



Australian Government



EXPORTING AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL PROPERTY

Australian cultural property is an important part of Australia's cultural heritage.

Objects of cultural property include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage (eg. rock art, sacred objects)
- archaeological
- natural science (eg. gold nuggets, fossils, scientific specimens)
- applied science or technology (eg. tools, weapons, machinery)
- fine or decorative art (eg. paintings, sculptures, interior decorations, jewellery, musical instruments)
- documentary heritage (eg. letters, ledgers, recordings, maps)
- numismatic (eg. medals, badges, coins)
- philatelic (eg. stamps, postmarks)
- historical

A small range of Australian cultural property cannot be exported (eg. Victoria Crosses, Ned Kelly's armour, Indigenous human remains and secret sacred objects). Others can be exported but require export permits based on their age, value or significance to Australia.



You must obtain a permit before taking some cultural property out of Australia. Export permits are your way to make sure it's above board.

More information

For information on importing the cultural property of a foreign country into Australia, check with an embassy of the country to which you are travelling. Alternatively, you can search international laws on the UNESCO website www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws.

For more information on Australian cultural property or to obtain an Australian export permit contact:

Cultural Property and Gifts

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FRONT COVER (clockwise from top left): Fossilised dinosaur eggs, People's Republic of China; Stoneware, Republic of the Philippines; Bracelets with human remains, Kingdom of Cambodia; Newmont's Normandy Nugget © Newmont Mining Corporation, Australia; Adelaide Hunt Club Cup, Art Gallery of South Australia, Australia; Incised human skull, Federation of Malaysia; Private William Currey's war medals © Australian War Memorial, Australia; Charlotte medal © Australian National Maritime Museum, Australia; Shabti, Arab Republic of Egypt.

INSIDE PANELS (clockwise from top left): Tek Sing shipwreck pottery, Republic of Indonesia; Fossilised pine cone, Argentine Republic; Fossilised dinosaur eggs, People's Republic of China; Clayton and Shuttleworth steam traction engine, Millthorpe and District Historical Society, Australia; Incised human skull, Federation of Malaysia.

BACK PANEL (top to bottom): Blackwood table, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Australia; Private William Currey's war medals © Australian War Memorial, Australia; Ned Kelly's armour © State Library of Victoria, Australia.

MAKE SURE IT'S ABOVE BOARD

ARE YOU PROTECTING CULTURAL PROPERTY?



CHINA
Fossilised dinosaur eggs
Returned 2005



PHILIPPINES
Stoneware
Returned 2010



CAMBODIA
Bracelets with human remains
Returned 2011



AUSTRALIA
Gold nugget
Recovered 1999



AUSTRALIA
Adelaide Hunt Club Cup
Export permit denied



MALAYSIA
Incised human skull
Returned 2007



AUSTRALIA
War medals
Export permit denied



AUSTRALIA
Charlotte medal
Export permit denied



EGYPT
Shabti
Returned 2005

WHAT IS CULTURAL PROPERTY?

Cultural property is an important part of a nation's identity. Cultural property includes artistic, technological, historical and natural objects. It can include souvenirs, such as antiques or collectibles.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE CONTROLS

Many countries, including Australia, have laws which regulate the export of cultural property. In Australia, important national and international cultural property is protected through the Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986 (PMCH Act).

The PMCH Act strikes a balance between public and private ownership. It does not intend to restrict normal and legitimate trade but it does regulate the export of cultural property through a system of export permits.

The PMCH Act also protects important foreign cultural property. Foreign governments can request the return of cultural property which has been illegally taken from their country of origin and imported into Australia.

The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service has an important role in detecting illegal exports and imports of cultural property.

Australian Federal Police work collaboratively with partner agencies to investigate and seize illegal exports and imports of cultural objects as required.

PROTECTING CULTURAL PROPERTY

IMPORTING FOREIGN CULTURAL PROPERTY

Some foreign cultural property, such as pottery, antiques, relics, artefacts, fossils and art may be so significant to its country of origin that it cannot leave the country or it may require a permit to be exported. If an object has been looted, illegally dug up or removed from its country of origin, it may be seized and returned when you re-enter Australia.

Before you travel, check international laws with embassies of the countries you are visiting to find out if you need a permit to export their cultural property to Australia.

Don't break the law. Foreign export permits are your way to make sure it's above board.

BUYING LEGALLY

If you buy cultural property, you are responsible for ensuring you purchase legally and your seller is above board. If you purchase illegally obtained objects you are participating in a major international crime, the illicit trafficking of cultural property.

Do your research before buying. Ask if the object is legal to export. Be aware of types of stolen cultural property, especially if buying from local street markets. Be suspicious if the price of an object is lower than the general market price. Verify the identity of the seller, buy from a member of a professional trade association and ask to see documentation about the object's history. Ensure that you have a written invoice, signed and dated by the seller, with their name, address and full details of the object. Do not buy if you are still uncertain.

You must be confident that your purchase is legal before you buy cultural property. Buying legally is your way to make sure it's above board.

