

# Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

<b>Primary SDG</b>	<b>10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES</b>
<b>Broad theme</b>	Indigenous histories, art and new media
<b>Research</b>	Collaborating with Aboriginal artists to transform 'documentary' paintings into new media forms
<b>Impact region</b>	Australia; Indigenous globally
<b>Faculty</b>	Arts and Social Sciences
<b>School/Institute</b>	National Institute for Experimental Arts (NIEA)
<b>Academic</b>	Dr Lisa Stefanoff
<b>Project partners</b>	ARC (DECRA) full funding
<b>Related SDGs</b>	4: Quality Education

## Elevator pitch

Lisa Stefanoff is collaborating with female Aboriginal 'town camp' artists outside of Alice Springs to create interactive experiences of their 'documentary' paintings to bring stories of survival and acute social disadvantage to national and international audiences.

## The Challenge: Important Aboriginal histories embedded in paintings are being 'lost'

Eighteen 'town camps' on the outskirts of Alice Springs are home to thousands of Aboriginal people who speak multiple endangered languages and who have lived their lives in many places across the Central Desert region. Lives in town camps are challenged by chronic housing shortages, high levels of unemployment, associated health and wellbeing issues, and reduced life expectancies. Senior women often support several generations of immediate and extended family.

Despite negative media portrayals of the camps, town campers have been telling their own stories for over 40 years through radio, music and more recently, paintings, sculptures, films and animations. Town camp artworks are renowned for their pictorial storytelling style, and their reflections on race relations, politics, and pop culture. Over the past decade, hundreds of these paintings have been sold into the Indigenous art market. They have also been collected by the likes of Bryan Brown, Warwick Thornton, Ernie Dingo, university museums and high net worth individuals. Although sales directly support artists and their families, important Australian stories about life on one of the nation's most complex frontiers are being 'lost' to private buyers.

## UNSW's solution: Collaborate with artists to transform their paintings into new media artworks

Lisa is assisting female town camp artists to access new media opportunities at NIEA that can amplify the stories in their paintings for a large, public audience. With ARC and Faculty support, Lisa is working with the artists to prototype an interactive town camp art experience that explores different modes of immersion. They will also be creating a new multi-media archive to capture their efforts. It's a shared design journey, with artists

determining how audiences might 'enter' a painting and engage with their world. With further funding the project can continue to experiment with more artists, artworks, stories and technologies, and produce major new media works for public exhibition globally.

**The Impacts: Increase public awareness of central Australian Aboriginal histories**

This project will bring long overdue attention to the remarkable stories and heritage of people whose lives on Australia's interior 'frontier' have been impacted by social, cultural, political and economic changes over the past 70 years. At the same time, Lisa is supporting the development of Aboriginal women's storytelling skills, the creation of new forms of digital desert Aboriginal cultural heritage, and living story archives for the generation of town campers to come.

**Researcher**

Lisa is an Australian cultural anthropologist, media producer and screen culture curator undertaking collaborative arts practice-led research at NIEA. She completed her PhD at the New York University Department of Anthropology Graduate Program in Cultural Anthropology / Culture and Media where she was a McCracken Fellow. Based in Alice Springs and Darwin since 2002, she has worked at the Central Australia Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA), IAD (Institute for Aboriginal Development) Press, and for a range of NT community arts organisations and projects. Prior to coming to UNSW Lisa was a post-doctoral research fellow on the CRC-Remote Economic Participation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Economies project (UniSA). She is also the mother of two young children.

Ben Falkenmire 12.03.18