

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian culture gone *Walkabout*

A 20th-Century travel magazine will be examined to provide an understanding of the social and cultural identity of middle-class Australians.

University of Tasmania Riawunna and School of English, Journalism and European Languages researchers Dr Mitchell Rolls and Dr Anna Johnston have received an Australian Research Council Discovery grant of \$109,000 (DP0984449), over three years to investigate the role of the magazine *Walkabout* on Australian culture.

Walkabout was produced by the Australian National Travel Association from 1934 to 1974. From the outset it was one of Australia's most popular 20th-Century magazines, with a top estimated readership of 104,000.

It was a travel magazine but covered many other aspects of Australian culture at the time. It was common in doctors' waiting rooms, lounge room tables and school libraries.

"*Walkabout* provides an ideal vehicle by which to examine the imbrications of commercial and cultural industries in the middlebrow, mid-century Australian print culture, and how this contributed to the development of a modern national identity," Dr Rolls said.

"*Walkabout* made a significant contribution to Australia's sense of itself as a nation."

It was one of the few publications at the time to recognise Indigenous Australians, with both photographs and articles.

Dr Rolls said this was significant in itself.

"*Walkabout*'s inclusion of many articles about and photographs of Aborigines, along with their incidental mention in other contributions, shows a nation's maturing sense of itself and provides a critical history of the relationship between settler, immigrant and indigenous communities which is crucial to the nation's understanding of itself," he said.

The magazine will be analysed to determine perceptions about Australia at the time, and how these have influenced current understandings. The project will produce an annotated index of *Walkabout* which will be available to the public on line.

“This project will advance both Australian and international scholarship on race, representation, nature, natural history, travel and place-making in popular middlebrow reading material,” Dr Rolls said.

“It intervenes directly in debates about how Australia has interpreted itself, debates that continue to resonate powerfully.”

Drs Rolls and Johnston are researchers affiliated with the University of Tasmania’s Centre for Colonialism and Its Aftermath.

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