

# ARKAROOLA WILDERNESS SANCTUARY



## From the ARK Update 25/01/10

### VISION OR VANDALISM? WE HAVE A CHOICE

Acclaimed British scientist, James Lovelock, the architect of the Gaian hypothesis that Earth is a self-regulating system, argues that intuition and instinct have a place in science. Whilst measurement and replication validate scientific knowledge, instinct and vision usually precede knowledge. What relevance does this have for Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary?

One of the greatest weaknesses of the South Australian Government's proposed new management framework for the Northern Flinders Ranges, is the flimsy foundation upon which it is premised. Mineral prospectivity is mapped, but biodiversity is represented only by point locality data, (places where threatened species have been recorded). No value has been ascribed to the overall health and integrity of ecosystems, barely modified since European occupation. Nor is there adequate provision for the knowledge we will gain from further sampling of the sanctuary's biodiversity and geoheritage. Yet great South Australian scientists like Sir Douglas Mawson, Sir Mark Oliphant and Reg Sprigg recognised and applauded Arkaroola's innate values, decades before scientific discoveries confirmed them.

With his geology students, Sir Douglas Mawson explored the Flinders Ranges from Melrose to Arkaroola. He mapped the region's stratigraphic units, creating geological bar codes that allow us to connect geological formations across great distances. Of all Flinders Ranges landscapes, it was Arkaroola that Mawson most wanted to see protected for posterity. Mawson appealed to his former student, Reg Sprigg, to realise this vision if he ever got the opportunity. For both men, Arkaroola was a story-laden, living outdoor museum with no equal in Australia.

Scientists continue to make great discoveries on Arkaroola, testimony to Mawson's instincts. An ancient reef was found in 2008, the oldest of its kind known on earth. The reef preserves the remains of what may be the oldest animals on earth, predating the Ediacaran fauna. Located in Zone 3, the reef will be vulnerable to mineral exploration and mining under the proposed new zoning framework. We have seen what can happen within a regulated environment. Illegally dumped waste may now be gone but so too is a celebrated fluorite reef. Behaviour by Marathon Resources revealed that regulation does not necessarily deliver the protection we would expect.

Through their submissions, the South Australian Museum, biologists, scientists, ecologists, and former bureaucrats have argued for a much more robust level of protection for Arkaroola's biodiversity, geoheritage, and cultural assets, than what has been proposed in *Seeking a Balance*. If the state government chooses to ignore these authoritative voices then it must take responsibility for state-condoned vandalism, the inevitable outcome of future mineral exploration and mining within Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary.

**We have five days left to promote vision over vandalism. YOUR voice is important. Help us to preserve our heritage and send in your submission before Friday 29th January 2010.**

For more information go to [www.savearkaroola.com.au](http://www.savearkaroola.com.au) or [www.arkaroola.com.au/breakingnews.php](http://www.arkaroola.com.au/breakingnews.php)



NORTHERN FLINDERS RANGES

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA