of origin is not known, the Office for the Arts facilitates the return of the ancestral remains to the care of Australia's major museums in hope that further work can be done in the future to identify the rightful custodians.

Where information is available to trace the ancestral remains to a state, territory or region (meaning their community or place of origin is not clear), they are cared for 'in trust' by the relevant state or territory museum. These museums are funded under the Indigenous Repatriation Program to have an active repatriation program which enables them to undertake consultations with the broader community, to advise them on longer-term care.

Where ancestral remains are traced to 'Australia' only and their community of origin is not clear, they are returned to the care of the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. The National Museum of Australia is funded through the Indigenous Repatriation Program to receive and care for these remains. Currently the National Museum of Australia has more than one hundred ancestors in its care that have no information to identify where they come from.

Why is the Government asking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about the longer-term care and management of ancestral remains?

The most culturally appropriate place to keep ancestral remains with no known community of origin is a difficult issue. There is currently no Indigenous specific facility to care for such remains. The National Museum of Australia has taken on this role over the last ten years. The Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation have decided further consideration needs to be given to the longer-term care and management of ancestral remains that may never be returned to a community of origin.

The Advisory Committee believe that Indigenous communities are to have control and ownership of the repatriation process, especially in the care and management of ancestral remains that are unable to be returned to Traditional Owners. So they have decided to undertake a consultation process to ask the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and other interested stakeholders.

The Advisory Committee recognises the issue is complex and sensitive, however, consultations are critical to determine a way forward that is culturally sensitive, encompasses the range of diverse Indigenous cultures and beliefs and most importantly, is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations.

What am I being asked?

Supported by the Australian Government, the Advisory Committee is seeking the views on the longer-term care and management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains that have no known community of origin. Previous consultations dating back 20 years, have determined that a national site is required to inter/bury Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains that are unable to be returned home because there is not enough information about where they come from. The consultations this time includes, seeking feedback about the form, location and function of a National Keeping Place.

PAST CONSULTATIONS:

The question has been asked before.

1993: Ministers for Indigenous Affairs adopted national principles for the return of Indigenous cultural property, which included access to reasonable facilities and places for safekeeping of repatriated significant cultural material.

1994: The Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action undertook consultations that identified the need for a safekeeping place for poorly provenanced and other ancestral remains.

1997-1998: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission held consultations regarding its policy on the return of human remains. The proposal for a national keeping place was supported by Indigenous organisations.

2004: On behalf of the Australian Government the National Museum of Australia surveyed Indigenous peoples on the future care and management of poorly provenanced ancestral remains. Results showed most communities would prefer another option other than the continued holding of ancestral remains within museums and that Indigenous people want to have control and ownership of the repatriation process, especially concerning remains that cannot go home.

What is the Advisory Committee's view?

The Advisory Committee's view is:

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains with no known community of origin should be interred in a National Keeping Place that is located in the nation's capital, Canberra”



The Advisory Committee are of this view because:

- First and foremost, a National Keeping Place should be sacred, symbolic and bring closure for ancestors so that their dignity is recognised and they can be laid to rest in peace in their broader homeland as one family, one community and not forgotten. It should serve as a memorial dedicated to the memory of all ancestors who were removed from their traditional homelands, including those that may never be repatriated from collections.
- It should be in the form of a central repository that is managed by an Indigenous body under a custodianship arrangement that ensures that the remains are restricted and secure for safe keeping and future access. If, in time, Indigenous peoples views change towards scientific research techniques that assist with determining a community of origin, the ancestral remains could still be accessible into the future.
- The location should be in the nation's capital, which is the home of many nationally significant cultural institutions, for example the Australian War Memorial and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. A National Keeping Place in Canberra will bring a national focus to the injustices of our shared past and a vehicle for national reconciliation.
- It raises public awareness and understanding that ancestral remains are first and foremost real people, they are family, and deserve respect and dignity, the same as we give our deceased of today. It could support a national grieving process or commemorative ceremonies that are an expression of compassion and broader respect to honouring the dignity of ancestors.

What are some keeping place options?

Some examples of current keeping places include:

CEMETERIES and MEMORIAL PARKS are permanent sanctuaries that reflect individual, religious or cultural identity. They are generally for burials, but can be for interments in crypts and vaults, or have a cremation memorial/garden. Cemeteries and memorial parks provide a physical place for people to commemorate life, celebrate the past and mourn loss.

Museum Victoria worked with the Aboriginal Community of Victoria to rebury unprovenanced ancestral remains at the Weeroona Aboriginal Cemetery in Greenvale, Melbourne. Extensive consultation was undertaken with a number of state-wide Aboriginal cultural heritage bodies and professionals and the opinion was sought from Traditional Owners to establish that the Weeroona Cemetery was an appropriate location for the reburial. The Weeroona Cemetery was selected on the basis that it is identified by many people as Aboriginal land; is a single, central location accessible to all Victorian Aboriginal people; is a designated cemetery; has an active management structure and support network; and has the capacity to continue to receive ancestral remains. A culturally appropriate reburial ceremony was held and a large boulder was positioned to mark the area. Aboriginal Affairs Victoria mapped the site and registered the location as an Aboriginal site (under Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006).

MAUSOLEUMS are buildings constructed as a monument enclosing the interment space or burial chamber of a deceased person or people. A mausoleum may be considered a type of tomb or the tomb may be within the mausoleum.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Australian War Memorial is an example of this. The remains of the Unknown Australian Soldier have been interred in the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial to represent all Australians who have given their lives during wartime.

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS have purpose built storage facilities to care for and protect artefacts and other objects of importance.

Under the Australian Government's Indigenous Repatriation Program, the National Museum of Australia is the national institution which receives and cares for unprovenanced ancestral remains repatriated from overseas.

The New Zealand Government's repatriation program located at Te Papa (New Zealand's National Museum) has hosted seven regional meetings around the country with tribe representatives to canvas people's perspectives as to an appropriate final resting place for unprovenanced Māori ancestral remains. During the consultation process the tribes considered burial options at Te Rerenga Wairua (represents the top of the North Island, a highly significant area to Māori, it marks the point from which Māori descendants travel in spirit form back to their traditional homeland) and an interment arrangement at a mausoleum in Wellington.

What is the role of science?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples face difficult decisions when considering allowing access to ancestral remains for scientific research that may assist with determining where their ancestors come from. They have to balance cultural considerations with the potential benefit of gaining knowledge.

For genetic relationships and geographical research the two most important tests are 'DNA sequencing' and 'stable isotope analysis'. Both are destructive tests that destroy small amounts of the original human material.

Analysis of human remains can tell us about past diets, diseases and lifestyles as well as genetic relationships of the deceased to the living, historical population movements and the geographical origin of ancestral remains.

New methods are continually being developed and research on ancestral remains leading to new knowledge will have an impact on Indigenous culture and wellbeing. It is also likely to have implications for the relationship between Indigenous communities and wider society in Australia and beyond.

Consent by Traditional Owners to undertake scientific research is paramount. Understanding both the proposed research and the implications of participating in the research from an ethical and scientific view are issues that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples face when considering the use of scientific research methods.

How can I participate in the consultations?

There are several ways to participate in the consultation process:

Written Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Respond to the questions in the attached Survey.Send your responses to: Office for the Arts - Indigenous Repatriation Program GPO Box 803, Canberra ACT 2601Or email your responses to Repatriation@pmc.gov.au
Online Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Go to www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/repatriation/consultation and fill in your answers to the questions in the online Survey
Community Consultation Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Attend a community consultation forum to talk about your ideas. Go to www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/repatriation/consultation to find a location for a community consultation forum and register to attend.If you prefer, fill in your answers to the questions in the Survey and submit it at the community consultation forum.
Group Teleconference/ Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Contact the Office for the Arts on 1800 006 992 to arrange a meeting to discuss your feedback to the questions in the Survey and provide further ideas.Or email the Office for the Arts at Repatriation@pmc.gov.au to request a meeting.

How long is the consultation process open for?

The consultation process will be open from June 2013 and close in August 2013.

What will the Advisory Committee do with this information?

The feedback will be compiled in a report for the Advisory Committee to consider. The Advisory Committee will then develop their advice to the Australian Government on recommending a way forward.

All responses will remain confidential and will only be used by the Advisory Committee for the purposes of preparing advice to the Australian Government.

Where can I get more information?

More information can be found on the Office for the Arts website at www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/repatriation/consultation.

SURVEY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains that cannot be returned home because there is no information about where they come from, need longer-term care and management.

1. Do you support a National Keeping Place for this purpose (please circle)?

YES / NO

(If NO, please go to Question 9)

2. Why do you support a National Keeping Place?

3. What form do you think a National Keeping Place should take?

4. Why do you support this form?

5. What do you think the function of a National Keeping Place should be?

6. Why do you support this function?

7. Where do you think a National Keeping Place should be located?

City/Town/Land (please specify) _____

8. Why do you support this location?

(Please go to Question 13)

9. If you do not support a National Keeping Place, what other option do you support?

10. Why do you support this option?

11. Where do you think it should be located?

City/Town/Land (please specify) _____

12. Why do you support this location?

13. Please provide any other comments you may have.

14. Should the Government or the Advisory Committee wish to discuss your responses or provide feedback to your community on repatriation matters, please tell us how to contact you. (optional)

Name: _____

Community/Organisation: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

All responses will remain confidential and will only be used by the Advisory Committee for the purposes of preparing advice to the Australian Government.

Thank you for your participation in this important process.

CONTACT

For further information contact the Office for the Arts on [1800 006 992](tel:1800006992) or visit www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/repatriation/consultation

NATIONAL RESTING PLACE CONSULTATION REPORT 2014

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR
INDIGENOUS REPATRIATION

Ministry

for the

Arts