



# KIMBERLEY FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA

*Researching, preserving and promoting Kimberley rock art*

Our vision is to promote scientific research into the rock art of the Kimberley, and in conjunction with the indigenous people of the region, ensure it is preserved and recognised for its national and international significance.

NEWSLETTER

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## FIRST STAGE FUNDING APPROVED FOR FOUR NEW PROJECTS

KFA has allocated funding to seven research projects to investigate complex questions about the Kimberley. Of these three have progressed to second stage funding. The Foundation provides up to \$30k for 'first stage funding' which should put the project in a good position for favourable consideration for additional funding either from KFA or other bodies such as the Australian Research Council. These projects are fundamental to understanding the Kimberley's ancient inhabitants and their origins, the climatic and environmental factors that affected their fate and their subsequent history and legacies.

### First Stage Projects:

**Wandjina Rock Art Project.** The aim is to provide a general statement on the state of knowledge relating to the nature and distribution of Wandjina art and its associated mythologies in the Kimberley region, using the extensive workings of the late Grahame Walsh and experts in the field. This would include the temporal and spatial distribution of the Wandjina art style throughout the Kimberley and the social, environmental and mythological contexts in which Wandjina art was produced.



**Palynology Project - Unlocking the archives of the Kimberley's past: A pilot study of sediment cores from the northwest Kimberley** led by Associate Professor Hamish McGowan, Climate Research Group, School of Geography Planning and Environmental Management, Uni of Queensland, and Dr Andrew Hammond, Uni of Central Queensland, Mackay: to determine the potential for stratigraphic sequencing from selecting cores at chosen sites and from those cores to produce pollen concentrates for carbon dating and investigate palaeoclimates.

**Palaeoecology Project - Developing palaeoecological science in the Kimberley Region** led by Dr Simon Haberle [ANU]. Despite the ecological and cultural significance of the Kimberley little is known about the long term history and variability of fire, vegetation and climate across the region. In this project they plan to develop key resources required to conduct palaeoecological research. The outcomes will be aimed at developing a greater understanding of the role of fire-climate-people in vegetation dynamics and the maintenance of biodiversity in the region. A new pollen atlas has been completed.

**The Linguistic prehistory of the Kimberley region** led by Patrick McConvell, [ANU] who will research the prehistory of the languages of the Kimberley and provide a database of the relevant findings. This will include linguo-genetic relationships between the indigenous languages of the Kimberley and elsewhere in Australia. Also, evidence of language contacts and borrowings in the past, and partial reconstructions of the vocabularies of the proto-languages of the Kimberley. Hypotheses about prehistoric human ecologies and social organisation will be presented.

### SUPPORT THESE PROJECTS

The Kimberley Foundation Australia relies on donations to fund its research program and to communicate the results. We are currently seeking funds for all of the above projects. Donations to KFA are fully tax deductible. Please call 03 9653 3780 for a donation form/information.

### Second Stage Projects:

- **Life ways of the first Australians - ancient cave dwellings & rock art, Oscar Napier Ranges Project**, led by Prof. Sue O'Connor [ANU] and Prof. Jane Balme [Uni of WA]. This project continues Prof. O'Connor's initial research at Carpenter Gap which revealed evidence of human occupancy dating back more than 40,000 years. It should determine whether there is other organic material for dating in the caves and rock shelters, and whether there is potential for further excavation. If, as expected, there is an abundance of well-preserved, ancient organic matter [e.g. ropes, baskets, and other artefact remnants] and further excavation is physically feasible, Professors O'Connor and Balme hope to establish habitation dates that may push the time horizons back beyond those currently accepted. Extensive consultation with indigenous representatives will be integral to the success of this project. The project is intended to enable four PhD students to complete their research degrees.
- **The last 100,000 years of Kimberley climate and weather** led by Prof. Andy Gleadow [Uni of Melbourne] and Dr Karl-Heinz Wyrwoll [Uni of WA]. Through its palaeo-climatological work, KFA anticipates findings that will bear on contemporary climate change and its consequences, as well as developing a more detailed historical record. It believes, too, that this research will illuminate how adverse shifts in the Kimberley environment, particularly those linked to climatic variations, triggered diverse cultural and migratory responses.
- **Change & Continuity: Chronology, archaeology and art in the north Kimberley, northwest Australia - North Kimberley Rock Art & Artefacts Project** led by Prof Mike Morwood (University of Wollongong) and Dr June Ross (Uni of New England). This study will document and date major turning points in the human occupation of the North Kimberley. It will be multi-disciplinary.



The resulting database will be an invaluable research, conservation and management tool in an area with increasing tourist use; and will provide a means for predicting site distributions elsewhere in the region to minimise development impacts. In addition, it will enable three PhD candidates to complete their research degrees, and will help to create a pool of able young researchers experienced in and focused on the Kimberley. It will go some way towards establishing a critical mass of Kimberley scholars and a measure of generational succession.

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## Researching, preserving and promoting Kimberley rock art

The Kimberley Foundation Australia is a not-for-profit organisation. It was founded in 1997 as Friends of the Wandjina by a group of people who observed the unique record of unexplored human history in the rock art of the Kimberley region and the need to preserve it. Their aims and interests grew significantly and the Kimberley Foundation Australia was established in 2002 to reflect the broader mission. The Foundation continues to grow as it seeks partnerships and links with relevant institutions and local people of the Kimberley.

The Foundation encourages and supports integrated scientific research into the rock art of the Kimberley region for the purpose of increasing our knowledge of the earliest Australian peoples, their art and cultures and their relationship with a changing environment.

Working with the assistance of local aboriginal people, we are committed to sharing and using this knowledge to ensure the ancient rock art is recognised and promoted for its national and international significance and protected and preserved accordingly.

### CHAIR OF SCIENCE ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOGNISED IN AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

Dr Jim Ross, Chairman of the Foundations' Science Advisory Council, and a director of the KFA Board, was awarded an AM for services to the geosciences in the recent Australia Day Honours. The Board congratulates Jim for this high achievement.



Jim is a senior industry geologist with a diverse background in the Australian and international mining and exploration industries, including almost 20 years in corporate management at the level of Executive Director, Managing Director and Chairman. During the last 10 years he has led efforts to strengthen geoscience teaching and research in Western Australia to a level commensurate with the State's strategic needs. Jim has a Ph.D. from University of California [Berkeley] and a Honourary Doctorate of Science from UWA and Curtin universities.

### GRAHAME WALSH LEGACY

*What is happening in Kimberley rock art research?* was the title of the packed-out public lecture held in March this year at Newman College, University of Melbourne, under the banner of 'The Grahame Walsh Legacy'.

The 'Grahame Walsh Legacy' lecture honours and acknowledges the research work of the late Grahame Walsh, who devoted his life to documenting the Bradshaw paintings and the ancient rock art of the Kimberley.

Professor Andy Gleadow of the School of Earth Sciences at Melbourne Uni, Cecilia Myers, a former student of Grahame Walsh and Dr June Ross, Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of New England all spoke with passion and understanding for Grahame's recording systems, the rock art, and the application of geochronology in geology and landscape evolution. They explored the deep origins of the climatic system and environmental changes that have occurred in northern Australia to explain how this provides an ever-changing backdrop to understanding the people of the Kimberley and their art.

### SCIENCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER UPDATE

Professor Jim Bowler AO, Professorial Fellow in the School of Earth Sciences at the University of Melbourne has resigned from the Science Advisory Council to take a well earned break from field work. Known for his discoveries at Lake Mungo (oldest human remains found in Australia), Jim was the project leader for the much acclaimed Mulan project. The work will continue under Peter Veth, Deputy-Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies [ANU].

Jim's contribution to the SAC is greatly appreciated and his humour will be sorely missed.



### NEW CEO BRINGS MARKETING, PR & FUNDRAISING EXPERTISE TO KFA

In April 2010 the KFA Board appointed a new CEO following the resignation of Mike Lisle-Williams who has resigned to pursue his own ventures in Queensland. Mike was instrumental in establishing the Science Advisory Council that underpins the work of the Foundation, and the Board acknowledges the important contribution he has made. The work of the SAC and the fruits of their research can be read elsewhere in this newsletter. The Board takes this opportunity to thank Mike for his work and wishes him every success in the future.

The Foundation welcomes Cas Bennetto as Chief Executive Officer. Cas returns to Melbourne from Sydney after 20 years in marketing, fundraising and public relations. Cas' work experience ranges across corporate, professional services, not for profit, government, the arts and tertiary. She has worked in senior management positions at Charles Darwin University, the Australia Council for the Arts, the Museum of Contemporary Art and The Smith Family. She was the founding producer of one of Sydney's most popular annual events - the OpenAir Cinema at Farm Cove.



Cas spent eight years as a fundraiser, volunteer and head of communications at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art where she was introduced to the MCA's Maningrida and Ramingining Collection of bark painting, wooden and fibre sculpture, beginning her love and fascination with Aboriginal art. Some years later, as Communications Director, Charles Darwin University (CDU), she visited those aboriginal communities. Cas also managed CDU's participation with Yothu Yindi Foundation's Garma Festival of Traditional Culture. Prior to joining KFA Cas was National Executive Director of the Australian British Chamber of Commerce.



### FOUNDING KFA MEMBERS HONOURED

To recognise the long term support, contribution and role key people have played in the genesis of the Kimberley Foundation, the Board has established a KFA Board Alumni.

The Foundation is delighted to announce The Hon. James Macken QC AM and Dawn Dixon as inaugural members of the newly initiated KFA Board Alumni.

Jim Macken, a founding member of the KFA, has resigned after nine years on the Board. A retired judge of the Industrial Court of NSW, Jim made a valuable contribution to the Foundation's progress over the decade. The Board is enormously grateful for the role Jim has played and for his support.

Dawn Dixon, also a founding member of the KFA, resigned from the Board late 2008. Dawn has a long-standing interest in Aboriginal cultural and political issues, and attended the 'Kimberley Bush University' in 1996. She also lived and worked at Gove/Yirrkala, and performed a liaison role between Nabalco and Yirrkala Mission. The Board is delighted to honour Dawn as an inaugural KFA Alumni member and is very appreciative of her support.