



INDIGENOUS REPATRIATION PROGRAM INTERNATIONAL

For more than 150 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains were removed by anthropologists, medical officers, anatomists, ethnologists and pastoralists and were taken to museums, universities and private collections in Australia and overseas for 'scientific' research linked to explaining human biological differences.

The Australian Government supports the unconditional return of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains through the Indigenous Repatriation Program (the Program).

About the Program

The Program has provided support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for over 25 years to return their ancestors back to their communities of origin.

Through the Program, the Government seeks the unconditional return of ancestral remains from overseas institutions and private collections. This requires the collaborative efforts of the Department of Communications and the Arts; other Australian Government departments, including Australian Embassies and High Commissions in the relevant country; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; foreign governments; state and territory governments; and Australian and international experts; and institutions and private holders.

Significance of Indigenous repatriation

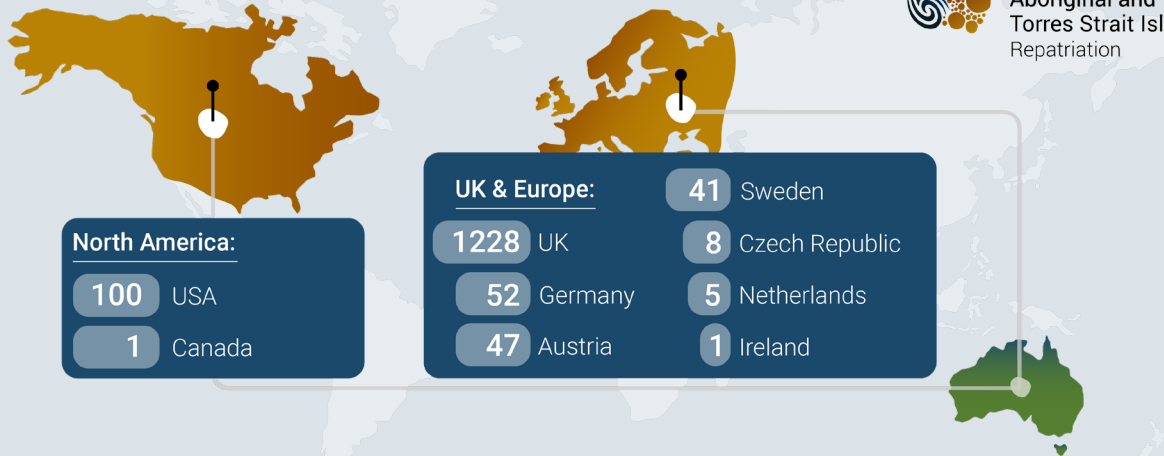
The Government acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the rightful custodians of ancestral remains. Returning ancestors back to Country helps to promote healing, justice and reconciliation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Where Indigenous communities are known, they are closely involved in the repatriation process. When ancestral remains cannot be identified to community, it is the view of Australian Indigenous peoples that the ancestral remains are returned to Australia to be cared for and brought closer to home.

1483 Australian Indigenous ancestors repatriated from overseas (over the past 25 years)

*As of 24 August 2018



Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
Repatriation



Number of returned ancestors

The Australian Government has supported the repatriation of Australian Indigenous ancestral remains from overseas for over 25 years. More than 1480 ancestral remains have been returned to Australia under the Program.

Hear from those involved

'They should have been left with their people, with their beliefs, with their practices in their soil and I want to say that we're sorry.'

Dr June Jones, Birmingham University, United Kingdom



I am happy because I am taking them home, and this feeling I have is coming from their spirit. As we travel home with them I will have the home song going in my mind, I will be singing them home.

Major Sumner, Ngarrindjeri Elder, South Australia



'Bringing these remains home is a joint effort involving many organisations and individuals who are all dedicated to seeing these Ancestors back on Country, where they belong.'

Kaiya Donovan, Repatriation and Conservation,
Office of Environment and Heritage, New South Wales

Find out more

Indigenous communities can find out more about the Program by calling [1800 006 992](tel:1800006992) or emailing repatriation@arts.gov.au.

More information is available at arts.gov.au/repatriation.