

# **THESIS TITLE**

‘A Critical Analysis of Decision-making Protocols used in Approving a Commercial Mining License for the Beverley Uranium Mine in Adnyamathanha Country: Toward Effective Indigenous Participation in Caring for Cultural Resources’

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## **Abstract**

An exploratory approach via a single case study is used in this thesis to better understand two embedded units of analysis: the first unit of analysis explores Adnyamathanha resources management and decision-making protocols, and the second unit of analysis explores the Environmental Impact Assessment for Beverley Uranium Mine. ‘Adnyamathanha’ literally translates into English as ‘name for the people of the rock country’ and is associated with several sub-groups of Indigenous peoples from the northern Flinders Ranges region of South Australia. These sub-groups include Kuyani and Adnya-Kuyani, Biladapa, Warlpi, and Yadliawada and all are inextricably linked through complex relationships between people, land, kinship and language.

This thesis involves a critical examination of the various levels of participation by Adnyamathanha in the decision-making processes surrounding the commercial licensing at Beverley Mine. It clarifies issues and raises new questions about the interface between players involved in land use through a qualitative and participatory research methodology and set of methods used to explore the topic. Theoretical understandings are linked to Indigenous heritage and resources management to highlight the cultural values of past, present and future relationships between Indigenous peoples and customary lands. Deconstruction of the geographical landscape offers an insight to the spaces and places necessary for an equitable assessment of commercial, social and environmental land values.

In this study the trajectory of cultural heritage protection and resources management is examined as part of the key legislated processes that relates to heritage security and sustainability in Adnyamathanha country. Native Title was a focal point of engagement within the Beverley case and is therefore central to many of the discussion points throughout this thesis. An examination of the extent to which mining proponents and governments are responsible for impact assessments goes hand in hand with this discussion regarding participation by Aboriginal players in land use.

Examination of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in the Beverley case reveals that government and industry processes facilitated mining and devalued Adnyamathanha cultural heritage and site protection. I argue that the ideology behind ‘impact assessment’ and land use procedures within Australia remains dominated by a colonial framework committed to prioritising commercial perceptions of what is valuable based on national and global business-related interests. This ideology fails to accommodate Indigenous cultural heritage values and

denies Indigenous peoples' human rights. Findings reveal a disturbing scenario of inequitable engagement that unequivocally favoured miners' rights and brutally disempowered Adnyamathanha, a pattern consistent with global trends.

The significance of this thesis lies in the validation of a culturally diverse range of understandings of land resources, especially the meanings of Adnyamathanha identity and Indigenous connectivity to the environment. Cultural heritage protection is explicitly linked to Indigenous governance and Indigenous engagement through prioritisation of Indigenous needs and values. This thesis identifies how capacity building and self-determination can improve governance and engagement strategies to galvanise and strengthen future outcomes for Adnyamathanha and other Indigenous players dealing with exploration and mining. Improving impact assessment participation using culturally appropriate protocols is one part of this multi-faceted solution.

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I wish to state that the intellectual and cultural knowledge shared by Aboriginal participants' remains their property and this thesis in no way infringes on that right.

### **Declaration**

#### **For a Thesis that does not contain work already in the public domain**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate my efforts in completing this thesis to all Yura Yakarti (Adnyamathanha Children) and the special bond they develop with the physical and spiritual environment from a very early age. This bond grows through the learning privileges provided by our Elders and parents, and time spent in ‘the bush’. The bush is the most precious part of Adnyamathanha Yarta (our land) and is like a home away from home where we can relax and rejuvenate; a cool shady creek in the summer time, a warm sunny hollow in the winter time, or a panoramic view down to Manda (Lake Frome) that is breathtakingly beautiful. Yura Yakarti go out bush with their ngangginyi (family), visiting special places, listening to all the peaceful sounds, sleeping under the stars, going for long walks in the daytime, and sitting around the fire at night. Together we enjoy all the wonderful foods like urdlu varlu (kangaroo meat) and mai (plant foods) cooked in the ilda (ground oven), warratyi vipi (emu egg) and nguri (wattle gum), and we drink fresh awi (water) from the creeks and springs. For our Yura Yakarti to have these experiences we as parents must demonstrate our knowledge and respect for Adnyamathanha Yarta and our ngangginyi, making sure both are looked after now and for future generations. Learning to know and respect your country is about learning to know and respect yourself.

I also dedicate this thesis to the peaceful movements of people on a global scale who truly believe our world will be a better place when it becomes decolonised and nuclear free. Decolonisation of our minds and our daily lives provides a peaceful strategy that every individual person can nurture and utilise toward a solution for global peace and a cleaner, sustainable environment. The threat of a nuclear holocaust is real for all global citizens, and responsible leadership alone cannot guarantee our children and their children a safe presence on this Earth if uranium continues to be extracted and marketed on a global scale. Ordinary citizens of every nation must act to ensure a safe environment for our children.

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