

Chit chat

We're privileged to have this second set of papers edited by Darren Curnoe on Australia's past, with two biologically oriented contributions that complement the archaeological content of this issue. Please see Curnoe's introductory paper in the last issue of *Before Farming* for his précis of the historical context of these contributions and summary of current issues that continue to polarise researchers, as well setting the agenda for some years to come.

The themed content of this and the last issue is a departure from the usual smorgasbord of topics covered in *Before Farming*. Rest assured we will be returning to our normal fare in the next issue, but the final issue of the year will feature an extended discussion of shamanism as a construct used by archaeologists and rock art researchers. David Lewis-Williams will review the subject of shamanism as applied to prehistory, highlighting abuses as well as drawing attention to examples of good practice and suggesting directions for future research. We have invited comment from regional specialists world-wide to assess the extent to which the art, archaeology or ethnographic record in their respective areas provides support for the widespread practice of shamanism in the past. This promises to be a searching overview that should move debate, and research, forward beyond its current impasse.

For those of you in the northern hemisphere, who have left or are about to leave for a season of fieldwork, why not send us a brief news report on your current research, either from the field or on your return? The medium of an electronic journal lends itself to just this kind of reportage. For example, I will be in Zambia shortly, undertaking another season of investigation of the prehistory of the Luangwa Valley, including the more recent record of forager/farmer interaction. We are integrating archaeological data, oral history and DNA sampling of the local population to model roughly 1300 years of co-existence between the two communities. I might just send an update from the field, but I'd rather hear from you, whichever hemisphere you're in.

The Editor
Liverpool, June 2006