

## Participant Information Sheet

Dear colleague,

This information sheet provides details of a research study in which you are invited to participate. Because your contribution is highly valued, we would like you to know the purpose of the study and the rights and conditions that your participation may raise. Please take the time to read the following information.

If, after reading this information, you would like to participate in the research project, you will be asked to sign a consent form, of which you will receive a copy.

### Researchers:

This research is led by A/Prof. Cate Frieman at the School of Archaeology and Anthropology (ARCHANTH), College of Arts and Social Sciences at the Australian National University (ANU) and conducted by Rebecca Paxton at ARCHANTH and the Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science, College of Science, ANU.

**Project Title:** Kin and connection: Ancient DNA between the science and the social (hereafter KINnect)

### General Outline of the Project:

- **Description and Methodology:** This research engages with current and former members of the aDNA, palaeogenomics, molecular anthropology, molecular archaeology, and archaeogenetics (hereafter aDNA) research communities, to better understand how these fields are evolving, particularly in relation to traditional archaeological enquiry. The aim of the project is to co-design a framework for ongoing communication and fruitful collaboration between researchers within and across these disciplinary boundaries.

To get a better understanding of how these fields are evolving and explore potential opportunities and challenges for collaboration, we are proposing a variety of structured activities and discussions which we hope will allow as many people as possible to share their perspectives according to their preferences and availability. These activities include a brief online survey and individual interviews, to be carried out in 2024 and 2025, and a workshop on interdisciplinary collaboration taking place in 2026. These research activities are described in detail below.

We recognise that constructing models of human history involves interpretation of diverse evidence, and that evidence from different fields might at times appear to conflict. While none of us are neutral with respect to our disciplines, we endeavour to approach this research from a position of curiosity and community building.

- **Participants:** You are being invited to participate in this research because you are currently, or have previously been, professionally involved in the aDNA research community. Unfortunately, we are unable to include students at any levels as research participants. We are also limited to conducting this research only in English.

To participate in the research, you will need access to the internet. Additionally, participation in online interviews or discussions will require use of a videoconferencing platform (such as, Zoom, Microsoft

Teams, or Skype). When practical and preferred, telephone or in-person interviews with the research team may also be arranged.

**Use of Data and Feedback:** Your information will only be used as described in this Participant Information Sheet and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except as required by Australian law. Data collected as part of this research will be used to better understand the evolution of the aDNA research field and to draft a framework for productive interdisciplinary collaboration. Additionally, data may be published in academic journal articles, books, or book chapters, or in media publications. Most of the data will be presented as summary data, although direct quotes and de-identified descriptions of concrete situation may be used in some publications.

We hope to generate an ongoing dialogue about interdisciplinary collaboration and are therefore keen to share any research updates and progress with you. With your consent, we will email you any interim and final project reports, as well as drafts of the framework for interdisciplinary collaboration. All research publications (including reports, academic publications, and media reports) will be available for download or linked to on the project's [public website](#) (under construction). From the website, you can also subscribe to A/Prof Frieman's biweekly newsletter, which will feature periodic research updates.

- **Project Funding:** This research is funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Future Fellowship, with additional financial support from the Australian National University.

## Participant Involvement:

- **Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal:**

Participation in this research is entirely **voluntary**. You may decline to participate in any or all parts of the research, and to pause or withdraw your participation, without explanation or negative consequences. Withdrawal from the research will not affect any ongoing or potential future employment with the ANU or other relevant institutions.

Please note that if you do withdraw your participation, it might not be possible to withdraw data that you have already provided. If you have participated in the survey or in an individual interview, you will be able to withdraw your contribution at any time until the work is prepared for publication. Your interview recording, transcript, and survey responses will be deleted/destroyed and will not be used in the data analysis. However, due to the nature of the research, it will not be possible to withdraw any individual contributions to the workshop.

- **What does participation in the research entail?**

To help us better understand how the aDNA field is evolving, and co-design a framework for productive collaboration, we are inviting you to participate in any or all the following research activities:

- A *survey*, which explores the demographic, geographic, methodological, and thematic characteristics of the aDNA research community, as well as its connections with other fields of research. The purpose of this survey is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the features of the field. [Click here to access the survey.](#)
- An *in-depth interview*, during which we will ask you open-ended questions about the development of aDNA research based on your approaches to, and experiences within, the field. You might also be asked to respond to others' reflections about aDNA research, and to consider

future developments in the field. You can decline to answer any interview question without reason or consequence.

The interview will be audio recorded using the platform's inbuilt recording functionality and/or a digital voice recorder. If you do not consent to being audio recorded, live transcription will be used to capture your responses, if available. The audio recordings will be accessible only to members of the research team and solely used for transcription purposes. After the interview, we will email the full written interview transcript for you to review. We encourage you to provide any additional comments or clarifications you feel are needed, either by email or by requesting a follow-up interview. **Please note that your feedback will be treated as research data.** You can also request that we avoid quoting particular responses.

- *A workshop*, in which we will discuss and draft a framework for productive interdisciplinary collaboration between the aDNA and archaeology communities. To make the workshop accessible across time zones, at least two workshop sessions will be held with a maximum of 25 participants in each session. Depending on interest, additional sessions might be organised. Further participant information about the workshop process and agenda will be provided closer to the event.
- **Location and Duration:** All proposed research activities are intended to be carried out online to ensure the broadest possible participation. If any of the proposed platforms are unavailable to you, please contact a member of the research team to discuss alternatives.
  - Our survey is conducted using the Qualtrics experience management platform, and is accessible on computers, tablets, and smartphones. You will access the survey via a personal link and will only be able to submit your responses once. Regardless of platform, the survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.
  - The interview will last 30-45 minutes. It will be conducted online, preferably via one of the following video-conferencing platforms; Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Skype. If necessary, we can use alternative online platforms or conduct telephone or in-person interviews. If necessary and subject to your consent, we might contact you by email to ask clarifying or follow-up questions about your interview responses. Reviewing the transcript and/or providing additional responses is entirely voluntary and should no more than half-hour.
  - Participant information about the duration and online platform used for the workshop is not currently available and will be provided to interested researchers once the details are confirmed.
- **Risks:** This research is considered low risk. Nevertheless, some of the topics discussed in the project (e.g. experiences collaborating with researchers within or across fields) might cause discomfort to some participants. If you are distressed by any of the topics raised in this research, or by participating in the research, please consult any of the relevant support services and resources linked towards the end of this document.

Please note that it will not be possible for you to be an anonymous participant in this research. We will use several approaches to de-identify individual responses (see our approach to privacy and confidentiality is outlined below). However, due to the relatively small size of the aDNA community, it is possible that a colleague or collaborator might identify you based on your responses.

To mitigate any social, professional, or reputational risks that might arise due to your participation in the research, you will have the opportunity to review your survey responses and/or interview transcript and clarify any responses prior to publication. If you have opted to make your responses identifiable, we will

confirm any attributions with you before quoting your responses in publications or other outward facing materials. Nevertheless, we ask that you avoid sharing confidential information, making defamatory remarks, or otherwise disclosing information that might be incriminating or otherwise harmful to yourself or others.

- **Benefits:** This project aims to foster more productive interdisciplinary collaborations between researchers in the aDNA and archaeology fields. By participating in the research, you may indirectly benefit from engaging with a wide network of scholars within and beyond your discipline. More broadly, we hope that improved interdisciplinary collaboration will benefit all participating researchers and research communities by enabling the generation of more robust social models and enriching our understanding of the past and the data we use to study it.

#### Exclusion criteria:

**Participant Limitation:** Due to practical constraints, we anticipate that we will be able to conduct approximately 35 interviews and accommodate approximately 50 participants across two workshop sessions. The workshop sessions will be separated to accommodate participants in different time zones. As noted above, we are not able to include students and researchers who are not fluent in English as research participants.

#### Confidentiality:

- **Confidentiality:** Due to the specific nature of this research, we cannot provide anonymity for research participants. Nevertheless, we will make every effort to protect your confidentiality according to your preferences and as far as Australian law permits.

You will be given the option to be listed as a research participant in the final project reporting:

- If you DO wish to be named as a research participant, we will contact you prior to publication to confirm whether you would like any of your quoted responses to be attributed to you (by default you will not be directly attributed).
- If you DO NOT wish to be named as a research participant, we will remove any information that is directly or foreseeably identifiable. We might refer to you by a pseudonym or by your research area(s) (such as evolutionary biologist, bioanthropologist), geographic region and/or type of institution (e.g., Northern European university), role (such as a 'senior researcher' or 'technician'), or demographic characteristics. If necessary, we might also report responses using fictional 'composite' respondents to represent shared positions or themes.

#### Privacy Notice:

In collecting your personal information within this research, the ANU must comply with the Privacy Act 1988. The ANU Privacy Policy is available at [https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP\\_010007](https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_010007) and it contains information about how a person can:

- Access or seek correction to their personal information;
- Complain about a breach of an Australian Privacy Principle by ANU, and how ANU will handle the complaint.

#### Data Storage:

- **Where:** All identifiable research data will be stored on a secure Australian National University server in a location that is only accessible to members of the research team. De-identified and aggregated data will also be stored on password protected personal computers during analysis.

- **How long:** All research data will be stored for at least five years from the date of any publication arising from the research.
- **Handling of Data following the required storage period:** At the end of the required data storage period, the de-identified data will be archived in the ANU Data Commons repository. Only the research metadata will be accessible to repository users. With your consent, we will retain the de-identified data for potential use in future research projects conducted by the same researchers.

### Queries and Concerns:

- **Contact Details for More Information:** If you have any questions about the project, please contact:
  - Rebecca Paxton, email: [rebecca.paxton@anu.edu.au](mailto:rebecca.paxton@anu.edu.au) , phone: +61(0)479141755, or
  - A/Prof Cate Frieman, email [catherine.frieman@anu.edu.au](mailto:catherine.frieman@anu.edu.au), phone: +61 (0)2 619 70054.
- **Contact Details if in Distress:** Please take care of yourself and consider whether participation in this research might raise topics that are emotionally distressing for you. If your participation in this research causes you distress, please consider accessing your local or institutional crisis support services. A list of available support services in different countries can be found [here](#). For participants in Australia, please contact [Lifeline](#) for support.

### Ethics Committee Clearance:

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol H/2024/0583). If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research has been conducted, please contact:

Ethics Manager  
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee  
The Australian National University  
Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427  
Email: [Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au](mailto:Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au)

*The research team acknowledges and celebrates the First Australians on whose traditional lands this research is conducted. We pay our respects to the elders past and present.*