



KEYWORDS: *Conservation – Protection – AIATSIS – RAPP – Indigenous Australian*

## THE ROLE OF AIATSIS IN RESEARCH AND PROTECTION OF AUSTRALIAN ROCK ART

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**Abstract.** The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra (AIATSIS), was involved in research into Indigenous Australian rock art almost from its inception in 1963/4. A major development in its support of various aspects of protection and research began in 1986. The national Rock Art Protection Program (RAPP) was initiated to provide for the protection of Indigenous Australian rock art. As a grants program administered by AIATSIS, it made its first grant allocations in December 1986. The formal RAPP continued for twelve years, disbursing up to \$200 000 per annum, after which the Institute continued to provide for a similar range of projects during the next decade. As interpreted by the AIATSIS Council, its scope became wider than mere physical protection. It supported new research and applied projects in three main areas. As with other AIATSIS research programs, it required the involvement of Indigenous Australian knowledge holders and custodians of the cultural places involved, and successfully encouraged applications from, and collaborative projects with, Indigenous traditional owners. The Program can be seen as having made a significant contribution to the development of systematic studies of Indigenous Australian rock art and influencing research and practice in these fields elsewhere in the world. Here I provide a retrospective comment on procedures, results and problems.

### AIATSIS-funded and staff research, some early examples

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) was involved in rock art research from its establishment in 1961/64.<sup>1</sup> Its first Principal (CEO: September 1964–1972), Frederick D. McCarthy, had written what was for many years the standard text, *Australian Aboriginal rock art* (McCarthy 1962). He continued his researches in this field and encouraged, through correspondence and with grants, researchers throughout Australia. Rock art was the especial interest, of course, of the second principal, Peter J. Ucko (November 1972 to 1980) and his partner, Andrée Rosenfeld; Ucko's major Australian work, *Form in indigenous art* (1977), combined European Palaeolithic with Australian research and a growing concern with Indigenous interests.

Several researchers joined Ucko in Canberra. Robert (Bob) Edwards, well known for his rock art work in central Australia, came from the South Australian Museum to the position of deputy principal; Michel Lorblanchet and Bob Layton joined the research staff and applied their European training in various Australian situations. The grant program was expanded early in Ucko's tenure and, while it supported a wide range of research across the continent, rock art projects were a central interest: from those of Ian M. Crawford in Western Australia, to Peter C. Sims in Tasmania, and Percy J. Trezise and Rosenfeld on Cape York Peninsula.

Bob Edwards, and later his replacement as deputy principal in 1974, Warwick Dix, had primary responsibility for the first Australia-wide recording scheme, the National Site Recording Program (1973–1979). The NSR program funded the development of Indigenous cultural places research and protection, and provided for the employment of site-recording staff, through the responsible State and Territory agencies. Edwards and Ucko (1973: 276) wrote that a major intent of the program was '[t]he recording of Aboriginal rock art sites in the greatest detail possible'. As with the general grants program, while many other types of sites were

<sup>1</sup> The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies was established in 1961 and, until fully funded in 1964 and provided with a full-time CEO in September 1964, was run by the 'Executive Member' of its Interim Council; the former Executive Member was Bill Stanner, also known for his writing about rock art in the Daly-Fitzmaurice region of the Northern Territory.

the focus of the various projects supported, rock art recording was central to many. Among the more than twenty site recorders employed were some with particular interests and expertise in recording rock art, including George Chaloupka and Darrell J. Lewis (Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory), Grahame L. Walsh (Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service), and Patricia Vinnicombe (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service).

### The Rock Art Protection Program

The Institute's Rock Art Protection Program (RAPP) began in 1986 (Financial Year 1987), with funding allocated by the Institute's Council in December of that year. The program was initiated in 1986 at the request of the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The first year's funds and those for the next few years came from an extra allocation to AIATSIS; subsequent support was covered from the Institute's overall appropriation, and the program was continued by a decision of the Institute's Council. The beginnings of the RAPP have been discussed by Ward and Sullivan (1989), and the results of the first few years funding outlined later (Ward 1989, 1992a, 1992b, 1993).

The scope of the program was decided by a sub-committee advising the Institute's council prior to the first round of grants, and the aims remained essentially unchanged for the duration of the Program: 'The physical preservation and management of endangered sites, including those threatened by natural elements and by interference from humans and animals'.

### Survey and documentation of newly reported rock art areas and major sites

#### *Research into the Aboriginal cultural significance of sites*

In the first several years of the Program, the large proportion of applications came from the various State and Territory cultural heritage management agencies. During this phase, most funds were applied to work deemed a priority by the agency and usually carried out by agency staff in consultation with Indigenous site managers. Subsequently, and especially following the successful one-year full-time graduate diploma course on the conservation of rock art conducted in 1989 at the Canberra College of Advanced Education (Pearson 1991), an increasing proportion of Program funding went to professionally-trained conservation specialists, either directly or through the agencies employing or contracting them. During the later years of the program, the Institute received an increasing proportion of applications from Indigenous Australians and/or researchers and conservation specialists collaborating with Indigenous community representatives and organisations.

The RAPP funded projects across a wide spectrum of management, conservation and protection activities ranging from direct protection measures to the support of original research into conservation techniques. Instances of the former category, direct protection

measures, included the installation of drip-lines, construction of fencing to protect places from feral and domestic animals, the design and erection of visitor control measures such as signage and board-walks, and the provision of information and visitors books. Research into conservation techniques covered such topics as control of salts responsible for rock surface exfoliation, and the origins and control of dusts coating images. Other projects supported included research to record the cultural significances of places, especially the cultural meanings and interpretations of particular images; this type of work has been of value both in encouraging an appreciation in the wider community of the value of Indigenous Australian rock art, and in preserving important cultural information for the relevant Indigenous communities.

Project funds could only be applied in Australia but the examples of the applied projects and much of the conservation research has had world-wide application.

In 1995, changes were made to the main protection program, with the addition of a second part, an 'exemplar protection program', and a third, a three-year research project in rock art dating and protection. The criteria for the second were listed as those projects that:

- were developed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities, or were under Indigenous direction and control;
- addressed fundamental issues of protection, having due regard to indigenous wishes and aspirations with respect to the sites;
- demonstrated the set of Principles and Guidelines for the Protection, Management and Use of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Places (the 'Guidelines' [Anon. 1994]), in conjunction with other established methods and techniques of rock art protection;
- demonstrated best practice in this area, including the development of an overall strategic plan for the site with respect to visitor numbers, conservation and ecological and other issues, providing an holistic approach to site management and protection; and
- demonstrated that the work, when completed, will provide an example of successful application of the Guidelines and these methods and techniques, having regard to the resources available.

The three-year research dating and protection project sought applications for one or more projects that sought to gain a fundamental understanding of the chronology and deterioration of natural protective processes involving the formation of natural skins protecting rock paintings and petroglyphs and its application to dating motifs.

From October 1997 (FY98), following the subsuming of the RAPP into the general Research Grants Program, research into rock art continued to be funded. However, the scope of the funding was limited to the research component, as with other Institute research grants, and explicitly excluded any applied conser-

vation or protection component. Funds were provided for projects focussing upon or including components related to survey, detailed mapping and recording, documentation of cultural significances and investigation of archaeological features, including the application of dating techniques.

The detail reports resulting from the various projects are housed in the Institute's library. They are not only an invaluable research resource; the collections have become important cultural archives for Indigenous communities and individuals. A summary of these reports, compiled for the period 1986 to 2000, has been provided (Ward 2002a).

#### Administration of the Rock Art Protection Program

RAPP grants were allocated in a similar way to normal AIATSIS grants. Potential applicants were advised by notice that applications are being sought and about the scope of the program. Applications were assessed competitively, there usually being many more able to be approved in principle than there were funds to support. In the first few years the Council formed a specialist executive committee whose members included representatives of the State and Territory Indigenous cultural heritage authorities. Later, applications were evaluated by the Institute's statutory Research Advisory Committee, augmented – for the relevant discussions – by two experts whose experiences encompassed technical aspects of conservation and of visitor/site management matters. Formally, grant allocations were

approved by the Institute's Council.

While some RAPP grants continued to have a significant original research component, many involved the implementation of conservation / protection works. Consequently, most were conducted by staff or consultants employed by heritage organisations and/or land management agencies rather than being researcher-instigated projects.

Costs of administering the Program were met by AIATSIS and each year all of the funds available were allocated. The Institute provides grants, not awards, and grantees had to report regularly upon the progress of their work, and provide substantive final and detailed financial reports. Non-reporting grantees faced the sanction of not receiving further grants. The RAPP program was administered by the Research Section of AIATSIS and was the responsibility of the Director of Research and individual research officers. As with other AIATSIS grants, advice was available to applicants concerning their proposed applications (such as the scope of projects, budgeting details) and, when a grant was made, on the conduct of the project, overcoming technical and other difficulties, preparing reports and submitting research materials to the Institute's library and other archives.

The funds available from the Institute annually were usually A\$150 000; in FY94 the Institute allocation was supplemented by additional funds from the then Department of Arts and Communications' Indigenous Cultural Heritage Protection Program.

	APPLICATIONS					GRANTS		
	Year	Amount available (k)	Number	Total value (k)	Average Value (k)	Number	Total value (k)	Average value (k)
1	FY87	\$150	30	\$469	\$15.6	12	\$154.0	\$12.8
2	FY88	\$150	34	\$450	\$13.2	12	\$152.7	\$12.7
3	FY89	\$150	22	\$312	\$14.2	14	\$145.5	\$10.4
4	FY90	\$150	25	\$392	\$15.7	14	\$151.5	\$10.8
5	FY91	\$150	40	\$523	\$13.1	21	\$149.2	\$7.1
6	FY92	\$150	39	\$605	\$15.5	20	\$158.7	\$7.9
7	FY93	\$150	21	\$263	\$12.5	16	\$151.9	\$9.5
8	FY94	\$200	23	\$304	\$13.2	17	\$190.9	\$11.2
9	FY95	\$150	17	\$215	\$12.6	15	\$175.4	\$11.7
10	FY96	\$200	18	\$267	\$14.8	12	\$188.3	\$15.7
11	FY97	\$130	17	\$160	\$9.4	10	\$160.5	\$16.1
11 yr	totals	\$1730	286	\$3960		163	\$1779	
	pa means	\$157	26	\$289	\$13.8	15	\$162	\$10.9
12	FY98	(general grants)	11	\$183	\$16.6	5	\$75.4	\$15.1
12 yr	totals	\$1805	297	\$4143		168	\$1854	
	pa means	\$151	25	\$345	\$13.8	15	\$155	\$11.0

**Table 1.** Rock Art Protection Program: summary of twelve financial years of applications received and their dollar values, and of grants made (\$k), and comparison with first non-RAPP year (FY98) allocations to RAPP-related projects (italicised figures in the fifth column are estimates due to partial data).

Year	No. of projects funded	RAPP funds available (circa)	RAPP projects average value (k)	Other R-A projects, including dating (k)	Total funding for rock art projects (k)
FY87	Twelve	\$150k	\$12.8	\$3.9	\$153.9
FY88	Thirteen	\$150k	\$11.8	\$4.8	\$154.8
FY89	Fourteen	\$150k	\$10.4	\$11.2	\$161.2
FY90	Fourteen	\$150k	\$10.8	\$16.8	\$166.8
FY91	Twenty-one	\$150k	\$7.1	\$13.6	\$163.6
FY92	Twenty	\$150k	\$7.5	\$5.0	\$155.0
FY93	Fifteen	\$150k	\$10.0	\$40.1	\$190.1
FY94	Seventeen	\$200k	\$8.8	\$37.5	\$237.5
FY95	Fifteen	\$150k	\$10.0	\$36.3	\$186.3
FY96	Thirteen	\$200k	\$11.5	\$25.7	\$225.7
FY97	Ten	\$130k	\$13.0	\$31.1	\$161.1
FY98	Five (general grants)		\$15.2	\$87.8	\$87.8
FY99	Four (general grants)		\$14.0	\$56.1	\$56.1
Totals	174	\$1.730m	\$11.0k	\$237.8k	\$2.100m

Table 2. Rock Art Protection Program: AIATSIS-supported rock art projects 1986 to 1998.

Initial year (FY87) RAPP projects					
Grantee/s	Researchers / conservators	Project title / topic	RAPP funds allocated (\$k)	Project reported	Report title
Lewis & Rose (ACT)	Lewis, Rose	RA in VDR cultural significance ...	\$3.5	1988	<i>The Shape of the Dreaming</i> (AIAS Report Series)
Museum of Arts & Sciences (NT)	Chaloupka	Three protection & conservation projects (Top End)	\$33.6	1987	Report on acquittal of 1986 grants ...
Abor. Comm. College (WA)	B. Colbung, Rhodda	Awareness & protection of RA	\$16.2	1989	Awareness program ...
AURA (Vic)	Bednarik	Parietal Markings Project 3 (SA)	\$4.2	1988	The Paroong Cave Preservation Project ...
Qld NPWS (Townsville)		Nara Inlet (Hook Island) project	\$18.2	1988	Final report on the Hook Island ...
Aboriginal Heritage Branch DEP SA	Ware, Lambert	Arkaroo rock painting site	\$17.2	1989	Arkaroo rock painting sites conservation
NSW NPWS (Sydney)	Lambert	National RA conservation manual	\$21.2	1988	<i>Conserving Australian Rock art: A Manual ...</i> (AIAS Report Series)
NSW NPWS (Parramatta)	Cameron McNamarra PL	Guided tour program ...Ku-ring-gai Chase NP	\$10.2	1987	Market research study. Guide tours of ... West Head
Vic. Arch. Survey	Gale, Gillen	Grampians arts sites visitor survey	\$10.5	1987	Visitor survey of Aboriginal art sites ... Grampians NP
Tasmania NPWS (Hobart)	Blanks, Ranson	Petroglyph protection Mt Cameron West	\$13.2	1987	Petroglyph protection: Mt Cameron West Aboriginal site ...

Table 3. Rock Art Protection Program: initial year (FY87) RAPP projects.

### Outline of results of the Rock Art Protection Program

During the eleven-year period FY87 to FY97, between seventeen and forty applications for funding

were received each year, and an average of fifteen projects were funded annually at a mean value of \$11000. Table 1 summarises the annual and cumulative

FY99 RAPP-related projects					
	Researchers / conservators	Project title	RAPP funds allocated	Projects reported	Report title
Burruga Aboriginal History and Writing Group (NSW)	Nugent	Whale carving at La Perouse	\$1450	Aug99	Interim report
Bawinganga Aboriginal Corp (NT)	Garde, Chaloupka, Allen	RA survey and excavations Liverpool River area	\$20 424	Oct00	Investigations at Ngalirrkewern rockshelter ...
Thoo Thoo Wandji Aboriginal Corp (WA)	Little, Gunn	Wajarri RA recording project	\$19 860	Oct00	Rock art of the Cue Region WA ...
R. G. Gunn (Vic)	Gunn	Kweyernpe RA recording project (NT)	\$14 392	Jul00	Kweyernpe: an Arnernte rock art and dreaming site in central Australia ...

Table 4. FY99 RAPP-related projects.

	APPLICATIONS				GRANTS			
	Number	Percent	Total value (\$k)	Percent value	Number	Percent	Total value (\$k)	Percent value
FY87	5	17	83.8	17.9	1	8.3	16.2	10.5
FY88	2	10	48.2	16.1	2	16.7	28.1	18.4
FY89	4	18	65.7	21.0	4	28.6	41.8	28.7
FY90	4	15	48.6	14.8	2	14.3	19.8	13.1
FY91	4	14	103.4	26.7	2	9.5	18.1	12.1
FY92	6	18	87.0	18.7	5	25.0	52.5	33.1
FY93	6	50	99.2	58.4	6	37.5	64.1	42.2
FY94	6	26	*	*	7	41.2	63.8	33.4
FY95	6	35	*	*	6	40.0	76.2	43.4
FY96	5	28	*	*	5	38.5	71.6	34.4
FY97	7	41	*	*	5	50.0	80.1	49
Totals	55	19			45		532.3	
Part totals	31		535.9					
Means pa	5		17.3		4.1	28.2	48.4	29.6
FY98	11	45	183.0	*	3	22.8	38.9	41.2
Totals	66				48		571.2	
Part totals	42		718.9					
Means pa	4.8		17.1	*	4		11.9	

Table 5. Rock Art Protection Program: Applications and grants for projects requested by Indigenous organisations (\* = data not available).

statistics for the Program. Table 2 shows that AIATSIS provided more than two million dollars to support both RAPP and other rock art projects during the thirteen years between 1986 and 1998.

The initial years of the RAPP show, typically, interest from State and Territory authorities (FY87 grants are detailed in Table 3). Seven of the twelve

grants allocated were made in response to applications from those sources. Typically these were for basic protection work.

Significantly, two of the successful projects resulted in reports that were published in 1988 and 1989 in the AIATSIS Report Series: *The shape of the dreaming: report on the cultural significance of Victoria River rock art*, written

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FY87	5	17	83.8	17.9	1	8.3	16.2	10.5
FY88	2	10	48.2	16.1	2	16.7	28.1	18.4
FY89	4	18	65.7	21.0	4	28.6	41.8	28.7
FY90	4	15	48.6	14.8	2	14.3	19.8	13.1
FY91	4	14	103.4	26.7	2	9.5	18.1	12.1
FY92	6	18	87.0	18.7	5	25.0	52.5	33.1
FY93	6	50	99.2	58.4	6	37.5	64.1	42.2
FY94	6	26	*	*	7	41.2	63.8	33.4
FY95	6	35	*	*	6	40.0	76.2	43.4
FY96	5	28	*	*	5	38.5	71.6	34.4
FY97	7	41	*	*	5	50.0	80.1	49.0
Totals	55	19			45		532.3	
Part totals	31		535.9					
Means pa	5		17.3		4.1	28.2	48.4	29.6
FY98	11	45	183.0	*	3	22.8	38.9	41.2
Totals	66				48		571.2	
Part totals	42		718.9					
Means pa	4.8		17.1	*	4		11.9	

**Table 6.** Rock Art Protection Program: summary by eleven financial years of applications received from and on behalf of Indigenous organisations and individuals, and grants made, as proportions of total applications and grants in terms of numbers and values (\$k), and comparison with first non-RAPP year (FY98) allocations to RAPP-related projects (\* = data not available).

by researchers Darrell Lewis and Deborah Rose; and David Lambert's *Conserving Australian rock art: a manual for site managers*.

Following cessation of the RAPP program in FY98, funding continued (Table 4) albeit for projects limited to research (including survey) rather than protection; some such projects of course provided advice toward site protection and conservation.

#### *Indigenous interest in the Rock Art Protection Program*

Indigenous Australian interest in the program has been significant. A large proportion of the approximately 250 notices sent in the latter part of the program's history went to Indigenous organisations. Table 5 summarises by year the number and value of applications received from, or made on behalf of, Aboriginal individuals and organisations (data for some years not accessible). Aboriginal applicants sought support for projects predominantly with this range of objectives:

- surveys for sites,
- basic protection measures such as fencing,
- provision of information about visited places, and
- the development and implementation of conservation plans and technical preservation measures.

In the last categories, they were able to call upon expertise of conservators who had graduated from the Getty Conservation Institute / CCAE post-graduate diploma course in Rock Art Conservation.

Table 5 shows all applications from and grants to Indigenous organisations or by researchers working under auspices of Indigenous groups.

In the next (Table 6), applications and grants to Aboriginal organisation are analysed as proportions of the total number of applications received and grants allocated, and in terms of the dollar values of applications and grants. In brief, the figures show that interest increased over time, and that the success rate of Aboriginal applications continued to rise over the same period.

#### **Middle year (FY91) RAPP projects**

Many of the graduates of the one-year post-graduate diploma course in Rock Art Conservation at the Canberra College of Advanced Education were involved in projects funded by the RAPP, and the grants data show an increasing proportion and the continuing success of applications involving graduates of the course.

The endeavours of the graduates generally were recognised to be invaluable. Their work was thorough and often innovative and their reports, held in the AIATSIS library, continue to be a reference resource.

However, the involvement of most of the graduates in the RAPP was too brief. One of the problems for the RAPP was the application of the ground rules of the AIATSIS grants system, which restricted the salary payments to a maximum equivalent to the post-doctoral

stipend as used by The Australian National University (ANU). Such a rate was argued — at a meeting with the AIATSIS Principal at a previous AURA congress — to be inappropriate for those conducting short-term projects. The graduates sought the recognition of their skills and the circumstances in which they worked in terms of payment of consultancy rates. They were listened to sympathetically but no change in the arrangements resulted. As a consequence, some graduates left the field.

This matter relates to the basic functions of AIATSIS; its grant funding relates primarily to 'pure research'. While the Institute's Council has been willing to accede to government requests to administer programs outside this remit, it appears that it has had concerns about the appropriateness of doing so. About the 1970s National Site Recording Scheme, the then deputy principal wrote '... the Institute had originally refused to administer funds for site recording, presumably because of similar arguments to those later employed against the programme, largely to do with the lack of academic content' (Dix 1980: 6). Similar concerns were expressed regarding the RAPP, and this attitude appears to have carried over to the reluctance to change a long-standing approach to funding of projects: that of support rather than willingness to cover all and every costs, and similarly to the remuneration of researchers. Some authorities may have overcome this latter difficulty by supporting projects with their own funds, but it was not necessarily an option available to other agencies and Indigenous organisations.

### Further results

Those interested in the detailed results of the decade or so of the RAPP, may access the final reports held by and summarised in a listing compiled for the AIATSIS Library (Ward 2002a). The reports listed here provide a wealth of information about the protection and management of Indigenous cultural heritage places, and should be reviewed by researchers or management staff undertaking similar work. This listing may be read in conjunction with the report prepared by Coates and others (1996).

### RAPP conclusions

It is not possible to know what the Hon. Minister had in mind when he agreed to providing extra funding to initiate the Program. George Chaloupka — if I remember our conversation adequately — related that the minister was so impressed by the rock art that he had seen that day in the new Kakadu National Park that he had agreed that something must be done to protect and promote the resource (in the language of the time). No doubt our colleague had related the conservation concerns of the Traditional Owners, with whom he had worked for years, as well as his own.

Manifestly, the RAPP resulted in the protection of many Indigenous places with rock art. These were, no doubt, a very small proportion of the known, let alone

unrecorded, corpus of rock imagery in Australia.

The systematics of survey, recording and assessment were developed further, as were techniques for physical protection and visitor management during the period of the RAPP. It would be inappropriate to claim that all such were due to the RAPP grant projects and there were substantial bases to provide points of departure — recall the contributions of Gale and Jacobs (1987), and of Rosenfeld (1988). The report — resulting from an RAPP grant project — by Lewis and Rose (1988) enhanced our understanding of various matters relating to Aboriginal cultural places, their continuing ownership and custodianship, while the manual by Lambert (1989) made a contribution that was useful to non-specialists and practical for application in the field (and which was subsequently revised and published by New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service: Lambert 2007). Many more RAPP reports could have been published in the Institute's Report Series had resources been made available. A current initiative to digitise grant reports will make many RAPP reports more accessible where permissions are available.

Various approaches to the difficult matter of dating rock art received support from the RAPP; it was successfully argued — notably by the late Rhys Jones — that a developed awareness of the antiquity of much Indigenous Australian rock imagery would enhance its appreciation by the general public and discourage vandalism and senseless adverse impacts. Various applications for dating were supported, and, in the last years of the program, a three-year project by Alan Watchman contributed to the development of new techniques and their applications at various sites, particularly in northern Australia (e.g. Watchman et al. 2000).

There was also the developing emphasis on practical aspects of visitor management. While some were built under the auspices of the RAPP, there was a reluctance to rely on massive boardwalks as a basis of visitor control. More subtle measures involving visitor books and signage were explored with valid and useful results. Reports by Hall and Sale (Ward 2002a), among others, provided excellent modelling of various situations. Along with an increasing involvement of Indigenous custodians and site managers came an emphasis on guided tours as the basis for the management of places subject to cultural heritage tourism, and arguments have been made elsewhere that this method is likely to be the most productive and appreciated by various stakeholders (e.g. Ward 2002b; Ward and Crocombe 2010).

Involvement of Indigenous custodians and site managers was a central concern of the Program and participation increased over the period of the program. Indigenous collaborations in and instigations of such projects, and the interests of Indigenous communities in cultural heritage tourism have a mutual meeting in the concerns of the Program. Indigenous cultural heritage tourism has the potential to be a major economic factor





**Figure 1.** Example of successful instances Indigenous cultural heritage tourism: Wilfred Gordon teaching about his places near Hopevale (Queensland). (Photograph G. K. Ward, Sept. 2005.)



**Figure 2.** Example of role of research in Indigenous cultural heritage protection: Elizabeth Cumaigai, late Traditional Owner, at Ngurde, near Wadeye (Northern Territory), recorded by Mark Crocombe and Alberto Furlan. (Photograph G. K. Ward, Oct. 2003, used with permission.)

in Indigenous Australia given the right circumstance, training, collaborations and infrastructure in remote areas. We all are likely to be aware of successful instances in various parts of the continent (e.g. Fig. 1).

This is not to say that there are not problems with the impact of tourism on heritage places, especially sites with rock art, which are a primary focus of tourism. We might be concerned not only for their fabric but for the continuation of the cultural significance of

the places involved. There are many aspects to which research can contribute in evaluating the potential costs versus benefits to Indigenous communities (Fig. 2). There is increasing appreciation among Indigenous community members and site custodians that such places need to be properly managed and conserved in order to protect the interests of Indigenous custodians, and for them to be able to sustain continuing visitation. If 'cultural heritage tourism management' ranges between the minutiae of condition reporting and related conservation measures, through techniques of visitor management, to questions of ownership and control of use of intellectual property, then the conservation and applied research projects supported over more than a decade by the AIATSIS under its Rock Art Protection Program have contributed substantially.

We might ask what might have been expected of the RAPP grant system in a more general sense.

Was it expected to, and did it contribute to the development of systematic processes in the area of rock art conservation?

Did it make a long-term difference to the conservation of rock art in Australia?

Did it make a long-term difference to the well-being of the Indigenous Australians whose heritage and continuing cultural significance was the focus of the Program?

It could be argued that it did contribute to these goals — if they were goals: they probably were not so formally expressed,

although they certainly came up in conversations with heritage program managers such as Sharon Sullivan and Bob Ellis who were involved early in the delineation of the Program — but the 'long-term' might have to await later evaluation.

Does it matter that the area is no longer a primary concern of AIATSIS or of other federal agencies?

It could be argued that — like the Program's predecessor, the National Site Recording Program



— it was instrumental in promoting awareness and prompting action where other-wise little action might have been taken. We had seen from the NSR Program how a pebble thrown into the States and Territories pool could generate useful ripples.

(On the other hand, several jurisdictions have been moving over recent years to emasculate their Indigenous heritage legislations and disempower both Indigenous custodians and heritage professionals. As, indeed, would be the proposed new federal legislation. This administration, as well those of previous Federal governments, appears to be moving to push responsibilities in Indigenous affairs to other jurisdictions. In this regard, provisions of some native title determinations have offered to Indigenous custodians greater rights to access and ability to protect their cultural heritage places — but then usually with little in the way of resources to effect any control.)

On balance, we would probably argue that there is still a need and a place for such a program; imagery continues to deteriorate from natural causes, and to the ever-present threat to sites of commercial and infrastructure development has been added in recent years the expansion of cultural tourism. The initiative toward a national centre undertaken by Claire Smith (2009) and her colleagues and discussed at the Broken Hill meeting of AURA will be important in this regard, as will the foci upon research, training and community outreach developed by the ANU's Rock Art Research Centre (Anon. n.d. a), and the courses and workshops held under the auspices of the Institute for Professional Practice in Heritage and the Arts (Anon. n.d. b).

As interpreted by the AIATSIS Council, the scope of the Minister's mid-1980s Kakadu visit initiative became wider than mere physical protection. The Program can be seen as having made a significant contribution to the development of systematic studies of Indigenous Australian rock art, and in influencing research and practice in these fields elsewhere in the world. It can be argued also that it made significant contributions to the developing awareness and appreciation of aspects of indigeneity in Australia.

Should a program like the RAPP — which effectively finished a decade ago — be of interest or concern to an AURA audience? There are particular research results, processes and procedures of which we need to continue to be mindful, and some aspects of the program might be relevant to present concerns about lessening statutory, organisational, staffing and other protective measures.

AIATSIS maintains its involvements in this field, continuing to fund various aspects of investigation of Indigenous Australian rock art with research foci from the southwest to the Torres Strait Islands (details are published in AIATSIS annual reports and the AIATSIS journal *Australian Aboriginal Studies*). Funding is no longer available, however, for practical protection measures.

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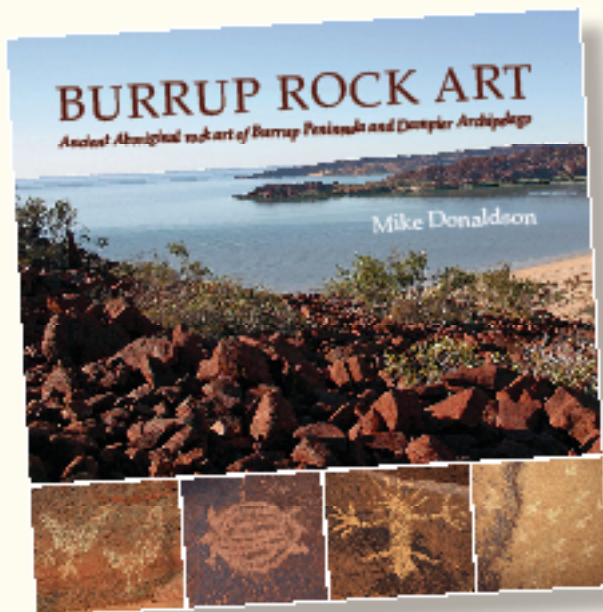
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