AustArch1: A Database of $^{14}$C and Luminescence Ages from Archaeological Sites in the Australian Arid Zone

A.N. Williams¹, M.A. Smith,¹,² C.S.M Turney³ and M.L Cupper⁴

Introduction
AustArch1 is a Microsoft® Excel® database listing radiocarbon, luminescence and uranium series ages from archaeological sites in the Australian arid zone. It was originally compiled to support analysis of time-series trends by the authors (Smith et al. 2008; Williams et al. in press) and is now available online at http://palaeoworks.anu.edu.au/databases.html. The database is intended as a resource for archaeologists working in the arid zone. It provides a ready checklist of dated sites as well as a comprehensive listing of radiocarbon, luminescence and uranium series age determinations, and in conjunction with calibration programs such as OxCal or Calib, can be used to generate radiocarbon density plots for analysis of trends in occupation. Research in the arid zone has grown over the past decade, making this central listing of chronometric data particularly relevant, and we expect that AustArch1 will become a useful tool for both consultant and academic archaeologists.

Format
AustArch1 is a Microsoft® Excel® file, listing ages (rows) by site, location and biogeographic region. The latter are based on the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA) 6.1 divisions (Thackway and Cresswell 1995). Longitude and latitude are compiled from published sources, or estimated from locality maps. All $^{14}$C ages are given as conventional (uncalibrated) ages. The file includes a bibliography of published and unpublished sources for $^{14}$C, TL/OSL and U/Th data.

Geographic Scope
AustArch1 covers the entire arid zone, including the following IBRA regions: BHC, BRT, CAR, CHC, COO, CR, DMR, FIN, FLB (northern section only), GAS, GAW, GD, GS (Shark Bay area only), GSD, GVD, HAM, LSD, MAC, MGD, ML, MUR, NUL, PIL, SSD, STP, TAN, YAL (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interim_Regionalisation_for_Australia). The Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) is included for comparison.

Coverage
AustArch1 is currently the most comprehensive listing of radiocarbon ages for the Australian arid zone. We estimate that the database includes >97% of available $^{14}$C ages – totalling 971 ages from 286 sites – derived from published and unpublished research over the past 40 years. In addition to radiocarbon data, there are 115 TL/OSL or U/Th ages available for arid zone sites (97 dating occupation sediments or hearths). Major gaps in coverage are the Great Victoria Desert, Nullarbor Plain, Tanami Desert and the northern (subtropical) margins of the arid zone, reflecting the paucity of archaeological work in these areas. We have not attempted to audit the database for technical and archaeological validity of the ages, preferring to leave this to users.

Updates and Errors
We intend to maintain and periodically update the database and would appreciate hearing of new $^{14}$C, TL/OSL or U/Th results as they become available. We also ask users to notify us of any errors (on email: u4077044@anu.edu.au or m.smith@nma.gov.au).

Acknowledgements
AustArch1 incorporates material from published or private databases by Matt Cupper, Fiona Hook, Mike Smith, Sean Ulm and Peter Veth. We thank colleagues who have supplied unpublished data: Neale Draper, Giles Hamm, Fiona Hook, Roger Luebbes, June Ross, Kathryn Przywolnik and Esmee Webb.

References


The Australian Academy of the Humanities: 2007 Fellows
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At the Annual General Meeting of the Australian Academy of the Humanities on 17 November 2007, an outstanding scholar in archaeology was elected Fellow: Sue O’Connor. Fellows elected to the Academy are residents of Australia who have achieved the highest distinction in scholarship in the humanities.

Dr Susan O’Connor is Head of the Department of Archaeology and Natural History at the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University. She is currently conducting a major archaeological research project in East Timor investigating the cultural and environmental changes that took place across the Neolithic transition and into the Metal Age. This project complements and builds on previous research in the eastern Maluku region and Wallacea and current research in Papua New Guinea which is investigating Pleistocene colonisation in Island Southeast Asia and Greater Australia and subsequent patterns of migration, interaction and exchange. Her publications include various papers in Terra Australis, Archaeology in Oceania and Antiquity.
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Subscriptions are available to individuals through membership of the Australian Archaeological Association Inc. or to organisations through institutional subscription. Subscription application/renewal forms are available at http://www.australianarchaeologicalassociation.com.au.

Graphic Design: Love hate Design
Printing: Screen Offset Printing
Cover: Excavations at Glen Thirsty 1, August 2004, looking southeast (L to R: Mike Smith and Sharon Overend) (Photograph: M.A. Smith).

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ISSN 0312-2417

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