

Dr Robin Torrence's testimony

For outstanding individual achievement

Dr. Torrence's current position as a Senior Principal Research Scientist at the Australian Museum recognizes her lifetime's achievements as a researcher in archaeology and material culture. She has been undertaking archaeological research in Papua New Guinea, and in particular the West New Britain area, for over two decades, and has also completed significant research projects in Greece and eastern Russia.

Dr. Torrence's research has focused on the roles of ancient material culture, especially stone tools, in peoples' daily lives, social strategies, and long term adaptation. The themes of her work have included:

- tracing the diversity of stone tools assemblages in West New Britain, Papua New Guinea
- determining the impact of natural disasters on cultural change, using inter-disciplinary studies (archaeology, geology, volcanology, geomorphology, botany) to examine how people have interacted with the highly active volcanic environment in West New Britain province, Papua New Guinea
- the application of Raman spectroscopy to sourcing and identifying microscopic residues for obsidian stone tools
- ancient obsidian exchange in far east Russia
- studying Indigenous agency and museum collections and re-invigorating collections from Central Province, Papua New Guinea by studying how changes in the manufacture, style, and form of these artefacts were actively used to structure social relations between local groups and European explorers, traders and government officials during the early history of the colony.

Committed to communicating her research and to sharing the knowledge she has gained, Dr. Torrence has published an astounding 150 books and scientific publications on archaeology and material culture studies. Just as importantly, she has established long-standing and enduring collaborations with researchers and staff from the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery, the University of Papua New Guinea, and the West New Britain Provincial Cultural Centre.

As part of her research Dr. Torrence has always sought to build bridges between cultural institutions in PNG and Australia, for example by:

- assisting with initiatives providing development opportunities for staff from the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery at the Australian Museum

- providing advice on collection management and conservation issues, and through facilitating other specialist support for colleagues at the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery and the West New Britain Provincial Cultural Centre
- supporting and mentoring postgraduate students from PNG
- supporting significant repatriation initiatives (for example in 2012 she assisted the repatriation of human ancestral remains from a commercial dealer in Sydney to the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery).

Dr Robin Torrence is recognised for her lifetime's achievements as a researcher in archaeology, material culture for furthering international relations with particular focus on Papua New Guinea and Australia. Robin's work primarily in West New Britain in Papua New Guinea combines her research focus on ancient materials and cultures with her commitment to supporting local cultures to care for their heritage. The outcomes are testament to just how important core research work in museums is to understanding fundamental issues of our times, past and present.

Dr. Robin Torrence is a very deserving recipient of the ICOM Australia Award for International Relations 2013.