

AMBER FROM CAPE YORK PENINSULA AUSTRALIA'S FIRST SIGNIFICANT AMBER DEPOSIT

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We report the discovery of the first significant amber resource from Australia. Initial discoveries were made on remote beaches of Cape York Peninsula, far north Queensland where amber was found as flotsam. To date more than 70kg of amber and copal have been recovered with as much as 20% bearing inclusions including plant, invertebrate and rare vertebrate remains.

In late 2009 we discovered amber *in situ* in horizontally-bedded, presumed Miocene aged lignite's underlying Pleistocene sand dunes. Although requiring further research, we anticipate that this will prove to be just one of several different aged lignite deposits in the same region. Cape York as the northerly most part of the Australian land mass has been intermittently connected to Papua New Guinea during the Cainozoic. For this reason, the fossils in the amber offer an unprecedented opportunity to document potential as well as realised biotic interchange during this climatically critical period in the evolution of the Australian biota.

PIR investigations have indicated that the Cape York amber is derived from Kauri Pine (*Agathis* sp) resin. Kauri Pines occur south of the collecting area in the Wet Tropics region near Cairns and to the north in the mid-montane regions of Papua New Guinea but are not known from Cape York today.