



# AusTAG 2026

Conference Program

22-23 May



# Welcome

Welcome to Adelaide University and to the *inaugural* Australian Theoretical Archaeology Group (AusTAG) conference. It is a pleasure to bring together such a diverse and engaged community of scholars to explore the role of theory in archaeology.

The Australian Theoretical Archaeology Group (AusTAG) exists to foster critical, creative, and inclusive conversations about the role of theory in archaeology. As part of the broader international TAG movement—which includes long-established communities in the UK (1979-), the Nordic Countries (1985-), and the USA (2009-)—AusTAG aims to move beyond data collection and presentation, toward deeper, more meaningful interpretations of the human past.

We believe the future of archaeology lies not simply in producing more data, but in thinking critically about what that data means and how we tell stories about the past. Our vision is to re-centre the interpretive and theoretical dimensions of the discipline, highlighting the diverse social, political, and cultural contexts in which people lived—and in which archaeologists continue to work today.

Theoretical archaeology in Australia has followed a distinctive trajectory. While shaped by global debates, it has been grounded in the specific historical, political, ethical and personal realities of working on unceded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land and sea Countries. Australian archaeologists have long grappled with issues of colonialism, identity, heritage, and representation—often balancing empirical research with critical self-reflection. AusTAG builds on this legacy by offering a national platform to address how a more explicit theoretical approach can deepen and expand these conversations.

AusTAG is committed to creating egalitarian and inclusive spaces for debate and discussion. We actively support the participation of First Nation scholars as well as graduate students and early career researchers through mentorship, open dialogue, and sponsorship. By encouraging the next generation of theoretically engaged archaeologists, we aim to strengthen the discipline and ensure its continued relevance in today's world.



# Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Kurna, Boandik and Barngarla First Nations Peoples and their Elders past and present, who are the First Nations' Traditional Owners of the lands that are home to Adelaide University campuses across South Australia. We also acknowledge other First Nations lands across Australia with which we conduct business, their Elders, ancestors, cultures and heritage.

# Venue

AusTAG 2026 will take place at the National Wine Centre of Australia, Adelaide University.

The National Wine Centre at Adelaide University is a world-class interpretive and educational centre that represents the entire Australian Wine Industry. The centre is designed to house offices for Australia's peak wine industry organisations, an interpretive exhibition, wine education courses, conference and events facilities, restaurant, cellaring, and tasting areas.

Location: Corner of Botanic and Hackney Road, Adelaide.

Take a scenic walk through the Botanic Gardens and enter either via the pedestrian entrance on Botanic Road – the extension to North Terrace – or from their main entrance on Hackney Road.

Further information can be found here: <https://www.nationalwinecentre.com.au/>

# Registration

You can register for AusTAG2026 via Humanitix:

<https://events.humanitix.com/austag-conference-22-23-may-2026>

AusTAG also has a general website with some further information:

<https://austag.org>

# Sessions at a Glance

## Friday 22 May

Time	Event/Session	Speakers
<b>9:00am</b>	Arrival and registration	
<b>9:15am</b>	Welcome to Country	Robert Taylor
<b>9:30am</b>	AusTAG2026 Introduction	Sally K. May & Catherine J. Frieman
<b>10:00am</b>	Aboriginal Art, Encounters, and the Production of Meaning	Paul Taçon, Joey Nganjmirra, Sally K. May, Emily Miller, Joakim Goldhahn
<b>11:30am</b>	Morning Tea	
<b>12:00pm</b>	Making/Dwelling	Megan Porter, Erik Champion
<b>1:00pm</b>	Lunch Break	
<b>2:00pm</b>	Indigenous Collaboration	Elsbeth Hodgins, Michelle Richards, Barry Judd, Katherine Ellinghaus
<b>3:00pm</b>	Afternoon Tea	
<b>3:30pm</b>	Planetarity Panel	Alice Gorman, Tracy Ireland, Sean Williams
<b>4:30pm</b>	Closing	James L. Flexner
<b>5:00pm</b> – <b>6:00pm</b>	Museum of Classical Archaeology tour (Booking Required)	Margaret O’Hea (Director, Museum of Classical Archaeology, Adelaide University)

## Saturday 23 May

<b>Time</b>	<b>Event/Session</b>	<b>Speakers</b>
<b>9:00am</b>	Ethics/Politics/Society	Justyna J. Miskiewicz, Ronika Power, James L. Flexner, Catherine J. Frieman
<b>11:00am</b>	Morning Tea	
<b>11:30am</b>	Aboriginal Archaeology Panel - Relationality and Objectivity	Jacinta Koolmatrie, Jade Turner, Natalie Sumner, Dawn Lewis
<b>1:00pm</b>	Lunch Break	
<b>2:00pm</b>	Contested Waters	Natali Pearson, Zainab Tahir
<b>3:00pm</b>	Panel and audience discussion – the future of AusTAG	Catherine J. Frieman
<b>3:30pm</b>	Closing	Sally K. May
<b>6:00pm</b>	Conference Dinner at Seven Stars Hotel (Booking Required)	

# Conference Abstracts, Friday 22 May

## Session: Aboriginal Art, Encounters, and the Production of Meaning

### A theory about archaeological interpretation and an interpretation of archaeological theory for rock art with examples from Australia

Paul S.C. Taçon

Griffith University

Archaeological theory is a form of interpretation used to explain aspects of the past that has implications for the present. There are many forms of archaeological interpretation, and an increasingly diverse range of theoretical perspectives are used to interpret the past. Often theory is associated with Western Science, but all societies use theories to explain the past and First Nations interpretations of the past and present are both complex and meaningful, especially those developed during periods of profound cultural and/or environmental change. These Indigenous interpretations are reinforced by learned elders through oral history, stories, ceremonies, songs, dance and artmaking. Rock art provides a unique Indigenous record and interpretation of the past throughout the world, but often Western archaeological interpretation inspired by etic theory development fails to grasp emic significance. Drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives, ethnography and discussions with Indigenous people from many lands over the past 45 years it is argued that rock art is best interpreted from a multi-theory and multicultural perspective. Relying on a single theory to explain rock art leads to incomplete interpretation. Thus, rock art researchers should draw from a toolbox of theories, with a range of theory tools used in different places as appropriate.

### Komnud Djang: Art and epidemics in Arnhem Land, Australia

Sally K. May<sup>1</sup> and Joey Nganjmirra<sup>2</sup>

Adelaide University<sup>1</sup>, Injalak Arts<sup>2</sup>

This paper examines how Aboriginal communities in western Arnhem Land conceptualised and responded to introduced epidemics through cultural narratives and artistic practice. Moving beyond colonial accounts that emphasise demographic collapse, it foregrounds Indigenous ontologies of causation, in which sickness is understood through breaches of cultural law and disruptions to relationships between people, Country, and Ancestral beings. Drawing on oral histories, archival sources, and contemporary bark and paper paintings—particularly representations of *Komnud Djang* (Phlegm Dreaming)—the study demonstrates how art operates as a biographical and epistemic medium. These works do not merely record events but actively transform and transmit knowledge across generations, functioning as both historical archive and risk-reduction strategy. By situating epidemic experience within ongoing cultural frameworks, the paper contributes to broader debates on Indigenous historical consciousness, materiality, and the “biographical turn” in archaeology, highlighting the dynamic integration of new phenomena into enduring ontological systems.

## **Thinking about contact rock art**

**Emily Miller**

**Adelaide University**

Contact rock art is often thought of as the introduced motifs and materials that have been depicted and used in the last 200 years or so, since the start of European colonisation in Australia. This viewpoint has highlighted some parts of Indigenous responses and adaptations to the encroachment of the colonial frontier on their lives. This includes studies about motif types such as firearms, introduced animal species, watercraft, as well as developments like the painted hands from Awunbarna, and the use of laundry blue as pigment. The Awunbarna complex is also home to a significant amount of more ‘traditional’ motifs, including anthropomorphs that have links to ceremonial practice and Indigenous lifeways, and are identifiable as being painted within the contact period. These figures provide a unique opportunity to explore the other side of contact rock art – the continuation and emphasis of cultural practices in response to colonisation – and in turn how archaeologists think about contact rock art.

## **Rock art as an intergenerational medium: towards a theory of rock art**

**Joakim Goldhahn**

**Adelaide University**

Rock art theory and the theory of rock art are distinct yet interrelated domains that are often conflated. The former develops interpretive frameworks for analysing specific imagery, or set of images, while the latter seeks to conceptualise rock art as a global audio-visual medium, tied to understandings of humans—and their close relatives—as creative, sentient beings. This distinction is epistemological, reflecting different analytical scales and ambitions.

Drawing on collaborative fieldwork in western Arnhem Land, Australia, and Samburu County, Kenya, this presentation examines rock art as an intergenerational medium. Among Samburu Lmurrans warriors, painting occurs within meat-feasting events and functions as a mnemonic device linking personal experiences, events, and places into personal and collective memory. Here, rock art is largely a pastime, not central to formalised ontologies. In contrast, in western Arnhem Land, rock art is embedded within a complex audio-visual knowledge system structured through apprentice–master relations. Senior artists act as cultural mediators, using painting pedagogically to transmit ancestral knowledge and mediate between the everyday and the sacred.

Across both contexts, rock art is not merely representational but performative, encoding biographies and enabling the transmission of knowledge, identity, and values across generations. However, the modalities of this transmission differ significantly. Attending to such differences is argued to be essential for advancing a theory of rock art. Any insights gained would challenge purely formal approaches and highlight the need to recognise Indigenous knowledge holders and understand rock art as a living, relational, intergenerational practice

## **Session: Making/Dwelling**

### **Archaeologies in Making: A Case Study in Mid-Nineteenth Century Footwear, Sydney NSW**

**Megan Porter**

#### **Biosis**

In centralising practice, I advocate for an archaeological ontology that challenges static states of being and the so-called entanglements between them and instead seeks to comprehend the dynamic and multi-scale actions or processes within which persons, places, and materials are inseparably and inextricably engaged. That is, by combining a heuristic understanding of form with a critical embodiment paradigm, “acts-of-making” become the analytical unit. The democratising potential is revealed in narratives that prioritise intuitive, habitual, and transformative practices over hylomorphic models that carry with them the baggage of Western dualisms, racial politicisations, and socio-economic hierarchisations. Not newly discovered but re-materialised as an archaeological baseline, “acts-of-making” actively foreground the intangible and prosaic dimensions of maintenance, re-use, repurpose, adaption, recycling, conservation, discard and so-on. As mutable materials, leather and textiles are favourably disposed to retain marks of these relationships. In footwear particularly, they hold culturally and temporally situated traces of actions that traverse personal, local, and global scales. I will discuss my interpretive findings from an analysis of mid-nineteenth century footwear recovered from a waterlogged context on Macquarie Place in the Sydney CBD (NSW). Through “acts-of-making”, I offer an intimate investigation of gender, socio-economics, and immigration within themes of industrialisation, globalisation, and mass-consumerism.

### **Smelling, Telling, and Dwelling: Limits to ‘Virtual’ Archaeological Worlds**

**Erik Champion**

#### **Adelaide University**

Tim Ingold’s theory of dwelling (Ingold, 2021), is an important contribution to the understanding of human-environment relationships. It also appears to be a viable theory for developing virtual worlds for archaeological communication and public engagement. Ingold wrote that worlds are continuous “becomings”, a theory inspired by the writings of philosopher Martin Heidegger. Ingold’s theory of virtual taskscape suggests we need to be constantly challenged with new tasks. Extrapolating from Tim Ingold and Heidegger, presence in a virtual world can be defined as “being there.” Ingold suggests important factors relevant to a sense of “being there”: “wayfaring”, “care”, ‘enskilment’, and so on. Yet if we don’t have continual tasks in a virtual environment, (or in Ingold’s terms, a taskscape), how can it become a world and how can virtual presence take place? Despite the recent improvement of virtual reality-related technologies and the increased speed of computing devices, there are several important limitations in applying Ingold’s or Heidegger’s phenomenological concepts directly to virtual “worlds.” These limitations result from the sensorial, socially judgemental, and logistical challenges facing the creation of virtual worlds.

## **Session: Indigenous Collaboration**

### **Learning how to braid knowledge on Adnyamathanha Yarta: Relationality and archaeology at the inaugural Adnyamathanha Artinyi Wimila (women's workshop)**

**Elsbeth Hodgins<sup>1</sup>, Glenise Coulthard AM<sup>2</sup>, Josephine Coulthard, Margaret Johnson**

**Flinders University<sup>1</sup>, Iga Warta Community Trust<sup>2</sup>**

The concept of 'braiding knowledge' has increasingly become recognised as an effective approach to centering Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing within archaeological practice. Drawing upon the landmark work of Professor Robin Wall Kimmerer and the archaeological research led by Professor Sonya Atalay out of the U.S National Science Foundation Center for Braiding Indigenous Knowledges and Science, this paper reflects on the experiences, successes, and challenges of applying a braided archaeology to research on Warraty rock shelter (The Rock). Situated on Adnyamathanha Yarta (land), the process and impacts of braiding Adnyamathanha Yura Muda (knowledge) and archaeological understandings of the site are examined through a social network analysis of the inaugural Adnyamathanha Artinyi Wimila (women's workshop), held in October of 2024. Social network analysis is utilised as a means of visualising the relationality within the Artinyi Wimila and identifying the new 'braids' of knowledge, understanding, and relationships to emerge from the weekend meeting between Adnyamathanha Artinyi researchers and visiting female archaeologists.

### **How do you Ngura Ninti?**

**Michelle Richards<sup>1</sup>, Barry Judd<sup>1</sup>, Katherine Ellinghaus<sup>2</sup>, Richard Broome<sup>2</sup>, Anna Dunn<sup>1</sup>, Braden Hill<sup>3</sup>, Jessyca Hutchens<sup>4</sup>, Carol Dowling<sup>5</sup>, Jane Lydon<sup>4</sup>, Linda Ford<sup>6</sup>, Kai Wheeler<sup>7</sup>, Murray Phillips<sup>7</sup>, Andrew Peters<sup>8</sup>, Rebe Taylor<sup>9</sup>, Michelle Broun<sup>2</sup>, Kootji-Desmond Raymond<sup>2</sup>, Maleah Carle<sup>7</sup>, Beth Muldoon<sup>2</sup>, Natasha Doolan<sup>2</sup>**

**University of Melbourne<sup>1</sup>, Latrobe University<sup>2</sup>, Edith Cowan University<sup>3</sup>, University of Western Australia<sup>4</sup>, Curtin University<sup>5</sup>, Charles Darwin University<sup>6</sup>, University of Queensland<sup>7</sup>, Swinburne University<sup>8</sup>, University of Tasmania<sup>9</sup>**

Ngura Ninti means 'knowing home' in the Pitjantjatjara language of north-west South Australia. The Ngura Ninti project is responding to the critical need for truth-telling about the experiences, lives and actions of Indigenous Australians since the British invasion 250 years ago (Uluru Statement, 2018). Australia has two beginnings, two histories, two knowledges about the past, which have existed separately, unengaged and often unknown to each other. The Ngura Ninti multidisciplinary team consists of Indigenous (Judd, Hill, Dowling, Hutchens, Broun, Ford, Raymond, Wheeler, Carle, Peters) and non-Indigenous (Ellinghaus, Broome, Lydon, Murray, Taylor, Muldoon, Richards, Dunn, Doolan) researchers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Our research brings together a collection of rare, inaccessible and key published or archival primary sources while also challenging the notion of what constitutes a 'document'. Working as part of the Ngura Ninti team reminded me that archaeology often prides itself on being multidisciplinary. This is perhaps most frequently in reference to the borrowing of hard science techniques and in alignment with other humanities which investigate the past, notably history. As archaeology grows to include more Indigenous archaeologists and incorporate Indigenous knowledges suddenly the interdisciplinary nature of Indigenous cultural heritage - past and future - expands exponentially. But just how well do archaeologists work with Indigenous communities compared to and with researchers from other disciplines?

## **Panel Session: Planerarity**

### **Planerarity and the technosphere: a ‘planerarity turn’ for archaeology**

**Convenor: Alice Gorman<sup>1</sup>; Panellists: Tracy Ireland<sup>2</sup> and Sean Williams<sup>1</sup>**

**Flinders University<sup>1</sup>, University of Canberra<sup>2</sup>**

We propose that a ‘planerarity turn’ in archaeology is imminent and timely. At the same time as space archaeology was emerging as a discipline in the early 2000s, the influential theorist Gayatri Spivak put forward the concept of planerarity as a counter to globalisation, describing it as ‘the intuition that the planet is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system’ (2003). Anthropocene and SETI scholars have since reconfigured the planerarity system as a technosphere which erodes the boundaries between nature and culture. On Earth, the technosphere is three trillion tons of human-manufactured material which acts as a dynamic ecosystem at the planerarity scale. A planerarity turn both centres and decentres the planet as a unit of analysis. It rejects the philosophy of the ‘Overview Effect’, ‘Spaceship Earth’ and the ‘Pale Blue Dot’, which emphasise a united humanity on a planet which is our only home, to highlight instead the uncanniness of the familiar made unfamiliar. It invites archaeological geocentrism to become Copernican, to see terrestrial conditions as only one instance in a plurality of worlds.

This panel brings together leading scholars of the contemporary future to discuss their visions of the planerarity turn, and includes an audience Q & A.

# Conference Abstracts, Saturday 23 May

**Session: Ethics/Politics/Society**

## **Social determinants of health in bioarchaeology**

**Justyna J. Miszkiewicz**

**University of Queensland**

The aim of this presentation is to interrogate how social determinants of health (SDOH), conditions people are born into, grow and live in that drive health outcomes, are approached in bioarchaeology. I conducted an interdisciplinary review of SDOH theoretical frameworks in relevant areas, including sociology, public health, and bio/archaeology, identifying that all share conceptual principles of the embodiment of social position, social gradient of disease, causes of causes, and that inequities are unfair and avoidable. However, unlike in these other disciplines, many existing bioarchaeological approaches rely on reductionist skeletal disease assessment against 'social status' inferred from mortuary and historical data, oversimplification of social structures due to assumptions of biological homogeneity of kin groups, and assumptions that all inequality is embodied. Treating 'social status' as fluid, contextualised within syndemics and intersectionality, and applying the life course perspective, can help avoid oversimplification and anachronism. Where/if possible, interrogating (often a priori) assumptions at all different stages of bioarchaeological SDOH analysis and acknowledging that inequality in bioarchaeology is not discovered, but constructed from the data we analyse, leaves great scope for alternative, more flexible and nuanced interpretations of lived and compounded experiences of past individuals and groups.

## **Unlearning entrenched ways of seeing: Practical insights into new ethical approaches for communicating Egyptian mummified human remains at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, Sydney**

**Melanie Pitkin<sup>1</sup>, Ronika Power<sup>2</sup>, Jacinta Carruthers<sup>2</sup>, Alice Stevenson<sup>3</sup>**

**University of Sydney<sup>1</sup>, Macquarie University<sup>2</sup>, University College London<sup>3</sup>**

Although we are often blind to it, museums have long been responsible for constructing public expectations around the display of ancient Egyptian mummified human remains. In this paper, we present aspects of recently published culturally-specific guidelines (Pitkin et al. 2024) for the care of Egyptian ancestral remains at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney, aimed at helping museum publics unlearn entrenched ways of seeing and engaging with the ancient Egyptian dead. While these guidelines apply to all platforms of the Museum, the paper will focus especially on the new messaging implemented in our galleries, online and via our education and public programmes, as well as how we are managing the ways this messaging has been, and could in the future be transmitted and consumed e.g. via the media, teaching and visitor photography and social media channels. The paper also addresses how this sensitive topic is navigated in the context of being a University Museum on unceded Australian Aboriginal land grappling with its own problematic colonial histories.

## **The Black Trowel Collective Manifesto turns 10: A theoretical reflection on anarchist archaeology**

**James L. Flexner**

**University of Sydney**

Anniversaries are often a useful time to pause and reflect. For professional contributions, a decade provides enough time in which to ask what a particular contribution has accomplished, and what work remains to be done. This year will mark 10 years since the Black Trowel Collective's "Foundations of an Anarchist Archaeology: A Community Manifesto" was published in the Decolonizing Anthropology series on the anthropology blog *Savage Minds*. Anarchist archaeologies have produced numerous practical benefits, from student microgrants to unionization movements. This paper considers specifically what theoretical foundations provide the basis for anarchist archaeologies, focusing on contributions anarchist archaeology has made to archaeological theory since 2016, what boundaries still need to be pushed, and what further horizons might be possible. Ultimately, many anarchist archaeologists would argue that theory is practice, as anarchists seek to turn ethical principles, critical theoretical frameworks, and models for more equal societies past and present into action for the future.

## **Hot Mess: Anarchafeminist approaches and methods to the archaeological study of gender**

**Catherine Frieman<sup>1</sup>, Maria Hadjigavriel<sup>2</sup>, Aris Polotopolous<sup>2</sup>**

**Australian National University<sup>1</sup>, Leiden University<sup>2</sup>**

The point of doing feminist and activist work within the research community is to have an impact, effect change, and reshape inequitable relationships. The ways we go about this, however, are often unclear or covered – for safety reasons among other things. Anarchafeminism, an early movement within anarchism, applies the feminist critique of patriarchy to the anarchist movement, but also attempts to reclaim feminism from its neoliberal, capitalist evolution. Anarchafeminists understand gender as a key axis through which domination and authority are asserted and articulated, and they work to undermine oppressive structures of gendered practice and relation, including heterosexism, homophobia, transphobia, and the gender binary. In practice, this includes both liberatory activism and the development of methods of analysis that foreground the entanglement of gender and power, and surface queer and messily gendered alternatives to the status quo. In this presentation, we begin to work through what this looks like in archaeology – both as a field replete with unequal relationships and a set of methods of reconstructing different pasts. We propose an outline of how to DO anti-hierarchical feminist work in archaeology, one that both those engaged and not engaged in activist work should be able to fruitfully apply.

## **Panel Session: Indigenous Archaeology**

### **Aboriginal Archaeology Panel - Relationality and Objectivity**

**Convenor: Jacinta Koolmatrie<sup>1</sup>; Panellists: Jade Turner<sup>2</sup>, Natalie Sumner<sup>1</sup>, and Dawn Lewis<sup>3</sup>**

**South Australian Museum<sup>1</sup>, Eastern Arnernte<sup>2</sup>, Adelaide University<sup>3</sup>**

Within archaeological practice, the theoretical lens of objectivity and the study of external societies has been the norm. This panel focusses on the opposite of this approach, what it means to be completely embedded within the society and using this position to ensure better practice. While many non-Aboriginal researchers are operating on the basis of co-design, collaboration, or weaving knowledges, we look at what it means to work from the lens of Relationality. Our connection to community and our lived experience of being Aboriginal is what drives our work. All panellists are Aboriginal and have worked in archaeology and the heritage sector.

## **Session: Contested Waters**

### **Toxic Sovereignities: Do WWII shipwrecks need their own international convention?**

**Natali Pearson**

**University of Sydney**

World War II shipwrecks complicate maritime archaeology's commitment to in situ preservation: they are culturally significant sites, yet also hazardous infrastructures containing unexploded ordnance, oil, and human remains. Their governance is further complicated by the concept of sovereign immunity, particularly when such wrecks lie in foreign waters. Although the 2001 UNESCO Convention briefly addresses sovereign immune vessels (Article 13), interpretations differ as to whether its reference to ships engaged in their "normal mode of operations" can reasonably extend to ships that are wrecked. At the same time, most WWII wrecks remain some 15-20 years short of the Convention's 100-year threshold, thus falling outside internationally agreed definitions of underwater cultural heritage. This temporal gap sits alongside the patchwork of protections already applied by individual states through domestic legislation, producing an uneven governance landscape. Within this context, some scholars have proposed that the 2001 Convention requires major revision to address toxic and sovereign-immune wartime wrecks; others, meanwhile, contend that carving out WWII wrecks would fragment UCH governance and that strengthening existing frameworks is preferable. Drawing on case studies from Southeast Asian coastal states, this paper examines how these debates shape emerging governance options and highlights the contribution maritime archaeology can make in these discussions.

### **Voices from the Shore: Community Perceptions of Underwater Cultural Heritage in Belitung, Indonesia**

**Zainab Tahir**

**Flinders University**

After two decades of recovery, the Belitung shipwreck remains a rich source of knowledge. It offers global comparative insight into maritime trade, cultural exchange, and heritage preservation. Yet, within this international discourse, the voices of the Batu Itam community, the village closest to the Belitung shipwreck site, have remained surprisingly silenced from discussions surrounding underwater cultural heritage (UCH). This study seeks to foreground these voices, examining how residents perceive the shipwreck, its commercial salvage, value and expectation of broader UCH management practices. By placing community narrative at the centre, this research challenges the dominant narratives of UCH management, highlighting the tensions between commercial interests, cultural preservation, and community rights. The findings reveal a complex web of meanings, memories, and aspirations that illuminate the significance of UCH to local identities and livelihoods. In doing so, the research raises critical questions around ownership, custodianship, and interpretive authority, advocating for the inclusion of community voices in shaping heritage policy. This research offers a nuanced understanding of the intersections between UCH, community identity, and sustainable development and calls for more inclusive and equitable approaches to heritage governance. It invites a rethinking of the very notion of cultural heritage management itself, prioritising the voices and perspectives of those who live closest to the past.

# Further enquiries

Professor Sally K. May  
Adelaide University  
Level 3, Napier Building, North Terrace  
Email: [sally.may@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:sally.may@adelaide.edu.au)

The content in this publication is for general information only and Adelaide University makes no representation about its accuracy, completeness or suitability for any purpose. It is subject to change, and you can find updated information on our website at [adelaideuni.edu.au](http://adelaideuni.edu.au)

Australian University Provider Number PRV14404  
CRICOS Provider Number 04249J

Published April 2026

