PROPOSAL TO STRENGTHEN VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY WITHIN THE SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Background
Visual anthropology at the ANU has a world-class reputation, on the back of decades of high calibre work in ethnographic filmmaking, ethnographic research in Aboriginal Australia and the Pacific, as well as broader scholarship in art and visual culture. In 2008 the Master in Visual Culture Research (VCR) was established as a postgraduate coursework program drawing upon this diverse expertise to offer a suite of courses tailored to the interests of a variety of students, from prospective HDR through to those with more vocational concerns. In 2009 VCR was incorporated into the Master of Liberal Arts. Further curriculum development in recent years has established ANU as the only university in Australia offering visual anthropology courses at undergraduate, postgraduate and HDR levels, with a wide diversity of visual research feeding into these teaching programs as well as a series of research-related forums and projects. Recent appointments of postdoctoral and future fellowships (Natasha Fijn and Jennifer Deger) have added further strength and vitality to this network.

Recent initiatives
Since 2010 we have been working to build up the program through a series of initiatives:

- Establishing the virtual Centre for Visual Anthropology
- Running a monthly work-in-progress forum CVA (with excellent regular attendance from across the university and further afield)
- Establishing the visualanth email list, with 220 subscribers at July 2013
- Developing new practical methods courses at undergraduate level
- Offering supervision and methods training to a growing cohort of HDR students — in 2012 60 students across CASS and CAP completed intensive ethnographic film courses
- Establishing the John Darling Fellowship in conjunction with Ronin Films, Herb Feith Foundation and Sara Darling. Plans are underway to expand this program
- Fostering a growing network of scholars from major centres of visual research across Europe, the US and UK through visiting fellowships and conferences
- Developing an integrated suite of visual programs and panels at the forthcoming Australian Anthropology Society conference at ANU in November 2013
- Supporting the Vice Chancellor’s Visiting Fellowship initiative to stimulate new research synergies with Vanessa Barbay, a recent PhD in the School of Art granted a VF in A & A

Barriers to strengthening the program
At present the growth of visual anthropology and visual culture research is hampered by the complex structure of the RSHA. The DHH was established in part to ensure the continuation of innovative visual research being carried out by CRIIO. However in recent years this stream of the DHH has lost two out of three visual anthropology staff, with no plans for replacement. Collaborative teaching and administration of the masters program across the DHH and A & A has also been a less than ideal arrangement as the two streams of the Hub (Digital Humanities and Visual Anthropology) have effectively operated separately and at times in tension with each other. Coordinating activities and building an integrated suite of teaching and research programs with a
vision for future expansion would benefit enormously from co-location of visual anthropology staff within a single AOU.

**Proposal to disestablish the DHH into its constituent units**
The proposed restructure of the RSHA presents an ideal opportunity to allow the two streams of the Hub to be relocated in order to strengthen the capacities of each. To ensure a viable base for visual anthropology I propose that the visual anthropology component of the Hub — staff, resourcing, equipment — be transferred into the School of Archaeology and Anthropology. This would allow us to achieve administrative and collegial cohesion and establish a more focused, visible and less compromised Centre for Visual Anthropology within the school, through which teaching and supervision programs, research projects and public events could be fostered.

**Physical and administrative Co-location**
Ideally all visual anthropology staff, fellows and visiting fellows would be physically located together in the school, along with edit suites and equipment.

Consolidating the current dispersed network in a single school would place us in a significantly stronger position to build on existing strengths, expand the program and promote ANU’s unparalleled ability in Australia to offer a comprehensive suite of visual programs.

*Melinda Hinkson 31 July 2013*