

For immediate release

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Horniman to return 10 Warumungu objects to Australia

The Horniman Museum and Gardens has agreed to transfer ownership of 10 objects to the Warumungu community, of Northern Territory, Australia.

The Trustees of the Horniman reached the decision following a formal repatriation request for nine Warumungu objects from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), on behalf of the Warumungu community. A tenth object, from the Horniman's Handling Collection, will also be returned.

The Warumungu objects, of cultural and spiritual importance, will be handed over to a delegation from Australia later this year. They include a ngurrulumuru (stone axe) and two wartilykirri (boomerangs), one from the Horniman's Handling Collection. Two of the objects – a marttan (knife) and a murkutu (sheath) – have been removed from display in the Horniman's World Gallery in preparation for their return. Their place in the display will, for now, be left empty with an explanatory label.

Following the transfer of ownership, the Warumungu objects will be returned to Australia where they will be housed at the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre in Tennant Creek, Northern Australia, and cared for in accordance with the traditions and customs of the Warumungu peoples.

Mr Michael Jones Jampijinpa, Senior Warumungu Man, says: 'Because it's been taken away from here, we would like to see all those things come back to the area where they were collected. They are Warumungu and they need to come back to Warumungu country. We are happy that they're coming back because all that stuff was taken a long time ago before my time. I want to thank them [Horniman Museum] for sending those things back to us. They've made a choice to send them back to where they belong. It wasn't them who collected it, it was their ancestors, so I want to thank them.'

More

Michael Salter-Church, Chair of Trustees at the Horniman Museum and Gardens, says: 'These objects are of the utmost significance for the Warumungu people, and were lost to them in circumstances where they were compelled to sell or give them away. We are pleased to be able to return them to the care of their original community.'

The formal request for nine of the Warumungu objects was received on 3 May 2023 and the Horniman has responded according to its [Restitution and Repatriation Policy](#). The decision of the Horniman Trustees was endorsed by The Charity Commission, as the regulator of the charitable sector, on 7 February 2024, under section 106 of the Charities Act 2011, noting the Trustees' 'moral obligation'.

The tenth object – one of the boomerangs – is part of the Horniman's [Handling Collection](#) rather than its permanent collection, and therefore did not need Charity Commission approval.

Ends

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Pictured:

- (9.354__001-D) Warumungu wartilykirri (hooked 'number seven' boomerang), image credit: Horniman Museum and Gardens
- Mr Michael Jones Jampijinpa, Senior Warumungu Man, © AIATSIS

Notes to Editors:

- **Nyinkka Nyunyu** is a regional art gallery and culture museum, dedicated to presenting and preserving the Warumungu culture of Tennant Creek and surrounds. nyinkkanyunyu.org.au
- **AIATSIS** is Australia's only national institution focused exclusively on the diverse history, cultures and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia. AIATSIS is leading the Return of Cultural Heritage (RoCH) program to return Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material held overseas to Australia. aiatsis.gov.au
- The Natural History Gallery closed for redevelopment from Monday 4 March 2024 as part of our [Nature + Love](#) project. The gallery will reopen in 2026.
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** was [Art Fund Museum of the Year 2022](#), the world's largest museum prize.
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** opened in 1901 as a gift to the people in perpetuity from tea trader and philanthropist Frederick John Horniman, to 'bring the world to Forest Hill'. Today the Horniman has a collection of 350,000 objects, specimens and artefacts from around the world. Its galleries include a World Gallery of anthropology, music, an acclaimed aquarium, The Studio – a flexible arts and exhibition space, and a natural history gallery (closed until 2026 for redevelopment as part of [Nature + Love](#)). Indoor exhibits link to the award-winning display gardens – from medicinal and dye gardens to an interactive sound garden, Butterfly House and an animal walk – set among 16 acres of beautiful, green space offering spectacular views across London. horniman.ac.uk
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** relies on income from ticket sales, memberships, the shop and the Café to help care for the Gardens, animals and Aquarium residents, to run events and to look after the collections. The support of our visitors and donors is hugely appreciated. horniman.ac.uk/support-us

- The **Horniman Museum and Gardens** is core-funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and since 1990 has been governed by an independent charitable trust, registered charity no. 802725.
- On 29 July 2019 the **Horniman Museum and Gardens declared an ecological and climate emergency**, pledging to place carbon reduction and environmental issues at the heart of its work. The declaration – and the subsequent **Climate and Ecological Manifesto**, published in January 2020 – is a consolidation of existing work and a commitment to renewed ambitions to reduce the Horniman’s environmental and pollution footprint, increase biodiversity, and inspire others to do so. Find out more about the Horniman’s manifesto commitments and progress so far at horniman.ac.uk/climate.