



CULTURE: Conserving it Together
Suva, Fiji, 1-5 October 2018
An ICOMOS conference on heritage conservation across the Pacific

Australia ICOMOS Secretariat
Ph: +61 3 9251 7131
austicomos@deakin.edu.au
www.icomos.org/australia

CONFERENCE PAPER ABSTRACT

NAME OF PRESENTER:	Gregory Babilis and Dr Andrew Connelly
TITLE OF PAPER:	Legislation Makes Visible That Which is Hidden Underwater – PNG National Museum & Art Gallery (NMAG) and the War Surplus Materials Act
THEME:	<i>Specific Session 1: Underwater Cultural Heritage</i>
PAPER ABSTRACT: <p>The War Surplus Materials Act was enacted by then Administrator of P-NG, Donald Cleland in 1952. The historical and philosophical significance of this piece of legislation in shaping the modern day nation-state of PNG will be discussed in this paper. The Museum does not deal daily with shipwrecks, plane wrecks or other general war surplus materials located under the sea. However, it does have a working conceptual framework for how such materials should be classified and thought about. This can be seen in how the definition of war surplus materials in the Act is inclusive of items that may also be found under “territorial waters” of PNG.</p> <p>After WWII, governments and local people alike used the sea to "hide" or "get rid of" war surplus materials, the common thinking being that by throwing them into the depths of the ocean you "dispose of" the items. In a recent example, a few years colleagues of mine suggested that, the surplus materials in three 20 foot containers we had grounded in Popondetta, be disposed of in the sea instead. This case presents another alternative to the use of the sea as a dumping ground. The sea can also be used to keep these things safe by making them even more unreachable by metal scavengers. The Act gives prominence to these surplus materials even if they are located under PNG's "territorial waters" by recognizing that their final resting places are more likely to be under bodies of water rather than on land.</p>	
BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESENTER: <p>Gregory Babilis has a Masters (Advanced) from ANU and is Principal Curator of Modern History Department, PNG National Museum & Art Gallery.</p> <p>Dr Andrew Connelly holds a PhD from ANU and is currently the Military and Cultural Heritage Expert Advisor to the PNG National Museum & Art Gallery.</p>	