

backfill

THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, DIVISION OF ANTHROPOLOGY: DEPOSITION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIALS

As a result of a recent review of its policies and procedures, the Australian Museum will be introducing new procedures for the deposition of archaeological materials in 1992. Our current view is that:

- (a) all archaeological materials should be stored in standard-sized boxes, with consistent labelling and full documentation; and,
- (b) some of the costs associated with management of these materials should be borne by depositors.

Costs to be borne by depositors will take the form of a deposition fee and payment for the standard boxes.

The Australian Museum is the legal repository for materials removed from Aboriginal sites in New South Wales since October 1967. The only exceptions are archaeological materials found on lands controlled by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), or materials under the control of the Director of NPW. The legal role of the Australian Museum is defined in Section 88 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act).

Over the years the archaeological collections, which are housed in a separate archaeological storage area within the Museum, have grown enormously. A recent special grant from the Ministry for the Arts has enabled the storage area to be refurbished to provide better facilities for both storage and study. Visitors now have access to basic research aids, such as bench space equipped with microscope, electronic balance and callipers. The most important step, however, was up-grading the storage facilities and documentation to ensure that the collections are well-organised and catalogued. A guide to the collections is under preparation. However, a lot of work still remains to be done. This work has come about principally because of the conditions under which many of the collections have come into the Museum.

The new system is being introduced in order to avoid such problems in the future, and will come into operation as from 1 July 1992.

We are asking depositors of materials relating to permits and consents issued under the NPW Act to present such materials to the Museum in boxes of standard size. These boxes will be available from the Museum at cost if only a small number is required, or can be bought direct from the manufacturers.

Introduction of this system and associated charges will relieve pressure on our ever-decreasing funds for collection maintenance, particularly in the staff area. We expect that a more consistent and comprehensive set of information will be supplied with the deposited materials, thereby making the collections more useful to subsequent researchers who study them.

We realise that funds to cover these charges will have to be incorporated into quotes for consulting projects and grant applications for research projects. The new system is thus to be introduced in two stages, which we believe will help everyone concerned. Consulting archaeologists are being asked to follow the new system as from 1 July 1992. A date of 1 January 1993 will apply to university and other research archaeologists. Students who do not have funding to cover such costs may apply to the Museum for the charges/costs to be waived.

This new system will only apply to materials collected/excavated under NPW permits and consents issued after 1 July 1992. At the time of writing this notice, details have not yet been finalised. Discussions are being held with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and opinions are being sought from the Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists, the Australian Archaeological Association, academic departments and other interested parties. Once finalised, details will be circulated to all interested parties.

Further details can be obtained from Val Attenbrow, Judith Graham or Phil Gordon, Anthropology Division, Australian Museum on (02)339.8111, or write to PO Box A285, Sydney South, NSW 2000.