



Australian Hellenic Council

A coordinating body for the Australian Hellenic community

POSITION PAPER

Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles

The AHC requests that the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia adopt a **resolution supporting the restitution of the Parthenon Marbles to the New Acropolis Museum.**

With the opening of the New Acropolis Museum on Saturday 20 June 2009, a duty has been fulfilled and a dream realised. In the words of the Hellenic Minister of Culture, Antonis Samaras, “[t]here are strong, sacred bonds, connecting us with every single item, from the humblest archaeological fragment to the most ornate figure. All of the artifacts are parts of our soul... Mostly the ones missing! ... With the anticipation that eventually – better sooner than later – they will be re-united in their birth place and in the integral form they were meant to be”.

For much of the last two centuries, the sculptured marble panels removed from the Parthenon temple on the Acropolis hill in Athens by Lord Elgin’s workmen have resided in The British Museum in London.

In the words of the former Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum, B M Cook: “The next phase of the campaign for repatriation is likely to begin any time after the actual start of construction of the new Acropolis Museum. The problem has not gone away, it is merely in hibernation; and when it wakes up, our successors will find that it is fiercer than before.” This prophetic statement was made in 1991.

Agreeing with these sentiments, the Australian chairman of the International Association for the Return of the Parthenon Sculptures, David Hill, has stated that the new museum is a “major acquisition for Greece and the best argument for the return of the Marbles”.

The Parthenon Sculptures are an integral part of one of the most important buildings ever constructed, and should be returned to their rightful owners. The Parthenon is a testament of human genius, a work of unsurpassed beauty and a symbol of freedom and democracy without equal anywhere in the world.

The call for restitution of the Parthenon Marbles has attracted much support from a wide cross-section of prominent Australians including former Prime Ministers the Hon Gough Whitlam, the Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser, and the Hon John Howard, former NSW Premier Bob Carr, former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett, South Australian Premier Mike Rann and former Premier John Olsen, as well as numerous current members of the Federal Parliament.