

The Australian Museum Repatriates Sacred Items to the Bunurong Community

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Australian Museum (AM) has repatriated a sacred cultural object back to the Bunurong Community, which was taken without consent and held within the AM collection since 1948. The Bunurong community received the object on Thursday 23 April 2026 with appropriate cultural protocols and ceremony.

The repatriation of First Nations and Pasifika Ancestral Remains and Secret Sacred Objects back to their communities of origin is a priority of the Australian Museum, and this work has been underway for more than 40 years. Since 2021, this work has been led by Director, First Nations, Laura McBride, a proud Wailwan woman, alongside a dedicated repatriation team.

"Repatriation is not a single act but an ongoing responsibility; one that honours the deep and unbreakable connection between First Nations peoples, their Ancestors, and Country.

"We have been working closely and respectfully with Bunurong Community representatives in an ongoing dialogue that has guided the repatriation process. We are grateful for the important collaboration to ensure that this repatriation was conducted entirely on the Community's terms, at their pace, and in a manner that is culturally appropriate. We appreciate the leadership, patience, and generosity they have shown," said Ms McBride.

Members of the Bunurong Community Uncle Robert Ogden said the repatriation of these significant cultural sacred objects would not only bring peace to Ancestors, but would also address some of the concerns the Bunurong People have in relation to bringing our Objects and Ancestors home and inspire future generations of Bunurong Community members, to pursue further repatriation.

"Bringing our sacred objects back to Country is incredibly important for our entire community, who are united in our pursuit of ensuring our cultural knowledge remains under our care and custodianship and today is just a small step in this long and often difficult process.

We hope that our success in identifying these important pieces and successfully bringing them back to Country will inspire other Communities across Australia to do the same," Glenn Shaw, Deputy CEO of the Bunurong Land Council said.

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