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How much is too much?

Abstract

Recognition of Indigenous Australians rights to exercise authority over cultural materials is an ongoing concern for Indigenous knowledge holders including arts practitioners. Advocates of legal recognition of Indigenous authority over Indigenous cultural material seek law reform on a number of frontiers. These efforts for reform are inevitably shaped to some extent by existing legal and economic principles. This paper looks at the incongruities between Australia's legal principles and Indigenous culture, and the ways in which these dissimilarities impact on recent attempts to recognise Indigenous authority over Indigenous cultural material within the framework of intellectual property and natural resource management laws. It is concerned with two questions that I ask myself as an Indigenous lawyer. Firstly, "how much are we required to adapt and change for recognition?" And secondly, "how much is too much?"