

to a highly publicised dispute in Australia. Aboriginal activists who pushed for the return of the remains claim most of them will end up in museums in Australia rather than in the Aboriginal communities where they belong.

They criticise scientists at the University of Edinburgh for providing poor documentation on the origin of the 300 items. Without details of the source of the remains it is impossible to return them to the appropriate Aboriginal group. Australian museum researchers disagree, saying that much of the material was never properly identified. They deny the charge that they want the remains for their own collections. □

Iranian rescue

A LEADING institute for Third World scientists, the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, has narrowly escaped closure for the time being.

Ninety per cent of the ICTP's funding comes from the Italian government. But a bill to make

the funding permanent has been stuck in the Italian parliament for months, cutting the cash flow and leading to plans to sack staff and close the centre.

Now the ICTP has been rescued by a loan from Iran. Tehran has agreed to put up £2 million interest-free until Italian funds start flowing again. □

Sorry, no grants

THE RECESSION and cash shortages at the Science and Engineering Research Council have combined to leave 1600 postgraduate research students without funding this year.

"The worry is that these people are lost to science forever," says Mark Richmond, chairman of the council. "It is a lasting piece of damage."

As the recession hit job prospects, more than 1800 people applied to the SERC for last-ditch grants from the council's reserve pool for this year, 900 more than last time. But a shortage of cash meant the council could only fund 200 studentships, compared with between 300 and 500 in previous years. □