



KEYWORDS: Rock art protection - Conservation - Funding - Australia

THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES ROCK ART PROTECTION PROGRAM

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Abstract. AIAS has been provided by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs with extra funding to encourage the protection of prehistoric rock paintings and petroglyphs in Australia. This paper reviews some of the history of the development of the Institute's involvement in rock art conservation and outlines the projects funded in the first year of its operation. It then considers some of the initial results from these projects along with the implications for the program of some recent events.

INTRODUCTION

Support for studies of Australian prehistoric pictographs (paintings and drawings on rock) and petroglyphs (rock engravings) have been a central, if minor, part of the endeavours of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) since its inception. Various aspects of painting and engraving techniques and motif distributions were an interest of the first Principal, Dr Frederick McCarthy, who, while at the Australian Museum, produced a major survey of *Australian Aboriginal Rock Art* (1967) and, while Principal of AIAS, provided tangible support for other researchers in this field. These initiatives were supported by Mr Robert Edwards, the Institute's first Deputy-Principal, well known for his work on the paintings and petroglyphs of Arnhem Land, central Australia, Panaramitee and Koonalda. During the period of Dr Peter Ucko's principalship, several major projects were initiated; the Institute contributed funding to the research by John Clegg, Lesley Maynard and George Chaloupka—that by Clegg and Maynard setting the theoretical basis for archaeological studies of rock imagery in Australia. More recently, there were developed by the Institute projects involving Drs Michel Lorblanchet and Robert Layton as research fellows based at the Institute in Canberra; the former worked at the Grampians in Victoria and on the Skew Valley petroglyphs at Dampier in Western Australia, and Layton at several sites in northern and central Australia. At the same time, many research projects into diverse aspects of the subject,

and from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, were supported through the AIAS research grant scheme. Among these was the development of a conservation research project involving John Clarke and technical assistants at the Western Australian Museum.

The current Principal, Mr Warwick Dix, actively supported much of this work with an interest developed during his time researching sites in the Kimberley and Pilbara areas from the Western Australian Museum. Later in this period, especially with the broadening of knowledge beyond academia of the Institute's role—perhaps prompted in part by the Institute's administration of the federal government's five-year site recording program—there came to AIAS a series of requests for assistance in implementing practical protective measures for painting and petroglyph sites. The increasing awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal heritage as well as a quickening pressure of land and resource development at this time had resulted in the perception of a greater number of sites in jeopardy. Such requests, however, were less likely to be funded by AIAS than those which dealt primarily with research or training.

In 1986, the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs made an extra allocation to AIAS to support the development of a rock art conservation program. In this paper, the background to this action is given along with an outline of the projects funded in the initial year of the program, and a brief discussion is made of some possible implications for the continuation of the program of some recent research and protection projects.

BACKGROUND

From the mid-1970s other institutions were addressing more conservation-oriented problems. In 1975, in Hobart, a National Estate conference organised to consider problems of weathering processes in the built environment found similar problems in conservation of prehistoric painted and engraved surfaces. Two years later an international workshop held in Perth under the auspices of the Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (ICCM) considered issues common to the conservation of pictographs and petroglyphs throughout the world. It was clear from these discussions, and the record of the proceedings edited by Dr Colin Pearson (published in 1978) that Australia was not alone in facing difficulties in this area.

The Joint Academies Initiatives

There existed no continuing body to develop these initiatives. Prehistorians, members of the Australian Academies of the Humanities, began a debate within the Academy on the urgency of the need for conservation action in Australia. This initiative was taken up by the Consultative Committee of the four Australian Academies which formed the Joint Academies Committee for the Preservation of Prehistoric Places, chaired by Sir Frederick White. A seminar involving a wide range of interests was held in Sydney during November 1980. This Rock Art Conservation Workshop set out to review scientific and technical aspects of conservation within a consideration of the criteria for priorities for action. The attendance of personnel from state and federal authorities, especially those involved in the day-to-day recording, assessment and management of heritage, went a long way towards achieving these ends; certainly it emphasised the rapid deterioration of many Australian sites and the inadequate resources available to arrest deterioration processes. There was a brief report of the findings of the Workshop in *Search* by its organiser, Dr Philip Hughes (1981), and more detailed presentations by several participants were published as a discussion of 'The state of Australian rock art research and conservation in 1980' in *Rock Art Research* 1 (1984).

Among the priorities agreed upon was a study of the behaviour of tourists visiting painted sites in the Kakadu National Park. This was conducted by Professor Fay Gale and her students at the University of Adelaide (e.g. Gale 1984, 1985; also Gale and Jacobs 1986, 1987) and the initial study was funded, in part, by AIAS. A second priority was also funded, the production of a synthesis of existing knowledge of the causes of deterioration and available processes for the preservation of rock imagery. This study, conducted by Dr Andrée Rosenfeld, was published by the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) in 1985. A third priority was clearly the field documentation of existing painted and engraved sites and a consideration of their preservation problems. Despite the employment of a conservation specialist for five years by the Western Australian Museum, it could not

be said that the job had been completed there or elsewhere. In the Kakadu National Park, a detailed study of a small area was seen to have highlighted the magnitude of the problem (Gillespie 1983).

The deliberations of the Joint Academies Committee had been assisted by funding from the Australian Heritage Commission. After the Rock Art Workshop in Sydney, the Consultative Committee of the Australian Academies approached the then Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. J. M. Fraser, seeking a grant to continue its work; this support appears not to have been forthcoming.

A Rock Art Conservation Centre?

Subsequently, the Joint Academies Committee, following a lecture to ICCM by Dr Colin Pearson of the Canberra College of Advanced Education (CCA), initiated discussion of a proposal for a Rock Art Centre to assume national responsibility for survey, interpretation and conservation in Australia. It was further proposed to seek funding through the Bicentenary Program for this Rock Art Centre. The Centre would be located in Canberra but have national responsibilities. It was suggested that it could be attached to AIAS which would provide administrative support. The Centre's functions would cover (a) survey and recording, (b) analysis and interpretation, and (c) management and conservation. A sub-committee involving AHC, Australian National University (ANU) and AIAS staff then prepared detailed proposals concerning survey and recording, and analysis and interpretation, and another, with ANU and CCAE members, dealt in detail with management and conservation proposals.

In the event the proposal which went forward heavily emphasised the physical conservation functions of a 'Conservation Research Unit for Aboriginal Rock Art'. It proposed that specialists in earth sciences, conservation, (physio-chemical) analytical and biological fields be employed or contracted along with support staff. There would be a managerial/services section and a small survey/recording attachment comprising two photographic and surveying staff. Analytical laboratories would consume a sizeable portion of the establishment budget of \$1.1 million and there would be annual recurrent expenses of \$0.8 million (in 1983 terms); Aboriginal involvement in the Unit was to be accomplished through the Unit's association with AIAS and, perhaps later, the National Museum of Australia's proposed Gallery of Aboriginal Australia. Some of the Academy members met with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs—but apparently not the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment—to put the case for the support of this project.

About this time, other approaches to the government were made by private citizens working in the area of recording and conservation supporting action for the preservation of paintings and engravings.

The Roles of the Minister and AIAS

In 1982, the federal government's Review of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies had recommended that the Institute should 'undertake

a study of rock art conservation', and this had been endorsed by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs who had requested a detailed plan and costing. The Institute's Council subsequently considered that neither the Reviewer's suggestion or the Joint Academies proposal, or any other, should be recommended until there had been an assessment of the need for conservation action at a national level and an assessment of Aboriginal views and wishes on this matter. The Institute's counter-proposal saw funding being provided to conduct a national-level survey, collating existing information, consulting and making recommendations for priority work. It was proposed to employ an archaeologist/anthropologist with CRM experience and an Aborigine with a liaison and site management background to assess the needs for significant site conservation and to confer with relevant Aboriginal groups concerning their wishes and attitudes. They would (a) report on the areas of major need, (b) describe the range of conservation problems and solutions, and (c) propose a specific project or projects in the area of highest need. It was estimated that a total of \$100 000 would be required.

About the same time, the federal government was encouraging discussion of 'Land Rights' for Aboriginal Australians; however, a public opinion survey commissioned at this time to ascertain people's attitudes to Aborigines found that 'rock art' was one of the very few Aboriginal associations which was viewed favourably by the public (ANOP 1985: 19, 41ff.). This report may have been in part responsible for the government's dropping Aboriginal land rights legislation as an issue because the Australian public was not ready. It may also have contributed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon. Clyde Holding, promoting funding of a rock art conservation program. In July 1986, the Minister advised AIAS that the Cabinet had decided that his portfolio would provide for the 'protection of Aboriginal rock art'. He invited AIAS to develop initiatives which addressed the problem of promotion and conservation. The Minister further advised that the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council (AAAC, a federal/state Ministers' meeting) had resolved at its recent meeting that there was an urgent need for protection, that AIAS should convene an expert committee to consider what means of protection should be developed, and should provide funds for this purpose; it also expressed the view that access to such sites should continue to be as limited as possible (Holding to Colbung 29 July 1986).

In passing on these views, the Minister asked AIAS to reconsider its previous advice. The Institute had produced a paper which outlined recent initiatives and stressed the lack of available funding for conservation; it requested its various specialist committees to consider a proposal that resources be directed into this area. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was little enthusiasm for recutting of a very small cake so that another speciality could benefit. The Institute considered that the main problems identified by the Joint Academies Workshop remained the major concerns today, and that there were many things that could be done at a basic level simply and now if funding were

available. Examples included:

- Surveys to find, record and assess sites in appropriate little-known areas;
- implementation of basic visitor management techniques at particular sites;
- implementation of simple conservation applications at certain sites;
- production and placement of inexpensive management tools, such as interpretative signs, visitors' books and brochures;
- producing a manual for use by site managers, and running training schools in conservation;
- the development of programs to monitor deterioration at selected sites;
- development of long-term research projects with the objective of conserving particular important sites.

The Institute considered that a program aimed at encouraging such basic measures would assist materially in improving the management of sites in Australia and would lead to effective conservation of many. Such a program would need to build upon the work already done and to begin with simple measures. Involvement of the relevant state authorities and Aboriginal communities would be essential.

The Institute also would ask its membership with expertise in related fields to examine matters of conservation of petroglyphs and paintings as a particular theme and to propose research priorities for consideration by its Council. The Institute's Council would convene a small working group with appropriate expertise and from relevant authorities to advise on and to cost specific research programs. Such programs might include:

- Survey and documentation in little-known areas with a potential for new 'discoveries';
- production of a manual of conservation techniques;
- training programs for local people;
- model site management programs at key sites along with tourist guides and interpretative booklets.

It was proposed that some funding would be available from AIAS but that other potential sources would have to be explored.

THE AIAS ROCK ART PROTECTION PROGRAM

After considering advice of the AAAC and that of a group of AIAS council members, the Minister made the sum of \$150 000 available to the Institute for conservation from the FY87 Budget. In September 1986, a working group met at AIAS, not only to consider the matters raised by the Institute's Council, but also to define criteria for a conservation program and to outline procedures for disbursing the funds recently provided by the Minister. The Rock Art Working Group included two AIAS Council members, Mr W. C. Wentworth and Ms S. Sullivan, Professor D. J. Mulvaney (deputising for Professor J. Golson, Chair of the Joint Academies Committee for the Protection of Prehistoric

Places), Dr J. Flood (AHC) and the Principal of AIAS, Mr W. Dix; Dr A. Rosenfeld (ANU) and Mr M. Williams (Brisbane CAE) were unable to attend; AIAS staff attended the meeting. The Working Group adopted a number of recommendations from a paper prepared by Ms Sullivan (n.d.), among which were that, in general:

(a) The conservation problems and programs outlined in the AIAS note should form the basis of a program for disbursement.

That:

(b) Funding should be divided into national and regional (or state) programs. National programs would be programs which would be of general use, applicability or benefit. Regional programs would address problems of a particular area, but priority should be given to regional programs which have some general spin-off or applicability—for example, a model site management program. The Institute committee should identify some national programs for discussion with NASAC (the federal/state National Aboriginal Sites Authority Committee).

(c) Information should be collected on work in progress, at a state and national level (AIAS, AHC, state authorities, Aboriginal organisations) to facilitate choice of the most appropriate project.

(d) Priority in the first instance should be given to programs which would produce demonstrable, short-term results, and which have national significance or applicability.

(e) The AIAS should examine its own grant applications for relevant applications, but should avoid the temptation to use the funding as a source for general Institute grants.

That to disburse the funds:

(a) The Institute Council should set up a committee It should include (i) a representative of the Joint Academies Committee; (ii) a representative of the AHC; (iii) a Council member or members; (iv) two representatives for state authorities, to be nominated by the National Aboriginal Sites Authority Committee including the chairman of NASAC; (v) a representative of the Australian Rock Art Research Association (AURA).

(b) Applications should be called for from state authorities and other relevant bodies/institutions (e.g. Aboriginal sites groups, site managers, relevant researchers). Applications should be refereed by relevant state authorities.

(c) Applications for regional programs should not normally exceed \$20 000.

(d) Applications from both national and regional programs should be called for.

(e) The committee itself have the power to bring forward research priorities to be undertaken by AIAS or any other relevant body.

(f) The Institute should design a special application form for the project.

And finally, that:

(a) Publicity should be maximised for projects carried out under this program.

Implementation of the Initial Year's Program

AIAS staff produced an application form, an

advertisement and a sheet providing further information for intending applicants. This sheet listed the major conservation problems and stressed that it was possible to do a number of basic things to ensure conservation, advised the decisions of the Institute's Rock Art Working Group and emphasised that:

. . . proposed projects should carefully take into account the implications for the site in an holistic sense; that it was important to be aware of the potential for destroying one aspect of the site while protecting another (for example, destroying archaeological deposits while erecting fences). Conservation projects should be drawn up having regard to the Burra Charter.

The advertisement stated that:

The Institute has received from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs a request to advise on the conservation of rock art. A Rock Art Working Group has been established; it will administer funds provided by the Minister for the purpose of protecting and preserving Aboriginal rock art.

It was distributed to all sites authorities, Aboriginal organisations and individual researchers known to AIAS to have an interest in rock imagery. It stressed that the conservation program had three main aims:

(1) The physical preservation of endangered sites, including those threatened by both the natural elements and from cultural interference from humans or by domestic animals. (2) The detailed recording of sites, especially those which could not be preserved. (3) Research into the Aboriginal cultural significance of sites.

And sought:

Applications from appropriate bodies and individuals . . . for both national and regional projects. Applications for regional projects should not normally exceed \$20 000. Application should be submitted on the approved forms, which are obtainable from AIAS at the address below.

Intending applicants should liaise with the relevant state authorities, and projects may be under the auspices of the relevant state authority.

In the meantime, the National Aboriginal Sites Authorities Committee had met in Hobart (in September 1986) and been advised of the Institute's initiatives in this area. NASAC supported the proposal but considered that all NASAC representatives should be on the Institute's Rock Art Committee and resolved to request the federal Minister for additional funds to support meetings of an expanded committee to be timed to co-ordinate with NASAC, to nominate a sub-committee of three members to negotiate with the Institute on the matter of the proposal, and to stress the necessity for Aboriginal participation in the program.

Analysis of the Initial Applications

By the closing date, some 30 applications for funding totalling nearly \$480 000 had been received. An analysis of the applications showed them to be divisible into four categories, those concerned with:

(1) survey and recording, including cataloguing and evaluation;

- (2) physical protection measures and visitation;
- (3) research into physical conservation techniques; and
- (4) public awareness/training programs.

There was a sub-category of the first group in which it was stressed that the aim of the project was to produce management recommendations from survey and recording data. The ratios of applications in these four categories was: 16:10:2:2. Many proposals were well-prepared and realistically costed; however, the budgets of several projects rounded out exactly to \$20 000, and there were some very poorly detailed costings.

More than half of the applications were of the first category - survey and recording. Many of these were concerned simply with exploring for and basic recording of sites; however, there were some which proposed to record in detail known sites or known areas of sites and to assess such factors as visitor impact and/or to produce a plan of management for the preservation of sites.

Those in the protection category dealt, in general, with very basic protective measures. In at least three projects the aim was merely to put fences around sites and do minor conservation work such as the removal of nests and installation of artificial driplines. In another the proposal was primarily to provide a walk-way and sign-posting of a site which was suffering from the adverse effects of recently increased visitation. These applications reflected the view of site managers that basic, simple, practical measures are often the most needed and cost-effective methods of conservation.

Those two involving research into conservation techniques proposed: investigation of artificial silica surfaces, and the monitoring of pigment deterioration on rock surfaces bearing images.

The fourth category included one proposal to promote awareness of the imagery in an area by educating local Aboriginal people, and another to enhance the training of cultural resource management personnel by the provision of a 'National Rock Art Conservation Manual'.

The Institute's Rock Art Executive Committee met early in December 1986. The Committee comprised the Principal of AIAS as chair, two representatives of the Institute's Council, Dr A. Chase and Mr K. Colbung, Professor D. J. Mulvaney, representing the Joint Academies Committee, Mr R. G. Bednarik (AURA), Dr J. Flood (AHC) and those representatives nominated by NASAC, its chair Mr D. Ranson, Mr R. Ellis and Ms S. Sullivan. In addition to the NASAC representatives appointed by Council, Mr M. McIntyre (Victoria Archaeological Survey), Dr C. Jack-Hinton (Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory) had elected to accept the general invitation to site authorities to attend the meeting; along with two staff members, the meeting gave them voting powers.

The three main aims of the Rock Art Protection program, (1) the physical preservation and management of endangered sites including those threatened by the natural elements, interference from humans or other animals, (2) survey and documentation of new and major sites, (3) research into the Aboriginal cultural significance of sites, were taken into account in assessing grant applica-

tions. The meeting decided to fund twelve projects totalling \$150 000 in value. In each case the amount of funding requested had been cut by a significant proportion to allow the total available to be further spread.

RESULTS OF THE INITIAL YEAR OF ROCK ART PROTECTION PROGRAM FUNDING

The twelve projects funded in the initial year of the Rock Art Protection Program were these:

- (1) Dr D. Rose and Mr D. Lewis; Rock Art in the VRD: cultural significance and preservation (Area: NT; Criteria met 2 and 3): \$3500;
- (2) Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences (Mr B. Harney/Mr G. Chaloupka); Protection and conservation of Wardaman rock art sites (NT; 1): \$11 200;
- (3) Aboriginal Community College Gngangara (Mrs B. Colbung/Ms J. Rodda); Awareness and protection of rock art sites (WA; 1 and 3): \$16 200;
- (4) Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences (Mr J. Namandali and others/Mr G. Chaloupka); Protection and conservation of Malgawo rock art (NT; 1): \$11 200;
- (5) Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences (Mr B. Neidjie/Mr G. Chaloupka); Protection and conservation of Mt Borradaile art (NT; 1): \$11 200;
- (6) Australian Rock Art Research Association (Mr R. G. Bednarik); Parietal markings project (SA; 1): \$4200;
- (7) Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service (Mr W. J. Fisher, Northern Region); Nara Inlet rock art project (Qld; 1): \$18 200;
- (8) Aboriginal Heritage Branch, SA (Mr R. Ware); Arkaroo Rock Painting Site (SA; 1): \$17 200;
- (9) New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (Mr D. Lambert); Rock art conservation manual (National; 1): \$21 200;
- (10) New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (Mr D. Bell, Central Region); Guided tours program (NSW; 1): \$10 200;
- (11) Victoria Archaeological Survey (Ms R. Buchan); Grampians art sites visitor use study (Vic; 1): \$12 500;
- (12) Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service (Mr T. Blanks/Mr D. Ranson); petroglyph protection, Mt Cameron West (Tas; 1): \$13 200.

('Criteria met' refers to the three criteria detailed above.)

The Various Projects (FY87)

Unlike the majority of those projects funded, which almost exclusively met only Criterion 1, the first application met Criteria 2 and 3. The application from Lewis and Rose was for a project to demonstrate the cultural significance of imagery in the Victoria River District. The applicants envisaged a report to include a general description of paintings in the area and an analysis of two major issues, (a) the cultural significance of the image and (b) social control and protection of painted sites in the area. The proposal did not involve fieldwork but would draw upon data collected during previous research.

The three projects submitted by the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences on behalf of traditional owners and others were all very similar. The aim of each project was to fence a rock face containing painted images and to carry out simple conservation measures, including the removal of vegetation causing damage to painted surfaces, the removal of nests of wasps, termites and birds, and the installation of artificial driplines to prevent water flowing over the painted surface. The fences were needed to prevent animals such as buffalo and pig trampling the surfaces of deposits and scratching rock surfaces. It was proposed in each case that traditional owners or others involved with the application would carry out the work under the supervision of the Field Anthropologist of the Northern Territory Museum.

The proposal of the Aboriginal Community College was to involve elders from the Nyoongah community, traditional custodians of sites in an area of the south-west of Western Australia, in promoting the awareness of younger Aboriginal people and others of traditional Aboriginal culture through visits to, and study of other aspects of, paintings and petroglyphs and other sites. The application outlined a three-phase program of teaching and exchange of information involving the use of videos on sites and Aboriginal land use, talks from academics, contact with Aboriginal elders as guides and teachers, and discussion of problems of conservation leading to the formulation of management plans for the conservation of sites which could be implemented when funds were available.

The application of the Australian Rock Art Research Association sought funds for a third stage of the Parietal Markings Project. Stages 1 and 2 had produced results from an initial reconnaissance and recording of decorated caves in the Mt Gambier area. Stage 3 was intended to address aspects of resource management including practical proposals for reclaiming the caves and the perpetual conservation of rock art. It was intended to grid cave entrances having removed large quantities of agricultural and household refuse dating from over 120 years. The caves and their markings would be thoroughly recorded. Appropriate educational signs would be installed.

The Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service sought funds to ensure adequate conservation and protection of a painted site at Nara Inlet on Hook Island in the Whitsunday Group, which was experiencing three to five hundred visitors each week. It was proposed to construct a boardwalk access to the site to prevent damage to the substrate and to the walls from dust, to construct a fence around the shelter entrance to stop degradation of the site by animals, to develop interpretative material along the access track and within the shelter and to implement seepage conservation measures. The work was to be supervised by the District Ranger and Mr Grahame Walsh of the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The Aboriginal Heritage Branch of the South Australian Department of Environment and Planning sought funds to upgrade existing protective facilities at the Arkaroo rock painting site complex. This involved replacing an obtrusive, deteriorating and ineffective grid, building a walkway over the archaeological deposit at the foot of the imagery in the major shelter, gridding adjacent minor shelters, upgrading access and providing a comprehensive interpretative facility. Another project addressing exclusively site protection, but one requiring the application of different methods, was that of the Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service. The Mount Cameron West petroglyphs are located on a calcarenite outcrop in an area of unstable dune sand; a blow-out had resulted in a reduction of the beach profile and allowed cattle to enter the reserve and damage the engraving in an area difficult to fence. The project proposed to reform and stabilise the fore dune with drift fences and marrum grass and thus protect the engravings. An initial phase of the sand dune stabilisation project had been funded by a National Estate Grant.

Another two requests dealt with visitor management applications. The first, by the Victoria Archaeological Survey, sought funds for a study of visitor behaviour at sites in the Grampians. The aims of the project were to provide quantitative data on visitor use of nine frequently visited sites and information on visitor expectation and education needs so that sound management decisions could be made. The proposal was to use methods developed by Professor Gale in other visitor management projects. The second, a proposal by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, was for development of a program of guided tours to petroglyphs in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. Its objects were to promote awareness of the nature of Aboriginal sites, particularly that they are valuable and irreplaceable cultural assets, that they are vulnerable and require protection, and that they have special significance to Aboriginal people. It was proposed to employ a consultant to identify visitor opportunities, consistent with Parks Service objectives, and by using questionnaires and interviews, to obtain information on the public's needs and desires. Liaison to ascertain Aboriginal interests and with the Department of Education to determine the needs of schools would be part of this project. It was envisaged that a training program for Aboriginal guides would be developed and an information package produced.

A project of national significance was proposed in the form of the development of a conservation manual, which would promote a greater level of participation of site conservation and equip site managers with information on conservation strategies. The project would identify protection and monitoring techniques which could be applied to sites throughout Australia. It was proposed that Mr David Lambert of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service who had had experience in site conservation methods would review the requirements of site managers, evaluate conservation and monitoring priorities, and produce a manual providing detailed information on conservation techniques which could be used by a variety of field officers and other site managers.

Summary of FY87 Grants Funded
Received: 30 applications, total value ca \$480k

Funded: 12 projects, total value \$150k; average grant \$12.5k; or one national grant \$21.2k, and eleven regional projects, average value \$11.71k

Projects Not Funded

It is worthwhile also to consider the character of the applications which were unsuccessful.

Eighteen of the thirty applications were unsuccessful. This is not to say that most of these applications or the proposed projects were unacceptable; many were, but a total funding request of \$480k value into \$150k available funds does not compute, as they say.

Twenty proposals initially were graded by the Committee as favoured (A); of those remaining most were recommended (B); only two were rejected (C). Finally, in order that twelve projects could be funded within the \$150k available (original values approximately \$212.54k) each was reduced in total, and successful applicants were requested to submit revised budgets within the amounts offered.

Those applicants graded A but not funded were recommended for resubmission with further detail or ranked for funding, should other grant offers not be accepted. Most proposals graded B appear to have been regarded less highly largely because they lacked, or did not sufficiently emphasise, a protection or conservation component; it is clear that the Committee was prepared to stress the physical preservation and management of endangered sites (Criterion 1) over the other two project aims (Criteria 2 and 3).

Others lacked necessary information, were peripheral to funding priorities or, in the case of some less experienced researchers, doubts were expressed about the practicality of the proposed project; in a few, the necessity for the work had not been demonstrated. Those ranked C were criticised on the basis of poorly defined objectives, naive methodology and lack of relevance to protection of paintings and engravings.

Taking a broader perspective, it appears that the committee not only tended to give priority to those projects whose aims were oriented toward site conservation but also those with a direct and immediately practical result. No projects seeking to conduct on-the-ground surveys for new sites or to record in detail sites already known were funded even though many survey projects (Criterion 2) had explicit and even strong management recommendation objectives. Two of those funded made explicit (or could be argued to have had implicit) as an objective research into the Aboriginal cultural significance of sites (Criterion 3).

Reporting

All grantees are required to report to AIAS on the progress of projects and to provide a substantial final report describing and evaluating the work for which a grant was provided; such reports are kept in the Institute's Library and are available to others. Individuals or agencies with reports outstanding are ineligible to receive further grants. A discussion of the results of the first year's funding will be offered subsequently (RAR 6[2]).

TWO PROJECTS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE PROTECTION PROGRAM

Lewis and Rose's report is entitled *The shape of the Dreaming: report on the cultural significance of Victoria River rock art* (published by AIAS). Their results are particularly significant to any discussion of the Institute's Rock Art Protection Program. As proposed, the report deals with the details of the imagery, describing motifs and styles and placing them in a regional context. The researchers concluded that '... in spite of the definite and apparent relationships with neighbouring art regions, the bulk of the rock art of the Victoria River District appears to constitute an art province quite distinct from other areas' (1988: 45).

The report then went on to consider the significance of the sites for the local communities. The researchers distinguished two main categories of the imagery: that identified by Aboriginal people as originating with them is mainly concerned with sorcery, although some apparently merely depicts European animals; the other category is not recognised as being made by humans to represent Dreaming Beings but it is said, rather, that such images are made by Dreaming Beings and are Dreaming Beings. These images '... are the shape of the Dreaming, the living presence, in past, present, and future time of the origins of the cosmos' (Lewis and Rose 1988: 50). They stressed that the cultural meaning of the paintings is necessarily '... construed out of culturally relevant knowledge which is not given in the depiction'. This referential ambiguity serves to facilitate the management of Aboriginal philosophy of an unchanging past in a changing present (1988: 53).

These ideas were further set in terms of the Aboriginal concept of 'country', the relationship between people and country, and the complex relationships of people with people. All these relate to the business of maintaining Aboriginal cultural integrity in relation to non-Aborigines and the non-Aboriginal pressures which impact upon that country and its people. The researchers stressed that 'Access to knowledge is a privilege to be earned. Strangers (Aboriginal and European) who learn do not have a right further to dispense information without permission from the proper custodians' (1988: 62).

This led then into a section on consultation and protection, which is of particular interest to a conservation action program. Central to the researchers' arguments is a section of the Burra Charter (1981: 1.4) which defines conservation as '... all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance'. They went on to show that '... physical intervention by Europeans has the potential seriously to undermine Aboriginal cultural significance' and to '... suggest ways in which the art can be protected without undermining its significance to the Aboriginal custodians' (1988: 68). Lewis and Rose developed a proposal which would recognise the pressing concerns of the people that they had worked with, one which would allow '... their status and their responsibili-

ties as custodians [to] be recognised and respected by persons outside of their own cultural milieu' (1988: 69). Their proposal detailed a series of steps which would give local Aboriginal communities direct and practical responsibility for the protection and maintenance of their own sites, a proposal originating with the communities with which they had worked. Finally, among their recommendations (1988: 76) was one which stated that: '... no physical intervention ... be undertaken with respect to "art" in the area except at the express and voluntary request of the Aboriginal custodians'.

Where then a federally-funded program to assist the conservation of prehistoric pictographs and petroglyphs? Clearly the arguments advanced by Lewis and Rose will have to be taken into account by anyone proposing projects of this nature; their work reinforces the view that it is essential to involve and to gain the approval, if not to await the initiative, of Aboriginal custodians of painting/petroglyph sites. They suggest, moreover, that there will be few places for which custodians could not be defined. A further implication of their work is that effective custodial control would be best obtained by custodians having control over, or at least unrestricted access to, traditional lands.

Their study emphasises the potential role of the Burra Charter. The Charter, properly interpreted, states that the primary significance of the place in question dictates conservation policy. If the primary significance is the site's value to the custodians, then this will dictate how (and if) conservation action is taken.

Another recent study, not funded by AIAS but the results of which have clear implications for any conservation program, is the one recently conducted in the Gibb River area of the Kimberley district of Western Australia. Here, the local community acquired federal funds as part of a CEP project to train young Aboriginal men and women in the maintenance of important sites and to educate them through association with elders in the significance and importance of such places. The project involved 'renovation' or repainting of certain motifs at certain sites. The project, entirely Aboriginal conceived and co-ordinated, struck some opposition from local landholders and persons concerned to protect the integrity of the 'rock art' from a perspective of European cultural heritage. Complaints were made to the federal and Western Australian Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs that the sites had been 'desecrated' by repainting, that there had been inadequate supervision for the project, that the young people employed were town-dwellers who were totally uninterested in traditional culture, that traditional materials were not used but that house paint, tennis court lime, 'Aquadhere' wood glue and 'Silastic' had been used, that initials, dates and cartoon characters had been scrawled over the rock face and that paint had been 'splashed on', partially obliterating and defacing the original work, with the ultimate result that many sites, part of the cultural heritage of all humankind, had been irreparably damaged, and that a potential source of tourism had been destroyed. These claims led to the suspension of CEP funding and an investigation conducted by the De-

partment of Aboriginal Sites of the Western Australian Museum which has statutory responsibility under the Western Australian *Aboriginal Heritage Act* for such sites. The investigation concluded that there was little substance to these complaints and that the behaviour of the CEP team did not warrant action under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act*. It stated that, apart from the silicone used to form driplines, only traditional materials had been used in painting, that elders and custodians generally approved of the work done, and that the images had been rejuvenated according to traditional precepts and methods. At the present time, the community involved is actively defending its position against newspaper reports and learning to deal with TV investigations.

The case highlights the fact that sites with engraved/painted imagery can have more than one value and can have a different value to different groups in the community. This poses problems for professional conservators and cultural heritage managers, who have to decide what is the appropriate conservation emphasis. Again, the Burra Charter, in laying down guidelines for conservation, provides a procedure which assists in decision-making in this area. The Charter's statement that the significance or value of a site dictates its conservation policy provides guidelines for assessing this significance. In the case of the Kimberley paintings, the assessment carried out by the Western Australian Museum has determined that the primary or major significance of the sites rests in their importance to the custodians and the traditional owners as part of a long tradition, and that therefore restoration as undertaken was appropriate.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies has made it a condition of any grant under this program that the Australia ICOMOS guidelines (the Burra Charter) are followed.

It seems likely that the Wanang Ngari CEP project in the Gibb River area will serve as a model for further Aboriginal-initiated renovation projects elsewhere in Australia where Aboriginal custodians are maintaining or wish to regain an active conservation role in protection of their sites.

No doubt the debate, which has been going on for some time to our knowledge, will continue, with sides being taken along the lines that, on one hand, Aboriginal custodians have the perfect right to do whatever they wish with their sites and, on the other, that a major element of the national cultural heritage is being jeopardised or, at least, compromised by such actions. For some, 'renovation' or repainting will be seen as the answer to most if not all the problems prompted by a concern for the preservation of Aboriginal rock paintings and petroglyphs; for all, these examples may prompt considerable thought when applying for funding for the protection of paintings and engravings.

Postscript

Late in September 1987, confirmation was received from the Minister that a further year's funding for the Protection Program would be provided. Given the level of funding sought in 1986, a sum of \$250 000 had been requested by AIAS; \$150 000 was to be provided.

Proposals for a second year of the Rock Art Protection Program had been called for and thirty-one applications had been received to fund projects to a total value again far in excess of \$400 000.

Acknowledgments

This is a revised version of a paper presented in Section H: 'Archaeology: peopling of the tropics' at the 57th ANZAAS Congress, James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville (Friday, 28 August 1987) by GKW who is grateful to Professor J. Campbell (Organiser, Section H) and Dr J. Flood (Chair of the Session 'Recent studies in the rock art of Australia and New Guinea') for the invitation to make the presentation; to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies for enabling him to participate in the Congress; and to participants in the symposium for useful comments.

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Résumé. Par l'intervention du Ministère des Affaires Aborigènes le Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies a reçu des fonds supplémentaires pour encourager la protection de l'art rupestre en Australie. Dans cet article nous présentons un compte-rendu du développement de l'intérêt que le AIAS apporte à la conservation de l'art rupestre, ainsi qu'un résumé des projets soutenus pendant la première année de cette opération. En suite nous examinons les résultats préliminaires de ces projets et les conséquences que certains événements récents pourraient avoir pour ce programme.

Zusammenfassung. Das Australische Institut für Aboriginal Studien wurde vom Minister für Aboriginal Affären mit extra Finanzen ausgestattet um den Schutz vorgeschichtlicher Felsmalereien und Petroglyphen zu fördern. Dieser Bericht bespricht die Geschichte und Entwicklung der Beteiligung des Institutes in Felsbildkonservierung, und umreißt kurz die Projekte, die im ersten Jahr unterstützt wurden. Weiters werden einige der ersten Resultate dieser Projekte, zusammen mit den Folgerungen jüngerer Entwicklungen für das Programm, berücksichtigt.

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