



## TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL CENTRE INC.

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### **Aborigines are able to collect human remains now scientists at Natural History Museum have finished testing them**

Tasmanian Aborigines are jubilant at the return today Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April of the human remains of four Aborigines from the Natural History Museum, London. Tasmanian Aboriginal delegates Greg Brown and Caroline Spotswood will arrive in London at midday and collect the remains in a private ceremony at the Museum after 3pm.

“This is both a joyful and deeply distressing occasion for Aborigines”, Ms Spotswood said during a stop over en route. “These remains, together with those of 13 more of our people, were removed without any Aboriginal consent from Tasmania during the 1880s and we have been fighting since the 1980s for their return. Greg and I are both proud and honoured to be able to take them home to lay their tormented spirits to rest.”

“However”, Ms Spotswood continued, “we are grieving also, because the only reason the Museum has allowed these four remains to be returned at this point is because scientists have finished their tests on them. We have been telling the Museum for over thirty years that physical interference of any kind with our dead is an absolute violation of Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and we are completely opposed to any form of it. The Museum has shown and continues to show no respect for our wishes or our religion.

Ms Spotswood and Mr Brown are also in London to take part in mediation between the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and the Natural History Museum on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> May. At issue is the safety of 13 other Tasmanian human remains in the Museum, which the museum have agreed to return only after completing comprehensive physical testing, including tests which will damage and destroy part of the remains.

The NHM only offered the return of four remains on the eve of this mediation. The mediation itself was only agreed by the Museum on the eve of pending court action which the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre were taking in the British courts to prevent further testing on the remains before return. The Museum had categorically rejected earlier offers from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre for mediation.

“We are uncertain and nervous about the outcome of the mediation,” Ms Spotswood said. “This is a very unfamiliar situation for us, and we are isolated and far from home. But we take very seriously our responsibility to both our dead ancestors and our people who have chosen us for this task.”

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**NOTE TO EDITORS:** It is offensive to Aboriginal cultural and religious beliefs that any images of skulls or other body parts be shown. According to Aboriginal beliefs an image of a dead Aboriginal, whether skeletal or otherwise, can capture the spirit of the dead and cause trauma to the spirit and the Aboriginal people generally. Please do not use images of the dead to accompany media stories.