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COUNCIL OF
AUSTRALASIAN
MUSEUM
DIRECTORS

MEDIA RELEASE

A World of Treasures

4 December 2012

The Chair of the Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD), Dr J. Patrick Greene has applauded new legislation introduced to the Parliament of Australia to protect foreign cultural treasures from seizure when they are loaned to museums and other cultural institutions for exhibitions in Australia. Dr Greene, who is also CEO of Museum Victoria, commented:

‘The proposed legislation will give foreign museums and Governments the legal security they need to continue to entrust significant items from their collections to Australian museums and galleries. The Australian public will be the winners as they will be able to see cultural icons from around the globe without leaving our shores’.

Australians have flocked to such exhibitions in recent years. By far, the most popular exhibition of this type has been *Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs* which attracted a staggering 796,277 visitors over eight months (1 April 2011 to 4 December 2011) – making it the most popular temporary exhibition ever presented at an Australian museum or art gallery. The exhibition was both culturally and economically enriching, bringing in millions of dollars for Victoria.

Melbourne Museum’s coming exhibition, *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*, opening in March 2013, will show more than 230 priceless treasures, some thousands of years old. In Sydney, the Australian Museum recently launched *Alexander The Great – 2000 years of Treasures* at the Australian Museum, which brings over 400 objects from the State Hermitage

Museum in Russia – known for having one of the finest antiquities collections in the world.

The lack of laws or legal assurances has made it much harder in recent years to secure such major exhibitions. The proposed law will provide overseas museums and their governments with legal assurances that their objects will be protected if they are imported here under arrangements involving an institution approved by the Minister.

Dr Greene, who also chairs the National Cultural Heritage Committee which advises the Minister for the Arts on the protection of movable cultural heritage, applauded the fact the proposed scheme will continue to uphold Australia's international obligations and will not affect potential claims against the country of origin if ownership of one of the items is disputed.

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