



# Museums and Notifying Taonga Tūturu

**Under the Protected Objects Act 1975, any taonga tūturu found after 1 April 1976 are considered the property of the Crown, to allow claims of ownership to be lodged with the Ministry for Culture and Heritage.**

**This newsletter outlines the process for finders of taonga tūturu and for museums that are given taonga tūturu by the public.**

## The Definition of Taonga Tūturu

**Taonga tūturu** is defined in section 2 of the Protected Objects Act as an object which—

- relates to Maori culture, history, or society; and
- was, or appears to have been, manufactured or modified in New Zealand by Maori; or brought into New Zealand by Maori; or used by Maori; and
- is more than 50 years old.

## Finding Taonga Tūturu

All finds of taonga tūturu must be reported to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage or the nearest public museum within 28 days of finding the object.

The definition of **found** in the Protected Objects Act is *“discovered or obtained in circumstances that do not indicate with reasonable certainty who has ownership of it and the last owner was not alive when it was found”*.

‘Found’ can therefore mean taonga tūturu recently excavated or uncovered in archaeological sites as well as those found in the garden, on the beach, or when walking in a National Park.

All newly found taonga tūturu are in the first instance the property of the Crown. The Ministry for Culture & Heritage must be notified of the find and a national identification or “z” number is then allocated. Taonga tūturu remain in Crown ownership until a determination on actual ownership is made by the Māori Land Court.

## The Role of Public Museums

**The Ministry for Culture & Heritage has received 67 notifications for newly found taonga tūturu from museums and archaeologists under the Protected Objects Act. Public museums play a central role in insuring that these objects & their stories are not lost, and in recommending who should be given ownership and/or custody.**

The Ministry recommends that any newly found taonga tūturu are taken to the nearest public museum within 28 days of the find. Museums are recommended as they have the specialist staff and appropriate facilities to care for the taonga while actual ownership is determined through the Māori Land Court.

**Newly found taonga tūturu should not be accessioned to museum collections while the object is in interim Crown ownership.** Once ownership has been transferred via the Māori Land Court to private ownership, the taonga should be handed over to the person or group confirmed by the Court. The Ministry will keep the museum informed throughout this process, and let all parties know who has been awarded ownership.

A custody arrangement between the confirmed owner and museum can be desirable because of factors such as the condition of the taonga, its rarity or significance to the area. The Ministry will facilitate arrangements between interested parties on request. Any interest in custody should be registered with the Ministry for Culture & Heritage.

## Notifying Taonga Tūturu to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage

Notifications can be made using the Notification of Finding of Taonga Tūturu forms, available from the Ministry. There is also an on-line notification form available, which the Ministry can register museums and archaeologists to use.

If you require notification form books or wish to have access to the on-line notification system, please contact Liz Cotton or Alex Moffat-Wood at the Ministry on 04 499 4229 or email [protected-objects@mch.govt.nz](mailto:protected-objects@mch.govt.nz)

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