

THE EARTH ABOVE

A DEEP TIME VIEW OF AUSTRALIA'S EPIC HISTORY

The Earth Above: A Deep Time View of Australia's Epic History is a feature-length full-dome planetarium show from the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage (CABAH) produced by the Deakin MotionLab in collaboration with First Nations communities and UOW Science Space.

The show explores Australia's past 140,000 years, incorporating traditional and scientific knowledge to tell Australia's epic story and transport viewers to four locations: Girraween Lagoon on Larrakia and Wulna Country outside Darwin in the NT; Cloggs Cave on GunaiKurnai Country in Victoria's East Gippsland region; Lake Mungo in NSW on the land of the Barkandji/Paakantyi, Ngyiampaa and Mutthi Mutthi people; and Jiigurru (Lizard Island) on the Great Barrier Reef, which is sacred to many, including the Dinggaal community.

The immersive educational experience will be shown extensively nationally and internationally through existing planetariums and with a portable inflatable planetarium-style dome. Importantly, the show is being taken on Country among the communities directly involved in the project before it is launched to the general public. Curriculum-aligned teaching resources to support the project are also being developed.



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Four stories

Experience Australia's epic history through four stories co-created and narrated by Traditional Owners and key community members. Explore the seven seasons of Girraween Lagoon and how researchers use pollen and core samples to reconstruct environmental change over 140,000 years. Enter Cloggs Cave and learn of the scientific rediscovery of the ceremonies and magic performed to ward off the mythical Nargun. Walk the ancient footprints of Lake Mungo and hear the stories they tell thousands of years after Australia's inland areas dried. Experience the stunning coastline and stone totem arrangements of Jiigurrurru (Lizard Island), and drop inside a midden archaeological dig to learn of the new evidence of Indigenous pottery and international sea-voyaging.



Producer's statement

"The creation of *The Earth Above: A Deep Time View of Australia's Epic History* marks a significant collaborative journey. Traditional Owners and key community members from each nation have intricately woven their stories into this film, contributing to every aspect from writing and narration to animation.

"This endeavour merges Indigenous knowledge and CABA's research, fostering a transformative insight into Australia's extensive cultural and environmental past. It represents a paradigm shift in both research methodologies and our perception of Country and place.

"This project profoundly demonstrates that deep time is intrinsically human, highlighting our existence's relevance rather than diminishing it. It underscores our perpetual connection to everything and everyone on Earth, prompting a reflective question: 'What legacy shall we leave behind?'"

—Martin Potter

The Girraween Lagoon Story

Girraween Lagoon, 35 kilometres southeast of Darwin, is known as the 'place of flowers'. It's a unique site: a waterbody where the seven seasons observed by the Larrakia people manifest clearly on the surface of the lagoon and surrounds, and where evidence of past environments is preserved deep below the water's surface. In this immersive media experience, presented in a portable planetarium-style dome, Larrakia Elder Lorraine Williams leads viewers through the Gulumoerrgin seasonal calendar year and 140,000 years of regional environmental history uncovered through recent scientific research.



The Cloggs Cave Story

Archaeologists once thought Cloggs Cave on GunaiKurnai Country in East Gippsland, Victoria, was primarily a place for shelter. But GunaiKurnai always knew this was a place of medicine and magic. Combining GunaiKurnai cultural knowledge and cutting-edge archaeological methods, the cave's history is being reinterpreted, and a more accurate story is being told. The Cloggs Cave Story transports viewers back through time, showing two different medicine ceremonies that took place in the cave 13,000 and 23,000 years ago, and the archaeological evidence that details these ceremonies.

The background image is a desert landscape at sunset. In the foreground, a large, glowing, ethereal figure, possibly a snake or a long, flowing object, is visible, emitting a bright, golden light. The figure has a segmented, snake-like appearance. The desert floor is sandy and textured. In the distance, there are some low-lying bushes and a horizon line under a sky with soft, warm colors from the setting sun.

The Lake Mungo Story

Once a lake brimming with life, now dry for almost 20,000 years, Lake Mungo in the Willandra Lakes Region in southwest New South Wales is one of Australia's most significant environmental and cultural landscapes. It is where evidence of past environments and megafauna fossils can be found. It is home to Mungo Lady and Mungo Man, the oldest known human remains on the continent. It is also where hundreds of fossilised footprints made by people some 20,000 years ago are preserved. The story etched in these footprints was deciphered by a group of expert trackers—a group of Pintubi people from the Western Desert—and is brought to life in *The Lake Mungo Story*, created in collaboration with the Barkandji/Paakantyi, Ngiyampaa and Mutthi Mutthi people.

An aerial photograph of the Great Barrier Reef, showing several islands with lush green vegetation and white sandy beaches. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, and the sky is filled with large, white clouds. The text 'The Jiigurru Story' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

The Jiigurru Story

Jiigurru (Lizard Island) on the Great Barrier Reef is sacred to many, including the Dingaal community of Far North Queensland. Almost 1500 stone arrangements made by the Ancestors stand on the island as signals of ceremonial practice and the Dingaal people's connection to Sea Country. The island group is also where evidence of human occupation stretching 6500 years and Indigenous-made Lapita style ceramics dated to 2500 years ago that provide evidence of ancient trade links across the Coral Sea have been uncovered. *The Jiigurru Story*, created in collaboration with the Dingaal community, offers an extraordinary view of the islands and trade routes voyaged long ago.

Licencing

The Earth Above: A Deep Time View of Australia's History is freely available to the Australian fixed-dome planetarium network via a licencing agreement.

Licence package includes:

- Full Dome Masters
- 5.1 and 7.1 Soundtracks
- Curriculum-aligned educational workbooks
- Promotional material (posters, images, media kit)
- Full-dome promotional trailer
- A brief documentary on the making of The Earth Above, including interviews with Traditional Owners

To learn more, visit our website:
epicaustralia.org.au/resource/theearthabove/

For further information regarding licencing and events, please contact CABA at
cabah-admin@uow.edu.au

More info: <https://bit.ly/3LreZRe>



Image credit: Mark Newsham

Education resources

CABAH is developing a range of free curriculum-aligned resources to support *The Earth Above's* educational outcomes. These resources will be available online and will include workbooks co-designed by educational consultants and teachers for primary and high school groups. Each workbook will include a curriculum alignment statement and links to additional materials.

Nyul Nyul artist Lowell Hunter at Beagle Bay, Western Australia.
Image credit: Deakin MotionLab.



Image credit: Mark Newsham

About CABAHA

Headquartered at the University of Wollongong, the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage (CABAHA) is enhancing our understanding of Australia's unique cultural and natural history. Working with our Indigenous partners, we explore diverse locations, from remote tropical islands to ancient windswept lunettes, boggy swamps, and the arid interior to tell a culturally inclusive and globally significant history of our region. We call this 'our epic story', and our intent is for the cultural and scientific narratives developed through our transdisciplinary research to guide efforts in preserving and managing Australia's biodiversity and cultural heritage for the present and future.

The Earth Above, part of CABAHA's Education and Engagement program, shares top-tier research on Australia's history and traditional knowledge with non-academic audiences.

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<https://epicaustralia.org.au/>

About DML

Deakin MotionLab (DML) delivers groundbreaking participatory and immersive screen experiences, cutting-edge research into screen creations and cultures, and inventive digital solutions that address real-world challenges. The DML works closely with industry and communities on innovative screen experiences providing expertise in emerging screen technology, co-creative strategies, motion capture, game animation and digital design.



Larrakia woman Lorraine Williams and Martin Potter recording at Girraween Lagoon on the outskirts of Darwin, Northern Territory on Larrakia and Wulna Country. Image credit: Deakin MotionLab.