Genocide: a ceramic representation and documentary study of the impact of colonisation on the Australian Aboriginals

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GENOCIDE: A ceramic representation and documentary study of the impact of colonisation on the Australian Aboriginals.

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF CREATIVE ARTS (D.C.A.)

FROM THE

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BY

PAUL COUNSEL

SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS 1990
I hereby certify that the work embodied in this dissertation is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.
ABSTRACT

The work presented in this submission deals with the impact of colonisation on the Australian Aboriginals. It is presented in two parts, one a written dissertation, the other an exhibition of ceramic art. Using both aspects, I investigate the relationship between Aboriginal and white societies, both in an historical and present day context, and claim that this relationship constitutes genocide.

This narrative is not written from a straight historical point of view, in that I do not look at different areas, States, times, individuals and policies to evaluate similarities and differences. Rather, it is a personal statement written by an artist. There is no attempt to create a smooth myth in the way that much of Australia's history has previously been addressed.

In this investigation, I have applied Raphael Lempkin's definition of genocide, to events and practices which have taken place since the colonisation of Australia. I have structured the document around the United Nation's Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

In the presentation of the art work, I have used clay and corroded steel metaphorically to represent Aboriginal and white societies respectively. The resultant juxtaposition of these materials alludes to certain events and practices as described in the research.

My greatest concern is that our history has been prejudiced by ideals and assumptions, which lay at the foundations of our ways of thinking. Aboriginal people continue to suffer the results of this legacy.

It is my belief that these ideals need to be reassessed and that we need to change the way we remember our past. Through this body of work, I am expressing my concern at the continued injustice directed towards Aboriginal people, by making visible a history which has contributed to the present socially depressed condition of Aboriginals.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THOSE WHO HAVE DONE ANY WRITING KNOW OF THE PROBLEMS IN GAINING A LITTLE DISTANCE FROM THAT WRITING, IN ORDER TO SEE MORE CLEARLY.

THIS PROBLEM, AND THE ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS OF FRUSTRATION AND MENTAL BLOCKAGES, ARE USUALLY PASSED ONTO OTHERS.

IN MY CASE THEY WERE PASSED ON TO SOMEONE WHO SHARES A SPECIAL PART OF MY LIFE.

AMANDA

THANKYOU
I REMEMBER THE DAY I DISCOVERED THAT MY PARENTS WERE MORE THAN JUST MY MUM AND DAD, THEY WERE MY MATES.

OVER THE LAST THIRTY YEARS OR SO, I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT THE BOND BETWEEN US, COULD NEVER GROW STRONGER THAN IT IS AT THE PRESENT.

BUT TOMORROW IT DOES.

THANKS PAT AND D'ARCY, THANKS MUM AND DAD.
INTRODUCTION

The work presented in this submission deals with the impact of colonisation on the Australian Aboriginals. Through the work, I investigate the relationship between Aboriginal and white societies, both in an historical and in a present day context, and claim that this relationship constitutes genocide.

This narrative is not written from a straight historical point of view, in that I do not look at different areas, States, times, individuals and policies to evaluate similarities and differences. Rather, it is a personal statement written by an artist. There is no attempt to create a smooth myth in the way that much of Australia’s history has previously been addressed.

In making this statement I acknowledge that the selectivity of the material presented, may tend to repress other narratives but it is not my intention to do so. Rather, it is to add to existing narratives. For all that we have learnt about Aboriginal and white contact over the last twenty years, we have barely begun to scratch the surface. Perhaps we can never know the full story, but it is hoped that this narrative contributes to a wider picture.

Contemporary Australian society is based on an unacknowledged genocide. By not recognising and dealing with this, the point of view of those who are in fact ‘victors’ continues to be perpetrated. At the
same time, the point of view of those who are the vanquished is denied.

In my investigation of the relationship between Aboriginals and whites, I have applied Raphael Lempkin's definition of genocide to events and practices which have taken place since colonisation. This document is structured around the five acts provided under the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

This investigation is presented as Chapters One to Seven. The body of ceramic work which is informed by this investigation, and which forms the major part of this submission, is discussed in some detail in Chapter Eight. The material presented in Chapter Nine expresses some of the motivations and concerns behind this study.

In the presentation of the art work, I have used clay and corroded steel metaphorically to represent black and white societies. The resultant juxtaposition of these materials alludes to certain events and practices as described in the research.

In this discussion I express my concerns about being schooled in a history which marginalised the Aboriginal experience. By their central positioning in this history, whites portrayed themselves as the heroes. This excluded the Aboriginal tragedy from many historical texts and softened the nature of the disappearance of Aboriginals from Australia.
By focusing on a particular aspect of history, 'Aboriginals as victims', I have constructed a particular type of history. In doing so I am attempting to keep alive the things we would prefer to forget so that the colonial past may be dealt with in a way which allows us, as individuals and as a nation, to evolve creatively and rectify the continuing injustice caused to Aboriginal people.

Australia's history continues to deny the Aboriginal experience and therefore deprives generations of Australians access to the knowledge of the Aboriginal plight and access to a rich and diverse culture.

Denying the Aboriginal experience buries the memory of the tens of thousands of Aboriginals who have died since white contact. In a land which builds and dedicates memorials to those who died in the defence of their country, none have been made by white Australians to commemorate those Aboriginals who died in the defence of their land, their country. Henry Reynolds asks the question, 'How do we deal with the Aboriginal dead?'

White Australians frequently say 'all that' should be forgotten. But it will not. It cannot be. Black memories are too deeply, too recently scarred. And forgetfulness is a strange prescription coming from a community which has revered the fallen warrior, and emblazoned the phrase 'Lest We Forget' on monuments throughout the land ... If we are to continue to celebrate the sacrifice
of men and women who died for their country can we deny admission to fallen tribesmen?...
If they did not die for Australia as such they fell defending their homelands, their sacred sites, their way of life.1

Seen in a different light this forgetfulness is not so strange. Helen Fein notes that once genocide has taken place, the most common way for the perpetrator to deal with, or account for it, is to deny it ever happened.2

Israel Charny says that there are a considerable number of 'experience denying mechanisms'3 in place in society which make it possible to deny the facts of genocidal acts once they have been committed. These allow individuals to go about their lives as though nothing has happened. They also allow denials on a larger governmental or collective cultural level.

The process is firstly to conceal the facts, then gradually wipe out the record. This not only denies the Aboriginal experience, it promotes a situation where many learn to despise Aboriginals as a matter of course, and a situation which perpetuates the continued oppression of Aboriginal people.

3 Charny, Israel, ibid.
Monuments serve as reminders of significant events, actions, or people in order to keep that memory alive. They are also a way of recording and reading history. Does the lack of monuments towards Aboriginals indicate that no value is placed on the lives of those who fought the wars in defence of their homes and their land? Or does it mean that white Australia has not yet reached a stage in its social development where events of the past can be looked at objectively?

Through this body of work I seek to create an awareness of, and a dialogue concerned with, the Aboriginal experience. Only by remembering and understanding the past, can the past be prevented from happening again. This also makes it possible to understand what must happen in the present and take place in the future.
CHAPTER ONE

GENOCIDE

Until recently, discussions on the subject of genocide, in relation to the Australian Aboriginals, was one of Australia's taboos. Genocide was a subject area draped with a veil of prohibition which discouraged attempts to peer into the dark crevices of history.

Today, although there is some public acknowledgement of the destruction of Aboriginal peoples and their culture, an uneasiness often exists when the subject is broached. Genocide continues to occupy a difficult position in the context of general dialogue, and is more often than not dismissed, or seen as irrelevant to events surrounding the colonisation of Australia.

Along with a new awareness regarding the history of colonisation come attempts to redress this dismissal and to further illuminate the events of the past. Generally the white community is reluctant to support this kind of dialogue, and opinions on the subject matter vary. They range from denial and dismissal, to total avoidance of the term itself. Such opinions are expressed by authors like Henry Reynolds, who both asks and answers the question, "but was it a case of genocide?"

... in a literal sense clearly no. The Aborigines survived the invasion. Re-population has been
increasing for a generation, although it has still not reached that of 1788.¹

Terry Lane, a social commentator and ABC radio personality, says,

I usually recoil from using the term genocide in relation to the Australian Aborigines, but we sure have done a comprehensive job of eradicating the people and their culture.²

In many major libraries it is difficult to find writings in the subject area of genocide and the Aboriginals. References under this heading direct the inquirer to events surrounding the holocaust of the Jews during World War II, and to other peoples and cultures throughout the world. With the exception of the Tasmanian Aboriginals, little is written.

Australia's history is one of an invading force appropriating a land inhabited by Aboriginals for at least 40,000 years. New evidence, from the Australian National University, suggests a possible 120,000 year occupancy. This history, based on the dispossession of Aboriginal people and the near destruction of their traditional cultural practices, their dreamtime, their economic existence, their security, their freedom, their health, their dignity, and their

² Lane, Terry, ABC Radio Station and Program Promotional Broadcasts, 1989.
languages was hidden from many generations of white school children and adults.

The history taught in schools, was written by the victors of colonisation and organised in a way which suited the political and historical requirements of Colonial Governments. It was a biased view which, over the generations, has been handed down through the school system. It perpetuated a false vision of the past and obscured the true nature of the conflict which took place. It denied the ruthless destruction and killing resulting in the near extermination of Aboriginal peoples.

In many cases, whole language groups and peoples were eliminated by the senseless slaughter by the colonists. Of the estimated two hundred and fifty languages, between fifty and sixty no longer exist and around one hundred and thirty have less than fifty speakers.

Although the colonists never saw themselves as agents of destruction as such, they did take the view that the conditions of life they imposed on other 'more primitive' societies, was ultimately for the benefit of the people living in those societies. According to white attitudes these benefits included, opportunities for growth and expansion, for survival, and for the adoption of a 'better quality of life'. Part of the thinking associated with these attitudes was the need to conquer the land, the elements, the environment, to consume and expand.

As colonisation took a firmer grip on an emerging nation and settlements began to spread, the Aboriginal presence was seen as a
problem of increasing proportions. Because of the pastoralists need and desire for land, Aboriginals were pushed off their land. Aboriginals required food, among other things, and since their lands, habitat and food gathering environment were being destroyed, they began taking sheep and cattle in order to survive.

Under these circumstances clashes were unavoidable and if colonisation was to be successful then Aboriginals, who were posing a barrier to the spread of pastoralism, had to be removed. Tony Barta says that the colonists fought and killed in their attempts to establish a new social order, a respectable white society, a new political system and a new economy. Not only did they kill, they were prepared in that killing 'to envisage the disappearance of the prior inhabitants altogether.'\[^{13}\]

Tens of thousands of Aboriginals were brutally eliminated by the colonists, by despair, degradation, introduced diseases and alcohol. By the 1850's the original inhabitants of Sydney and the surrounding areas of Wollongong and Newcastle were all gone. By 1886, after only fifty years of occupation in Victoria, the Aboriginal population was reduced from 10,000 to 806. Of the estimated 4,500 Tasmanian Aboriginals only one survived on the main island until the 1870's. Around Adelaide the decline was from 650 to 180 in fifteen years.\[^{4}\]

As colonisation expanded and the appropriation of land gained momentum, the killings increased. Many died horrific deaths at the hands of the whites. Introduced agents such as smallpox and venereal diseases claimed many Aboriginal lives as they had no natural defences or immunities. Malnutrition, caused by the forced
adoption of an inadequate diet based on European food-stuffs such as flour, sugar and tea, resulted in the drastic reduction of birth rates among Aboriginals.

Despite many attempts by Aboriginals to withstand this kind of pressure, it eventually destroyed or shattered much of their hunter-gatherer economies, and caused breakdowns in their social structures, traditional culture and lines of authority.

In any attempt to come to terms with this history consideration must be given to the psyche and thinking of the times. Among Europeans there was a sincere belief in the genetic superiority of white races and an equally profoundly held idea that their way of life was superior to all others. Along with this was the belief that they had every right to impose their way of life on poor and pathetic looking native peoples.

In 1869 Charles Darwin advanced his theories of evolution, hypothesising that only the fittest of species survive. These theories became fashionable and were eagerly embraced as a means of explaining and excusing the decline of the Aboriginal population. It was seen as inevitable that a 'weak and inferior' race would be unable to survive 'white settlement' and must die out. An editorial in The Sydney Herald suggested that any attempts to civilise the blacks was futile as it was in the order of nature that savage nations must be exterminated. Aboriginal extinction was inevitable.5

5 Editor Sydney Herald, cited in Reynolds, Henry, Frontier, op. cit., p. 54.
Generally the popular use of the term genocide associates it with the events surrounding the attempted extermination of the Jews by the Nazis in the early 1940's.

The attempted systematic dismemberment of the Jews as a people, was revealed to the world as events unfolded at the end of the Second World War. The images from Auschwitz, and other extermination centres, exposed the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis and did much to cement the Jewish-genocide connection.

Elie Wiesel argues that Auschwitz is the point zero of history and everything must be measured against it. Auschwitz, he says, defies every analogy and transcends all forms of description, it is the beginning of all that exists.\(^6\)

The connecting of genocide to the Jews and Auschwitz also reinforces the notion that genocide only occurs on a gross level, and this in turn fosters an ignorance of the insidious ways in which peoples, and cultures can be destroyed.

Another reason for the Jewish-genocide connection is that the terms genocide and holocaust have become virtually synonymous. Because the term 'The Holocaust' explicitly illustrates and emphasises the Jewish catastrophe, the existence of genocidal practices, or genocide itself, in relation to the events of Australia's history, seems easy to deny.

On this point Tony Barta writes that by associating genocide uniquely with the events surrounding the holocaust,

Australians have been able to make a classical transference of an unacknowledged shadow in their own past, to a publicly acknowledged worse - indeed worst - case. Germans have a terrible legacy to live down - how could they let something like that happen? Whatever took place in our past, it was nothing like that. This very powerful importing of atrocity, I would argue, and the consequent exporting of outrage, is a major factor in the way Australians cope (or do not cope) with what happened here.7

Part of the reason for the denial or lack of recognition of genocide, is the difficulty in understanding what the term means or implies. Many definitions are either too narrow or too broad. Often definitions become lost in politics and, in the case of genocide, it usually means what other nations and people do, to subject peoples throughout the world, not what nations do to their own peoples. Generally speaking, genocide is more easily understood in terms of gross premeditated plans or actions. It is much more difficult to understand it in terms of one's own actions or the effects of one's policies or as the result of one's beliefs.

7 Barta, Tony, op. cit., p. 155.
In an attempt to gain an understanding of genocide, and the means by which it can happen, a clue comes from the root of the word itself. It has two sources, geno from the Greek 'genos', meaning race and cide from the Latin 'cida', meaning agent, 'cidium' meaning act and 'caedere' meaning to kill. Along with 'to kill,' I draw the readers attention to 'act and agent' as the implications of these words will be developed later in this document.

The term genocide itself is a relatively new one being coined by Rapheal Lempkin in 1944 when he said 'new conceptions require new terms'. In coining the term, Lempkin was attempting to describe the crimes being perpetrated against the Jews by the Nazis. In 1944 the full extent of the horror of the 'final solution' had not yet been revealed. Histories of subject peoples like the Poles, Slavs and Russians gave Lempkin much of his evidence. Had a more accurate history of the events surrounding the colonisation of Australia been available at the time, Lempkin may well have gained much of his research material and evidence from the Aboriginal experience.

In defining his new term Lempkin said that,

generally speaking, genocide does not mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except where accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a co-ordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of

national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity and the actions involved are directed against individuals belonging to such groups.\(^9\)

Lempkin emphasised the point that the actions involved in genocide are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of a national group.

Further, he said that genocide advanced in two ways. First and foremost was the destruction, by various means, of the national pattern of the oppressed group. Secondly, there was the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition could be either on the oppressed group who were allowed to stay, or on their land after they had been removed.

With the creation of the United Nations, Lempkin's intended meaning of genocide was given some legal standing in international law. In a response to the horrors of the holocaust, the General Assembly

\(^9\) Ibid.

declared in its resolution of the 11th of December 1946 that
 genocide was a crime under international law.\textsuperscript{10} The Assembly
 approved a 'Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the
 Crime of Genocide' on the 9th of December 1948. Under this
 Convention genocide is described as,

Acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or
in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious
group. The types of acts which constitute genocide
are (1) killing members of the group, (2) causing
serious bodily or mental harm to members of the
group, (3) deliberately inflicting on the group
conditions of life calculated to bring about its
physical destruction in whole or in part, (4)
imposing measures intended to prevent births
within the group, (5) forcibly transferring children
of the group to another group.\textsuperscript{11}

Given Lempkin's definition and the United Nation's Convention, I
intend, through the following chapters, to investigate the concept of
genocide as it relates to the Aboriginals. I will demonstrate that
over the past two hundred years, Aboriginals have suffered the
consequences of all the acts contained in the convention. In order to
do this each of the five components of the Convention will be
examined under individual headings.

\textsuperscript{11} Cited in an Extract, Commissioner Wotten, 'Report of the Inquiry into the Death of
During this investigation, references are made to a number of myths and theories which shaped white attitudes towards Aboriginal people. Although these are mentioned in some detail in Chapters Two and Three, and to a lesser degree in other Chapters, they apply right across the board and are central to an understanding of how the colonists excused and justified their treatment of Aboriginals.

Four basic aspects lay behind the development of these myths and theories. They are the xenophobic, ethnographic and racist nature of white society and its all consuming belief in Social Darwinism.
In this chapter I have focused on population reduction, as opposed to mental torment and violence, which is the essence of the next chapter. In doing this I have presented a great deal of closely packed information because that is the way the killing seemed to happen. I have not distinguished between the 160 years of killing as there did not appear to be any significant period during which there was not a sustained and relentless attack on Aboriginal people. Some say that descriptions of two massacres may well speak as strongly as twenty. However while this may have some merit, in this case, I do not agree. In Australia's case of collective amnesia I believe the descriptions of two massacres are more easily forgotten than the descriptions of twenty.

The amount of information is not intended to harangue the reader. Rather it is presented in an attempt to demonstrate that the killing of Aboriginals was not some sporadic event which took place in the distant past, but a sustained, violent attack on Aboriginals by people who wanted to cause their extinction in what was to become known as Australia. With this in mind I present the following.

It is difficult to know how many Aboriginals have been killed since the first recorded death at the hands of a white person two hundred and ninety one years ago. Nobody actually knows exactly how many
Aboriginals lived on the land mass, now called Australia, before the Europeans came in 1788. Demographic reconstruction of the pre-European populations is difficult. However, various estimates put the Aboriginal population at somewhere between 1,000,000, which was Governor Arthur Phillip's guess in 1788, and 150,000, which was the official Government figure throughout the 19th Century. Figures of around 300,000 advanced by Professor Radcliffe-Brown seem to be the most accepted, although these have been challenged recently by Bultin who suggests that Radcliffe-Brown's figures for New South Wales and Victoria alone should be multiplied by a factor of 5 or more.

Another major problem is, that since the first recorded death at Roebuck Bay in Western Australia in 1699 by a member of William Dampier's landing party, returns were seldom made on the number of Aboriginal killings. If they were, they were often inaccurate or worded in ways so as to reduce the impact and number of deaths. According to Henry Reynolds, police parties were expected to account for every death they caused, but they often ignored their instructions or deliberately falsified returns. Government leaders seemed satisfied, he says, with reports which diluted the nature of clashes, accepting and preferring statements like 'the blacks have been punished', or 'chastised and dispersed'. In Queensland victims of the Native Police Force were 'incinerated rather than enumerated'.

1 Wilson, Charles, 'History Hypothesis and Fiction', cited in Quadrant, March 1985, p. 27.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
In his book *Frontier*, Reynolds attempts to access the impact of frontier skirmishes. He arrives at a figure of 20,000 deaths through violence, but adds that it remains little better than a guess. Subsequent research, he says, reveals that the figure is too low.\(^5\)

Resistance to the white invasion, by the Aboriginals began on the 21st of January 1788\(^6\) when the British began clearing the land. The last recorded Aboriginal massacre took place in the Kimberleys during the 1940's.\(^7\) The killings lasted for approximately 160 years.

Given that all Governors of British colonies were issued with strict orders to treat indigenous peoples with kindness and friendship, and to defend and protect them and issue fitting punishments to those who would cause or bring them harm,\(^8\) it is difficult to reconcile these directions with the fact that Aboriginal populations were nearly destroyed by the colonists.

Australia began its present life as a repository for many of the undesirables and social misfits of England. After the British Government lost the American War of Independence, and in turn, control over the American colonies, it also lost a dumping ground for the by-products of society's ills. In 1788 the British authorities, based on information supplied by Captain James Cook, decided to establish a new colony in Botany Bay.

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7 *Ibid*.
8 Wollmington, Jean, *op. cit.*, p. ix.
At that time the British saw Australia as being fit for nothing more than the dumping of what they called 'the human scum of the hulks of the River Thames.'

Australia's beginning as a human garbage dump created a chain of events that caused the near extinction of over 500 tribes of Aboriginals. As colonisation progressed and new economic potentials realised, the appropriation of Aboriginal lands was rapid and extensive. This interfered drastically with the lifestyles of the Aboriginals. They resisted the usurpers and began the struggle for what was rightfully theirs. This struggle continues today.

One of the factors which contributed to the takeover was the official declaration that Australia was uninhabited, 'Terra Nulas' or, in European terms, 'not effectively inhabited.'

... on that day invaders from England made a proclamation at the place our people had always called Pattawilya, but which the newcomers named Holdfast Bay. They made a public declaration to their own satisfaction of power and control over the lands. Without a treaty or recompense, they proceeded to survey and sell, for their own use and profit the land which our people had occupied for countless generations.

The displacement of the Aboriginals and the acquisition of their land opened the way for an economy based on pastoralism to flourish. Lush pastures were converted into private property as fast as they

9 Fesi, Eve, _op. cit._, p.11.
10 Nungas, cited in Mattingley, Christobell, _op. cit._, p. 3.
could be fenced and stocked. Australia was seen as a new land ripe for the picking. A situation which gave birth to the 'get rich quick' mentality.

Towns, villages, farms and pastures advanced at a rate which quickly consumed land, especially the more fertile coastal and hinterland regions. Goonyas, as white men were called, came to the country with axe, plough, flock and fencing wire. They invaded it with roads and railways. They replaced its animals with sheep, cattle, camels, goats, horses, donkeys, rabbits and cats, and took the water for themselves and their beasts. Together they destroyed the trees and the life giving plants. They suppressed the traditional owners of the land with firearms, chains, whips and arsenic. They forced their penis into the womb of our traditional society. They poisoned our people with their food, addicting our ancestors to sugar and flour, tea and tobacco. They laid the curse of alcohol upon our people. They introduced diseases which decimated our population.\(^\text{11}\)

Initial clashes between the Aboriginals and the colonisers were centred around major settlement areas, but as the pastoralists and the emerging colonies need for more land grew, the clashes became widespread. Killing the Aboriginals was seen as the most

\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 4.
convenient way of solving the increasing dimensions of 'The Aboriginal Problem'. They were killed with methods ranging from Governor Arthur's attempted para-military style extermination of the Tasmanian Aboriginals, to the use of strychnine-laced flour in Queensland and other States. In South Australia arsenic was used.

Actions against the Aboriginals were brutal and ruthless. Many communities were concerned at the continued presence of Aboriginals around their districts. Towns people, pastoralists and community organisations called meetings to decide which strategies could best be employed in order to rid themselves of Aboriginals. At one such meeting, held at Bathurst in N.S.W., one of the largest sheep holders in the colony suggested that the best thing that could be done,

... would be to shoot all the blacks and manure the ground with their carcasses, which was all the good they were fit for! It was recommended likewise that the women and children should especially be shot as the most certain method of getting rid of the race. Shortly after this declaration, martial law was proclaimed, and sad was the havoc made upon the tribes at Bathurst. A large number were driven into the swamp, and mounted police rode around and around and shot them off indiscriminately until they were all destroyed! When one of the police enquired of the officer if a return should be made of the killed, (sic) wounded there were none, all were destroyed.
Men, women and children! the reply was - that there was no necessity for a return. But forty-five heads were collected and boiled down for the sake of the skulls! My informant, a Magistrate, saw the skulls packed for exportation in a case at Bathurst ready for a shipment to accompany the commanding officer on his voyage shortly afterwards taken (sic) to England.\(^\text{12}\)

Although the term had not yet been coined, the concept of genocide was openly discussed as 'the most certain method of getting rid of the race'. Massacres like these were not isolated and every State and Territory in Australia has its death sites. Some descriptions of these, and the events which took place, are as follows.

Near Rufus River in South Australia a massacre occurred in 1841 when a 'punitive expedition', a euphemism for murdering party, shot and killed some thirty Aboriginals, wounded ten and took four prisoners.\(^\text{13}\) Later that same year, near the same place, Sub-Inspector Shaw commanded another slaughter,

Mr Shaw's party on the western side and Mr. Robinson's on the eastern side of the Rufus now advanced and commenced firing. The natives were almost instantly thrown into confusion, 100 running into the scrub, and about fifty into the water, with the intention of concealing themselves

\(^{13}\) Nungas, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
in the reeds. The Europeans followed them to the water's edge and continued the firing for about fifteen or twenty minutes, and the result to the natives, death of nearly thirty, about ten wounded, and four (one male adult, one boy and two females) taken prisoners; and to the Europeans one individual Mr. Robinson) speared in the left arm.14

In Gippsland Victoria, there were many such massacres. Angus McMillan, said to be the founding father of Gippsland, gathered his stockmen and during punishing hunts would kill any Aboriginal in sight in order to gain control over what he saw as his land.

In his book Our Founding Murdering Father, Peter Gardner refers to McMillan as the 'Butcher of Gippsland''15 and describes a number of massacres carried out by McMillan and his men. These, he says, inflicted heavy tolls on the Kurnai, the Gippsland Aboriginals. Among the descriptions are the Butcher's and Warragul Creek Massacres.

At Butchers Creek McMillan and his men surprised and surrounded a party of Aboriginals. Although they managed to escape McMillan, his stockmen and some black trackers relentlessly pursued them.

Crossing the Mitchell, Nicholson and Tambo Rivers, they eventually bottled them up on a small headland,

14 Ibid., p. 40.
15 Gardner, Peter, Our Founding Murdering Father, Ensay, Australia, 1987, p. 35.
near a creek, at the north eastern corner of Bancroft's Bay. Having no means of escape, except by swimming, the unfortunate blacks were soon wiped out. Thus the adjacent creek has ever since been known to oldtimers, as Butcher's Creek.\textsuperscript{16}

The Warragul Creek Massacre involved the formation of a private army called the 'Highland Brigade' which operated under the leadership of McMillan.\textsuperscript{17} With his army, McMillan hunted and slaughtered the Kurnai until the 'waters ran red with blood.'\textsuperscript{18}

At Warragul Creek McMillan and his men surrounded a large group of Aboriginals and began another slaughter,

\[\text{... they killed the blacks for as long as their ammunition lasted. Many escaped into the bush. Others sought cover in the waterhole, but after, as one raised his head for a breath, he was shot.}\textsuperscript{19}\]

Between one hundred and one hundred and fifty were killed at Warragul Creek. Those who managed to escape were relentlessly hunted and killed for some time after.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{17} Pepper, Phillip, \textit{et al.}, \textit{The Kurnai of Gippsland}, Hyland House, Victoria, 1985, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{19} Gardner, Peter, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 38.
Near Bourke, in New South Wales, some place names are derived from the horrific events which took place there. 'Hospital Creek'\textsuperscript{20} got its name from a massacre where stockmen shot and killed around four hundred Aboriginals and wounded many more. A billabong known as 'Stinking Lagoon'\textsuperscript{21} got its name from the large number of Aboriginal bodies that were stacked there at any one time waiting for flood waters to remove them.

Massacres in Queensland are among the more ruthless and sanctioned acts of barbarism. Many were carried out by members of the police force. Some, alarmed at the cruel treatment and killing of Aboriginals, wrote of the wild injustice of the police and described the officers as behaving 'in a most atrociously cruel manner'.\textsuperscript{22}

Poisons were used extensively in Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales and to a lesser extent in other States. Flour, damper and other forms of rations, laced with strychnine and arsenic, were distributed among the Aboriginals. In New South Wales this process became known as 'The Harmony'.

The poisoning of water sources such as lagoons, billabongs and water holes was a common practice. Witnesses described these poisonings, and the actions of white men as 'pure terrorism'. Around many of the water sources frequented by Aboriginals the 'ghastly

\textsuperscript{20} Kamien, Max, \textit{The Dark People of Burke}, Humanities Press, New Jersy, 1978, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

remains of the blacks may be seen'. Their 'skulls, ribs' and thigh bones are scattered everywhere.\(^{23}\)

Those who laid the poisons seemed to take delight in their handiwork and their ability to kill so many at one time.

The niggers (were given) something really startling to keep them quiet ... the rations contained about as much strychnine as anything else and about one hundred blacks were stretched out by this ruse of the owner of Long Lagoon.\(^{24}\)

The perpetrators of these crimes did not bury their victims. Instead they preferred to leave them to the animals who would scavenge on their carcasses.

Arthur Gordon, the British High Commissioner was at a loss to understand the eagerness and cruelty which Queenslanders displayed towards Aboriginals. In letters to his friend, Prime Minister Gladstone, he wrote,

\[\ldots\text{the habit of regarding the natives as vermin, to be cleared off the face of the earth, has given to the average Queenslander a tone of brutality and cruelty ... I have heard men of culture and refinement, of the greatest humanity and kindness to their fellow whites ... talk, not only of wholesale}\]

\(^{23}\) Cited in \textit{ibid.}, p. 49.

\(^{24}\) \textit{ibid.}
butchery ... but of the individual murder of natives, exactly as they would talk of a day's sport, or of having to kill some troublesome animal.25

Of police officers, Charles Evans says that, where the killing of Aboriginais was concerned, they had little if any control over their troopers,

it is a rash thing to rob a lioness of her whelps or a tiger of his prey, but I doubt if either would be attended with more danger than interfering between the troopers and their foes when once their blood is up. Then is the only time his officer loses control over them.26

So cruel and complete was the carnage wreaked by the Queensland police force it moved C.D. Rowley to write that the Native Police force offered 'a perfect niche for the sadist.'27

The Honourable Mr. Hamilton argued that there were men in the police force,

whose careers were long records of crime sanctioned by the Government ... men (who) had committed murders which were unparalleled in the records of the Bulgarian atrocities... He knew of

26 Evans, Ray, et al., op. cit., p. 58.
such men who went patrolling through the country shooting the unfortunate blacks wherever they met them. 28

During the 1850's and 60's, newspapers were full of protests reflecting outrage at the horrors,

there were outcries against the police, 'the barbarous corps of exterminators', 'a system of native slaughter merciless and complete', 'our trained murderers saturated with innocent blood'. But the Government coolly answered that 'no illegal acts were occurring; at the worst, there were only 'indiscretions'. Genocide was, it seems, official policy.29

The above descriptions of massacres and the treatment of Aboriginals are by no means isolated cases. Behaviour like this was the rule rather than the exception. Henry Reynolds comments that the killing and cruel treatment of Aboriginals was described as a 'pleasurable excitement'30 for those living in frontier regions. Many, he says, found pleasure in the pursuit of Aboriginals. He describes these men as being distinguished for the malicious vigour they displayed when tracking and murdering Aboriginals.

28 Ibid., pp. 58-59.
29 Roberts, Janie, op. cit., p. 22.
30 Reynolds, Henry, op. cit., p. 51
According to Reynolds, frontier immigrants often gained a sense of freedom from many of the constraints of life in Britain. They felt they could do as they pleased with the Aboriginais because on the frontier they were free of normal moral constraints and had nothing to fear from public opinion or the law. When squatters and stockmen were questioned about their behaviour towards the Aboriginais they often replied with 'we are on the border and can do as we like.'

These 1840's attitudes were still being expressed in the 1880's when the editor of a Brisbane newspaper remarked that 'shooting the blacks was justified so long as such killing is confined to the 'Border-Line', or along the country abutting on the outskirts of civilisation.'

Prevailing myths of the times allowed the colonists to excuse and justify the treatment and violent behaviour directed towards the Aboriginais. One of these myths was the belief in the absolute and ultimate superiority of white races. The colonists believed themselves to be racially, physically and culturally superior to Aboriginais. These ethnocentric beliefs were developed in such a way as to foster absolute contempt for the Aboriginais. They were spoken of as being the most 'miserable and lowest form of human life ever seen'. They were viewed as a 'completely and utterly worthless bunch of savages, as a useless, uncivilised, primitive race of people which, before too much longer, would cease to exist'.

31 Ibid., p. 52.
32 Ibid.
According to Brian Attwood, supporters of this view claimed that their natural superiority 'entitled' them to ignore or disregard the interests of the Aboriginals. Further, he says, that most people adopted this attitude in order to satisfy their needs. A major need was to justify, to themselves, the violent dispossession that was taking place. Another was to win support from the imperial and colonial governments of the day so that the dispossession of Aboriginals could continue.33

To many, Aboriginals were not even human. Such was the extent of the internalisation of the ethnocentric views. Early drawings often depicted them as being physically and mentally inferior to whites. These drawings were created in a way which exaggerated the physical characteristics of Aboriginals, locating them somewhere between the Apes and Neanderthal man. In everyday dialogue about Aboriginals, comparisons were frequently made between them and monkeys,

oh those disgusting natives - of everything in the shape of human form divine they far exceed anything I've seen before ... and as to the women they look more like superannuated baboons than anything else.34

Examples of how Aboriginals were constructed and posed in demeaning and belittling ways can be seen in early photographs. In

34 Cited in Mattingley, Christobell, op. cit., p. 4.
these they were dressed, or semi-dressed, in European clothes, arranged in a European context - superior male and inferior female - and generally constructed in a way which reduced their Aboriginality to dehumanising levels. In other photographs they were constructed in a way which accentuated their nakedness as opposed to their nudity. To be nude is to be without an outer covering. To be naked is to be without power.

The basic prejudice of ethnocentrism lead to extreme racist beliefs with the colonisers believing that the inferiority of the Aboriginals was due to their innate physical differences. Richard Broome comments that this extreme form of prejudice occurs when one group seeks to dominate and exploit another to such an extent that through invasion, they take over the economic control of a group and force them into a position of slavery.35

The myth of the limited physical and intellectual capacity of the Aboriginals, fostered the belief in a seemingly irrefutable law of nature, which suggested that the Aboriginals would die out. How could it be otherwise, for the colonists no other prognosis seemed possible. The perceived differences had become so internalised and entrenched into white thinking, they believed that it would be impossible for the Aboriginals to adopt new lifestyles and adapt to a higher culture.

These myths were given credibility by the popular sciences of the times. One such science was phrenology which claimed intelligence

and the extent and strength of the faculties was determined by the shape and size of the skull. Since it was known that primitive people often had thicker skulls than whites, it was reasoned that the Aboriginals were far less intelligent than whites.

In 1857, Mr Schier reported to a Victorian Select Committee on Aboriginals and claimed that after examining many Aboriginal skulls he found the,

perceptive and observing intellect, residing in the lobe of the brain immediately behind and above the eyes was largely developed while other areas of the brain were very underdeveloped. He concluded: 'The great inferiority of the race, combined with the small brain, will cause the whole race to be extinct.36

Along with the ethnocentric beliefs and popular sciences the theories of Charles Darwin provided further opportunities for the colonists to justify their attitudes and behaviour towards Aboriginals. These theories were opportune as they provided the colonists with further evidence to show that what was happening to the Aboriginals was simply fulfilling the laws of natural selection. They were not being shot or poisoned, they were just passing away as a consequence of being an 'inferior race'. It was the natural order of things.

Theories and beliefs such as these were not confined to Australia. Many of them had already been developed in the Americas and in other countries where colonisation was causing clashes between black and white societies. Janie Roberts states that the racist theories, developed in the West Indies and the United States, in order to justify slavery, were imported into Australia to justify the violence directed towards Aboriginals and their eventual extermination.37

So complete was the adoption and internalisation of these theories that Stevens says the Aboriginals came to be thought of and portrayed as beasts who possessed every imaginable vice possible. They were thought of as lacking any virtues, and because of their limited faculties, it was impossible for them to respond to higher orders of society, as introduced by the colonists. Aboriginals were seen as the most 'debased race on the face of the earth'.38

These views were also supported by the anthropologists of the era. Many argued that there should be separate categories developed to enable the classification of the different human races. In response to these arguments an anthropologist named Max Meller wrote in The Anthropological Review, in 1870, that the human races should be divided into seven categories arranged on an ascending scale. At the lowest point he placed the Aboriginals and on the highest he placed

37 Roberts, Janie, op. cit., p. 11.
the Indo German or Aryan race. This race he suggested was the most supreme race.39

Throughout the 'killing times' racist views and theories were continually reinforced by articles in newspapers and journals throughout the country. An article appearing in the 'Queenslander', expressed the opinion that nothing could be done to 'alter the immutable laws of nature which direct human progression on earth'. These laws, it suggested, 'make sure that the Aboriginal populations are doomed to extinction and that with the coming of the whiteman the only thing left to do was to assist in carrying out these laws'.40

In support of this article the editor of the Normanton Herald said that it would be more of a mercy, than a crime, to wipe the Aboriginals off the face of the earth, as they amounted to nothing more than 'despicable wretches' or 'half civilised niggers'.41

The Vice President of the Royal Society of Tasmania suggested that the process by which the Aboriginals were being exterminated was just fulfilling an axiom of the law of evolution and the survival of the fittest.42

A well known social evolutionist during the 1870's, Rusden, explained Darwin's theories at length. To assembled audiences he stressed that survival of the fittest meant that 'might was right',

39 Cited in Evans, Ray, et al., op. cit., p. 15
40 Ibid., p. 65.
41 Ibid., p. 67.
42 Ibid., p. 80.
which in turn meant that extermination was the right course of action. He emphasised the need to 'invoke and remorselessly fulfil the inexorable law of natural selection' when communities went about the business of exterminating the inferior Australian and Maori races. After this, he said, 'we must appropriate their patrimony coolly'.

The stated intention of Rusden and others, and the massacres which resulted, clearly demonstrates the attempted violent destruction of all the Aboriginal peoples of Australia.

Killing was the most expedient of means. Further chapters could be written on deaths which occurred through the poisoning of flour and waterholes or the introduction of diseases such as venereal disease and smallpox. It is estimated that diseases contributed to as many as four fifths of all deaths.

We may not know how many Aboriginals were killed. What is known is that they were killed.

the settlers guns were well oiled and their butts bloodied.

43 Ibid., p. 81.
44 Pepper, Phillip, op. cit., p. xiv.
CHAPTER THREE

CAUSING SERIOUS BODILY OR MENTAL HARM TO MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

Through this chapter I attempt to convey something of the extent of suffering caused to Aboriginals both in a physical and psychological sense. While many deaths resulted from the violence perpetrated by the colonists, in essence there is a shift away from the relatively simple acts of killing to acts of physical and mental abuse. Given the tremendous number of these acts, the first part of this chapter reads like an horrific act of carnage. The second part changes tone and style a little because I attempt to communicate more complicated aspects, such as the breaking down of the identity, group cohesion and psyche of Aboriginals.

Since the arrival of Europeans, Aboriginals have suffered both mentally and physically. They have been subjected to extreme acts of physical and mental cruelty, to terror campaigns and to the pain of slow deaths resulting from poisoning with arsenic and strychnine.

During a Senate debate in 1923¹ Senators Gardiner and DeLargie spoke of the cruelty shown towards the Aboriginals. They described the brutality of the early pioneers as one of the 'blackest pages in Australian history.' Senator Gardiner described whites as being,

aggressive and most unscrupulous in their methods'. In support of his claim he gave a report of a sixteen year old boy who was dragged through a fire then dumped in a river by some pastoralists. 'When he did not sink and the murderers had exhausted their brutal savagery, they shot him.

In support of Gardiner's descriptions, De Largie spoke of a kind of sport practiced by white men in the North of Queensland. For the amusement of those present, Aboriginal men, women and children would be rounded up and driven into water where shoals of crocodiles would be waiting.

Many such acts of cruelty were officially sanctioned by various Government instrumentalities, dating back to Governor Macquarie, and earlier to Governor Phillip. In 1816 Macquarie continued the terror campaigns initiated by Phillip some twenty years earlier by ordering his military expeditions to go out and reap carnage among the Aboriginals occupying areas around the Hawkesbury, Nepean and Grose Rivers. Rather than face the brutality, or the hangings resulting from these expeditions, women and children often jumped to their deaths, from cliffs. Such was the success of these campaigns.

In order to rid himself of the problems associated with the dispossession of the Hawkesbury Aboriginals, Phillip supplied his men with hatchets and bags and ordered them to 'cut off the heads

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2 Macquarie, Governor, cited in Roberts, Janie, _op. cit._, p.15.
of those they killed and return them to him.\textsuperscript{3} He ordered his men to butcher and,

\begin{quote}
destroy as many as they could meet with of the wood tribe ... and, in hope of striking terror, to erect gibbets in different places, whereupon the bodies of all they might kill were to hang.\textsuperscript{4}
\end{quote}

Phillip wanted to terrify Aboriginals to such an extent they believed that they would either have to leave the district or be killed. He was of the belief that the settlement and colony would not be successful if there was continued Aboriginal presence. They were thought of as an encumbrance which had to be removed. To this end Phillip initiated his plan of violence and this had long lasting effects. In fact the attitudes expressed by Phillip in the the early eighteen hundreds were still being expressed, by men of high standing and power in the community, in the early nineteen hundreds.

A member of The Queensland Legislative Council informed the Roman Catholic missionary, Duncan McNeb, early in 1881 that while he was attending the Governor's Christmas banquet conversation turned to the blacks and 'the conclusion arrived at ... was that there was nothing for the Aborigines but extermination' ... it was clear that when Governor Phillip decided to produce 'a universal terror' around the site of the first settlement, he

\textsuperscript{3} Phillip, Governor, cited in \textit{ibid.}, p.14.

\textsuperscript{4} Cited in \textit{ibid.}.
gave birth to a tradition of violence that outlived not only everyone of Phillip's generation but also all of the dignitaries who sat down to dinner with the Queensland Governor 90 years later.\(^5\)

Along with Phillip's gibbets, the guillotine\(^6\) was used in N.S.W. as a means of striking terror and fear into the hearts of Aboriginals.

During the 1840's Major O'Halloran, at the direction of Governor Gawler, rounded up a group of Aboriginals and pinioned 65 of them together, men women and children. He made them form a semi circle around a makeshift gallows where two Aboriginal men were to be hanged. When the boxes were kicked from under them, the fall did not kill them; 'they hung there, eyes glaring up at the crossbeam and toes touching the sand'. Death was brought about some time later as further attempts were made to complete the task. Gawler ordered O'Halloran to leave the bodies on the gallows until 'they fall in pieces'.\(^7\)

Among the more heinous and sadistic treatment of Aboriginals were crimes committed by people who they considered friendly. After gaining their friendship and confidence, a stockman strung up and butchered twenty eight Aboriginals\(^8\) for chasing his cattle causing them to loose condition thus lowering potential profits at cattle sales.

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\(^6\) Fesl, Eve, *op. cit.*, p.11.
\(^7\) Cited in Roberts, Janie, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
\(^8\) Ibid.
Fifty Aboriginals were shot and killed at Risdon in Tasmania. The testes of the dead were cut off, fashioned into tobacco pouches and sold. It was a belief among settlers that cutting the testes off led to exclusive rights and unfettered carnal use of Aboriginal women.9

Squatters in the Victorian high country would round Aboriginals up, tie their hands behind their backs and cut off their penis and testes. For their amusement they would watch them run around and scream until they bled to death.10

In other areas, after raping and bashing Aboriginal women, squatters further tortured them by thrusting spears up their vaginas and leaving them to die.11

An Aboriginal, named Birt, recalls that although he suffered for many years at the hands of white settlers, he was lucky to escape the fate which befell many babies of his tribe.

My mother would sit and cry and tell me this: they buried our babies in the ground with only their heads above the ground. All in a row they were. Then they had a test to see who could kick the babies' heads off the furtherest. One man clubbed a babies' (sic) head off from horse back.12

9 Ibid., p. 20.
10 Ibid., p. 20.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., p. 19.
In Queensland the Jardine brothers, killed many Aboriginal babies and children by picking them up by the ankles and bashing their heads against trees. In the 1840's the Jardine brothers drove a mob of cattle 800 kilometres from Cairns to Cape York. After they arrived they attempted to set up a centre, modelled along the lines of Singapore, which they hoped one day would be the capital of Australia. During the cattle drive they shot and killed many Aboriginals. They shot Aboriginals who were swimming and called it 'duck hunting' or from their homesteads they would shoot Aboriginals and then tell their men to collect the crocodile carcasses.

During the 1930's men were often heard boasting of the ways they dispensed 'justice' to Aboriginals. A letter published in the Northern Territory Standard in 1938 was written by a station owner who said he used summary justice on his station. He added that he had letters from others who did the same. He went on to describe people who shot Aboriginals on sight and people who inflicted punishment with a stockwhip and wire cracker. To be particularly severe, he said, saplings would be sharpened and driven through the hands of Aboriginals.

In and around towns such as Paramatta, Sydney and Hobart, Aboriginals were ridiculed, bashed and tormented. They became figures of cruel fun for adults and school boys alike. Manning Clark describes cruel acts as being one of the 'great popular sports' of

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13 Ibid., p. 21.
14 Ibid., p. 24.
the times. In these towns Aboriginals were forced to drink alcohol and become uncontrollably intoxicated. They were provoked into fights and encouraged to 'murder' and 'mangle' each other. Spectators would 'roar with laughter' at the butchery.

An article, written by Robert Milliken and published in the National Times in 1978, describes how Aboriginal women were forced to wear the severed heads of their husbands. It describes the practice of cutting the flesh from the bodies of Aboriginals, while they were still alive, and feeding it to dogs. As a means of striking fear into them, sealers forced Aboriginal women and children to eat their severed ears, cheeks or flesh cut from their thighs. A testimony given by James Hobbs stated that this practice was known by the various tribes and 'it operated on their minds.'

Leg irons, chains and neck irons were used extensively as a means of controlling and inflicting pain on Aboriginals. At Oomulgurri, in 1926, Aboriginals were chained together, driven through the bush and systematically slaughtered by a group of squatters and police. Others were chained back to back and made to walk tremendous distances, some as far as 200 miles.

Many were chained, hung on trees and butchered. Others were chained to trees and left to rot. In 1928, a missionary saw policemen chain a whole tribe by their necks to trees. He saw all the tribe killed

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18 Bullivant, Brian, op. cit., p. 18.
except for three women. These, he said, were taken back to camp, raped, tortured, then chained and killed.\textsuperscript{19}

In Western Australia a group of Aboriginal men, women and children were chained to trees, doused with kerosene and burnt alive.\textsuperscript{20}

Horace Winitja remembers when he and three others were chained to a tree for five days by a station manager and systematically beaten. A report in The Herald said that,

\begin{quote}
in a bizarre attempt at humiliation, he freed the men for a day, clad them in women’s dresses and made them brand a yard full of bullocks.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

The heaviest chains used were bullock chains. These were usually placed around the neck and fastened with large locks. Lighter dog chains were used more frequently as they had an added advantage in that they could be used for flogging. Many suffered this kind of torture as flogging and chaining occurred late into the 1950’s.\textsuperscript{22}

On Groote Eylandt stocks were used by the missionaries.\textsuperscript{23} Any girl who failed to behave in a manner required by the strict practices of the missionaries was placed in these stocks. Leg irons clasped the ankles.

\textsuperscript{19} Roberts, Janie, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{i bid.}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{22} Mattingley, Christobell, \textit{op. cit.}, p.36.
Flogging, whipping and caning were widely used forms of coercion, especially on Aboriginal women who were flogged until they submitted to the sexual demands of white settlers. In the 1890's, a policeman named Logan, concerned with the mistreatment, kidnapping and rape of Aboriginal women, provided his superiors with a report\(^{24}\) describing the practice of prominent settlers keeping Aboriginal women against their will, 'wholly and solely' for sexual gratification. He added that William Nairn, the 'Protector of Aborigines', used dog chains as a means of coercing women to assign themselves to certain settlers.

Aboriginal men in their attempts to free women kidnapped by settlers, were often caught. If caught they were beaten and whipped. Mr. Nelson, a Parliamentarian from the Northern Territory, was concerned about the lack of protection for Aboriginals. In Parliament he spoke of a man who, in an attempt to rescue his wife, was captured by stockmen. They hung chains around his neck, tied him to the stirrups of a saddle and dragged him alongside a horse for miles. After this they flogged him.\(^{25}\)

Beche-de-mer fishermen of Queensland kidnapped Aboriginal men and women for use as labourers. These fishermen often used extreme forms of violence in removing Aboriginals from their territory and training them for work in the Beche-de-mer industry. Police

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Magistrate Dalrymple described these men as among the worst to ever sail out of any port. ²⁶

So called 'nigger catchers' advertised in various outlets and newspapers that they would capture Aboriginals, for use as labourers, for five pounds a head, or shoot them for the government at half a crown a piece.²⁷

Women were physically and sexually abused, kept under the most appalling conditions and forced to work long hours. If the men protested at the working conditions or the treatment of women they were flogged.

Treatment of Aboriginals in the pearling industry was the same. They were forced to stay in the water for long hours. Many were attacked by sharks and left to die while others lost their lives when they refused to dive. It was the practice to teach Aboriginals how to dive by taking them out to the pearling beds, throwing them in and then firing shots at them from rifles.

On cattle and sheep stations women were kept as slave labour, under slave conditions, and to provide sexual outlets for station owners and their men. In 1905, a Royal Commission revealed some of the horrifying conditions under which Aboriginal women were forced to live. It also revealed that, after Aboriginals were rounded up or came seeking work food and shelter, it was common practice on

²⁷ Hunt, Su Jane, 'Aboriginal Women and Colonial Authority.' cited in Mackinalty, Judy, ed., et al., op. cit., p. 33.
stations for the bosses to have first choice of Aboriginal women, the overseer the next and so on for the rest of the men. Witnesses at the Royal Commission confirmed these practices, adding that women would be flogged at night for allowing sheep to wander or for not mustering them into paddocks.28

It was common practice for police to gain, maintain and exercise control over Aboriginals through the use of whips. Often they would be used to dispense gatherings of Aboriginals and to 'strike fear into their souls',

... policemen went along hitting everyone - racing along on horse back, lashing them with a whip, hitting with a stick and sending them off, galloping about, hitting as he went. The whip caught some people by the throat as they ran.29

Police often chained Aboriginals and forced them to march long distances to remove them from their territory. Along these marches they were fed starvation rations and suffered brutal treatment. At the end of these marches, as a final persuasion not to return, the police gave them hidings with a special stockwhip with spiky ends.30

Pain, suffering and cruel treatment holds a dominant position in the memories of many who went through the Children's Homes system or

28 ibid., p. 34.
29 Manta, Tommy, cited in Mattingley, Christobell, op. cit., p. 62.
30 Lester, Yomi, cited in ibid.
who were rounded up and herded onto missions and reserves. In mission schools Richard Broome says that physical violence always 'lurked beneath the surface'. Along with being subjected to such violence, children suffered 'daily denigration' and 'humiliation' by teachers.\textsuperscript{31}

Staff of State run homes and institutions are remembered as being 'cruel, vicious and sadistic' people who took great delight in using the cane at every opportunity.\textsuperscript{32} Some of these staff were described as Nazi-like in that they always walked around with cane in hand.

In 1927, a former officer of the Cootamundra Home made complaints to the Aboriginal Protection Board, stating that children were 'flogged and slashed' with the cane and that the use of the cane was a daily activity.\textsuperscript{33}

Margaret Tucker remembers beatings with everything from the cane to lumps of fire wood\textsuperscript{34} in the homes. When she was assigned as a domestic servant she attempted suicide to gain relief from the suffering of beatings, caning and her treatment as a slave.\textsuperscript{35}

Managers of homes were particularly cruel, often using stockwhips on boys who were secured by ropes and tethers. A Child Welfare report in 1933 said these homes operated under a system which was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Broome, Richard, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 85.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Hankins, Carla, \textit{The Missing Links}, BA Hons Thesis, University of NSW, 1983. pp. 4.4.1-4.4.3.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Edwards, Coral, 'Is that Ward Clean', cited in Gammage, Bill, \textit{All that Dirt}, Central Printing, Canberra, 1982, p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Tucker, Margret, cited in \textit{ibid}.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Broome, Richard, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 85.
\end{itemize}
'barbaric in its execution' and 'indefensible in its intent'. A further report six years later, stated that the brutality of officials was compounded by the lack of external controls over them. Peter Read says that one sentence in the report was particularly chilling because it brought to mind images of prisoners in concentration camps,

... there is a noticeable tendency for the boys to sit on their haunches motionless and almost silent.

There were many who were concerned at the cruel treatment of Aboriginals on stations and reserves where they were 'flogged till they dropped.' However those who held official positions, especially Government ones, and who were sympathetic to the Aboriginals were either sacked or removed from their positions. Concern for both these injustices was raised in Parliament by Mr. Nelson who stated that,

Mr. T.J. Beckett administered the Act (Aboriginal Protection Act) in a most humane spirit, but because he was fearless and had the courage to inform the Administrator of abuses and of reforms that would be to the benefit of the natives and prevent cruel treatment by their employers, his position was abolished. He was not an isolated case. Any official in the Northern Territory who

37 Ibid.
has the courage of his convictions and dares to condemn the prevailing order of things soon finds that he has lost his position.\(^3\!

This was in 1923 and there were others who voiced their protests but the situation in the Homes and on reserves and missions remained until the late 60's and early 70's.

The economic, social and spiritual destruction of tribal life had an enormous impact on Aboriginal women. From their position of importance in tribal life they were forced into a position of deprivation and dependency. Because of the decreasing number of Aboriginal males and the increase in settlements, Aboriginal women had no option but to move into fringe dwelling situations. This forced them into a life of pauperism and brought about an increase in the dependency on welfare situations and an increase in their vulnerability to attacks by whites. Raids, for women in fringe camps, were common by men who wanted physical and sexual outlets. Women were raped, killed or kidnapped. Once important providers and central to the maintenance of tribal life, Aboriginal women found themselves members of a subject race. Eve Fesl says that they suffered sexual abuse in the most appalling ways.

Koorie women were kidnapped and tied to furniture in the huts of settlers, so that they would by available for sexual abuse when men returned at the end of the day.\(^4\)

\(^4\) Eve Fesl, \textit{The Age}, 12th May, 1987, p. 11.
Used as sexual outlets and being forced into a position of increasing dependency on welfare, and in turn European males, meant that the incidence of disease and destitution among Aboriginal women increased dramatically. Women were used as chattels and were often thrown in as extra incentives to clinch bargains in the buying and selling of horses and other goods.

Aboriginal women became desirable commodities who were exploited physically, sexually and economically. As the colony expanded labour supply was short, Aboriginal women were coerced into supplying their labour for ever-increasing demands. In Western Australia,

They were forced to put a mark on a contract written in English, which they couldn't understand. These contracts bound them to be labourers or concubines without wages and had disciplinary measures if they "escaped", such as having the soles of their feet burned, and whipping, even for children.41

In other parts of Australia Aboriginal women were physically dragooned into supplying their labour. They were used extensively in all the major economic industries of the day. In the cattle industry they were used for droving, mustering and the domestics of camp life. In the pastoral industry they were shepherds, shearers, prospectors. Using shovels, long bars and picks they built roads.

41 Ibid.
They were harnessed, in teams of up to twenty, to ploughs used to till soils needed for crops. They were trained as house servants and sold, or released from missions, into servitude, often being kept in slave conditions.

Appalled at such conditions Mr Nelson told Parliament, in 1923, that he assured,

honourable members that Mrs Harriet Beecher-Stowe, who, in Uncle Tom's Cabin, exposed the horrors of negro slavery in America, would shudder if she could know of the conditions imposed upon the natives.42

Together with physical suffering Aboriginals suffered acts of psychological interference, torture and degradation. They underwent what Kevin Gilbert describes as 'a rape of the soul so profound that the blight continues in the minds of most blacks today.'43

Australia was colonised by people who held strong ethnocentric beliefs. They believed themselves to be spiritually, physically, racially, intellectually and culturally superior to the Aboriginals. Many believed they were chosen by God and that it was their duty to civilise and Christianise the heathen populations of the world.

Other attitudes developed as a result of the Industrial Revolution, a time when dramatic changes in peoples lifestyles took place. It was

43 Gilbert, Kevin, op. cit., p. 3.
a time when home-based production and cottage industries were displaced by social production, when the social rhythms and perceptions built up over centuries of pre-industrial life were placed in a severe state of crisis by the rationality of the factory system. Change occurred rapidly and was met with resistance and antagonism. Families became fragmented in the sense that they lost their central function as a productive unit. It was a time of increasing poverty as machines replaced traditional hand crafts. New forms of agriculture drove people off their land. This social dislocation in England caused people to drift towards the cities which, in turn, became over crowded.

Crime became endemic and humanitarian values declined. Over sixty crimes became punishable by death, most of these were against property.

The colonisation of a 'new land', a 'new world' offered a means of escape. It offered the chance of a new life. No matter what the obstacles the settlers had to succeed in making a new life for themselves. The colonists' determination to succeed and prosper in the new colony was compounded by their ethnocentric beliefs, their lack of understanding of Aboriginal culture and their lack of willingness to understand Aboriginal culture. The result for the Aboriginals was catastrophic.

New pastoral, cattle and mining economics, although using Aboriginals as labourers, made little room for their traditional hunter gather economy. In order to survive they become increasingly dependent upon welfare practices and handouts. They were forced to
occupy the lowest social position possible in the new society. Their economic and political powerlessness fostered little hope of survival. They were despised, degraded and devalued as human beings and excluded from white society. As a sense of worthlessness became part of Aboriginal thinking the psychology of a persecuted and dispossessed race was displayed. Many Aboriginals lost a sense of purpose and their lives became governed by a lack of desire for living. An increase in traditional practices of infanticide resulted. Derrimut, an elder of the Yarra people explained,

you see ... all this mine, all along here Derrimut's once; no matter now, me soon tumble down ... why me have lubra? Why me have Piccaninny? You have all this place, no good have children, no good have lubra, me tumble down and die very soon now.44

another elder, Billibellany, added,

the Black lubras say now no good children, Blackfellow say no country now for them, very good we kill and no more come up piccaninny.45

Kevin Gilbert says that as Aboriginals began to sicken physically and psychologically,

they were hit by the full blight of an alien way of thinking. They were hit by the intolerance and

44 Derrimut, cited in Broome, Broome, op. cit., p. 62
45 Billibellany, cited in ibid.
uncomprehending barbarism of a people intent only on progress in material terms, a people who never credited that there could be cathedrals of the spirit as well as of stone. Their view of the Aborigines as the most miserable people on earth was seared into Aboriginal thinking because they now controlled the provisions that allowed blacks to exist at all. Independence from them was not possible.46

Cultural exclusion exacerbated the sense of worthlessness and low self esteem felt by the Aboriginals. These effects were compounded by their inability to do anything about their situation. Cultural exclusion means exclusion from the possibility of producing change. It is exclusion from the mechanisms which bring about change and exclusion from the power bases controlling the institutions which were controlling them.

From the late 1800's until 1969 it was Government practice to remove Aboriginal children from their parents and place them in homes and missions. Many adults today still suffer the psychological trauma of this action.

Parents suffered mental torture from nightmares by always being on the look-out for officials who might take their children. They suffered the anxiety of discovery as surprise inspections were made of missions, reserves and stations. Initially only half or lighter

46 Gilbert, Kevin, op. cit., p. 2.
Caste children were taken. If these surprise inspections were discovered in advance parents and family members would smear the lighter coloured children with anything ranging from charcoal through black polish to blackened clay in the hope that the inspectors would overlook them. Other measures undertaken to prevent removals were to bury children in the earth under beds or among the camp dogs. Sometimes children were made to rush off into the bush or to other predetermined areas in the vicinity.

Parents families and communities suffered the shock and trauma of loss when their children were finally removed. Peter Read gives a figure of 8,000\(^\text{47}\) for New South Wales alone and says if anything this figure is far too low. As this practice occurred in all States, total removals must be in the tens of thousands representing four or five generations.

Children were often taken by force and parents were threatened with violence, if they didn’t give their children up,

"... thinking the policeman would shoot Mother, we screamed, "we’ll go with him, Mum, we’ll go"... I heard years later how, after watching us go out of her life, she wandered away from the police station three miles along the road leading out of town to Moonahaila. She was worn out, with no food or money, her apron still on. She wandered off the road to rest in the long grass under a tree. That

\(^{47}\) Cited in *Link Up*, Union Off Set Company, Canberra, 1988, p. 2.
is where old Uncle and Aunt found her the next day, still moaning and crying. They heard the sounds and thought it was an animal in pain.48

The children suffered psychological damage in many ways. Generally they were told the worst possible reasons why they were in homes and institutions, 'their parents were drunkards and incapable of looking after them', 'that they were given away as unloved and unwanted children and babies', or that they were 'rescued from the immoral influences of a savage and primitive race'. Many were told that their mothers were 'drunken sluts'.

In the institutional environment children learnt nothing of their Aboriginal heritage. What they did learn was that they were 'different', that they were 'other'. They were humiliated by white teachers who taught and instilled in them the thinking that they belonged to the lowest form of humanity living. Remembering his treatment Jimmie Barker came to believe what they were saying.

During my first lesson from the men I learnt that I was black, or partly coloured, there was no place in Australia for me. I learnt that anyone of my colour would always be an outcast and different from a white person. It gave me the firm idea that an Aboriginal, even if he was only slightly coloured, was mentally and physically inferior to all others. He was the lowest class known in the world, he

was little better than an animal; in fact, dogs were sometimes to be preferred. As I was less than twelve years old it was impossible to disbelieve men of authority who were much older. I tried to stop their remarks from bothering me too much, but it was hard to adjust to being treated with such cruelty and contempt.49

Other institutions used isolation, religion and conditioning techniques as a means of forcing white values on children. Brainwashing was used to affect radical changes in the ideas and beliefs of children. Along with others the Bomaderry home was dominated by religion. Children had to pray if they saw somebody wearing lipstick, as it was wicked and sinful. They were conditioned to think of Aboriginals as wicked, sinful, evil and dirty. They were continually exposed to two pictures, one with Aboriginals sitting on a wide road playing cards and drinking, the other a narrow road with few people on it. They were taught 'wide is the road to destruction and narrow is the road to heaven.' These children learnt to fear Aboriginals, associating them with cruelty, sin and alcohol.50

As these children grew, they were unable to function as normal adults. Deprived of their parents and families, a counterbalance to white indoctrination was not possible. Children were taught to despise their parents. Deprived of a culture and heritage, an environment of hopelessness and despair soon surrounded them.

institutional system forced the children to adopt European values and belief systems. However upon being released from the institutions, they found that they were excluded from mainstream society. They were not Aboriginal and they were not white. For many there were no support systems to help them cope with the helplessness. They sought freedom from the pain of frustration and mental anguish and freedom from a sense of worthlessness. Alcohol offered an avenue of escape. It offered oblivion.

If one is poor in an absolute sense, but living in a nation where the bulk of the population are also poor, the physical burden does not have a psychological dimension. But when the affluent general society has relegated one's people to the rear and consigned it to a status in which there is not rational, serious hope for the future, the consequence is a feeling of personal worthlessness, of hopelessness. And therein lies the most insidious of the weapons of genocide.51

CHAPTER FOUR

DELIBERATELY INFlicting ON THE GROUP CONDITIONS OF LIFE CALCULATED TO BRING ABOUT ITS PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART

Through the information presented in this chapter, I wish to demonstrate firstly, that successive governments knew of the atrocities being committed against the Aboriginals, and secondly, that through the formulation and enactment of policies, they provided, and promoted, conditions where the atrocities could flourish. Through these policies, the various governments demonstrated that they were not simply passive observers to the extinction of Aboriginal people, rather they informed and guided policy towards that end.

In essence, this chapter is about the historical development of policy. However as it was not until 1967 that the Commonwealth, through a referendum, gained control of Aboriginal Affairs the information is difficult to present in a sequential linear manner. Not all States and Colonies introduced policies at the same time, nor did each introduce exactly the same policies. But as it will be seen all policies enacted by the various governments had one thing in common. Their goal, either stated or unstated, was the removal of Aboriginal people as recognisable entities from Australia.
Together with the above I attempt to communicate something of the insidious way in which governments and missionaries went about the process of breaking down the identity and group cohesion of Aboriginals. Through their inaction governments supported the continuing annexation of land from the Aboriginals depriving them of the means of existence, both spiritually and physically. Through the annexation of land not only were their food stuffs destroyed but also their access to sacred sites, dreaming trails and the dreamtime.

The following extract is from a report delivered to the 1837 Select Committee of the House of Commons on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements). Despite its length I use it to demonstrate that knowledge of the catastrophe befalling the Aboriginals existed, together with an understanding of the effects of colonisation, in the early part of the last century. Governments knew of the ways in which the Aboriginals were being destroyed physically. They also knew that an equally complete way of destroying or eradicating Aboriginal people was to take possession of their land and 'despoil them of the means of existence'. Despite this, governments and settlers continued to perpetrate the tragedy which became the hidden part of Australia's history.

The intercourse of Europeans ... without any exception in the favour of the subjects of Great Britain, has been ... a source of many calamities to uncivilized nations. Too often, their territory has been usurped; their property seized; their numbers diminished; their character debased ... European
vices and diseases have been introduced ... and they have been familiarized with the use of our most potent instruments for the subtle or the violent destruction of human life, viz, brandy and gun powder.

It might be presumed that the native inhabitants of any land have an incontrovertible right to their own soil; a plain and sacred right, however, which seems not to have been understood. Europeans have entered their borders uninvited, and, when there, have not only acted as if they were undoubted lords of the soil, but have punished the natives as aggressors if they have evinced a disposition to live in their own country.

If they have been found upon their property, they have been treated as thieves and robbers. They are driven back into the interior as if they were dogs or kangaroos ...

From very large tracts we have, it appears, succeeded in eradicating them; and though from some parts their ejection has not been so apparently violent as from others, it has been equally complete, through our taking possession of
their hunting grounds, whereby, we have despoiled them of the means of existence.¹

Land was and is central to the continued cultural and physical existence of Aboriginals. In order to attempt to come to terms with this notion, an effort must be made to understand the Aboriginal ownership of, and relationship to, land. While this is a complex relationship, and justice cannot be done to it here, I direct the reader to Catherine and Ronald Berndt's, The World of the First Australians.²

A brief summary of their work describes all land in Aboriginal Australia as sacred land, highlighted by significant sites of spiritual importance. To Aboriginals land is inalienable, its character being developed during the Dreaming, an infinite spiritual cycle more real than reality itself. The values, laws and symbols of Aboriginal societies were established in the Dreaming.

Every Aboriginal man and woman has an incontrovertible right of possession of, and a spiritual linkage with, a part of the land by virtue of their birth. This linkage is more than just an association with a piece of land. They are part of it, in spiritual terms, as it is part of them. This cannot be removed from them, even by death, since the concept is relevant to past and present generations and the spiritual part of man/land is considered as being eternal, returning

¹ House of Commons Select Committee, cited in Mattingley, Christobell, op. cit., p.x.
on death for re-cycling to the mythic being concerned, or the sphere associated with such beings.

Ownership of land exists through membership to a certain kind of group to which men and women belong by birth and by spiritual linkage. Groups owned a specific stretch of land and were responsible for its renewal through ritual access to mythical power.

As land owners they have the dual role of caring for the land as well as perpetuating their relationship between the mythic beings and the land. They do this by acting as guardians and custodians in order to prevent desecration of specific sacred sites. They also perform rites concerned with maintaining the food supply, and ensuring an orderly sequence of seasons. Their set of beliefs, developed through the Dreaming, establishes them as landowners and land sustainers.

In a case study concerned with the resettlement of Aboriginals in the Western District of Victoria, The Farmlington Aboriginals, Dr. Coombs argues that by removing land from Aboriginal possession,

... we did not merely deprive Aborigines of property. We took also the source of their livelihood, the very foundations of their society, the basis of the rights and obligations on which it was built, and above all the source of the religious convictions
which gave purpose and justification to their lives.³

The removal of land from Aboriginal use and possession means stripping them of the physical and cultural means of existence. That this fact was known to the British government, the Colonial governments and today's State and Federal governments is indisputable, yet the annexation of land continues through the practices of mining companies.

Act 3 of the Convention on Genocide states, 'deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or part'. The Colonial governments satisfied this in two ways. Firstly, by their inaction, they condoned the brutality with which land was being seized by settlers. According to Stevens there was a policy of official detachment on the part of the authorities.⁴ Secondly, despite knowledge to the contrary, governments justified the expropriation of Aboriginal land on the grounds that it was not, in European terms, effectively used. The continuing annexation of Aboriginal land must be seen as a practice which satisfies Act 3 of the Convention.

Other conditions of life inflicted on the Aboriginals, were brought about by the manufacture, development, and adoption of various Aboriginal Policies and Acts.

⁴ Stevens, 'Pluralism, Cultural Maintenance and Evolution', cited in Bullivant, Brian, op. cit., p. 32.
According to Henry Reynolds, until the 1840's the main concern and emphasis of policy-makers towards the Aboriginals, was their incorporation into colonial society.\textsuperscript{5} Benevolent policies aimed at 'improving' the situation through civilising the Aboriginals and advancing them through the Christian faith were followed.\textsuperscript{6} All these policies had two basic elements in common. The first was that civilisation would be a natural consequence of their conversion to Christianity. The second was that through their conversion to Christianity, Aboriginals would be elevated from the filthy immoral practices of traditional camp life, and made useful to the needs of an expanding society.

In order to achieve the incorporation of Aboriginals into white society, various schemes were devised to teach the Aboriginals 'habits of useful industry.' Labour was seen as one of the key civilising agents.\textsuperscript{7} In order to ameliorate their condition and raise them in the scale of civilisation, many attempts were made to instil a western work ethic into the Aboriginals. The most widely held view amongst officials, missionaries and well-to-do settlers, says Reynolds, was that the Aboriginals were to become landless labourers.\textsuperscript{8}

The success or failure of these schemes was, among other things, largely dependent on the Aboriginals giving up their lifestyles and becoming settled. Anchoring them in settlements and reserves, was

\textsuperscript{5} Reynolds, Henry, 'Aboriginal and European Social Hierarchy' in \textit{Aboriginal History}, 7: 2. p. 5.
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Ibid.}
paramount because their nomadic habits were completely opposite to the Christian civilised life the policy makers and missionaries wanted to inculcate.

At first it was thought that the Aboriginals would want to give up their traditional lifestyles in favour of a 'higher civilised' way of life and that they would come voluntarily to reserves. This did not eventuate, so force was used to move Aboriginals onto reserves. Apart from physical coercion, food and rations were used as a means of controlling Aboriginals and directing their movements towards reserves. Food became a central instrument of coercion in forcing Aboriginals to give their labour and become civilised. It was thought by many that the 'stomach was the organ to be attacked in any attempts to civilise Aboriginals.'

Food was an extremely powerful agent of coercion since their hunter-gatherer lifestyle had all but been destroyed. Food and rations were deliberately used to control and manipulate the location of Aboriginals. By setting up ration stations and depots, governments effectively destroyed the freedom of movement of Aboriginals and ensured their concentration in certain places.

Food was used as both reward and punishment, given in response to appropriate behaviour and withheld for inappropriate behaviour, as determined by the authorities. Other coercive practices were also used as a means of forcing Aboriginals to supply their labour. As Reynolds puts it, compulsion either of hunger or of the gun barrel

9 Mattingley, Christobell, op. cit., p. 20.
10 ibid., p. 21.
played a part in the introduction of Aboriginals into the work force.\textsuperscript{11}

Overall the 'benevolent' policies were of immense benefit to interested parties other than the Aboriginals. These policies allowed governments to exercise greater control over the movements of Aboriginals and for the establishment of settlements away from any areas which were potentially useful to settlers, cattlemen and pastoralists. They also allowed missionaries greater opportunities to introduce the Aboriginals to the principles of the Christian religion.

Reynolds says that the link between labour, religion and social control was most clearly enunciated by the Port Phillip missionary John Harper who wrote,

they must be taught the art of cultivation ... and it will only be by keeping them employed, that their minds will be made susceptible to Religious impressions ... They must also be taught to settle upon a spot where they will always be under the inspection of their teachers.\textsuperscript{12}

Early attempts to 'include' Aboriginals into white society failed for a number of reasons. Among them were the prevailing ethnocentric beliefs of the white population. The amalgamationist trends were

\textsuperscript{11} Reynolds, Henry, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 8.
largely dependent on the white population accepting Aboriginals into their society and clearly this was untenable. Other reasons centred around the ethnocentric nature of white society itself. Aboriginals had been forced to occupy the lowest social position possible. It was seen that they were not fit for anything. Training them for the labour force necessitated a reassessment of this attitude and of their position. A possible result of this reassessment was the elevation in status of the Aboriginals to that of the white labour force. However this could not happen because the nature of ethnocentrism worked against it. An upgrading would also mean that the white labour force would have to be seen as their equals which for them would be a down-grading, which in turn would cause members of the white labour force to loose whatever status and self-esteem they had in colonial society. This simply could not be allowed to happen.

Other reasons for their failure had to do with the capitalist nature of the emerging white society. Too many Aboriginals entering the labour market would have the effect of lowering the price of labour thus affecting white labourers and their families. There were those who fought to prevent this. Also the schemes depended upon the establishment of a 'master-servant' relationship\textsuperscript{13} between Aboriginals and whites. This made little sense to the Aboriginals as they had no concept of such a relationship in their traditional societies.

\textsuperscript{13} Reynolds, Henry, \textit{ibid.}
By and large, Reynolds argues, confidence in the plans to include Aboriginals into society declined because of the perpetual arguments that the blacks belonged to a 'doomed and dying race' which could never be assimilated.\textsuperscript{14}

Brian Bullivant comments on the fact that because it seemed obvious to everyone at the time, the Aboriginals belonged to a dying race, who were doomed to extinction, and because they were faced with failure on several grounds, the colonial governments retreated into despair and cynicism and adopted different policies towards the Aboriginals.\textsuperscript{15}

Owing to the increasing brutality shown towards the Aboriginals as white settlement increased, and because of the increasing number of deaths through killings, diseases and malnutrition, coupled with the belief that they would be unable to survive white contact, governments developed policies of 'segregation and protection'. This necessitated the development and establishment of Aboriginal Protection Boards, the first in Victoria in 1860 and the last in the Northern Territory in 1911,\textsuperscript{16} to implement the mechanics of the new policies.

The idea behind these new policies was to exercise greater efforts to round up Aboriginals and force them to live on an increasing number of settlements, reserves, missions and holding centres. On these, it was thought, they could be protected from the increasing

\textsuperscript{14} ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{15} Bullivant, Brian, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{16} ibid.
brutality. Also they could be allowed to die out in relative peace. These new attitudes were based on assumptions that since the number of full blood Aboriginals had been dramatically decreased, the 'Aboriginal problem' would solve itself as the rest of them died out.

These policies, Bullivant argues, were not entirely for the benefit of the Aboriginals. They were of benefit to the governments as they represented a negative and clearly exclusive way of coping with what had become an intractable problem. Earlier solutions to the problem became embroiled in economic and political expediency. The new policies offered welcome relief for politicians and settlers alike. Bullivant argues that, among other concerns, the ideology behind the new policies was based on three components, all of which laid the blame for the failure of previous policies on the Aboriginals.

The first component was the belief that they were a dying race faced with extinction. An appealingly humanistic parochial metaphor, "smooth the dying pillow", was invoked to demonstrate that negative protection was actually a humane way of allowing Aboriginals to die in peace. The second component was the firm belief that segregation was justified to avoid inter-breeding or miscegenation with Europeans, in order to preserve the purity of the European race ... The third component, with particular bearing on education, was Social Darwinism. This entailed a fixed belief that the Aboriginal intellect was composed of base
instincts and was incapable of higher mental processes. Thus there was no point in trying to encourage the development of Aboriginals or educate them. So primitive were they, so the belief ran, that they had limited, if any, ability to adjust to the more advanced type of society introduced by the Europeans.¹⁷

These policies were disastrous for the Aboriginals for they began the process of institutionalisation which attempted to make them totally dependent on white society. The emphasis of these policies was on control. The Australian Aborigines' Act 1911,

... eroded civil rights. It had a strong emphasis on segregation. It was restrictive. Our People bitterly resented it and its effects, which are still felt today. Here was the compromise of almost absolute control with a degree of apartheid; and as usual, of good intentions to protect with economic interests. The Act ratified institutionalization as a way of life and confirmed the status of Nungas as 'inmates' whose affairs and families were to be controlled in almost every respect. It supported vested economic interests by developing a hidden subsidy to rural employers.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 35.
¹⁸ Mattingley, Christobell, op. cit., p. 45.
Other States had adopted similar repressive Acts as early as 1860 with the formation of Aboriginal Protection Boards. In all States and Territories all Aboriginals eventually came under the control of Chief Protectors of Aborigines. The 'Protectors' formulated rules that governed the very existence of Aboriginals. The Chief Protectors became the legal guardians of all Aboriginal and part Aboriginal children up to the age of 18 for boys and, in some States, 21 for girls. The 'Protectors' could order the removal of children, from parents, families and communities, to institutions for intensive training. Through this training the intention was to sever the childrens' links with Aboriginal culture and instil in them European values and ways of life.

Managers appointed to reserves and mission stations exercised almost total control over the movements and the daily lives of Aboriginals. Reserves, on land usually considered incapable of supporting white families, were expected to support whole Aboriginal communities. In their attempts to make reserves self supporting managers either dispensed or withheld food stuffs, rations and other forms of provisions, such as blankets, as a means of forcing them to adopt farming practices.

Managers had powers of search and seizure in that they could enter dwellings at any time and confiscate property. They controlled all movements in and out of reserves and stations. Aboriginals had to seek and be granted permission to leave reserves, get married, and to visit doctors, dentists and so on. Managers had the power to remove children and send them to homes and dormitories. They had power to expel people from reserves regardless of their situation.
All traditional practices such as corroborees, meetings of elders and religious practices were prohibited as was gambling, card playing, alcohol consumption and any other activity considered to be inappropriate. Aboriginals had to obey managers at all times and failure to do so meant the possibility of being legally charged with a wide range of offences. Managers had the power to withhold pay and dispose of it as they deemed appropriate, and the power to order up to 32 hours work a week without pay.

They also had the power to recommend that certain Aboriginals be exempt from being Aboriginals. Those who demonstrated, in European terms, attributes of trustworthiness and reliability could be issued with 'Certificates of Exemption' and could become honorary whites. These certificates had to be carried at all times and be produced upon request. Failure to do so meant sanctions in one form or another. The certificates allowed these 'honorary whites' to break curfew laws, venture into places banned to Aboriginals, consume alcohol and generally handle their own affairs. They could be revoked at any time.

The reality of the reserves and stations was a form of prison in that the imposed restrictions were not only used to control the movements of Aboriginals, they were used to satisfy increasing demands by whites to keep aboriginals out of sight, especially after sunset. Along with this they were designed to prevent Aboriginals from having contact with whites who were sympathetic to the Aboriginal situation. If contact was not possible with these people then chances of improving their position became more difficult.
Along with the various Aboriginal Protection Acts, the prevention of contact with sympathetic whites was formalised in the Consorting Act of 1911. This Act prohibited any white person from associating with an Aboriginal and breaking it could attract penalties of up to six months in jail. It had the effect of further entrenching the hopelessness and despair of the Aboriginals as it effectively shut them off from the white world and from many of the mechanisms which could bring about change.

One of the stated intentions behind the new policies was the protection of the Aboriginals from the atrocities of the white settlers, and to halt, if possible, the rapid decline in numbers. This was contrary to the other stated reasons of allowing them to die out. The reality was that governments had no intention of halting the decline in the Aboriginal population. If they had, then they would have undertaken measures to rectify the deplorable conditions on the reserves. Because there was no movement by governments, or their departments, to improve conditions for Aboriginals, their numbers continued to decline. Malnutrition, diseases, lack of medical attention and an increase in infant mortality further contributed to the decline.

The allegedly inferior constitution of the Aboriginals and the belief in the doomed race theory were cited as reasons for their decline, but Edward Curr, a member of the Victorian Aboriginal Protection Board, saw it differently. He was critical of the lack of medical attention and continually expressed his disbelief at the lack of

19 Ibid., p. 46.
concern by governments. He argued that much could be done to save the Aboriginals but,

that they must die out is, I think, a foregone conclusion. Were they as valuable commercially as shorthorned cattle, or merino sheep, there would be no fear of them dying out. The fact is that we have pretended but never really wished to save them from extermination.²⁰

Although the numbers of 'fullblood' Aboriginals on the reserves was decreasing, the part Aboriginal population was increasing. This situation presented those in authority with further problems. Half castes, as they were termed, were considered to have a genetic advantage over Aboriginals. After all, according to ethnocentric beliefs, they were half white and must possess greater intelligence and therefore could be educated. There was considerable anxiety throughout the Colonies, and later throughout the States and Territories, that these people should continue to be raised among the 'blacks'. It was immoral. Concerns were also being expressed for the protection of the white race. It should remain white and every measure possible should be undertaken to facilitate this. The prospect of cross-breeding was unacceptable.

The solution reached by the various Aboriginal Protection Boards was a change in policy and the removal of all halfcastes from reserves. In fact the Boards thought that by enacting the new

²⁰ Curr, Edward, cited in Critchett, Jan, et al., op. cit., p. 87.
policies, in a relatively short while, there would be no need for Aboriginal policies and no further administrative problems. It was thought that, with the new policies in place, the halfcastes could be educated and absorbed into the white population and that the decline in numbers of 'fullbloods' would soon see the end of the Aboriginal race.

Along with the removal of children the Boards adopted dispersal policies, like the one formalised in the Victorian Aborigines Act of 1886. This Act stated that only 'fullbloods' and 'halfcastes' over 34 years of age were entitled to aid and to reside on the stations and reserves. Richard Broome says that the stated reasons for the Boards introducing these policies were that they believed it to be unreasonable for the State to continue to support able-bodied men and women who had the ability to earn their own living. The truth of the matter was, he argues, in one swoop the cost of supporting Aboriginals would be reduced, the Aboriginal population would vanish as the 'fullbloods' died out and the 'halfcastes' blended to whiteness.21

This argument is supported by the fact that increasingly the economy was making little room for Aboriginals. If employment was at all possible they were paid at a fraction of the rate of white workers, making it extremely difficult to survive without assistance.

21 Broome, Richard, _op. cit._, p. 82.
In support of Broome, Peter Read says that codified in these Acts were views and policies which looked towards the day,

... when there would be no reserves, no Board, no expense and no people claiming Aboriginal descent. In time the Aboriginal problem would be solved forever. The nub of the perceived problem was the association of Aborigines with each other; the perceived remedy was the elimination of the reserves.\(^\text{22}\)

As the dispersal policies took effect many Aboriginals were forced into becoming destitute fringe dwellers, attempting to exist under the worst possible conditions. Most town councils wanted nothing to do with Aboriginals and their camps, which were usually established on the outskirts of towns, and they employed brutal methods to rid themselves of them. Peter Read says that the mental and physical violence of dispersal was kept hidden from the population at large,

... they simply were not aware of the dusk to dawn curfews, the pursuits by Alsatian dogs, the prisoners dragged through the streets handcuffed to mounted policemen, the children living on nothing but flour and tea, the windowless leaking huts, their beds sodden throughout the winter, the appalling infant mortality rate, the bulldozed

houses ... There seems hardly to have been any awareness that the official policy was dispersal, or that dispersal implied the extinction of Aboriginality, or that the extinction of Aboriginality meant nothing less than the extinction of Aborigines.23

These dispersal policies were followed until the late 1930's and early 1940's. Slowly the State and Federal governments began to realise that dispersal had not worked. The Aboriginals did not die out. Expelling them from one camp simply meant they had nowhere else to go except to another camp or to set up new ones. The cycle of expulsions and new camps could not continue, so again a change in the policy was advocated.

Assimilation became the new policy towards the Aboriginals. This was adopted by all States and the Commonwealth government after the Second World War. Under the assimilation policy, Aboriginals were to be enticed into towns so that they could live in the same manner as the whites. They were to be absorbed into the greater community for their 'own benefit'. Town housing schemes were established and Peter Read argues that these became the 'principle pillar of assimilation'. He said that the 'carrot' of town housing reinforced the 'stick' of reserve clearance and provided a solution to the problem of what to do with the Aboriginals after the reserve clearances. The other 'carrot', he says, was the Exemption Certificate system which, among other things, allowed some

23 Ibid., pp. 27-28.
Aboriginals access to some social service benefits. In practice the Exemption Certificates acted to condemn Aboriginal values and affirm those of the Europeans.

This new policy aimed at complete one-way assimilation, but in reality it was no more than an extension of the dispersal policy, in that its stated intention was to spread the Aboriginal population throughout the white community. The policy makers thought that the only hope of survival for Aboriginals was to make them white. The expense to the Aboriginals would be their own socio-cultural heritage. The ultimate aim of this new policy, like the previous ones, was the disappearance of Aboriginal societies, and people, as distinguishable entities.

The policy of Assimilation was followed until the late 1960's, a time when many of the attitudes and practices of Australian society were being challenged. A great deal of unrest surfaced during these times. They were marked by attempts of minority groups to gain recognition and have their voices heard. Challenges from the anti Vietnam movement, the Feminist movement, the Conservation movement, the Counter Cultural movement and the Black movement, to name a few, caused a considerable degree of upheaval throughout the Australian community. Many began to question the practices in society which perpetuated the injustices suffered by minority groups.

24 Ibid., p. 29.
Changes to the Policy of Assimilation followed concerns that it did not recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal culture. Further that it ignored the natural right of Aboriginals to make decisions about their own lifestyles and have a say in their future.

The new policy formulated to solve the 'Aboriginal Problem' was termed the Integration Policy. This stated that Aboriginals were as free as other Australians to determine their futures, keep their racial identity and traditional lifestyles or if they desired Aboriginals could adopt a European lifestyle.

Attempts to deliver more services and service related agencies to Aboriginals characterised this Policy. Throughout the 1970's, the boundaries of this Policy became blurred with the Multicultural Policy, which was introduced in the late 70's to cater for the expanding multicultural nature of Australia. Both the policies attempted to shift emphasis from the promotion of assimilation, of both Aboriginals and Migrants, to a different way of managing minority groups within a white society. The intentions behind both Policies were to encourage minority groups to maintain their cultural identities but locate them within an 'Australian white identity'. They had to integrate.

There were however, a number of problems associated with these Policies. Consideration was not given to the way individual and cultural identity is constructed. Berger and Luckman say that identity is formed by a number of social processes and once formed it is maintained, modified or even reshaped by social relations. Individuals are born into a world of meaning, and they inherit a
history which locate them within certain structures in society. Identity is identity within a specific world of meaning that is socially constructed.\textsuperscript{26}

The world of meaning for Aboriginals included, among other things, over a century and a half of violence, dispossession, exploitation, subjugation and attempted extermination. Aboriginal people had to integrate this history, together with a history which marginalised them as a people, and used euphemisms to explain away their disappearance. They inherited the legacy of Social Darwinism and the legacy of stereotypes based on widely held racist beliefs and assumptions. What was to be integrated, the reality as Aboriginal people saw it, or the 'Noble Savage' as white society saw it?

If identity is modified or reshaped by social relations, then the integration of Aboriginals into the dominant white society, necessitated their being reshaped by the social relations operating in that society. These social relations continued to define Aboriginals in negative terms.

We have already seen that many efforts had been directed towards destroying Aboriginal cultural identity. The Integration Policy added to these efforts. The extent of social dislocation caused to Aboriginal people destroyed much of their traditional cultural practices. Superficially, what was left was allowed to exist within White society as a separate culture. However aspects of their culture were taken over by white society and used for commercial

gain. A situation evidenced by the exploitation of Aboriginal art works and artifacts. The cultural aspects, which could be retained, were those useful to whites.

If integration was to be totally successful then it necessitated Aboriginals abandoning their Aboriginality because the maintenance of Aboriginality and the integration into white society was incommensurable. It is not possible to live in, and identify with, two worlds at the same time. The reality of the Integration Policy was, although some cultural aspects were transportable, an extension of the Assimilation Policy.

This same problem plagued the Multicultural Policy. Many argued that Aboriginals were just as much a part of multicultural Australia as other immigrants were and therefore should come under the Multicultural policy. Through this policy the Government sought to establish an environment where social policies considerate of, and appropriate to, the needs of populations regardless of their diverse backgrounds were developed. However such social policies did not cater for the issue of land rights, a major point of divergence between Aboriginals and other immigrant groups. Other points of divergence were the social history of Aboriginals, how they came to be in the depressed condition the policies were attempting to 'solve', along with issues of health, alcohol and drug abuse, culturally appropriate housing, legal and educational concerns and the provision of utilities in outback Australia.

Like the Integration Policy, the Multicultural Policy attempted to provide a situation where people can live in two worlds at the same
time. These policies created a situation which saw minority groups attempting to retain their traditional identities while at the same time operating in, and being defined by, the dominant white society. This resulted in an untenable tension in which Aboriginal and other ethnic groups were expected to exist in two worlds at the same time. As I discussed in relation to the Integration Policy, this concept made no allowances for the idea that individual and group identity is formed by the social context into which people are born and is not necessarily commensurate with another culture or society. Aboriginals and migrants could not identify with and live in a white world without losing the identity defined by their traditional cultures.

How could Aboriginal people, who by tradition live a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, follow a religion which necessitates a symbiotic relationship to the land, its animals, plants and physical features along with the maintenance of that land, retain their cultural traditions and live under the broad umbrella of an essentially exploitative social system? Again the situation envisaged by the Multicultural Policy was incommensurable.

Towards the late 70's the Policy of Self Management/Self Determination was introduced in another attempt to solve the 'Aboriginal Problem'. The carrot of this Policy was that Aboriginal people were to be offered 'self management' through the granting of land rights. However, if this policy was to achieve anything near its stated intentions then it should have witnessed the dismantling of the special departments set up to administer Aboriginal Affairs.
This did not occur and in fact the activities of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs were widened.

Langton described the Policy of Self Management/Self Determination as one of oppression and argued that it was only a front for 'assimilation and exploitation' because the Department of Aboriginal Affairs created the illusion that Aboriginal organisations were autonomous and independent. Further, he says that the functioning of a Government Department necessarily has to suppress anything which is distinctively Aboriginal, and Aboriginal needs per se, are not regarded as worthwhile or important. Projects, while they might meet the needs of Aboriginal people, are only sanctioned when they satisfy and meet the values and prejudices of white assessors to the extent they agree it can be funded. The primary function of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is not to ameliorate the Aboriginal condition, but to make whites happy.

In 1982 Mr Richardson, an area officer for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, stated that the policy of self management was doomed to 'frustration and failure' because its implementation uses a whole range of agencies who use the policy for their own benefit and not for the benefit of Aboriginal people.

The structural inability of the Self Management Policy to achieve its aim, led to its description as a 'very bad joke' because the term

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27 Ibid.
28 Richardson, Mr., cited in Rose, Deborah, op. cit., p. 26.
29 Rose, Deborah, Ibid.
contradicted what it purported to express. Rose states that a bureaucratically administered policy of integration or self management is a perfectly paradoxical injunction. The implications are that Aboriginal people need help, otherwise there would be no policies aimed at helping them, and that success in being helped is indicated by a spontaneous (self management) conformity to bureaucratic expectations.30

The Self Management Policy/Self Determination Policy, marked another stage in the development of the history of imposed solutions to the 'Aboriginal Problem'. By its very nature it could not succeed because there was no accompanying structural alteration in the relative positions of power between Aboriginal and white societies. An alteration which necessitates the ceding of power to Aboriginal people so that they can begin to define their own problems, their own needs, and take culturally appropriate steps to bring about their solutions.

Other attempts to impose different conditions of life on the Aboriginals were carried out by the missionaries. Their work, albeit in most cases sincere and benevolent, sought to change the Aboriginals and make them anew. They sought to divest them of their land and culture and impose upon them 'civilised Christian' ways of life. They worked towards the removal of all forms of Aboriginal authority and towards the substitution of an entirely new order. Ronald and Catherine Berndt say that despite the best of

30 Ibid.
intentions the missionaries undermined the principles and assumptions on which Aboriginal life was based.

Some were intent on stamping out Aboriginal culture entirely, even to the extent of calling for police assistance in breaking up initiation camps, and speaking of all traditional practices and beliefs as devil-sponsored, leading inexorably to hell and eternal damnation ... With this extreme attitude went other aspects, handled with greater or less rigidity: forcibly taking children into dormitories and forbidding or restricting access to parents; interfering with marriage customs; undermining the authority of older people, for instance, by over-riding or even openly mocking at their attempts to influence the young; holding up sacred objects to ridicule, and displaying to children or to women things which were not only sacred but conventionally secret to adult men.31

In their attempts to convert the Aboriginals to Christianity and civilise them by eradicating their culture and preventing the continuance of social practices, the missionaries complimented the work of the governments. Their efforts to impose a new order also complimented the physically destructive activities of the authorities and colonists.

The imposition of the new order did not take place immediately nor did it take place at the same time throughout Australia. Basically, for their work to be successful, the missionaries had to alter the Aboriginals' notions of space and time. This was achieved firstly by reordering, redefining and reconstructing their social space and secondly by establishing a system of discipline aimed at reordering time. After the Aboriginals were settled, the missionaries changed the landscape of the missions from something culturally familiar to the Aboriginals to something culturally and economically familiar to the missionaries. Then they attempted to change the Aboriginals sense of time by imposing on them regulated eating, work, social and religious practices.

The physical layout of missions was carefully arranged so as to compliment these endeavours,

in order to carry on the work successfully it needs a regular plan or system of operation. It needs a general station plan which forms the centre of the whole and to which fall all the parts, from the Mission house, the School house, and native houses and finally the order of every individual Black from the old man down to the child, so that each one knows his place and work. This enables each branch to work separately and yet to form part of the whole machinery.

32 Attwood, Brian, op. cit., p. 7.
33 Hagenauer, Friedrich, cited in ibid., p. 8.
The creation of therapeutic environments, such as the one described was common, for they were central to the practice of controlling and reshaping. Brian Attwood says that the missionaries placed faith in the reformatory potential of incarceration, and an ordered environment. Some, he says, copied their moral architecture from institutions such as schools, prisons, mental asylums, and reformatories.34

Since the beginning of white contact attempts were made to eradicate the Aboriginals from Australia. Initially this was carried out in physically violent ways. As settlement progressed there was a conscious effort on the part of Colonial and, in turn, State and Federal governments to introduce Policies and Acts to facilitate the solving of the 'Aboriginal Problem' as they saw it. Codified in these acts was the eradication of Aboriginals as identifiable people.

Among the more insidious ways in which the governments attempted to bring about the eradication of Aboriginal people was defining and providing the solutions to problems, according to the dominant white mode of thinking. Not only did this cause tremendous amounts of psychological trauma and damage to Aboriginal people, it caused the breakdown of traditional lines of authority, the group cohesion among Aboriginals and fostered situations, which continued the structural oppression of Aboriginal people and prevented them from being able to do anything about their situation.

34 Attwood, Brian, op. cit., p. 8.
Conditions on the reserves were most destructive and through inaction, the governments facilitated the decline in Aboriginal population numbers. Also, the sacking and removal of persons from positions of importance, if they were seen to be sympathetic to the Aboriginal plight, along with the Consorting Act, were repressive measures undertaken in order to prevent Aboriginals access to the mechanisms which could bring about real change.

The work of the missionaries complimented the work of the governments. These conditions, which were imposed on the Aboriginals, must be seen to satisfy Act 3 of the 'Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide'.
CHAPTER FIVE

IMPOSING MEASURES INTENDED TO PREVENT BIRTHS WITHIN THE GROUP

Since the beginning of white contact Aboriginal women have occupied a precarious position in the newly imposed social order. Their position emanates from the fact that they belong to two oppressed groups. In the emerging dominant social order, Aboriginal women were members of the subordinate group 'women' and the subordinate group 'Aboriginals'. They have suffered the extremes of oppressions and exploitations racially, sexually and economically.

From the time of white contact the decline in the status of the Aboriginal began. Before contact, women were central to the functions of traditional society. They were secure members of their respective societies and had clear images of their relationship, value and roles within these societies. In the imposed new order this picture changed. Owing to the destructive practices of colonisation and the subjugation of Aboriginal people, Aboriginal women were forced to occupy a position in a sub-culture of poverty, despair and denigration. They were viewed by whites, especially males, as lubras fit only for masculine sexual gratification, their labour and their potential as breeders of future labour forces. There
were those who bragged they could 'breed all their future labour force from Aboriginal women.'

This picture of Aboriginal women has to be seen in the context of a rapidly expanding economy, which was unable to be supported by a white labour force. Aboriginal women generally were seen by whites as exploitable both sexually and physically. But as the emerging colonies expanded, the position of Aboriginal women worsened. With the failure of the various schemes, to instil a white work ethic, and to include Aboriginals in white society, attitudes towards their potential as breeders changed. The new social order now had little use for them. In fact it was their potential as breeders and their potential to increase the black population which caused an about-face in these attitudes. Aboriginal women came to suffer increasing acts of sexual abuse and death as more and more violence was directed towards them. Tony Barta says that a 'direct incitement of genocide' stemmed from the 'kill the breeders' slogans and campaigns of Queensland and Western Australia.

By far the most comprehensive plan aimed at ridding Australia of Aboriginals, by preventing their reproduction, was the removal of children from parents, families and communities and their subsequent institutionalisation in childrens' homes, dormitories, mission stations, boarding and foster arrangements. During their institutionalisation Aboriginal children, especially girls, were conditioned and trained as domestics. They were then sent from the Homes to support the needs of the white community. While

1 Broome, Richard, op. cit., p. 134.
2 Barta, Tony, op. cit., p. 158.
increasing acts of violence were directed towards Aboriginal women, their children, through white education, were somewhat more acceptable. However child removal was underpinned by more sinister intentions.

Specific strategies, developed by various government authorities via Aboriginal Acts, were aimed at the control, subjugation and depopulation of Aboriginal peoples. The mechanisms were the practices of child removal, and their subsequent sexual segregation into Homes. In a study on child removal in New South Wales, Carla Hankins argues that child removal began as a means of expediting the passing of the Aboriginal race.³

In these Homes, children were conditioned into avoiding and rejecting all things Aboriginal. They were taught to 'despise the life of the wild blacks.'⁴ These lifestyles were ascribed the most negative qualities.

It was thought that complete institutionalisation and sexual segregation, would both provide and achieve the solution to the persistent 'Aboriginal Problem'. Reports of the various Aboriginal Protection Boards make frequent references towards the need to separate the sexes, to remove the girls from the influences of Aboriginal camp life, and the need to remove the children, especially girls, at a young age because of the risk of them getting into trouble with the opposite sex.⁵

³ Hankins, Carla, op. cit., p. 2.1.17.
⁵ Hankins, Carla, op. cit., p. 2.1.16.
Figures for New South Wales show that between 1916 and 1929 more than double the number of girls than boys were taken from their families. Hankins suggests that the removal of Aboriginal girls at a disproportionate rate suggests a particular strategy in operation. Without evidence to suggest either a higher demand for female labour or a higher rate of neglect for boys, the sole factor of gender explains why girls were more likely to be abducted.6

Hankins goes on to argue that, through its bureaucratic agents, various governments attempted to impose the predominant social and economic relations, on remnant groups of a dispossessed indigenous minority. The abduction of female children formed a key strategy in the suppression of the Aboriginals, and was part of a specific scheme to exert control over Aboriginal populations. In removing young girls the state attempted to control the most powerful aspect of these individuals which was as possible reproducers of future generations of Aboriginals.7

The sexual segregation of the children in the Homes had far reaching implications later in life, for many of those who survived the system. Many of the children, especially females, had little or no contact with the opposite sex during their time in the Homes. When their training was deemed to be complete, they were sent from the Homes well equipped with domestic skills, but poorly equipped socially. The social depravity in the Homes, had a detrimental effect on the young adults' future relations with the opposite sex. Many could not enter into relationships as they had no role models, or

6 Ibid., p. 3.1.12.  
7 Ibid., p. 3.1.13.
training, for such things during their institutionalisation. The lack of role models created many problems for Aboriginal people in later life. These problems have far reaching consequences when seen in the context of the extended families of Aboriginal societies.

Faced with an increasing number of halfcaste children, the Aboriginal Protection Boards had a problem which had to be solved. The Boards thought the solution rested in the elimination of halfcastes through their removal and subsequent blending to whiteness.8

Throughout the 1920's the Boards maximised their efforts to remove children, and in one of their annual reports, they wrote that the process of the gradual elimination of quadroons, and octaroons, as lighter castes were termed, was being quietly carried on.9

In April 1937 the Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities held a conference in Canberra and adopted the policy of Absorption as the destiny for the Aboriginal race in Australia.10 Members at the conference were of the opinion that, as other policies had failed to solve the 'Aboriginal Problem', the only solution to be followed, was for the ultimate absorption of Aboriginals into the larger white Australian population. As with the policies before them, implicit in the Absorption policy, was the disappearance of the Aboriginal race from Australia.

8 Cited in Annual Report, Aboriginal Protection Board, N.S.W. 1920, p. 3.
The 1930's represents a fundamental change in the attitudes of white Australians towards Aboriginals. Until this time there was a degree of comfort among whites that the policies and practices, which had been put in place to solve the 'Aboriginal Problem', were achieving their objectives. This fostered an attitude of complacency based on widely held racist beliefs and assumptions that whites were more evolved than Aboriginals, and that Aboriginals were unable to adapt to the higher standard of life necessary for survival.

Actions were aimed towards assisting Aboriginals to die out either directly, by the imposition of the 'protection' or subjugation and control policies, or indirectly, by their reluctance to do anything at all, which would improve the health and standard of living of Aboriginals. Governments simply ignored the worsening conditions on reserves and camp areas, because they believed the Aboriginals to be dying out anyway. They took the attitude that it was simply best to 'smooth the dying pillow'.

With the increase in the number of halfcastes, throughout Australia, these assumptions and beliefs were challenged, to the extent that a sense of fear began to be felt by white Australia. These fears were being fueled by statements such as 'the halfcastes were breeding like rabbits'. White Australia was afraid that with such an increase in numbers the white population was in danger of being over-run by blacks. Many concerns were expressed along these lines, together with concerns about the impending threat of violence associated with the 'black revolt'. A quick solution had to be found.

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11 Boxall, Mr., cited in ibid., p. 18.
At the conference in 1937 A.O. Neville, the Chief Protector of Natives in Western Australia, together with Dr Cook and J.W. Bleakley, who held similar positions in the Northern Territory and Queensland respectively, expressed the need for the immediate introduction of the Absorption Policy.

Are we to have 1,000,000 blacks in the Commonwealth or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there were any Aborigines in Australia.\textsuperscript{12}

Absorption is more appropriately termed 'miscegenation', because absorption was to be achieved through the coupling of halfcaste with lighter castes, or whites, in order to breed out the Aboriginal race.

This policy was based on the belief in two theories. (1) That genetic atavism did not occur between the white and Aboriginal races of Australia. (2) That racial intermixture would not produce any deterioration of human type. In fact it was thought that intermixture led to 'increased virility'\textsuperscript{13} among the progeny, a desirable quality as it had the potential to increase the rate of absorption. Patricia Jacobs says that these two potent racial theories figured largely in the public consciousness regarding the concept of absorption.\textsuperscript{14}

During the 1930's, 40's and 50's there was an obsession with grading and categorising Aboriginals according to the amount of white or

\textsuperscript{12} Neville, A.O., \textit{et al.}, cited \textit{ibid.}, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{13} Cited in \textit{ibid.}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{ibid.}
black blood they had, hence the terms 'fullblood', 'halfcaste', 'quadroons', 'octaroons' and so on. Richard Broome says that this grading process reflected the racist idea that people of mixed race were a continuum between civilisation and barbarism. It reached absurd proportions in Western Australia in 1952 when welfare officers dealt in fractions as small as 1/128.\textsuperscript{15} The various Boards throughout Australia wanted to control as many people as possible under the Aboriginal Acts, to ensure complete removal of Aboriginals as identifiable entities.

Throughout the same period, and as recently as the 60's, great concern was expressed across Australia at the alarming number of children of mixed parentage. Need for tighter controls on females was stressed, as was the need for more child removals to orphanages and white foster families. By and large the Boards switched emphasis from institutionalisation, to fostering, and with the many childless couples in the community, fostering quickly gained in popularity. The New South Wales Board stated that,

in view of the fact that many of the wards in the Board's care are of light caste, efforts were made late in 1955, to secure foster homes for these amongst white people. Furthermore, this was regarded as a positive step in the implementing of the Board's policy of assimilation.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} Broome, Richard, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 161.
\textsuperscript{17} Cited in \textit{Dawn}. November, 1956, p. 18.
Generally the white community was not satisfied with the various Boards' attempts to solve the continuing Aboriginal Problem, and a pressure was brought to bear on politicians to do something extra. During parliamentary debates in Queensland and Western Australia, public fears about the increased incidences of miscegenation, were expressed together with the increased demands for the sexual segregation of Aboriginals. These demands were accompanied by the suggestion that all Aboriginal women be sterilised.\(^{18}\)

Particularly sinister schemes operating in Darwin surfaced during parliamentary debates of the 1920's and 30's. During a Senate debate in 1923 members were presented with a report describing attempts by officials to breed parts of the Aboriginal population to whiteness. The report stated,

for the last six years, continual and repeated reports on the subject of the treatment of halfcaste girls in Darwin have been furnished to the administrator. These reports prove that nineteen halfcaste girls under fifteen years of age have been sent out to service during that period. Twelve of these girls have returned to the native compound and become mothers; three more are about to add to that number. Of the first twelve alluded to, nine were employed by Government officials, and the remaining three by influential residents, while the three latest victims of the

white men are all employed by Government servants.¹⁹

Further schemes aimed at the prevention of Aboriginal births, in favour of births of mixed parentage, surfaced during the 1930's, when Parliament was told of the practices of the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, Dr Cook.²⁰ Along with his involvement in the Absorption Policy, Dr Cook operated a private scheme which was based on a belief in the discovery by anthropologists that the Australian Aboriginals were the only race of humans who would not throw back. In order to rid the Northern Territory of the halfcaste problem Dr Cook attempted to breed all halfcastes back to whiteness. To achieve this he was able to use economic measures to prevent any white male seeking employment in the Northern Territory, from gaining employment, unless he married a halfcaste woman.

Other measures aimed at the prevention of Aboriginal births were undertaken in Victoria where attempts were made to breed out the Aboriginals. All halfcaste Aboriginals were forbidden to marry fullblood Aboriginals by law.²¹

Under the Aborigines Act of 1886 all halfcastes were considered white and intermarriage was illegal. After 1911, The Consorting Act also applied. With the stroke of a government pen, Aboriginals became white. It was expected that these Aboriginals would

²⁰ Holloway, Mr., Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 144, 28 June, 1934, p. 63.
²¹ Critchett, Jan., et al., op. cit., pp. 88-89.
marry within the white community and help solve the 'Aboriginal Problem'.

Richard Broome argues that not only were these absorptionist policies an attempt at benign genocide, but they were evidence of poor reasoning. They assumed that prejudiced whites would accept Aboriginals of mixed descent as partners, and that these Aboriginals would not only accept whites, but also their own cultural and racial extinction. In practice neither was to prove the case.22

The control of female sexuality reached absurd proportions during the era of the Absorption Policy. This policy was directly aimed at controlling the sexuality of Aboriginal women. No other options were considered. The Social Darwinists' believed that halfcastes were the result of the fulfilment of the law of evolution and of natural selection. They represented the changing from one stage to another, from black to white. In order to hasten this process Physicus, a keen supporter of Social Darwinism, stressed that in genetic engineering or in the mechanics of controlling the mating habits of Aboriginal females, love or human affection was not an issue.

Fortunately, love as we know it, does not animate the breasts of the blacks of Australia ... the desired union of halfcastes with a lighter coloured caste can, to a certainty, be brought about by mere

proximity coupled with a judicious word at the right moment.23

During the 1930's and 40's the sexuality of Aboriginal women was treated in much the same way as a studmaster treats the procreation of animals. Simply separate the halfcastes according to their colour and sex, place the females in the proximity of white or lighter coloured males and encourage nature to take its course. The protagonists here had an extremely distorted view of the humanity of Aboriginals, especially Aboriginal women.

Unwritten but clearly demonstrative was the double standards operating within white society. The forceful union of white males and Aboriginal women was ignored as a crime, while the union of Aboriginal men and white women caused many Aboriginal men to be shot.

Anti-reproduction measures were mainly directed towards Aboriginal women. While it can be argued that the cutting off of testes is also an anti-reproductive measure, these acts were more to do with the establishment of power. Testes are a symbol of power and their removal was a gesture of the taking of power and being in control, implying not only physical power but symbolising the subjugation of the Aboriginals as a race. The sexuality of Aboriginal males was largely ignored.

The various attempts made to decrease the birth rate among Aboriginals were mainly directed towards Aboriginal women. These attempts were based on the patriarchal assumptions that control of human reproduction, means control of female sexuality.

'Kill the breeders' became a hue and cry in Queensland. In Bathurst the cries were to 'shoot the women and children as this was the most certain method of getting rid of the race'. So severe did the white population see the problem of continued Aboriginal presence that, in parliament, consideration was given to suggestions that all Aboriginal women be sterilised.

There were those who wanted to take more direct and brutal action in order to prevent births among Aboriginals. These actions are evidenced by the fact that in many cases, after being physically and sexually abused, Aboriginal women had their genitals destroyed.

The forced interracial sexual unions, the forced intraracial avoidance and the sexual segregation of removed children, were all physical measures aimed at the prevention of births among Aboriginals.

Many of the consequences of the forced genetic engineering had psychological implications. There was a real sense of fear felt by Aboriginal women and communities. A number of women were afraid to have babies for fear that government officers would one day remove them, never to be seen again. Removed children, who went through the institutionalisation process, were socially ill-equipped to form bonding relationships.
The psychological breaking down of individual and group identity played an insidious role in the control of reproduction. Psychological repercussions resulted in an increased rate of infanticide. The seemingly hopeless situation children faced, was expressed by parents as, 'why me have lubra, why me have piccaninny', 'very good, we kill and no more come up piccaninny'.
CHAPTER SIX

FORCIBLY TRANSFERRING CHILDREN OF THE GROUP TO ANOTHER GROUP

According to Catherine and Ronald Berndt two statements, which still have currency today, came into circulation early in the history of Aboriginal - European contact. These are in effect, "You can't do much with the adults, you just have to concentrate on the children;" and "the only way to do anything with the children is to get them away from the adults." Further, they said that whilst wholesale removal was most consistent, the means of implementing these views ranged from the wholesale removal of children without adult consent, through consultation and partial or temporary removal, to emphasis on psychological rather than physical separation.¹

Despite the destructive and violent practices of colonisation the Aboriginals did not die out as expected. In attempts to facilitate the disappearance of the Aboriginals as identifiable entities, governments, their officials and missionaries adopted the practices of child removal-separation. Officially these practices began in 1883 and ended in 1969.²

Some argue that, however disguised, the practice of child removal continues today.3 As it is the legal requirement for all children of secondary school age to attend school, many Aboriginal children are forced to leave their parents, families and communities to attend boarding schools many hundreds of kilometres away. This is especially the case in the remote areas of Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

According to Louis Althusser, schools are the dominant state ideological apparatus which contribute to the reproduction of the relations of production, in capitalist societies. He says,

in schools children learn not only the basic skills necessary for the economy, but also the attitudes required for the successful functioning of the capitalist system. They learn respect for private property and come to recognise the merits of individual competition. Children are also taught as 'natural' and 'inevitable' the fact that people are rewarded differently according to their presumed abilities. Children learn above all to accept the rules of the established order by which, if they become workers, they 'submit' to the directions from those with superior power or knowledge.4

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In this way Aboriginal children are continually deprived of education in their own societies and culture. Parents, families and communities, who still live traditional lifestyles, lose their children as they find it difficult to return to the isolation of outback Australia, and to the mores, values and laws which are in complete opposition, to the ones in which they have been schooled. Many children are thrown into a state of confusion, torn between an Aboriginal lifestyle, and the one gained through the schooling process. Conflict and family breakdown occurs.

A report released by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 1989, states that Aboriginal children are largely over represented in the child welfare system and that the number of Aboriginal children who are in the care of the state, or are state wards, is also disproportionately high. The report gives an example that despite only making up only 2.7% of the population in Western Australia, the rate of Aboriginal children under guardianship of that State is 40% compared with non-Aboriginal children.5

Thorpe argues that because problem behaviour is determined by whites in a white context, and because the terms 'neglected' and 'abused' are defined in the cultural context, and the language of the dominant European perspective, Aboriginal children are at a higher risk of being judged as neglected, and are more likely to be removed from parents and families by the Department of Community Services.6

6 Thorpe, D., cited in Choo, Christine, ibid., p. 59.
Initially child removal began for seemingly benevolent reasons; to get the children away from the 'vile, disgusting habits and moral dangers of camp life.' They were to be offered opportunities of a 'better' life through the teachings and practices of Christian religions. In reality, it was their potential to supply labour which was being protected and cultivated. As colonisation progressed the supply of labour was short and the demand high. Owing to the many difficulties in attempts to get adult Aboriginals to voluntarily enter the work force, to adopt white value systems, and the white work ethic, attention was focused on the children. It was thought that if children were removed at a young age, they could be indoctrinated, trained, and generally made useful in an expanding economy.

Reports on how best to achieve this training were commissioned by the Commonwealth. One such report, presented by Baldwin Spencer, Professor of Biology at Melbourne University, (in 1913) stressed the need to remove children from their mothers, despite the acknowledged cruelty aspects, and the need to remove them at a young age because of the degrading environment of camp life. Only then could they be made useful and serviceable for life on pastoral stations.7

In the same year James Gray, Secretary of the South Australian State Childrens' Council, supported these views, adding that,

I am strongly of the opinion that if we took these native children when they are quite infants ... we

could educate them for service ... and they would do useful work for the community. They should be taken away directly they are born. If they live in the wurley (Aboriginal hut) for a week it is bad for them, but it is fatal for them to remain there for a year.\textsuperscript{8}

Sterling, Professor of Physiology at the University of Adelaide agreed with Gray and others, except for them being taken as absolute infants because of the extra burden it would place on the state. He argued that taken at around age two they would not require so much attention,

\begin{quote}
the more of those halfcaste children you can take away from their parents and place them under the care of the State the better. I think you should take them at an early age because it would be easier to deal with them when they have the attractiveness of infancy.\textsuperscript{9}
\end{quote}

Attacks on the so-called degrading influences of Aboriginal camp life continued throughout the 20's and 30's. In 1937 Mr. A.O. Neville, Commissioner of Native Affairs in Western Australia wrote that children must be removed from these influences, and that it was useless to wait until they were twelve or thirteen. He added that it was well known that coloured races all over the world detest institutionalisation, and that they have tremendous affection for

\textsuperscript{8} Grey, James, cited in Mattingley, Christobell, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 160.
\textsuperscript{9} Sterling, E.C., cited in \textit{ibid.}
their children. Despite this, it is infinitely better to take a child from its mother and put it in an institution, than to allow it to be subjected to the influences of camp life.\textsuperscript{10}

Peter Read says that the removal of Aboriginal children by missionaries, governments, their officials and teachers was an attempt at genocide, in that they sought to breed out the Aboriginal race. He cited a 1921 report by the Aboriginal Welfare Board of New South Wales which stated that the continuation of the policy of dissociating the children from the camp life must eventually solve the 'Aboriginal Problem'.\textsuperscript{11}

Many of the children removed were forced to live under, and in the most deplorable conditions. Conditions, such as those at the infamous 'Bungalow' at Alice Springs, were brought to the attention of Parliament in 1924 by Senator Newland. Although termed a bungalow, said Newland, it was a bare iron shed divided by a partition. On one side boys were accommodated, and on the other side girls. It was positioned just outside the backyard of the hotel, alongside the toilets, and there was nothing to prevent half drunken white or coloured men from entering and having their way with the children.\textsuperscript{12}

The bungalow was a galvanised iron shed specially erected by the Commonwealth Government in 1914 for the needs of so called 'neglected Aboriginal children'. At one stage, during the 1920's,

\textsuperscript{10} Neville, A.O., cited in Gammage, Bill, \textit{et al.}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{11} Read, Peter, \textit{The Stolen Generations}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 2.
there were 50 children and 10 adults living in the bungalow. In contrast there was a permanent white population of 40 in Alice Springs during the same period.\textsuperscript{13} The was no lining in the bungalow and gaps left in the structure for doors and windows were never filled. The children slept on the earthen floor and were given one blanket per year, despite the extremely cold nights of a semi-desert climate. Andrew Markus comments that it was common knowledge that the girls were nothing but 'public property' and the custom was to go to the back fence and 'whistle if a girl was wanted.'\textsuperscript{14} The bungalow was in place in Alice Springs until 1928.

Berndt and Berndt argue that one of the weakest points in the attempts to breed out the Aboriginal race, the "clean slate policy" as they termed it, was the lack of any clear understanding of what institutionalisation involved. At their worst, they say, institutions were bleak, prison-like places with repressive rules and punishments, under the charge of persons who typified the harshest aspects of authority, and who did not encourage the inmates to seek them out for help and guidance in later life.\textsuperscript{15}

The genocidal effects of child removal and institutionalisation continued throughout the lives of those who were removed. These lives were shattered firstly by their removal from parents, families and communities, and then by their eviction from institutions, the only form of life many had come to know. Children sent from these

\textsuperscript{13} Markus, Andrew, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{15} Berndt, Catherine and Ronald, 'Aborigines', \textit{op. cit.}, p. 133.
institutions had no sense of belonging, except to a life of servitude or despair and hopelessness.

These effects cut deep into the fabric of Aboriginal life, leaving deep scars on individuals and on Aboriginal people as a whole. A woman, who wishes to remain anonymous, stated,

when I was still very young I decided I would never have children. Then no one could ever take them away from me. That's the reason I didn't marry until late in life. My husband still doesn't know this. We'd known each other for more than twenty years before I finally married him.16

Many children continue the struggle of attempting to piece their lives back together and find the parents, families and communities, from whom they were removed. Together with this is the struggle to find the identity which was taken from them, along with the pain and frustration, resulting from a realisation that all they seek may be lost forever.

The impact of conditioning and institutionalisation was tremendous. Coral Edwards cofounder of Link Up, an organisation which seeks to reunite removed persons and their families, speaks of the enormous extent of suffering and of the psychological damage caused by removal and institutionalisation. In a paper titled 'Is that Ward

Clean?'\(^{17}\) she gives an account of the psychological damage caused to the inmates of the Cootamundra Girls Home, together with an account describing the way Aboriginal children are lost to their families, and as functioning members of their race.

Jan Carter, in a report on Aboriginal child poverty, stated that since colonisation, Aboriginal children have suffered every form of destitution, exploitation, abandonment, slavery, persecution and violence. Sometimes policies were hostile, sometimes unwitting and sometimes well-meaning but they all deprived Aboriginal children of parents and families, of traditional food and living circumstances, of the education and identity of their indigenous culture, of health, their land, their natural Australian environment and of their lives.\(^{18}\)

In the same report Christine Choo says that Aboriginal children continue to suffer the consequences of separation policies and of racism, and have inherited the legacy of Social Darwinism. The extreme poverty of Aboriginal children,

\[\ldots\text{ is seen to be linked with the loss of children to the community through their removal from their families and their communities. This has, over the last 200 years, resulted in an inestimable loss to the communities of their most valuable resources in economic as well as personal, cultural and social}\]


terms. It has also impoverished generations of Aboriginal children of their cultural heritage and identity and contributed to the huge wastage of human resources among Aborigines ... Related to this great loss and impoverishment is the loss of dignity and self respect, the result of oppressive structures and practices, which have been the direct consequence of explicit and implicit racism.¹⁹

As Peter Read says, it may well be an impossible task to discover the total number of children who were removed throughout Australia. The many problems associated with this are that documents may have been hidden or destroyed, they may have been lost along bureaucratic pathways or they may never have been filled out in the first place.

The number must range in the tens of thousands but more importantly these figures alone may not tell the fuller story. They do not indicate the number of parents and family members who also suffered as a result of child removal. They do not indicate the extent to which the communities suffered and the extent to which they were fragmented by the practices of child removal. They do begin to indicate the extent of government attempts, to break down the group cohesion of Aboriginal populations, and the extent to which governments were prepared to go, in order to facilitate the disappearance of Aboriginal populations as identifiable groups.

¹⁹ Choo, Christine, ibid., p. 10.
The many attempts to breed the children to whiteness bear testament to this. There were public outcries at the increasing numbers of children of mixed racial unions, a situation which was simply untenable. In their attempts to keep the white race white governments were prepared to bring about the extinction of Aboriginals.

Governments showed callous disregard for the welfare and safety of the children after their removal. One of the situations which vividly demonstrates this was 'The Bungalow' at Alice Springs, as mentioned above. Others are the daily beatings children received in the 'Homes' and their failure to equip the children socially for life outside the institutions. In many cases the stated reasons for removal were that the state considered these children to be 'neglected', and in need of help, or that they were in 'moral danger' if they remained in camps. However, the state displayed a lack of interest in ensuring that once these children had been removed, their safety and long-term interests were safeguarded by those who had assumed guardianship.20

The history of Aboriginal children in Australia since colonisation is one of exploitation and cultural oppression, of cultural destruction and persecution, of abduction and abandonment and of servitude and violence.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PRESENT

In this chapter, I shift focus from an historical to a present day perspective, in order to paint a more contemporary picture of the relationship between Aboriginal and white societies. It is also a partial summary of this section of the document, before moving on to descriptions of the art work.

Colonisation was disastrous for the indigenous peoples of Australia. With the establishment of the first colony, Aboriginals were forced from their land and suffered as a dispossessed and subject people.

Their laws, customs, rights and social arrangements were ignored and disregarded. Colonisation imposed a framework on Aboriginals which involved the overthrow of traditional power relations and structures, and the substitution of an entirely new order.

As individuals and as indigenous groups they suffered among the most violent forms of physical and sexual abuse, coercion, death and psychological interference. They came to be viewed as savages, subhuman, low forms of life and as a useless barbarous race of people unable to adapt to a higher civilised life, the result of which was to be their ultimate extinction.
They were subjected to oppressive and repressive laws, acts, policies and practices which empowered governments, their officials and missionaries, to herd them onto reserves, settlements and mission stations. Moves such as these drastically altered the relations of Aboriginals to each other as individuals, and as groups. It destroyed their group cohesion and this eventually led to the destruction of many Aboriginal societies and forced those who remained into a culture of poverty.

With the traditional practices, culture and social arrangements of Aboriginals all but destroyed, governments passed laws enabling children to be forcibly removed from parents, families and Aboriginal groups. They were placed in institutions which, in many cases, were prison-like. The institutionalisation which followed forced the relinquishment of traditional cultural practices, languages and religion and forced the continued breakdown in traditional lines of authority and social practices. The conditions under which Aboriginals were forced to live were engineered in such a way as to facilitate their extinction as identifiable entities and the disappearance of Aboriginal culture and social practices.

Their notions of space and time were redefined and reordered by missionaries, government officials and colonists. They were forced into a position of soul destroying dependency on white society.

Aboriginals became the fringe dwellers of white society, of education, of health, of housing, of the law and of history. They became the fringe dwellers of the power structures that defined their very existence. With the loss of self esteem, and the
accompanying low self image, came the increased use of alcohol plunging them into a void of helplessness, hopelessness and despair. They were forced into a position as the fringe dwellers of life, as defined by a WASP society.

In coining the term genocide, Lempkin included elements such as the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national groups; actions aimed at annihilating groups themselves; the disintegration of political and social institutions of culture, language, national feelings, religion and economic existence of national groups; the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity and the lives of individuals of national groups. Genocide, he said, was directed against the national groups as an entity and the actions involved are directed against individuals belonging to such groups, not in their individual capacity but as members of a national group.

Lempkin went on to say that genocide advanced in two ways. Firstly, there was the destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed, then there was the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor.

The facts contained in the preceding chapters satisfy every element of Lempkin's definition. As we have seen, they also satisfy all the Acts contained in the United Nations 'Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide'.

Aboriginal peoples of Australia have suffered genocide.
Has anything changed?

In 1988 Julian Burger wrote a report which stated that the notion of Australia being divided into two nations is clearly evident when one sees the comparative living conditions of the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal populations. For most non-Aboriginal Australians the standard of living is one of the highest in the world, while for most Aboriginal people it is one of the worst. He stated that white Australia almost obscenely flaunts its wealth while the squalor of Aboriginal encampments is largely kept hidden. It is the land, which was so brutally colonised, that continues to provide the wealth of White Australia and leaves the indigenous people as the victims.¹

Racism continues to hold a dominant place in the attitudes of many white Australians as the experiences of Robyn Davidson can attest. Throughout her travels in Australia during the 1980's she learnt of the fundamental tension between Aboriginal and white culture.

I learned that coons had thicker skulls than whites, so that when you hit them with crowbars nothing broke. I learned that all coons were potential rapists of white women and that all female coons (black velvet) were drunken whores. From some of the bleary-eyed, beer-gutted men I learned that coons couldn't handle booze. I learned that a politicians wife had suggested that coons be used to pull rickshaws full of tourists from the airport,

ten miles outside town. Coons were dirty. Coons were dogs. Coons were giving the place a bad name.²

Ken Hampton says that white attitudes maintain two distinct societies, superior white and inferior Aboriginal. Whites, he says, have always kept us apart by their thinking, defining and stereotyping us so that through their eyes we have never been their material, social or intellectual equals ... What most Goonyas haven't learned is that heritage is not uniquely the property of their culture. Prior to invasion each of our groups was an independent society. Each had its own heritage and an identity all its own. The Goonyas have taken that away. Today many of us haven't got a heritage to uphold and that is why we are lost within the society that has overtaken and taken over our people. They've put the camp sheet over us. We are now all 'Aborigines'. For us, through our eyes, the word is a badge of rejection.³

The divisions and disparity between Aboriginals and whites is clearly demonstrated in the recent police shootings in New South

² Davidson, Robyn, Australia: Beyond the Dreamtime, Hienemann, Australia, 1987, p. 230.
³ Hampton, Ken, cited in Mattingley, Christobell, op. cit., p. 306.
Wales of two Australian citizens. Both shootings were said to be accidental, both were said to be unjustified and both resulted from bungled raids by members of the New South Wales police force. In the words of the New South Wales Premier, Nick Greiner, "they appear to have been monumental stuff-ups."

In one shooting the victim died, he was Aboriginal. Since then there has been no public apology, no apology to the family and no compensation. The events leading up to the shooting and the details of the shooting have been covered up, hushed up and suppressed. Protests have been made by police to prevent this death being investigated by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

In the other shooting the victim received facial injuries and was hospitalised with a shattered jaw and facial lacerations. The family and the individual received almost immediate apologies. The victim received $50,000 to cover expenses so far and a promise of covering all future medical and legal expenses. Committees are meeting to determine the amount of compensation to be paid in future. This victim is white.

In a recent A.B.C. news item, (11 July 1990), Justice Marcus Einfeld stated that it has been twelve months since the shooting of the Aboriginal. White Australians, he said, "have taken this death in their stride and treated it as a normal course of events. They have

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4 Reports on these shootings were given coverage in the media, especially the printed media in NSW, during the months of April, May and June, 1989 for the shooting of David Gundy, an Aboriginal, and in May, June, July and August, 1990, or the shooting of Darren Brennan, a white person.
not addressed the issue of how an innocent man came to be shot and killed, by police, while he was asleep in bed."

Despite the limited concessions given by whites and the consistent efforts of Aboriginals towards self determination, generally Aboriginals continue to be defined and determined culturally, socially, politically, ideologically and economically by white society. Aboriginal people continue to be lumped together as Aborigines, 'they've put the campsheat over us'. This blanketing is done despite the fact that Aboriginal people continue to describe themselves on a regional basis as distinct groups. In the Northern Territory, for example, groups refer to themselves as Anangu, Tunuwuwi and Yalngu. In Queensland they are Murries, Koories in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, Nungas in South Australia, and Nyunga, Marngu and Wonggai in Western Australia.\(^5\) In a recent interview Ernie Dingo argued that he and his people consider it offensive to be lumped together under the title of 'Koories'. He said "Murries hate to be called Koories and the Nyunga and Marngu of Western Australia would not like it if you called them Koories, neither would the Nungas in South Australia."\(^6\)

Brian Attwood says that the concept 'The Aborigines' is generally used as though such a self-consciously identifiable group exists.\(^7\)

Aboriginals are still viewed as a 'problem' and solutions are still being sought to remedy the 'problem'. Colin Tatz says that to

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\(^6\) Dingo, Ernie, interviewed by Robertson, Clive, GTV Channel Nine, Tuesday 14th August, 1990.

\(^7\) Attwood, Brian, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
recognise a group as a 'problem' has the merit of implying the need for action towards its 'solution'. He points out that,

theses, symposia, anthologies and articles have expounded the range and variety of welfare and social change programs this past decade. Social history demonstrates one feature common to both the eras of neglect and concern: that white society unilaterally defines the problems, prescribes the policy dicta, enacts the legislation, creates the administrative machinery and determines the nature, content, personnel and flavour of remedial programs.8

Tatz goes on to say that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that race relations in Australia can only get worse. Changes in political philosophy, abolition of discriminatory legislation, new human rights bills, revamped institutional structures and infusion of money cannot solve three fundamental problems.

First, there is the psychological inability of whites to stop talking about blacks rather than with them, to cease being their proctors and curators, of allowing them to act on their own behalf. Secondly, there is the cultural impossibility, for most whites, of evincing empathy rather than sympathy for black view points on black

consciousness and identity, on their frustration, alienation and deprivation. Thirdly, there is the improbability of whites ever comprehending, let alone conceding, that the major avenue for black survival and progress is their rejection of white society, its values and programs it mounts for their benefit.9

As evidenced by failure after failure to provide solutions to the 'Aboriginal Problem' a re-examination is necessary, if not obvious, in the way white society thinks, in regard to Aboriginal people. A suggestion offered by Tatz and others is to begin a dialogue which pays closer attention to the 'White Problem in Aboriginal Australia'.10 Only when this is done will the continued structural oppression of Aboriginal people be changed. Until this is achieved Aboriginal people will continue to be the most downtrodden and disadvantaged group in contemporary Australian society. They will continue to suffer the pain of the past and the pain of the present.

The tremendous amount of oppression Aboriginal people are still forced to endure is a key factor in the present situation of Aboriginals. The fact that Aboriginal people exist at all today is testament to the tenacious nature of Aboriginals, and to the continuing struggle for survival and equality. Despite the fact that Aboriginals in contemporary Australian society continue to live with the consequences of their oppressive past, they continually fight for

9 Ibid.
the right to define themselves by their own culture and laws, to define their own situations and take culturally appropriate steps to address them. Aboriginal communities continue the struggle for self determination so that they can begin to move out of the situation of oppression.

However Aboriginal people are not generally given acknowledgement for this. That they are here still, is used in a paternalistic way by patronising, self congratulatory white mechanisms and individuals, who publicly parade the opinions that Aboriginal people are where they are today, because they have been helped by whites. The limited concessions the white community has been prepared to make are publicly paraded, and used in a way suggestive of great strides forward in Aboriginal Affairs. What is hidden from the public at large are the communities of Aboriginals who are in self-destruct mode because of continuing oppression. The amount of family violence, sexual abuse, incest, alcoholism and homelessness are indicators of a system facing total breakdown. A contributor to a program aimed at stopping the violence among Aboriginal families and communities has said that family violence,

is a cancerous disease that is destroying us, and our future as a people. Our women are being maimed and killed, our children's lives scarred, and our young men sentenced to prison terms and further cycles of abuse and self abuse.11

The following figures serve as guides to the extent and seriousness of the perpetuating cycle of violence and abuse,

Aboriginal females were victims of 79% of all chargeable homicides in the Northern Territory in 1987. For every one white death in the N.T. ten Aboriginal people die from family fighting. 53% of our men who died in prison cells were there because of acts of violence, 9% for homicide, 12% for assault and 32% for crimes of sexual assault. But more women have died through violence than all the deaths in custody in two States. Aboriginal women represent almost 50% of all females in custody and between 70% and 80% of all young women going through the court system have been sexually abused.12

Such cycles and rates of sexual abuse foster enormous rates of physical and psychological damage in individuals and communities. These cycles increase the rate at which violent and abusive behaviour is considered the norm. This has led to the description of the perpetuating cycle, as a form of genocide, and the condition or state of affairs being described as anomie.

Anomie is the state of low social regulation which is the result of a disintegration or change in the social circumstances of a group. When social

12 Ibid., p. 13.
situations change suddenly and dramatically or slowly, so that the usual means of social control disappear or fail, individuals and the group find themselves in a situation where there are no new rules for the regulation of society. This places the society and the individual in disarray.\textsuperscript{13}

These problems are directly linked to the continued subjugation and oppression of the Aboriginal people. Justice Muirhead says that the present rate of Aboriginal deaths and their over representation in prisons and lockups,

are a consequence of history, of appalling neglect, of ignorance, and of traditional perceptions of "the Aboriginal problem" and the way they should be coped with ... The high incidence of Aboriginal custodial deaths is symptomatic of past failures.\textsuperscript{14}

There has been no significant change in the nature of juvenile institutions such as Kinchela Boys Home, Mt Penang Boys Home and the Tamworth Institution for Boys. Commissioner Wotten says that the character of these institutions has a destructive effect on Aboriginal people. They are run by people who have little perception, little understanding of human nature and little intelligence. Further he says that such destructive effects cannot be attributed to these individuals alone because they operate under the supervision of, and

\textsuperscript{13} Choo, Christine, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{14} Muirhead, Justice, \textit{Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, op. cit.}, p. 65.
in accordance with, policies laid down by departments under ministerial control who in turn are responsible to parliament which is in turn responsible to the people.\textsuperscript{15}

Rates for juvenile incarceration and institutionalisation continue to equal those of the child removal policies. In New South Wales Aboriginal children account for 25\% of institutionalised populations despite the fact that this state's 10 to 17 year old Aboriginal population is only 1.8\%. Aboriginal children throughout Australia are locked up at rates which far exceed those of non Aboriginal children. In New South Wales the rate is 25 to 1, in Victoria it is 20 to 1 in Queensland 16 to 1, Western Australia 14 to 1, South Australia 10 to 1 and the Northern Territory 7 to 1.\textsuperscript{16} In 1989, in Western Australia, 77\% of the inmate population at the maximum security institution for girls, 53\% of the inmates in maximum security for boys, and 62\% of those held in remand and detention centres for boys and girls were Aboriginal children.\textsuperscript{17}

Aboriginals continue to suffer exclusion from most mainstream activities, and experience severe problems of access and equality. Many still live under conditions of abject poverty. Land is still being appropriated by mining companies in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. Charles Perkins summed up the present position of Aboriginals, when he said that he could see 'no future for Aboriginals in this country, the way we are going, no


\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 79.

\textsuperscript{17} Choo, Christine, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 58.
future at all.' He sees all measures taken to solve the 'problem' being 'stop-gap, piecemeal measures' and says that he cannot see white people ever letting go, or white society ever letting go of the control of Aboriginal Affairs,

there is too much vested interest, personal or otherwise, and I cannot see anything else happening but the eventual destruction of Aboriginal Society.\(^{18}\)

Without the necessary power to bring about change, the structured reproduction of the power relations together with the resultant distress felt by Aboriginal people, will continue. Without power Aboriginal people are deprived of many of the tools needed to convey or enforce recognition of their needs and gain broad support from the larger community. In this way old stereotypes remain in place and it is difficult to break through them. Issues, as evidenced by attempts to gain broad support for Aboriginal Land Rights, become extremely emotive and embroiled in political processes.

To cede power to Aboriginal people would give them the ability to fulfil the needs and solve the problems they themselves identify.

As white Australia continues to define the problems, solutions are usually encapsulated in increased service provision. These solutions are based on assumptions that the provision of material comfort and well being, defined in white cultural terms, will ameliorate the

Aboriginal condition. However, many of these solutions have a tendency to create further problems, and the cycle of oppression repeats itself. Deborah Rose says that defining the real problem is not difficult, as the problem is the relationship of oppression structured in such a way as to ensure the continuance of that relationship. The solution is also not difficult, terminate the relationship and the problem will be gone.¹⁹

If this perpetuating relationship can not be terminated then perhaps the answer lays in the vested interest Charles Perkins speaks of. Drakakis-Smith suggests that whites have a material interest in proposing certain kinds of answers to the 'Aboriginal Problem'. Solutions in which a good deal of money is channelled from government through Aboriginals into the hands of private business or other government departments.²⁰

Racism is deeply ingrained in white society. Its view is almost always from the inside looking out, a view which focuses on differences rather than similarities. It cannot help but see Aboriginals as different, as other. Part of this otherness, says Barta, is that they belong to a portion of humanity to whom we expect discrimination to happen. We might not condone it, we might actively campaign against it, but historically, at least, we very easily accept it.²¹

²⁰ Darkakis-Smith, cited in Sullivan, Patrick, ibid., p. 15.
²¹ Barta, Tony, op. cit., p. 159.
As a nation Australia allowed, and continues to allow itself, the right to define others. In this way the power base is protected and safely located within the dominant white ideology. This fosters a situation where certain sections of white society demonstrate little tolerance towards anything that is other. They point an accusing finger at Aboriginals and say that the position they find themselves in is largely their fault. Behaviour displayed by Aboriginals, perceived in white terms to be negative, is used to support many of the stereotypes developed over the past 200 years. The more Aboriginals display that they are the victims of the history of the past 200 years, the more intolerant some sections of society become. Increased intolerance potentially generates more of the behaviour which whites consider to be anti-social. This fosters more intolerance and the racist cycle continues.

Racism continues to provide material for individually and collectively held stereotypes and prejudices, and these influence what is seen as normal and what is seen as other. These stereotypes and prejudices, in part, help maintain and reinforce the unequal distribution of power in a male dominated white society.

While the present power relations between Aboriginals and whites remain intact real change will be difficult. Change will continue to take the form of ad hoc considerations, unless a radical alteration is achieved in the basic precepts of white society.

How then does one break the psychological bond of Aboriginal Affairs being a white activity which, by tradition, has become a cultural norm? Tatz says that some ministers and government
officials have shown a vague awareness that there has to be a new order of things, like the removal of proctor and guardianship mechanisms along with the ceding of real power, authority, responsibility and accountability to the Aboriginals, but, nobody really believes it, or in it. Hence the endless token mechanisms of reserve councils, advisory councils and specially convened seminars.22

Power then, represents perhaps the most impenetrable barrier for Aboriginals. Another barrier is that Australia refuses to see itself as a genocidal society. Although various government strategies allowed for the subjugation and control of Aboriginal people, along with the attempted removal of Aboriginals as identifiable people, the publically stated intentions, of official policies, were aimed at their protection. They were enacted to save the Aboriginals. But, as Barta points out, save them from what? In this case, he says, it was precisely to save them from a genocidal society, a form of imported social order, which could not be established here without the dispossession of the original inhabitants. Through the processes of dispossession, Aboriginals were killed in large numbers, and attempts were directed towards facilitating their disappearance as identifiable entities. The state played a part in this process but the appropriation of the whole continent was only nominally in favour of the crown. Effectively, land was alienated from the common ownership of Aboriginals, into the private property of invading

22 Tatz, Colin, op. cit., p. 132.
settlers. This fact is inseparable from the destruction of Aboriginal people and is basic to our every day lives today.\(^{23}\)

Barta sees the major problem/barrier to Australia's recognition of itself as a genocidal society being the reluctance to admit anything which questions so threateningly the legitimacy of our society. In Germany, he says, genocide was the work of a conspiratorial minority and that comparatively few people benefited from the crimes committed against the Jews.

Yet Germans have had to wrestle with the question, was our whole society criminal? In Australia, where all of us are the beneficiaries of crimes against the Aborigines, the question cannot seriously penetrate our ideological defences. Anyone interested in the continued hegemony of our social values - property acquisition at the very centre of them - has a kind of functional incredulousness: how could our kind of society be criminal?\(^{24}\)

Because of the reasons mentioned above Aboriginals will continue to live in conditions of deprivation as considerations for the solution of the Aboriginal 'problem' will go on being void of any real content. While white Australians continue to define the problems and solutions in terms of their own interests, and in terms of the

\(^{23}\) Barta, Tony, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

dominant white perspective, the cost to the Aboriginals will be the abrogation of cultural attitudes, values, belief and being.

Genocide.

This narrative has been written in an attempt to change the perception of many white Australians towards the Aboriginal experience in Australia's history. Certainly there are other stories to be told, such as the Aboriginal resistance to colonisation, or the Aboriginal resistance to the attempts, by whites, to make them anew, and reconstruct their notions of space and time. Stories about Aboriginal resistance, to official policies formulated and enacted to solve the 'Aboriginal Problem', together with the continuing struggle for self determination and the strategies involved in Aboriginal attempts to constitute themselves, could also be told.

I am by no means alone in my attempts to change the perceptions of white Australians. Authors like Reynolds, Tatz, Evans, Markus, Attwood, Roberts, Barta, Rose, Rowley and Berndt, to name a few, demonstrate that we are becoming increasingly aware of a history previously denied to many generations of Australians. It is hoped that through the presentation of my art work, this narrative will reach a broader audience.
CHAPTER EIGHT

THE WORK

In Chapters One through to Seven, I dealt with the relationship between Aboriginal and white societies and the events, as I see them, which unfolded as colonisation progressed. I claimed that this relationship constitutes genocide, and presented the information supporting this claim, in the form of a written narrative.

In this chapter I explain how I have set about the task of creating a visual representation of this information. Earlier I alluded to the use of clay and corroded steel as the metaphors for this visual representation. The focus of the first part of this chapter is a more detailed explanation of the use of these materials as metaphors and how, through them, I convey the conceptual concerns of my research.

After the explanation of the materials, I begin to explain some of the concepts behind recurring elements or motifs in the work. Motifs such as the various frames or fence posts, and elements such as the references to chains and neck irons. Together with the reading of these elements, I attempt to express how clay has been manipulated, squeezed, changed and forced to fit exactly into the frames or held tightly in the confines of fence posts. The control of clay in this way addresses some of the ways in which Aboriginal people have been controlled and made to fit into the dominant white society.
In the final part of the chapter I will concentrate more specifically on individual pieces, and show the thinking behind the image and how it is derived from the material presented in the research.

THE USE OF CLAY

Clay is used widely in both Aboriginal and white societies but it is used very differently. The differences in the way clay is used is like the inherent differences between the societies themselves, especially in the way they relate to the environment.

At the fifth National Ceramics Conference held in Sydney in 1988, Vincent McGrath spoke of the Aboriginal use of clay. He said,

contrary to popular belief, clay has been used in Australia for thousands of years by Aboriginals, and although their application of it has been essentially decorative, we should heed the significance of this heritage.¹

I agree with this statement though not in its entirety. Clay has been used for tens of thousands of years, and we should pay closer attention to this heritage. In doing so we are presented with possibilities of gaining access to a culture rich and diverse in artistic practices.

¹ McGrath, Vincent, Ceramics '88. Potters Society of Australia, Sydney, 1988,
However, the use of clay among Aboriginals is far more diverse and extensive than the essentially decorative use McGrath suggests. Clay is an extremely important resource to the Aboriginals. Not only is it used in art work and for the recording of some Dreaming stories, but also in a wide range of daily activities and the recording of historical events as we know them.

Both in traditional and contemporary Aboriginal societies clay is used as decoration, as tool, as medicine, as protection and much more. Among these uses are forms of expression on bodies, head dresses, props and musical instruments. It is used in the formation of cicatures, the elaborate body cuts which take the form of raised keloid scars.

In some areas of Australia, figures made from clay, are imbued with magical qualities and used for sorcery. These figures are modelled on their intended victims and include distinguishing marks such as hair, beards, cicatures and other physical features. Clay was also fashioned into breasts and hung around the necks of young girls in order to encourage their own to develop.2

In daily cooking activities clay has an important place and has a wide variety of uses. These include the baking of food stuffs, encased in clay directly among burning embers, or the lining of structures to act as camp ovens for the baking of breads made from the crushing of various types of seeds.

Traditionally, in Cape York and Arnhem Land, igloo style mosquito huts were fashioned from clay. These provided protection from mosquitos, especially during and after the wet seasons.

Clay has a very important use in daily hunting activities for camouflage, especially if there is a lot of stalking involved. Different colours are used in order to blend in with the environment and to disguise body odours. During night time fishing trips fires are built on clay pads in the bottom of canoes. Clay was also used for corking canoes.

Clay is used in the manufacturing process of musical instruments such as didgeridoos and in a wide range of medicinal remedies, which have both internal and external use. These include electrolyte and glucose supplements, diarrhoea powders, iron and mineral supplements along with treatments for indigestion, dyspepsia, heartburn and acid stomach. Externally it is applied over open wounds to stop bleeding and promote healing. As a means of immobilising fractures broken limbs were encased in clay reinforced with twine and bark.

White clay is especially used in mourning rituals. In some areas clay pellets were fashioned and stuck to the hair of those in mourning. In Victoria, the Wiimbaio people made skull caps and wore them for approximately one month before placing them to rest on the graves of those who had died.
Today Aboriginal artists are starting to use clay, in the form of ceramics, as a means of expression. Most notable among these artists is Thancoupie (Gloria Fletcher) who began her career in 1970.

Through her work, Thancoupie expresses her concerns with the recording of the history of her people from the Weipa area of North Queensland. She uses ceramic tile murals, along with hand built, and thrown forms, as vehicles for the expression of this history. Knowing that fired clay may last for thousands of generations, she works, with a 'sense of urgency',\(^3\) to record as much of the history and the legends as told by the old people as she can. These legends will then be passed on, through her ceramics, for future generations to read.

Many other Aboriginal artists are using clay, in the form of ceramics, to record their dreaming stories which have been handed down through the generations by their fathers and grand fathers. A major exhibition of ceramic works by artists of the Lajamanu community of the Northern Territory is to be held at the National Gallery of Victoria towards the end of 1990.

Although clay has a very real connection to Aboriginal societies, I use it in a metaphorical sense to represent these societies. In a similar way I use corroded steel to represent white society. The resultant juxtaposition of these materials alludes to certain events and practices informed by the research.

I liken the differences in the way these societies use clay to the differences between the societies themselves. Aboriginals did not use clay in an irrevocable sense. They did not seek change. They used it in a way which reflected their harmonious, conservationist attitude towards their environment. By contrast, white society's main use of clay is in an irrevocable way. The properties of clay are exploited, like the environment, and change is sought.

It is interesting to note that one of the effects of colonisation, has brought about a change in the way clay is being used by Aboriginal people. It is now beginning to be used in an irrevocable way, in much the same way as white society uses clay. As a further avenue of research, I intend to explore the way in which the subjugated people are using the tools of the dominant society, to bring about an understanding of their position and to produce change.

In working with clay and corroded steel I have chosen to work with materials which in themselves reflect qualities, such as modernity and timelessness, of white and black societies. Clay is an ancient material, while steel is a relatively modern material. Although these materials are as different from each other, as are the societies, there are common denominators. Societies are states or living conditions which allow people to co-exist relatively harmoniously, and each has a framework of rules and guidelines in order to facilitate this. These guidelines and people are common denominators. Clay and steel are interrelated by the use of clay as a binding agent, in the agglomeration process of ore bodies. Iron, the main ingredient of steel, is present in most forms of clay. Fire or
heat is a common agent in changing iron ore into steel and clay into ceramic.

Clay is an intrinsic part of the landscape. It is of the land and from the land. So too are the Aboriginals. Their societies cannot be separated from the land. For them the land is like a book full of stories which is read by all. These stories explain why things exist, both physical and spiritual. Their culture is firmly rooted in the land, and their laws, rituals and customs, are integrally related to it. Like Aboriginal societies, white society is also connected to the land, but in a diametrically opposed way. On the one hand, land to Aboriginals is something to be revered, maintained with sacred rituals and held in trust from one generation to another. On the other hand, it may be said that whites do not inherit land from past generations, they borrow from future ones. Land is exploited and changed. It is a commodity, an economic unit which has exchange value and is used in the process of capital accumulation.

CORRODED STEEL

Once useful, now discarded corroded steel is used for its inherent ability to communicate something of its own story. It is also used as a means of communicating something of the society which created it.

The layers of rust evoke layers of meaning. In a deconstructive sense, these layers can be whittled to the point of discovery and enlightenment. Through reconstruction, the emergence of something made relevant to us can occur. Pare the decayed layers and the
steel core is revealed; pare the patina of history and a different picture begins to emerge.

I see an association between the layers of rust and the 'cultural clothing' which many carry as excess baggage. There are many aspects of white culture of which, generally speaking, few of us have knowledge. However there is an acceptance of the status quo. Despite the counter-cultural movements and those who question and seek different directions, the trend is towards conformity. Throughout a lifetime individuals are exposed to many thousands of experiences, but seldom are they accompanied by meaning and understanding. The layers accumulate.

The use of corroded steel also focuses on my attachment to the landscape. Rust has become an intrinsic part of that landscape, inseparable from it. The more extensively one travels throughout the land, the more one begins to realise that rust, either wanted or unwanted, is part of the land. It can be found almost everywhere in one form or another. It is the physical presence of rust in the landscape which confirms its intrinsic nature.

The search for rusty artifacts involves me directly with the landscape in its many forms. Journeys take me into particular landscapes in that, if I am seeking artifacts representative of the way land is treated in white society, then I am more likely to find them in country areas. Coastal areas and foreshores yield many objects which have been cast aside. Old mining sites also yield artifacts and in one sense, the narrative of these artifacts, are different, but in another they are similar. Through searching for
appropriate objects, I build up a dialogue with the landscape that previously had not existed. I am also presented with opportunities to reassess my own involvement with the land.

I use the term 'appropriate objects' because not only is it important for the objects to communicate something of their own story, they have to be appropriate to the conceptual concerns behind the particular works I am seeking to create at that time.

Rust is the physical reminder of human activity in the landscape. Locked away in the rust is the history of a particular event or time.

The initial reading of rust is often as the discarded wastes of human activity or of industrial society. But through a rereading of rust, and the discarded elements, we can begin to decode the human events which took place, and understand something of the human condition, which caused the elements to be where they are. Rust has its own narrative of the events, the lives, the times and the activities of people now absent.

On another level, rust can be read as failure. Human activity has been defeated by the conditions, economically or otherwise, or by the elements which could not be overcome or conquered. As a narrative, rust tells the story of the differences between the way Aboriginal and white societies, relate to their environment. One seeks to conquer and exploit, is eventually defeated and consumed by the land. The other lives in a harmonious and symbiotic relationship with the land.
Like the rereading of rust, the rereading of history presents us with a picture of the human activity which had previously been hidden.

As well as being an intrinsic part of the landscape, rust's myriad of colours both reflect and remind me of it. The brilliant reds and oranges, the purples and browns, the tans, burnt umbers and siennas reflect Central Australia, the mountains of ore in Western Australia, the richly coloured sands of our beaches, the deeply cut gorges of the north and the intensely vivid soils of farmlands.

The use of clay with corroded steel highlights the naturalness of clay. It is a tenacious earthly material which endures. In a metaphorical sense this reflects Aboriginal societies which have endured for at least 40,000 years. Recent evidence suggesting a longer, unbroken chain of occupation.

Like the societies, there is an interrelationship between the materials. Clay contains all the basic materials, some less than others, that are found in steel. As stated earlier clay is used in the agglomeration process of ore bodies. When clay is fired, or changed into ceramic, it can take thousands of years for it to be reclaimed by the land which gave it birth. On the other hand, once discarded, steel is reclaimed by the landscape relatively quickly.

Steel is the product of a manipulative society, a materialist society, one which discovers, uses and depletes. Steel has a purpose in this arena. When this is exhausted it is cast aside, it corrodes, decays and is reclaimed. Its manufacture is closely controlled, its
environment is monitored, scrutinised, inspected, upgraded, retooled and manipulated, to ensure a high quality product.

This reflects a society which, among other things, is about control. A process which must be maintained in order for it to reproduce itself. It reflects a society which entertained ideals of 'white supremacy'. It was the ethnocentric nature of white society which sought to exterminate, Christianise, civilise, exploit, change, adjust, incorporate and assimilate the Aboriginals. Steel was the superior material which combined the supreme qualities of raw materials into a manufactured product.

It is only recently that the potential strength of clay has been realised. It was seen as a plastic material easily manipulated into a variety of essentially light weight uses. Steel had the strength and desirable qualities. The colonists, in their determination to believe that their cultural background was superior, made little attempt to learn from their new environment. Rather they attempted to control, re-shape and conquer it. The continuation of this legacy is the destruction and desecration of the landscape. The testament to this legacy is the environmental damage caused through the practices of mining, clear felling, erosion, salination and poisoning. This is clearly evident in devastated forests, rivers, oceans, atmosphere, plants and animals.

With today's new technologies there has been a reassessment of the strengths and properties of clay. In is now used in the dental, medical and surgical industries, in the domestic, electronic, nuclear, structural and building, and motor vehicle industries, together with
the industries associated with outer space. Ceramic is expanding into new and more demanding applications almost every day. Ceramic is stronger, more durable, and can have a sharper edge than steel. Technical ceramic is now being used by engineers to replace metal in almost every industry.

With today's new awareness a reassessment of Australia's history is taking place, and consideration is now being given to the Aboriginal presence and to the Aboriginal experience in that history.

When clay and steel are used together, a tension is created. It is a tension which, for me, reflects the indomitable spirit of Aboriginals and the spirit associated with the land. In contrast the exploitative values and ideals developed in white society, are exposed by the corroding steel.

FIRE

Fire was central to the daily lives of Aboriginals. It affected the economic, social, ecological and mythological structures of Aboriginal societies. These aspects were interrelated.

Aboriginals were extremely skilled and unsurpassed in their ability to create and use fire. Before the invention of the safety match, as we know it, around one hundred years ago, there were four principal methods of fire making. These included the fire drill, the fire plough, the fire saw and percussion. In other parts of the world, at any one time, only one method of fire making was known and used. However, in Aboriginal societies, not only were all four methods
known, in many cases two or three were used in the same locality. Over thirty two highly specific uses of fire have been recorded.

The visible markings of fire are important in my work. On one level they serve as physical reminders that fire is intrinsic to both materials. It changes clay into ceramic and iron ore into steel. By subjecting the materials to the fire, the metaphor is extended. The clay becomes harder, more durable and can last for thousands of generations. Its surface takes on patterns, colours and textures of the landscape. Steel, although created in fire, corrodes in the flame. In this trial by fire one endures, the other is consumed.

On another level, by using a firing technique which leaves visible markings, I am attempting to create a sense of tension and drama on the surface of the work itself. In doing so I am seeking to reproduce or make visible the tension in the written narrative.

In some of the work there is a more subtle and subdued use of colour and firing technique. There is a more ambiguous relationship between the metal and clay surfaces. In these works I seek to parallel something of the effects of the material presented in Chapter Four, where I describe a number of the more insidious attempts to break down the group cohesion of the Aboriginals. Through works such as 'Assimilation and Integration', I also attempt to express something of the subtle nature of the various policies and practices, of the colonialists and governments, and the effects they had on destroying Aboriginal culture.
With the presentation of the terra sigillata works, I attempt, through the use of colour, to communicate the fact that these practices were not isolated to the coastal regions of Australia. The colours of more fertile landscapes, are markedly different to those found in the central regions of the country.

FENCES

Star pickets are used in a number of works. These make references to the physical boundaries of institutions such as homes, missions and reserves along with the boundaries of power and bureaucracy, all of which were so destructive to Aboriginal people and societies.

They also make references to the psychological and attitudinal barriers and boundaries which continue to exist between Aboriginal and white societies.

In a land so brutally usurped from Aboriginal people, fences became the stamp of possession and a barrier to freedom. They became the mark of a society which sees land as property, as a commodity having exchange value. I interpret fences as a symbol which represents the appropriation and alienation of land from the communal ownership of Aboriginals and its conversion into an exchangeable unit of economic wealth and prosperity. Through the works titled 'The Stamp of European Possession' I attempt to communicate these concerns. More than buildings, more than cities and towns, more than any other man made structure, fences represent one of the most insidious forms of genocide.
Thomas Keneally says that fences number among the more subtle reasons for the declining of Aboriginal populations. He sees fences as the ultimate statement of European possession,

Far more than the spreading of disease, or the poisoning of flour issued to the tribes - people, or the hunting of Aboriginals as if they were game - far more than any of that, the fence interrupted the access of the tribes to the Dreaming trails and so helped wither the Aboriginal soul.4

Fence posts are used in a number of other works and through them I am attempting to communicate the notions of confinement, of being trapped, of being overpowered, in the sense that clay is made to fit between the posts in a similar way that Aboriginal people were forced into some preconceived idea of how they should fit into white society.

On another level I wish to communicate something of the way we treat the land, how we communicate to others the possession of that land, and how we exploit and package it for commercial gain. In much the same way Aboriginal men and women were exploited sexually, and used for commercial gain.

In the pieces titled 'Genocide', I seek to combine all of the concerns expressed above. I present the landscape as skeletal remains wedged between two star pickets. These remains are similar to those found

4 Keneally, Thomas, Australia: Beyond the Dreaming, Heinemann, Australia, 1987, p.41
on the wind swept plains after severe droughts, or those found decaying in the landscape after some tragic event. On one level I seek to communicate something of the attempts to bring about the death of a culture, of a people so much a part of the land.

On another level I attempt to communicate the violence and destructive practices of the settlers, who left the remains of Aboriginals strewn around the poisoned waterholes or stacked up at places such as Stinking Lagoon, and Hospital and Butchers Creeks.

FRAMES

The metal frames have been used as reminders of the destruction of the Aboriginal forms of government and their replacement with an entirely new order. References are made to the burdening of Aboriginal societies with rules, regulations, policies, practices and acts which actively sought to bring about their destruction.

All laws passed by the goonyas "for the uplift of the natives" crushed us as people under a great burden of bureaucracy. Policies of assimilation, segregation and integration were introduced and abandoned by succeeding generations of Goonya politicians, administrators, educators and missionaries. No-one asked us what we wanted or how we viewed the problem which they had imposed on us.
Administration of 'Aboriginal Affairs' spawned a whole breed of goonya officials - 'protectors', 'sub-protectors', superintendents, overseers, managers, clerks and others, whose word was law on the reserve or the area which they administered ... our society has struggled to survive under this superstructure.5

The frames serve as reminders of the complete domination of white society over Aboriginal societies. The standards, laws, policies, practices, effects and processes of bureaucracy, were alien to Aboriginal people and the forced imposition of such, was catastrophic. In a similar way to 'fences', they also make references to the physical boundaries of the reserves, of the homes, of the missions and to the confinement and processes of institutionalisation within these boundaries.

The frames serve as reminders of a society which seeks to compartmentalise and pigeon hole, most aspects of that society, in order to make them fit western ideological notions of what should be.

The frames come in various forms ranging from solid steel plate frames, through thinner steel rods presenting a picture frame quality, to the round frame of an old car wheel and the heavy frame of a caste iron stove.

5 Nungas, cited in Mattingley, Christobell, op. cit., p. 57.
The work utilising the caste iron stove top is titled 'Taking Possession'. This imagery is derived from the arrival of the colonists and the military, who immediately set about felling a tree in order to erect a flagpole, upon which they could raise the flag marking arrival and possession. The metal spike piercing the clay slab is symbolic of that flagpole and the flag raising ceremony. It is also symbolic of the actions of the colonists and military taking possession of the land, without reference to the original owners.

CHAINS

There are a number of references to the use of neck irons and chains which were used extensively throughout the history of black/white contact.

Neck irons and chains were used in the gaining of control over Aboriginal people as individuals. On another level they were used in an attempt to gain control of the Aboriginals as a people. Chains represent the attempts by whites, at the complete subjugation and control of Aboriginal people.

BARS

Various types of steel bars have been used in many of the works. Again I attempt to convey something of the domination of one culture over another, the white domination of the landscape and the people. I use 'The Inquiry' as a title in a number of works. Through them I seek to communicate something of the frustrations of a people who continue to suffer extreme oppression, resulting in part,
from the history of the past two hundred years, and in part from the ongoing practices of white society. These frustrations are surfacing on many fronts, through the black movements, the land rights movement, the inquiry into Aboriginal deaths in custody and more.

On one level, by using the term 'The Inquiry' I am making references to the Muirhead Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and attempt to address the issues of why there is an over representation of Aboriginal people, in the various correctional establishments throughout the country. On another level, I am attempting to use the denotation of the term, as a means to encourage people to question and investigate why so many people have, through death, sought freedom from continued oppression.

There is also an attempt to establish a dialogue through the work which addresses the condition of anomie in which many Aboriginal societies are currently located. Through these works I attempt to encourage questions of why many Aboriginal communities appear to be in selfdestruct mode, why so many people choose death as a means of freedom from the cycles of sexual and physical abuse, and what is it about white society that continues to support the relationship which allows this destruction to take place?

FARMING IMPLEMENTS

Through the use of these elements I attempt to convey something of the destructive nature of colonisation by the practices of farming. Initially the land was altered by the bringing in of cattle and sheep, and the erection of fences. Then great acreages were cleared in an
attempt to increase the numbers and varieties of stock. These practices were followed by the introduction of cash crops which required the further clearing and altering of the land.

These processes not only pushed the Aboriginals off their land and destroyed their food sources, they left tremendous scars on the land and caused the further destruction of the land through salination, erosion and poisons. Aboriginal people often refer to the land as mother earth, they are part of it as it is part of them. The brutal attack on the land, has to be seen as consistent with the brutal attack on Aboriginal people.

The images of other titles such as 'Oppression', 'Phillip's Campaign', 'Assimilation' and 'Terra Nullus' come directly from information presented in the research.

In the descriptions of the motifs which reoccur in the work, I have attempted to provide the differences in the concepts behind the choice of the various elements. In doing so, I have avoided the similarities, not in an attempt to dismiss them, but to avoid repetition. However the similarities are very important in the development of understanding with regard to the inhumanity of the colonisers towards the Aboriginals. With the visual imagery I have attempted to develop the layers of meaning, in the same way as the written narrative does. The following descriptions of the concepts behind individual works attempt to further develop these ideas.
CULTURAL BAGGAGE

The works titled 'Cultural Baggage' seek to explore the differences in the cultural clothing of the respective societies, and the way we are dressed with this clothing.

Traditional Aboriginal culture presented a model in which all elements are balanced and in harmony with nature, the land and with the environment, a model in which all pieces of life's jigsaw puzzle fitted.

What follows is not an attempt to present Aboriginals as stereotyped 'noble savages', but as individuals who, generally speaking, had a developed sense of their own being and of their respective positions and roles within their world.

Traditional life presents a picture of a world where all the elements are interdependent, a world where everybody belongs, where everybody has a sense of purpose and knows what is expected of them. All are parts of a whole and each part has equal importance.

Collectively, Aboriginals possess a body of knowledge which has slowly accumulated over time. The laws, customs and rituals which govern their existence, were born in the time of creation, the Dreaming. Traditionally children are educated through the repetitious telling of Dreaming stories. Relevant information and knowledge is communicated according to their age and level of understanding. The Dreaming stories teach them how to interact with the environment, the land and with each other. The Dreaming is
central to the existence of Aboriginals. It is a belief system which is passed on from generation to generation, and gives meaning to everyday life. It prescribed the social relationships, and determines values and beliefs, as well as their relationships to all things. It gave order, meaning and security. The cultural clothing in which they are dressed, fits.

In contrast, whites are born of a transplanted culture, one which never really took root. How could it? Everything was different. The animals were different, and some like the platypus, were even absurd. The trees were different and the timber so hard it was almost unworkable. The seasons were different and they came at the wrong times of the year. European seeds withered and died as the strange soils rejected them. Nothing fitted. Even the gods were different. Thomas Keneally says it was difficult for the ice blue Gods of northern Europe to take on credibility in the new landscape; there was a sense of other gods, gods ancient, Aboriginal and therefore shocking to the European soul.6

Part of this cultural baggage is the schooling in a history which hid the reality and truth behind the colonisation of Australia. It hid any objective assessment of the facts, and distorted, or denied, the Aboriginal experience. Australia's history presented a picture of colonisation, as being a quiet and peaceful process, a picture which suggested, that Aboriginals were passive recipients of an entirely new social order.

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6 Keneally, Thomas, op. cit., pp. 11-22.
If Aboriginals were mentioned at all it was generally in a negative, patronising way. Officially I learnt that Aboriginals entered Australia via landbridges to the North and North West of the continent. I learnt that as savages, they were inferior, and that they followed heathen practices and rituals, and chose to live in squalor. Many more untruths were taught in a way which presented them as unchallengable truths. Unofficially, through my peers, I learnt to be wary. I learned that all they wanted to do was drink and fight. Anything moving, especially white, was fair game. I learned that the only way to deal with them was to fight first, asking no questions. Racism was so ingrained in my society I was not even aware of its existence.

Only recently are we beginning to learn of the falsehoods, deceptions and fabrications which riddled Australia's history. Only now are we learning of the lies, the evasions and the great silence.

Brian Attwood says that until recently, history has been written by those who had a commitment to produce a 'politically useful past'. Perhaps one of the intentions of this 'politically useful past' was to allow the absolution of guilt, the absolution of any form of recognition that white Australians are the beneficiaries of crimes against Aboriginals. Perhaps this is why, as Tony Barta says, the question of genocide, the question of a destructive past, cannot seriously penetrate our ideological defences. To do so, he says, would threaten the legitimacy of white society. This kind of

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7 Attwood, Brian, op. cit., p. 136.
knowledge is suppressed and powerful interests reinforce this suppression.\(^8\)

White Australians are born of a culture that is continually in a state of flux and change. Relatively speaking, change takes place quickly in this environment. In the past 200 years we have witnessed the near extinction of all Aboriginal people from Australia. We have witnessed the era of the convict and colonisation, the era of the gold rush and the bushrangers, the great land grab and five wars, two of them world wars. In one lifetime transport has changed from horses through trains, motor vehicles and aeroplanes to flights into outer space. Change which takes place quickly produces feelings of restlessness and uncertainty. It is estimated that the body of knowledge of present day Western technological society doubles every six years. By the next generation this body of knowledge is estimated to double every one and a half years.

Robyn Davidson says that because of the speed at which things changed it was difficult to feel settled,

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\text{... despite the domesticity and hard work which rooted us to the various places in which we lived, they all had a temporary quality, as if we were waiting on the outskirts of something to which we would eventually belong ... perhaps this is how many white Australians feel, like transplants who haven't quite taken root.}^{9}\]

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\(^8\) Barta, Tony, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 160.
\(^9\) Davidson, Robyn, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 176.
This restlessness and uncertainty has been described as springing, in large measure from a vague and generalised fear of our own environment, the feeling of being alien in our own continent and our own region. As a result, we have tended to swing between isolationism and interventionism, between 'Fortress Australia' and an over dependence on one great powerful protector; and culturally, between slavish imitation and brash self-assertion.\textsuperscript{10}

The cultural clothing does not quite fit. There is discomfort. Many carry this clothing as 'excess baggage' which is passed on through successive generations. Rarely is it passed on with comprehensive knowledge and understanding. The baggage is carried and few attempts are made to look inside. For many the baggage is a burden, and inspite of a lack of identity with, or understanding of our beginnings, (or at least our associations with them) the baggage remains with us.

Although not intrinsically part of us, the baggage acts like ballast which gives some form of stability. Most of us need a belief system, but we tend to head towards conformity and fail to see the diverse number of options possible. The colonists never saw or understood the cathedrals of spirit of the Aboriginal people and all but destroyed their way of life forcing them into the depressed social position they now occupy. Through their removal, children lost the

\textsuperscript{10} Cited in \textit{ibid.}, p. 228.
role models they would normally gauge themselves on, and learn from. This in turn destroyed the models of life which have sustained Aboriginal people for in excess of half a million generations.

Aboriginals were forced into a double bind situation, devalued and rejected by white society while at the same time being forced, through assimilationist policies, to adopt the values and beliefs of the society which was destroying them.

To a large extent Aboriginals have been dispossessed of their cultural 'clothing'. Their 'baggage', along with much of the contents, was removed when their notions, of space and time, were altered through their conversion to a 'higher Christian, civilised' way of life. They were forced to adopt the uncertain, uncomfortable clothing of white society.

Through the works titled 'Cultural Baggage' I attempt to demonstrate the differences between the cultural clothing of the respective societies. There is an uncertainty about the metal additions which are undergoing the processes of decay. In contrast I have used ceramic forms which are in balance and harmony with each other. In both works, the cylinder has been attached to the sphere, and there is a strength in this union. The metal addition has been placed on the shoulder of the forms but remains in a precarious position. Through these works I convey the attempts to clothe Aboriginal societies, in the uncertain cultural clothing and baggage of white society.
CULTURAL INVASION

Through the works titled 'Cultural Invasion' I attempt to further communicate how the culture of one society was thrust upon and invaded another.

In one, I use an agricultural implement designed to rip through earth. The intention here is to demonstrate that the traditional values, customs and mores of Aboriginals, were in contrast to the imposed values, customs and mores of white society, and the forced adoption of white values, caused the near destruction of their traditional values. In another, I make use of an axe head which itself is starting to buckle. The intention here is to demonstrate that despite the continued oppression of the last 200 years, Aboriginal people have survived. Many continue to dress themselves in, and identify with, traditional cultural clothing.

In other works I have used various metal spikes or bolts which intrude into the forms. Together with the readings already presented, I attempt to communicate something of the notions of what Lin Onus describes as, "the most extraordinary salvage operation in which dispossessed Aboriginals are presently engaged". 11

The re-learning of languages, the expression of history through what is termed Urban Aboriginal Art, and a desire for knowledge and cultural awareness are the foundations of this revival. Despite the

events and practices of the last 200 years, Aboriginal people have resisted the invasion to the extent that there are now many rebuilding initiatives taking place.

In contrast to the 'burdening baggage' of white society, Aboriginals travelled lightly.

**CUCKOO**

With the works titled 'Cuckoo' I deal with the practices of child removal, especially the forced child removal as described in Chapter Six of the research.

The Collins English Dictionary tells us that the formal use of the word 'cuckoo' refers to the family Cuculidae, having pointed wings, a long tail, zygodactyl feet. The informal use of the word refers to 'insane or foolish'.

One of the many dramas that takes place in the Australian bush each year, happens between the months of September and January. Like many dramas, the sequence of events carried out by this Cuculidae group, ends in tragedy and disaster. A.H. Chisholm refers to this series of events as,

infants who commit murder.12

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This nature drama is the result of the habits of Cuckoos. They come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from the smallest - the Tiny Bronze Cuckoo, 17 cm long, to the largest - the Channel Billed Cuckoo, 64 cm long. Some one hundred and twenty seven species are distributed throughout the world and of these, between twelve and fourteen reside in Australia.

With the exception of the Pheasant Coucal, the common thread connecting these family members is that they parasitize the nests of other birds. Their signature is that they steal their eggs, by various means, into the nests of up to eighty four species of host birds.

After having selected a nest, the female Cuckoo examines the situation carefully and waits for just the right moment to deposit her eggs. Usually one egg is deposited with the process being repeated in a number of nests. In the case of the Channel Bills, up to five eggs may be left. After the completion of this act the Cuckoo will then remove a number of the host's eggs.

As the drama unfolds the audience becomes aware that from the original number of eggs, only one bird is raised. The reason for this being that the eggs of Cuckoos normally take less time to hatch than do the eggs of other birds.

Upon hatching, the young Cuckoos attempt to evict the other eggs from the nest and in most cases are successful. However if they fail at this eviction attempt, the audience witnesses, in a human sense, a cruel turn of events.
Cuckoos generally possess a larger and more brightly coloured gape than do most other birds. That this serves as a feeding stimulus means that the young Cuckoos get fed in preference to the hosts' own young. Consequentially they gain strength rapidly and can complete the eviction. However, if this second attempt fails the hosts' young will eventually starve to death as the young Cuckoos are more aggressive and will out-compete them for the available food.

This episode of the nature drama is consummated by death. While still naked and sightless, the young Cuckoos commit murder by eliminating eggs or chicks from their nests. It is this practice that has prompted the description of Cuckoos as 'birds that live by crime'\textsuperscript{13}

Parallels can be drawn between the drama which unfolds in the Australian bush each year and the drama that unfolded when, what is euphemistically referred to as 'white settlement', began.

As the young Cuckoos evict their hosts' young and bring about their death, so too did the settlers evict the Aboriginals from their land and bring about their death. They were shot, poisoned, murdered and butchered. Many other horrific crimes were perpetrated against them over the years and I would argue that some of these crimes continue today. Only their character has changed.

Groups sharing a common language were massacred to the point of extinction, as the white population and the pressures of settlement

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}
grew. Many of the remaining groups were herded onto reserves and missions. On these, the Aboriginals were forced to live under a system or rules and regulations which were destructive to their societies. Further, they were burdened with the baggage of a culture which was alien to them. Their land, their freedom and their hope were stolen. In the words of Dr. Coombs,

we did not merely deprive Aborigines of property. We took also the source of their livelihood, the very foundation of their society, the basis of the rights and obligations on which it was built, and above all the source of the religious convictions which gave purpose and justification to their lives.¹⁴

1883 saw various Government instrumentalities adopt the practice of taking children from their parents, relatives and communities. These acts were carried out under the web of 'protectionist policies' and were maintained until as recently as 1969. These children were taken to missions and homes, raised by white hosts and indoctrinated in white ways. In an attempt to bring about a cultural genocide, the children were prevented from having contact with their own culture.

When they reached the age of sixteen, or in some cases eighteen, they were forced to leave these missions and homes. Many were

¹⁴ Coombs, Dr., cited in Critchett, Jan, op. cit.
placed into, or found employment, again a euphemism, in domestic servitude.

Like the Cuckoos, we live in the shadows of the crimes committed against the Aboriginals. This brings me to the informal use of the word cuckoo, 'insane'.

The works informed by these practices, I use a landscape form as representative of the stolen children, and a knot of iron as the metaphorical nest of white society.

THE MISSIONS

With these works, I attempt to deal with the practices mentioned above in a different way. When the children were taken from their parents and families they underwent the institutionalisation process, which attempted to change them into white people.

When they were released from the missions many found themselves to be neither white or black, because they had been alienated from their own culture, and were not accepted by white culture. They were the by products of the practices of white society.

With regard to child removal, I chose a cooling tower form to represent the actions and practices of white society. Cooling towers, on one level, are about conversion. They change steam into water, the missionaries were concerned about changing black into white. They attempted to alter and redefine the Aboriginals' sense of time and space. At the base of the cooling towers is a pile of slag,
which is the relatively useless by product of the processes of steel making. I see this as being symbolic of the waste of human potential brought about by the practices and policies of child removal.

KAKADU AND THE OPEN CUTS

Several works allude to the practices of mining, especially open cut mining. These practices vividly convey the exploitative and destructive practices of white society. The open cuts appear as gaping wounds which permanently disfigure the land. The scars which remain are reminders of power, especially the relative power positions of the respective societies. These positions are positions of inequality.

On the one hand, the scars represent the powerlessness of Aboriginal people to prevent the assault on, and the destruction of, their land. On the other, the scars represent ultimate power, power enough to rip through any obstacle, be it the land itself or anything on the land. Whole towns, as in the Yallourn open cut in Gippsland, have been uprooted and relocated so that the materials under them could be removed.

The scars serve as reminders of destruction: of the people who belong to the land, of the plants and animals associated with the land. They remind us of the destruction caused by tailing heaps which, through the processes of leaching, destroy the earths and soils. With by products and washings, the waterways are destroyed, along with the life forms they support. As by products are released into the environment and atmosphere it, too, suffers.
To see the scars of Queenstown, Gippsland, Muswellbrook, Roxby Downs, Kakadu, Mt Isa, The Kimberleys and of Weipa, to name a few, is to be continually reminded that land is property, that land is commodity to be exploited.

Mining continues to be, an assault both physically and spiritually on Aboriginal societies. It destroyed food supplies and forced people from their ancestral homes and violated their connections with the Dreaming and Dreaming trails.

They robbed us of our laws, languages and religion ... and destroyed the trees and life giving plants ...
They destroyed the sacred places of the Dreamtime ...
and forced their penis into the womb of our traditional society.¹⁵

With new discoveries of bauxite, gold and uranium etc. the alienation of land from Aboriginal people has become more ruthless, especially in Queensland, and the Northern Territory where people are still living tribal and semi tribal life styles.

In the works titled 'Kakadu' there are many levels of reading. On one level, a metal addition eats away at the landscape in much the same way as the machinery of white society does. Another reading is provided by the shape. I have used a form derived from a stylised version of the mushroom shaped cloud resulting from a nuclear blast. I have turned this form upside down in an attempt to convey

¹⁵ Nungas, cited in Mattingley, Christobell, op. cit., p. 4
something of the attempts of people to halt the continuing
destructive assaults on the land, and to communicate something of
the attempts by people who seek to understand the processes, which
continue to effect Aboriginal people. Through understanding these
process we can seek a reversal of oppressive practices.

By turning the form upside down I am also seeking to communicate
the differences in the way Aboriginal and white societies relate to
the environment.

In the 'Open Cuts' I have used a metal form which is termed an idler.
These are the metal rollers used to support the conveyer belts
which carry the coal away from the coalface to the processing plant.
The coal is used to fire boilers which convert water into steam.
This steam drives turbines which convert the energy of coal into
electricity.

In the work, the idler stands as lord and master over the land forms,
symbolic of the way white society stood as lord and master over
Aboriginal people. It is intended that the colour of the works titled
'open cuts' should operate on many levels.

In the words of Pert-boolak Tjappwoorrong,

the massacres have not ended. People are not being
rounded up and killed, but far more subtle methods
are being used. If you take the people from their
land and homes they will die. The mining, pastoral,
forestry and tourism bodies are doing this every
day of the year in Australia. But more importantly, as this land, its animals, fish birds and insects, its plants, the water and the sea, the rocks, the sky and in fact all things are a part of us as we are part of them both physically and spiritually, then to destroy all this - the environment - is to destroy the people. Massacre!\textsuperscript{16}

BLACK MORTAR WHITE PESTLE

These works are a series of bowl forms which incorporate a large ball-bearing in a shallow dish section. The idea for the forms, originated from the shallow depressions left in rock surfaces by Aboriginals after having ground ochres, clays and pigments for paints.

Essentially, through these forms, I deal with the information presented in Chapter Four of the research. This information described attempts at the 'deliberate infliction of conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of a group in whole or in part'.

Many of these conditions, were subtle and insidious attempts to break down, and destroy the identity and group cohesion of Aboriginal people. The Policies, Acts and practices of government instrumentalities, missionaries and, in general, the attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions of the white population, ground away at the

\textsuperscript{16} Tjappwoorrong, Pert-boolak, cited in ibid., Foward.
psyche, as well as the physical and religious aspects of Aboriginal people.

The ball-bearing in the bowls is representative of white society slowly grinding away at Aboriginal societies in an attempt to cause their extinction. As exhibited the bowls will be arranged in a manner reflecting the chronological development of Policies enacted to solve the 'Aboriginal Problem'.

I have used different glaze and colour qualities in these works in an attempt to express, something of the differences in the attitudes of the policy makers, towards the Aboriginals. Although the Policies were perceived by whites to be of benefit to Aboriginals, they all had one thing in common. Despite the superficial wording of the Policies, the cost to Aboriginal people, their societies and culture, was their Aboriginality.
CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

This work is in response to a need I perceive in white society to change the way we remember our past.

While it may well be an impossible task to convey all the incidences, emotional responses, or pieces in the jigsaw, which lead to the point of beginning a body of work such as this, my greatest concern is that our history has been prejudiced by ideals and assumptions, which lay at the foundations of our way of thinking. Aboriginal people continue to suffer the results of this legacy.

It is my belief that these ideals need to be reassessed. Through this body of work I am expressing my concern at the continued injustice directed towards Aboriginal people, while at the same time making visible, a history which has contributed to the present socially depressed condition of Aboriginals.

We live in a time of rapid change and as a result many people no longer accept the face value of things. The ideas, beliefs and paradigms, which dominated the thinking of the past 200 years in Australia, are now being questioned and challenged. Through the process of reassessing and deconstructing previous patterns of meaning and order, we can generate new understandings.
As an artist I take things which have immediate and recognisable meaning and re-present them in ways which give new meaning. I take clay, which is earth and land and which has a recognisable utilitarian function, and re-present it as a metaphor for Aboriginal societies. I use metal which has a meaning in one context and re-present it as a metaphor for white society. That the metal is rusty and corroded is an important signifier in the work.

Part of the process, is taking specific elements, and presenting them in ways which give new meaning. For example, fenceposts have meanings of ownership, of boundary marking, of cultivation, of civilisation and dominion over the land. Fences are signs of possession in that they close in what belongs to their owners and close out the unknown and elements which might threaten. By using decaying fenceposts, I am saying that there are many alternate interpretations to the ideas and beliefs upon which Australia's present is built. The layers of history, presented to many white Australians, need to be pared away for them to be revealed.

Fences changed the face and shape of the Aboriginal world. They ruined their hunting grounds and prevented access to their religious sites and Dreaming trails. Fences cut Aboriginals off from their sacred sites, those places invested with the memory of their beginnings. To cut them off from these was to cut them off from their own identity, from their past and therefore, their future.

Using fence posts and clay together I am making a statement about how Aboriginal societies have been manipulated and made to fit into
white society, a society which sought to control and dominate Aboriginal people.

Chains were used to harness the power of horse and bullock teams so that this power could be used for the benefit of the colonialists. Through the use of chains, the colonialists dominated the beasts of burden and used them for their own gains. In a similar way the colonisers used chains to take power from, and to control, Aboriginal people. Along with the various government Policies, practices, Acts, beliefs and assumptions, chains were used as an instrument contributing to the subjugation of Aboriginal people.

In a paper titled 'History and Social Memory', Peter Burke describes one of the central functions of contemporary historians as being that of a 'remembrancer', a person whose job it is to remind people of things they would prefer to forget.

I see one of the roles of artists as being very much a role of a remembrancer. Through this body of work I seek to assist in keeping alive the memory of the Aboriginal experience in Australia's history. In this way we can begin to question the myths Australia's present is based on. These myths centrally locate whites and displace Aboriginals. As a remembrancer my task is to remind people of a past which is uncomfortable, unpleasant and troublesome, in order to dispel many of the false impressions of reality these myths have created.

An attitude of many white Australians is that if something is unpleasant, it is perhaps easier to ignore, or sidestep it, rather than confront it. If it is ignored for long enough, then perhaps it will go away. This attitude underpins many aspects of history, especially events surrounding the colonisation of Australia. It manifests itself in the belief that events of the past, which are unpleasant or troublesome, are best left to the past.

When the topic of genocide, as it relates to the Aboriginals, is raised, it is often labelled as being unproductive, as being emotive and hysterical or hyperbolical, and is easily dismissed by those who wish to do so. This situation allows many people, freedom from the burden of recognition and the discomfort of realising they live in a society constructed on the basis of an unacknowledged genocide.

Deborah Rose says that by not remembering, we place ourselves outside the arena of the continuing distress, which are manifestations of systematised injustice, caused to Aboriginal people. By placing ourselves outside this arena we do violence to ourselves as responsible persons and contribute to the violence perpetrated against Aboriginal people. By not remembering we ignore the fact that Aboriginal people live by coercion under a perpetuating system of structured injustice.²

David Lowenthal sees memory as the key to self development. Remembering the past, he says, is crucial for our sense of identity.

'to know what we were confirms what we are'. The loss of memory destroys one's personality and deprives life of meaning.3

As a nation we have not been aware of the selection of information which marked our progress and attempted to create a national identity. Our present is constructed on the basis of 'White Heros' and 'Founding Fathers'.

Collectively, Lowenthal says, we are not confident about reviewing our past. The signals we recall often seem confused or even contradictory, the memories which define us are apt to be tacit rather than explicit, somatic rather than self conscious, involuntary rather than deliberate. Further, modern habits of analysis render dubious the integrity of our own remembered past, and the frequency with which we update and reinterpret our memory, weakens coherent temporal identity. This frequency of alteration precludes a consistent view anchored in memory. Few, he says, can afford to become aware of this deficiency, it is too painful to recognise the discrepancies between one's present and past views.4

In attempts to establish a national identity, historians have played down the clashes between Aboriginals and whites. Harry Allen argues that this has been done in order to 'graft white culture directly onto Aboriginal root'. Further, Europeans, after loosing their connections with their European homelands, have attempted to gain a ready made past and legitimate claim to the continent by usurping

4 Ibid.
and excluding those of the Aboriginals. This is the very stamp of colonialism and it will not go away, while Europeans continue actions and policies which are directly derived from their colonial and imperialistic past.⁵

To gain a common sense of identity, we must approach the task from a different perspective. This perspective must include a more complete picture of the past. We must remember this past, because we have not yet done the work which will enable a real identity to emerge. We have not yet done the work, necessary to give meaning to past suffering. Nor have we done the work, necessary to prevent past events from occurring again. We cannot inhabit the past, we can not change what happened, but through a better understanding of, and identifying with the past, we can evolve creatively.

By not remembering the past, we continue to blame the victims for their depressed social condition, and continue the practices of institutionalised injustice. By blaming the victims, we avoid any recognition of guilt, or realisation that as individuals and, as a nation, we benefit from a brutal past.

In this way we also avoid issues of compensation and land rights, because as Kevin Gilbert says, "this would inflame the memory of past guilt and the territorial fears of the uninformed".⁶

In part, I have presented this chapter as a key to reading the works. Through them, I seek to engage the issue of genocide at the level of representation.
In using clay, it is important for me that the surfaces take on colours and textures found in the landscape and environment. I use a technique, which I term smoked earthenware, for colour development. This involves the cooling of a copper based surface layer in a reducing atmosphere. There are three basic ways to achieve this.

The choice of methods depends largely on the desired end results. For example, pinks, yellows and blues require a rapid cooling process, purples and siennas require a cooling process over a period of several hours, and tans, browns and oranges require an even longer cooling process.

Variations on the texture of the surface treatment are possible. These involve the amount of melt time allowed. As with any other glaze, the degree of melt involves both time and temperature. For rough, sandpaper like textures, maturation temperature must be achieved quickly, (approximately two hours). For smoother surfaces a slower rise in temperature is needed using anything up to ten hours.

The surface treatment can be applied to green or bisque ware. It can be applied repeatedly to previously fired ware as it has minimal
shrinkage and will move with the forms. It can be fired using any energy source available, gas, wood, oil, electricity and so on.

The treatment is based on variations of 34% copper oxide or copper carbonate, 33% bicarbonate of soda and 33% borax or borax frit. Variations can include manipulations of the ratio of materials to each other or the additions of up to 5% of the various metallic oxides. Variations promote changes in maturation temperature, colour and surface texture. The melt temperature of the basic treatment is 850°C over a two hour cycle. Changes in the cycle allow adjustment of this temperature up or down as desired.

For rapid cooling the works are fired in a ceramic fibre lined portable kiln. The works are taken out at maturity and placed in a bin containing combustibles such as wood shavings, shredded paper or straw. The most important aspect here is the works' environment. If the work is smothered with combustibles colour will not develop. On the other hand, if there is too little material, again colour will not develop, except perhaps, dark brown. Experience with this will enable the happy balance to be found.

With the degree of thermal shock involved in this process, the loss rate, especially with the larger pieces, is around 60%. Smaller pieces handle the process more successfully. The addition of around 30% of 16# grog assists the larger works. Potters who use coarse clay will no doubt realise that throwing this is like throwing clay impregnated with razor blades. Despite the rate of loss, I have found that this firing method, is the only way to develop the pinks, yellows and blues as mentioned earlier. If colour does not develop in
the first instance, or it is undesirable, the works may be refired to a temperature of around 650°C without further additions of copper. The more firings, the greater the colour development but, the greater the loss.

The second method involves leaving the work in the kiln, and adding the combustible materials to the existing atmosphere. Again the rule for the amount of combustibles applies. With this method, the copper is allowed to cool under reduction over a period of several hours. As long as the reducing atmosphere is kept until the temperature has dropped below 300°C, colour will develop and remain. Failure to keep this atmosphere, means the work will reoxidise and turn black. Oil soaked wood and rags are more than useful here.

The third method is to fire the work in a kiln which can be closed at the end of the firing cycle, so that it is air tight. This allows the work to cool over a period of ten hours or more. The advantage here is that more than one or two pieces of work can be fired at the same time. These must be loosely packed to allow the reducing atmosphere access. When the works reach maturation temperature, sugar, oil soaked rags, rubber tubes and tyres, or naphthalene, in fact any highly combustible material, is introduced in much the same way as for blackfiring. Most important for the development of colour here, is that the reducing atmosphere remain in the kiln until the temperature has dropped below the point at which reoxidation will occur.

The terra sigillata slip coatings, involves a chosen clay, in my case 'Vic Clay Terracotta' from Clayton in Melbourne, being dried, crushed
and mixed with a large volume of water to achieve a thin clay suspension. To this water a deflocculant, such as Calgon, is added to aid the sedimentation process.

This mixture is allowed to settle over a period of three or four days, then the thin layer of slip, directly under the water which by this time should be clear, is syphoned off. A clear container here is most useful, however not absolutely necessary. With careful syphoning the layers of clay will not be disturbed, it is also possible to see the layers change as the level drops. The water should be syphoned off first. The finer the particles the better the results, so, depending on the desired effects, this process can be repeated over and over again, with the same clay, until only the finest particles remain. In my case I repeated the process three times.

The slip is applied thinly to leather hard clay. If the slip is applied too thickly, it may flake off during firing. As with the copper surface treatment, the slip is applied with an air brush which allows at least 60# particle sizes to pass through.

Again surface texture variations are possible. The slip can be burnished with a soft cloth or sprayed with coarser particles. The works should be fired in a wood kiln to maturation at around 1050°C, however variations of 100°C, up or down, give good results. This work should be densely packed in order to shelter some areas from the flame. This aids the development of flame marks. Used sparingly, additions of copper, rock salt, straw, banana skins and coal can be placed around the works in such a way as to promote the development of surface colour, textures and markings.
The surface of the works, subjected to the copper treatment, can continue to be worked upon after the firing process, with the use of a gas burner. Selected areas of work can be reactivated to change the colour. All the previously mentioned colours are possible. For the development of greens a mixture of 80% 'Bakers Soldering Solution', which has an active ingredient of 40% zinc chloride, and 20% stannous or ferric chloride, is placed into a plastic spray bottle. This is then sprayed onto the work, which has been preheated, and burned into the surface until it changes to a straw colour. At this point, the heat is removed allowing the colour to develop over the next 48 hours. As the patina of a copper plated surface develops, so the colour of the pot intensifies over time.

A word of caution here. These materials are extremely toxic and should only be used in an open environment, in conjunction with an approved gas mask.


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