

Ngurra: The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Precinct

The National Resting Place



AIATSIS

Over many decades consultations have identified the need for a National Resting Place that would replace existing facilities in museums. These do not — in the view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples — provide culturally-appropriate facilities for caring for ancestral remains (ancestors) with limited provenance.

The National Resting Place will provide a purpose-built physical site, managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, that will care for repatriated limited provenance ancestors and any associated cultural material on their journey back to Country.

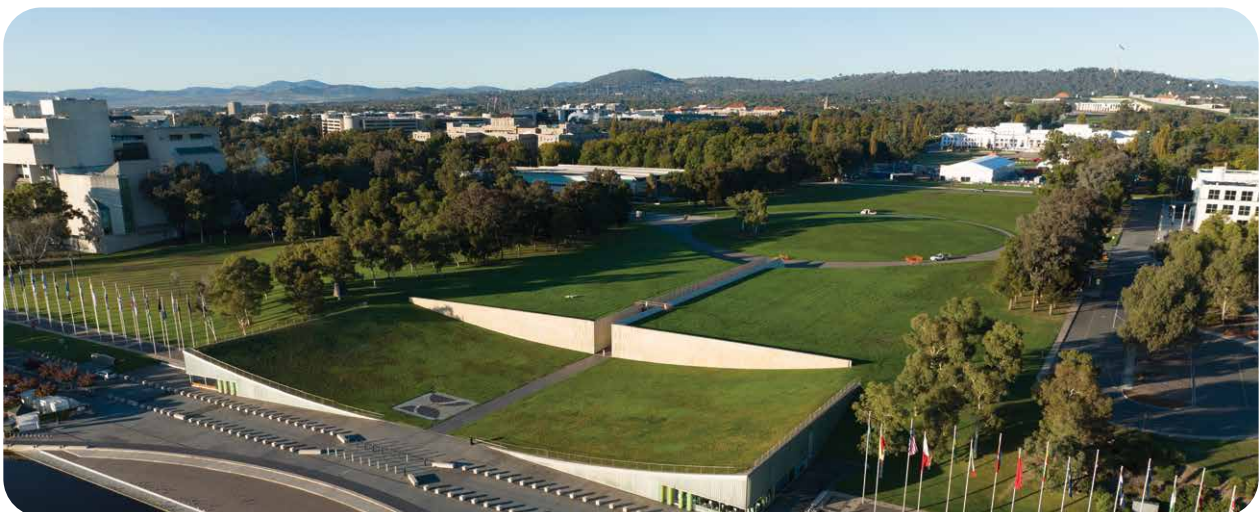
The National Resting Place will consist of three main spaces:

1. **A resting place** for the ancestors. For some ancestors, the stay may be short, while others may have to stay longer before being returned to Country. And in instances where provenance has been forgotten or erased, they will be cared for in perpetuity with dignity and respect.
2. **A ceremonial space** where ceremonies can be conducted in accordance with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols.
3. **A reflective space** where broader education and the narrative of repatriation can be shared with all Australians.

Functions of the National Resting Place:

1. **Provide culturally appropriate care** for repatriated ancestors.
2. **Spaces and resources** to support provenance research.
3. **Work with Indigenous communities** to return ancestors to Country.

No ancestors will be interred at the National Resting Place.



The Ngurra site.

Why do we need a National Resting Place?

The need for a National Resting Place stems from the past collection and removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remains over a period of at least 200 years, spanning first contact to the early 1970s.

Removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors was undertaken in the name of “discovery”, but the practice was at odds with the contemporary laws and moral codes that related to the treatment of deceased Europeans.

These ancestral remains were also collected against the will of their descendants, without consent and often in dubious circumstances.

Returning ancestors back to Country helps to promote healing, justice, and reconciliation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is also the belief of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that their ancestors cannot rest if separated from their Country.

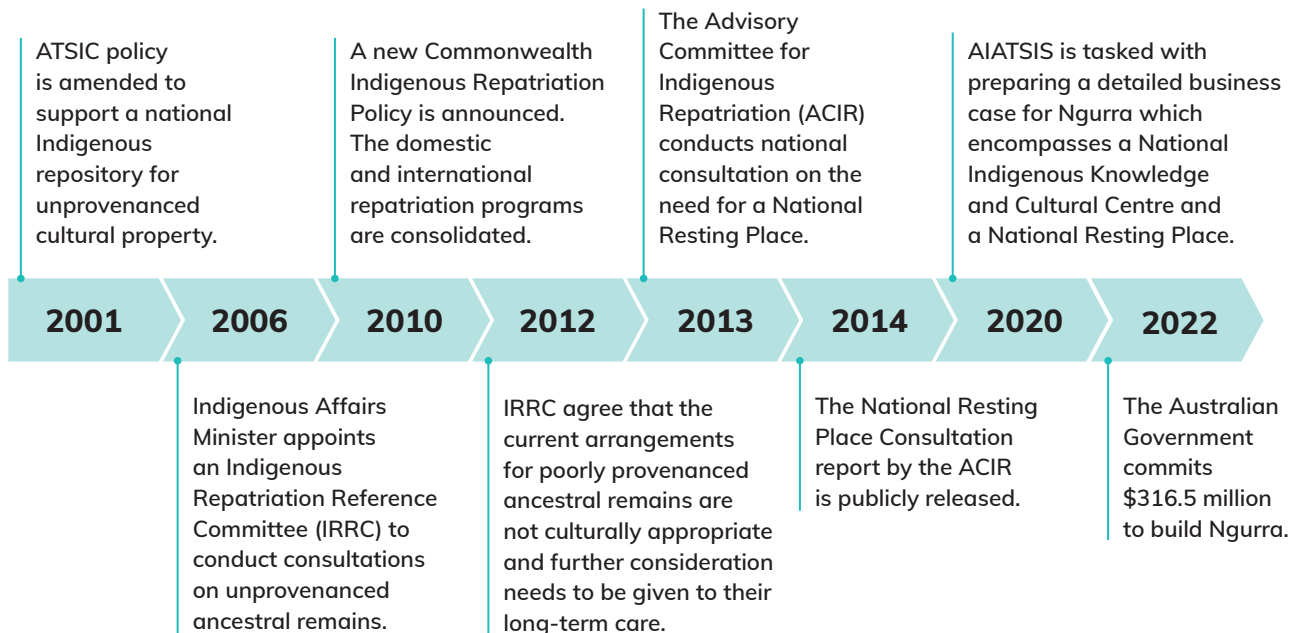
What are the current arrangements for limited provenance ancestral remains?

Under the Australian Government’s current arrangements ancestors of limited provenance are cared for by the National Museum of Australia (NMA).

As these ancestors at the time of their return to Australia are of limited provenance they often have no known community of origin or geographical provenance and therefore at present cannot continue their journey back to Country.

The shortcoming with the current arrangement is further stressed by the view of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that museums do not provide culturally appropriate spaces, facilities, practices, and locations for ancestral remains.

Timeline



We are currently seeking your views on the governance and operation of the National Resting Place.

Learn more and have your say: aiatsis.gov.au/ngurra

If any information contained in this fact sheet has raised concerns or caused distress, please contact Beyond Blue, Healing Foundation or your local community health service.



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