



**AIATSIS**

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL  
AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

# Return of Cultural Heritage Project

2018–20



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Cover image: Gangalidda dancers taken at Mougibi (Burketown). Image credit Iain Johnston, AIATSIS.

**Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this document may contain sensitive information, images or names of people who have since passed away.**

# Contents

Executive Summary	2
Key Findings	3
Acronyms	4
Key Terms and Definitions	5
Acknowledgement and Recognition	7
1 Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)	8
2 The Return of Cultural Heritage (RoCH) Project	9
3 Guiding Principles and Ethical Engagement	12
4 Project Methodology	13
5 Initial Research Findings	15
6 RoCH Project Case Studies	24
7 Future Opportunities	36
8 In Conclusion: Reflections and Lessons Learnt	37
9 References	41
Appendices	45
1.0 RoCH Project Advisory Committee	45
2.0 Engagement with Key Stakeholders	46
3.0 Repatriated Cultural Heritage Material	60
4.0 Logistics, Permits and Approvals	65
5.0 Future Work Program	66
6.0 Financial Distribution of Project Funding	67

# Executive Summary

This document summarises the findings of the Return of Cultural Heritage (RoCH) project led by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). It is supported by a series of community case study reports which provide further detail on the community partnerships, engagement and return processes undertaken as part of the project.

In 2020, Australia marked the 250th anniversary of James Cook's first voyage to the east coast of the country. This anniversary also marked the beginning of the large scale removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage to overseas collections. With funding from the Australian Government, AIATSIS led the RoCH project to intensify efforts to return Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage materials held overseas to its original Custodians and Owners.

The project aimed to facilitate and secure the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage materials, including but not limited to objects, photographs, manuscripts and audio visual records held overseas for the purpose of cultural renewal, revival, support and maintenance.

Through the RoCH project, 199 overseas collecting institutions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage collections were identified. Of those, 124 institutions shared information regarding their collections and 74 expressed an eagerness to establish a relationship with AIATSIS and/or Indigenous communities in Australia. Significantly, 44 expressed a willingness to consider a repatriation request. Information gathered through the course of the project will be documented in an appropriately accessible database of overseas-held Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material.

During the two years of the RoCH project, AIATSIS facilitated and secured unconditional returns from two overseas collecting institutions: Illinois State Museum (United States of America), and Manchester Museum — The University of Manchester (United Kingdom). The returns comprised a total of 85 culturally significant objects to five cultural groups — Aranda (Central Australia), Bardi Jawi (Kimberley region), Gangalidda and Garawa (North West Queensland), Nyamal (Marble Bar) and Yawuru (Broome). The returned material included secret/sacred, ceremonial and secular items, including but not limited to: boomerangs, shields, spears, clap sticks, body ornaments and necklaces.

This report documents the processes undertaken and key findings from the RoCH project, including initial observations of the issues, research and engagement approach and return process.

The research and engagement reported herein has been informed by AIATSIS' commitment to best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and engagement. This includes the principles of Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (GERAIS), Ask First, and Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). At all times the five Aboriginal Nations (Aranda, Bardi Jawi, Gangalidda and Garawa, Nyamal and Yawuru) involved in the RoCH project were at the centre of key decision making processes and were engaged at the earliest possible stage in the return process.

# Key Findings

- Repatriations, although strongly desired, can have significant emotional and spiritual impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Repatriation is complex and difficult, with parties separated geographically, socially and culturally. Even when institutions are able and willing to repatriate material, the process is resource intensive and time-consuming.
- Returning cultural heritage material supports inter-generational transference of knowledge, cultural maintenance, restoration and revitalisation.
- Returning cultural heritage material is an important mechanism for reconciliation, healing and truth telling.
- Partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, collecting institutions and governments are key to ensuring the successful return of cultural heritage material.
- Many overseas collecting institutions aspire to having a meaningful relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Traditional Owners and Custodians and have a greater understanding of the material within their collections and care.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must have a seat at the negotiation table and be involved in key return decisions.
- Indigenous communities should and must be able to exercise sovereignty over their material regardless of where material is located throughout the world.
- The legacy of past collecting practices presents many challenges to understanding where, what, and how much Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material is held overseas.
- There is a strong desire from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to have their material home and a willingness from overseas collecting institutions to support this.
- There is a role, and need for, an independent government agency with cultural authority, such as AIATSIS, to facilitate and negotiate future return requests.
- The willingness of an institution to consider a repatriation request does not appear to directly correlate to any common denominator, e.g. policy, legislation or previous experience.
- Repatriation is not a one-sided transactional relationship. Both the collecting institution and the Traditional Custodians and Owners gain from the process and the partnership developed.

# Acronyms

AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COVID-19	Novel coronavirus 2019
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GERAIS	Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies
ISM	Illinois State Museum
MAGNT	Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
MM	Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OHRM	Online Heritage Resource Manager
RoCH	Return of Cultural Heritage
UK	United Kingdom
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights for Indigenous Peoples
USA	United States of America
WAM	Western Australian Museum

# Key Terms and Definitions

Advisory committee	The Project Advisory Committee provides advice and recommendations to the AIATSIS CEO on the overall direction, development and management of the project.
Collecting Institution	Museums, libraries, galleries and archives — organisations or institutions which hold and care for all forms of cultural heritage material.
Communities	A group of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who identify as a cultural unit. Communities is used throughout this document for brevity but we acknowledge that depending upon the context and the material this could be an individual, family, cultural centre, township, outstation or art centre.
Country	For the purpose of the project, the term 'Country' means an area of land or body of water for which a community, organisation or individual have cultural and/or spiritual connection and in which they have rights or interests.
Cultural heritage material (material)	Things, or their remnants, that have been created or modified by the efforts of humans. In the case of the RoCH project, all forms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material, including but not limited to objects, audio visual, artwork and documentary cultural heritage material.
Custodian	An individual with cultural authority or knowledge that is recognised by the relevant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community to look after the material.
Elders	The knowledge holders within a community, some of which are Lore women or Lore men and Senior Loremen.
Lore man / Law man Lore woman / Law woman	A senior male or female knowledge holder within an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, who has responsibility for culture, ceremonies and to make important decisions on behalf of the community. Spellings reflect preferences of each cultural group.
Native Title Bodies, Aboriginal Corporations, Native Title Representative Bodies	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned corporations or peak bodies and organisations that represent or work with or for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Please note that these terms have specific meanings but are used generally within this document.



Return	For the purpose of the project the term 'Return' includes the unconditional (e.g. repatriation) and conditional (e.g. loans) return of a cultural material to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individual, community or organisation.
Traditional Owners / Custodians	Members of an Indigenous community. Within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, some cultural heritage material is owned by individuals, while other material is the responsibility of an Indigenous community, who are stewards of the material to ensure it is looked-after for future generations.

# Acknowledgement and Recognition

This report would not have been possible without the generous support and contributions of the Aranda, Bardi Jawi, Gangalidda and Garawa, Nyamal and Yawuru Nations; the AIATSIS CEO Return of Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee; the Western Australian Museum; The Strehlow Research Centre; the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in particular, the Soft Power, Communications and Scholarships Division; the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment; Department of Health; Australian Border Force; the Office for the Arts, in the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, in particular the Indigenous Repatriation Program. We would also like to acknowledge the work of Ingrid Button of IAS Logistics, which was invaluable and finally, we'd like to acknowledge the time, support and hard work of the Staff at the Manchester Museum, University of Manchester, Illinois State Museum and AIATSIS.

All mistakes and errors are our own.



**Boomerangs repatriated to the Bardi Jawi from the Illinois State Museum, October 2019.**

# 1 Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is Australia's only national institution focused exclusively on the diverse history, cultures and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia.

AIATSIS conducts research to the highest ethical standards, directly benefiting the communities we work with. The Institute's partnerships span the globe, including government, academic, corporate, cultural and community sectors. Its unique and dynamic convergence of knowledge, resources and expertise enable us to tell the nation's story and enhance the lives of all Australians.

The functions of AIATSIS were established under the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act 1989* (AIATSIS Act), a revision of the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Act 1964* (Cwth).

AIATSIS is an Australian Government statutory authority established under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. The Minister responsible for AIATSIS is the Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians. The Institute sits within the portfolio of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

AIATSIS is governed by a Council of nine members. Four are elected by AIATSIS members, while five are appointed by our Minister and must be Aboriginal persons or Torres Strait Islanders. The Council is responsible for ensuring proper and efficient performance across all of AIATSIS' functions and setting its policies.

## **The role of AIATSIS is to:**

- Develop, preserve and provide access to a national collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage;
- Use that national collection to strengthen and promote knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage;
- Provide leadership in the fields of:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research;
  - ethics and protocols for research, and other activities relating to collections, related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and
  - use (including use for research) of our national collection and other collections containing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage;
- Lead and promote collaborations and partnerships among the academic, research, non-government, business and government sectors and Indigenous Australians in support of the other functions of the Institute; and
- Provide advice to the Australian Government on the situation and status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage.

AIATSIS has a growing collection of over 1 million items encompassing archives, films, photographs, audio recordings, art and artefacts, published and other resource materials. It conducts research to the highest ethical standards, directly benefiting the communities it works with. The Institute publishes award-winning books, journals, CDs, DVDs and apps that engage people with the story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia.

## 2 The Return of Cultural Heritage (RoCH) Project

The Return of Cultural Heritage (RoCH) project, led by AIATSIS, was part of a suite of initiatives funded by the Australian Government to mark the 250th anniversary of James Cook's first voyage to the east coast of Australia, henceforth Cook 2020.

One legacy of Cook's voyage to Australia that continues to impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is the widespread removal of their cultural heritage material from Country to overseas collectors and collections, which commenced on 29th April 1770. Thus, Cook 2020 was seen as a fitting time to intensify the effort to return cultural heritage material to its Traditional Custodians and Owners for the purpose of cultural maintenance and revitalisation.

In 2019 and 2020, AIATSIS scoped, facilitated and secured the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material from overseas collecting institutions to Country. In doing so, AIATSIS contributed to a global discussion about the importance of repatriation for First Nation peoples and supported the cultural maintenance and revitalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

### Project Background

Recent years have seen an increase in repatriation discourse and activities based on a wave of momentum generated from decades of advocacy by dedicated Indigenous leaders, advocates and researchers (Adams 2019; Akerman 2010; Curtis 2006; Fforde 1997, 2002 & 2004; Fforde & Ormond Parker 2001; Fforde et al. 2002 and 2020; Giblin, Ramos and Grout 2019; Hubert 1994; Layton 1994; McManamon 2002; Ormond-Parker 1997; Pickering 2002; Robson et al. 2006; Simpson 2002; Smith 1999 & 2004; Tythacott, & Arvanitis 2016; Turnbull 1993 & 2020; Turnbull & Pickering 2010). The repatriation of ancestral remains has become business as usual for many overseas collecting institutions (Curtis 2010) and conversations on, and activities regarding, repatriation, decolonisation and restitution are occurring across all levels of the galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) sector, research, universities and government.

Repatriation activities, discussions and policies are broadening to include consideration of cultural material beyond secret / sacred objects (Pickering 2015). Prominent examples of this are the *Report on the Restitution of African Cultural Heritage* (Sarr & Savoy 2018), *Guidelines on Caring for Colonial Collections from the German Museums Association* (2018; 2019) and the Museums Association UK's forthcoming guide for repatriating material culture (Atkinson 2020).

Within this growing discussion, AIATSIS proposed the RoCH project to the Australian Government as a valuable aspiration in and of itself, and to explore whether the sentiments expressed by the GLAM sector and by international governments could have the practical outcome of returning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material culture to Country (see AIATSIS 2018; McGrath et al 2015).

## Project Objectives

The RoCH project supports the Australian Government's commitment to Article 12 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) and the aspiration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have their cultural heritage held in overseas collecting institutions returned.

The RoCH project formed part of a larger *View from the Shore* narrative that AIATSIS (and others) fostered during the Cook 2020 anniversary to support the cultural resurgence of Australia's First Nations peoples and signal to the nation and globally that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is respected, celebrated and valued.

Whilst the initial focus of the project was on cultural material from the period 1770 to 1788, research was also conducted on materials held overseas that were removed in the following 250 years.

### The RoCH project goals were to:

- Facilitate and secure the return of cultural heritage material from overseas collecting institutions back to Country.
- Build relationships between overseas collecting institutions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to allow communities to tell their stories in their way.
- Develop an appropriately accessible database of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material held in overseas collecting institutions.
- Prepare a business case for a future work program.

The RoCH project ran for 2 years (July 2018 to June 2020). The team comprised of Lyndall Ley (Executive Director), Christopher Simpson (Director), Tamarind Meara (Research Manager), Jason Lyons (Research Manager), Alana Harris (Community Liaison Manager), Dr Iain G Johnston (Senior Researcher) Rose Rutherford (Research Officer) and Diana Quadri (Research Officer). Jasmine Tearle (Research Officer) and Jeffrey Paul (Research Officer) were also contracted for a short period to undertake research on collections and assist with data entry.

The RoCH project team drew upon AIATSIS' unique and irreplaceable role within Australia's research framework and its reputation for rigorous and independent research across the breadth of Indigenous studies and affairs. Key to AIATSIS' work was cultural competency, and for the project team to appreciate and act in ways which supported the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Part of this was understanding colonisation still affects the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel about themselves and their ancestors. The RoCH project aimed for the community partnerships to help all Australians to feel proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and promote their sovereignty.<sup>1</sup>

*The real powerful part of self-determination, indeed sovereignty, is the freedom to define ourselves and our context and our situation. So projects like this that build and rebuild and support our culture and give us, in a sense, access to our values, and give us the ability to exercise self-determination, the power to define and articulate our own identity are really, really important. I think that's an aspect of self-determination that we haven't really come to grips with as a country. And in many ways even as Indigenous Australians we're still fronting up to that and that's why institutions like AIATSIS are so important, because we help that with support and facilitate that process.*

Craig Ritchie, AIATSIS CEO

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<sup>1</sup> See AIATSIS Towards Cultural Proficiency: a phased approach to building cultural capability 2013–2015.

## Project Scope and Limitations

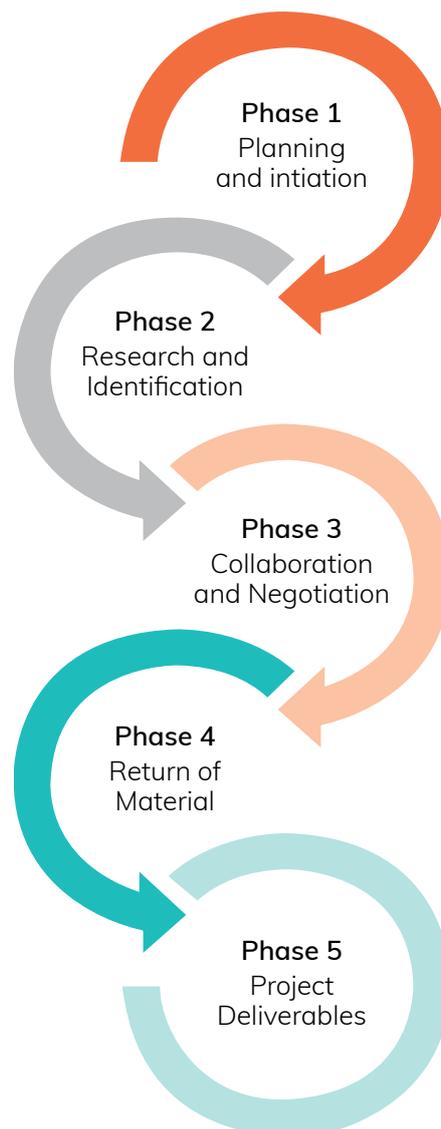
The RoCH project sought to scope and facilitate the return of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material, including but not limited to objects, archival records, audio-visual items and artwork from overseas collecting institutions to Australia and, where appropriate, to Country, to support the cultural resurgence and maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and colonial or non-Indigenous cultural heritage materials held in overseas collecting institutions were excluded from the scope of the project.

## Project Schedule

The RoCH project was delivered over five phases, commencing in February 2019 and concluding 30 June 2020. It is worth noting that some phases overlapped or ran concurrently. See Section 4 for a detailed discussion on the project's methodological approach.

**Figure 1: The five phases of the RoCH project**



### 3 Guiding Principles and Ethical Engagement

AIATSIS recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to be fully engaged in any processes, projects and activities that may impact on them. Indigenous repatriation programs, whether involving ancestral remains, cultural heritage material or data and knowledge, must proceed on this basis. The *AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* (GERAIS) establishes a framework for designing and carrying out ethical engagement in research, including research involving collections. GERAIS is informed by the recognition and respect for the rights of Indigenous peoples as articulated in the UNDRIP.

For the implementation of the RoCH project, AIATSIS employed an ethical engagement approach based on the principles of GERAIS, including Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and Ask First. In keeping with these principles, at all times the five Aboriginal communities involved in the RoCH project (Aranda, Bardi Jawi, Gangalidda and Garawa, Nyamal and Yawuru,) were at the centre of the decision making processes and were engaged at the earliest possible stage of the return process.

In accordance with the principles of GERAIS, the RoCH project's research methodology underwent review by the AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee to ensure it upheld appropriate ethical standards for research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The project was approved by the AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee on the 13th of March 2019, reference number EO111-20022019.



**Bardi Jawi fishtrap at One Arm Point, Cape Leveque WA.**

# 4 Project Methodology

The RoCH project leveraged AIATSIS' dual role as a government statutory agency and independent research institution and demonstrated the importance of a partnership approach with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In simplified terms, the engagement process commenced with two questions: "Is this your material?" and "Do you want it back?" Broadly, the key stages of the research involved:

## 1. Initial research phase and correspondence with overseas institutions

AIATSIS drew upon previous studies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material held in overseas collecting institutions and completed an extensive search of public museum catalogues and records (Cooper 1989; Kaeppler & Stillman 1985). From this, AIATSIS identified 199 and contacted 194 overseas collecting institutions about their holdings; this is (as far as is known) the most extensive survey of overseas holdings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage conducted in Australia.

## 2. Engagement with key stakeholders

AIATSIS liaised with over 50 stakeholders from across Australia involved in the administration of Aboriginal Affairs, heritage management and/or involved in the repatriation of Indigenous ancestral remains or objects. This informed relevant key stakeholders, such as peak bodies and land councils, about the project and helped to identify the local bodies which represent individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in matters of culture, heritage and repatriation (see Appendices 2.0 Table 3). Explicitly, this meant those who could speak for particular collections of cultural heritage material held overseas.

## 3. Partnership with communities

AIATSIS partnered with five Aboriginal communities during the course of the project (Aranda, Bardi Jawi, Gangalidda and Garawa, Nyamal and Yawuru). These partnerships were based upon reciprocity and respect, where the community was empowered to make decisions about their material. To support this outcome, all significant meetings about repatriation with a community occurred on their Country. This enabled the communities to exercise control over the meetings and ensured all those who needed to be present were able to attend and be part of the decision making process. Together, AIATSIS and the community analysed the material to confirm its ownership and developed a repatriation request. These requests were for material that could meaningfully support that community's cultural maintenance and/or revitalisation aspirations or which had a deep connection to Country and community.

## 4. Returning the material to Country

AIATSIS escorted two delegates from each community to the overseas repatriating institution to collect their material and ensure its safe transport home. This allowed the community delegates to personally share with the collecting institution and its stakeholders how important it is to have their material back on Country and under their control. AIATSIS ensured the material was transported to the Country of that Aboriginal community in order for an appropriate welcome / return event to take place.

Bardi Jawi shell necklace returned from  
Illinois State Museum, October 2019.



# 5 Initial Research Findings

Through the course of the initial research phase, AIATSIS identified 199 overseas collecting institutions with collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material (see also Cooper 1989; Kaepler & Stillman 1985). The number of collection items held at each institution varied drastically from less than 10 to many thousands. Where these institutions are located geographically is shown in Table 1 and Figure 2.

**Table 1: Institutions which hold Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage material grouped by region**

Number of Institutions	Region
83	United States of America and Canada
55	Europe (France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Russia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland, Italy, Republic of Ireland)
42	United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland)
8	Asia (Japan, India, Philippines)
7	Oceania (New Zealand, Fiji)
3	Africa (South Africa and Zambia)
1	Middle East (Israel)

**Figure 2: Geographical distribution of collecting institutions approached by AIATSIS**



## Willingness of Overseas Institutions to Engage

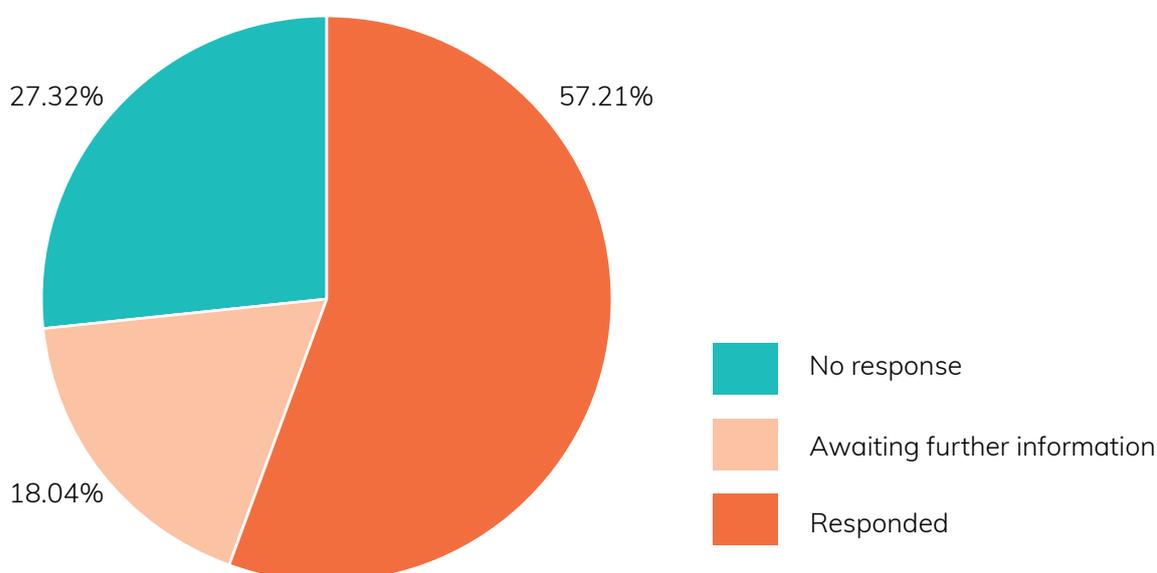
AIATSIS identified 199 collecting institutions with collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material and corresponded with 194 (97%). Of these 111 (57.21%) responded and engaged with our request for information about their collections, while a further 35 (18.04%) acknowledged receipt of our correspondence and are in the process of providing further information pertaining to their collections (see Figure 3). Fifty-three (53) (27.32%) institutions either did not respond or had yet to respond at the time of preparing this report.

Of those that have responded to our correspondence, 124 (84.93%) expressed a willingness to share information about their collections. Seventy-three (73) (50%) expressed an interest in working with AIATSIS and/or First Nation communities in some capacity and 45 (30.82%) institutions expressed a willingness to consider a repatriation request (see Figure 4).

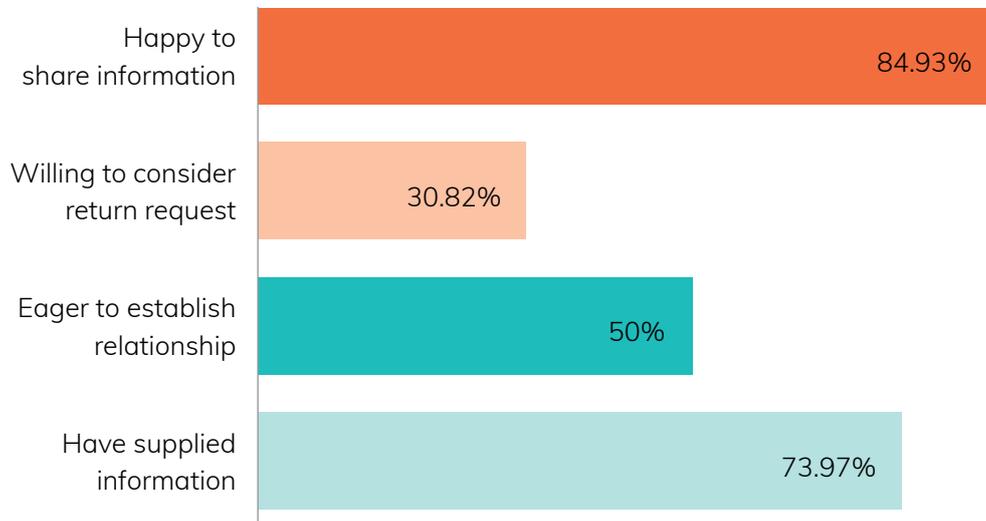
Of the three major regions which hold Australian material, UK institutions were the most likely to reply at 71.42% (n=30), while North America (USA & Canada) and Europe had a response rate of 59.03% (n=49) and 47.27% (n=26) respectively (Figure 5).

The correspondence received from overseas institutions confirms there is considerable willingness to engage with and consider the repatriation of cultural heritage material to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Australia more broadly.

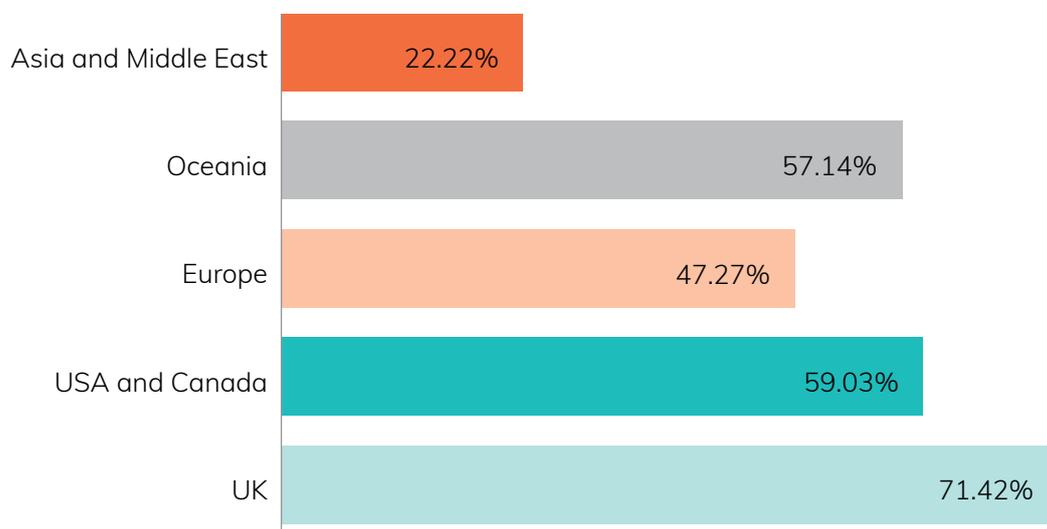
**Figure 3: Rate of response from overseas collections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections**



**Figure 4: Type of response received**



**Figure 5: Distribution of received responses grouped by region**



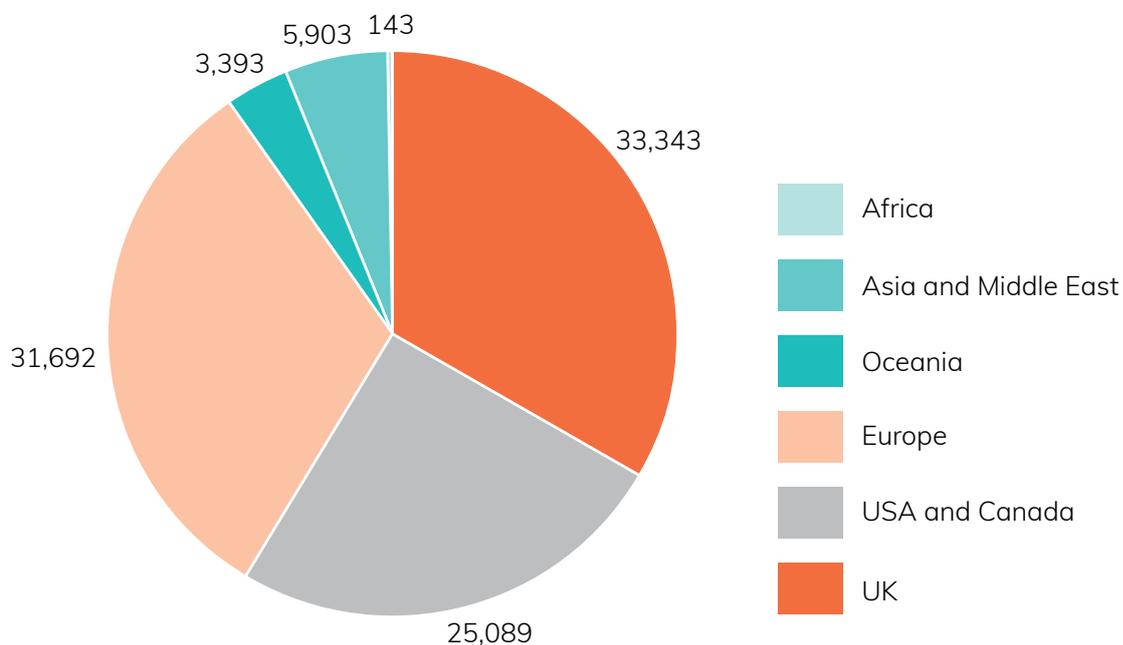
## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Material Held Overseas

In the initial research phase over 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage objects were identified as being held in overseas institutions. While this is a substantial number, it is not a complete picture or full account of objects held overseas, nor does it include a full account of archival, photographs or audio-visual material. At the time of preparing this report, AIATSIS is still receiving updated figures and processing data from a number of institutions. Furthermore, the Institute is yet to fully explore the number of items held by international governments, universities and private holders.

Of the material identified in overseas collections, UK institutions hold the largest combined collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material with 33% (n=33,343) of the total number of items. This is followed closely by European institutions with 32% (n=31,692), and the USA and Canada holding a combined total of 25% (n=25,089).

As noted earlier, these figures are not definite and the UK and European figures are likely to be under representative of the true numbers. A distribution of the items is provided in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Distribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material held in overseas institutions (grouped by region)**



## Willingness to Consider a Return Request

While only a proportion of the overseas collecting institutions said they would consider a request for a return (n=45, 31%) (See Figure 7), when examining the 45 institutions' responses more closely, several common considerations were observed. They included:

### 1. Legal status of the material

Institutions may not legally own the material, it could be owned by a donor, society or group. Most often items were held in trust by the museum and were property of the government, state, city, council or similar. Therefore, the decision to repatriate would not rest with the museum or its staff but an external board or potentially a government minister.

### 2. Who is making the request

Many institutions wanted to ensure the Aboriginal and/or Torres Straits Islander peoples were requesting material for their own use and cultural revitalisation. Although it was expressed differently by each institution, many expressed they wanted the material to be returned to 'source communities' and not to an Australian cultural institution or AIATSIS to become part of their collections, although temporary storage at AIATSIS for an eventual return was positively thought of by many institutions. Some also requested the repatriation not be used as a political tool. Many institutions stated or stipulated in their policies a requirement of a repatriation request to address potential competing claims to the material, especially if the documentation about the material was limited.

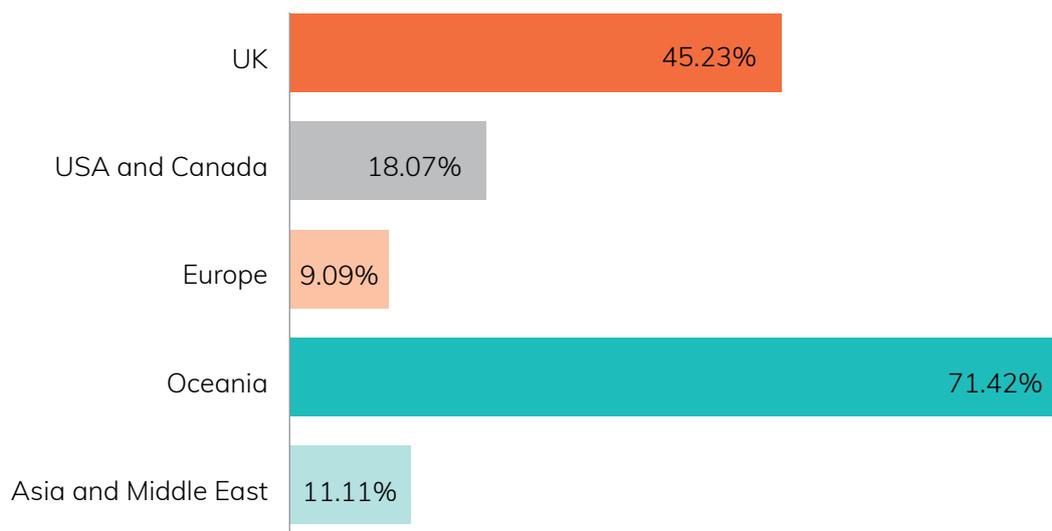
### 3. Justification / reason for the return

Determining and articulating the reasons why material should be returned, and the place to which it is to be returned, are critical pillars of the sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over their cultural heritage. As noted, institutions were more interested in returning secret sacred / ceremonial material, this can be attributed to Article 12 of the UNDRIP which explicitly states Indigenous Peoples have the right to use and control ceremonial objects. The responses suggested that returning ceremonial material was associated with cultural revitalisation, whereas secular material was considered the purview of museums.

It is important to note of the 85 items returned under the project, 22 were secular items, including but not limited to: boomerangs, shields, spears, clap sticks, body ornaments and necklaces. It is clear this material holds great cultural significance to Indigenous communities. The purpose of repatriation and Article 11 of the UNDRIP is to return material that supports cultural revitalisation, and secular material made and used by men and women regularly in the past is an effective tool to achieve this aim as culture is not only embodied in sacred and ceremonial practice but fully expressed in everyday life. While Article 12 of the UNDRIP is important, repatriation cannot be limited to ceremonial objects. In essence, partnering with, and listening to, Indigenous communities in the process is an acknowledgement that those communities are empowered to exercise cultural sovereignty, must be the decision makers in regards to what material should be returned, and that this cannot be limited to ceremonial material. Returning ceremonial material is part of actioning Articles 11 and 12 of the UNDRIP but it is not the only material that communities want and need returned either to maintain and revitalise their cultural practices or for other reasons. The focus away from only ceremonial material was made evidently clear through the consultation and repatriation partnerships the RoCH project formed.

Finally, the willingness of the institution to consider a repatriation request did not appear to directly correlate to any common denominator, i.e. policy, legislation or previous experience. If anything, the vast majority of the collecting institutions which responded positively to AIATSIS regarding a possible request had no prior experience with repatriation.

**Figure 7: Distribution of overseas institutions willing to consider return requests (grouped by region)**



## RoCH Online Heritage Resource Manager (OHRM)

During the initial research phase, AIATSIS recognised that the RoCH project had the potential to generate a substantial amount of data which could be informative for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak representative bodies, communities and Indigenous researchers in future return requests and collection research. In response to this, a decision was made early in the research process to partner with the eScholarship Research Centre at the University of Melbourne to develop an Online Heritage Resource Manager (OHRM) to manage, store and visualise the collection information gathered by AIATSIS.

The production of an OHRM database seemed the most appropriate step for the type and nature of the data produced by the RoCH project and its intended future user. The OHRM is a context based management system capable of integrating data from a variety of sources into a relation-focused dataset and visualisation output. The structure of the OHRM is based around capturing key information about persons (e.g. explorers, collectors or donors), places (e.g. museums, galleries, geographical provenance), events (expeditions), archival material, published resources and digital objects (e.g. images, video) and the relationships (entities) between them.

The development of the RoCH OHRM was based upon the work Assoc. Prof Gavan McCarthy had undertaken with the *Return, Reconcile, Renew and Restoring Dignity: Networked Knowledge for Repatriation Australian Research Council* projects (see also Fforde et al. 2020). The OHRM developed for the RoCH project has been built on a Microsoft Access software platform and engineered to curate data based on two international archival standards: the International Council on Archives (ICA) *International Standard for Archival Authority Records – Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families* and the ICA *General International Standard Archival Description*.

While the RoCH OHRM was based upon Assoc. Prof McCarthy's earlier work the database will operate slightly differently. The RoCH OHRM has two key objectives:

1. to provide individuals and Indigenous communities with information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material held in overseas collections; and,
2. to develop a system capable of representing the complexity of cultural heritage material, and present it in a clear and meaningful way, facilitating opportunities for research and further knowledge.

In order to achieve these objectives, one of the early decisions in its development was to incorporate the AUSTLANG database as a key / central entity. By integrating AUSTLANG within the OHRM, collections, sub-collections and objects held overseas could then be linked to a specific geographical region, place and language group within Australia. The integration of AUSTLANG also enabled the data contained within the OHRM to be linked to other datasets in the future, such as MURA (the AIATSIS catalogue for items), TROVE (National Library of Australia) and OZBIB (a curated bibliography).

At the time of preparing this report, the RoCH OHRM database contained a total of 15,887 records from 162 collecting institutions. These comprised:

- 12,106 cultural objects;
- 1,217 Aboriginal or Torres Strait languages;
- 989 discrete collections;
- 712 persons — e.g. artists, field collectors, explorers and donors;
- 617 places — e.g. physical location of an institution, geographical provenance of the object and the place of collection;
- 195 collecting institutions — i.e. museums, art galleries, libraries and universities;
- 113 digital objects (dobjects) — e.g. images;
- 46 organisations — e.g. Auction houses, Aboriginal Art Centres, Private Galleries, Corporations, etc.; and,
- Five events — e.g. archaeological, anthropological or ethnological expeditions, explorations and repatriations.

## **Preliminary Outcomes and Learnings**

While only a proportion of the collecting institutions approached by AIATSIS provided current collection data (n=108, data from the remaining 54 institutions was garnered from their online catalogues and secondary sources such as Cooper 1989 and Kaeppeler & Stillman 1985), a number of preliminary outcomes and learnings could still be observed. A brief summary of these are provided below.

### **1. An issue of standardisation**

A key challenge in the development of the RoCH OHRM was the variation and inconsistency in the format and detail of collection records provided by overseas institutions. While many institutions were generous in their provision of information, each and every catalogue or dataset required some level of cleaning, curation and refining in order to reach a level of standardisation. This was a resource intensive process and highlighted the variation in which collecting institutions record and catalogue items and how the standards for record keeping within the sector have evolved over time (later records on average were considerably more detailed).

In terms of the RoCH OHRM, the variation in data and need for standardisation meant that information provided by overseas collecting institutions was entered at the collection entity-level (i.e. groups of items based on geographical provenance, cultural origin or holding institutions) rather than the singular object entity-level. With further resources and funding, a key objective for the future is to have all items held overseas entered at the object entity-level.

## **2. A lack of information**

Another challenge or complexity for the OHRM was the absence or lack of information contained within museum accession records and by consequence the shared museum catalogues. In order to ensure the information contained on the OHRM was accurate, a considerable amount of additional desktop research was required. In conducting this research, it was often observed that institution accession records captured or provided little to no information pertaining to the cultural origin of the object and the geographical provenance information was either absent, incorrect or vague. It was also frequently noted that the accession records, particularly those relating to objects acquired in the late 19th century, contained more detail on the donor or field collector than the item itself.

There are many possible reasons for this lack of information. One reason can be attributed to the nature in which items, often seen as curiosities of a primitive culture, were collected or acquired during the 19th and early 20th centuries by wealthy private collectors, servicemen and tourists. Another is the significant number of items that were traded, loaned or transferred between collecting institutions, resulting in the dislocation of the original accession records for the relevant item. In European institutions, the repercussions of the World Wars also appears to have resulted in a loss of primary documentation for many objects. It is hoped that with future research some of the information lacking from early collection records can eventually be retrieved and/or pieced back together.

## **3. Public, Private and Restricted information**

Early in the development of the RoCH OHRM it became evident that some of the information recorded and provided by collecting institutions was culturally sensitive and not for public dissemination. In order to manage this the RoCH OHRM adopted a similar approach to the *Return, Reconcile, Renew and Restoring Dignity: Networked Knowledge for Repatriation* projects. Records which contained sensitive or culturally restricted information were duplicated with a public record or entity noting the accession number and a warning that the record contained sensitive information. A second, and full record, of the item was then created and stored on a linked closed repository. Access to these records will be managed in accordance with AIATSIS' well-established mechanisms and protocols for restricted materials and in close collaboration with the relevant Traditional Custodians of the material and its data.

### **Future Access and Use**

Owing to the sensitive / restricted nature of the information contained on the OHRM, current and future access and use will be managed in accordance with the principles of Indigenous data sovereignty and the AIATSIS *Access and Use Policy*.

In the future, as additional collection information is shared, curated and cleaned, it is anticipated that the digital provision of the RoCH OHRM may be possible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative bodies, communities and Indigenous researchers so that physical attendance at AIATSIS is not necessary. It is also hoped that the continued investment in the OHRM will allow for the underlying infrastructure of the database to be further developed.

It is anticipated that the database will be appropriately accessible in 2021. An example of the OHRM platform is provided in Figure 8.

Figure 8: RoCH OHRM main directory and user interface

# RETURN OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

## Browse

**A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W Y Z**

Return of Cultural Heritage consists of 15,887 entries with references to 119 published resources, and 113 dobjects.

Collections	<b>A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P Q R S T U V W Y</b>	989 entities
Cultural Objects	<b>A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W Y Z</b>	12,106 entities
Events	<b>F I M V</b>	5 entities
Institutions	<b>A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W Y</b>	195 entities
Languages	<b>A C D E G K L N P S T W Y</b>	1,217 entities
Organisations	<b>A B C D E F G H J K L M P R S T</b>	46 entities
People	<b>A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P R S T U V W Y Z</b>	712 entities
Places	<b>A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W Y</b>	617 entities
Functions	<b>A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P R S T U V W</b>	299 descriptors
Dobjects	<b>A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P R S T U V W Y</b>	113 items

Published by the eScholarship Research Centre, 2018

<http://www...../browse.htm>

*Return of Cultural Heritage* uses the Online Heritage Resource Manager, a tool developed by the eScholarship Research Centre, part of the University Library at the University of Melbourne.

# 6 RoCH Project Case Studies

## Identification and Selection Process

Once an overseas collecting institution was identified as potentially holding Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander material, direct contact was made by AIATSIS in order to establish:

- their willingness to share information;
- the current status (presence and quantity) of their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander collections; and,
- if any further documentation was available and could be provided regarding the collections, i.e. accession records, supporting documentation and/or images.

Subject to an institution's willingness and provision of information, an intensive review of the institution's catalogue and, where possible, supporting primary documentation (accession records) and supplementary records (secondary sources, field journals, images, etc.) was conducted by a gender appropriate member of the RoCH project team. The primary aim of this review was to identify and confirm:

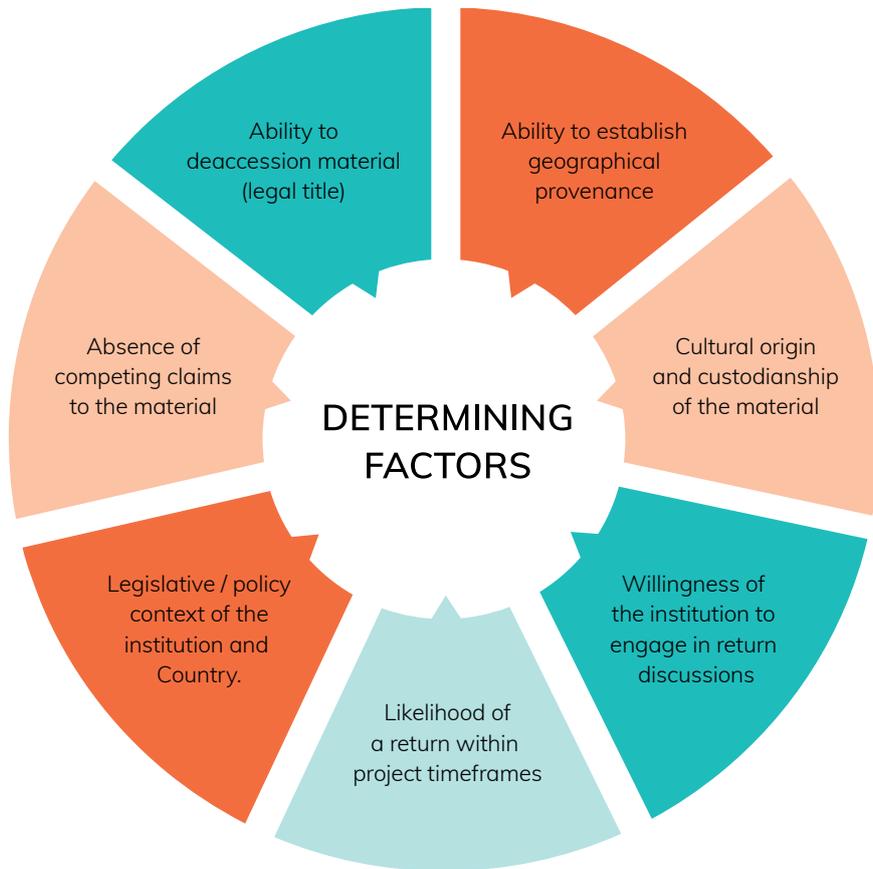
- the presence of discrete collections within an institution's wider collection;
- the geographical provenance of where an object was collected or manufactured;
- the acquisition history of the material;
- the field collector and their history; and
- any notes / features (i.e. language, form, iconography) to assist in establishing the cultural origin of the material.

Based on the information garnered, six potential case studies (returns) from two institutions (Illinois State Museum and Manchester Museum) were selected for further investigation. These included:

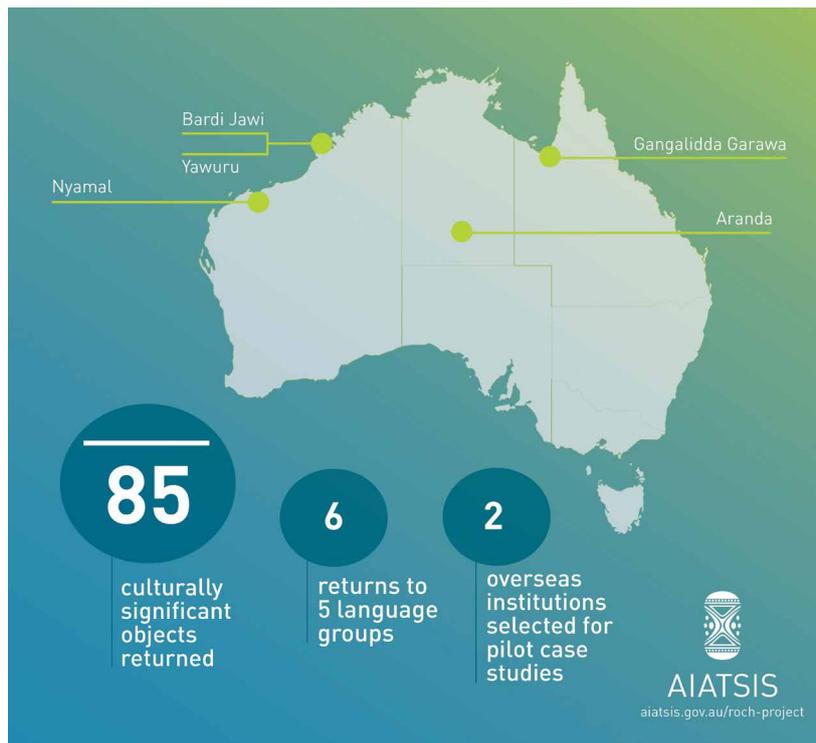
- Aranda (Illinois State Museum and Manchester Museum);
- Bardi Jawi (Illinois State Museum);
- Gangalidda and Garawa (Manchester Museum);
- Nyamal (Manchester Museum); and,
- Yawuru (Manchester Museum).

Selection of case studies was determined on a number of factors as illustrated in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Key factors in determining the RoCH project case studies**



**Figure 10: RoCH project case study selection**



## Illinois State Museum Repatriation

A formal repatriation request was submitted to Illinois State Museum (ISM) on Friday 9th August 2019. The request was developed in conjunction with, and authorised by, the Aranda and Bardi Jawi Nations and sought the unconditional repatriation of 42 secret / sacred and secular items (see Appendices 3.0, Table 5 for a full list of the items).

On Monday 9th September 2019, the ISM Board of Directors unanimously voted to deaccession and unconditionally repatriate the requested material. One board member wrote:

*Unquestionably this is the most complete repatriation request I have ever encountered and there should be no question about the Board's action with regard to deaccession... Thanks for your sensitive attention to this culturally significant matter.*

Between 18th and 28th October 2019, an AIATSIS-led delegation travelled to Springfield, Illinois to collect the material. The delegation was made up of two community nominated representatives from the Aranda Nation and the Bardi Jawi Nation, as well as staff from the AIATSIS RoCH project team.

The official handover of material from ISM took place on Wednesday 23rd October 2019. This event was attended by the return delegation, David Bushby, Australia's Consul-General in Chicago, Logan Pappenfort, 2nd Chief Peoria Tribe (the First Nation of Illinois), George Godfrey of the Potawatomi Nation, museum staff, local dignitaries and members of the family of Gerhart Laves (field collector of the Bardi Jawi material).

*Staff of the Illinois State Museum offer their sincere gratitude to Aranda representatives Braydon Kantjira and Lofty Katakarinja and Bardi Jawi representatives Russell Davey and Robert Wigan for taking the time to share stories from their cultures. The kindness and openness of these men affected everyone at the museum. After the evening presentation at the museum, one woman reflected on how important the return was and said "I'm proud of my state." We will look back on this repatriation as a turning point for the museum and remember the role you played in shaping our new direction.*

Dr Brooke M. Morgan, ISM Research & Collections Centre



**Official handover ceremony at Illinois State Museum (L-R: Braydon Kanjira (Aranda), Russell Davey (Bardi Jawi), Logan Pappenfort (Peoria Tribe), Robert Wigan (Bardi Jawi) Christopher Simpson (AIATSIS), Brooke Morgan (ISM), Cleopas (Lofty) Katakarinja (Aranda), Jason Lyons (AIATSIS) and Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko (ISM)).**



**Braydon Kanjira (Aranda) demonstrates the procedure for being cleansed with smoke to the Illinois State Museum staff and official handover guests.**

## **Aranda**

The Aranda material was returned to Mparntwe (Alice Springs) on Wednesday, 6th November 2019. A number of Senior Aranda Lore men and apprentice Lore men attended the ceremony, as did AIATSIS representative Christopher Simpson and the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians.

The Hon Ken Wyatt said of the return:

*The return of these culturally significant objects signifies an important moment of healing for these communities. Importantly, it demonstrates... [our] commitment to work with cultural authority from throughout Australia to preserve our unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and provides all Australians with the opportunity to learn about the significance of these objects through truth-telling and to gain a greater understanding of our nation's shared history.*

Braydon Kanjira, Senior Aranda Lore man, also spoke at the return ceremony, commentating:

*It's good they've come back and can now rest forever. To us, it means a lot, to the Aranda tribe ... it was emotional, really, really emotional, I can't find the words to describe it, how we felt about our artefacts being here, back home in central Australia. We already know about the songs of the artefacts, they're going to be restored for our future generations, we will be talking to our grandsons about the artefacts, but in a public way.*

*I experienced the same feeling when I travelled to America to bring our artefacts home, it's the start of getting artefacts back from around the world, and it's the beginning.*

Although it was a private event at the request of the Senior Aranda Lore men, the ceremony demonstrated to those in attendance the importance of returning cultural heritage material to Country.

## **Bardi Jawi**

*We're excited and happy that the Bardi Jawi material is coming home and believe that this is the right thing to do. These items were taken a long time ago but we're glad that the museum looked after them and are now returning them back to the rightful tribe. Other important things are missing too and a lot more work needs to be done, and we're glad it's happening. We'd like to thank the Australian Government for their help.*

Kevin George, Senior Bardi Lawman

On 28th November 2019, the ISM repatriated Bardi Jawi material was returned to Country at Cape Leveque, Western Australia. The items were welcomed by a small delegation from the community, along with AIATSIS representatives Christopher Simpson and Iain Johnston.

*We are very strong with our culture here, we still practise our culture here, but it does give us, strengthen us more and for the young people to look at these things and say hang on ... we can't lose it now, we've just got to carry on.*

Frank Davey, Bardi Jawi Elder



**Bardi Jawi Elder, Frank Davey with two of the boomerangs repatriated from the ISM.**

*We were actually overwhelmed by their [the items] appearance, the state they were in... Especially the spears, they were quite amazing. There's a sense of joy and pride in seeing these things being well looked after and in such good condition.*

Philip McCarthy, Bardi Jawi Representative

For further information pertaining to the Aranda and Bardi Jawi returns, refer to Johnston et al 2020a and 2020b.

## Manchester Museum Repatriation

A formal repatriation request was submitted to Manchester Museum (MM), University of Manchester on Friday 30th August 2019. The request was developed in conjunction with, and authorised by, Aranda, Gangalidda and Garawa<sup>2</sup>, Nyamal and Yawuru Nations and sought the unconditional repatriation of 43 secret / sacred and ceremonial items (see Appendices 3.0, Table 6 for a full list of the items).

On Wednesday 2nd October 2019, the Board of the University of Manchester approved the deaccession and unconditional repatriation of the requested material. The external repatriation request reviewer, a requirement of MM's repatriation policy, Dr Emma Martin, Senior Curator of Ethnology, National Museums Liverpool, wrote of the formal request:

*Reviewing the repatriation claim and the research provenance documents it is clear that the claim to ownership has been proven and that there are no competing claims against the objects selected for return. With this in mind, I fully endorse the request for the return of these objects to the originating communities in Australia.*

Owing to the cultural considerations and commitments it was decided the requested material would be returned over two delegations. The first delegation took place in November 2019 with representatives from the Gangalidda and Garawa and Nyamal Nations followed by a second handover in March 2020 with Aranda and Yawuru representatives.

## November 2019 Handover

*This is, to me and my community, what true practical reconciliation looks like. Bringing these sacred cultural heritage items back to Country is important and necessary for the purpose of cultural revitalisation — because locked deep within these items is our lore; our histories, our traditions and our stories.*

*It was an immensely proud moment for myself as a young Aboriginal person, as a young Gangalidda man, to be able to play a small part in bringing our cultural heritage materials back home to Country where they belong.*

**Mangubadijarri Yanner, Representative for the Gangalidda Garawa Native Title Aboriginal Corporation.**

Between 15th and 24th November 2019, an AIATSIS-led delegation travelled to the United Kingdom (UK) to collect the Gangalidda and Nyamal material. The delegation was made up of two nominated community representatives for Gangalidda and Garawa Nations, as well as staff from the AIATSIS project team and a representative from the AIATSIS Communication and Media team. After much consideration, the Nyamal people chose not to send community representatives overseas, instead they requested AIATSIS collect the material on their behalf.

The official handover for the return of 18 culturally significant objects to the Gangalidda and Nyamal Nations took place at Australia House, London on Friday 22nd November 2019. This event was attended by Craig Ritchie, AIATSIS CEO, RoCH project team representatives, return delegation, museum staff, local dignitaries, and museum professionals from across the UK. The Hon George Brandis QC, Australia's High Commissioner to the UK hosted the event.

<sup>2</sup> While the Gangalidda and Garawa return exclusively involved Gangalidda material, the return is referred to the 'Gangalidda and Garawa return' as the delegation involved representatives from both Nations. Donald Bob, a senior Garawa loreman with full authority and autonomy within Gangalidda and Garawa countries, was authorised by the Gangalidda community to accompany Mangubadijarri, a Gangalidda loreman, on the official delegation to ensure everything was conducted in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner.



**Official handover ceremony at Australia House London (L-R: Esme Ward (Director Manchester Museum), Donald Bob (Senior Garawa Lore man), the Hon George Brandis QC; Mangubadijarri Yanner (Gangalidda); and Craig Ritchie, (AIATSIS CEO)).**

On reflection of the landmark event, Esme Ward, Director Manchester Museum said:

*Like many museums we have been active in returning ancestral human remains to their communities of origin since 2003, but this marked the first return of secret sacred and ceremonial material to Australia's First Nations peoples. The other distinguishing factor was the unconditional nature of the repatriation (without conditions or limitations). It did not move the objects from one institution to another, but instead fully acknowledged that Aboriginal people have the primary and sole right to the ownership and control of all forms of their heritage. I believe that repatriation shifts the processes, language and thinking of the past towards a context of possibility and action for the future.*

Stephen Welsh, Curator of Living Cultures and Honorary Research Fellow in Social Anthropology at the Manchester Museum, noted of the return and partnership with AIATSIS:

*The unconditional repatriation allowed us to further challenge, disrupt and transform western colonial modes of curation, which were established to analyse, catalogue, display and preserve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage in isolation and without consent from Australia's First Nations peoples. It facilitated a deeper understanding of how such practices continue to inflict loss, trauma and exclusion on those Traditional Owners and places most intimately connected with secret sacred and ceremonial objects. The trust that has been built will only encourage a deepening commitment to healing, reconciliation and inclusion.*

Building on the relationship developed through return discussions, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between AIATSIS and the University of Manchester was executed at the official handover ceremony. The formal agreement committed both institutions to promoting greater understanding between cultures and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is respected, valued and celebrated. MM saw the MoU as a way to further the Museum's goal to become a more inclusive, caring and relevant institution to the communities it serves both locally and globally.

Following the delegation's return to Australia, AIATSIS facilitated the direct return of the repatriated Nyamal and Gangalidda materials to Country.

## **Nyamal**

*We are very proud to have got them back.*

Tony Taylor, Senior Nyamal Elder

The repatriated Nyamal material was welcomed to Australia on the 25th November 2019 in a ceremony held at the West Australian Museum (WAM). At the event were Tony Taylor (Nyamal Elder), Nathan Newland (Njamal Project Consultant), Evelyn Mitchell (Njamal People's Trust representative) and Cheryl Geary (Community Liaison Office, Njamal People's Trust), who represented the Nyamal people. Also in attendance were Craig Ritchie, AIATSIS CEO, Alex Coles, CEO of WAM, and Ross Chadwick, Curator, Anthropology and Archaeology Department, and Christopher Simpson, Director RoCH project team.



**Nyamal handover ceremony at the Western Australia Museum (L-R: Craig Ritchie (CEO AIATSIS), Nathan Newland (Njamal People's Trust), Evelyn Mitchell (Njamal People's Trust) and Tony Taylor (Nyamal Elder)).**

Following the welcome at the WAM, the Nyamal people celebrated the return of their material at the Nyamal People's Trust office in Marapikurrinya (Port Hedland) on the 27th November 2019.

*Bringing these sacred cultural heritage items back to country is important and necessary for the purpose of cultural revitalisation, because within these items is our lore our histories, our traditions and our stories... We cannot fix the past only the future so this is the start of closing those small gaps of what has been taken from us. So we the Aboriginal people can heal and build that trust to work together to educate ourselves to build a better future as one.*

Nathan Newland, Nyamal People's Trust



Nyamal welcome home ceremony, with Christopher Simpson (AIATSIS) and Tony Taylor (Nyamal Elder).

## Gangalidda and Garawa

The repatriated Gangalidda material was returned to Country (Moungibi) on 19th December 2019. The return event involved the whole community, with over 100 members from across the Gulf Country, Kunhanha (Mornington Island) and beyond taking part in the celebrations. The dignitaries at the ceremony included Her Excellency Vicki Treadell CMG MVO, British High Commissioner to Australia, Ernie Camp, Mayor of Burke Shire and Clare Keenan, Chief Executive Officer of the Burke Shire Council. From AIATSIS Michael Ramalli, Deputy CEO and the RoCH project team, including Lyndall Ley, Executive Director, Christopher Simpson, Director, Tamarind Meara, Research Manager, Dr Iain Johnston, Senior Researcher, Rose Rutherford, Project Officer and Diana Quadri, Project Officer as well as Daniel Walding from the AIATSIS Communication and Media team.

We share a dark history – but it's moments like this, when we come together as one, united by our desire to do better, to be better and to right the wrongs of the past, that we start to heal spiritual wounds and the intergenerational trauma that still exists today.

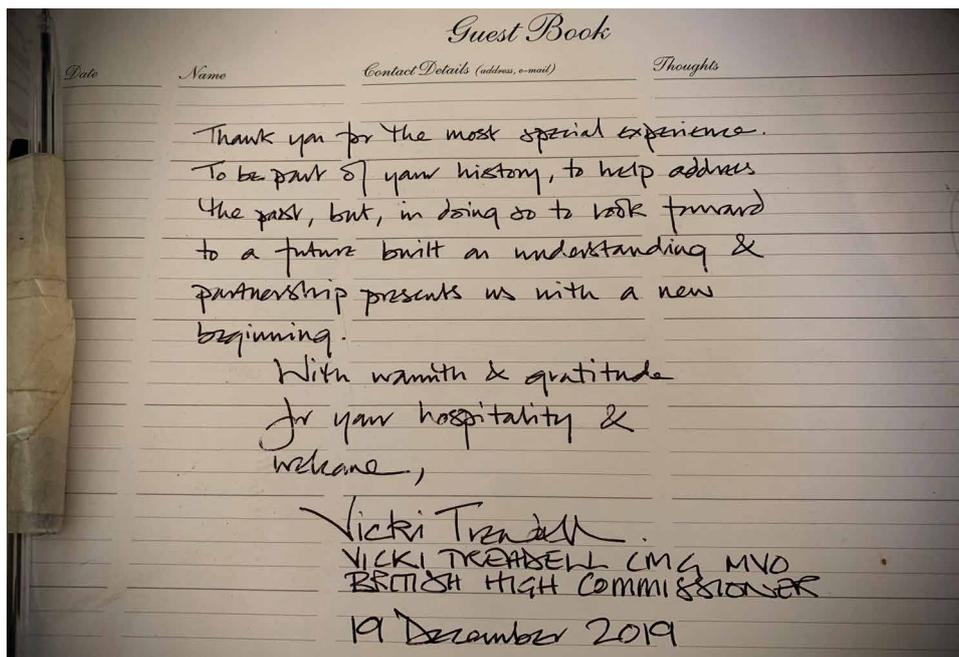
Mangubadijarri Yanner, Representative for the Gangalidda Garawa Native Title Aboriginal Corporation

It's not just the items, it's the spirit attached; they were taken. The people who once owned them, their spirit went with them and they returned today... It's a very, very powerful event and it helps in the cultural revival that's going on.

Murrandoo Yanner, Director Gangalidda Garawa Native Title Aboriginal Corporation



Gangalidda dancers celebrating the on Country return event.



Message of thanks from Her Excellency Vicki Treadell CMG MVO, (British High Commissioner to Australia) to the Gangalidda and Garawa Peoples.

## March 2020 Handover

A second (and final) delegation with representatives from Aranda and Yawuru Nations was scheduled to travel to Manchester in March 2020 to collect the remaining 25 objects secured by AIATSIS for return. However, owing to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic and following consultations with Aranda, Yawuru and the Manchester Museum, AIATSIS decided to cancel the delegation. Owing to the extraordinary circumstances created by COVID-19 and, with authorisation from the Traditional Custodians, the 25 items were collected by IAS UK logistics partner Martinspeed and returned to Australia unaccompanied.

This was a particularly difficult decision for the Senior Aranda and Yawuru Men but their trust in AIATSIS and partnership with the RoCH project team helped them to make the safest decision for their communities.

### Yawuru

*Our past represents our future. Aboriginal societies are unbroken and returning our sacred cultural artefacts and ancestral remains back to Country brings them and us a peace of mind. Thanks sincerely to the museums abroad, AIATSIS and the various other government departments of Australia who helped with the return of the material.*

Neilø McKenzie, Yawuru Senior Cultural Leader

The repatriated Yawuru material arrived in Australia on the 12th March 2020 and, in agreement with Yawuru Traditional Custodians, was transferred to the WAM secret sacred store for temporary holding. On 17th March 2020, the repatriated Yawuru material was quietly collected by Neilø McKenzie (Yawuru Senior Cultural Leader).

Immediately following the collection of the material from the WAM, the material was personally escorted to Country and welcomed home quietly, privately and safely as directed by Yawuru Traditional Custodians near Rubibi (Broome).



Yawuru Senior Cultural Leader collecting the repatriated Yawuru items from the Western Australian Museum (L-R: Brett Nannup (WA Museum), Christopher Simpson (AIATSIS), Neilø McKenzie (Yawuru) and Ross Chadwick (WA Museum)).

## Aranda

*Returning the material will restore our culture and strengthen community. Young people need to learn about culture and bringing back the material will help us do this. The return of the material will let us reconnect it to Country. It will also help us preserve our culture and pass knowledge onto the young people.*

Mark Inkamala, Senior Aranda Man

Owing to COVID-19, AIATSIS was unable to return the Aranda material to Country within the RoCH project timeframe because of transport restrictions put in place during the global pandemic. With approval from Senior Aranda Men, AIATSIS arranged for the temporary storage of the material in IAS Logistics' climate controlled facility in Mascot, New South Wales. The material will be returned to Mparntwe (Alice Springs) when it is safe to do so.

*For further information pertaining to the Aranda, Gangalidda and Garawa, Nyamal and Yawuru returns, refer to Johnston et al 2020a, 2020c, 2020d and 2020e.*

## The Impact of COVID-19 on the RoCH Project

The COVID-19 global pandemic had a substantial impact upon Australia and the world in 2020, with implications for working and travel arrangement being felt from March 2020. As a consequence of the virus, AIATSIS was unable to return the Aranda material repatriated from MM to Country and had to cancel the final 'follow up' research phase with each community partner.

AIATSIS had intended to meet with each of the key individuals involved in the repatriation, particularly Elders and other knowledge holders, to discuss the material (where possible) and the impact of its return in their community. This research phase was intended to inform the final phase of the project and provide each community's perspective on the significance of repatriating cultural heritage material to First Nations peoples for the purposes of cultural revitalisation and maintenance. Whilst it was not possible to undertake this work, AIATSIS has co-authored case study reports with each of the Nations engaged in an effort to capture their story and the legacy of each return.

## 7 Future Opportunities

Through the course of the RoCH project, AIATSIS engaged and established relationships with a number of collecting institutions across the globe. As a consequence of these engagements, an extensive future body of work for the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage was identified.

As at May 2020, 24 institutions, holding a combined total of 11,913 items belonging to over 60 language groups from across Australia, had expressed a willingness and/or a readiness to consider a return request.

In addition, one private holder directly approached AIATSIS in relation to a future return of cultural heritage material. These approaches are a direct response to the momentum and impact created from the successful returns facilitated by AIATSIS between ISM, MM and the Aranda, Bardi Jawi, Gangalidda and Garawa, Nyamal and Yawuru Nations.

Furthermore, this willingness clearly demonstrates some of the early observations that attitudes within collecting institutions towards repatriation and the return of cultural heritage material are changing.

**Table 2: Breakdown of the 24 Institutions which are willing to consider a return request grouped by region**

Number of Institutions	Region
10	United States of America and Canada
1	Europe
11	United Kingdom
1	Oceania
1	Middle East

Refer to Appendices 5.0, Table 7 for a comprehensive list of collecting institutions willing to consider a request.

## 8 In Conclusion: Reflections and Lessons Learnt

*...getting our cultural heritage material is empowerment. It is all around empowering Aboriginal people. Over the last 250 years there's been a massive disempowerment of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people all over the country, right throughout Australia. A lot of it was to do with the taking away of our important cultural heritage which now lies in numerous institutions all over the world. So that empowerment aspect is why this [RoCH] project is really important.*

*When you've got Indigenous people struggling, it reflects upon the whole health and wellbeing of a nation. I think that empowerment of Aboriginal people, ultimately empowers non-Indigenous as well. When you have a healthy First Nations people, well that's just going to mean a healthier nation, a healthier community; healthier dialogue, healthier perspectives upon one another...It's a really good news story for the whole world.*

*...it's [the RoCH project] sort of got this justice sort of element to it, when things were taken away, over the course of many, many years. It's such a good story if things are going to now come back, and that's what we hope happens.*

Shaun Angeles, Penangke (Arrennte) previously Artwe-kenhe Collection Researcher Strehlow Research Centre and now Cultural Repatriation Manager, MAGNT

The implementation of the RoCH project provided a valuable learning opportunity for AIATSIS regarding the repatriation of cultural heritage material from overseas collecting institutions to First Nations communities. The following section explores these lessons in further detail.

### Relationships are Key: the Complexity and Difficulties of Repatriation

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their representative bodies have long sought the return of cultural heritage material from overseas collecting institutions. From speaking with communities and representative bodies, AIATSIS determined that requests independently made by communities are more often denied completely or left to lapse, as the research and decision making process of the overseas collecting institution is too long and difficult. When this happens, communities are left feeling disenfranchised and disempowered.

It also became clear that overseas collecting institutions that are willing to repatriate cultural heritage material, are frequently unable to undertake the extensive work required to facilitate the return of the material to its proper Custodians. This is largely due to resourcing, however, it is also about the capacity of those institutions to establish a relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Through correspondence with 194 overseas institutions, AIATSIS found that just under a quarter would accept a request submission and consider the repatriation of cultural heritage material to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. However, only a small number of these offered more than collection records and some minimal staff time to undertake research about the material in order to repatriate it.

While many aspire to have a relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that are represented in their collection, many asked AIATSIS to act as the facilitator of this relationship. Ultimately, while many institutions may be willing to repatriate cultural heritage material they do not have the resources (or curatorial knowledge) to undertake this work or develop relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Therefore, the burden of repatriation is placed upon the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Requests for the return of material can be denied for a number of reasons. For example, some institutions will only accept requests from governments or government agencies, while others are prohibited by law from deaccessioning objects from their collections. Even when institutions are able to deaccession objects and return material, the deaccession process is frequently complex, and always resource intensive and time-consuming.

A clear lesson of the project is that repatriation is complex and difficult, with parties separated geographically, socially and culturally and having to negotiate and complete complex administrative and bureaucratic processes. As such, the relationship between the Indigenous community seeking repatriation and the overseas collecting institution is key. AIATSIS — as an independent government statutory authority with cultural authority and mandate — was able to play a bridging role and help establish a relationship between the source community and overseas collecting institution. AIATSIS was able to lend its research and curatorial knowledge to facilitate the return of material, act as the requesting government agency (where an official government request was required) and help negotiate the complex, resource and time intensive deaccession and ensuing export/import processes.

## Indigenous Communities at the Heart of the Process

The key to the successful repatriations under the RoCH project was the identification by the Indigenous communities of the material that they wanted repatriated and the reason why they wanted the specific material repatriated, e.g. the material identified would help maintain the cultural practices of the community. In the RoCH project, the partnership with the Indigenous community and their determination of the reasons for the repatriation – in this case primarily cultural revitalisation and maintenance – was a key factor in the decision by the overseas collecting institutions to proceed with a return.

Importantly, Indigenous communities did not seek the repatriation of all cultural heritage material in overseas collections but material that was seen as most critical for return at this time. As such, the question “What is suitable for repatriation?” is best directed to the Indigenous community seeking repatriation as it is they who are best placed to understand what material will revitalise or support their continuing cultural practices or is spiritually most significant and therefore should be returned. The partnership approach acknowledges that Indigenous communities should determine what material should be repatriated and that this cannot be limited only to secret/sacred or ceremonial material.

## Returning Cultural Heritage Material Supports Cultural Maintenance, Restoration and Revitalisation

The return of cultural heritage material held in overseas collecting institutions back to Country strengthens communities and cultures. As Mark Inkamala, Senior Aranda Man, said about the return of Aranda cultural heritage material from ISM:

*Returning the material will restore our culture and strengthen community. Young people need to learn about culture and bringing back the material will help us do this. The return of the material will let us reconnect it to Country. It will also help us preserve our culture and pass knowledge onto the young people.*

Returning material enhances the cultural education of young people by bringing old and young people together, instigating inter-generational dialogue about the past.

## Returning Cultural Heritage Material as a Mechanism for Reconciliation and Healing

For many Indigenous communities, repatriation is a mechanism which facilitates and supports a journey of healing, reconciliation and truth telling. AIATSIS has learned through conversations with Indigenous communities, that the physical return of material is just the start of a much larger conversation about self-determination, keeping places and cultural revitalisation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been calling for the return of cultural heritage material for many decades, and for the work to be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The RoCH project demonstrates this aspiration can be fulfilled.

For more than 200 years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material was removed from Country and placed in museums, universities and private collections in Australia and overseas. The loss of this material, its often wrongful collection and removal to all parts of the world, continues to be a grievance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, physical objects, in particular secret / sacred and ceremonial items embody the spirit of their ancestors and are living beings rather than lifeless antiquities. When these items are removed or taken from Country, the spirit of the ancestor who created and cared for the item is also removed. Repatriation provides the mechanism to restore not only the health and vitality to the present day Custodians but also heal and breathe life back into these vitally important cultural heritage materials, as articulated by Donald Bob, Garawa Elder, on seeing the objects for the first time at MM:

*...[the room] felt cold because it was the person of that thing, that spirit" [speaking to him] "crying for his home... our lore, our histories, our traditions, our livelihood and our stories" [are in those objects].*

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, repatriation supports the development of healing relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and provides an opportunity for governments and their agencies to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their representative bodies.

Repatriation provides a vehicle to reflect and acknowledge Australia's past. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the return of cultural heritage material is the first step in exercising sovereignty over their cultural heritage.

Material repatriated as part of the RoCH project was transferred to Traditional Owners / Custodians, via on Country handover events. The handover of cultural heritage material from MM to the Gangalidda and Garawa peoples was attended by over 100 people. This event brought Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together to celebrate the return of the material and promoted truth telling, healing and reconciliation within the community.

The successful outcomes of the RoCH project are evidence of how the return of cultural heritage material promotes reconciliation and healing.

## Importance of Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Regardless of where material is located throughout the world, Indigenous communities should and must be able to exercise sovereignty over their material, even material not on display but held in the store rooms and archives of collecting institutions. AIATSIS has identified that material on display represents a very small percentage of what collecting institutions have and some museums have none of their Australian collection on display. Given this, it is important to ask questions about this material, for example:

- Does the community who created this material know of its existence?
- Why does this collecting institution hold this material — is it still needed and is it ethical to keep it without endorsement from its Traditional Owners / Custodians?

By asking these questions collecting institutions can cede some of their authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and help them exercise sovereignty over material, allowing originating communities authority in determining both access conditions for the material and the context and narrative of material on display. This helps to restore some equality in the power balance of the relationship.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples want to tell their own stories and repatriation is a crucial part of shifting the power to Indigenous communities in order to do this. Community driven repatriation makes a positive contribution to this endeavour, because if a collecting institution asks the above questions of their material and in turn welcomes repatriation activities from their collections to Indigenous peoples, it is safe to assume the materials they still hold in their collections are items which those Indigenous communities are happy to have displayed to tell their stories.

Moreover, by creating and renewing a relationship between an Indigenous community and a collecting institution through repatriation, the two parties create a privileged space to begin to work together to write exciting stories, together. By inviting Indigenous communities into the collecting institution through repatriation, a space is created where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are empowered and they can provide both context for, and another layer of, understanding of those objects while telling the stories that need to be told.

In this way, collecting institutions lose nothing through repatriation activities and have the potential to gain immeasurably.

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**Bardi Jawi bowl returned from  
Illinois State Museum, October 2019.**

# Appendices

## 1.0 RoCH Project Advisory Committee

At the commencement of the RoCH project an Advisory Committee was established for the purpose of providing overall advice on the direction, development and management of the project to the CEO. The Project Advisory Committee was appointed by, and reported to, the AIATSIS CEO throughout the course of the two year project.

The role of the Committee was to provide specialist advice in relation to the complexities and sensitivities involved in returning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage materials. The nature and scope of the advice included, but was not limited to:

- issues relating to cultural protocols;
- issues relating to the return of materials with limited or poor documentation;
- feedback and advice on general issues pertaining to the return of materials from overseas; and,
- other advice as requested

The Committee consisted of six members including three Indigenous representatives (two Aboriginal and one Torres Strait Islander). Initially correspondence was sent to a number of institutions and agencies. Members of the Committee were appointed based upon the following:

- An extensive understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture and traditions;
- previous or existing experience in Indigenous repatriation; and/or
- experience in museum and/or cultural heritage work.

Members of the Advisory Committee included:

- Adj Prof. Margo Neale (National Museum of Australia)
- Mr Ned David (Torres Strait Sea and Land Council)
- Dr Lyndon Ormond-Parker (University of Melbourne)
- Mr Shaun Angeles (Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory)
- Ms Katherine McMahon (National Museum of Australia)
- Prof John Carty (South Australian Museum)

The AIATSIS CEO fulfilled the position of Chairperson while a team member of the RoCH project fulfilled the role of secretariat.

In addition to the appointed Committee members, two representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Soft Power Division were invited to observe the meetings, these representatives included Mr Damien Miller and Ms Paula Watts.

## 2.0 Engagement with Key Stakeholders

Throughout the course of the RoCH project AIATSIS established and developed relationships with cultural sector organisations in Australia and internationally. These relationships enabled AIATSIS to collaborate, share knowledge and expertise and support the aspirations of First Nations peoples to return their cultural heritage material.

### Domestic Stakeholders and Key Contacts

As part of the research and identification phase of the RoCH project, AIATSIS engaged with over 50 stakeholders from across Australia involved in the administration of Aboriginal Affairs, heritage management and/or involved in the repatriation of Indigenous ancestral remains or objects (see Table 3).

The engagement served a number of functions. First, it established an awareness of the project, its objectives and core deliverables. Second, it enabled the RoCH project team to develop relationships with key stakeholders involved in repatriation and the management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage. Third, it provided an opportunity to share intelligence, data, and information to ensure the returns conducted under the project did not impact on domestic repatriation negotiations already underway.

The RoCH project team contributed to the national discourse on repatriation, as well as contemporary museum practice, through attendance and presentation at various conferences and meetings, as listed below:

- *GLAM Peak* — Project introduction and updates
- *Australian Committee, UNESCO Memory of the World Program* — Project introduction and updates
- *Australian National University Collections Advisory Committee* — Project introduction and updates
- *Atlas of Living Australia Advisory Board* — Project introduction and updates
- *Australian Museums and Galleries Association's National Conference* — A panel discussion facilitated by Lyndall Ley including Shaun Angeles, Jane Lydon, Christopher Simpson and Leonard Hill at the Australian Museums and Galleries Association's National conference in May 2019.
- *Department of Communications and the Arts* — Project update to the Indigenous Repatriation Committee and Repatriation Officers from across Australia.
- *Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA)* — Project team members provided a project update to the TSRA Board meeting at their request.
- *AIATSIS National Indigenous Research Conference* — Joint presentation with Neilø McKenzie (Yawuru Senior Lore Boss) and Stephen Welsh (University of Manchester, Manchester Museum) on the importance of the Ask First Principle in repatriation discussions.
- *National Cultural Heritage Committee Meeting* — RoCH project team members presented an overview of the project.
- *Australian National University* — Master of Museum and Heritage Studies Lecture Provided joint lecture on repatriation engagement at ANU Master of Museum and Heritage Studies
- *Office for the Arts* — Project update to the Indigenous Repatriation Committee.

**Table 3: List of domestic stakeholders and key contacts**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Given Names</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Institution / Organisation</b>
Ms	Pamela	Young	A/Senior Team Leader Repatriation and Conservation	Heritage NSW, Community Engagement, Department of Premier and Cabinet, New South Wales
Mr	Toby	Forde	Manager Heritage	Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, South Australia
Ms	Anna	Russo	Aboriginal Heritage and Repatriation Manager	South Australian Museum
Dr	Jared	Thomas	William and Margaret Geary Curator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art and Material Culture	South Australian Museum
Prof	John	Carty	Head of Humanities	South Australian Museum
Dr	Alistair	Paterson	Collecting the West, Project Director	University of Western Australia
Mr	Jeremy	Elliott	Director Partnerships and Agreements	Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage Western Australia
Dr	Moya	Smith	Head of Department, Anthropology & Archaeology	Western Australian Museum
Ms	Wendy	Dalitz	Assistant Director, Museums and Repatriation	Office for the Arts, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Ms	Amanda	Morley	Assistant Director, Museums and Repatriation	Office for the Arts, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Mr	David	Doble	Director, Museums and Repatriation	Office for the Arts, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

<b>Title</b>	<b>Given Names</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Institution / Organisation</b>
Ms	Kathrine	Vella	Assistant Director, Museums and Repatriation	Office for the Arts, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Dr	Lyndon	Ormond- Parker		University of Melbourne
Dr	Cressida	Fforde	Deputy Director, National Centre for Indigenous Studies	College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University
Dr	Michael	Pickering	Senior Repatriation Advisor	National Museum of Australia
Mr	Phil	Gordon	Project Manager of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections and Repatriation	Australia Museum
Dr	Odetta	Moore	Manager Ancestral Remains Unit	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
Dr	Harry	Webber	Director, Heritage Services	Aboriginal Affairs Victoria
Mr	Daniel	Clarke	Heritage Officer, Ancestral Remains Unit	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
Ms	Alison	Lee	Associate Director, Governance, Policy, Planning and IT	National Gallery of Victoria
Ms	Kimberley	Moulton	Senior Curator South Eastern Aboriginal Collections, First Peoples Department	Melbourne Museum
Ms	Barrina	South	Senior Team leader, South East Regional Heritage Operations	Community Engagement, Department of Premier and Cabinet, New South Wales
Mr	Robert	Kelly	Aboriginal Strategy and Outcomes	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, New South Wales
Assoc Professor	Gavan	McCarthy	Director, eScholarship Research Centre	University of Melbourne

<b>Title</b>	<b>Given Names</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Institution / Organisation</b>
Ms	Amanda	Webster	Senior Executive Assistant — Office of the Director and CEO	Australia Museum
Mr	Peter	Denham	Director, Collections and Research	Queensland Museum Network
Mr	Bill	Harris	Project Director, Encounters 2020	Australian National Maritime Museum
Mr	Alex	Souvlis	Program Manager, Encounters 2020	Australian National Maritime Museum
Ms	Ebony	Williams	Indigenous Programs Coordinator, Encounters 2020	Australian National Maritime Museum
Mr	Beau	James	Manager of Indigenous Programs, Maritime Museum	Australian National Maritime Museum
Dr	Jude	Phillip	Senior Curator	McLeay Museum, Sydney
Mr	Russell	Briggs	Director of Engagement, Exhibitions and Cultural Connection	Australia Museum
Ms	Leilani	Bin-Juda	CEO	Torres Strait Regional Authority
Mr	Napau Pedro	Stephens	Chair	Torres Strait Regional Authority
Ms	Zoe	Rimmer	Indigenous Cultures Team	Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
Mr	Steve	Gall	Acting Manager	Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Tasmania
Mr	Matthew	Schlitz	Principal Heritage Officer	Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, South Australia
Ms	Elizabeth	Jacks	Director	Libraries Tasmania
Prof	Paul	Turnbull	University of Tasmania	Professor of History and Humanities, repatriation specialist
Ms	Amelia	Geniola	Acting Executive Officer	Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, Department of Primary Industries

<b>Title</b>	<b>Given Names</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Institution / Organisation</b>
Mr	Brett	Nannup	Registrar, Anthropology and Archaeology Department	Western Australian Museum
Mr	Ross	Chadwick	Curator, Anthropology and Archaeology Department	Western Australian Museum
Mr	Alec	Coles	CEO	Western Australian Museum
Ms	Deanne	Fitzgerald	Senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Advisor, Organisational Development	Western Australian Museum
Mr	Shaun	Angeles	Artwe-Kenhe (Men's) Collection Researcher	Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory
Mr	Marcus	Schutenko	Director	Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory
Mr	Winston	Green	Repatriation Officer	Strehlow Research Centre (MAGNT)
Ms	Margret	Allen PSM	CEO and State Librarian	State Library of Western Australia
Mr	Damien	Miller	Assistant Secretary	Soft Power, Communications and Scholarships Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Ms	Rachel	Grant	Policy Officer	Soft Power, Communications and Scholarships Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Dr	Stephen	Nicols	Site Registrar	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Queensland
Ms	Isabel	Tarrago	Director, Cultural Heritage	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Queensland

## International Stakeholders

In addition to the domestic engagement undertaken as part of the RoCH project, AIATSIS also approached a total of 194 overseas collecting institutions from across the UK, USA, continental Europe, Asia, Middle East, Oceania and Africa (see Table 4 for a full list of contacts).

The engagement undertaken was targeted at institutions which were either documented to hold collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material or were known to have once held collections. The responses received from these institutions were fundamental to the development of the RoCH OHRM database and ultimately informed the case study selection and, to a lesser degree, the return process.

**Table 4: List of international stakeholders**

Institution Name	Region
Alabama Museum of Natural History	USA & Canada
American Museum of Natural History	USA & Canada
Anthropology Collection, University Museum, Florence	Europe
Anuchin Research Institute and Museum of Anthropology, Moscow State University	Europe
Arizona State Museum	USA & Canada
Art Institute of Chicago, Primitive Art Department	USA & Canada
Auckland Museum	Oceania
Baltimore Museum of Art	USA & Canada
Bankfield Museum	UK
Bern Historical Museum	Europe
Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum	USA & Canada
Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire des Langues Orientales	Europe
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery	UK
Boonshoft Museum of Discovery (Dayton Museum of Natural History)	USA & Canada
Brighton Museum and Art Gallery	UK
Bristol Museum and Art Gallery	UK
British Museum	UK
Buffalo Museum of Science	USA & Canada
Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture	USA & Canada

Institution Name	Region
Canadian Museum of History	USA & Canada
Canterbury Museum	UK
Cantor Arts Centre (Iris and B Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University)	USA & Canada
Captain Cook Birthplace Museum	UK
Carnegie Museum of Natural History Section of Anthropology	USA & Canada
Cincinnati Art Museum	USA & Canada
Cincinnati Museum Center	USA & Canada
Cleveland Museum of Natural History	USA & Canada
Columbus Museum of Art	USA & Canada
Cornell University	USA & Canada
Denver Art Museum	USA & Canada
Denver Museum of Nature and Science	USA & Canada
Ethnographic Museum University of Zurich	Europe
Ethnological Museum of Berlin	Europe
Ethnological Museum of Neuchatel	Europe
Field Museum	USA & Canada
Fiji Museum	Oceania
Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco	USA & Canada
Fowler Museum, University of California Los Angeles	USA & Canada
Frobenius Institute	Europe
Glasgow Museums	UK
Glenbow Museum	USA & Canada
Gordon L. Grosscup Museum of Anthropology (Wayne State University, Michigan)	USA & Canada
Government Museum, Chennai	Asia
Grassi Dresden Museum of Ethnology, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD)	Europe
Grassi Museum of Ethnology in Leipzig (part of SKD)	Europe

Institution Name	Region
Grassi Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut (part of SKD)	Europe
Great North Museum	UK
Guernsey Museum and Art Gallery	UK
Hampton University Museum	USA & Canada
Historical and Ethnological Museum St Gallen	Europe
Honolulu Museum (Academy of Arts)	USA & Canada
Hood Museum of Art	USA & Canada
Horniman Museum	UK
Houston Museum of Fine Arts	USA & Canada
Hudson Museum, University of Maine	USA & Canada
Hunterian Museum	UK
Illinois State Museum	USA & Canada
Ipswich Museum (Colchester + Ipswich Museums)	UK
Israel Museum, Jerusalem	Middle East
Iziko South Africa Museum	Africa
Joslyn Art Museum	USA & Canada
Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, University of Virginia	USA & Canada
Kobe City Museum	Asia
Kunstkamera Museum (Peter the Great Museum)	Europe
Leeds City Museum	UK
Les Musees de Sens	Europe
Lichfield Museum, Staffordshire	UK
Linden Museum	Europe
Logan Museum of Anthropology	USA & Canada
Manchester Museum	UK
Manitoba Museum	USA & Canada
Mathers Museum of World Cultures	USA & Canada

Institution Name	Region
Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, University of New Mexico	USA & Canada
McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture, University of Tennessee	USA & Canada
Metropolitan Museum Arts, Dept. of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas	USA & Canada
Michigan State University Museum (MSU Museum)	USA & Canada
Middle America Research Institute	USA & Canada
Milwaukee Public Museum	USA & Canada
Montrose Museum	UK
Moravian Museum	Europe
MTG Hawkes Bay Museum	Oceania
Musee d'Arts Africains, Oceaniens, Amerindiens	Europe
Musee de l'Homme	Europe
Musee du Quai Branly	Europe
Musee des Beaux Arts de Lyon	Europe
Musee des Confluences	Europe
Musee d'Histoire Naturelle de Lille	Europe
Musee National de la Marine	Europe
MUSEON (Museum for Education in The Hague)	Europe
Museum aan de Stroom (MAS)	Europe
Museum de Nantes	Europe
Museum der Kulturen, Basel	Europe
Museum Fünf Kontinente (Museum Five Continents)	Europe
Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia	USA & Canada
Museum of Anthropology, University of Missouri	USA & Canada
Museum of Anthropology (Man), Wake Forest University	USA & Canada
Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge	UK
Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography in Lodz	Europe

Institution Name	Region
Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri	USA & Canada
Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo	Europe
Museum of Ethnography (Neprajzi Muzeum)	Europe
Museum of Ethnography Geneva	Europe
Museum of Ethnology and Prehistory MARKK	Europe
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston	USA & Canada
Museum of Man and Nature, Germany	Europe
Museum of Musical Instruments	Asia
Museum of Natural and Cultural History, University of Oregon	USA & Canada
Museum of Natural History, University of Colorado	USA & Canada
Museum of Natural History, Yale	USA & Canada
Museum of Vancouver	USA & Canada
Museums Sheffield	UK
Nanzan Anthropological Museum, Nanzan University	Europe
Naprstek Museum, Prague	Europe
Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University	USA & Canada
Natal Museum (KwaZulu-Natal Museum)	Africa
National Ethnographic Museum, Warsaw	Europe
National Library of New Zealand	Oceania
National Maritime Museum	UK
National Museum of Denmark	Europe
National Museum of Ethnology (Portugal) / Popular Art Museum	Europe
National Museum of Ethnology, Japan	Asia
National Museum of Finland	Europe
National Museum of Ireland	Europe
National Museums of Northern Ireland (Ulster Museum)	UK
National Museum of Science and Nature, Japan	Asia

Institution Name	Region
National Museum of Scotland	UK
National Museum of the Philippines	Asia
National Museum of World Culture, Sweden — Varldskultur museerna (former Goteborg Ethnographic Museum)	Europe
National Museum of World Cultures (Netherlands)	Europe
Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County	USA & Canada
Natural History Museum, England	UK
New Mexico State University Museum	USA & Canada
New Orleans Museum of Art	USA & Canada
Newport Museum and Art Gallery	UK
Norfolk Museum	UK
Oakland Museum of California	USA & Canada
Otago Museum	Oceania
Paisley Museum and Art Gallery	UK
Peabody Essex Museum	USA & Canada
Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology Harvard	USA & Canada
Penn Museum	USA & Canada
Perth Museum and Gallery	UK
Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology	USA & Canada
Pigorini National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography	Europe
Pitt Rivers Museum	UK
Plymouth City Museum	UK
Polish Academy of Sciences Kornik Library	Europe
Powell-Cotton Museum	UK
Princeton University, Museum of Natural History	USA & Canada
Putnam Museum and Science Center	USA & Canada
Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum of Ethnology	Europe

Institution Name	Region
Reading Museum	UK
Rose Art Museum	UK
Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter	UK
Royal Alberta Museum	USA & Canada
Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (the RAI)	UK
Royal Botanic Gardens, Museum Division — Kew Gardens	UK
Royal Geographical Society	UK
Royal Museum for Central Africa	Europe
Royal Ontario Museum	USA & Canada
Saffron Waldon Museum	UK
San Diego Museum of Us	USA & Canada
Scarborough Museum	UK
Science Museum of Minnesota	USA & Canada
Seattle Art Museum	USA & Canada
Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Krakow	Europe
Smithsonian Institution	USA & Canada
Spencer Museum of Art at Kansas University	USA & Canada
Springfield Science Museum	USA & Canada
Spurlock Museum	USA & Canada
St Louis Art Museum	USA & Canada
Te Papa Tongarewa (Museum of New Zealand)	Oceania
The Livingstone Museum	Africa
Tokyo National Museum	Asia
Torquay Museum	UK
Übersee Museum Bremen (Overseas Museum, Bremen)	Europe
University College London (UCL)	UK
University Museum at the University of Delaware	USA & Canada

Institution Name	Region
University Museum of Bergen	Europe
University Museum of Southern Illinois	USA & Canada
University of Aberdeen	UK
University of Nebraska State Museum, Systematics Collection	USA & Canada
University of Wroclaw, Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology Department	Europe
Vanderbilt Museum	USA & Canada
Vatican Ethnological Museum	Europe
Warrington Museum and Art Gallery	UK
Washington State Museum, Thomas Burke Memorial	USA & Canada
Wellcome Collection	UK
Weltkulturen Museum (Museum of World Cultures formerly Museum of Ethnography Frankfurt)	Europe
Weltmuseum Wein, Museum of Ethnology, Vienna	Europe
Whitby Museum	UK
Worcester Art Museum	UK
World Museums, National Museum Liverpool	UK



Nyamal feather body ornament returned from Manchester Museum, October 2019. Photographs courtesy of Susan Standen, ABC Pilbara.

### 3.0 Repatriated Cultural Heritage Material

The following section provides a comprehensive list of the 85 items unconditionally repatriated from the Illinois State Museum (USA) and Manchester Museum (UK).

In accordance with cultural protocols, descriptions of secret sacred and/or gender restricted items have been omitted and replaced with a culturally appropriate term.

**Table 5: Material repatriated from the Illinois State Museum**

Museum Catalogue Number	Description	Identification	Field Collector
1942-0062-816216	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816235	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816236	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816237	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816756	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-808991	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal	G.Laves
1942-0062-816217	Shell decoration	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816218	Shell decoration	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816220	Shell decoration	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816241	Shield	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816242	Shield	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816254a-c	Spear	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816265	Spear	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816266	Spear	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816267	Spear	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves

<b>Museum Catalogue Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identification</b>	<b>Field Collector</b>
1942-0062-816268	Spear	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816269	Spear	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816274	Spear	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816275	Spear	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816222	Boomerang	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-81623	Boomerang	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816224	Boomerang	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816225	Boomerang	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816226	Boomerang	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816227	Boomerang	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816231	Toy raft	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816232	Toy paddle	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816234	Coolamon	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816238 a-b	Fire sticks	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816263	Spear	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-816271	Spear	Australian Aboriginal (Barda)	G.Laves
1942-0062-808992	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal, (Arunta/Western)	Unknown
1942-0062-816214	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Arunta)	Unknown

<b>Museum Catalogue Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identification</b>	<b>Field Collector</b>
1942-0062-816215a-c	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Arunta)	Unknown
1942-0062-816239	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Arunta?)	Unknown
1942-0062-816240	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Arunta)	Unknown
1942-0062-816250	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Arunta)	Unknown
1942-0062-816251	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Arunta)	Unknown
1942-0062-814636a-b	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Arunta)	Unknown
1942-0062-814787	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Arunta/Western)	Unknown
1942-0062-816252	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Arunta?)	Unknown
1942-0062-816617	Restricted object	Australian Aboriginal (Arunta/Western)	Unknown

**Table 6: Material repatriated from the Manchester Museum**

<b>Museum Catalogue Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identification</b>	<b>Collector</b>
0.1011	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	Spencer and Gillen
0.1021	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	Spencer and Gillen
0.1044	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	Spencer and Gillen
0.1045	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	Spencer and Gillen
0.1046	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	Spencer and Gillen
0.1047	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	Spencer and Gillen
0.1048	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	Spencer and Gillen

<b>Museum Catalogue Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identification</b>	<b>Collector</b>
0.6801	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	Mrs Mellard
H.732	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	Heape Collection
0.5288	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	F. Wood Jones
0.5296	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	F. Wood Jones
0.5298	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	F. Wood Jones
0.5297	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	F. Wood Jones
0.5289	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	F. Wood Jones
0.5295	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	F. Wood Jones
0.9340a	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	G.A.G. Mitchell ex. F.Wood-Jones
0.9340b	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	G.A.G. Mitchell ex. F.Wood-Jones
0.9340c	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	G.A.G. Mitchell ex. F.Wood-Jones
0.9340d	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	G.A.G. Mitchell ex. F.Wood-Jones
0.5299	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	F. Wood Jones
0.5300	Restricted object	Aranda, Central Australia, Northern Territory	F. Wood Jones
0.4003	Restricted object	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond
0.4002b	Body ornament feathers	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond
0.4002a	Body ornament feathers	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond
0.2584	Restricted object	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond

<b>Museum Catalogue Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identification</b>	<b>Collector</b>
0.4000/1	Body ornament / decoration	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond
0.4000	Body ornament / decoration	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond
0.4000/2	Body ornament / decoration	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond
0.4001/1	Restricted object	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond
0.4001/2	Restricted object	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond
0.4001/3	Restricted object	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond
0.4001/4	Restricted object	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond
0.4001/5	Restricted object	Gangalidda Garawa, Burketown QLD	W.G. Samond
0.9322/251	Body ornament — feathers	Ngamo (Nyamal), Nullagine WA	Salford Collection
0.9322/249	Head ornament — feathers	Ngamo (Nyamal), Nullagine WA	Salford Collection
0.9322/243	Restricted object	Ngamo (Nyamal), Nullagine WA	Salford Collection
0.9322/252	Restricted object	Ngamo (Nyamal), Nullagine WA	Salford Collection
0.9322/256	Restricted object	Ngamo (Nyamal), Nullagine WA	Salford Collection
0.9322/71	Restricted object	Ngamo (Nyamal), Nullagine WA	Salford Collection
0.5290	Restricted object	Yawuru; Roebuck Downs, WA	F. Wood Jones
0.5292	Restricted object	Yawuru; Roebuck Downs, WA	F. Wood Jones
0.5293	Restricted object	Yawuru; Roebuck Downs, WA	F. Wood Jones
0.5294	Restricted object	Yawuru; Roebuck Downs, WA	F. Wood Jones

## 4.0 Logistics, Permits and Approvals

### Freight and Logistics

To administer and manage the logistics and freight for the return of the repatriated cultural heritage material from overseas, AIATSIS engaged IAS Logistics.<sup>3</sup> IAS Logistics had extensive experience in handling sensitive and fragile freight, an understanding of repatriation processes and demonstrated cultural competency through past experience working with the Indigenous Repatriation Program administered by the Office for the Arts.

Kingsley Munday AM, an Aboriginal man and Managing Director of IAS Logistics, explained their role in the process:

*IAS Logistics is a family business but more importantly we are an Indigenous family. The work we do in our daily lives involves moving valuable, delicate and secure objects across the country and around the world but there are times when we have the privilege to do things which have a higher meaning.*

*The removal of Indigenous cultural objects from their land to be taken thousands of kilometres around the world into foreign land places them in a state of unrest. No matter whether we are black or white, the reuniting of these objects with their community and with their land, with their place of origin, is to bring them to their natural resting place and to their ultimate place of peace.*

*To return them to country is of immense significance to the communities, but it also gives to us and our people a tremendous sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Once each task is completed we too feel a sense of calm and peace — it was meant to be.*

### Permits and Approvals

In accordance with Australia's strict bio-security laws, the RoCH project was required to obtain the following importation / exportation permits pursuant to the *Biosecurity Act 2015*:

- Pre-Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Certificate from the UK Government for Australian Customs; and,
- A permit to import conditionally non-prohibited goods (issued by Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health).

In addition to the import / export permits, a letter of exemption from the *Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage Act 1986* (Cwlth) was also sought from the then Dept. of Communication and the Arts (now the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, regional Development and Communications).

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<sup>3</sup> International Art Services (IAS) Logistics is a Supply Nation certified business.

## 5.0 Future Work Program

The following section provides a list of institutions willing and ready to consider a repatriation request from AIATSIS, First Nations and/or Traditional Owners.

**Table 7: List of overseas collecting institutions willing to consider a return request**

Institution Name	Region
Israel Museum, Jerusalem	Middle East
Museum of Vancouver	Canada
Hudson Museum, University of Maine	USA
Illinois State Museum	USA
Kluge-Ruhe, University of Virginia	USA
Moravian Museum	Europe
Warrington Museum and Art Gallery	UK & Ireland
Manchester Museum	UK & Ireland
Auckland Museum	Oceania
Great North Museum	UK & Ireland
Hunterian Museum	UK & Ireland
University of Aberdeen	UK & Ireland
World Museums, National Museum Liverpool	UK & Ireland
Horniman Museum	UK & Ireland
Logan Museum of Anthropology	USA
Museum of Natural History, University of Colorado	USA
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery	UK & Ireland
Leeds City Museum	UK & Ireland
Glasgow Museums	UK & Ireland
Museum of Man, Wake Forest University	USA
Columbus Museum of Art	USA
Fowler Museum, University of California Los Angeles	USA
Gordon L Grosscup Museum of Anthropology (Wayne State University, Michigan)	USA
Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter	UK & Ireland

## 6.0 Financial Distribution of Project Funding

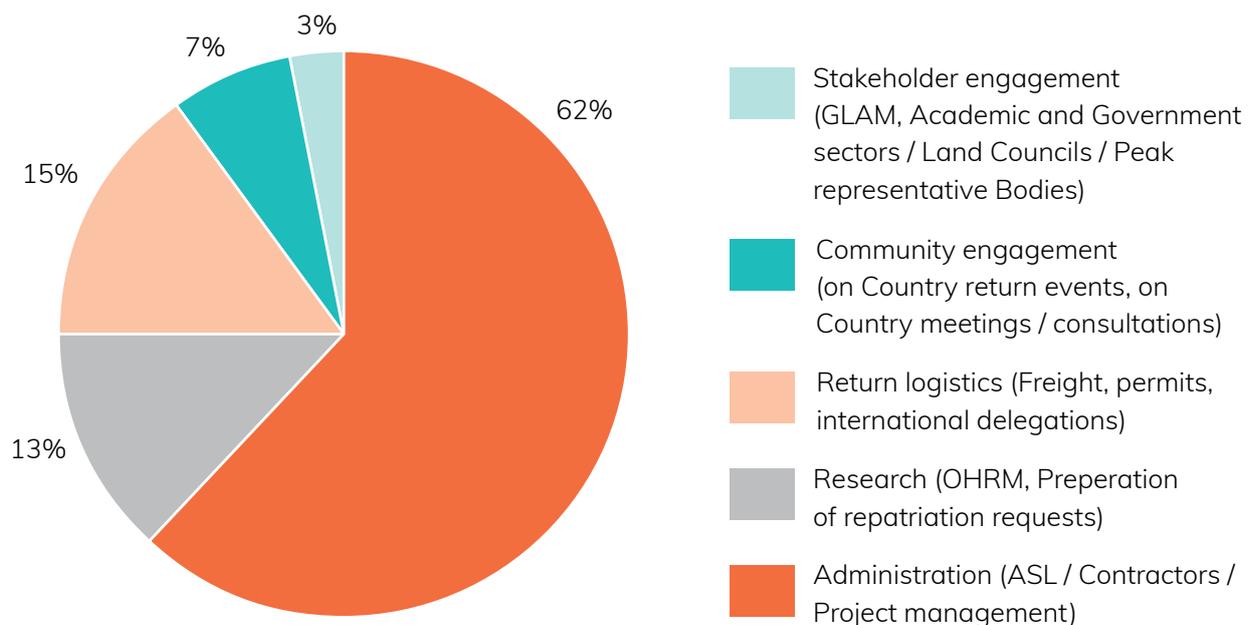
In May 2018, the Australian Government allocated \$2 million over two years in funding to AIATSIS to scope and commence activity relating to the return of culturally significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material from overseas, the RoCH project (see the Hon. Mitch Fifield and Hon Warren Entsch joint media release – Honouring Captain James Cook’s Voyage).

The project formed part of a suite of initiatives to mark the 250th anniversary of James Cook’s first voyage to the east coast of Australia.

Over the two year funding period, just over half of the funds were allocated to project administration (i.e. contractors, project management and planning) and half was allocated to return expenditure (freight, logistics, travel, etc.).

The distribution of the \$2 million funding allocation is provided in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Distribution of project financials 2018–2020**



# Project Participants and Partners







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