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The Australian Rangeland Society

SUSTAINING CULTURAL VALUES: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous rights need to be acknowledged for traditional cultures to survive. The potential benefits resulting from indigenous cultural practices can range from better land management practices to tourism. A shared commitment to ensuring the survival of culture is an important step towards reconciliation.

The uniqueness of Australia's indigenous cultures is threatened by a number of factors, including excessive exploitation of land and the destruction of special cultural places and traditions.

A key element to sustaining indigenous culture is the *Native Title Act 1993* (NTA), which can provide benefits to both indigenous and non-indigenous interests by providing a framework for negotiation on land use without compromising rights. Indigenous cultural identity is derived from associations with land. The survival of culture cannot be divorced from traditional practices.

Passage of the NTA was of great significance in the maturing of Australian political life, ensuring both that the rights recognised by the *Mabo* decision would receive the protection of Commonwealth legislation and that land titles issued previously, which may have been invalid because of native title, would be deemed valid.

This is the contemporary social and legal reality - sustaining culture is inextricably linked with access to land. For this reason, native title issues will be central to any discussion about sustaining cultural values in the rangelands.