

Dr Tristram Besterman
Trebears
Porthcothan
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United Kingdom

20 March 2007

Dear Tristram

Request for the repatriation by Te Papa Tongarewa for Maori human remains in the British Museum

The Trustees recently received a formal request for repatriation of 7 preserved heads and 9 skeletal remains (correspondence enclosed) and I am writing to ask if you would be prepared to give the Museum's Trustees some independent advice.

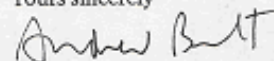
As you may know the U.K. Human Tissue Act 2004 came into force in July 2005, and gives the Trustees of the British Museum the power to de-accession human remains. I attach a copy of our policy on Human Remains for your information.

Under paragraph 6.4 of their policy the Trustees would seek independent advice on various matters in relation to this claim. I am writing to ask if you would be prepared to give them an assessment of the actual and potential public benefit of the remains in question if held by the museum.

I should be grateful if you would let me know if you might be willing to help us in this way and, if so, on what basis. I should point out that the draft policy sets out that any advice received by the Trustees will be published, so that if you were to give such advice, both the advice and the identity of the advisor would become public.

I do very much hope that you will be able to assist us in this matter, and, if so, I shall expect to hear what information you would need from the museum to help form a view. Ideally, we should like to be in a position to send advice to Trustees at the end of April, but I realise this may be difficult.

Yours sincerely


Andrew Burnett
Deputy Director