

**DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION**

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## FORWORD

This booklet is an attempt to provide teachers with local and relevant reference material on the history of the Aboriginal People of the Metropolitan North Region.

It is not a general overview of the "Aboriginal people of Australia". It is a collection of material about the local area which will hopefully be used by teachers so that Aboriginal Studies and Perspectives will become more interesting and challenging for all students.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Department of School Education clearly states in the rationale of the Aboriginal Education Policy that "*Aboriginal education in New South Wales is concerned with .....the education of all children in respect of contemporary and traditional Aboriginal society* " yet many teachers still only feel comfortable with the traditional aspects of Aboriginal culture. This resource aims to assist teachers to more successfully fulfil all of the aims of the Aboriginal Education Policy.

A chronological approach has been taken in this resource for simplicity of presentation. Teachers can adapt materials as they see fit and not be restrained by this approach if it does not suit the needs of their students.

Historical documents used in this resource were written by European people and have problems in that some of them saw Aboriginal life and customs through 'different eyes' - not only different in the sense of Aboriginal values versus European, but also in terms of their own interest in and emotions towards the Aborigines, and their tolerance and acceptance of the Aboriginal culture. Some of the colonists were more tolerant than others; some were also more observant than others. The descriptive terminology used often varies from writer to writer and terms are not always used consistently. Whilst in some cases having several different descriptions of particular observations or events can lead to clarification of a point, it can sometimes lead to apparent conflicts in the descriptions of the various activities and customs of Aboriginal people and are now the cause of some debate. For example, the word 'tribe' was used variously to refer to named groups of people from different geographic areas. These groups were not necessarily tribes (i.e. a political/linguistic group), but were often clans and/or bands of extended family groups which had come together for specific purposes.

In the journals, books, letters, etc. written by the colonists and visitors after 1800 the descriptions are based on 'hearsay' information they must have received from local residents or that they gained from the writings of people such as Tench, Hunter, White, Collins and

Stockdale, which had by that time been published. Thus these descriptions may not be accurate or truthful. It is necessary when using the historic documents to remember the biases which may have unconsciously, or sometimes consciously, crept into them and point this out to students.

The Metropolitan North Region is an arbitrary boundary as defined by the Department of Education. It ranges from the Harbour Bridge in the south to Lake Macquarie in the north., from Manly in the east to Galston in the west. The Metropolitan North Regional boundaries are not those of the traditional Aboriginal people and hence there is overlap from numerous different traditional cultural groups.

**At all times local Aboriginal community input should be encouraged and sought. If in doubt as to who to contact, check with either the Regional Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (R.A.C.L.O.) or the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (A.E.C.G.) representative.**

**In this document an Aborigine is a person of Aboriginal descent, who identifies and is accepted as such by the community with which he or she is associated. (Commonwealth Government definition).**

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## **An Overview of the Resource**

### **TOPIC section 1**

#### **The Land and The People**

- A. The Land
- B. Technology
- C. Lifestyle
- D. The People

#### **COMPONENTS**

##### **Part A. The Land**

1. Geographical description
2. Countries and languages
3. Country and belonging

##### **Part B. Technology**

1. Tools, weapons, artefacts and utensils
2. Art, rock engravings, cave paintings

##### **Part C. Lifestyles**

1. Food - fish, shellfish, materials, birds, plants
2. Housing
3. Clothing and adornment

##### **Part D. The People**

1. Kinship and marriage
2. Law and religion
3. Ceremonies, music and dance

### **SCOPE - section 1**

This section is primarily concerned with providing information based on traditional Aboriginal people. The general theme is the human being, land and the relationship between them which is looked at from differing aspects in each of the sections.

1. The geographical setting (vegetation, landform, rainfall, temperature) which can be addressed in terms of Aboriginal/non Aboriginal adaptation/habitability.
2. Consideration of country or in what way does/ did the Aboriginal citizen relate to his/her nation
3. Cultural geography, an examination of art, music/musical instruments and material culture of the traditional Aboriginal people in the Metropolitan North Region.
4. Language (dialects) of tribes/nations - linguistic and cultural notions of the same.
5. Environment and conservation issues relating to traditional Aboriginal culture.

### **TOPIC section 2**

Invasion and Resistance

#### **COMPONENTS**

Part A The Moving Frontier - The Sydney Region

Part B Historical events

Part C Culture Conflict - case studies

Part D Aboriginal Identities

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### **SCOPE - section 2**

The emphasis is on the colonial situation of the first 100 years - the moving frontiers of European invasion and occupation of Aboriginal land. It can be related to local and colonial economic forces and the geography of Australia. Following this is an account of reserve creation in its differing contexts in NSW and around Sydney.

### **TOPIC section 3**

Rebellion Reform and Reassertion

#### **COMPONENTS**

Part A. Political and Social Injustices - The Aboriginal Protection Period 1850-1940's

Part B. The Apprenticeship Scheme

Part C. Political movements in the 1920's, 30's and 40's

Part D. Assimilation 1940's - 1970's

### **SCOPE - section 3**

A chronology or account of local and regional experiences and responses are discussed.

The experience of colonialism poses difficulties in obtaining information for earlier periods of European occupation (ie up to the 1880's in NSW). A much better account is available after because of the creation of the Aborigines Protection Board during which Aboriginal experiences became a firm part of oral history and institutional records.

This section will particularly highlight "The Apprenticeships Scheme" and the Aboriginal

political movements of the 1920's, 30's and 40's.

This section also deals with post WWII Aboriginal Australia and surveys a number of specific events and issues which have continued and refined the Aboriginal rights theme whether it be 'civil rights' or 'land rights.'

#### **TOPIC section 4**

##### **The Contemporary Scene**

#### **SCOPE - section 4**

Part A. Aboriginal statistics

Part B. Stereotypes

Socio-economic indicators and stereotypes about Aboriginal people.

#### **TOPIC section 5**

##### **Appendix**

#### **SCOPE section 5**

Appendix A - Aboriginal place names

Appendix B - Contact name and addresses

Appendix C - Resources and bibliography

## **A. THE LAND**

### **1. GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION THE NATURAL SETTING - THE SYDNEY REGION**

The Sydney Region is centrally located on coastal New South Wales extending over 85km from Broken Bay in the north to the Woronora Plateau in the south, and from the Tasman Sea 80km westward to the foothills of the Blue Mountains. Covering an area of some 4080sq km, the Sydney Region exhibits a unique assemblage of natural features.

Geologically the region occupies the central portion of the Sydney Basin and exposed sediments date from the Middle Triassic, about 230 million years ago. The oldest rocks, Narrabeen shales and sandstones, outcrop at the northern and southern extremities of this saucer-shaped structure. They are overlain by the younger Hawkesbury Sandstone which, particularly in the low central portion of the region, is covered by the Wianamatta Shale Group. Igneous activity dating from the Jurassic (150 million years ago) has left a legacy of diatremes and dykes. Thermal doming and later episodic subsidence associated with the formation of the Tasman Sea



(60-80 million years ago) have contributed to the present topography.

Many of the suburbs are located on the Cumberland Plain, a complex of low, undulating hills of Wianamatta Shale extending westward from the southern shore of Port Jackson. It is bounded by three sandstone plateaux, the Blue Mountains to the west, the northern Hornsby Plateau rising sharply from Sydney Harbour and the more gradual ascent of the Woronora Plateau south of Botany Bay. While Wianamatta Shale outcrops on northern ridges, the coastal plateaux are mainly formed of Hawkesbury Sandstone which, being resistant to erosion, contributes to Sydney's spectacular coastal scenery. Subdued cliffs form where Narrabeen Shale outcrops, and brecciated diatremes are differentially eroded to form valleys within the sandstone. The structurally controlled bays and ports are rias or drowned river valleys, incised in the sandstone during ice ages when sea level was lower. Beaches and dunes are relict deposits derived from the ancient fluvial sands. The Nepean/Hawkesbury River System has been responsible for sedimentation seen in stepped terraces in the north-west of the Cumberland Plain.

Soil types are related to geology and landform. The most widely distributed of the soil types in the higher plateau is Hawkesbury Sandstone which is sandy, dry with a low water retaining capacity, hence plants that grow in it develop the capacity to store or lose very little water. The sandstone weathers to form the sandy dune areas along the coast where there are headlands of Hawkesbury Sandstone.

More fertile soil is associated with the clay rich, red brown earths of Wianamatta shale which becomes saturated when wet and cracks hard during very dry weather. It is found in the low lying areas in valley floors, such as the Cumberland Plain, the Nepean and Hawkesbury River valleys and from Ryde up to beyond Hornsby and Pennant Hills. The shale derived from igneous rocks weathers quickly in comparison to Hawkesbury Sandstone.

Narrabeen Shale is a darker red clay soil to be found in small areas around the Northern Beaches of Sydney - Collaroy to Palm Beach. It is rich in nutrients and supports a scrubby vegetation

**See the map of the Sydney Region - Major landforms.**

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Sydney experiences a warm temperate eastern maritime climate with local variations due to landforms and distance from the sea. Coastal areas receive an average annual rainfall of 1210mm with an autumn/winter maximum and an average diurnal temperature range from 22C in January to 11.8C in July. Orographic uplift of onshore winds produces higher rainfall totals (up to 1350mm) on the coastal plateaux, while rainfall decreases to less than 700mm in the rainshadow belt east of the Nepean/Hawkesbury River. The diminishing effects of moderating sea breezes, and cold air drainage from the Blue Mountains, increase temperature range with distance from the coast. Frosts are experienced in winter in the western suburbs.

South east and north east winds are responsible for most of the rainfall during summer. While the westerlies are the prevailing winds during autumn, winter and early spring. On shore salty winds stunt vegetation in the coastal dune areas and the westerlies effect the vegetation on the windward slopes of plateau areas.

Local combinations of geology, landforms, soil and climate governed the original diversity and distribution of the flora, little of which now remains except in the national parks. The impact of human activities in most areas has been total. Woodland and open forest once dominated the coastal plateaux and dry western Cumberland Plain with tall open forest on the higher rainfall shale belt and in sheltered valleys in the sandstone areas. Elsewhere, remnant rainforest, heath, sedgeland, sand dune and mangrove communities contribute to the present vegetation patterns.

There is no doubt that the landscape of the study region has changed dramatically since European invasion.

It would also stand to reason that if the area was more fully covered with trees the animal and plant foods would have been quite high and therefore have supported a large population especially with the abundance of seafood available to them.

The rock engravings in the study area also display a number of animals not commonly seen in the area today eg. turtles, whales and penguins. This may indicate a fall in numbers of these animals due to changing environments and destruction of habitats.

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### **LANDFORM, CLIMATE AND VEGETATION**

The following map shows that this Region has very different types of topography. Compare this map with the rainfall map on the next page and discuss the vegetation that would occur naturally. Do you notice anything about the way the landform affects rainfall and vegetation?

Think about the following question and describe in words or pictures, what the country would be like in earlier times.

1. How much rain falls along the coastal area of this region.

2. What is the name given to the climate of the East Coast?
3. How much rain does the area of the Cumberland Plains have per year?
4. Why, do you think, that only short, small-leaved plants grow in the Hawkesbury sandstone areas of the plateaus.
5. What sort of vegetation would grow on the alluvial river flats and terraces?

**Project**

**Find** all the information you can about climate and rainfall in your area.

**List** the plants and animals which would be natural to your area.

**Draw** or **collect** pictures to describe the natural environment of your area.

**Write** a short story telling how you would have lived 500 years ago in that area. Imagine what food you would eat, what clothes and housing you would need and what materials you could use to make things needed to make your life comfortable.

## 2 COUNTRIES AND LANGUAGES

The original inhabitants of this continent were called Aborigines by the European colonists

because that is exactly what the name means (original inhabitants). They had different names for themselves depending on which country they come from. Today, the Aboriginal people call themselves KOORIES if they come from Eastern N.S.W., for example, or MURRIES if they come from Western N.S.W.

Aboriginal people were never nomadic. They moved around their own country just as many people do in Australia today when they go on a holiday to the mountains or to the city. However, Aboriginal people camped at different places within their own country, and did so because of religious beliefs or because seasonal food was available at that time.

There were at least 719 different countries in this continent. The people who belonged in these countries shared similar languages and lifestyles to their neighbours in that area, but they still considered themselves a separate community which was special to the land they lived on.

This study is concerned with the Aboriginal people who live and lived in the area of Sydney from Port Jackson north to around Lake Macquarie. Prior to disruption by European invasion, the Aboriginal people who habitually lived within the study area were primarily the Kuringgai and the Darkingung (Darginyung or Darkinjang) people. **See map of Aboriginal languages of the Sydney Region.**

Although there is a certain amount of conflicting evidence regarding the language and tribal groups and the spelling of these groups' names in the Sydney Basin, most recent studies suggest the following divisions to be valid (Capell 1970):

The language spoken around Port Jackson was a dialect of Dharruk (Dharug). The Dharruk themselves lived inland of Sydney and their territory extended as far north as the Hawkesbury River, a boundary they shared with the Darkingung. Darkingung territory extended from the Hawkesbury River northwards to Wollombi and the southern drainage of the Hunter River.

East of the inland Dharruk and Darginyung were the coastal Kuringgai (Gurinygai), who lived both north and south of Broken Bay. To the south, they merged with the Thurrawal (Dharawal) on the Sydney peninsula and north they merged with the Awabal (Awabagal) who were centred around Lake Macquarie and Newcastle.

There was considerable enmity and ritualised fighting between the Kuringgai of the study area and the people to the north and to a less extent, with the Dharawal (Thurrawal) to the south. Relationships with the inland Dharruk too, were sometimes strained (Collins 1798:44.) although trading occurred. Indeed, Dharruk was structurally a very different language from Kuringgai, having affinities with the languages of the north coast of New South Wales, whilst the Kuringgai spoke a language like those in the Western Desert (Capell 1970.)

By contrast relationships between the Kuringgai north and south of Broken Bay and the inland Darkingung and the Darkingung and the Awaba were apparently very cordial. Reciprocal visits were made each year between the groups and trade items were exchanged.

These trading sojourns were accompanied by festivities, and this enabled the clans of each group to barter for materials which were either deficient or non-existent in their own area.

The Darkingung had several trading routes in the Wollombi region. One route led up to the headwaters of the Wollombi Brook, on to Kulnura, and down to Ourimbah near Gosford. Indeed Kulnura was a favoured camping ground of the Wollombi people. Another trading route was from Howe's Valley near Putty, territory of the Darkingung across the mountains to Boree, 10km west of Wollombi. Residents of the Wollombi area also recall the Aborigines using the Boree Track and The Devil's Rock for intertribal ceremonies and initiations (Elkin 1949:129 quoted in Smith 1983).

There have been reported instances of materials which could have been traded into or through the Darkingung territory. The first item was a piece of sandstone, used as a grindstone, which was located at Moree in north-western N.S.W. The rock was identified as Hawkesbury sandstone, that is sandstone from Hawkesbury rock stratum. Also a pure form of Bathurst quartz was traded into this region for use in ceremonies.

A recent study has indicated that the Darkingung Aborigines were the central link in a trading sequence which extended from the Newcastle region south to the Port Jackson area. This idea is evidenced by the existence of cherts, a rock type whose source can be identified from geological mapping of rock strata. Cherts identified in the Darkingung area may have originated from as far away as the south coast. (Needham, 1981)

The MacDonald Valley is thought to have been used as a major trading route between the coast and inland (McCarthy 1939 :1). It was also thought to have been an access route from the Great Divide to Brisbane Waters and from Bulga Plains to Cockfighter Creek (McCarthy 1939 :407). The above routes as well as the trade route also included a route to Mangrove Mountain that went through Wollombi. A direct route between these two places lies along the Kulnura/Peat's Ridge. This may have been used as an access route. This ridge is quite predominant, and was also found to be the most accessible place to build the Peat's Ridge Road (Elkin 1946 : 6-7). The information about these trade routes comes largely from the descendants of the settlers in the area, remembering what their fathers had told them or what the Aborigines had told them (McCarthy 1939 :2).

The idea that Aborigines followed defined routes or paths and used ridge tops as access routes is, in part, supported by observations made during early European explorations of Port Jackson and Pittwater. Hunter, during the exploration of Broken Bay, found the country very rugged but stated that they could usually find paths well trodden down by the Aborigines travelling along the coast. These paths were found on the most easily accessible parts of the hills and used the shortest routes (Hunter 1793:102).

Also, Hunter describes a meeting with two Aboriginal men during exploration of the lower Hawkesbury or Colo River who had seen Europeans in Sydney. Hunter thought that these two had travelled from Sydney as they were the only people from this district who were not afraid of them and who also appeared to be familiar with European customs (Hunter 1793:120-1).

The Kuringgai officiated at the tooth avulsion puberty rituals held on the Sydney peninsula, and they joined with the feasting when a whale was washed ashore at Manly (Collins 1789:490). When Europeans first visited Brisbane Water in 1788, they recognised Aborigines whom they had seen in Sydney, and further contact between the two areas was demonstrated by the presence of goods obtained from Sydney in an Aboriginal camp on Brisbane Water (Bradley 1969:90;

**Reference for trade: "Trade Routes" a video from the series, The Rainbow Serpent by SBS.**

Travelling to remote and often spectacular locations, 'Trade Routes' analyses in social and economic terms how important the trade routes were to Australia's Aborigines and how a traditional system of nonequitable debt is so powerful it remains today.

See map from The Rainbow Serpent series showing trade routes in Australia.

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE ABORIGINAL GROUPS**

Something needs to be said about the relationships of the languages here discussed to each other. The boundaries of Kuringgai are now fairly clear except on the west. If Dharruk did not reach the coast between Manly and Broken Bay, where is its eastern boundary? There is no natural boundary and it is curious that although Port Jackson does seem to form a natural boundary on the south of the Kuringgai area, Broken Bay, a more difficult crossing, did not bound it on the north.

North of the Hawkesbury River Dharruk would meet Darkingung in the west and a Kuringgai dialect in the east.

The nature of the differences between these languages must now be indicated to provide evidence for classing Kuringgai as a language separate from Awabagal and giving it a separate status. This can best be done by means of a short vocabulary of all the languages in the area under discussion. This is presented in Table 1.

**TABLE I**  
Vocabulary Comparisons in the Languages of the Sydney Area

English	Dharawal	Sydney	Dharuk	Kuringgai	Darkingung	Awaba
Beard	walu	walu	yariy	yari	yariy	yari
Cheek	walu	bira		yundariy		galu
Ear	guri	guri	guri	muranj	binuyari	nuraway, barabara
Eye	mabura	mai	mibarai	mi gay	mi gay	yaiguy
Fish	danj	mdgura	mdgara	mdgaru		mdguru
Forehead	yulu	yulu	yanan	gunbilan	yanan	yulu, jindiri
Hand	maramun	ddmara	ddmar	madjara	buril	madara
Man	juwinj	guri dalai	guri dalai	guri	guri	guri
Opossum	gurawura	burumin	wali	gurabil	giribil	wilai
Rain	bana	bana, wailan	murgu	bana	murgu	bwarin
Stone	gurabuy	gibar	gibar	buidja	djurug	dunuy
Sun	wuri	gain	guwinj	bangal	banal	banal

Water	yadunu	baidu	baidu	gugwinj, baidu	baidu	gugwinj gulun
Woman	mega	din	djin	nuguy	njuguy	nuguy

Notes: "Ear" and "man" are distinguished by the untrilled in the former, trilled in the latter. (Capel 1970)

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### 3 COUNTRY & BELONGING.

The Kuringgai Aboriginal people who comprised several sub-groups such as the Gayimai, Camaraigal and Cadigal, lived in the Sydney coastal area bounded by Gosford, Port Jackson and Parramatta. The living area of individual "family" groups would have been much smaller.

The Aborigines living space was determined by the amount of food an area produced and that also determined the number of people in any one area at anytime. The Hawkesbury River, Broken Bay and the coastline provided much of the food for the Aborigines as is evident by the shell middens found at numerous locations along the foreshores. Kinship ties, trade, status and other cultural and social factors determined how far an Aboriginal group travelled.

Members of each tribe or nation shared the same language, social customs and shared territory situated within specific but elastic geographical units. Each nation consisted of a number of descendant groups or clans. The clan was the land owning group as ownership was by the group rather than the individual (Vinnicombe 1980:1V:2)

A wide network of kinship ties and obligations entitled land owning clans to economic and social links which extended far beyond their own territory. This meant that a temporary abundance of resources in one area were accessible to others.

Such extended rights and ties were promoted and maintained by regular gatherings at which songs, dances and stories were exchanged and wives were sought. Sometimes inter-clan or tribal rituals were conducted. It is significant to note that the 'religious' aspect of land ownership was more important to the Aboriginal people than the economic aspect (Vinnicombe 1980 p.1V:3 )

Throughout Australia there is a strong affiliation between the Aboriginal people and their land and it has been said it would be as correct to speak of the land possessing them rather than them possessing land. (Vinnicombe 1V:3 1980 from Bennett 1977)

When Aboriginal people use the sayings 'my country' or being from such and such a country, they are most often expressing a different relationship (to that of the European usage) between themselves and their home region.

Just as Europeans add "n" to the word Australia when they say 'I am Australian' (I am a citizen, belong to Australia) so too do Aboriginal languages show this relationship by usually adding a small part to the name of their country (e.g. the Arrentye of central Australia add "renye" to their words for country to give a similar meaning as the "n" to the word Australia. Note that "renye" and equivalents used in other Aboriginal languages have the meaning 'of', or 'belonging

to', 'derived from' or 'inseparably tied to').

However, while the idea of nationality is virtually the same, Aboriginal peoples sense of belonging to country is distinctly powerful because of the awareness of ancestral occupation, historical occupation and the religious interpretation of human birth and ancestry. Aborigines take their identity from their country, as does an Indonesian from Indonesia and have rights parallel to the 'citizenship' rights of any people in their own country.

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## PART B. TECHNOLOGY.

### 1. Tools, Weapons, Utensils & Artefacts.

The Kuringgai Aborigines' knowledge of their natural environment was complimented by a rich material culture. It should be noted however that the implements of the material culture were all made of materials from the natural world, indicating a wider knowledge of this environment than just for eating purposes.

The tools and weapons used on the Central Coast area were similar to the those used by Aborigines throughout the Sydney Basin and the Hunter Valley.

The men used several types of spears, two of which were a single pronged one for hunting (the barbs of which were either oyster shell or wood) and a multi-pronged "fish - gig". These were usually carried in the hand as well as a spear-thrower, waddy (wooden club), wooden shield, boomerang and stone hatchet. The smaller items were often thrust into the band worn around the waist when not in use.

Up to three lengths of stem made up the shaft of the spear and these were joined together by resin from the base of the grass tree.

Fishing spears, known as mootim in the study area, were usually made from the stem of the grass tree Xanthorrhoea sp., with three strong prongs, (made from fish teeth, or bones, shells, stingray spines or hardwood.) bound to the end (Mathew in Harvard 1943:193)

Hunting spears, on the other hand, were barbed with bone or pieces of shell by the coastal people, while those who lived inland used stone (Collins 1798: 586). After contact by Europeans, bits of bottle glass were used. The barbs were fixed to the shaft by means of Xanthorrhoea resin which was softened with fire, and beeswax which afterwards set very hard (Hunter 1793: 495). The spears were thrown either straight from the hand, or with the aid of a spear-thrower or woomerah, which gave them added force. The spear-throwers, carved from wood, were also furnished with a piece of shell, stone or glass at one end which was used as a multi-purpose tool, or more especially as a gouge or scraper.

The waddy or club, made from a hard wood, was used in combat or for throwing at animals, as was also the boomerang. Shields, oval in shape, were carved from wood and then usually



decorated with a quartered design in red ochre and pipe clay. The manufacture of stone hatchets, known as mogo, was also described by the colonists. The stone was said to come from the shallows on the upper Hawkesbury and after being sharpened to a fine edge by friction, was bound to a wooden handle and fixed with gum (Collins 1798: 586).

The women were associated with fishing lines and hooks. Grinding stones were also used by the women to beat, roots and seeds to make them soft.

The fishing equipment used by the women was quite different. Their hooks were made of the inside of a shell resembling mother of pearl. This was the turban, Turbo torquata, which was broken into a ring two or three centimetres in diameter, then ground with a coarse stone file into a crescent shape, sharpened at one end and frequently notched at the other to attach the line. The shiny inside of the shell acted as a lure, and this, in addition to a ground-bait of chewed shellfish which was spat into the water to attract the fish, usually resulted in success. According to some accounts, hooks also were made from wood, bone or bird claws and these were probably baited.

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The fishing lines were made from twisted grasses and fig tree bark which were also the material for nets and bags. In the bags (used by both men and women ) they carried the meat from shell fish, ochre, resin, hooks and lines, shells ornaments and points for spears.

The women also carried coolamons (wooden vessels) to carry goods and after the contact period, tin pots and other containers. The net bags were often slung from the forehead and carried hanging down the back (Mathew in Harvard 1967: 189)

Several examples of the material possessions of the Aborigines who formerly lived in the study area have been preserved. Most of them were found stored in rock shelters and have subsequently been donated to the Australian Museum, Sydney. These items include an excellently preserved stone hatchet bound to a wooden handle, a large boomerang with an all-over incised design and a gnarled coolamon which has been repaired with gum.

Non-portable belongings such as bark canoes were usually left moored near the fishing grounds. The canoes had to be renewed at regular intervals. Bark was cut from the trees soon after rains when the sap was rising. At this time the bark is both stronger and more pliable. The ends of the bark were simply folded, skewered together with pegs and caulked with Xanthorrhoea resin (Hunter 1793: 495). The canoes were propelled with paddles, often to the accompaniment of a rhythmical song, or with a pole where water was sufficiently shallow (Collins 1798: 593). The canoe was kept open by sticks placed across the inside of the canoe. Paddles were about 1/2m in length, one paddle was held in each hand.

Spears made from Xanthorrhoea stems were much in demand by Aborigines who did not have this resource to hand and they were an important item of trade between the coastal Aborigines and those in the Hunter Valley.

Xanthorrhoea provided resin for hafting stone and shell implements and for mending leaking canoes and wooden vessels. In addition, segments of the resinous trunk, when rubbed together

readily produced fire (Bennett 1833:62)

Bark was used for many items - shelters (huts), shields, baskets, fishing lines, bowls, net bags. Phillip described the Aborigines putting a piece of bark over their heads when they slept and also using it to keep the rain from their heads and shoulders. The bark used for canoes was described by Worgan as coming from a tree which 'bears leaves like a Fir' and 'somewhat resembles the Fir in its Growth' (1788:11, 17). Worgan is probably referring to Casuarina. Soft bark from the tea-tree (probably Melaleuca sp.) was used to lay new-born babies on and to carry them about in.

Hardwood was used in manufacturing spears: for either the whole spear which consisted of one piece with the end sharpened to a point, or for part of a multi-component spear - e.g. a segment of the shaft would be hardwood with the remainder being of the flowering stem of the grass tree, or just the barbs would be hardwood. Collins referred to fishing spears ('the fiz-gig') being made out of wattle (1788 [1975]:461). Spearthrowers and some shields were also made of solid wood. Collins added that the wood used for shields was hardened by fire.

The wooden 'digging sticks' used by the women to obtain yams and other root vegetables would also have been hardwood. Other wooden items included bowls, parring sticks, 'swords' and 'scimitars', clubs, boomerangs, and axe handles. (Attenbrow 1988 pp42-43).

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## **BONE AND SHELL TOOLS.**

Bone tools were used all over Australia, as spear tips, fish gorges, harpoon heads, pegs for spear throwers and as death pointers or deadly weapons.

Cutting equipment included axes with stone heads attached to a handle with resin and bound securely with sinews. Chisels and knives were manufactured by shaping and sharpening a selected stone and attaching it to a wooden handle. Heavy wedge shaped choppers and mallets were used to shape canoes and shields. Suitable shells such as oyster shells were also used for cutting implements.

The canoes, fish-gigs, swords, shields, spears, throwing sticks, clubs and hatchets are made by the men; the women made the fishing-lines, hooks and nets.

To make these wooden implements, shell tools were frequently employed. The shell at one end of the throwing stick is intended for sharpening the point of the lance and for various other uses. Shell tools were sometimes sharpened with the teeth and could be used while held in the hand.

## **LOCAL HUMAN TECHNOLOGY**

An eyewitness account from Swancott (1955) - referring to the collection of animals in the Tuggerah Lakes District.

**This district has ever been noted for its saleable timber, many of the trees attaining a height of 80 or 90 feet before putting forth a branch. I had previously heard of natives ascending these trees for the purpose of securing an opossum, honey, bird's nests and other articles of food, by means of cutting**

steps or notches in the trees as they ascended.

My desire now was to witness the performance. By the offer of 6d I had very little difficulty in obtaining a volunteer, a very old man. On standing up this man presented a remarkable figure; his legs and arms were long and sinewy, his feet large and well flattened out and his stomach, on account of the amount of kangaroo meat in camp, was round like a globe. The tree which he was about to ascend was estimated at 70 feet to the lowest branch, a blue gum with a smooth bark.

He at once fixed upon the proper side for ascending, then standing close up to the tree he cut one notch at about the height of his forehead; then without shifting his position he cut a second one on the level with his waist. Standing with his right foot in the cut, he made a third one at the height of his forehead, then standing with his left foot in the first cut he was able to make a fourth cut at his full height. As there is little or nothing to hold on by, except a small cut made by the climber, into which he can barely insert the tips of his fingers, it is necessary that the body be kept close to the tree. This is the only way which can be adopted, unless by the employment of a vine, which many blacks use by passing it round a tree like a rope and so holding on while cutting these notches.

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## 2. ART, ROCK ENGRAVINGS, CAVEPAINTINGS.

The antiquity of Aboriginal people is now documented by a number of world archeological finds found in the past few years.

Not only the first cremations in the world (26,000 years old), but the first ceramics (30,800), the earliest use of ochre for art (32,000), the first edge-ground axes (23,000), some of the earliest rock carving (at least 20,000 years old) and the earliest mastery of the boomerang (12,000 years old). (Dawn of Man - extract from *Aborigines of Hunter Region* )

### ENGRAVINGS

The engravings of the Sydney district and Hawkesbury River catchment are unique and world famous. Engravings are found in many other parts of Australia but they are usually quite different from those of the Sydney area. Also interesting is the relative abundance of engravings in this area. In Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park alone, there are a couple of hundred groups of engravings comprising in all a thousand or more figures. There are probably several thousand more in the rest of the Hawkesbury River catchment. It is likely, then that the engravings played an important role in the cultural life of the Aborigines here.

Middens are associated with tidal water, whilst engravings are associated predominantly with Hawkesbury Sandstone ridges. Since the sum total of ridge length in the Sydney and Gosford/Wyong district far exceeds the sum total of estuarine shore-line, the frequency of

engraving sites may be expected to exceed the number of middens.

The ages of the engravings are unknown. Some must be less than 200 years old, because they depict European objects such as ships. Others may be much older. Researchers are attempting to devise effective methods of dating the engravings, but for the moment we can only guess. There is some evidence that Hawkesbury Sandstone weathers relatively quickly and some engravings may therefore appear older than they really are.

The wide range of degrees of weathering seems to indicate a cultural tradition continuing through time, but lack of geological information about the properties of the sandstone prevents absolute dating of the faintest figures.

McCarthy (1937 : 406) has suggested that figures which have wide and deep smoothed grooves may be the oldest, probably having been re-rubbed by generations of artists.

There are several references to the carvings in the writings of the early colonists - mainly just observations of their presence around the settlement. George French Angus conducted the only anthropological research on the engravings.

We selected "Old Queen Gooseberry" (as she is generally styled by the colonists) to be our guide, promising her a reward of flour and tobacco if she would tell us what she knew about these carvings, and conduct us to all the rocks and headlands in the neighbourhood where like figures existed. At first the old woman objected, saying that such places were all *koradjee* ground, or "priests' ground," and that she must not visit them; but at length, becoming more communicative, she told us all she knew and all that she had heard her father say respecting them.

She likewise consented at last to guide us to several spots near the North head, where she said the carvings existed in great numbers; as also impressions of hands upon the sides of high rocks. (Angus 1847) 25

*Aboriginal Carvings, or Outline Tracings, upon Rocks and Headlands in the vicinity of Port Jackson.*

*FROM: Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand, George French Angus 1847 Vol. 11.*

These are to be found on North Head, on South Reef Promontory, on Middle Head, at Camp Cove, at Point Piper, at Mossman's Bay, and at Lane Cove on Mr. Kirk's property.

The subjects represented are the human figure, the hieleman, or shield; kangaroos, birds, flying squirrels, black swans, and various sorts of fish, some of them twenty-seven feet in length.

In Lane Cove, in Middle Harbour, at George's Head, and at Port Aiken, are carved heads; and at the latter place, parts of the human body cut in intaglio. At Port Aiken and in Middle Harbour they are found in caves, formed by projecting masses of rock, called by the natives "Giber Gunyah" stone or rock house.

Relative to these tracings, or carvings, upon the surface rocks of projecting

headlands, their uses or intention are now only legendary. The natives say, that "black fellow made them long ago".

They agree in stating that the tribes did not reside upon these spots, assigning as a reason - "Too much dabble-dabble walk about;" for they greatly fear meeting the "dabble" or some evil spirit in their rambles, and never leave their camp at night. They state that these places were all sacred to the priest, doctor, or conjurer - for the one is the other among these tribes. A man potent in spells and of great dread, is the Ko-ra-gee - Chiruga. The oldest person in the Sydney tribe, is the widow of the chief who ruled when the first fleet arrived, and whose name was "Bungaree;" thence dignified as "King Bungaree."

His queen has survived her glories, and she now totters about, very aged and decrepit, known as "Old Gooseberry;" but her memory is still good. In her statements she says she was no eye-witness- "Bel I see it, my father tell me" - so that all is a matter of legend relating to these carvings.

### Location of Engravings.

The soft nature of the Hawkesbury Sandstone provided an ideal medium for engraving. There are thousands of engraving sites within a radius of 100 kilometres of Port Jackson, depicting animals of all kinds, weapons, people, tracks and dreaming characters. Most of them are lifesize, but they range from small animal tracks to gigantic figures possibly of the culture hero, Daramulan, over ten metres in length. Kangaroo and whale outlines on a comparably large scale also occur.

McCarthy (1937 : 91) had observed that the outline engravings of the Sydney district do not appear to extend over the whole of the Hawkesbury sandstone terrain. They have not been recorded further north than the Putty and Wollombi districts, although cave art in the region extends further across the plateau, north to the Hunter and Goulburn River valleys and west toward the Great Dividing Range.

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Comparison of the engravings in the north-western section of their range with those in the Sydney-Hawkesbury coastal districts reveal some differences, both in subject matter and technique. Among the engravings described here, there are, as would be expected in an inland area, few fish or marine subjects, which are common on the coast, but many kangaroo and emu tracks, which are subjects which are uncommon in the coastal districts, although the animals themselves are well represented among the engravings there. The significance of this is not known.

The localities selected for these carvings are most varied in character, but they are generally bare of trees. This arises partly on account of the rocky ground where the large smooth surfaces most often occur, and partly perhaps to secure for the more important groups a commanding view of the surrounding country and of sites of other carvings, and the ocean or some sheet of water.

The tops of sea cliffs are favourite sites, and also the table-lands and the ridges of the hills along which the people travelled; sometimes the bald rocky prominence formed by the crest of a range

is selected, at others the smooth rock that frequently forms the floor of a "saddle," or a ledge towards the heads of a valley, or in the bed of a stream. They are also generally found near where dry caves and rock-shelters have been inhabited.

## Methodology

Although it is not absolutely sure how the engravings were made it is thought that the outline of the subject was first drawn perhaps with charcoal or scratched on the rock surface. Sometimes the outline of the shadow of a man, or that of dead animal was traced in this way.

Regarding the methods for the production of the outlines in the first instance, some of the figures are probably drawn by laying the object to be represented upon the rock, and marking it round. Another method was by drawing the outline in the case of a man or woman by means of the shadow.

The majority of the figures are, however, probably drawn by eye and exhibit a considerable amount of ability, being either true to nature, or to some adopted design of a deity or spirit.

Next, a number of punctures (pecks) was made around the outline with the sharp corner of a hard stone (e.g. ironstone) or perhaps with a stone gad and hammer. As yet no specialized implements used by these rock artists have been found. If you look carefully at some of the engravings you will see that some of the punctures overlap to form the outline. Other engravings, said to be the most sacred, show that the grooves have been rubbed smooth with an abrading stone.

Some engravings show evidence of regrooving. The largest galleries must have taken many hundreds of hours to produce. The purpose of these sites is not known, but at least some of the larger groups with sacred figures were used during male initiation ceremonies, and these sites were under the control of the *koradji* men of authority and power.

An outstanding feature of many of the kangaroo tracks is the engraving technique which as been used. Of the two hundred or so which occur, about sixty per cent have been engraved by hammering or pecking of the rock away to a fairly uniform overall depth, up to 2cm deep. In some the engraving has been accurately executed to produce a figure with regular, well defined edges. The technique has apparently been dictated by the artist's desire in these cases to reproduce an accurately shaped impression of the animal's track. 27

In some cases the tracks occur together with the animal, providing an interesting combination of techniques in one composition. Among the other figures, a single footprint has been engraved using a similar technique. These hammered figures, which have apparently not been described previously in the engravings of the Sydney-Hawkesbury district, suggest a limited regional development in technique.

The older figures appear to have had the deeper and broader grooves and are generally well smoothed, while those of a later date graduate from this to one formed only by slight punctures cut close together without any subsequent rubbing.

Engraved ships have also been recorded in sites throughout the area. This implies that engravings were still being executed at contact, at most 200 years ago, and that some drawings and engravings are contemporaneous. Mathews gives an account of stencilling being done during

the 1840's by Aborigines of Wollombi Brook (Mathew 1897: 144).

### **Content and Subject Matter.**

In Ku-ring-gai, Muogamarra and Dharug National Park, a number of large figures are depicted which are thought to represent Ancestral Heroes. They are quite dissimilar to one another and could represent different heroes. Daramulan and Baiami were thought to be the principle heroes of the Aborigines in the Sydney area. He was an ancestor of the tribes in this area.

**The Durkinung conceived of Daramulan and Baiami as being separate creatures (Mathews 1897a:3). During intertribal initiation ceremonies the Durkinung, as did some coastal tribes, sculptured Daramulan in relief on the ground and carved him on trees (Mathews 1897a:2-3; Howitt 1904:533,540, 1883:447; Berndt 1974:29). Baiami was also represented alongside of Daramulan in the Durkinung ceremonies (Mathews 1904:204).**

**Daramulan was thought to be married to Kurikuta (Berndt 1974:28) (other names Tippakalleum, Mailkin and Bimpoin - Backhouse 1843:556).**

**The Kurikuta belief thought to be widespread and she was also supposed to have carried 'charms' made of quartz and wrapped in possum skin. Women were not allowed to see the contents of these skins; one report tells of a European being killed by an Aboriginal for showing a woman the crystals (Backhouse 1843:556-7, quoted in Smith 1983 : 26-27).**

The grooves around these Daramulan figures are deep and smooth, suggesting they were used over long periods of time for ceremonials. There is no way as yet of determining an age for engravings. They could be anything from a couple of hundred to a couple of thousand years old.

Most of the motifs found among the Sydney engravings are figurative, and in outline form. Subjects include men and women, animals, birds and marine creatures familiar to the Aboriginal people; common implements; bird and animal tracks and human footprints; some simple geometric figures such as circles; and many irregular shapes whose subject is unidentifiable by uninformed Europeans. Recognisable portrayals of plants and invertebrates are very rare. The scale of most figures is between half and full life-size; there are very few miniatures (unlike most figurative art in other parts of Australia).

Although Koalas and Wombats have been identified in the art record, they are uncommon. The so-called Koalas in engravings often have long legs, buttocks and rounded heads, making them look more like stylised humans in profile than animals. There is a record of an unmistakable image of a Wombat on an engraved rock near Peats Ridge Electric Sub-station, and Fred McCarthy reports several others (McCarthy 1939). 28

Fish are frequently depicted in the rock art of the study area, both drawings and engravings but few are recognisable as to species (Macintosh 1950:152-83). There are exceptions, however, notably eels usually represented with distinctive gills and stingrays shown with ovoid bodies, long tapering tail and two eyes on a flat head. One of these representations is of unusual size, being an engraving 8 metres long on a high ridge in Dharug National Park, at least 20km. from the sea. Curiously, stingrays are said to have never been eaten by the Sydney Aboriginal people (Collins 1798:548), but it is unclear whether this was a temporary prohibition relating to seasonality, age-group or sex, or whether it was a general totemic taboo. Bowdler identified

stringray from the midden at Bass Point (Bowdler 1970), and Aborigines in other areas enjoy the flesh of stingray (Meehan 1977:499).

Macropods form the highest proportion of animal engravings in the open art sites of the study area. Macropods are also the animals most frequently drawn in the rock shelters. Bone counts from the excavations in Upper Mangrove Creek, the area furthest from the coast, are markedly macropod-dominated, constituting as much as 75-80 % of the total count (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980). There would therefore appear to be a close correlation between selectivity in hunting and selectivity in art in the areas furthest from the fish-dominated coastal area.

Although birds are depicted both in drawings and engravings, they are seldom recognisable as to species, with the exception of the Emu, and more rarely Lyre Birds and Brush Turkeys. Emus may be shown singly or in groups, sometimes with their young or with eggs.

Emu tracks are another motif frequently encountered in the art record, but more especially in engravings on exposed horizontal surfaces. They are often placed in a linear sequence just as the tracks would be seen in nature. The tracks may lead to or from a rock pool, may link one engraving with another, or may be associated with images of actual emus.

Snakes are not usually identifiable as to species in the art, but there are exceptions, such as the very clear black charcoal drawing of a Death Adder *Acanthopis antarcticus* with its stout body and distinctive thin rat-like tail. The snake, with tongue extended, is drawn in an elongated honeycombed niche in a large shelter at Cave Point in Ourimbah State Forest. Usually, the snakes are simply shown as serpentine lines which frequently follow natural graining in the rock surface. Sometimes, naturally occurring columnar shapes in the rock have been further modified with engraved lines to enhance the snake-like qualities.

One such example is on a flat rock surface in Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park south of the Hawkesbury River and there is another example on a vertical face of a rock near Mangrove Creek.

As well as providing highly prized food, Goannas feature prominently in the art. Sometimes they are portrayed in such a way that it is difficult to ascertain whether they are indeed depiction of reptiles, or whether they are humans with long tails. In both instances, the arms or forelimbs are shown extending upwards and outwards, with claws or fingers splayed apart. When the tail is long, the figures look predominantly reptilian; when the tail is short, they appear predominantly human, seated in a squatting position.

There also appears to be a correlation between the Dharruk/Dharawal boundary at Botany Bay and the way kangaroos are usually drawn. To the north of Botany Bay (Dharruk and Kuringgai people), kangaroos are almost always depicted in profile with two legs, one eye and one ear. To the south of Botany Bay (Dharawal), kangaroos have four legs, two eyes and two ears. Drawings of eels in rock shelters to the north of Botany Bay usually show the head pointed up, while south of it the head points down.

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## Interpretation.

There is no record of the "meaning" of any of the Sydney engravings, or the artists' motives for



making them, or the part that they played in the ceremonial life of these coastal groups. Comparisons with other areas of Australia suggest that the features of the motifs would have been dictated by local mythology, that ceremonies would probably have been performed at some sites, and that some groups of carvings would have been secret to the initiated men and forbidden to women and children. For example - two important culture heroes of south-east Australia were Baiami and Daramulan, who were associated with the sky. It seems quite reasonable that some of the large anthropomorphic figures found among the engravings might be portrayals of these beings. Elsewhere in N.S.W. , Baiami was represented on the initiation ground by a large human figure shaped of earth; carved figures in the Sydney area may have had a similar role. But in other parts of Australia, where local Aborigines are still able to explain the meanings of rock carvings and cave paintings, individual motifs usually have a very specific interpretation, and mythological prominence does not often correlate with artistic prominence. It is, therefore, not very useful to identify particular engraved figures in the Sydney area as characters in local mythology.

The majority of engravings are unlikely to have been initiation sites, and represent other aspects of local Aboriginal culture. Many life-sized human figures and family groups are found and they seem to reflect the different kinds of activities carried out by the group. Indeed there are some engravings which depict women wearing European dresses and others depicting sailing ships, confirming that the engravings continued to be produced after contact with Europeans.

However, McCarthy (1939), in his study of the large series of engravings on the plateau between the Hawkesbury River and Mangrove Creek, concluded that most of the sites there probably sacred ritual centres in which the figures were engraved and used by initiated men during ceremonial visits. Such a conclusion seems reasonable for several of the groups of engravings occur in conjunction with a large rock shelter containing drawings in very rugged and inhospitable country. The presence of large anthropomorphic figures and lines of large footprints in some groups, and the remains of a stone arrangement at one might reasonably be accepted as indicators of a ceremonial function. Women had their own private initiation ceremonies and places that were for women only.

McCarthy's view (1939) that figures in which the outline grooves have been smoothed by rubbing were probably the most important ones to the Aboriginal people, was supported by Elkin (1946).

McCarthy (1939 : 19,405) and Elkin (1946 : 126) have commented on the significance of human, animal and bird tracks as links between groups of engravings and as probable indicators of sacred tracks and ritual paths followed by ancestral beings and by the Aborigines. In several groups, engraved tracks and footprints serve as directional links between sets of engravings.

### **CAVE DRAWINGS- methodology.**

The cave drawings are made in several different ways and with different materials, and are much more durable than might at first be supposed, for the sandstone when dry is very porous, and readily absorbs any oily material to a depth of two centimetres or more.

Drawings in charcoal and red ochre are the most frequent. The outlines of the figures are sometimes drawn with a firm line of a brown tint. This probably is a fatty substance, and the

rest of the figure is filled in with charcoal or red ochre lines, and occasionally solid black or red colour.

Drawings with a white material are more rare. The white pigment is probably in most cases made from the ashes from camp fires in the caves, which in this district are generally composed of calcined shells and wood ashes. This mixed with fat would be readily absorbed into the stone. These have the peculiarity of being readily seen in a dim light.

The Aborigines made cave paintings, usually in one colour, of wallabies, fish, men reptiles and birds. These paintings were applied in black, white, red or yellow ochre or pigment. However, these are not as common as engravings in the Sydney area.

### **Content.**

The most lasting examples of Sydney Aboriginal art are to be found on the Hawkesbury Sandstone rock which surrounds the Cumberland Plain. In the rockshelters and overhangs which are so abundant, the Aborigines drew representations of the objects which were familiar to them. Animals, particularly wallabies, fish and eels, were frequently drawn in outline with charcoal, or sometimes painted with white clay or red ochre. Negative images or stencils of hands, boomerangs, hatchets and spears were produced by blowing pigment from the mouth.

### **HAND STENCILS.**

Stenciled markings of hands with white material is common and red and also black stencilling are also occasionally met with. In this method the palm of the hand is placed against the rock and the paint is then squirted from the mouth upon the rock, while the natural surface is covered by the object. Sometimes the paint appears to have been applied in a state of powder after the whole surface had received a coat of fatty matter. Captain King, an old Aboriginal person, many years ago informed Mr. Izard, of Brooklyn, Hawkesbury, that the hand-marks were made with a mixture of ashes and blood, and squirted from the mouth. In some cases where durability perhaps was not needed pipe-clay was used.

The most common form of painting was hand stencils. These were made by spraying the paint mixture from the mouth, whilst the hand was held flat against the wall of the cave. The paint was allowed to spray around the hand and between the fingers.

One view expressed in Aboriginal circles is that they were formed by the initiated person filling his mouth with ochre and then forcing it through the aperture left by the missing tooth. This would represent a symbolic act. But frequent stencils of the hands of children are found suggesting that this activity was not the province of only initiated men.

### **Concluding Comments**

It is essential that Aboriginal art sites be preserved, and this can only be done with the co-operation of everybody. Unfortunately, through ignorance, neglect and vandalism, many invaluable engravings have been mutilated or destroyed. They can never be replaced!

Aboriginal people today retain a emotional attachment to their land. This special relationship should be respected and all students must be taught to treat any sites they visit with respect.

should be respected and all students must be taught to treat any sites they visit with respect.

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An example of past ignorance can be found in the book: *Pioneers of the Hornsby Shire 1788-1906* (Hornsby Historical Society, Griffin Press 1978)

At the northern end of Quarter Sessions Road there are the remains of a camp site where there were a number of carvings. Many have been lost but some remain.

There was a carving among others of a large upright kangaroo all quarried away in the 1930s. Axe-grinding grooves that remained were bulldozed and destroyed in 1977. The carvings that remain show a wallaby sitting up, two dead wallabies, three fish, a koala and a noose. There is also in the vicinity a tree showing scars where bark has been cut from it. There was also a ritual stone arrangement. This too, has been bulldozed away.

Further south was an area which may have been another camp site where stone tools were made. Nearby an aboriginal skull was found last century, so part of the complex had been used for burial. Since that time the spot has been known as 'Blackfellow's Head', the name being carved in the large flat rock area near the quarry.

Another site in Thornleigh lies west of the station in what was to become the 'Slaughteryard Paddock'. Here it is likely grass seeds were gathered and wallabies speared as they came to feed on the grass. Farther east was another aboriginal campsite destroyed when the railway went through in 1884.

## **Organising an Excursion to an Aboriginal Site.**

When organising an excursion to a site the following points should be considered;

- \* How does the excursion fit into the class' program of work?
- \* Are Aboriginal people involved?
- \* Is the excursion to focus on traditional, transitional or contemporary aspects of Aboriginal history/culture?
- \* Who needs to be contacted for permission to go to the site?
- \* Are there any restrictions on entry to the site or on behaviour there?
- \* What strategies can be developed to sensitise students to the significance of the site?
- \* Have you and other supervisors visited the site and devised methods of class management for the particular site?
- \* What work can students carry out at the site?
- \* What follow-up will there be?

### **How does the excursion fit into your class program of work?**

Any excursion should be part of a continuing program of work. There are a number of reasons why this is particularly important for excursions involving Aboriginal Studies. For example, it is important that:

\*Students know exactly where they are going and what is expected of them during the excursion and follow-up activities.

A great number of Aboriginal sites have been vandalised because people visiting them have not appreciated or respected their significance.

### **Are Aboriginal people involved?**

It is imperative to consult and involve the Aboriginal community when planning an excursion to an Aboriginal Site. There may be implications for that particular community. For instance, recently the Mootwingee National Park has gained publicity because the local Aboriginal people have identified three sacred sites within the park that should be viewed by men only. Public access to these areas is therefore inappropriate.

If a site has been vandalised or weathered extensively the community may not want your class to visit the area. One way to reduce the risk of damage is to record the site on video-tape, preferably with an Aboriginal person narrating, and use it in the classroom.

It is imperative that you know the wishes of the local Aboriginal community and that you respect

those wishes. Contact the local or Regional Aboriginal Lands Council Office.

If the site is situated in an area where there are no Aboriginal people, the National Parks and Wildlife Service employs Aboriginal Sites Officers who will assist you with information and may even accompany the excursion.

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### **Is the excursion to focus on traditional, transitional or contemporary aspects of Aboriginal history or culture?**

When thinking of an excursion in Aboriginal Studies most teachers still tend to think in terms of excursions that highlight traditional aspects of Aboriginal life.

Even a visit to a site which at first appears purely traditional will allow the teacher to raise issues which are related to contact history or contemporary Aboriginal society. On such excursions, for example, you might raise issues like:

- \* changes to the vegetation since contact
- \* changes to the physical environment
- \* changes to the animal population
- \* damage to the actual site
- \* responsibility for such sites
- \* Land Rights

Sometimes it might be possible to use the one site to look at all three aspects of Aboriginal history. For example, at Mt. Pleasant near Bathurst there is a bora ring; the grave of Colonel Patterson, the commander of the local garrison in the late 1820s; and a huge blue metal quarry which is still operating. A teacher could use this site to raise issues covering the whole spectrum of Aboriginal history. There are probably many other sites with the same potential.

### **Who needs to be contacted for permission to go to the site?**

In the first instance, discover whether the local Aboriginal community is responsible for the site. If it appears that no community person or group has responsibility for the site then contact an Aboriginal Sites Officer at the National Parks and Wildlife Service or the Local or Regional Lands Council. These people should be able to clarify the position regarding the site and also give you further information about it. If the site is on private property, it may be necessary to seek permission from the owners to visit the site.

### **Are there any restrictions on entry to the site or on behaviour there?**

Many people will need to be sensitised to this issue. If visiting a sacred site it may be useful to compare it to similar sites in non-Aboriginal society such as churches, cathedrals or war memorials and suggest that the same standards of behaviour apply.

Teachers should also make students aware that Aboriginal sites are governed by law. A general rule should be to "take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints." Teachers should also be

wary of the "collector's syndrome."

Some sites may be particularly sacred to Aboriginal people. If visiting such sites it is important to take care so as to avoid giving offence.

In particular, find out:

- \* whether the site is sacred to men or women
- \* are there any restrictions on either men or women entering the site
- \* to whom do these apply?

If there are any restrictions then they should apply to all, not just to Aboriginal visitors to the site. Such restrictions may make certain sites completely inappropriate for excursions. They should therefore be determined very early in the planning of the excursion.

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### **What strategies can be developed to sensitise students to the significance of the site?**

If the visit to the site is part of a continuing program of work, then the class should have received some information about its significance well before the actual visit to the site.

A number of techniques can also be devised to sensitise the students before they enter the immediate vicinity of the site. If possible, the local community should be consulted about appropriate techniques. Some possible alternatives could be:

- \* use of paint or ochre to decorate faces or bodies
- \* prohibitions on breaking twigs or making other noises,
- \* prohibitions on stepping on human shadows or
- \* listening and concentrating exercises.

### **Have you and other supervisors visited the site and devised methods of class management for the particular site?**

Though this may be difficult to arrange it is always advisable. Much damage can be caused to Aboriginal sites by children milling about. This could be avoided if teachers were aware of where they could place groups and are definite in giving instructions. Teachers will be able to do this if they have visited the site previously. It is also suggested that there be no more than one class in anyone area at the one time.

### **What work can students carry out at the site?**

The most useful technique of class management anywhere is having something interesting and relevant for the students to do. This is particularly important when visiting Aboriginal sites. Children who are bored and have nothing to do are much more likely to cause damage to a site than children who are usefully occupied.

Therefore, it is important that, after visiting the site, the supervisors devise a number of activities for the students to carry out. These will of course vary depending on the site and the class but some which come readily to mind include:

- photographing
- sketching
- writing descriptions
- recording information

recording emotions  
marking prepared checklists  
answering prepared questionnaires.

### **What follow-up will there be?**

Whatever has been learnt on an excursion needs to be reinforced. It is important that there be some follow up in later lessons. Again, this follow up can take many forms. Some possibilities include:

- \* writing up a report of the excursion
- \* undertaking further research to discover more about the site. (The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in Canberra, NSW National Parks and Wildlife and Aboriginal Land Councils would be a useful sources of information about most sites.)
- \* inviting guest speakers associated with the location that was visited to talk to the class.
- \* developing a class resource such as a poster record of the visit to the site.

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## **PART C. LIFESTYLES**

### **1. FOOD.**

In the Hawkesbury Plateau the oldest scientifically dated Aboriginal kitchen midden is 12,000 years B.P. To put this in perspective with events in other parts of the world, agriculture and pottery in South East Asia date from 85,000 B.P. and the Egyptian Pyramids are dated at 4,500 B.P.

For Aboriginal people, the Sydney Coastal Area with its numerous bays, beaches, freshwater lagoons and streams provided an almost perfect environment. Food was in abundance and the climate pleasant. These were the same reasons that the area was settled by the European invaders nearly 200 years ago.

Much of our knowledge about the Aborigines of the Hawkesbury Plateau is hypothesis as the people were devastated and scattered within thirty years of the European invasion.

Traditional Aboriginal society was (and still is) a complex of interrelationships. Living religious and spiritual life was interwoven. All activities hinged on a deep understanding of nature. The men and women knew the haunts and habits of each and every animal. They could recognise the signs of their passing, their particular niches. They knew the seasons, their coming and their waning, and any variations in animal behaviour as a result of these changes. The women knew when to harvest the seeds, berries and the roots of plants, how to treat and prepare them for eating.

The Aboriginal people relied upon an equally intricate pattern of understanding nature. Every nook and cranny of every gully and hill within their territory was etched into their memories. Moreover, they also knew the religious stories behind the origins and behaviour of flora and fauna. For the Aborigines, their lives were intimately linked with the material and religious lores. (*Aborigines of the Hunter Region*)

## Fish and Shellfish.

When members of the First Fleet encountered the Aboriginal people on the coast of New South Wales, fish were noted to be their principal item of diet during the summer months. Vinnicombe lists 39 species of fish (including eels, stingrays and sharks) identified from middens on the NSW South and Central Coast, these included marine as well as estuarine sites (1980: Table 1). Snapper and black bream were the most common fish remains, followed by leatherjackets, wrasse, rock cod and groper. Vinnicombe points out that the species found in middens may not represent all the species eaten by Aborigines.

## Fishing Methods.

There appears to have been a marked division of fishing technology between the sexes: the men speared fish with long-handled multi-pronged fish gigs, while the women fished with hand lines and hooks (Lawrence 1969:195-6)

Fish are most successfully speared in shallow water and the men either stood on rocks or in the water, or in simple bark canoes. The speed and dexterity with which they were able to hurl the spears was frequently remarked upon, and sometimes, in order to see the fish more clearly, they would lie on the canoes with their heads partly under water (Collins 1798:556).

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The women with their hand lines either fished from rocks, or more usually, from the bark canoes which they manoeuvred with great dexterity. Young children accompanied the women while fishing. It was common practice to have a small fire burning in the centre of the canoe, laid on seaweed, sand or a tablet of clay, so that fish could be cooked and eaten straight from the water. The women usually sang while fishing, some of the ditties being designed to persuade the fish to take their baited hooks (Collins 1798:557, 601). In fact, fishing seems to have been a pleasant, social pastime as well as a serious quest for food, as illustrated by the description of a party of Aborigines fishing near The Entrance on Tuggerah Lake in the summer of 1834.

**They wait till the water is shallow, and then several enter, together swimming and wading, and pursue the fish with astonishing swiftness and dexterity; the spear usually made of the stem of the grass-tree, has three strong points, and is sometimes thrown from the hand alone, and sometimes from a sort of sling of a peculiar construction which gives it amazing force . . . ; they seem to enjoy the sport excessively, laughing and shouting all the time, in which the rest of them on shore seemed to participate, it was really a very animated scene. (Matthews in Harvard 1943)**

Sometimes night fishing was practised from canoes, using a flare to attract the quarry (Scott)

From the Aboriginal food-getting point of view there must have been a constant necessity for observation of and adaptation to, the changes in micro-environment as well as to the changing seasons. Changes in silt deposition bring changes in fish-feeding grounds. Changes in temperature dictate whether the fish will be in deep or shallow water. Changes in salinity dictate whether fish and crustaceans are likely to be closer to, or further away from, the fresh water or saline source. A sound knowledge of these varying ecological factors, and an understanding of the effect of one level on another, would have been a basic requirement for the



successful food provider. Moreover, the difference in the availability and distribution of fish in summer and in winter must have had a marked effect on the fishing strategies of the Aborigines.

Because of their predilection for spear fishing, the men in particular would have been affected. Shallow water is the first environment to be forsaken by the fish in winter, and spear fishing is most effective in shallow water ( the average length of a fishing spear is 2.5-3 metres). The women, who fished with lines, could have adapted their techniques to follow fish down to deeper water. Indeed, it was noted during the period of first contact, that at the end of winter when the weather was very dry, the men around Sydney were constantly employed in burning patches of grass in order to catch rats and other animals, while the women were still employed in fishing (Hunter 1793:469).

Fishing with hook and line, however, is apparently a relatively recent introduction to Aboriginal technology, the oldest known hooks in Australia being 700 years old (Lambert 1971). Prior to the introduction of line fishing therefore, the men as well as the women were likely to have sought sustenance from terrestrial rather than marine sources during the winter.

The importance of shellfish to coastal Aborigines can be seen by the large number of shell middens which still line the bays of Sydney Harbour and Broken Bay. These middens, which occur both in the open and in rockshelters, contain archaeological evidence pointing to the importance of fishing and its associated technology for at least the last 2,000 years.

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One of the early European settlers industries was the collecting of shells, secondary only to timber, for they were collected together with oyster shells, and sent to the Hawkesbury and to Sydney where limeburners converted this relatively pure form of calcium carbonate to lime by burning the shells over hot coals, above which a stream of air was directed. The residual powder was slaked with water and when mixed with sand was used as mortar in the building trade, in which it was an essential product for over fifty years. (Brennan n.d.)

The New South Wales coastline is rich both in species diversity and abundance of marine shellfish, and these provided a much sought after source of food for the coastal Aboriginal people. Inland, the freshwater mussel, *Velesunio* sp., does not appear to have been an important food item in the study area, although a small number of shells have been found in as many as 14 rock shelters in Upper Mangrove Creek (Attenbrow 1980).

Although shellfish were gathered and eaten by all, the task was predominantly the province of women and children (Bowdler 1976; Brayshaw 1967:58). A great variety of shells have been identified among the middens. Broadly speaking, they fall into categories of shell that are found on rocks and in sand along the open coastline, and shells that are found on rocks and in sand or mud in estuarine conditions. Some species, such as mussel and oyster, may be found in both environments.

The most commonly eaten shells of the coastal rock platforms are Oysters (*Saccostrea commercialis*); two species of Mussels (*Mytilus planulatus* and *Trichomya hirsutus*); Limpets (*Patellanax* and *Cellana Cartruts Dicathais orbita*); Turban shells (*Turbo undulata* and *Turbo*

torcata) and Triton shells (*Cabestans spengleri*), Pipis, (*Plebidonax deltoides*) which favour sand along high energy surf zones. Of the estuarine species, Oysters and Mussels are adapted to intertidal rocky areas, the former also growing on mangrove roots. Sydney Cockles (*Anadara trapezia*) and Whelks (*Pyrazus ebeninus*) favour mud flats, and also larger Mud Oysters (*Ostrea angasi*) and scallops.

The shells were often hafted into the end of spear-throwers. Shells fixed to the end of a short stick were also used as a chisel for pointing their spears and for separating the oysters from the rocks. Shell was also used to barb spears. Fish-hooks were also made from shells. (Attenbrow 1988 :58-59).

Cuttlefish, squid and octopus were also undoubtedly part of the Aboriginal menu, but evidence of their use is lacking both in the archaeological and the ethnographic record.

From archaeological as well as ethnographic evidence, it is clear that Aboriginal people like many other societies enjoyed crustaceans as an adjunct to the menu.

The largest crabs are usually free-swimming, whereas the smaller crabs are more sedentary and do not move far from their holes they dig in the sand or mud. Free-swimming crabs include blue swimmers and mud crabs, both highly prized as food, while soldier crabs are examples of the smaller edible species. Lobsters were also caught in small hoop nets.

## **MAMMALS.**

### **Larger Marsupials**

There is a contemporary account of Aborigines hunting near the junction of the Hawkesbury River with the MacDonald in the autumn of 1834 described by a party travelling down the river by boat.

**The dead, unbroken silence of the bush was suddenly broken by the sound of voices. On approaching more closely, a group of Aborigines was found to be hunting a small species of Wallaby, called by them Wallabunging. A number of them assemble and while some of them run along the tops and sides of the rocky heights shouting and screaming, drive down the poor little frightened inhabitants to the flats below where others attack them with their spears and dogs. (Mathews in Havard 1943:237)**

The use of burning grass to attract kangaroos to the new growth comes from Threlkeld, who recorded that the Aborigines from his mission at Lake Macquarie all went "to the mountains" for three weeks to engage in a "superstitious ceremony". The rituals included a kangaroo hunt for

three weeks to engage in a "superstitious ceremony". The rituals included a kangaroo hunt for which preparation was made by burning off a large part of the country (Threlkeld in Gunson 1974:206).

Kangaroos, wallabies and emu were sometimes caught by means of a large net, which was fixed in a semi-circle amongst the trees. The animals, frightened by the cries of the hunters and their dogs, were driven into the nets and quickly killed (Collins 1798:305; Fawcett 1898:153; Brayshaw 1966:60, Note 64).

Substantial snares for catching animals and birds were seen at the base of Richmond Hill on the Hawkesbury River in 1788. They were approximately 15 metres in length, and had converging sides tapering to a small wicker gate. The walls were constructed by rushes and weeds with earth thrown up to form an additional embankment. The hunted animals were driven into this foil and then presumably speared. Other traps were seen on the banks of lagoons, where deep holes covered with grass had been excavated, "so that bird or beast stepping over it would inevitably fall in and from its depth, be unable to escape" (Collins 1798:558).

### **The Smaller Marsupials.**

The bones of Long-nosed Rat Kangaroo (*Potorous tridactylus*), have been identified in a rock shelter formerly used by Aborigines in Upper Mangrove Creek (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980). Significantly the shelter is near the damp, lush creek bed at the juncture of three gullies.

The large Brush-tailed Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) is one of the most widely occurring mammals in Australia. It is an important fur-bearer, and was exploited to this end by Aborigines and early colonists alike (Collins 1798:526). As many as four million possum pelts were sold in the London and New York markets in 1906. Their populations are not adversely affected by human changes to the landscape, and may even have increased. They leave distinctive claw marks on the bark of the trees as they clamber up the trunks. This evidence was closely observed by the Aboriginal people, who then pursued the animals to their day-time hide-outs and nests, adeptly climbing the trees and chopping away the wood until the possum could be pulled out. The bark of many trees was cut into notches to provide footholds, or branches were placed at an angle against perpendicular trunks to facilitate the ascent. Smoke was also sometimes used to chase the animals out (Barrington 1795:66).

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Long-nosed Bandicoots (*Perameles nasuta*) and Short-nosed Bandicoots (*Isodon obesulus*) are ground dwelling animals with a wide distribution. The latter species have been identified among the bone debris from Aboriginal shelters in Upper Mangrove Creek.

Bones of the Tiger cat have been identified among Aboriginal food refuse at Mangrove Creek (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980) and also from Burrill Lake (Lampert 1971).

### **Koalas, Wombats & Echidnas.**

Despite the fact the Koalas and Wombats still are common animals within the study area, and are both easy prey, they do not appear to have been an important item of diet for the Aborigines. Ethnographic accounts of their use as food on coastal New South Wales are sparse. The analysis of bone material from excavations in upper Mangrove Creek has yielded but few Wombat identifications and no Koalas (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980)

The Echidna or Spiny Ant-eater (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) is another widely distributed and popular food animal, weighing up to 6.5 kilograms. Aborigines must occasionally have competed with Echidnas for food, for both enjoyed the high fat content provided by ants and ants' eggs (Collins 1798:558).

### **Whales.**

Perhaps one of the most significant events which could occur along the coast was the beaching of a whale. Bands of people would travel great distances to share in the feast of whalemeat, providing an opportunity for social contact as well as an abundant supply of food. The meat was usually cut from the dead animal with sharpened shell tools, commonly a valve of the Sydney cockle (*Anadara trapezia*). One whale came ashore at Manly in 1790 and people quickly gathered for the feast.

### **Seals.**

The distribution of the Australian Fur Seal used to extend along the coast of New South Wales to north of Newcastle, but seals were so excessively hunted for their fur that they became exterminated on the Central Coast by the middle of the last century. Breeding colonies are usually in rocks, inaccessible places and pupping takes place early in the summer. Seal bones have been identified among midden debris on the South and Central Coasts and were therefore certainly exploited by the Aborigines on occasions.

### **Dingoes.**

Dingoes, like humans, are not native to Australia, but the precise date of their arrival has not been established although it is known to be at least three thousand years ago (Mulvaney 1975:138). Bones of dingoes have been identified from the South Coast middens and from Upper Mangrove Creek.

### **Rats.**

There are a number of references to Bush Rats and Swamp rats being another source of meat which the Aborigines hunted and ate. With all shy nocturnal animals, the recognition of their spoor, and a sound knowledge of their habit and habitats, would have been a decisive factor in providing clues as to where they might be found during daylight food-collecting hours. Animals that follow set routes are also far more susceptible to being snared than those that wander freely. Fire however, was an important agent in flushing rats from cover. In the spring of 1790, after a dry winter period, the Aboriginal men were observed to spend much of their time burning off grass on the north shore opposite Sydney, in order to catch rats and other animals (Hunter 1793:469).

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### **Flying Foxes or Fruit Bats.**

The Flying Fox, a surprisingly large animal with wing spans in excess of 1.25 metres, was an important source of food. Although they eat wild figs and other fruits, they are principally blossom feeders and depend on native trees with differing flowering seasons for sustenance.

In February 1791, Hunter recorded huge numbers of Flying Foxes appearing near Parramatta. It was estimated that 20,000 were seen hanging on the branches of trees within the space of a mile. Hunter noted the fox-like appearance of the bats and remarked that they were very fat and

were reckoned excellent food by the Aborigines(Hunter 1793:507).

Threlkeld, on the other hand, who was working among Aborigines on Lake Macquarie immediately north of the study area, notes that the men had a great veneration for the bat. If a man were to kill one purposely, he would also be killed. Bats were apparently associated with powerful notions of respect or taboo - the men would not look at them directly, nor mention them by name, although the women were permitted to do so (Gunson 1974:206). It is not clear from this account whether the bats referred to are the smaller bats that dwell in caves and hollow trees, or the larger fruit bat or Flying Fox.

### **Birds.**

In the Gosford-Wyong region where there is an abundance of lagoons, shallow tidal waterways and shallow low-lying swampy areas, there are great numbers of gulls, coromorants, plovers, terns, black swans, pelicans and ducks of many species.

**Black Swans** nest along the western margins of Tuggerah Lake and there are descriptions of swan's nests dotted over the whole of the shallow beaches, each containing several eggs. Swans lay from four to six eggs sometimes as many as eight and the eggs were much enjoyed by the Aboriginal people, even if they were close to hatching (Mann in Swancott 1955, Pt.4:68). Laying season is in the spring, and after moulting during the laying season, swans and ducks are flightless until new feathers have grown. They are, therefore, easy prey at this period.

**Penguins** are another bird that is easy prey when on land, since they too are flightless. They nest and rear their young in colonies in secluded rocky areas and return to their burrows at regular hours to roost at night. The bones of Fairy Penguins were identified among midden refuse at three of the South Coast sites (Lampert 1966, 1971; Bowdler 1970), so were certainly included in the Aboriginal diet in the past.

Of the forest birds, nomadic **Pigeons** and **Lorikeets**, **Parrots** and **Cockatoos** may occur in great numbers when feeding on seasonal blossoms, fruits and seeds of selected trees. With a good aim, the birds may be knocked down with boomerangs or throwing sticks. Carion eaters, on the other hand, occur in pairs rather than in flocks, and the Aborigines used to set bait for the common crow (*Corvus* sp) which they then caught and ate with great relish (Collins 1798:548). Crows have also been identified among the bones from Currarong shelter on the South Coast (Lampert 1971).

**Brush Turkeys** (*Alectura lathami*) and **Lyre Birds** (*Menura* sp) are ground feeders of substantial size, and are usually found in pairs where there is plenty of leaf litter to shelter the insects on which they feed. Both birds are included in the topics represented by the Aboriginal artists of the area.

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**The Emu** is far and away the largest of the Australian birds, attaining the weight of a human when full grown. The flesh was much sought after by Aborigines and the eggs are likewise large and good eating.

Certain birds were held in awe by some Aboriginal groups, and were never killed or eaten . Indeed, not even their names were allowed to be referred to directly. Threlkeld quotes one such

Indeed, not even their names were allowed to be referred to directly. Threlkeld quotes one such example from Lake Macquarie where the women, but apparently not the men, paid such respect to a bird like a woodpecker (Gunson 1974:206).

## **Reptiles**

### **Snakes.**

There are many species of snakes in the coastal bush of New South Wales, but despite the fact that many of them are venomous, they were often killed and eaten. During the winter they are in a state of torpor and remain hidden and inactive, but when the sun is hot enough they may come out to bask (Cogger 1975). The non-venomous Diamond Python (*Monelix spilotes*) and venomous front-fanged snakes, (Elapidae and Boidae), are among the species identified from the Mangrove Creek excavations (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980), and snakes as well as possums, bandicoots and goannas are listed as part of the festive fare enjoyed when Aborigines from two areas meet for a dance near Tuggerah Lake (Swancott 1955:69).

### **Skinks & Lizards.**

The larger skinks (*Egernia*) and Dragon Lizards (*Agamidae*) are widely distributed and were a popular item of diet. They are mostly ground dwelling insect eaters and are diurnal in behaviour. Mussel Shelter, one of the sites excavated in Mangrove Creek, had proportionately more reptile bones in it than the other deposits, a finding in keeping with its proximity to dry rocky slopes high up the valley (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980). Since skinks and lizards are dependent on sun for maintaining their body temperature, they are markedly less active in the cold, and are therefore more easily caught before they have time to warm up after a cold night (Bustard 1970:32).

### **Goannas.**

The Lace Monitor or Goanna (*Varanus varius*) may grow up to two metres long and provides a good quality meat in greater quantity than the far smaller lizard. Goannas predate on insects, other reptiles, nestling birds, small mammals and carrion. Although predominantly ground foragers, they usually take to a tree when disturbed. During cold weather, they become torpid when they are easily caught (Cogger 1975:241).

### **Insects.**

Popular additives to the diet of the coastal Aborigines were the larvae of various Homoptera, commonly known as witchetty grubs, which emerge from the ground during maximum plant growth in summer. Cicada larvae would also have been available in summer, though it is not certain that they too were eaten. Hunter notes that the Aborigines ate a grub found in a small gum tree and Collins mentions that they tasted just like sweet marrow when digested of their antennae and legs (Hunter 1793:516; Collins 1798:557).

As well as providing a source of food, animals also provided a range of materials which were used to make implements, and personal ornaments: bone, teeth, skins, fur, feathers, claws and talons. Bone was used for the points or barbs in spears and fishing.

In her diary describing a trip to the Gosford/Wong area in 1833, Mrs Felton Mathews referred to the women wrapping themselves in 'blankets, or cloaks of sewed opossum skins'. Animal

to the women wrapping themselves in 'blankets, or cloaks of sewed opossum skins'. Animal hair/fur and sinew were used in the manufacture of many items. Phillip mentions 'the fur of some animal' being used to make lines and nets.

Items such as feathers, bones, claws talons and teeth were often used as ornaments - in particular, gummed into hair. Collins added that children's hair was decorated 'after the custom of the country' as soon as the hair ' could be taken hold'. (Attenbrow 1988: 49-50).

### **Plant Resources.**

The Aborigines of coastal New South Wales relied heavily on plants for food even though there was normally an abundance of animal protein available.

The European settlers made reference to several plant foods eaten by the Aboriginal people but unfortunately specific identifications are seldom possible from these reports. However, three plants common to the Sydney-Hawkesbury area are so distinctive as to be clearly recognised from their descriptions: Burrawang (*Macrozamia communis*), Giant Lily or Gynea Lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*) and Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea* sp).

Bradley describes Burrawangs as " a kind of nut growing bunches somewhat like a pine top" and notes that the food is poisonous without being properly prepared.

In Broken Bay, Bradley saw Aborigines feeding preparations from this nut to their children and tasted some himself, which he thought good (Bradley 1786:92). Hunter, too, describes a nut which had violent effects on those who ate it unprepared. After taking the kernel out of the hard outer shell, the Aborigines soaked the nut in water for 7 or 8 days, changing the water every day. The final preparation was roasted in embers and Hunter pronounced it almost as good as chestnuts (Hunter 1793:479).

According to oral tradition, the Aborigines of the Broken Bay area soaked the Burrawang seeds by suspending them in string bags in flowing water but it is also possible that rock pools were used.

A plant which grows prolifically on the ridge tops around Somersby and Kulnura, and which is abundant throughout the Spencer and Upper Mangrove Creek area but absent on the Bouddi peninsula, is the imposing Gynea Gigantic Lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*). This striking plant with sword-like leaves and robust flowering stalk up to 4 metres high, bears a cluster of large red flowers at the top. In the heart of each bloom is an accumulation of sweet translucent gluey nectar, much sought after by bees and humans alike. When the flowering stems are young and swollen, they too are filled with sweet sap and were roasted in the embers, as also the roots, which were made into a sort of cake and eaten cold (Cribb 1974:120). The long straight stem of this plant was used, on occasion, for spear shafts (Scott in Brayshaw 1966:84).

### **Xanthorrhoea arborea or grass tree .**

This species of an easily recognised genus, so frequently seen growing with *Angophora costata* on the rocky hillsides of Sydney, epitomises 'the bush'. The resin impregnated trunk varies from scarcely apparent to 2m tall, flourishing a great tuft of long grass-like leaves up to 1.5m long. The cream flowers are massed in complex cylindrical spike lofted on a pole to 2m. Birds and insects, particularly butterflies, flock to its heavy flow of rich nectar in spring. The fruit is a

shining brown capsule.

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The young centre shoots of this decorative plant are edible, the long straight flower stalk was used for spear-shafts and the small white flowers, tightly clustered around the terminal metre of the spike, are rich in delicious nectar. Licking one of these long flower heads must fulfil every child's dream of the 'biggest lolly in the world'.

Although the task of collecting vegetable foods usually fell to the women and children (Brayshaw 1966:48) Hunter comments on a party of Aboriginal men collecting wild fruits when they were in season (Hunter 1793:487).

Several species of wild fruits and berries ripen from November through to late summer, and many of these trees and shrubs have a wide distribution. Common to all the areas surveyed are Lillipilli (*Acmena smithii*), Dumplings (*Billardiera scandens*), Native Cherry (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*), Blueberry Ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*), Geebung (*Persoonia* sp). Also common to all the areas in Gristle Fern (*Blechnum cartilagineum*), Wombat berries (*Euctrephus latifolius*) and Geranium sp. all of which have starch-rich root systems. Other widely distributed climbers such as the wild yam (*Dioscorea transversa*) and False Sarsparilla (*Hardenbergia violacea*), also have edible underground tubers.

Plants such as Wild Figs (*Ficus*), the Giant Lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*) and Burrawang (*Macrozamia communis*), are local.

For the central coast north of Broken Bay, Bennett notes that:

**"Wild honey was especially plentiful in the area. A local speciality was the sweet drink called Bael or Bool obtained by soaking Banksia flowers in water.....Yams, Fern Roots, the growing heart of the Cabbage Tree Palm, the Quandong, the Bumbel (native orange) and various edible berries contributed variety to the flesh and fish diet." (1969:5)**

The use of fern roots as food is often referred to in the early literature (Lawrence 1969:198), and although this is sometimes identified with the Bracken Fern (*Pteridium exulatum*), it is more likely to be Bungwall Fern (*Blechnum indicum*) and Gristle Fern (*Cyathea* sp.) which were also used as food. Hunter describes a temporary bark hut in the wooded hills inland from Sydney near which were found the bones of a kangaroo and "a piece of root resembling that of a fern tree" which showed evidence of recent chewing (Hunter 1793:65).

When travelling along the Hawkesbury River, Hunter remarks:

**The natives here, appear to live chiefly on the roots which they dig from the ground; for these low banks appear to have been ploughed up, as if a vast herd of swine had been living on them. We put on shore, and examined the places which had been dug, and found the wild yam in considerable quantities, but in general very small, not larger than a Walnut; they appear to be in the greatest plenty on the banks of the river; a little way back they are scarce. (Hunter 1793:150)**



The roots of reeds and rushes *Phragmites* and *Typha* both water-fringe plants, were another good source of vegetable food, and the rhizomes of various species of orchids were also used. Then there were edible fungi such as Blackfellows Bread (*Polyporus mylittae*). Bradley says of the Sydney Aboriginal people:

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**I have several times met with small parties of them seeking roots and spongy substances which grow on some of the trees. The fern and some other roots they prepare by moistening and beating between two stones a considerable time before they use it. (Bradley 1786-92 [1969]:134)**

From the archaeological viewpoint, the reference to the use of stone pounders is of interest. Another specific reference to stones being used in the preparation of vegetable food can be found in Hunter:

**This season, in which fish is so scarce [July 1788],.. they [the Aborigines] were frequently found gathering a kind of root in the woods, which they broiled in the fire, then beat between two stones until it was quite soft; this they chew until they have extracted all the nutritive part, and afterwards throw it away. This root appears to be a species of the orchid (Hunter 1788:80)**

An important factor to be borne in mind when assessing vegetable food potential in any given area is the effect of fire, which in the Sydney-Hawkesbury area plays an even more significant role than seasonality and rainfall.

### **Use of Fire.**

The Aborigines were seldom seen without fire. They carried it about with them - i.e. as a burning piece of wood held in the hand or else in the bottom of their canoes.

Tench recorded a method of making fire which he saw the Aborigines use:

**They take a reed, and shave one side of the surface flat; in this they make a small incision to reach the pith, and introducing a stick, purposely blunted at the end, into it, turn it round between the hands (as chocolate is milled), as swiftly as possible, until flame be produced.**

Tench said it was not only laborious, but the effect tedious, and this was the reason they always, if possible, carried it with them. (Attenbrow 1988 :110-111).

There were frequent mentions of smoke and fire in the First Fleet journals, including fires directly observed being lit by Aborigines. There are also some more general comments on burning practices:

**They (the Aborigines) also, when in considerable numbers, set the country on fire for several miles extent; this, we have generally understood, is for the purpose of disturbing such animals as may be within the reach of the conflagration; and thereby they have a opportunity of killing many. We have also had much reason to believe, that those fires were intended to clear that part of**

the country through which they have frequent occasion to travel, of the brush or underwood, from which they, being naked, suffer very great inconvenience.

The fires, which we very frequently saw, particularly in the summertime, account also for an appearance that two thirds of the trees in the woods were very much scorched with fire, some were burnt quite black up to the top we sometimes, upon our arrival here conjectured that it proceeded from lighting, but upon looking farther, it appeared too general amongst the woods to be occasioned by such an accident. (*Hunter1793:43*).

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The weather now being very dry, the natives were employed in burning the grass on the north shore opposite Sydney, in order to catch rats and other animals, whilst the women were employed in fishing: this is their constant practice in dry weather.

*Governor Phillip's Journal, Sept 1790.p312*

Comments on Aboriginal burning were also made by George Worgan, surgeon of the *Sirius*, describing a trip to North Head on 28th May, 1788:

.....returning we made a circuit over to part of the hill where we observed a great fire. We found it to be burning of healthy brushwood, which we supposed the natives had set on fire for some purpose, but what we could not conjecture. We observed likewise fires of this nature in several other parts of the country.

Whether the burning was all deliberate, or included some accidental escapes on these windy days from the lighted sticks they carried about with them, the burning was certainly frequent.

The evidence for Aboriginal maintenance of grasslands by burning in many parts of the country is very strong (Gould 1971, Hallam 1975, Flood 1980, Clark 1981). On the basis of the above ethnographic evidence burning practices in the Sydney region and on the North Shore would have been frequent. These fires would have been very mild, serving several purposes: keeping the ridges clear of brush for ease of travel, encouraging new growth for larger mammals and thereby also locating the game, making the hunting of smaller animals (lizards, possums, rodents ) easier, keeping down shrub invasion in areas of bracken fern, whose roots were an important source of carbohydrate, and promotion of vigorous regeneration of shrub food resources such as geebung (*Persoonia* sp.) and native currents (*Leptomaria acida* and *Leucopogon* sp.)

According to Ross (1976), the Kuringai's movements were north-south through their coastal territory and this would coincide with the north-south alignment of the topography and the shale ridges carrying the tall forest with grass understorey easily kept open for travel.

The advent of European settlement soon began to alter the vegetation pattern of tall forest with little undergrowth. Major Mitchell certainly attributed this to a changed fire regime and, in 1848, commented that "the omission of the annual periodical burning by natives, of grass and young saplings, has already produced in the open forest lands nearest to Sydney, thick forests of young trees, where formerly a man might gallop without impediment and see miles before him."

It is possible that, by opening up the forest, logging could also have caused these changes but whatever the case of the changes in the vegetation structure, a new fire regime did develop- less frequent but hotter and wilder bushfires fed by the fuel of the shrub understorey. In 1850 a great fire swept the North Shore from Hornsby to St Leonards, and area described as being then dense forests and thick undergrowth prior to the fire. (McLaughlin 1985)

An account of a visit to Tuggerah with some companions  
(Account by J.F. Mann 1842 SWANCOTT 1955).

J.F. Mann was an early settler of Gosford.

"Tuggerah" in Aboriginal language means "cold, bleak, exposed," and is most applicable to this expanse of water, the shores being low and sandy, and the whole surface exposed to the winds of heaven. It is separated from the ocean by low, narrow sand ridges, through which a channel affords an occasional outlet, but this outlet is most frequently silted up. 60

The lake abounded with fish of all sorts, but what attracted my attention in the first instance were the black swans; their nests built in the water of sticks were dotted over the whole of the shallow beaches of the lake. Every nest contained several eggs, and we each collected as many as we could conveniently carry. The several points of land which extended into the lake were black with ducks, and water fowl; they were in thousands, and covered acres of ground. The outlines of the sand flats were indicated by a countless number of pelicans.

Well laden with spoil, we arrived at the blackfellows' camp shortly before dusk, and were agreeably surprised to find that by the forethought of Long Dick, a separate encampment had been prepared for us. It was built of sheets of bark, tent shape, and lined with dry grass a log to sit on, and wood for a fire, also provided. Dick now took possession of us and relieved Emu of his responsibility. The site of the camp was prettily situated on the bank of Wyong Creek, which hereabouts joined the Lake.

A bark canoe, paddled by a very old, grey headed man, now silently approached and drew up close to our camp. The canoe was so laden with fish of all sorts as to be but a few inches above water. The old man, by name "Jew Fish," at once commenced to throw the fish on shore. There was no rush or scramble for them; in fact no one seemed to pay the slightest attention. Dick, however, selected some of the best for our use and undertook to act as cook. Collecting some grass, he placed it upon the charcoal fire, and paced the fish at once on the top of it; by this means the scales came off in a much more complete manner than by scraping with a knife. At the same time the body of the fish swelled, so that when cut open the whole of this inside came away at once, and was ready for the grill. Some few opossums, bandicoots, snakes and iguanas, and other items had been secured by these people during the day; so with the addition of fish and the donation of all bad eggs we had found in the swan nests, there was bountiful supply of food.

"Close up picanniny sit down" was the comment when a bad egg required boiling for ten minutes. When broken into a frying pan and fried it had much the appearance of a pancake. The taste was by no means disagreeable.

It was evident that some of the young fellows were special wits and were listened to attentively. Mimicry they excelled in and it was just as well that none of the individuals personated were present to recognise their peculiarities in the hands of the blacks.

On the following morning while getting our guns ready for a shooting excursion, we were unexpectedly told to sit down. "Bime-by, you hear 'im plenty noise, plenty kangaroos".

A battue by the blacks had already been fixed upon and most of the women and elderly men had noiselessly started off early to take up positions in the surrounding ranges, leaving 12 or more young men behind.

Shouts were soon heard as those who had gone up approached the camp, driving the kangaroos before them. The poor animals came hopping along to the flat at the foot of the hill, to be killed by the spears and boomerangs of the blacks who were concealed behind trees and bushes.

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The accuracy with which the blacks threw their spears and boomerangs was something marvellous. All took effect. One kangaroo while passing within a few yards of me was struck by a boomerang and killed. Some of the animals were skinned and cut into joints; others were placed bodily on the fire. We secured some tails for our own use.

The battue and cookery was in anticipation of the arrival of a deputation from the Wollombi tribe; so with the addition of the ducks, pigeons and the fish provided by Mr. Jewfish, the camp was well supplied with food. Next day, Long Dick, Emu and others were unable to move. "Too busy" was the excuse. They had eaten too much the night before and pointed to their distended stomachs. Dick, when asked "How many possums did you eat?" replied, "Murry load," and "how many kangaroos?" "Two or three."

About twelve men of the Wollombi tribe arrived and joined in with the feasting and a corroboree was held that night. We were not privileged to witness the proceedings.

#### FOODS EATEN BY ABORIGINES OF COASTAL N.S.W.

##### PLANTS.

N.B. Some of these plants are poisonous without considerable preparation to remove the toxins. Do not eat any of them unless you know them to be harmless.

Scientific name	Common name	Part eaten
Cyathea australis	Rough tree fern	fruit
Doryanthes exelsa	Gynea lily	root
Pteridium esculentum	bracken fern	rhizome
Carpobrotus aequilateras	pig face	fruit and leaves

Astroloma humifusum  
 Leucopogon parviflorus  
 Monotoca elliptica  
 Eupomatia laurina  
 Geranium spp  
 Burchardia umbellata  
 Acacia spp  
 Alocasia macrorrhizos  
 Dioscorea transversa  
 Ficus spp.  
 Acmena smithii  
 Acmena brachyandra  
 Oxalis corniculata  
 Livistona australis  
 Billardiera scandens  
 Podocarpus elatus  
 Persoonia lanceolata  
 Leptomeria acida  
 Cissus hypoglauca  
 Cissus antarctica  
 Xanthorrhoea resinosa

native cranberry fruit  
 native currant fruit  
 pigeon berry fruit  
 native guava fruit  
 tuber  
 milkmaids roots  
 wattle seeds  
 cunjevoi lily shoots  
 yam roots  
 fig fruit  
 lillipilli fruit  
 native myrtle fruit  
 clover sorrel leaves and roots  
 cabbage tree palm terminal bud  
 apple berry fruit  
 plum pine fruit  
 geebung fruit  
 native currant fruit  
 native grape fruit  
 native grape fruit  
 grass tree leaf bases

young flowers  
 and shoots

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Macrozamia communis  
 Solanum laciniatum  
 Honey was also much relished.

burrawang seeds  
 kangaroo apple seeds

**BIRDS.**

**Scientific name**

Phalacrocora spp.  
 Puffinus tenuirostris  
 Puffinus gavia  
 Puffinus carneipes  
 Eudyptula minor  
 Diomedea cauta  
 Pachyptila turtur  
 Morus bassanus serrator  
 Diomedea  
 Cygnus atratus  
 Anas spp.

**Common name**

cormorants  
 mutton bird  
 fluttering shearwater  
 fleshy footed shearwater  
 little penguin  
 white capped albatross  
 fairy prion  
 Australian gannet  
 Molly hawk  
 black swan  
 ducks

**SHELLFISH.**

**Scientific name**

Anadara trapezia  
 Pyrazus ebeninus  
 Crassostrea commercialis  
 Ostrea angasi

**Common name**

Sydney cockel  
 Hercules club whelk  
 rock oyster  
 mud oyster

Cabestana spengleri	Spengler's triton
Dicathais orbita	cartrut
Haliotis ruber	abalone
Mytilus planulatus	edible mussel
Trichomya hirsuta	hairy mussel
Plebidonax deltoides	pipi
Chlamys spp.	scallop
Ninella torquata	turban
Subnivalia undulata	lightning turban
Austrocochlea obtusa	striped periwinkle
*Pyura praeputialis	cunjevoi
*not a shellfish but an invertebrate of the sea.	
<b>CRUSTACEA</b>	
Reptantia	Lobsters, crayfish, crabs

Reference: *Aborigines of N.S.W.* published by The National Parks and Wildlife Service.

## 2. HOUSING

Dwellings were constructed from sheets of bark removed from growing trees which were then flattened and supported on timber frames. The more temporary "hunting huts" which were usually seen inland were "A" frame structures made from pieces of bark about 3.35 metres long and from 1.22 - 1.83 metres broad, bent in the middle and set up at an acute angle. The windward end was sometimes blocked off for added protection (Phillip 1789: 103; Collins 1798: 555). Some of these huts were so small as to shelter one occupant only, others were large enough for a family.

On the coast, the huts were sometimes built on semi-circular design "in the form of an oven with an entrance" and were large enough to hold 6 or 8 people (Collins 1798: 555). The entrances were so low as to necessitate stooping or crawling, and the fires were usually built at the mouth of the hut rather than inside or outside. There were seldom more than 8 or 9 huts grouped together (Bradley 1969: 140; Barrington 1795: 20). One particularly well-constructed dwelling at Broken Bay was described by Surgeon White.

In the hut were two very well made nets, good quality fishing lines, some spears, a stone hatchet of superior quality and two wooden vessels for carrying water (White 1962: 157).

In addition to constructed huts, of which there is now little or no surface evidence in the

archaeological record, the Aborigines of the Sydney Basin also made frequent use of rock shelters, a point emphasised in many of the early journals.

When walking between Port Jackson and Broken Bay in August 1788, White noted:

**All along the shore we met the natives who seem to have no fixed residence or abode, but, indiscriminately, wherever they meet with a hut, or, what is more common, a convenient excavation, or hole in the rocks, take possession of it for a time. (White 1962: 157, Bradley 1969: 140).**

This type of housing did not require any trees to be cut down, so the environment was not changed.

Barrington and Collins recorded the following:

**They appear to live chiefly in the caves and hollow of the rocks, which nature has supplied them with, the rocks about the shore being mostly shelving and overhanging so as to afford a tolerable retreat.....They make a fire at the outer part of these dismal holes which throws a heat in .....**  
**(Barrington 1795: 20).**

**Beside .....bark huts, they made use of excavations in the rock; and as the situations of these were various, they could always choose them out of the reach of wind and rain. (Collins 1798: 555).**

Collins goes on to mention that at the entrances to the rock shelters, a luxuriance of soil was noticed, and on turning up the ground, the colonists found it rich in shells and other organic remains. These deposits proved a valuable resource, many loads of shells being burnt into lime, while the residue was wheeled into the gardens and used as manure (Collins 1798: 555).

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Hunter described how the sandstone rocks had weathered into cavities suitable for habitation. He noted the wide distribution of such shelters both along the coast and inland, and commented that some were large enough to lodge forty or fifty people. Unlike Barrington, who described the rock shelters as "dismal holes," Hunter remarked that in cases of necessity, the colonists used the shelters and thought themselves not badly off (Hunter 1788: 60).

Hunter corroborates Collin's observation on fires:

**.....in order to make their apartment as comfortable as possible, they commonly make a good fire in it before they lie down to rest; by which means, the rock all round them is so heated as to retain its warmth like an oven for a considerable time; and upon a little grass, which is previously pulled and dried, they lie down and huddle together. (Hunter 1788: 59).**

Since the rock shelters used by the Aborigines are still in existence today, and since the floors of the shelters are usually protected from the accumulation of vegetation to which sites in the open bush are subjected, rock shelters are now the most prevalent evidence of Aboriginal usage of the area.

### **3. CLOTHING AND ADORNMENTS.**

The Aboriginal people who camped, hunted and foraged in this area usually wore a long cord of opossum hair wound many times round their waists. From this belt hung three or four tassels or strips of opossum skin, usually one in front, one behind and one on each hip.

Their heads are covered with thick black hair, some curled, some not, and almost all have a fillet of net-work round the forehead; perforated, and they are fond of inserting a small white bone from the leg of the kangaroo (sic), which projects two or three inches on each side of the nose; the hair is ornamented in various ways, some twist a feather from some bird, others fasten a long tail to their back hair, to hang down the back in a queue, but it is somewhat strange these ornaments are all peculiar to the men, the women are almost always seen wrapped in blankets, or cloaks of sewed opossum skins, without any attempt at adorning their ..... features (Harvard 1943: 186-187) Fish oil was sometimes rubbed into the skin as a guard against the cold, as well as against mosquitoes and biting flies (Collins 1798: 551).

Both sexes were also ornamented with raised scars on the breast, arms and back. The incisions were made with pieces of broken shell, and the wounds were prevented from healing in order to intensify the scar tissue. In some instances, the scars were in the form of animal tracks. Body paint was also frequently used, especially in association with particular ceremonies. The patterns applied were various, but specific descriptions include large white circles round each eye or broad bands below the eye. Cheeks and breasts were daubed, wavy lines applied along arms and legs, and the ribs were marked out in white. The right to wear specific decorations was inherited, and the designs were often linked to a particular clan emblem or totem.

Cloaks of possum skins sewn together with sinews were worn in winter. Yarn was spun and tassels were made from fur and feathers. These were used as personal adornment. Ornaments like nautilus shells were cut into an oval shape and hung around the neck. Knotted bags were used to carry oysters.

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In the early days of the European settlement the Aborigines were very fond of ornamenting themselves with any European clothing they could get hold of old shirts, trousers, handkerchiefs etc. However, it is suggested by some historians that they wore European clothing only in order to win favour on occasions when they sought personal contact with the colonists. The Aborigines saw European clothing as a means and not as end.

## **PART D. THE PEOPLE**

### **1. Kinship & Marriage.**

Early European observers were of the false opinion that the Aboriginal people had no social, political and military organization to speak of. "Tribe" is merely a convenient term to describe



a number of "clans" or "bands" (anthropologists' terms) who had much in common in their social organisation, language and customs, and who regarded each other as closer relatives than more distant clans or bands. A large tribe had around 1500 members; a clan varied in size from less than fifty to over two hundred.

It is widely accepted that the total Aboriginal population in 1788 was between 250,000 to 1,000,000 made up of about 600 tribes, each with its own language or distinct dialect.

The hordes or family sub-divisions of the clan were those who habitually occupied and collected food with a given area, but horde had right to the land of the entire clan, and also to the land of the clans with whom they inter-married, some of whom may have belonged to different language groups. Wives therefore not infrequently spoke different languages or different dialects from their husbands, while the children spoke both. The languages of adjacent clans were thus mutually understood.

There was therefore, a wide network of kinship ties and obligations which entitled land-owning clans to economic and social links which extended far beyond the core territory in which each horde habitually moved. It also meant that resources occurring infrequently were accessible to all. These extended rights and ties were promoted or maintained by regular gatherings or corroborees at which songs, dances and stories were exchanged and wives were sought. There was also inter-clan and sometimes inter-tribal participation in specific rituals such as food increase rites and initiation ceremonies.

Major decision-making and the administration of tribal law was nevertheless in the hands of male elders, who reached their position of respect and authority through progressive and hierarchical initiation into tribal lore. Older females also had their own esteemed position in society especially with the younger girls and wives.

In the Darginung organisation, the two sections in Moety 1 were called Bya and Kubbi while in Moety 2 they were Kembo and Ippai. Children always took the moiety of the mother but never her section; they took the other section in her moiety. That is, the children of a Bya woman would be Kubbi, the children of a Kubbi woman would be Bya and likewise for Moety 2. Potential husbands and wives had to be from different moieties but also had to belong to suitable sections. A Bya man could only marry a Kumbo woman, for example.

The regulations for marriage can be set out like this:

Moiety 1	Moiety 2
Bya	Kumbo
Kubbi	Ippai

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- Bya men married Kumbo women. Children were Ippai.
- Kubbi men married Ippai women. Children were Kumbo.
- Ippai men married Kubbi women. Children were Bya.
- Kumbo men married Bya women. Children were Kubbi.

A person's totem was also inherited from his or her mother, regardless of the totem of the father. We can define a totem as a natural object or species with which a person or group had a special relationship. People who belonged to Moety 1 had totems such as Bee, Emu, Bandicoot, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Stingray. In Moety 2 the totems included Grey Kangaroo, Diamond Python, Wombat, Black Snake and Wallaby. So, for instance, when a Bya Bee man married a

Kumbo Diamond Python woman the offspring would be Ippai Diamond Python.

There were exceptions to the above rules but these were also subject to restrictions. It was possible for two people belonging to the same section to marry as long as they belonged to appropriate totems. For example, a Kubbi Bandicoot could marry a Kubbi Stingray. Because men and women of the same totem were regarded as brothers and sisters they could not marry each other. (Turbet 1988 pp 75-76)

## **2. Law & Religion**

At the heart of Aboriginal religion is the idea of the Dreamtime. This idea is kept alive in the stories of the ancestral spirits, stories which varied among the groups but which were usually rich in detail. These stories are often referred to as myths, though to the Aboriginal people they are not myths but truths which they believe in and which form the basis of their social living. The sky-heroes laid down the patterns of behaviour which had to be followed - failure to observe these and failure to carry out rituals correctly could result in lack of rain or food, and punishment for the wrong - doer.

**An important spiritual contact for the Aborigines lay in the plants & animals. Each person born into a clan was immediately identified with a particular animal. This was his totem. He became totally familiar with its haunts and habits. He dare not kill his totem, or eat it, and its appearance was an omen**  
(An artistic key to a culture - Bob Beale Newcastle Herald 5.11.82)

Throughout all these social arrangement there is a very strong thread of religious feeling, so strong in fact that it is impossible to understand the Aboriginal manner of living without being aware of it. This can be seen again in the relationship of the Aborigines to the land. Individuals did not own land in the European sense - the land they occupied was passed down from previous generations and entrusted to them. It has been said that the land seemed to own them, rather than the reverse, since it was the spiritual home of their ancestors, who included the ancestral beings who had wandered the land in the Dreamtime. Therefore the Aboriginal people regard this land as entrusted to their care, rather than owned for a practical purpose. The clans (groups of people related by descent from a common ancestor) would jealously guard their spirit homes, including the sacred sites of their clan and sacred rituals, totems, and songs. They regarded the land in a religious as well as a practical way, as a home of the ancestral spirits as well as a source of food and materials. It is clear that the Aboriginal people were and are very religious and their life was strongly shaped by their beliefs.

The anthropologist F.D. McCarthy has summarized this well:

**To the initiated man his religion explains the origin of life itself and of his tribal customs, the source of this supply of food and raw materials, and the mysterious world beyond the comprehension of his scientific or general knowledge. To him it is religion of great sanctity, inspiring in its mythology**

and songs, and impressive in its often colourful ceremonies.....It becomes a most important part of the adult life demanding a great deal of time and energy in the enactment of ritual, a tremendous concentration of intelligence in the memorization of the myths, song-cycles, ritual procedure and art designs, and an absolute faith in the efficacy of the beliefs and ceremonial activities.

## **STORIES OF THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES**

**By R.H. Mathews**

**Some examples of Stories recorded by R.H. Matthews.**

### **Arrival of the Thurrawal Tribe in Australia.**

In the remote past all the animals that are now in Australia lived in another land beyond the sea. They were at that time human creatures, and resolved to leave that country in a canoe, and come to the hunting grounds in which they are at present. The whale was much larger than any of the rest, and had a canoe of great dimensions; but he would not lend it to any of his fellows, who had small canoes, which were unfit for use far from the land. The other people, therefore, watched, in the hope that an opportunity might present itself of the whale leaving his boat, so that they could get it, and start away on their journey; but he always kept a strict guard over it.

The most intimate friend of the whale was the starfish, and he conspired with the other people to take the attention of the whale away from his canoe, and so give them a chance to steal it, and start away across the ocean. So, one day, the starfish said to the whale, "You have a great many lice in your head; let me catch them and kill them for you." The whale, who had been very much pestered with the parasites, readily agreed to his friend's kind offer, and tied up his canoe alongside a rock, on which they then went and sat down. The starfish immediately gave the signal to some of his co-conspirators, who soon assembled in readiness to go quietly into the canoe as soon as the whale's attention was taken off it.

The starfish then commenced his work of removing the vermin from the whale's head, which he held in his lap, while the other people all got quickly into the canoe and rowed off. Every now and again the whale would say, "Is my canoe all right?" The starfish, who had provided himself with a piece of bark to have ready by his side, answered, "Yes, this is it which I am tapping with my hand," at the same time hitting the bark, which gave the same sound as the bark of the canoe. He then resumed his occupation, scratching vigorously about the whale's ears, so that he would not hear the splashing of the oars in the water. The cleaning of the whale's head and the assurances as to safety of the canoe went on with much garrulity on the part of the starfish, until the people had rowed off a considerable distance from the shore, and were nearly out of sight. Then the patience of the whale becoming exhausted, he insisted upon having a look at his canoe to make quite sure that everything was right.

When he discovered that it was gone, and saw all the people rowing away in it as fast as they could go, he became very angry, and vented his fury upon the starfish, whom he beat unmercifully, and tore him almost to pieces. Jumping into the water, the whale then swam away after his canoe, and the starfish, mutilated as he was, rolled off the rock on which they had been sitting into the water, and lay on the sand at the bottom till he recovered.

It was this terrible attack of the whale which gave the starfish his present ragged and torn appearance; and his forced seclusion on the sand under the water gave him the habit of keeping near the bottom always afterwards.

The whale pursued the fugitives, and in his fury spouted the water into the air through a wound in the head received during this fight with the starfish, a practice which he has retained ever since. When the people in the canoe saw him coming after them, the weaker ones were very much afraid, and said, "He is gaining upon us, and will surely overtake us, and drown us every one." But the native bear, who was in charge of the oars, said, "Look at my strong arm. I am able to pull the canoe fast enough to make good our escape!" and he demonstrated his prowess by making additional efforts to move more rapidly through the water.

This voyage lasted several days and nights, until, at length, land was sighted on ahead, and a straight line was made for it. On getting alongside the shore, all the people landed from the canoe, sat down to rest themselves. But the native companion, who has always been a great fellow for dancing and jumping about, danced upon the bottom of the canoe until he made a hole in it with his feet, after which he himself got out of it, and shoved it a little way from the shore, where it settled down in the water, and became the small island now known as Gan-man-gang, near the entrance of Lake Illawarra into the ocean. When the whale arrived shortly afterwards and saw his canoe sunk close to the shore, he turned back along the coast, where he and his descendants have remained ever since.

### **3. CEREMONIES, MUSIC AND DANCE**

#### **INITIATION.**

One of the most important components of traditional lifestyle was the initiation. It was one of the ceremonial and spiritual foundations on which Aboriginal society has been built.

Aboriginal boys were initiated into manhood through a complete series of ceremonies which were witnessed and described in some detail by early settlers, as well as by anthropologists of the late nineteenth century (Collins 1798: 564-581; Howitt 1883). The rituals promoted growth in social and economic status as well as a gradual revelation of the sacred stories and objects of the tribe. A young man's initiation was held over a period of years. Tuition in hunting, fishing and self-control, as well as in tribal responsibilities, culminated with an education in tribal lore and tradition (Brayshaw 1969: 117).

Initiation ceremonies varied with different Aboriginal groups. In the Sydney area, initiation ceremonies included dances in which dogs and kangaroos were imitated, and an effigy of a kangaroo was displayed. At times, the older men who instructed the initiates repaired to a secluded place in the bush to prepare their various disguises. At the culmination of a series of symbolic rites, the boys were mounted on the shoulders of seated elders, and an upper front tooth was knocked out using a special piece of bone as a punch and a stone as a mallet. Once the operation was completed, the initiate was presented with a hair girdle as mark of manhood, and a headband into which was stuck slips of foliage from the grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea* sp.). Only the white base of the foliage was used, which protruded from the head in spikes like a radiating coronet (Collins 1789: 579, 580).

The initiation ceremonies described below represent those practised by the Aboriginal tribes spread over the coastal district of New South Wales, from Newcastle south to about Sydney. One of the principal dialects was the Darkingung, which was spoken by the tribes occupying the country on the southern side of the Hunter River, from Jerry's Plains downward towards Maitland, extending southerly to Wollombi Brook, Putty Creek, and including the Macdonald, Colo, and Hawkesbury Rivers.

The locality selected for the gathering is some place where there is a good camping ground, with plenty of water for camp use, and also where game is numerous enough to provide food for the people. Messengers were despatched to the head men of all the adjacent groups who were expected to participate in the ceremonies. Each of these messengers carried the usual emblems of his mission, namely, a bullroarer, a belt, several "tails". The messenger remained with the group to which he had been sent until they were ready to accompany him to the appointed meeting place.

When all the people who are expected have arrived, the old men meet adjacent to the camp, and fix the day on which the business of the meeting the initiation ceremonies shall commence. Shortly after nightfall, they proceed to the sacred ground and light pieces of dry bark at the fire burning there, and then come marching back towards the camp shouting and waving their firebrands in the air. They enter the public ring and dance round, the women beating time for them, after which they throw away the firesticks and call out the names of water-holes, etc, and then go away to their camps.

Early next morning the novices are brought into the ring and placed sitting down on the bank, their mothers and the other women being outside. One of the head men then enters the ring and sticks a spear into the ground near one side. The boys' heads are now bent down, and the women are covered with rugs, bushes or grass, some of the old men being deputed to watch them.

As soon as this is done two men sound bullroarers (minyawaok) in close proximity, whilst the other men beat their weapons together, and the man who has been appointed guardian to the novice, usually his brother-in-law, now catches him by the arm and leads him away.

Shortly after the boys get out of sight the covering is removed from the women by the old men who have charge of them, and they are set at liberty. All hands then gather up their baggage and remove the camp to another locality, perhaps some miles distant, which was determined by the head men at the same time that they fixed the day for taking the boys away. About a hundred yard from the main encampment - on the side towards that part of the hunting grounds into which the novices have been taken the old women, and mothers of the boys, erect a gunyah, called the watyoor, composed of forked saplings, rails and boughs. It is built in a straight line, and is open on the side facing the direction from which the novices will approach it. It is large enough to hold all the novices and their

guardians, and has leaves strewn thickly on the floor for them to lie on. Near one end of this long gunyah all loose rubbish is cleared off the surface of the ground to make it fit for dancing on. Every morning the mothers of the novices, accompanied by the old women of all the tribes present, repair to the watyoor, and light one or more fires in the cleared space, around which they sit and sing songs which have reference to the novices.

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When all the formalities have been carried out, the men and boys start away to the part of the district in which it has been decided to remain whilst carrying out the ceremonies in the bush. The time spent at camps in the bush generally occupies about a fortnight, being regulated by the weather other considerations. About the middle of this period, preparations are made for the extraction of one of the novices' upper incisor teeth.

On the day which has been appointed for the return of the novices their mothers proceed to the watyoor, being painted with coloured clays. They wear headbands round their hair, in which are fastened various ornaments, such as the feet of the porcupine (*Echidna*), the teeth of animals, and the tail of the native dog hanging down behind. They are accompanied as usual by the other old women of the tribes present, and on this occasion several old men go with them to make the necessary arrangements for the reception of the novices.

The novices march right on into the watyoor, and each boy lies down on the leaves opposite his mother's yam-stick, their guardian's remaining in front of them. The mother's now go back to the main camp.

Next morning the guardians and novices leave the watyoor and go into the bush for some days, gaining their living by hunting. In the course of a few days the novices are again brought back to a place near the women's camp, painted and wearing their full dress. Pieces of bark or rugs are spread upon the ground, on top of which each mother lays some food for her son.

When everything is ready the guardians bring the novices marching up and on their arrival each boy picks up one of the dilly bags. At the conclusion of their repast the novices are taken into a camp provided for them near that of the single men, and the mothers return to their own quarters. From this time onward the boys will not be permitted to stop at their mother's camp but must remain with the men.

The ceremonies being now at an end, all the groups get ready for their departure to their respective countries, and in the course of a few days most of them are on their way homewards. (Mathews 1897).

Girls and women had their own education system and ceremonies which little has been written about as most of the written records of Aboriginal life were recorded by European men.

As soon as a girl was born she was promised by her family, to be the wife of one of the men, in the right clan. While a baby she had the little finger of her left hand amputated. A strong spider's web was wrapped tightly around the last joint, stopping blood circulation, and in a

short time, by drawing the cord tighter, the top of the finger was removed. This was supposed to help them become better at fishing but there was some religious significance to this custom.

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## **DEATH & BURIAL**

Burial ceremonies differed but there was always a high degree of mourning for people of prominence or "brave warriors". Women, particularly were emotional mourners. Their cries of grief would last for days because for them death was a time of sincere mourning. (*Aborigines of the Hunter Region*)

Mourning for the dead also involved smearing with body with pipe-clay, and grief was demonstrated by wailing and gashing the head so that blood mingled with the white clay.

The early Europeans colonists were of the impression that the methods by which bodies of the dead were disposed of varied according to age - the young were buried in the ground, while those who had passed middle age were burned (Collins 1798: 601; Barrington 1795:27).

Bodies were incinerated overnight, then the ashes and bones were raked into a tumulus which was marked with two logs of wood. Men were buried with their hunting and fishing weapons, and also with whatever clothing they owned. The name of the deceased was not permitted to be mentioned, and certain food prohibitions had to be respected (Collins 1798:601; Barrington 1795: 27).

W.J. Enright (1937) describes a Darkingung burial. (*Mankind* June 1937 Vol 2 No 4)  
The body was trussed up with knees near the head, and carried on a sheet of bark from the place of death. Arriving at the place of burial the body was placed on the ground and the earth was piled on it in the form of a mound with the aid of the boomerangs.

## **MUSIC, SONGS & DANCE.**

Music and dance are central to traditional Aboriginal life. They form the core of religious ritual and provide much of the communities aesthetic and recreational activity.

Aborigines performed music and dance on many different occasions. Public entertainments, often involving several local groups, were usually performed near the general living area of a camp and were attended by everyone. Music and dance played an important part in initiation and death rites, which were often performed in secluded areas. Songs and dances of initiation were often known and performed only by the initiated.

Non-sacred songs covered subjects such as fighting, hunting and fishing, relationships between men and women, the weather and dreams. Sometimes they were based on contemporary events.

For example, at a Botany Bay corroboree in 1790 a man sang about Bennelong's hut, how it had been built for him by Governor Phillip and about other events at the settlement as well. (Turbett 1988 :127)

Relatively little of the poetry and songs have survived and even with some of the songs we have there is an uncertainty about correct translation, since it was in this field of expression that Aborigines used most of their idiom.

Groups of Aborigines made up their own songs and poems, collectively or individually, rarely long but always much to the point. They would laud brave warriors, ridicule persons deserving scorn and would comment on a current happening. These were the pieces favoured for the nightly camp fire. If dancing could be woven into song, then there would be a new dance.

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A number of songs were recorded north of Sydney and as with songs from other parts of the country they are short and repetitive. Threlkeld gives a translation of the following Awaba song:

Ah, is it so!  
Where is the man?  
Man away!  
Where is the man?  
Ah, is it so!  
etc.

Eliza Dunlop of Wollombi translated several songs, two of which are given below. The first song is about the first sighting of horsemen.

What is there? See what it is?  
It eats the grass. It is tied by a rope.  
What is beside it? A spirit.  
Is it a stump we see through the maze?  
It rests on the grass. See it walks.  
It's like the fork of a tree.  
It's a spirit.  
Go away cold, Why tarry so long?  
Return into the blue sky.  
Get behind the clouds, the spirits will let you in.  
Why remain, cold? Let the bright sun shine forth.  
Go away, cold and remain with the spirits above.  
Go away.

Song makers were highly esteemed individuals. Threlkeld tells us about old Wullati who, when visiting the Lake Macquarie mission, would often sing and dance in time with his clapping sticks



well into the night.

A certain female singer was also enthusiastically welcomed by the Awaba whenever she visited. Once she started singing, men, women and children would throw off their European clothes and join her in dance and song. Threlkeld says that song men and song women composed impromptu and if a song proved to be popular, messengers would be dispatched to teach it to other groups. Some Port Stephens people once arrived at Lake Maquarie to pass on a new song that had been revealed by a dying man.

Corroborees were not the only occasions at which songs were sung, in fact, one observer states that the Port Jackson Aborigines sung all day long. Women sang while fishing and kept time with a song while paddling. On sighting a school of dolphins, people chanted a short, repetitive song which changed words whenever the animals dived. A similar chant was recited when a pelican was seen overhead. There were also songs, usually performed by women, for the sick and dying. (Turbett 1988 : 128)

There are some sacred songs and dances known only to the initiated persons. The sacred or ritual language was used, according to the degree or level of the initiated person. Sometimes these gatherings were related to only the mysteries of initiation; on other occasions new songs and dances would be taught to the initiands to prepare them for the next step in their initiation. 73

Various types of ceremony were intended to manage conflicts. There were ceremonies for resolving disputes between individuals, conducting diplomacy between groups, making peace and preparing for war. Again there are regional variations, though music and dance were almost always central to them. Some songs and dances are performed on more than one kind of occasion or in more than one kind of ceremony.

## **DANCE.**

In his account of the first four years of settlement at Sydney Cove, Captain John Hunter describes an Aboriginal "crib-berie", calling it 'a dance'. This is probably the origin of the word 'corroboree.' What especially impressed Hunter was a leg quiver, a movement that later observers also saw as a central feature of Aboriginal dance.

He wrote:

**"One of the most striking of the principal beauties of their dancing was that of placing their feet very wide apart, and, by an extraordinary exertion of the muscles of the thighs and legs, moving the knees in a trembling and very surprising manner, such as none of us could imitate."**  
(Hunter 1793).

The word 'corroboree' is often used for the total complex of dance, song, the body decorations of the performers, the objects they used, the sounds of musical instruments, the body movements, shouts and calls of the dancers, the involvement of non-singers and non-dancers, the spatial arrangements of all participants, the skilful use of lighting and other theatrical techniques. These elements, when taken together, can have a powerful effect on those privileged to witness them. Divorced from each other, they, lose much of their impact.

However R.M. and C.H. Berndt in *The World of the First Australians* warns that:

'Corroboree' has passed into English as a word for all Aboriginal ceremonies and rituals and entertainments involving singing and dancing, and social effervescence generally. Howitt (1904: 413) says it is probably derived from "some tribal dialect in the early settled districts of New South Wales, and has been carried by the settlers all over Australia." Haygarth (1850: 103), among others, spells it as 'corrobory,' and seems to imply that it is a word used in the Sydney district. However, it is too vague a term, lumping sacred and non-sacred together in an undifferentiated way, without adding anything distinctive to compensate for using it.

Many early descriptions of dancing and dramatic performances (ceremonies and rituals) were marred by misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and prejudices deriving from the writers' sex and cultural background, at that particular time. We read statements like these:

.... at other times the songs will consist of the vilest obscenity.

I have seen dances which were the most disgusting displays of obscene gesture possible to be imagined, and although I stood in the dark alone, and nobody knew that I was there, I felt ashamed to look upon such abominations. The dances of the women are very immodest and lewd.... (Taplin, in Woods, 1879: 37-8.)

Or, Some corroborees are lewd in the extreme, and it is generally understood that at such times sexual restrictions are shamefully, or from the native point of view shamelessly, relaxed. (Mathews :1897)

What does this tell us about European perception of Aboriginal morality?

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Dances were usually held at night. In the early days of British settlement, Bennelong Point was a common venue for corroborees (the present building on the site is therefore appropriately located!) and the proceedings of one of these were recorded by a European observer. The eyewitness describes how, prior to the dancing, the young men were carefully painted by the young women and notes the great concern shown by the men with regard to their appearance. Likewise, Threlkeld mentions that husbands and wives decorated each other at Awaba dances.

White clay was the principal pigment at corroborees. Saliva was used to moisten a part of the skin where the white markings were to be particularly outstanding. The patterns painted were probably similar from head to foot, cross-bars on the back and chest and white circles around the eyes were all observed at Sydney. The face was always painted. For these secular occasions the main object of body painting was probably ornamentation.

At the Bennelong Point corroboree, music was provided by a man who sang and hit together two hardwood clapping sticks, one of which was held against his chest like a violin. At his feet sat a group of boys and girls who also sang. They kept time by hitting with their open hands the hollow formed between their crossed thighs and stomachs.

During the evening a number of dances were performed and there was plenty of variety. Sometimes the dancers were all men, while in other performances women were the only participants. In some dances both sexes joined in. One dance began with only a few boys but ended up with movements observed where pairs dancing back to back, dancers holding green branches and a group sitting down and then all rising together. At Sydney corroborees the dancers themselves sometimes sang. (Turbett 1988 : 128-129)

The whole complex of songs, stories and dances provides the meaning of a ceremonial

performance. Even in Aboriginal society, only a few people share the deep knowledge and experience of religion and ritual that enables them to appreciate the songs fully. Others, nevertheless, can appreciate the theatrical brilliance and subtleties hidden beneath the performers' exuberance and skill.

Mr R.J. Wild, a resident of Manly for 50 years recorded that in the late 1870's he saw Aboriginal people doing "corroboree" on vacant land next to St. Mathews Church at the Corso Manly. (Swancott n.d.)

## **INSTRUMENTS.**

Aboriginal musical instruments are essentially rhythmic in purpose and consist mainly of percussion. Even the well-known didjeridu, a wooden trumpet indigenous to the northern third of the continent, produces two pitches and in some traditions only one. Its main purpose is to produce rhythmic accompaniment and a drone rather than melody.

A variety of percussion instruments are employed across Australia. Paired boomerangs, one held in each hand, are clapped and tapped together in various rhythms and are used in many places to accompany singing. Clapsticks (also known as songsticks) are widespread. Men and women clap their hands, slap their laps and buttocks and stamp their feet. Dancers in all areas commonly have boughs of eucalyptus foilage tied to their legs to produce an abrasive resting sound in rhythm with the dance.

In constructing their sound instruments Aboriginal people used the resources at hand. If the appropriate materials were not readily available they were adept at contriving some workable substitutes.

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There are examples of highly successful ways in which traditional Aboriginal dance and music forms have been incorporated into modern performance ideas, eg:

Gondwanaland  
Goanna Band  
Aboriginal and Islander Dance Theatre Company at Glebe.  
Coloured Stone

For resources on Aboriginal music contact:

Black Books  
13 Mansfield St,  
Glebe.  
Phone. (02) 660 0120.

## **Musical Instruments**

**Look** at the map of Aboriginal Sound Instruments.

**Draw** as many of these instruments as you can and describe what you think they are made of.

**Think** about these questions:

1. Along the East coast tropical rainforest area, what is the most common kind of musical instrument?

2. Where are the hollow-log instruments made?

How does the vegetation of the country affect other musical instruments which are made there?

3. Name all the different kinds of musical instruments which are made on the coastal areas of the continent.

4. From what part of the continent do skin drums come?

5. Some places have many different kinds of musical instruments. What does this tell you about the climate and vegetation?

Listen to a tape of Aboriginal music and try to distinguish as many kinds of musical instruments as you can.

Tapes can be purchased from:

Blackbooks

13 Mansfield Street,

Glebe.

(02) 660 0120

Source: TAFE Aboriginal Education Unit, Aboriginal Society and Culture Resource Book.

## SECTION TWO INVASION AND RESISTANCE

- A. The Sydney Region
- B. Historical Events
- C. Culture contact/conflict - Case Studies
- D. Aboriginal Identities

## SECTION THREE: REBELLION, REFORM AND REASSERTION.

### POLITICAL AND SOCIAL INJUSTICES

- A. The Protection Period 1883 -1940
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## SECTION FOUR THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

- A. Aboriginal Statistics
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## SECTION FIVE

- Appendices
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## **PART A : THE SYDNEY REGION - 1788.**

The Sydney region we speak of here can perhaps be better visualised by looking at the map in section 1.

This region, and the rest of Australia, has always been the homeland of Aborigines from the time of creation. However, the Aboriginal history of, in this case, the Sydney region, has been all but obliterated by the European invasion. Only a vague picture remains of, for example, the people's names and which "countries" they belonged to. Since only a few details of the Aboriginal history of the region exist, and a slightly more detailed European account of Aboriginal Australia for this time, it has become necessary for people studying this time of Aboriginal history to try and put together a "jigsaw" puzzle, but without all the pieces being available! Moreover, this "reconstructed" picture, of who was living where and what they might have called themselves, changes often according to who is trying to put the "jigsaw" puzzle together.

This situation will probably continue into the future as different people, Aboriginal and non Aboriginal, look again with "different" eyes at the available information, the incomplete parts of the puzzle. With this understanding in mind one such "reconstruction" of the Aboriginal people's occupation of the Sydney region is as follows.

### **B. HISTORICAL EVENTS**

#### **Governor Phillip's View.**

To try to understand the events that occurred after the arrival of the First Fleet, it is vital to review Governor Phillip's orders from the British Government and then to see how they were followed.

**You are to endeavour by every possible means to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them. And if any of our subjects shall wantonly destroy them, or give them any unnecessary interruption in the exercise of their several occupations, it is our will and pleasure that you do cause such offenders to be brought to punishment according to the degree of the offence.**

**You will endeavour to procure an account of the numbers inhabiting the neighbourhood of the intended settlement, and to report your opinion to our secretaries of state in what manner our intercourse with the people may be turned to the advantage of the colony. 15 May 1788. Governor Phillip's first dispatch. (*Historical Records of New South Wales*, Government Printer, 1897. Vol. 1 part 2: 128, 129,131.)**

Four months after his arrival in Botany Bay, Phillip sent his first dispatch to the Home Secretary, Lord Sydney. In it he described the inhabitants.

With respect to the natives, it was my determination from my first landing that nothing less than the most absolute necessity should ever make me fire upon them, and tho' persevering in this resolution has at times been rather difficult, I have hitherto been so fortunate that it never has been necessary.

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Mons. La Perouse, while at Botany Bay, was not so fortunate. He was obliged to fire on them, in consequence of which, with the bad behaviour of some of the transports; boats and some convicts, the natives have lately avoided us, but proper measures are taken to regain their confidence.

When I first landed in Botany Bay the natives appeared on the beach, and were easily persuaded to receive what was offered them and tho' they came armed, very readily returned the confidence I placed in them by going to them alone and unarmed, most of them laying down their spears when desired; and while the ships remained in Botany Bay no dispute happened between our people and the natives. They were all naked, but seemed fond of ornaments, putting the beads or red baize that were given them round their heads or necks. Their arms and canoes being described in "Captain Cook's Voyage," I do not trouble your Lordship with any description of them.

When I first went in the boats to Port Jackson the natives appeared armed near the place at which we landed, and were very vociferous, but, like the others, easily persuaded to accept what was offered them, and I persuaded one man, who appeared to be the chief or master of the family, to go with me to that part of the beach where the people were boiling their meat.

When he came near the marines, who were drawn up near the place, and saw that by proceeding he should be separated from his companions, who remained with several officers at some distance, he stopped, and with great firmness seemed by words and acting to threaten if they offered to take any advantage of this situation. He then went on with me to examine what was boiling in the pot, and expressed his admiration in a manner that made me believe he intended to profit from what he saw, and which I made him understand he might very easily by the help of some oyster-shells. I believe they know no other way of dressing their food but by broiling, and they are seldom seen without a fire, or piece of wood on fire, which they carry with them from place to place, and in their canoes, so that I apprehend they find some difficulty in procuring fire by any other means with which they are acquainted. The boats, in passing near a point of land in the harbour. were seen by a number of men, and twenty of them waded into the water unarmed, received what was offered them, and examined the boats with a curiosity that gave me a much higher opinion of them than I had formed from the behaviour of those seen in Captain Cook's voyage, and their confidence and manly behaviour made me give the name of Manly Cove to this place. The same people afterwards joined us where we dined; they were all armed with lances, two with shields and swords - the latter made of wood, the gripe small, and I thought less formidable than a good stick. As their curiosity made them very troublesome when we were preparing our dinner, I made a circle round us.



There was little difficulty in making them understand that they were not to come within it, and they then sat down very quiet.

When the south branch of Broken Bay was first visited we had some difficulty in getting round the headland that separated the two branches, having very heavy squalls of wind and rain, and where we attempted to land there was not sufficient water for the boat to approach the rocks, on which were standing an old man and a youth.

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They had seen us labour hard to get under the land, and after pointing out the deepest water for the boats, brought us fire, and going with two of the officers to a cave at some distance, the old man made use of every means in his power to make them go in with him, but which they declined; and this was rather unfortunate, for it rained hard, and the cave was the next day found to be sufficiently large to have contained us all, and which he certainly took great pains to make them understand. When this old man saw us prepare for sleeping on the ground, and clearing away the bushes, he assisted and was the next morning rewarded for his friendly behaviour. Here we saw a woman big with child that had not lost the joints of the little finger.

When we returned, two day afterwards, to the spot where the old man had been so friendly he met us with a dance and a song of joy. His son was with him. A hatchet and several presents were made them, and as I intended to return to Port Jackson the next day every possible means were taken to secure his friendship: but when it was dark he stole a spade, and was caught in the act. I thought it necessary to show that I was displeased with him, and therefore when he came to me, pushed him away, and gave him two or three slight slaps on the shoulder with the open hand, at the same time pointing to the spade. This destroyed our friendship in a moment, and seizing a spear he came close up to me, poised it and appeared determined to strike; but whether from seeing that his threats were not regarded for I chose rather to risk the spear than fire on him - or from anything the other natives said who surrounded him, after a few moments he dropped his spear and left us. This circumstance is mentioned to show that they do not want personal courage, for several officers and men were then near me. He returned the next morning with several others and seemed desirous of being taken notice of; but he was neglected, whilst hatchets and several other articles were given to the others. 13 February 1790, Governor Phillip's dispatch .(*Historical Records of New South Wales* Vol 1. part 2 :308)  
N.B. The supposed site of the above mentioned cave can be visited today at West Head in Kuring-gai National Park.

In a further despatch to Lord Sydney, Phillip speaks of his attempts to befriend the Aborigines, and the high incidence of diseases among them.

I have always found the natives friendly, and still retain the opinion I first formed of those people that they do not betray a confidence placed in them. I

have reason to believe from their never having attempted to take that advantage which they might have done from the confidence which has been frequently placed in them by myself and those who have been with me in the different excursions, and from the confidence some of them have placed in us; nor do I believe they would have ever been hostile but from having been ill-used and robbed, which has been the case though every precaution that was possible has been taken to prevent it.

In December, 1788, one of the natives was seized for the purpose of learning the language and reconciling them to us (as mentioned in my former letter to your Lordship), none of the natives having for some months come near the settlement. The man who was taken for that purpose appeared to be about twenty-four years of age, and in three months was so well reconciled that he was freed from all restraint, and lived with me perfectly satisfied with his situation.

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In the beginning of the following April numbers of the natives were found dead with the small-pox in different parts of the harbour; and an old man and a boy of about eight years of age were brought to the hospital. The man died, but the boy recovered, and now lives with the surgeon. An elderly man and a girl of about ten or eleven years of age were found soon after and brought up; of the man there was no hopes of recovery, and he died the third day, but the girl recovered, and lives with the clergyman's wife. I brought these people up with the hopes that being cured and sent away with the many little necessaries we could give them would be the means of reconciling them to live near us; but unfortunately both the men died, and the children are too young to have weight with the natives with whom since they have frequently conversed, and what was more unfortunate our native caught the disorder and died.

It is not possible to determine the number of natives who were carried off by this fatal disorder. It must be great; and judging from the information of the native now living with us, and who had recovered from the disorder before he was taken, one half of those who inhabit this part of the country died; and as the natives always retired from where the disorder appeared, and which some must have carried with them, it must have been spread to a considerable distance, as well inland as along the coast. We have seen the traces of it wherever we have been.

His Excellency was surrounded by twenty or thirty natives, and on Bennilong pointing out a man standing near, the governor stepped towards him. The savage not comprehending what was meant, and alarmed for his own safety, lifted a spear with his toes, and fixing his throwing stick, instantly darted it at the governor, whom it struck with such force that the barbed point came through the other side. Captain Hunter gives the following account of the affair: 'The spear entered the governor's right shoulder, just above the collarbone, and came out about three inches lower down, behind the shoulder blade. Mr. Waterhouse who was close the governor at the time, supposed that it must be mortal, for the spear appeared to him to be much lower down than it really was,

and supposed from the number of armed men that it would be impossible for any of the party to escape to the boat. He turned round immediately to return to the board, as he perceived Captain Collins to go that way, calling to the boat's crew to bring up the muskets: the governor also attempted to run towards the boat, holding up the spear with both hands to keep it off the ground; but owing to its great length, the end frequently touched the ground and stopped him (it was about twelve feet long).'

(D. Blair, *The History of Australasia*, 1878 : 262-3)

### **How Phillip's View Changed.**

**On this first inhabited spot, from that time tranquility ceased, and the foundation of a new country usurped the seat of silence.**

From *The History of NSW* by George Barrington, 1810, quoted by W.E.H. Stanner in his "The History of Indifference Begins." in Aboriginal History Vol 1 1977, Part 1.

This article by Stanner is recommended reading, as it describes how the instructions to a well intentioned Governor Phillip to come quickly on friendly terms with the natives to "conciliate their affections" soon came to be ignored.

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An outline of Stanner's six stages of Governor Phillip's treatment of the Aboriginal people:

1. "Cautious friendship" of the first few days.
2. "Neither frequent nor cordial" - in late summer & autumn.
3. "Often open animosity" of winter and spring.
4. "Capture by force" - Bennelong etc.
5. "Phillip speared" - Sept 1790.
6. "McEntire killed" 1790 and retribution.

In fact, the Phillip era is described as being largely responsible for the demise of the Aboriginal people in the succeeding century and a half.

## **C. CULTURAL CONTACT/CONFLICT -CASE STUDIES**

### **The Central Coast and Hawkesbury River areas.**

The Aborigines of the Central Coast came into contact with the Europeans within five weeks of settlement. Although early contacts were infrequent, the effects of the invasion were soon felt throughout the Central Coast.

Communication between the Aborigines on both sides of Broken Bay was common. As a result, prior to concerted European concentration north of Broken Bay, the Aborigines of the Central Coast became increasingly aware of developments in and around Port Jackson.

Their population was also seriously affected as early as 1789 with the outbreak of a smallpox epidemic.

This section details specific occurrence relating to early contacts, co-existence and resistance and the effects on the Central Coast Aborigines, of the European invasion from 1770 to the early 20th Century.

For a general account of the destruction of the tribes of the Sydney Region 1788-1850's see Keith Willey's When The Sky Fell Down. Although this book concentrates on the Sydney area it most certainly has implications for the Central Coast.

Another very good resource is Pemulwuy, The Rainbow Warrior by Eric Willmott or the video Warriors in the series The Rainbow Serpent by SBS.

Extracts from P. Vinnicombe Predilection & Prediction NPWL SERVICE 1980:

### **1770**

In 1770, Captain Cook sailed past the Central Coast of New South Wales, and described seeing the smoke of native fires along the coast. It was not however, until 1788 that Broken Bay and Brisbane Water were actually visited by the European colonists.

### **1788**

Only five weeks after founding the new settlement at Sydney Cove in 1788, Governor Phillip and a party of about forty men set out in a long boat and cutter to examine the surrounding countryside with a view to settlement (Bradley 1969: 84-92). In the vicinity of Lion Island at the entrance to Broken Bay, the two parties lost sight of one another, but after dark joined forces again where they saw the fires of natives on the north shore.

### **Pearl Beach**

The cutter landed within a rocky point at what is now Pearl Beach, where there were numerous Aboriginal men, women and children. Although the Aborigines appeared very friendly, the exploring party decided to sleep on the boats for safety. 86

### **Ettalong/Pretty Beach**

At daybreak the next morning the party negotiated the narrow entrance into Brisbane Water at Half Tide Rocks, and then almost immediately drew up on a beach, either Ettalong Beach on the west shore or Pretty Beach on the east. They found several flimsily built bark huts with lobster carapaces lying about, and inside were several Aboriginal women, young and old. The women were terrified at first, but after presents were offered, soon became more composed and friendly.

### **Hardy's Bay, The Rip.**

The party continued up Brisbane Water, and after passing two other coves, presumably Hardy's Bay and Fishermans Bay, they came to The Rip. The tide was on the ebb and running so strongly that they could not row against the current. While waiting for the tide to turn, they landed in an adjacent cove, either Fishermans Bay east of The Rip or Booker Bay to the west, and were met by several Aboriginal men and women, who moved freely about the visitors. They noticed that all the women had lost the two terminal joints of the little finger of the left hand, this was not so prevalent around Port Jackson. Most of the women, like the men, also had a hole bored through the nasal septum. It was presumably at this stop that they met a lively young Aboriginal woman, who was very talkative and remarkably cheerful. She subsequently fell in love with Governor Phillip's great coat and used all conceivable means in her attempts to wheedle it from him (White 1962:118.) Phillip himself made a great hit with the Aborigines because he like their initiated men, had a front tooth missing. It was possibly here too, that Phillip saw a large fish being landed, presumably caught in the deep water at The Rip. Because the fish was too strong

and heavy to haul into the frail canoe on a fibre line, the Aborigines paddled their craft towards shallower water, gently drawing the fish to the edge of the bay, where a waiting man despatched it with a spear.

When the tide slackened, the exploring party pulled through The Rip, beyond which they found several inlets between banks of sand, mud and mangroves. They stopped on one of the islands, probably St Huberts Island, and pitched their tents in hard rain.

The following day, while the tents and clothing were drying, some Aborigines paddled across from the opposite shore but were "easily kept at a proper distance from the clothes". One of the visitors was the lively young lady they had met the previous day and on approaching the party she stood up in her canoe and "gave a song which was far from unpleasing."

### **Proof of contact between Aborigines of Brisbane Water and those south of Broken Bay.**

At daylight the following day the party investigated further up Brisbane Water. They saw Aboriginal people all the way, as well as pelicans and other birds in great numbers, but swamps, shoals and shallows impeded further progress of the boats. They therefore returned to the Aboriginal camp where the first stop had been made and noticed trade beads and a European straw hat, introduced goods which were not among the presents they had themselves given the Aborigines. The party also thought they recognised faces they had previously seen at Port Jackson, and this in conjunction with the presence of introduced goods proved that the Aborigines from Brisbane Water and those across Broken Bay to the south had contact with one another. In the following year the visit was repeated, contact with the local Aboriginal people was made, very friendly relations were established. Camp fire parties and sing songs were held on each side of the Northern Arm of Broken Bay.

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### **Small Pox Epidemic.**

That same year, 1789, small-pox had broken out among the Aborigines causing a devastatingly high death toll. Barrington wrote:

**It is truly shocking to find the coves of the harbour, which were formerly thronged with numerous families now strewn with the dead bodies of men, women and children (Barrington 1795:52).**

On visiting Port Jackson and Broken Bay, Collins noted:

**In the year 1789 they were visited by a disorder which raged among them with all the appearance and virulence of the small-pox. The number that is swept off, by their own account, was incredible. At that time a native was living with us; and on our taking him down to the harbour to look for his former companions, those who witnessed his expression and agony can never forget either. He looked anxiously around him in the different coves we visited; not a vestige on the sand was to be found of human foot; the excavations in the rocks were filled with the putrid bodies of those who had fallen victims to the disorder; not a living person was any where to be met with. It seemed as if, flying from the contagion, they had left the dead to bury the dead. He lifted up**

his hands and eyes in silent agony for some time; at last he exclaimed, 'All dead!' and then hung his head in mournful silence, which he preserved during the remainder of our excursion.

Some days after he learned that the few of his companions who survived had fled up the harbour to avoid the pestilence that so dreadfully raged. His fate has been already mentioned. He fell a victim to his own humanity when Boo-rong, Nan-bar-ray, and others were brought into the town covered with the eruptions of the disorder. On visiting Broken Bay, we found that it had not confined its effects to Port Jackson, for in many places our path was covered with skeletons, and the same spectacles were to be met with in the hollows of most of the rocks of that harbour.

(Collins Vol 1, [1798] 1975 : 597.)

Captain John Hunter's account of woman stricken with smallpox at Broken Bay in June, 1789. In the course of the little excursions of our boats; a native woman was discovered, concealing herself from our sight in the long grass, which was at this time very wet, and I should have thought very uncomfortable to a poor naked creature.

She had, before the arrival of our boats at this beach, been, with some of her friends, employed in fishing for their daily food, but were upon their approach alarmed, and they had all made their escape, except this miserable girl, who had just recovered from the small-pox, and was very weak, and unable, from a swelling in one of her knees, to get off to any distance:

she therefore crept off, and concealed herself in the best manner she could among the grass, not twenty yards from the spot on which we had placed our tents. She was discovered by some person who having fired at and shot a hawk from a tree right over her, terrified her so much that she cried out and discovered herself.

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Information was immediately brought to the governor, and we all went to see this unhappy girl, whom we found, as I have already observed, just recovered from the small-pox, and lame: she appeared to be about 17 or 18 years of age, and had covered her debilitated and naked body with the wet grass, having no other means of hiding herself; she was very much frightened on our approaching her, and shed many tears, with piteous lamentations; we understood none of her expressions, but felt much concern at the distress she seemed to suffer.

We endeavoured all in our power to make her easy, and with the assistance of a few expressions which had been collected from poor Ara-ba-noo while he was alive, we soothed her distress a little, and the sailors were immediately ordered to bring up some fire, which we placed before her; we pulled some grass, dried it by the fire, and spread round her to keep her warm; then we shot some birds, such as hawks, crows, and gulls, skinned them, and laid them on the fire to broil, together with some fish, which she ate; we then gave her water, of which she seemed to be much in want, for when the word Baa-do was

mentioned, which was their expression for water, she put her tongue out to show how very dry her mouth was; and indeed from its appearance and colour, she had a considerable degree of fever on her.

Before we retired to rest for the night, we saw her again, and got some fire-wood laid within her reach, with which she might, in the course of the night, recruit her fire; we also cut a large quantity of grass, dried it, covered her will, and left her to her repose.

### **Affect of smallpox on Brisbane Water unknown. Area by - passed by settlers until 1796.**

Details of the depopulation of the north-east arm of Broken Bay (Brisbane Water) are unknown, for few traversed that area. The thrust of traffic headed up the Hawkesbury River to the now prospering settlements at Richmond and Windsor, whilst Brisbane Water was continually by-passed.

In fact, after Phillip's initial reconnaissance of Brisbane Water in 1788, no mention is made of the Central Coast until 1796, when the area was traversed on foot by a party of ship-wrecked fishermen. They were welcomed, fed and escorted most of the way home by the local Aborigines. When they arrived in Sydney with a story of a white woman among the Aborigines, a volunteer party returned and searched the whole area without success. The Europeans did however, report the existence of Tuggerah Lakes (Swancott 1953:13; Bennett 1969:8).

### **Early contact / conflict on the Hawkesbury River. Unarmed Aborigines shot in 1797.**

Broken Bay was charted in 1789 by Captain John Hunter. Shipping began to use its water ways immediately. In 1794 regular shipping between Windsor and Sydney and vice versa began. It is fairly certain that many unrecorded contacts with the Aboriginal people of the region were made by timber cutters and escaped convicts.

In 1797, James Webb commenced shipbuilding on the Hawkesbury River where suitable timber was available. The following year Webb and his crew were sailing his new boat to Sydney with a load of corn, when an unfortunate incident occurred which appears to have been based on misunderstanding. While drifting peacefully down the river, they came upon a party of Aborigines in canoes who appeared friendly and were unarmed, so were allowed aboard the vessel.

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The natives spread casually over the locally built vessel, inspecting the mast and the rigging with interest. James Webb, meanwhile, was suspicious of treachery. He watched their movements carefully, and called one of the crew to a position where the muckets, loaded with buckshot, were within easy reach.

At this point, according to the colonists, the Aborigines made a concerted attack on the crew, which seems somewhat questionable since they were unarmed and traditionally fought only with spears or clubs. Whatever the truth of the story, Webb and his mate fired point blank at their nearest "attackers". Four Aborigines were shot, and the remainder jumped into their canoes and paddled furiously out of range before the muskets could be reloaded. The bodies of the dead were thrown overboard.

(Swancott 1967:23)

### **European reaction to the incident.**

On Webb's return voyage up the Hawkesbury River he carried with him, on the Governor's direction, a party of well-armed soldiers to further chastise the Aborigines. They proceeded up the creek from whence they supposed the attackers had come, when fortunately for the Aborigines, their attention was distracted. They unexpectedly came upon a missing vessel, also built by Webb, which was thought to have been blown to sea and lost during a storm. Instead, however, pirated by a gang of convicts and hidden in a secluded branch of the waterway. On this occasion at any rate, the heat was transferred to the convicts and the Aborigines escaped further punishment. (Swancott 1967: 25)

### **Deteriorating relationships between Aborigines and white settlers after 1804.**

Relationships between the Aborigines and the white settlers on the Hawkesbury River deteriorated rapidly after 1804. The Aborigines had complained that settlement along the river banks was depriving them of access to their food supplies, and Governor King promised that no further grants of land would be made. Unfortunately however, succeeding Governors did not adhere to this agreement, and the Aborigines became thwarted and desperate. Repeated attacks on the colonists resulted in increasingly bitter reprisals. (Bennett 1968: 9; Willey 1979: 175)

### **Aborigines attack Europeans on Mullet Island (Dangar)**

Mullet Island (Dangar) on which an old Aborigine by the name of Grewin was still living in 1804, became a centre for men working as salt boilers in 1805. They were attacked and divested of their clothing by Aborigines, but two other friendly Aborigines from the Pittwater escorted them back to Sydney. (Swancott 1967: 14)

### **Incident at Mangrove Point (on Mullet Creek)**

Shortly afterwards another incident with disastrous results for the Aborigines took place. Again, James Webb was one of the crew of a vessel that took on board a salt boiler who set out in a small boat to go to salt pans situated on Mullet Creek. Several Aborigines boarded the larger vessel while it waited at a place called Mangrove Point, but they left after presents had been given. It being a hot and sultry day, the crew of three went below deck for a sleep, but on hearing whispered voices, the captain looked up the hatchway to see several Aborigines with spears. One of the Aborigines was Woglomigh, known to the colonists as a "notorious" leader of the local people. A struggle ensued, Woglomigh wounded the captain in the hand with a spear, and the resultant shouts awakened the other two crew members. At that juncture, the salt boiler returned in his small boat, and with a pistol "blew out the brains of the savage." Woglomigh's dying scream alarmed the rest of the Aborigines, who jumped overboard. Another named Branch Jack was shot, but other Aborigines who were clinging to the stern of the small boat were allowed to swim ashore (Swancott 1967:25-26)

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### **Settlers Exploit Aborigines Land.**

Permanent European settlement began on the Central Coast some thirty-five years after the First Fleet arrived. There were a number of reasons why an outpost there was not encouraged earlier. Firstly, Phillip, in 1788, had been unimpressed by the low-lying land surrounded by sandstone-capped mountains. (Collins Vol 1 [1798], 1975).

When expansion into the area could conceivably have begun as a result of pressure for more land, King's ban on settlement in the lower Hawkesbury vicinity successively forestalled move



in that direction. A prime reason, however, for lack of settlement before 1823 was the fear that the area could become a haven to runaway convicts from the penal establishment at Newcastle. (Tanttari 1976.)

The colonists who settled on the newly apportioned land on the Central Coast soon found that the prospects for farming were limited. It was far more profitable to cut and saw timber, to gather shells from the Aboriginal middens which were often tribal burying grounds and to burn the shells for lime (Swancott 1953:21; 1955:7). Fishing and shooting was now fair game for everyone.

Fish were netted in such large quantities that what could not be eaten or smoked by the colonists, was fed to their pigs (Swancott 1953: 79). Lobsters, also a favourite food of the Aborigines, were so plentiful that as many as 70 to 80 dozen could be caught in a night. The habitat for many of the marsupials was also destroyed - trees were felled ad lib and "kangaroo grass" was cut and carried to Sydney where it was sold as fodder for the garrison horses (Swancott 1955:17; Bennett 1969: 10).

Duck, which frequented the swamps and secluded lagoons, provided prime sport for gunmen, and also brought in ready cash from the Sydney markets. And all the while, the colonists gained new awards of land while the Aborigines lost all that they had. In 1829 there were 15 European householders in the Brisbane Water district.

By 1836 there was census of 621 Europeans, 459 of them males, thus out numbering the Aborigines. As the natural food resources became increasingly depleted, the Aborigines became more and more dependent on the colonists for food, and when this was not provided for them, they augmented their diet from the produce which now grew on their traditional estates. (Vinnicombe IV 20 &21, 1980).

By 1832, 76 land grants, in total probably exceeding 22,000 acres, had been made to 67 settlers. (Tanttari 1976). In 1844 some 34% of land in the Police District of Brisbane Water had been alienated. (Tanttari,1976). Not all land alienated was chosen for cultivation or grazing. As in other areas the pastoral boom of 1830-1842 encouraged speculation in land, particularly town blocks so far as the Central Coast was concerned, and this is reflected in figures of land alienation. (Tanttari 1976). Surveys of the northern part of the district in 1830 and 1831 may also have encouraged interest in the areas, interest fueled by the adoption of Commissioner Bigge's recommendations on the release of Crown Land, perhaps.

Administration of the district reflected the growing number of European settlers. In 1826 the area boasted one constable; in 1828 the law was represented by one magistrate and three constables.

At the northern end of the Central Coast little settlement took place. It was initially too far removed from the market place and transportation was fraught with too many difficulties. It was, though, an ideal spot, or so it was assumed, for a mission to the local Aborigines. The mission began in September 1826 after the preliminary disagreements on funding and control, so common with such endeavours both in Australia and in the Pacific, had been resolved to

nobody's satisfaction as it turned out. The mission began in a climate of ambivalence. The Reverend Samuel Marsden was directly associated with the venture and, although expressions of the utmost support for the venture may have been expected from a man in his position, he was quite pessimistic about the chances of success.(Gunson 1974) This was perhaps because he felt his authority had been undermined by the control given to the Reverend L.E. Threlkeld in conducting affairs of the mission. Enthusiastic support was, however, forthcoming from the Sydney Gazette which offered its " most fervent wishes for its (the mission's) prosperity." ( *Sydney Gazette*,1826)

In spite of such fervent wishes the mission failed in its aim to convert the 'heathen'. The Aborigines were unreceptive to the message and Threlkeld found himself more involved in studying their languages, to enable translation of the Bible, than in preaching the word of God. The mission become noted for two things - Threlkeld's linguistic endeavours, and the continual bickering over funding and control; this though, was a feature common to many mission establishments at the time. Matters reached a head in 1829 when the London Missionary Society head office advised it has sacked Threlkeld for insubordination and excessive expenses, and intended to close the mission.

Threlkeld managed to obtain financial support from the government to keep the mission open but Governor Darling believed he was funding a lost cause. Threlkeld laboured on until 1841 when, discouraged by the lack of Aboriginal people available for instruction and believing their extinction inevitable, he submitted his final report to the government. The mission closed soon after.

### **Early contact and conflict in the Central Coast area.**

Relationships between the settlers and Aborigines were generally friendly at first. This was probably due to a belief commonly held by the Aboriginal people that after death they would become "ghosts" like the European people. Such a belief provided a socially acceptable explanation for the whites being not strangers but ancestors returned in another form. However, as economic and social pressures increased, the relationships between the settlers and Aborigines deteriorated. The question of land ownership was central to increasing conflict.

The following accounts highlight both friendly and hostile interactions between the colonists and Aborigines.

### **James Webb's farm at Booker Bay**

#### **Land Conflict.**

In 1823, James Webb became the first European settler on Brisbane Water. Through his previous boat-building experience on the Hawkesbury River, he had a working knowledge of the Aboriginal language and soon found willing hands among the local populace to help him clear land at Booker Bay near The Rip. This was precisely the area where the Aborigines had their first European visitor 40 years previously. The Aboriginal men proved adept with the saw and axe, while the women too, helped with chores around the house. They soon became accustomed to domestic animals and helped feed the pigs etc. (Swancott 1955:9).

Webb and his foreman lived well off produce from their farm as well as local oysters, fish and wild fowl, and occasionally they gave the Aborigines sufficient netted fish to feed the whole

tribe. However, as soon as the crops of wheat, corn and pumpkins began to bear, trouble arose, and James Webb's attitude of patronage towards the original land-owners changed to one of aggressively defending what he now deemed his own property.

Traps and spring guns were set to protect his crops, and there was an incident when his foreman's son was seized by an Aboriginal although he was not harmed in any way (Swancott 1953:10; Swancott n.d: 14, in Vinnicombe 1980). Webb had formerly shot and killed Aborigines at point blank range on the Hawkesbury River; his exploits on Brisbane Water are not recorded (Swancott 1967: 23, in Vinnicombe 1980 IV : 22).

### **William Cape and conflict with the Darkingung at Wyong in 1828.**

In January 1828, William Cape, one of the first Wyong farmers, was somewhat taken aback when about 200 Aborigines, mostly strangers, suddenly arrived on what had 'legally' become his property, and made off with part of his potato crop. This large gathering was probably occasioned by the visit of the Darkingung tribe from Wollombi, who visited the coast for about a fortnight every year to relish fish, shell-fish and kelp and to enjoy a get-together with their friends (Swancott 1955: 86,102, in Vinnicombe 1980.)

### **Violence at Cape's farm in Wyong.**

In February and March 1828, Aborigines again troubled the settlers, pilfering and destroying crops, and even threatening lives. On one occasion they heaved a spear at one of Cape's stockmen while he was on horseback, and the spear stuck in the saddle. The district constable armed 15 men and pursued the Aborigines. Magistrate Bean took part in the chase, and two prisoners were taken. They confessed they had a grudge against Cape who had formerly fired on them at night when they were taking his corn. Magistrate Bean recorded that Cape was a difficult man who had alienated his sons and neighbours as well as the Aborigines. He had provoked the Aborigines to many acts of violence by his conduct, menacing them on almost all occasions with a loaded musket. The Aborigines, remarked Bean, had been ill-treated by Mr Cape as well as by others in the district (Swancott 1955: 86, 87, in Vinnicombe 1980 IV: 22, ).

### **Violence at Dooralong near Wyong**

At Dooralong near Wyong, a farmer was exasperated by Aborigines who were "continually lurking in the bush" near his hut, and who occasionally called out to ask for milk and other provisions. The harassed farmer enlisted the help of three other colonists and two constables, who set up an ambush in the hut. In due course, six Aborigines entered. The same number of Europeans were hiding, awaiting them. The door was speedily closed, and a tussle ensued during which three of the Aborigines escaped through a small hole cut in the bark slabs. The remaining three surrendered only after one of them, by name Jack Jones, was severely wounded in the neck with gun-shot. All three Aborigines were taken to the lock-up at Brisbane Water. Two of the men, Jago and Nimbo, had been handcuffed together, but despite this handicap, they made a surprise attack on a constable when he brought them some water. Immediately Jack Jones, who had been lying on the floor nursing his wounds, roused himself to strike a decisive blow, and all three prisoners escaped (Swancott 1953: 24 in Vinnicombe 1980).

### **Convicts, bushrangers. Taking of Aboriginal women.**

The Brisbane Water area became a refuge for absconding convicts and ticket-of-leave men who were notorious for taking Aboriginal women by force, and equally forcefully disposing of the men. Law enforcement was minimal, bush-rangers found a haven in the inaccessible waterways

and glens and illicit practices such as liquor distilling and cedar cutting were rife (Bennett 1969:11).

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In 1826, the first magistrate, Willoughby Bean, was appointed in a vain attempt to restore law and order. After six years, the magistracy on the Central Coast fell vacant, and was not renewed for some years. The activities of bush-rangers, absconded convicts, cedar getters and illicit grog suppliers, went unchecked. (Vinnicombe 1980 IV:21)

## **ABORIGINAL POPULATION DECLINES**

### **Disease, brutalities**

In 1826, the surviving Aborigines, who after the combined depredations caused by introduced small-pox, syphilus and influenza and by brutalities at the hands of the colonists, were estimated to be only 65 in number, including men, women and children. This is in marked contrast to the numerous Aborigines seen in almost every cove during the first visit to Brisbane Water by Governor Phillip only 38 years before. Serious encounters between Aborigines and settlers occurred in 1833, again in the Wyong district. Bennett claims a punitive expedition was mounted to capture twenty Aborigines outlawed as a result of the melees: eight were captured and later confined on Cockatoo Island; the balance were driven off. (Bennett 1969).

Governor Bourke, shortly after the incident requested that a school teacher be made available for the convicts on Cockatoo Island specifying that any appointee should be prepared to teach the elements of Christianity to the eight Aborigines held there after capture in the Brisbane Water district. (Bourke to Secretary of State HRNSW, 1.5.1835).

The only other recorded attacks occurred in 1835 and 1838. In 1835 sixteen Aborigines were confined in the local watch-house after robberies committed against the settlers. The sixteen probably included those that Johathan Varner, the visiting J.P. in the northern area, reported as arrested, also for robbery. In 1838 no arrests were made but the local constables spent six nights defending a settler's property from Aborigines (Swancott 1955.)

### **Population estimates**

Magistrate Bean reported five distinct "tribes" or more correctly hordes, in the Central Coast area. These were the family groups centred at Broken Bay (15), Erina (10), Narara (10), Tuggerah Beach (15) and Wyong (15). It is possible, however, that these estimates were incomplete, for no mention is made of the inland people, for instance those centred along Mangrove Creek and at Kulnura.

A major loss of population was experienced in the period 1820 to 1830. It was probably attributable to three principal causes. First, it is likely that the effects of the smallpox epidemic, introduced into the area from Sydney in the first days of settlement there, was still working through the Central Coast groups during this time. Second, movement of population away from the immediate vicinity of the new European residents, particularly when the Aborigines welcome was briskly removed by acts such as Webb's. Thirdly, the denial of access to some areas of traditional food resources on the waterways would have meant a complete dependence on secondary and normally supplementary food sources further inland for some Aboriginal people.

However the most likely causes of a major loss of numbers to 1830's are the lingering starvation in the bush, combined with final throes of the smallpox epidemic. From the stability

of population figures from 1830 to 1838 it appears that a plateau level of population was reached: a level which the changing environment could support. This view would tend to be supported by the expansion of agriculture which occurred mainly after the 1830's, though its beginnings stemmed from the reduction in timber-getting activities from about 1830.

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In effect, the environment was undergoing change but the major change would occur from the late 1830's. In the meantime, that is, from about 1830 to about 1840, the area was still able to support the static population of the period.

A major losses in population occurred again towards 1840. The consolidation and expansion of agriculture from that time was certainly the principal cause. Traditional food gathering areas would have been decimated by the clearing and ploughing activities extending from the waterfront to the inland. The contracting area of available food resources would have contributed directly to the decline of the Central Coast Aboriginal population after 1840. Any decline in Aboriginal numbers however must have been facilitated by the breakdown of traditional society through the dislocating effect of the settlement by Europeans.

With the intensification of white settlement on the Central Coast during the 1830's and 40's, the Aboriginal population dwindled. In 1841 Threlkeld had to close his mission on Lake Macquarie (16 years after its opening) because there were not enough Aborigines to teach. (Vinnicombe IV:28). Government records of the annual issue of blankets to the Aborigines illustrated the decline of the Aboriginal population of the Brisbane Water district. In 1870 the blanket issue was discontinued. (Vinnicombe 1980 p29)

**Returns of Aboriginal people issued with blankets 1833-1843. Extracts from *The Bench of Magistrates Report 1835-1840* and Tanttari 1976**

	Brisbane Waters/Gosford
1831	67
1833	58
1835	76
1837	42 men
1838	78
1839	63
1840	62
1841	31 men
1842	27 men

Contemporaries appear to have been complacent about continually reducing Aboriginal numbers; many believed extinction inevitable. The conscience of the European settlers was untroubled by the disappearance of the Aborigines. Some regarded it as a blessing and welcomed it; William Cox asserted that the Aboriginal people would make excellent manure for crops and that for him was their main function. (Gunson 1974). The Reverend John Gregory stated, in 1847, that settlers believed the Aborigines decreed by God to a position of innate inferiority from which the only escape was an inevitable extinction. Threlkeld believed the Aborigines had strayed from God's path and as a result were doomed. (Gunson 1974)

In 1842 John F. Mann reported visiting the site of the modern Tacoma and observing the

proceedings of the annual Aboriginal get together of whom he estimates only 60 souls attended. Most of these had come from the inland areas and the mountains. Assuming that all the remaining Aboriginal people of the area attended this rally, the population had, by 1842, diminished to about 24 of the coastal plain and 36 of the inland area. The 1848 Census showed a population of 50 in the whole of the Brisbane Water area. Subsequent records show that the inland Aboriginal people continued, even during the 1850's to make annual pilgrimages to the Coast. (Bennett 1969)

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The Central Coast Aboriginal population was affected by disease, conflict and reprisal (sometime due to the kidnapping of Aboriginal women by Europeans) and the gradual drift of families to settlements in Sydney or Newcastle. (pIV:29 Vinnicombe 1980, Bennett 1969 p12).

### **The last supposed traditional Aboriginal people**

The popular accounts of particular Aborigines being the "last of a particular tribe" was all too often recorded. The death of "Black Nellie, last of the Nepean Tribe" was recorded at Penrith, while in 1926 Martha Everingham, "said to be the last of the full blood tribe", was buried in Sackville. In the late 1880's records of only a few individuals can be traced. In 1892 in the Government Reprint of Threlkeld's work, is given a photograph (p.196) of, Old Margaret, described as "The last survivor of the Awabakal. Born at Waiong near the Hawkesbury River. Now about 65 years of age, Living in her slab hut on a piece of land near Lake Macquarie Heads". (Bennett 1969, p12.)

It is not the colour of the skin which makes a person an Aborigine, any more than one European ancestor makes a person white. Aboriginal people recognise themselves as Aborigines, not on the basis of their past, but by virtue of their cultural upbringing. Just as Europeans no longer use swords, Aborigines no longer use spears and boomerangs. Both cultures have changed over time. Maintaining those aspects which are seen to be important while replacing or modifying those which are not. Local Aboriginal families have maintained many aspects of their culture while living a lifestyle otherwise indistinguishable from any other Australian family in the community. The difference lies in the fact that European cultural heritage and traditions in Australia go back less than 200 years, while Aboriginal traditions to back perhaps as much as 50,000 years. (Kohen 1985.)

Henry Kendall's elegy "The Last of His Tribe", published in 1881 was a memorial to the last supposedly traditional Aboriginal (probably Billy Fawkner) still living on traditional tribal territory on Brisbane Water. (Vinnicombe 1980:30)

**'THE LAST OF HIS TRIBE'**

**Henry Kendall (1881)**

He crouches, and buries his face on his knees,  
     And hides in the dark of his hair;  
 For he cannot look up to the storm-smitten trees,  
     Or think of the loneliness there:  
 Of the loss and the loneliness there.

The wallaroos grope through the tufts of the grass,  
     And turn to their covers for fear;  
 But he sits in the ashes and lets them pass  
     Where the boomerangs sleep with the spear:  
 With the nullah, the sling, and the spear.

Uloola, behold him! The thunder that breaks  
     On the tops of the rocks with the rain,  
 And the wind which drives up with the salt of the lakes,  
     Have made him a hunter again:  
 A hunter and fisher again.

For his eyes have been full with a smouldering thought;  
     But he dreams of the hunts of your,  
 And of foes that he sought, and of fights that he fought  
     With those who will battle no more:  
 Who will go to the battle no more.

It is well that the water which tumbles and fills  
     Goes moaning and moaning along;  
 For an echo rolls out from the sides of the hills,  
     And he starts at a wonderful song:

At the sounds of a wonderful song.

And he sees, through the rents of the scattering fogs,  
The corroboree warlike and grim,  
And the lubra who sat by the fire on the logs,  
To watch, like a mourner, for him:  
Like a mother and mourner, for him.

Will he go in his sleep from these desolate lands,  
Like a chief, to the rest of his race,  
With the honey-voiced woman who beckons, and stands.  
And gleams like a Dream in his face -  
Like a marvellous Dream in his face?

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CIRCULAR.

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE,  
SYDNEY. 1833

*DRAWING your attention to the Government Notice \_\_\_\_\_  
of the \_\_\_\_\_, by which you will observe, that **BLANKETS** are to  
be distributed to the **BLACKS** in the Interior, about the*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, I do myself the honor to inform you, that

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ of these Articles will be immediately forwarded to  
your

*District, to be issued to the Natives in your Neighbourhood: and to request,  
that you will cause them to be distributed accordingly, and transmit to me  
a Receipt for the same, and a Report of the Date on which they arrive at  
your Station.*

*In distributing these, I am directed by His Excellency the Governor  
to request, that you will give the preference to such Individuals as may  
have distinguished themselves by any good Behaviour, - marking the  
Conduct of those who may have evinced a disposition to be troublesome, by  
omitting the bounty to them; and that you will also avail yourself of the  
opportunity, afforded by their being collected together, to cause a correct  
Return of their Numbers to be taken, and transmitted to me, with a  
nominal List of the Men in the enclosed Form.*



*the honor to enclose a Statement of the Numbers which have been also sent to the neighbouring Districts; in order that, if necessary, you may communicate with the Magistrates, and others, for the purpose of ensuring a more equal distribution in proportion to the whole. But as it would, of course, be impossible to supply all the Tribes, at a distance from the settled Districts, it will be advisable to confine the distribution to the Native who usually resort to your Neighbourhood, or take up their abode in the Districts most traversed by Europeans.*

*It may be proper to explain, that the object in procuring a nominal Return of the Males, is to ascertain, if possible, the entire aggregate number of the Aboriginal Population within the Districts occupied by the Colonists, and also the proportion in each. For this purpose it will be advisable to insert, if practicable, the Name of every Member of the Tribe, whether actually present or not, and the Tract of Country from which the Tribe derive their designation, and the Place or District to which they usually resort.*

*I have the honor to be,*

*Your most obedient Servant,*

From the original letter in the Archives Office of NSW

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## LETTERS FROM THE TIME

The Aborigines and the white settlers seem to have come to terms with one another in these areas; and there are only two recorded incidents that I have been able to find. Soon after coming to this area William Cape had antagonised some of the Aborigines by shooting at them when they were caught stealing his corn, so they gathered in large numbers and were marching towards this district with the object of capturing Cape and burning him to death. The story is told as follows in an official letter written by Willoughby Bean, magistrate at Gosford, dated April 25, 1828. (*Historical Record of N.S.W.*)

The district has within the last 5 or 6 months greatly disturbed by the inroads of several tribes of Aborigines, I believe from the Hunter River, the Wollombi and the Sugar Loaf. These tribes have frequently during this period, assembled in great numbers (on one occasion upwards of 200 and on another 180)

the settler could communicate with his neighbours or seek any assistance. Mr. Henderson, the District Constable, during my absence from home on their last making their appearance, deemed it prudent to arm 15 men and to go in pursuit of them. He overtook and drove them before him along the coast to the northward till night came on, when they doubled upon him and returned. He took two of them home and released after retaining them some days. They, however, confessed that it was their intention not only to rob the settler but likewise to capture and burn the gentleman of the name of Cape who had formerly fired on them during the night when stealing his corn. Assistance was immediately sent to Mr. Cape (who resides 12 miles from any other settler) by which means they were deterred.

I am however confident that they really intended doing some great injury, they having already heaved a spear to one of his men when on horseback and which struck in the saddle. They have now left the district, but will I have no doubt visit it again; and unless some strong steps be taken to intimidate them they will be liable to do more mischief.

I therefore beg to know to what extremes I can go in repelling them and, if any be taken, whether I am to use my own discretion in punishing them even by corporal punishment or confinement, or other ways how they are to be disposed of. From Mr. Cape's statement to me I should imagine that he has been at a loss of upwards of 60 pounds by their pilfering. We can always repel them without any assistance; only I wish to know how far I am justified in trying them with severity in case of their again making their appearance.

In another letter a month later dated May 25, regarding the Aborigines; Bean is inclined to blame Cape. He writes; 'He has provoked the Aborigines' to many acts of violence by his conduct, menacing them almost on all occasions with a loaded musket...many of the blacks in this district have conducted themselves very well and should it be His Excellency's intention this winter of distributing blankets among them, I shall assemble the whole of them and give only to those who have been deserving from their late conduct'.

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In an official letter dated January 15, 1835, Jonathon Warner magistrate at Gosford, told of troublesome Aborigines at Dooralong:

'I have the honor to state for the information of His Excellency the Governor, that Constable Moses Carroll, Henry Anderson, George Mason, and Adam Rainey (free) were concealed in Adam Rainey's hut at Dooralong (near Wyong) for the purpose of apprehending some of the black natives concerned in the late robberies, who were continually lurking about the brushes near the hut, and occasionally calling and asking for milk, etc., and on Friday 2nd inst., six black natives, five of whom were ringleaders advertised in the Gazette, entered.

Immediately after they entered the hut the door was closed and the four white men attempted to secure them, but the Blacks being so resolute and seizing hold of their firearms, they were obliged in self defence to fire at "Jack Jones", who

is a very powerful man, and wounded him severely in the neck before any of them would surrender. During the scuffle, three of them made their escape through a small hole that was cut out in the slabs.

"Jack Jones," "Jago" and "Nimbo" were apprehended and conveyed safe to the lock-up and given over by Carroll and his party of the 4th inst., and make their escape the same day under the following circumstances.

"Jack Jones" has since been taken and forwarded to Sydney Gaol.

Constable William Smith, who had charge of the Lock-up, opened the door on the afternoon of the 4th inst. to give the blacks some water, and immediately he had drawn the bolt they pushed the door open suddenly against him. "Nimbo" and "Jago", who were handcuffed together, seized hold of the constable with their leisure hands, while the third, "Jack Jones", who was sitting on floor and was so severely wounded in his neck by the party who took him, was considered unable to move, but as soon as one of the blacks spoke to him in his own language, he struck the constable a blow which nearly stunned him. The other two then dragged him (the constable) from the lock-up, tore off his jacket, and kept fast hold of him, shaking him and occasionally striking him with the handcuffs that were fast to their hands. And after forcing them back to the lock-up, the Constable with much difficulty disengaged himself. During this time "Jack Jones" had made his escape, and before Smith could reach his forearms the other two made their escape also. The other Constable was at this time on board a vessel in charge of three other Blacks for Sydney Gaol.

Constable Smith should in my opinion have used more precaution, by handcuffing the three Blacks together, knowing what a lot he had to deal with (as the leg irons were in use on the Blacks on board the vessel) as they are determined and even require more caution to be looked after than the white prisoners. Constable Carroll and his party, after risking their lives in apprehending the three Blacks, are entitled to the reward offered for their apprehension, and I beg leave to be informed in what manner those are to be rewarded who apprehended the Blacks thus escaped'.

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## **ABORIGINAL RESISTANCE IN THE HAWKESBURY/NEPEAN AREA.**

The work entitled *Colonial Occupation of NSW: The Aboriginal Experience*, a thesis by Barry Morris (1978) is a reference for this section.

.....the agricultural occupation of Aboriginal land along the Hawkesbury / Nepean River was marked by a bitter struggle between Europeans and Aboriginals which lasted approx 20 years until Aboriginal numbers were exhausted and resistance broken. The guerrilla style warfare along the

**Hawkesbury/Nepean River began with the plundering of crops but quickly changed to driving the colonists out completely. (Morris p178.)**

Morris outlines how a succession of governors between 1794 and 1816 found it necessary and even vital to the survival of the Colony, given that this area was a principal food source, to provide military protection for the white settlers farming along the Hawkesbury/Nepean.

By 1795 the European population of the river increased to about 550 and settlement began to occupy most of the river-front from Richmond to Portland. Aboriginal attacks intensified, with hunger probable the principal motive. Aborigines appeared in large numbers - men, women and children together - to carry off using blankets and nets the corn which grew so luxuriantly where once a variety of animals had come down to the water to drink. These raids were swift and well organised and only when they were surprised by the settlers did they resort to violence. To put an end to increasing attacks, Captain Paterson, the Lieutenant-Governor, ordered a party of the N.S.W. Corps to destroy as many of the Hawkesbury Aborigines as the soldiers could find. Gibbets were erected at different spots on the waterfront as a grim symbol of the European man's justice. However, the list of Aborigines killed and wounded in this punitive action included only nursing mothers and babes in arms. (E.G. Docker 1964, p. 67.)

This extract describes the Aborigines of the Hawkesbury River, north of Sydney, in the years just before and after 1800.

**The time has passed when the raids on the ripening cornfields were merely an alternative form of food gathering. The object of the recurrent, well-planned attacks was to drive the white men off the river. New settlers taking up virgin land were attacked indiscriminately with those who had been marked down for vengeance. Four years of intermittent guerilla fighting gradually reduced the tribes of the lower Hawkesbury so that Governor King was able to report all quiet on the Hawkesbury in May 1803. Isolated raids continued, however, along the whole front of the river..... (E.G. Docker 1964 p. 70.)**

Many of the punitive action of the government were as indiscriminate as those of settlers. A Government punitive expedition sent to the Hawkesbury in 1795 brought in five women. One of the women, who had been suckling her child, had been wounded, the bullet having passed through her shoulder striking the child at her breast (the baby later died). In December 1795 an armed party sent out to the Hawkesbury, not only killed four men, but also killed one woman and badly wounded a child (Collins 1971 Vol. 1 pp.444-5, *On Darug Land* 1988 p65)

As the frontier war became more intense and bitter the supposed protection afforded the Aborigines as British Subjects would appear to have lapsed. Both settlers and the military were able to avoid any legal consequences of the indiscriminate killing of Aboriginal men, women and children. (Morris 1978).

It is likely that the Aborigines at first believed the European's crops a form of bounty in return for permission to occupy the land. The failure of Europeans to willingly part with their crops was probably seen as a breach of social convention remedied only by direct action. The settlers, of course, resisted such depredations, the Aboriginal people continued their attacks and, in a short time, the frontier situation on the Hawkesbury had escalated to a point described as open

war. (Collins 1798).

In the ensuing violence, tribes from the Broken Bay area were often believed the guilty party but allowances were made as they had had little contact with the settlers.

Pious hopes were expressed that they would soon see the "advantages the other natives have derived by their intercourse" with the Europeans and would reconcile themselves to the situation. But the trouble on the Hawkesbury continued relatively unabated. Soon the administration saw in the Aborigines conduct the incitement of one Musquito from the Central Coast, and peace was believed attainable if he were captured. Musquito was eventually taken after the murder of a woman and was transported to Norfolk Island.

That military protection led to punitive expeditions by the British is undoubted. The Darug people whose economic subsistence was based on a now disrupted riverina economy, were to bear the brunt of these attacks because of their attacks on crops, houses, stock and settlers. Morris cites sources that suggest that by 1800 a "total of 26 white people had been killed by natives and thirteen had been wounded on the banks of the Hawkesbury." Of course, the number of Aborigines killed will never be known. Suffice to say that Aboriginal resistance appears to have been broken at this stage Morris says because "peaceful relations existed on the river until 1804.

Another view of this period comes from William Caley, a botanist who apparently retained friendly relationships with most Aborigines with whom he came into contact. Caley summarised the conflict in this way:

**This sort of war lasted for about 12 months, at which time an order arrived from England respecting their behalf, and then the scene was reversed, for instead of shooting or killing the, orders were give for no-one to molest them unless they were committing some depredation. The cause of this war began about some sheep which the stock-keepers said the natives had speared. Accordingly war was declared without much deliberation, and the natives finding that we were bent on hostility it was not long before they revenged themselves by killing one of the stockkeepers... Whether the natives were guilty of what was laid to their charge I shall not say; but there has been proof of the stock-keepers losing part of their flock and laying the charge to the natives, when at the same time they were innocent. (Morris 1978)**

It is clear that Caley believed the stock-keepers lost some of their sheep and blamed the Aborigines, a lie which resulted in the proclamation being issued by the Governor.

The next few years saw an increasing number of conflicts between the Aborigines and farmers, particularly "when the maize is ripe". The fact that most of the problems arose when the crops ripened can be related to two facts. Firstly, the farmland had removed many of the traditional food sources, resulting in a food shortage. The Aboriginal view of life was on of gathering what was there to be gathered, so the ripe maize and corn crops presented as easily harvested food supply. The second problem was related to the failure of farmers to pay the Aborigines' who helped them to gather their crops. An Aboriginal labour force was particularly cheap if you gave them nothing in return for their work.

Because of the continuing problems along the Hawkesbury, King sent for three Aborigines to try to correct the situation.

**On questioning the cause of their disagreement with the new settlers, they very ingenuously answered that they did not like to be driven from the few places that were left on the banks of the river, where alone they could procure food; that they had gone down the river as the white man took possession of the banks; if they went across white men's grounds the settlers fired upon them and were angry; that if they could retain some places on the lower part of the river they should be satisfied and not troubled the white men. The observation and request appear to be so just and so equitable that I assured them no more settlements would be made lower down the river.(HRNSW Vol 5 P513)**

This noble gesture by King gave away nothing, for the river below Portland Head was primarily sandstone country unsuitable for farmland. (Kohen 1985 p15.)

The simple facts were these; the appropriation of land along the river banks deprived the Aboriginal of many traditional sources of sustenance. Also, the clearing of land for crops destroyed the natural habitat of other traditional sources of food etc. The Aboriginal people had either to accept the European occupation, in the process becoming dependent on them as benefactors, or starve and be hunted down.

**Significantly, the Hawkesbury/Nepean River conflicts and the subsequent decimation of the Aboriginal population cannot be accounted for by disease and alcohol but principally by Europeans violence. European dominance was established by superior weaponry, mobility and numbers. However, it is worth noting that: Resistance, for the Aborigines, was a matter of survival. As such, the Aborigines conducted what appears to have been a well-organised and determined campaign to drive out the Europeans. (Morris 1978, p78-80)**

The frustration and bitter nature of the conflict is reflected in the escalation of military violence whereby punitive expeditions became indiscriminate attacks on Aboriginal men, women and children. The frustration of the settlers manifested itself in random revenge killings. In 1799, five settlers angered by the continual attacks, quite arbitrarily killed two Aboriginal boys known to the settlers (Bowd, 1969:34). While these men were convicted of these murders they nevertheless continued to live on their farms and in 1802 were pardoned (Clark, 1962:167 in Morris 1978). Similarly, settlers committed another atrocity on an Aboriginal woman and her two children in revenge for the killing of a farmer, at Appin. As a contemporary observer of the period reported,

**The people, not content with shooting them in the most treacherous manner in the dark, had actually cut the woman's arm off and stripped the scalp of her head over her eyes and finding one of the children only wounded, one of the fellows deliberately beat the infant's brains out with the end of his muskett... the bodies were left for the natives to view next morning. (Docker, 1964:75).**

Given the ambivalent official legal status of Aborigines in the early colony, it seems reasonable to assume that the number of atrocities committed on Aborigines by settlers will never be known. In the outlying areas of the settlement where a determined Aboriginal resistance took

place, settlers attitudes and the image of the Aboriginal changed.

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The Aboriginal was no longer the object of pity or cruel amusement, but as the aforementioned murderers of the two Aboriginal boys on the Hawkesbury, stated the murder of aboriginal men was justified on the grounds that 'the Aborigines were a treacherous, evil-minded, blood thirsty set of men' (Clark, 1962:145 in Morris 1978). By the end of the Hawkesbury conflict, it would seem that, for many colonists, the indiscriminate killing of Aboriginal men, women and children by settlers or by punitive military expeditions was not regarded as a crime for which colonists should be prosecuted.

### **TIME LINE OF HAWKESBURY / NEPEAN CONFLICT ADAPTED FROM: *ON DARUG LAND: AN ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVE* 1988**

#### **1793**

Collins noted that

**the natives have lately become troublesome, particularly in lurking between the different settlements and forcibly taking provisions and clothing from the convicts who were passing from one to another.**

(Collins 1971 Vol. 1, p. 297;cf.p. 328)

#### **1794**

In January, Collins recorded that:

**some settlers had been attacked by a party of armed native and stripped of all their provisions. Reports of this nature had been frequently brought in and it was noticed, that as the corn ripened, they constantly drew together round the settlers farms and round the public grounds, for the purpose of committing depredations.**

(ibid. pp. 340-1)

Another note, from April, mentioned that on the Hawkesbury the Aborigines had given them (the settlers) such interruption, as induced a necessity for firing upon them, by which, it was said, one man was killed" (ibid. p. 364) At the same time, at Toongabbie, "one was shot, and one cut down with a sword, the head of one is brought in and the Lt. Govr. has preserved it, as a present for Dr. Hunter" (Atkins, p.169).

By the Spring of the year, the Aborigines on the Hawkesbury had been fired upon, and one killed. Huts were attacked and looted, and an armed posse pursued and killed between two and six Aborigines. Settlers captured and bound an Aboriginal boy who was said to have been spying. They tortured him by dragging him through a fire, threw him into the river, and then executed him. Children were abducted at gunpoint, and their parents' entreaties for their release ignored.

When a settler and a convict were speared in retaliation, a party of the settlers tracked the Aborigines and killed eight of them. Captain Paterson sent out more armed parties to kill as many Aborigines as they could find. (Kohen 1985.) By the end of the year, the Hawkesbury

district was reported to be in a state of "open war".

## **1795**

A military guard under Sergeant Goodall was posted as protection from the Aborigines.

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**The natives appeared in large bodies, men, women, and children, provided with blankets and nets to carry off the corn. (Collins 1971 Vol. 1, p 348)**

One particularly serious problem occurred along the banks of the Hawkesbury, where the yam beds provided the staple vegetable component of the Dharug diet. By 1795, the vast majority of the yam beds had been destroyed and replaced with crops. When the Aborigines attempted to harvest the crops which now grew on the riverbanks, they were driven off. A few settlers maintained good relations with the Aborigines, but others shot any Aborigine they saw on their land. The two economic systems were competing for the same rich soil to provide food, a circumstance which inevitably led to conflict. (Kohen 1985)

## **May**

Two Whites were killed by Aborigines. By June, five Whites were killed, several wounded. A detachment of sixty soldiers of the NSW Corps was sent to the Hawkesbury area and a subaltern's party was stationed there to-

**.....secure to the settlers the peaceable possession of their estates, and without which, from the alarm these murders have created, I very much feared they would have abandoned the settlement entirely, and given up the most fertile spot which has been discovered in the colony. (HRNSW Vol. 2, p. 509-10)**

Collins says the force was sent to

**destroy as many as they could meet with of the wood tribe (Be-dia-gal): and in the hope of striking terror, to erect gibbets in different places, whereon the bodies of all they might kill were to be hung (Collins 1971 Vol. 1, p.348)**

Seven to eight Blacks were killed and five captured. The first legally sanctioned massacre

## **December**

**Aborigines...assembled in a large body, and attacked a few settlers... stripping them of every article they could find in their huts. An armed party was directly sent out, who coming up with them, killed four men and one woman, badly wounded a child, and took four men prisoners. (ibid. p. 444)**

## **1796**

### **January**

Aborigines were "beginning again to annoy the settlers " on Hawkesbury, and John Lacy, "who had been allowed to ply with passage-boat between the port of Sydney and the river", was killed.

### **February**

Hunter advertised the Government Order to induce settlers, especially at the Hawkesbury, to mutually afford their assistance to each other by assembling without a moment delay whenever any numerous body of the natives are known to be lurking about the farms... (HRNSW Vol. 3. p. 26)



## **March**

The settlers of the northern farms had frequently lost clothing and provisions as a result of the Aborigines. They armed themselves, and in the fight five Aborigines were killed . (Collins 1971 Vol. 2, p. 27.)

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A punitive party pursued a group of Blacks led by Pemulwuy. Pemulwuy's group, in turn, staged an attack on Parramatta itself, at that time, the largest White settlement in the colony. After a brief exchange, in which one soldier was wounded and five Blacks were killed, Pemulwuy was captured. Nevertheless, despite severe buckshot wounds to the head and body, he later escaped with an iron on his leg.

## **April**

The natives at the Hawkesbury were at this time very troublesome, burning a dwelling-house and a stack of wheat belonging to a settler there, after having plundered him of all his other possessions. (ibid. p.31)

## **May**

Hunter noted that "many robberys and cruelty", livestock thefts, arson, murder and injury had been inflicted on the settlers by Aborigines in association with convict absconders. Pemulwuy was blamed for leading raids on farms just north of Parramatta, where two settlers (John Wood, a settler, and William Garland, a convict) were killed, and huts plundered of food, clothing etc.

## **October**

The conflict on the Hawkesbury had reached dangerous proportions for the colonial government. Aborigines attempted to take over a grain boat on the river.

## **1798**

### **February**

With the ripening of the maize fields, the depredations of the natives returned. On the 19th the governor received a despatch from Parramatta, containing an account, that a man had been murdered by them near Toongabbe, and three others severely wounded; and a few days after, two others were killed in the same manner. It became, from these circumstances, absolutely necessary to send out numerous well-armed parties and attack them wherever they should be met with; for leniency or forbearance had only been followed by repeated acts of cruelty. (ibid. p.93.)

### **May**

Towards the latter end of the month, the settlers at the northern farms were much annoyed by the natives, who came down in a body, and burnt several of their houses. (ibid. p.113-5)

## 1799

Pemulwuy re-appeared in May, 1799, and a settler was fatally speared on the George's River. In August, a settler murdered an Aboriginal woman and child. The Aborigines retaliated by killing two Europeans. In September, two Aboriginal boys were "barbarously murdered:", and a woman and child were killed in "a most shameful and wanton manner" by five settlers.

A short while later, Governor Hunter ordered the arrest of the five settlers. From the Hawkesbury River district - Simon Freebody, William Butler, Ed Powell, James Metcalfe and William Timms. The trial was remarkably simple. In court Sarah Hodgkinson explained that about three weeks before the murders her husband had been killed by Aborigines. She told the court how her grief had turned to revenge and how she had asked the men to kill the boys. It was irrational frontier revenge.

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There was no evidence that the boys had been involved in the Hodgkinson killing. The prosecution then brought Lieutenant Hobby of the New South Wales Corps to the dock. He told of how he had found the bodies of the two Aborigines. Both boys had their hands tied. One had been nearly decapitated; the other had been killed by a series of sword stabs. The court had no alternative. The five defendants were found guilty. But instead of sentencing them, they were all set free and the case and the sentence were referred to His Majesty's Ministers in England. (Elder 1988 p.19)The trial was held in October but they were released after a few days in gaol-ostensibly because their farms were in danger of being destroyed. They were eventually pardoned in 1802.

Hunter correctly places the blame for the problems with the settlers.

**Much of the hostile disposition which has occasionally appear'd in those people (the Aborigines) has been put too often provoked by the treatment which many of them have received from the white inhabitants, and which have scarsely (sic) been heard of by those who have the power of bestowing punishment (Hunter to Portland HRNSW Vol 4 p1)**

Unfortunately, it was not only the settlers who committed atrocities. A deep hatred grew up between the Aborigines and the soldiers who were stationed near the Hawkesbury. The reason for this situation was also recorded by Hunter:

**Their violence against the military proceeded from a soldier having in a most shameful and wanton manner killed a native woman and child. (Hunter HRNSW) With respect to the defenceless settlers and the stock, the Governor has directed that as well, that all other natives in the above district to be driven back from the settlers' habitations by firing at them. (HRNSW vol. 4,p.362)**

## November

A detachment was posted to Georges River to prevent the natives from firing the wheat... They are to fire on any native or natives they see, and if they can, pursue them with a chance of overtaking them. Every means is to be used to drive them off, either by shooting them or otherwise, taking care always to leave one private where posted. (ibid. p. 628)

Similar procedures were to be carried out at the outposts at Parramatta. Convicts William Knight and Thomas Thrush were outlawed, together with Pemulwuy.

**1802**

**October**

Four Whites were killed; many farms were plundered around Parramatta and Toongabbie "... Two settlers, not having the means of securing the persons of Pemulwye and another native, shot them." (HRNSW vol. 4, p.868)

**1804**

**May/June**

A Report by Governor King stated, in part:

...the natives were very troublesome to the settlers on the lower parts of the Hawkesbury, occasioned by the temptation of taking their maize... From these circumstances several very daring outrages were committed by the natives; and as the whole of the new settlers were leaving their habitations, I was very reluctantly compelled to direct a stop being put to those acts by firing on them, which very soon had the desired effect, but not before two of the natives were killed. (HRNSW Vol. 5, p. 430)

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**1805**

**April**

A Government and General Order claimed:

Whereas the natives in different parts of the out-settlements have in an unprovoked and inexcusable manner lately committed the most brutal murder on some defenceless settlers whose hospitality appears to have drawn upon them the most barbarous treatment, and there being but little hope of the murderers being given up to justice, the Governor has judged it necessary, for the preservation of the lives and properties of the out-settlers and stockmen, to distribute detachments from the New South Wales Corps among the out-settlers for their protection against those uncivilized insurgents; but, as those measures alone will only be a present check, it is hereby required and ordered that no natives be suffered to approach the grounds or dwellings of any settler until the murderers are given up. (ibid. p. 596)

Settlers were to be prosecuted if they 'harboured natives and were required to assist each other in repelling those visits'. However, a number of Aborigines who were well known around Prospect and Parramatta were exempted from this restriction after they had placed themselves under the protection of the Parramatta magistrates. Later, more Aborigines successfully applied to be allowed to return to Parramatta and Sydney, although trouble continued along the Hawkesbury and George's rivers. (Reece 1974 p.107-108)

**May**

Paramilitary punitive expeditions were conducted by the Europeans following raids by Tal-lonn on flocks at Seven Hills and the killing of one of Macarthur's stockmen. The parties were led by Major Johnson, whose party killed Tal-lonn and Andrew Thompson, whose party killed "a considerable number"; and by Obediah Ikin who was said to have "destroyed many of them".

## June

'Mosquito', who was accused of leading an attack on farms in this month, was tracked down, imprisoned and transported to Norfolk Island. In this way, Darug resistance was broken down so that by the end of 1805, the virtual state of war that had existed since 1793 was effectively over. Despite a number of killings in succeeding years, there was little extensive violence and conflict for nearly ten years.

## 1814

### May

Aborigines along the Nepean killed a soldier and three other settlers. Macquarie dispatched a small military party to the area. Macquarie noted that he had learned that some idle and ill disposed Europeans had taken liberties with their women, and had also treacherously attacked and killed a woman and her two children whilst sleeping, and this unprovoked cruelty produced that retaliation whereby persons perfectly innocent of the crime lost their lives. (HRA Vol.8,p.250-1)

### August

Hostilities erupted between Aborigines in the Mulgoa area and the white settlers. The Sydney Gazette on 7th August, 1814, gave the following report:

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**The mountain natives have lately become troublesome to the occupiers of remote grounds. Mr. Cox's people at Mulgoa have been several times attacked within the last month, and compelled to defend themselves with their muskets, which the assailants seemed less in dread of then could possibly have been expected.**

Moved by genuine sympathy for the remnants of the 'Sydney blacks', Macquarie was the first governor to concern himself conscientiously and constructively with Aboriginal welfare. Despite the depressing evidence visible in Sydney, he believed that contact with a 'superior civilization' must of necessity benefit a 'primitive, benighted' race. In December 1814 he announced his intention of establishing a school for Aboriginal children at Parramatta and an annual 'feast' or 'congress' which would serve the dual purpose of reuniting the pupils with their relatives and demonstrating His Majesty's goodwill with presents of roast beef, plum pudding, slop clothing, blankets, pipes and tobacco. Accordingly, the Native institution was opened in January 1815 under the supervision of the former South Seas missionary William Shelly and his wife .

Macquarie also established 'King' Bungaree and the remnants of the Broken Bay tribe on a reserve of land at George's Head on the northern side of the Harbour. (Reece 1974)

## 1816

### March

Severe drought caused Aborigines to kill 5 settlers along the Nepean at the Cowpastures and forced many others to abandon their farms. Other attacks occurred on the Hawkesbury and at South Creek. Macquarie declared his intention to:

**send a strong detachment of troops to drive them to a distance from the settlements of the white men, and to endeavour to take some of them prisoners in order to be punished for their late atrocious conduct, so as to strike them**

with terror against committing similar acts of violence in future. (HRA Vol.9, pp.53-4)

Macquarie despatched a military expedition lasting twenty three days to the Hawkesbury, Nepean and Grose Rivers to sieze all Aborigines found. Near Appin fourteen men, women and children were killed and five captured, and bodies of two Aborigines, Durelle and Kanabygal,(or Carabygal) were hung in order to terrify the survivors.

#### 4th May

Macquarie issued a Proclamation declaring that henceforth no Aboriginal with any "weapon", and no group of more than six unarmed Aborigines "shall ever appear at or within one mile of any town, village, or farm". (Willey 1979, p.165)

Finally, those Aborigines who desired the protection of the British government and who conducted themselves in a suitable manner were to be supplied with 'Passports or Certificates' signed by the Governor and issued by the Colonial secretary on the first day of each month.

But the vital point made in the Proclamation was that settlers were empowered to use force of arms if in their judgement the Aborigines had contravened the Regulations, and to apply to a magistrate for military assistance if the situation was beyond their means. (Reece 1974, p. 109-110)

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Macquarie issued two further proclamations on the Aborigines: one on 20 July 1816 outlawing 10 'Most Violent and Atrocious Natives' and another on 1 November offering an amnesty to those who had not already been killed and confirming the holding of a 'General Friendly Meeting' at Parramatta on 28 December. The Blanket distribution was to begin. (HRA, IX, pp. 362-6)

Basically, the war for Western Sydney was over. The increased authority and order Macquarie brought to military operations in the colony ensured that his Proclamation was thoroughly policed. The Darug people were now aliens in sections of land that they had once roamed freely in pursuit of game and other native foods. But by this stage, western Sydney had been thoroughly settled, and it was virtually impossible for Blacks not to be "within one mile of any town, village, or farm."

To take away Aboriginal weapons, while securing the safety of settlers and the continued viability of the infant colony, was also to take away the Aboriginal means of a livelihood. It was a guaranteed method of ensuring Aboriginal dependence upon European systems of production, and of robbing the Darug of proud hunting and food gathering traditions that had taken thousands of years to develop. Henceforward, Aborigines of the western Sydney region were at the mercy of the colonial authorities, whose primary concern was the continued expansion of British settlement further westward - into yet more Aboriginal land. ( *On Darug Land* 1988 p74)

FROM: *RACE RELATIONS IN AUSTRALIA The Aborigines* Fay Gale, 1975.

In 1845 the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney gave clear evidence of the reasons for the Aboriginal

decline.

The aggressive mode of taking possession of their country which necessarily involves a vast loss of life to the native population. This is done under the influence of principles and ideas which parties, to soothe remorse of conscience, under the influence of selfish motives, are willing to adopt. I have myself heard a man, educated, and large proprietor of sheep and cattle, maintain, that there was no more harm in shooting a native, than in shooting a wild dog. I have heard it maintained by others, that it was in the course of Providence, that the blacks should disappear before the white, and the sooner the process was carried out, the better for all parties.

I fear such opinions prevail to a great extent. Very recently in the presence of two clergymen, a man of education narrated, as a good thing, that he had been one of a party who had pursued the blacks, in consequence of the cattle having been rushed by them, and that he was sure they shot upwards of a hundred. When expostulated with, he maintained that there was nothing wrong in it, that it was preposterous to suppose they had souls. In this opinion he was joined by another educated person present.

I fear also, though I am ashamed to say it, that I have reason to believe that poison has been, in many instances, used.

John Molloy, a surgeon in the Hawkesbury district in 1800, maintained that in the four and a half years prior to 1799, 26 white settlers had been killed and 13 wounded (*On Darug Land* 1988 p75.)

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**60,000 Aborigines died after 1788, study shows.**

**(The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 Feb, 1987.) By Joseph Glascott**

More than 600,000 Aborigines died in the years after European settlement in Australia, thousands of them shot by the settler, according to new evidence.

Recent archaeological research shows that the Aboriginal population in 1788 was much higher than earlier thought.

These are the findings of the authorities in the Australian Bicentennial history book project, *Australians to 1788*, which have been announced in the Sydney University newsletter.

Dr. Peter White, reader in anthropology at Sydney University and a co-editor of the book, said that the estimate of the Aboriginal population in Australia at the start of European settlement in 1788 had been dramatically revised upwards to about 750,000 people.

The more than doubled the estimate of about 300,000 which was accepted in the 1930's.

Dr. White said belief in the smaller number of Aborigines at the time of settlement had helped diminish the responsibility of Europeans for the decline of the Aboriginal population.

"If we are now talking about 750,000 people rather than 300,000 the destruction of the

Aboriginal society was on a more appalling scale than we imagined," he said.

"A large Aboriginal population in some areas also explains more easily the terror some settlers must have felt, because obviously in some places there were few whites and thousands of Aborigines.

"But the recent research confirms that thousands of Aboriginal men, women and children were killed by European settlers."

The co-editor of the book, Emeritus Professor D.J. Mulvaney, Professor D.J. Mulvaney, professor of pre-history at the Australian National University, said the recent evidence meant that more than 600,000 Aborigines died in the years after European settlement.

The majority would have died from introduced diseases such as influenza and smallpox, and a poor diet of flour and other new foods which replaced their traditional balanced diet.

"While the population figures are only estimates, there is no doubt that a great many Aborigines were shot by Europeans," he said.

"In the Alice Springs area between 1870 and 1900, between 500 and 1,000 Aborigines were killed by settlers. In one area of Queensland, about 200 to 300 were killed in one massacre.

"Some Europeans were also murdered by Aborigines. But the settlers killed about 20 Aborigines for every white person who was murdered."

Professor Mulvaney said recent archaeological evidence also showed that Aborigines were not as nomadic as traditionally believed. Stone houses near Hamilton in southern Victoria indicated that Aborigines lived in semi permanent villages in some food-rich areas. He said Aborigines had a more diverse diet than was thought. "The traditional idea is that Aborigines hunted kangaroos. But the vegetable food sources from plant life was probably much more important."

Professor Mulvaney said Aboriginal occupation in Australia had been traced back 40,000 years.

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## D. ABORIGINAL IDENTITIES

### BUNGAREE

Bungaree came with remnants of the Broken Bay tribe to settle in Sydney; King Bungaree in reply to questions, of early European contact; said

**When the tribe to which he belonged first beheld the big ships, some thought they were sea monsters; other groups thought they were gigantic birds, and the sails were their wings; while many declared they they were a mixture of gigantic fish and bird, and that the boats which were towed astern were their young ones. He heightened his description by acting the consternation of the tribe on that occasion. He told me they were too much terrified to offer any hostile demonstrations, and that when they first heard the report of a musket, and of a ship's gun, they fancied those weapons were living agents of the white man (Sadleir, 1978).**

Bungaree first came to the record when he was recruited by Flinders in 1799, to accompany his voyage of exploration in the *Porpoise*. His age was probably about 18. His achievements were many, his character exemplary and his conduct earned the praise of all under whom he served.

After his return from the *Porpoise* voyage 1799, he was recruited by Lieutenant Grant in the *Lady Nelson* and assisted in the exploration of the Hunter River. He then joined Captain Matthew Flinders in the *Investigator* with another Aboriginal named Nanbaree who had been brought up in the settlement under Surgeon White. They were thus the first native born Australians to circumnavigate Australia.

In 1804 Governor King sent Bungaree to assist in handling the local Aborigines at Newcastle where the penal settlement had been reopened. Unfortunately some absconding convicts killed Bungaree's father whilst making their way back to Sydney through the Central Coast. Bungaree then returned to his family group of which he now became the Elder.

He visited the settlement at Sydney on several occasions for ceremonies and gatherings and became known to and a favourite of Governor Macquarie. At the time, under stimulus from home, the Governor was making special efforts to get the Aborigines to settle down and grow crops.

In 1815 Governor Macquarie persuaded Bungaree, his family group and 15 other Aboriginal families to leave the Central Coast and to occupy some huts which had been prepared for them at Georges Head, near the entrance to Port Jackson which he called King Bungaree's Farm. The land was rock-strewn and barren and thus farming failed but the fishing boat provided was used to row out to the open sea and catch fish. An old map dated 30th October 1841 notes an area at George's Heights as "King Bungaree's Farm" so evidently it was still being used as an Aboriginal settlement even though it was unsuitable for any farming purpose (Carroll 1949).

In 1817, however, Captain Phillip Parker King, who had been directed to complete the maritime survey begun by Matthew Flinders, again recruited Bungaree who thus became the first native born Aboriginal Australian to circumnavigate Australia twice. On his return Bungaree found that his family group had returned to the Central Coast where he followed them. So it was that he was not on the spot when Captain King sailed on his second voyage.

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In 1821 Governor Macquarie made his last visit to Newcastle and Bungaree and his family group journeyed to Wallis Plains to put on a "Kauraberie" for the old Viceroy. At his meeting Macquarie persuaded Bungaree and his family group to settle again at Georges Head. Here, the day before they embarked for England, the Macquarie visited and farewelled the Bungaree family group and left them in the care of the new Governor who has been a member of the visiting party.

From this point onward Bungaree himself became one of the fixtures of and one of the sights worth seeing in the settlement. Governor Macquarie, who had been promoted just before his departure, had presented Bungaree with his old uniform and accoutrements and with such other things as a well equipped boat. Bungaree loved to wear the uniform and became a familiar figure in it. As an ex - naval man he knew and observed the necessities of naval procedure in all his comings and goings and he was one of the few competent interpreters then available.



All the diarists and analysts of the period mention him and most refer to his manly character and good qualities. Flinders, Collins, Menzies and Macquarie all tell a good deal of the story and the writers of the 1820's such as W.C. Wentworth, J.D. Lang and Peter Cunningham also refer to him.

The village Bribie Island in Queensland is named after him. So also is a fishing village in the state of Victoria in the form of Bungaree Norah. His memory is honoured in the Central Coast by the name given to the headland on which Norah Head Lighthouse stands.

It is not possible to determine the exact position of the Central Coast from which Bungaree and his family group came from, it is more probable that they came from Patonga but it is still possible that they came and were a family group whose hunting grounds were in the vicinity of the area named Bungary Norah. Bungaree was looked after in Garden Island Naval Hospital in his last illness. He died in 1830 and was buried at Rose Bay.

For further details on Bungaree see Keith Willey's *When the Sky Fell Down*.

## MUSQUITO

A well known resistance fighter from the Central Coast was Musquito, who was a revolutionary and desperado according to the norms set by European law. Early in the contact period, Musquito became involved with the criminal fringe of European society. He later led several attacks against colonists along the Hawkesbury River, and was eventually imprisoned and sent in 1805 to Norfolk Island and later Tasmania in 1813. Musquito's first-hand knowledge of bush-ranging tactics was subsequently used by the authorities to help round up outlaws in Tasmania.

When given his freedom as a reward, Musquito became leader of a renegade group of Tasmanians, and organised large-scale guerilla tactics against the colonists, with tactics aimed at emulating the military discipline and skills of the soldiers. He was eventually re-captured, and sentenced to death for murder in 1825 in Hobart gaol. At the hanging, Musquito expressed the view that hanging was "no good for blackfellow". On being asked if it was good for white fellow, why was it not also good for blackfellow, he gave the laconic reply "Oh white fellow! Him bin blurry well used to it now" (Bennett 1969: 15-16; see also Willey 1979: 180-182 in Vinnicombe 1980.)

## TURO DOWNS

The older inhabitants of Brisbane Water still recall an Aboriginal by the name of Turo Downs who lived at Hardy's Bay but he was not a local man. He had been brought from Northern Queensland by a contractor named Dunk. Turo later became an employee of Captain Anderson who had a vessel which carried fire-wood to Sydney. Turo was able to bring the ship from Sydney to Brisbane Water on his own. He was a great runner and a powerful swimmer and impressed those who saw him dive into the sea from the rocks at Kilcare Beach and emerge with a thrashing lobster in his hands. Turo Downs still has a great reputation among the older inhabitants, who

remember him as a gentleman in the true sense of the word, astute, polite and with a good command of English (pers. comm. E. Pope and B. Myers). He died on Brisbane Waters aged 86 in 1942. Turo Downs was buried at Kincumber Church, where a grave stone bears the tribute that he was "respected by all" (Swancott 1961: 10, 142 in Vinnicombe). There is a photograph of Turo Downs in pg 82 *The Third Old Gosford* by Gwen Dunder 1980.

## **BILLY FAWKNER**

In 1875 Henry Kendall the well known poet and columnist, described Billy Fawkner, in the *Town and Country Journal*, as being "the last of the blacks." Consequently Kendall's elegy "The Last of his Tribe," was probably about Billy Fawkner. (The elegy is quoted in full in the section, Culture Contact and Conflict - Case Studies) Also known as King Billy, Fawkner had been a trusty servant with the Ward family at Brisbane Waters for many years, helping to raise their children. Henry Kendall had lived in Brisbane Water for two years and certainly knew the Wards and Billy Fawkner. (Vinnicombe IV:29)

In the 1860's and 70's Billy used to travel to Dural to sell fish and oysters and with the money bought tea, sugar, flour, tobacco and pipes from the Central store.

King Billy's Cave was about three-quarters of a mile south of Berowra Creek. At the top of his cave was a distinct effect of the head of an Aboriginal, not carved. King Billy's wife, Sal, lived in another cave nearby, and she would jump from the top of her cave and drop into his. There was no other way she could enter. In the water was "Sal's Rock" from which she used to fish. (*Local Colour*, July/September 1977)

The grave of Billy Fawkner, who died on land where he belonged, is apparently lost in oblivion. (Vinnicombe IV:29)

## **WILLERMARIN**

Willermarin was the Aboriginal person who threw the spear which struck Governor Phillip at Manly Cove. Willermarin was a visitor to this area from the North, probably the Central Coast. This information is according to Captain Tench in Cobley, J. (1963.)

## **BRANCH JACK**

In 1804 new European settlement in the Portland Head (now called Sackville Reach) area caused conflict between the Aboriginal people as they were again driven from the river banks.

One of the settlers sent Governor King a memorial requesting permission for the European settlers to shoot any Aboriginal people who appeared on sight and as a result Governor King sent for three Aboriginal people who declared that they did not like not being allowed near the river banks and being shot at and asked if they could have the lower part of the Colo River and King assured them that there would be no more settlement in this region. But land grants continued the following year when Aborigines realised they were still being driven from their land.

Branch Jack, an Aboriginal 'resistance fighter,' led his people on a series of raids using guerilla warfare tactics against the European settlers around his own neighbourhood, the Colo River area. After numerous raids on farms and killings in the district the Aboriginal warriors escaped to the mountains and could not be found. Armed boats were sent out but no one was apprehended.

In September 1805 a vessel , *The Hawkesbury* was moored off Mangrove Point downstream from the present day Wiseman's Ferry. The Aboriginal raiding party paddled out, boarded the ships while the Captain and crew were down below sleeping.

Branch Jack and Woglomigh a 'notorious', Aboriginal leader were seen by the captain when he went to investigate when he heard voices from above. Woglomigh wounded the Captain in the hand with a spear and was shot by another European visitor on the boat. The Aborigines retreated and Branch Jack swam for the banks. As he rose to breathe he was fired at three times and died on the banks before his father and the rest of his people. (Ross 1980 : 87,88)

### **Queen Gooseberry.**

Queen Gooseberry was one of Bungaree's wives whose father had come from the Northern Sydney area. Her father told her about the rock carvings around the harbour foreshores and she showed those she knew about at North Head to George French Angus a European visitor with an interest in them. After Bungaree's death she settled around Camp Cove, South Head with other groups of displaced Aborigines and was given a breast plate with her name on it. She died in 1862 and is supposedly buried at La Perouse.

### **Bumble**

A servant of a Yarramalong Valley family after whom Bumble Hill on the Central Coast is named.

### **Biraban (bee-re-bahn) meaning Eaglehawk**

Biraban was well known Aboriginal character from the Awabakal area of the Central Coast. He was born at Bahtabah (Belmont). As a child he was taken to Sydney to act as personal assistant to an officer of the Sydney Barracks Captain John M. Gill. He was given the English name of Johnny McGill (after his master) and quickly learnt to speak English fluently.

Biraban, having been initiated through 14 different ceremonies was a leader of the Awabakals. When L.E. Threlkeld opened a mission on Lake Macquarie in 1825, Biraban, through his influence on his people and his knowledge of English, became Threlkeld's interpreter and linguistic assistant. Threlkeld used his association with Biraban to make a full translation of the Awabakal language. The mission closed in 1841.

Biraban also helped interpret at court cases which involved Aborigines, where his abilities and demeanour won the respect of officiating judges but he was not allowed to be sworn as a witness (as he was Aboriginal).

Biraban was an outstanding Aboriginal of his time, at once using European culture and at the same time preserving his traditional integrity. Although attentive to the Christian teaching of his employer, he was also punctilious in observing his own tribal customs and ceremonial obligations. (Vinnicombe IV:198 1980)

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He took part in the annual get-together of Aborigines where he was declared and given the

insignia of King of the Lake Macquarie tribe. He visited the Australian Agricultural Company at Port Stephens with Rev. L.E. Threlkeld and they astonished the local people by addressing them in their own language. (Bennett 1969 : 15)

Biraban skills and influence were used to create a better understanding between the Europeans and the Aborigines of the whole colony. Biraban died in about 1850. (Threlkeld, in Vinnicombe 1980)

### **Pemulwy.**

**The name Pemulwy means earth: man of the earth. Pemulwy lived in Australia in the last half of the 18th century. He was born around 1756 to a people who believed that their world was brought into being by a transcendental creator who took the temporal form of the rainbow. He died in 1802. He was the rainbow warrior. (Eric Wilmot, 1987.)**

Such was the legend of Pemulwy, as stated by Wilmot in his book, *Pemulwy, The Rainbow Warrior*, Weldon 1981. It is recommended reading, also the viewing SBS series *The Rainbow Serpent*, an episode called "Warriors".

Wilmott describes his extraordinary powers and his connection to the supernatural. In both legend and history, he is credited with conducting a 12 year campaign against the European invaders that were well beyond the acts of outlaws or thieves.

**They were acts of war carried out by people determined not to surrender their land or sovereignty to the invader. (Wilmot 1987)**

Pemulwy was a member of the Eora people from the Sydney area. He fought fiercely against the Europeans in the Sydney - Parramatta area from 1790 to 1802.

He is not mentioned in our textbooks because, unlike Aborigines like Bennelong, he did not accept European ways nor their presence in the Sydney region. Despite the fact that past historians have overlooked Aboriginal resistance in general, and Pemulwy's exploits in particular, we can put together his career from documents of the time such as Governor Phillip's correspondence and from journals of the earliest colonists.

1790 Pemulwy and his group had committed many raids against the colonists, killing or wounding seventeen people.

Pemulwy speared Governor Phillip's gamekeeper, John McIntire who later died from his wounds.

Governor Phillip ordered a punitive party to pursue Pemulwy and his group and to bring back six adult males - dead or alive. They failed.

1794 Pemulwy was involved in a raid at Parramatta and wounded.

1795 Pemulwy was spotted at an initiation ceremony, fully recovered from his wounds.

Pemulwy led an attack on settlers at Brickfield Hill near Sydney.

Another punitive party went in search of Pemulwy but was not

successful.

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Pemulwy fought Black Caesar, a negro bushranger, and was seriously wounded.

1796 Pemulwy led many attacks against settlers in Parramatta and Lane Cove.

1797 Pemulwy and his group attacked and killed settlers at Toongabbie and north of Parramatta.

Settlers finally confronted Pemulwy and his group. Five Aborigines were killed and Pemulwy was wounded. He was taken to hospital with seven buckshot wounds. Later he escaped, even though he had irons on his legs.

1798 A myth grew up among the Aborigines that Pemulwy was immune to European weapons.

1799 Pemulwy's attacks on the settlers increased.

1801 Pemulwy and his people started setting fire to crops and houses and continued killing settlers.

Governor King issued orders that the Aborigines of the Parramatta, Georges River and Prospect Hill districts were to be fired at on sight. Pemulwy continued his raids, killing more settlers.

Governor King outlawed and offered a reward for the capture of Pemulwy - dead or alive.

1802 Pemulwy again attacked settlers at Parramatta and Toongabbie, killing four.

Governor King told the local Aborigines that if Pemulwy was captured he would re-establish friendly relations with them.

Not long after this Pemulwy was shot by two settlers. His head was amputated, preserved in spirits and sent to Sir Joseph Banks in England for research purposes.

**Although a terrible pest to the colony he was a brave and independent character (King HRNSW Vol 4 : 784).**

#### **Discussion Points**

1. List some of the guerrilla war tactics used by Pemulwy.
2. Why, do you think, was Pemulwy's head considered of importance to "scientific research" in 1802?
3. What happens when a person is declared an outlaw?

(From the work of Kate Cameron)

### **Marth Hobbs / Everingham**

Martha Hobbs was an Aboriginal women from the Hawkesbury area. She married Ephrain Everingham who was born in 1855 of an Aboriginal mother and non Aboriginal father (John Everingham [son of a First Fleeter]/ Mildred Saunders). They settled around the Sackville area, and lived on a local property "Tinzana." They had children who went to the local schools, six boys and two girls. Some of the grandchildren of Martha lived on Sackville reserve in the early 20th century.

Descendants of the family still live in the Windsor and Richmond area and also in Sydney and there are several buried in St. Thomas Cemetary, Sackville. Matha Everingham was said to be the last of the traditional Aboriginal women of the Hawkesbury area. She died in Sackville at the Everingham property "Tinzana in 1926 and is buried at the local church, St Thomas Church of England, Sackville Reach.

(Ross 1981 : 202, Ross 1980 :380)

For more information about this family see *Aboriginal History* vol 12 1-2 1988 pg 63 and *History Magazine* of The Royal Australian Historical Society No. 4, June 1989 pg 13 and Ross, V. *Cornstalks A Geneology*, Library of Australian History 1980.

### **Other Aboriginal People of the 19th Century and early 20th Century.**

After the devastating first contact period, Aboriginal people lived on the fringes of European society often subsisting off rations and blankets handed out by the Government or catching and collecting their own food. Very little is mentioned in books, journals and newspaper articles of these people because they were thought to be 'a dying race.'

Evidence suggest that Aboriginal people lived along the shores of the Hawkesbury River and its tributaries and Sydney Harbour up until the 1920's perhaps and that others were living on specific Aboriginal Reserves (such as the Sackville Reach reserves) having travelled there from many areas until these reserves were forcably closed by the Aboriginal Protection Board in the 1920's,30's and 40's.

Some of these people to get a mention in various books are:

\* **Granny Lewis** - who lived on the banks of the Marramarra Creek in the Berowra area. Her decendants are reported to have intermarried with non Aboriginal people in this area (*Local Colour*).

\* **Black Lucy** - who lived in Milling Street Gladesville, until she died in the late 1920's. She was referred to by Europeans as the last (traditional) member of the Gameraigal tribe and was buried in the Field of Mars cemetery. (Attenbrow 1981 : 91-92)

\* **Tarpot** - occupied a cave at Mosman Bay above "The Barn" the boy scouts building and lived by catching fish and doing odd jobs. He was usually dressed in cast off naval uniforms. He was

reported to be still alive in 1888 (Guilder n.d. and Carroll 1949)

Other Aboriginal people lived until the early 1900's at Quakers Hat Bay near Beauty Point, Middle Harbour (Information from D. Keed 28/5/1984 North Sydney local history library collection also Carroll 1963,1949)

Quakers Hat Bay was earlier named Red Hand Bay because of the stencilled red hands at one time to be found there on the sandstone rocks and caves in the area.

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At Christmas time, the "Blackfellows", as they called the Aborigines, would come up in hordes from the country and camp in the caves in the Cremorne Reserve. There they waited to receive the annual gift of a blanket each, given by the Government. Traces of these Christmas gatherings could still, until quite recently, be seen in the heaps of half-burnt shells around the caves. Source: *Doctor Agnes Bennett*, C & C Manson, 1960 :11. Local history section of North Sydney library.

On the flat piece of ground between the Kurraba Road bridge and Aubin Street adjacent to a pretty waterfall, now covered by stones and other dumpings, and at the immediate rear of "Dalmarnock" cottage, the blacks would come in from far and near each year and camp for some time in order to receive the annual distribution of blankets and rations on the Queen's birthday. These blacks would forage for miles around and pretty well clean out all the opossums and other matter fit for digestion. Sometimes they would camp at the back of "Fassifern," the late residence of the family Loxtons. During the visit of the late Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, in 1868, in the H.M.S. Galatea, the Aborigines that were collected from the different districts to perform a large corroboree before the royal visitor camped about where St. John's Church now stands on the southern heights of Careening Cove.

I well remember watching a number of the original inhabitants of this country here camped practising for this great event, making their boomerangs from the local trees and using them, as they danced round with their bodies painted in many designs. The grotesqueness and facial contortions were such that one could never forget. Source: *Early Neutral Bay*, L.F. Mann, R.A.H.S.J. Vol. XVIII, Part IV, 1932. Local History Section North Sydney Library.

## **SECTION THREE REBELLION, REFORM AND REASSERTION.**

### **A. The Protection Period 1850-1940's**

European settlement had altered the Aborigines from free, assured people, held together by a strong sense of community obligation and sharing networks, to a scattered group of dependents, relying on the hand-outs of a non-Aboriginal society.

As early as 1841 Crown Land Commissioner Allman wrote of his belief in the benefits of "separating the children of the present generation from their parents and placing them under competent tuition" to try to keep the children from leaving the mission stations with their parents.

The Aborigines believed in a spirit world, unseen yet ever present. The missionaries could not challenge the power of the spirits. Europeans, being seen as re-incarnated spirits might be expected to break the 'tabus' which to the Aborigines were inviolable. By accommodating the white man's presence into their beliefs, the Aborigines were able to resist, even ignore, the attacks on their behaviour of the Europeans who, on the one hand, put forward Christian laws and codes of behaviour, but on the other hand, disobeyed those laws with impunity. This was unacceptable within the Aboriginal system of values and beliefs.

The Aborigines Protection Board (later to become known as the Aborigines Welfare Board) was established by the New South Wales Government in 1883. Its powers were legislated through an act of parliament in 1909.

The Board's policy was that all Aborigines should live on reserves. In 1883 there were 25 Aboriginal reserves totalling 1,414 hectares. By 1900 there were 133 reserves. Aborigines were encouraged to farm these reserves and implements were supplied. Most of the reserves would have been considered insufficient to support one non Aboriginal family, but they were expected to support whole Aboriginal communities. It was the Board's policy to force Aborigines to be self-sufficient by supplying rations only to the aged, the sick and children. Most Aboriginal reserves were miles out of town, making it more difficult for Aborigines to get work.

Reserves were run by non Aboriginal officials or missionaries. Generally, their effect was one



of institutionalising the people, and they lost their desire and ability to be self-sufficient. The only form of protest that was safe was one of passive resistance, often disguised to appear as incompetence or stupidity. It is an intelligent human strategy to be uncooperative when other means of resistance are not available.

Resistance sometimes also took the form of leaving the mission or reserve where possible for the establishment of the missions meant a fixed focus of activity and implied that the Aboriginal people should forgo their traditional lifestyles.

The powers of the Protection Board were wide and far reaching. What we would today call invasion of privacy and denial of natural justice was then a daily occurrence. There were weekly inspections of houses; the Aborigines were required to ask for permission to enter or leave a reserve; they were excluded from various social security allowances of the day and, where eligible, were paid in the form of household goods which were not transferable if the family left the reserve. Those who wanted to move about their locality as free citizens needed "an exemption certificate" but these were very difficult to obtain. Indeed, Aborigines did not always want them because it was an insult to their humanity and set them apart from their kin. 124

By far the worst actions of the Board were those which removed Aboriginal children from their families. Legally children could only be removed if they were neglected or uncontrollable but in practice the law worked differently. No committal hearing was necessary and in some cases managers of reserves wrote on the committal notice the reason for the Board taking control of a child simply as "for being Aboriginal".

Training homes were set up to train Aboriginal children as domestic servants and labourers: a girls dormitory at Warangesda Station on the Murrumbidgee in 1893, the Cootamundra Girls Home in 1911 and the Kinchela Boys Home at Kempsey in 1924. From 1915 to 1939 any station manager or policeman could take Aboriginal children from their parents if he thought this was for their moral or spiritual welfare. Many Aboriginal people grew up not knowing who their parents were. Brothers and sisters were always separated and usually lost contact. Parents were actively discouraged from visiting their children, and children were never allowed to go home, because Government policy was designed to break up Aboriginal families. More than 5,000 children were removed in this way between 1883 and 1969 when the Aborigines Welfare Board was finally abolished. (In 1940 the Aboriginal Protection Board was replaced by the Aboriginal Welfare Board.)

Under legislation in force after 1939 non Aboriginal children could also be charged with neglect and removed from their parents but the act under which they were charged was a good deal more generous in the alternatives in offered of being fostered by suitable relatives or returned to the parents after a period of good behaviour.

A 1918 amendment to the Protection Act defined an Aborigine as "any full-blooded or half-caste Aboriginal who is a native of NSW." These people were legally allowed to live on reserves. To the Aborigines, however, the criteria for being Aboriginal were identifying as such and being of Aboriginal descent.

During the 1920's and 1930's the discrepancy between these two definitions caused untold misery. The Protection Board expelled hundreds of people from the reserves on the grounds they were not Aborigines. When these people moved to new camps on the town fringes, local councils

would hound them away on the grounds they were Aboriginal. They became displaced persons, wandering from station to reserve to fringe camp, often miles from their traditional territory, and so, unwelcome by those Aborigines on whose territories they were forced to now live.

In New South Wales a new Aborigines Protection Act was passed in 1936. It applied to "any full blooded or half caste Aboriginal." Any statement or document was enough to prove a person was Aboriginal unless the contrary could be "shown to the satisfaction of the Court." If there was any doubt the Court could decide on sight.

The 1936 Act allowed any Aboriginal or "person apparently having an admixture of Aboriginal blood" to be removed by court order to a reserve, and kept there until the order was cancelled. It was now an offence to entice or assist any Aboriginal person to move from a reserve. The Board could also terminate any Aboriginal employment if the Board was not satisfied with its terms. The so called protection policy was in fact a dispersal policy and was to be replaced by assimilation policies and then integration policies, none of which took into account what the Aboriginal people themselves would have wanted. Whether Government policy caused anger or fear, defiance or misery, dispersal touched all Aboriginal people in New South Wales.

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From: The Module Bank 87/004 *The School in the Community: the Aboriginal Perspective*

### **ACTIVITIES.**

#### **Material Required**

- \* Worksheet 1 - N.S.W. Aborigines Protection Act, 1909
- \* Worksheet 2 - Application for Exemption
- \* Worksheet 3 - Certificate of Exemption
- \* Video - 'Lousy Little Sixpence' (1 hour)  
or  
'Women of the Sun' Episode 2, 3 or 4  
(1 hour per episode)
- \* VCR and monitor  
(one copy of each worksheet per participant)

#### **TASK ACTIVITY**

1. Distribute Worksheet 1 and ask participants to read it.
2. Ask participants to form small groups to discuss the worksheet. Suggest to small group leaders that they may wish to use the following discussion points.

#### **Some possible discussion points**

- \* type of document (Act of Parliament/Government Policy)
  - \* wording of the document (complicated legal language)
  - \* members of the Board (who they were, how they were appointed)
  - \* powers of the Board (amount of control)
  - \* effects of the Board's decisions on the Aboriginal people (paternalism, loss of identity, splitting of family groups, roles of men and women changed, children's lives affected)
  - \* implications of this Act for Aboriginal people today
3. Distribute copies of Worksheets 2 and 3 for participants to read and discuss. Small group leaders may wish to include the discussion points below.

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**Some possible discussion points**

- \* what the Certificate of Exemption meant for Aboriginal people (exchanging one for of control for another, imposing 'white' values on Aboriginal people)
  - \* why Aboriginal people applied for the Certificate of Exemption
  - \* importance of the extended family to Aboriginal people during the Protection era and today (support, survival of people)
4. Introduce the selected video, 'Lousy Little Sixpence' or 'Women of the Sun'. Play the video.
5. Ask participants to return to small groups and to consider the discussions points relevant to their video.

**'Lousy Little Sixpence' - Discussion Points**

- \* ways in which Aboriginal people organised their fight against the Board
- \* how education of Aboriginal people during the Protection era affects

the lives of Aboriginal people today

**OR**

'Women of the Sun' - Discussion points

- \* the attitude to Aboriginal Welfare demonstrated in the video episode
  - \* the reasons why the Welfare policies concentrated so much on Aboriginal women and children
  - \* how those Welfare and Protection policies affect the lives of Aboriginal people today
6. In plenary, invite group leaders to report back on their small group discussions.

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## **WORKSHEET I**

### **NSW Aborigines Protection Act 1909**

An Act to provide for the protection and care of aborigines; to repeal the Supply of Liquors to Aborigines Prevention Act; to amend the Vagrancy Act, 1902, and the Police Offences (Amendment) Act, 1908; and for purposes consequent thereon or incidental thereto. [20th December, 1909.]

Be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly of New South Wales in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:-

1. This Act may be cited as the "Aborigines Protection Act, 1909," and shall come into force on a date to be fixed by proclamation of the Governor in the Gazette.

2. The Acts specified in the Schedule hereto are, to the extent indicated, repealed.

3. In this Act, unless the context or subject matter otherwise indicates or requires:

"Aborigines" means any full-blooded aboriginal native of Australia, and any person apparently having an admixture of a aboriginal blood who applies for or is in receipt of rations or aid from the board or is residing on a reserve.

"Board: means board for protection of aborigines constituted under this Act.

"Liquor" means and includes wine, spirits, beer, porter, stout, ale, cider, sherry, or any spirituous or fermented fluid whatever capable of producing intoxication.

"Local Committee" means committee appointed by the board to act in conjunction with the board under this Act.

"Prescribed" means prescribed by this Act or the regulations.

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"Reserve" means area of land heretofore or hereafter reserved from sale or lease by the Governor, or given by or acquired from any private person, for the use of aborigines.

"Regulations" means regulations in force under this Act.

"Stations" means stations on reserves.

4. 1) There shall be a board, to be styled "The Board for Protection of Aborigines", to consist of the Inspector-General of Police, or Acting Inspector General of Police, who shall, ex officio, be chairman, and not more than ten other members who shall be appointed by the Governor.

2) The board shall, subject to the direction of the Minister, be the authority for the protection and care of aborigines under this Act.

3) The board shall annually elect one of its members as

as may be necessary.

6. The board may appoint managers and local committees consisting of not more than seven nor less than three persons, to act in conjunction with the board, and also officers to be called guardians of aborigines; and may at any time abolish such local committees, or remove any members therefrom, or cancel the appointment of any guardian.

Such committees and guardians shall exercise and perform the powers and duties prescribed by this Act and the regulations.

7. It shall be the duty of the board-

a. to, with the consent of the Minister, apportion, distribute, and apply as may seem most fitting, any moneys voted by Parliament, and any other funds in its possession or control, for the relief of aborigines;

b. to distribute blankets, clothing, and relief to aborigines at the discretion of the board;

c. to provide for the custody, maintenance, and education of the children of aborigines;

d. to manage and regulate the use of reserves;

e. to exercise a general supervision and care over all matters affecting the interests and welfare of aborigines, and to protect them against injustice, imposition, and fraud.

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8. 1. All reserves shall be vested in the board, and it shall not be lawful for any person other than an aborigine, or an officer under the board, or a person acting under the board's direction, or under the authority of the regulations, to enter or remain upon or be within the limits of a reserve upon which aborigines are residing, for any purpose whatsoever.

2. The board may remove from a reserve any aborigine who is guilty of any misconduct, or who, in the opinion of the board, should be earning a living away from such reserve.

3. Any building erected on reserve shall be vested in and become the property of the board also all cattle, horses, pigs, sheep, machinery, and property thereon purchased or acquired for the benefit of aborigines.

9. Any person who gives, sells, or supplies, except in case of accident,

aborigine, shall be guilty of an offence against this Act. Nothing in this section shall affect the operation of the Liquor (Amendment) Act, 1905.

10. Whosoever, not being an aborigine, or the child of an aborigine, lodges or wanders in company with any aborigine, and does not, on being required by a justice, give to his satisfaction a good account that he has a lawful fixed place of residence in New South Wales and lawful means of support, and that he so lodged or wandered for some temporary and lawful occasion only, and did not continue so for some temporary and lawful occasion only, and did not continue so to do beyond such occasion, shall be guilty of an offence against this Act.

11. 1) The board may, in accordance with and subject to the provisions of the Apprentices Act, 1901, by indenture bind or cause to bound the child of any aborigine, or the neglected child of any person apparently having an admixture of aboriginal blood in his veins, to be apprenticed to any master, and may collect and institute proceedings for the recovery of any wages payable under such indenture, and may expend the same as the board may think fit in the interest of the child.

Every child so apprenticed shall be under the supervision of the board, or of such person as may be authorised in that behalf by the regulations.

Any such child so apprenticed shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished for absconding, or for other misconduct, in the same way as any child apprenticed by his father with such child's.

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## **PROTECTION PERIOD IN THE SYDNEY REGION**

After the traditional method of hunting and gathering ceased to be an option, the remnants of the Dharug, Darkinjung, and Gundungurra Tribes who had not become integrated into the mainstream culture lived largely on reserves or on missions. Such establishments were to be found between Blacktown and Richmond along the Richmond Road, on the west bank of the Hawkesbury River north of Windsor (Sackville), in the Burragorang Valley and La Perouse in the south of Sydney.

Many of the records relating to the reserves were lost in a fire, but they were probably similar to the other institutions throughout Australia. In general the Aboriginal people were supervised by a non Aboriginal who had absolute power over the movements of people to and from the reserve. The Aborigines were provided with food and clothing but rarely, if ever, did they actually receive any currency. In general, conditions were unchanging and little generally better than they had been over the previous fifty years. It was generally believed that the Aboriginal race would soon die out, so the reserves basically acted as holding areas until what

The reserve at Sackville still had about 50 Aboriginal people living on it at the turn of the century, consisting of both Dharug and Darkinjung families. (Kohen 1985). In 1889/ 1890 there was an average of 35 adults and 40 children in the Windsor Police District which includes the Sackville Reserves. Rations of tea, sugar, flour were given to these people every three months and in January 1889 the Aborigines Protection Board, railway freighted a sailboat from Sydney for the Aborigines on the Sackville Reserves (Aboriginal Protection Board records, State Archives).

After World War 1 and II large numbers of reserves were revoked for the provision of 'soldier settlers' blocks for ex-servicemen. It was believed that Aboriginal people were a dying race and thus would not require any land. In the 1954 - 1964 period another wave of revocation occurred related to the Government policy of assimilation and the removal of Aboriginal people from traditional Reserves to new Reserves set aside in other places or towns.

Many of these reserves and missions, like the Sackville Reserve on the Hawkesbury near Windsor, remained until the early twentieth century. The Sandy Point Reserve, near Liverpool, was possibly one of the oldest reserves in the Sydney area. In Burratorang Valley, there were two reserves. The Tonelli River Reserve was near its junction with the Wollondilly. "Pocket Farm" (also called "St. Joseph's Farm", "Black Farm" or "Black Town") was at the junction of Cox's River and Warrangamba Gorge. The latter was 100 acres of alluvial soil purchased, in 1877, with money collected from public contribution by the Rev. Father Dillon of Camden. Sixty people of the Gandangarra tribe lived there. When the Aborigines Protection Board eventually decided that the Aboriginal population on reserves and missions in western Sydney should be relocated to La Perouse, there was little option. Even though the families of Nurragingy and Colebee held the land grant along Richmond Road for several generations, it was expropriated by the Aboriginal Protection Board. The Tonelli River Reserve people were removed to La Perouse in 1927-28. The people at Pocket Creek were also moved at the same time. Dr. Dillon (apparently) had not received a full legal title. The farm was sold, possibly as a result of the Church's desire to raise revenue, regardless of the fact that it had been bought by public contribution specifically for the Burratorang Aborigines.(Kohen 1985)

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The Sackville Reserve were closed in the early 1940's and the people were removed to La Perouse except Andy Barber who wanted to stay.(Wal Jones in *Yarns and Photos of Beautiful Berowra, Hawkesbury to Hornsby*). One Sackville reserve was declared a public reserve in 1957 and a stone monument placed there to commemorate the Hawkesbury Aborigines.

In 1940 a new policy of "assimilation" was proclaimed in the Aborigines Act 1940 which established the Aborigines Welfare Board. Many reserves were closed in the 1940's and 50s and people coerced into the towns.

With the fragmentation of Aboriginal groups, after their resistance had been brutally suppressed and their subsequent dependence on "hand-outs" for their survival on the missions and reserves to which they were directed, came the NSW Governments' desire to "de-tribalise" the children of Aboriginal people in order to make them more "useful and acceptable" in a more "civilised" society.



While no specific figures are available regarding the numbers of Northern Sydney Aboriginal people who suffered during this "period of protection," it is certain that not a single one would have been unscathed. Peter Read, in his *The Stolen Generations* says, **To put it another way, there is not an Aboriginal person in NSW who does not know, or who is not related to, one or two of his countrymen who were institutionalised by the whites.** In the article, *The Stolen Generations*, Peter Read describes what happened to the Aboriginal children in NSW who were taken away from their parents by government legislation and put into the care of government institutions.

The impact of this legislation and policy on Aboriginal families in NSW can never be fully appreciated. The devastation of individual lives remains incalculable. That the law remained in force until 1969 is indefensible. It is a story that needs to be told.

For more information read:

Survival, A History of Aboriginal Life in NSW, Nigel Parbury, Office of Aboriginal Affairs, 1986.

The Stolen Generations, The Removal of Aboriginal Children in NSW 1883-1969. Office of Aboriginal Affairs 1982.

Koorie: a Will to Win, Angus and Robertson 1985

Tucker, Margaret. If Everyone Cared Grosvenor Books, Sydney 1977.

Which has an account in chapter nine of Margaret's apprenticeship as a maid to a family in Beecroft Road, Cheltenham.

Or view videos:

1. Koorie - A Will to Win by James Miller (NSW Office of Film and T.V)
2. A Lousy Little Sixpence.
3. Faces of Change: Coral (ABC)
4. Women of the Sun: SBS Sydney 1982

## ITEMS OF ENVIRONMENTAL HERITAGE

DATE: 28th October, 1987.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION: Monument to Aborigines - Public Recreation Reserve off Holes Drive, Sackville

DESCRIPTION: Simple monument with plaque listing the purpose of the monument.

monument.

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1952

LOCAL ENVIRONS: Situated within public reserve

CONDITION: Good

**SPECIAL FEATURES:**

Where monument is situated was previously an Aboriginal reserve. Last known Aboriginal person living in the area was Andrew Barber who died at 106 years of age. Barber had a small row boat which he used to catch fish from the River. Barber supplemented his diet of fish and small animals with supplies of tea, sugar, flour and anything else he would obtain from local farmers.

In addition to this the local police travelled to the area weekly by motorcycle with food and tobacco for Barber.

In the vicinity is Maggie's Bight - a former Aboriginal mission run by Maggie, an Aboriginal woman.

\*Monument placed by farmers etc. as tribute to Aboriginal people who lived in the area.

EXTERIOR RESTORATION NEEDS: Minor

Mr. P.W. Gledhill, who was responsible for having the site declared a public reserve, donated a sandstone memorial to the Hawkesbury Aborigines. It reads as follows:

*This obelisk erected as a memorial to the aborigines of the Hawkesbury for whom this area was originally reserved. Unveiled by Cr. H. C. Matheson, Esq., President, Colo Shire Council. Dedicated by the Very Rev. S. Barton Babbage, M.A., Ph.D., Th.L., Dean of Sydney, 5th July 1952.*

*This memorial is the gift of P.W. Gledhill, Esq., F.S.A.G. and interested friends.*

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**Aboriginal land claim is queried**  
North Shore Times 19.11.1986.

The Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council admitted that land it has claimed at Cowan hasn't any historical significance. This follows a recent Hornsby Shire Council meeting where the claim was tabled. The council decided to defer the matter for the "educational benefit" of the council to find out on what basis the claim was made. But the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council's chairman Harry Mumbulla said the land in question did not have any Aboriginal historical significance. He said the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 allowed the Aboriginal community to make any claims on land that: "can be lawfully sold or leased, or reserved or dedicated for any purpose under the Crown Lands Consolidation Act 1913.

\*Is not lawfully used or occupied

\*Is not likely to be needed for residential lands

\*Is not likely to be used or needed for essential public purposes"

The land claim includes 5.36ha along the rear boundaries of lots on the western side of the Pacific Highway near Cowan railway station.

#### **Council opposes claim on gardens.**

An Aboriginal land claim for the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden has met with vehement objections from aldermen. Ku-ring-gai Council decided to fight the claim to the land at St Ives, made by the Aboriginal Land Council under the strong protest that the claim was "ludicrous" and "deplorable."

Alderman .....suggested the council's emblem, depicting two Aborigines, be changed. Alderman .....put forward a five point proposal to not recognise the claim or the Land Rights Act and called on other councils to unite against the act.

Alderman..... demanded, "the council deplore attempts to divide the nation" and said the claim was " a threat to Australia's future as a free nation."

"When we start recognising minority groups and give them the right to claim land we open up a Pandora's box,"he said.

"It is the beginning of a nation within a nation."

## The Stolen Generations

The station populations became older, more dependent than ever on the manager, the matron, and their Aboriginal handyman. Young men now left their families for good, either to search for work wherever pastoral or untrained labourers were wanted, or to wander around the kinship area, offering themselves as cheap casual workers to farmers. They kept well out of the way of women and their youngsters who, before child endowment came in 1927, depended on their men bringing back to the two-roomed weatherboard huts sufficient wages to supplement the not very nutritive Board ration. If the breadwinner had been issued with an expulsion order for insolence or idleness (and the managers had absolute discretion to make such expulsions), then the wages had to be smuggled into the station, or into a reserve if the sergeant was vindictive, for the family were firmly separated from him while they lived in a Board home. Small groups of hidden huts, of bag or corrugated iron scavenged from the local tip, grew where such families could get together off reserves, usually on town commons, riverbanks, or in untouched forest.

Where the small Aboriginal communities had, before the War, most feared the aggressive shire councils and expected the Board to protect them from councils' efforts to move them on, now their fears turned against the Board itself and all its works. The Aborigines sardonic nick-name for the Board, common coin until the 'fifties, was the "Persecution Board", and dates from this time. There were no less than thirty-six expulsion orders issued over single year from December 1923, including sixteen over April and May of 1924: mostly from managed stations, where the policy could be immediately imposed by authority.

(Jack Horner, *Vote Ferguson for Aboriginal Freedom*, 1974.)

The day came at Cumeroogunga when police arrived in a car from Moama and took, with other girls, Doug's sister, sixteen-year-old Hilda. The police came without warning, except for the precaution of ensuring that the men had been sent over the sand-hills to cut timber. Some of the girls eluded the police by swimming the Murray. Others were forced into the cars, with mothers wailing and threatening the officers with any weapon at hand. Doug saw his mother chase the police with a crowbar. She and other mothers scrambled into the cars with the children and refused to get out. They went as far as Moama with the girls and there were forced out.

After a few months' training at Cootamundra, these girls were apprenticed at 3/6 a week. They received 1/- as pocket-money, 2/6 being paid into the board's trust account, later to be handed out at the board's discretion.

"The police said the children were neglected," Doug said. "My sister was not neglected. But it was the crafty way the police handled the matter that rankled." For a long time after that, whenever cars were heard approaching, Doug and the other young children crawled under the floor of the school-house.

The fact that the highest avenue of opportunity open to these girls was training to be cheap servants in white homes - with its implied inferiority - was the reason for the parents' inability to see advantage in separation from their children, was incomprehensible to the Board.

( M. Thorpe Clarke, *Pastor Doug*, 1975: 39-40.)

**Discuss these examples of "protection."**

Consider the effects on the women and children of the practices described in the second document.

A) After reading the account of Pastor Doug and Margaret Tuckers account in : *If Everyone Cared: Autobiography of Margaret Tucker* (1983) and seeing the film *Lousy Little Sixpence*, find out about the Aboriginal Protection Board's Apprenticeship schemes and write a short account in your own words of what happened to two generations of Aboriginal children in Australia.

B) Imagine that you are a small boy or girl of about six or seven years old taken from your parents by the Protection Board. Keep a diary of the events which happened to you till you reached adulthood.

### C. POLITICAL MOVEMENTS 1920's 30's 40's

**Extract from: *Survivors A History of Aboriginal Life in NSW***

**N. Parbury, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs 1988 pp107-112.**

In 1937 William Ferguson, an Aboriginal shearer and unionist formed the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) at Dubbo. Like the Aborigines League (AAL), the APA aimed for full citizenship and equality for Aboriginal people. White sympathizers like Michael Sawtell, later president of the Aborigines Welfare Board, and the poet (Dame) Mary Gilmore were present at the first meeting of the APA.

In 1937, William Cooper of the AAL had the idea of marking the 1938 Sesquicentenary as a "day of mourning" for Aboriginal people. The idea was taken up by Ferguson and Jack Patten of the APA, and a Day of Mourning committee was formed. At the same time the Sydney press published letters about the frontier massacres period in New South Wales.

The committee published a manifesto, "Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights" (reprinted here almost in full) for Australia Day 1938, and on the day held an Aboriginal Conference and Day of Mourning and Protest, at the Australian Hall in Sydney. "Aborigines and persons of Aboriginal blood only" were invited. One reporter and one policeman were allowed in.

Five days later an Aboriginal delegation led by Ferguson and Patten met the Prime Minister, presenting him with a ten point program for Aboriginal equality. The Commonwealth was asked to take over Aboriginal affairs and give positive help in education, housing, working conditions, social welfare and land purchases, although it was to be thirty years before the Australian Government accepted any of this responsibility. The Committee for Aboriginal Citizen Rights was formed in Sydney, and from March 1938 Ferguson and Bill Onus published the Australian Abo Call, the journal of the APA.

#### **The official celebrations**

For the official 1938 Australia Day celebrations the Government brought in "tame" Aborigines from the Menindee reserve. They were taken straight from the train, locked up in a stable at the Redfern police barracks and guarded by dogs:

**On January 26 they were brought out dressed in leaves to be chased along the shore by British soldiers with bayonets and to parade through the street on a float. The next day they were sent back to their tin sheds on the Darling River. *Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend*, 26 January 1985.**

The following is a major part of the manifesto distributed by the Kooris of New South Wales at the protest meeting held in Sydney on Australia Day, 1938.

#### **One Hundred and fifty years.**

The 26th of January, 1938, is not a day of rejoicing for Australia's Aborigines; it is a day of mourning. This festival of 150 years of so-called "progress" in Australia commemorates also 150 years of misery and degradation imposed upon the original native inhabitants by the white

150 years of misery and degradation imposed upon the original native inhabitants by the white invaders of this country. We, representing the Aborigines, now ask you, the reader of this appeal, to pause in the midst of your sesquicentenary rejoicings and ask yourself honestly whether your "conscience" is clear in regard to the treatment of the Australian blacks by the Australian whites during the period of 150 years' history which you celebrate?

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### **The old Australians**

You are the New Australians, but we are the Old Australians. We have in our arteries the blood of the Original Australians, who have lived in this land for many thousands of years. You came here only recently, and you took our land away from us by force. You have almost exterminated our people, but there are enough of us remaining to expose the humbug of your claim, as white Australians, to be a civilised, progressive, kindly and humane nation. By your cruelty and callousness towards the Aborigines you stand condemned in the eyes of the civilised world.

### **Plain Speaking**

These are hard works, but we ask you to face the truth of our accusation. If you would openly admit that the purpose of your Aborigines Legislation has been, and now is, to exterminate the Aborigines completely so that not a trace of them or of their descendants remains, we could describe you as brutal, but honest. But you dare not admit openly that your hope and wish is for our death! You hypocritically claim that you are trying to "protect" us: but your modern policy of "protection" (so-called) is killing us off just as surely as the pioneer policy of giving us poisoned damper and shooting us down like dingoes!

We ask you now, reader, to put your mind, as a citizen of the Australian Commonwealth, to the facts presented in these pages. We ask you to study the problem, in the way that we present the case, from the Aborigines' point of view. We do not ask for your charity; we do not ask you to study us as scientific freaks. Above all, we do not ask for your "protection".

No thanks! We have had 150 years of that! We ask only for justice, decency and fair play. Is this too much to ask? Surely our minds and hearts are not so callous that you will refuse to reconsider your policy of degrading and humiliating and exterminating Old Australia's Aborigines?

### **Aborigines Protection Acts.**

All Aborigines, whether nomadic or civilised, and also all half-castes, are liable to be "protected" by the Aborigines Protection Boards, and their legal status is defined by Aborigines Protection Acts of the various States and of the Commonwealth. Thus we are for the greater part deprived of ordinary civil legal rights and citizenship, and we are made a pariah caste within this so-called democratic community.

The value of the Aborigines Protection Acts in "protecting" Aborigines may be judged from the fact that at the 1933 census there were no Aborigines left to protect in Tasmania; while in Victoria there were only 92 full-bloods, in South Australia 569 fullbloods, in New South Wales 1,034 full-bloods.

The Aborigines of full-blood are most numerous, and most healthy, in the northern parts of Australia, where white "protection" exists in theory, but in practice the people have to look after themselves.

But already the hand of official "protection" is reaching out to destroy these people in the north, as it has already destroyed those in the southern States. We beg of you to alter this cruel system before it gets our 36,000 nomadic brothers and sisters of North Australia into its charitable

clutches!

#### **What "Protection" Means.**

The "protection" of Aborigines is a matter for each of the individual States; while those in the Northern Territory come under Commonwealth ordinances.

This means that in each State there is a different "system", but the principle behind the Protection Acts is the same in all States, Under these Acts the Aborigines are regarded as outcasts and as inferior beings who need to be supervised in their private lives by Government officials. No one could deny that there is scope for the white people of Australia to extend sympathetic, or real, protection and education to the uncivilised blacks, who are willing and eager to learn when given a chance.

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But what can be said for a system which regards these people as incurably "backward" and does everything in its power to keep them backward? Such is the effect of the Aborigines Protection Acts in every State and in the Northern Territory. No real effort is being made to bring these "backward" people forward into the national life. They are kept apart from the community, and are being pushed further and further "backward."

#### **"Protection" in New South Wales**

We take as an example the Aborigines Protection Act (1909-1936) of New South Wales, the Mother State of Australia, which is now so proudly entering its 150th Anniversary.

This Act sets up a Board, known as the "Board for Protection of Aborigines," of which the Commissioner of police is ex officio Chairman. Other members - not exceeding 10 in number are appointed by the Governor.

The Board has power to distribute moneys voted by Parliament for the relief of Aborigines, and has power "to exercise a general supervision and care over all Aborigines and over all matters affecting the interests and welfare of Aborigines, and to protect them against injustice, imposition and fraud."

The arbitrary treatment which we receive from the A.P. Board reduces our standards of living below life-preservation point, which suggest that the intention is to exterminate us. In such circumstances it is impossible to maintain normal health. So the members of our community grow weak and apathetic, lose desire for education, become ill and die while still young.

#### **Aboriginal within the meaning of the act**

An "Aborigine" is defined in the New South Wales Act as "any full-blooded or half-caste Aboriginal who is a native of Australia, and who is temporarily or permanently resident in New South Wales."

It will be noted that the Board's "protection" extends to half-castes as well as to full-bloods. Under certain provisions of the Act, the Board has power to control "any person apparently having a admixture of Aboriginal blood," and may order any such person "apparently" of Aboriginal blood (under a Magistrate's order) to live on an Aboriginal Reserve, and to be under the control of the Board.

By an amendment of the Act (1936) an averment that a person is an "Aborigine" is regarded as "sufficient evidence of the truth of such averment....unless the contrary is shown to the satisfaction of the Court." The onus of disproof is thus on the accused, contrary to the traditional practice of "British" law.

#### **Half-Castes, Quadroons and Octoroons.**



The Aboriginal Protection Board, which has "protected" the full-bloods of New South Wales so well that there are now less than a thousand of them remaining, has thus recently acquired the power extend a similar "protection" to half-castes, quarter-castes, and even to persons with any "admixture" of Aboriginal blood whatever. Its powers are so drastic that merely on suspicion or averment it can continue its persecuting protection unto the third, fourth and fifth generation of those so innocently unfortunate as to be descended from the original owners of this land.

#### **Powers of the Board.**

The Protection Act gives the Board an almost unlimited power to control the private lives of Aborigines as defined by that Act. For example, the Board may order any Aboriginal into any Reserve or out of any Reserve at its own discretion.

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The Board may prevent any Aboriginal from leaving New South Wales.  
The Board may prevent any non-Aboriginal person from "lodging or wandering in company" with Aborigines (thus keeping the Aborigines away from white companionship)!  
The Board may prosecute any person who supplies intoxicating liquor to any "Aborigine, or person having apparently an admixture of Aboriginal blood."  
The Board may cause the child of any Aborigine to be apprenticed to any master, and any child who refuses to be so apprenticed may be removed to a home or institution.  
The Board may assume full control and custody of the child of any Aborigine.  
The Board may remove any Aborigine from his employment.  
The Board may collect the wages of any Aborigine, and may hold them in trust for the Aborigine.  
The Board may order any Aborigines to move from their camp to another camp-site, and may order them away from towns or townships.  
The Board may authorise the medical inspection of any Aborigine and may order his removal to any institution for treatment.  
The Board may make regulation to "apportion amongst or for the benefit of Aborigines" the earnings of any Aboriginal living upon a Reserve.

#### **Deprived of Citizen Rights**

The effect of the foregoing powers of the Aborigines Protection Board in New South Wales is to deprive the Aborigines and half-castes (and other "admixtures") of ordinary citizen rights. By a curious twist of logic, the Aborigines of New South Wales have the right to vote - for the State Parliament! They are considered worthy of the franchise, but not worthy of other citizen rights. They are officially treated either as a menace to the community (similar to criminals) or as incapable of looking after themselves (similar to lunatics) - but yet they are given a vote!

#### **How the Board's Powers are Used.**

The annual report of the Aborigines Protection Board for the year ended 30th June, 1936, is a smug, self-satisfied document.

It states that the total number of Aborigines and half-castes in New South Wales on 30th June, 1936 was:-

Full-bloods	976
Half-castes	9,884

Total 10,860

In the "care and protection" of these 10,860 people the Board reported that it spent 57,265 pounds during the year.

This amounts to an expenditure on Aborigines of an average of 5/5/5 half pounds per head per annum.

The Government of New South Wales may boast that it spends approximately two shillings per head per week on the care and protection of its 10,860 Aborigines, or approximately 3 half d. per day on each Aboriginal!

#### **Abolition of the A.P. Board.**

We, representing the Aborigines and half-castes of New South Wales, call for the abolition of the A.P. Board in New South Wales, and repeal of all existing legislation dealing with Aborigines. We ask to be accorded full citizen rights, and to be accepted into the Australian community on a basis of equal opportunity.

Should our charges of maladministration and injustice be doubted, we ask for a Royal Commission and Public Inquiry into the conditions of Aborigines, to be held in public.

We can show that the Report of the Aborigines Protection Board omits to state relevant facts, bearing on the "care and protection" which the Board is supposed to give to our people.

The Aborigines themselves do not need or want this "protection."

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#### **No "Sentimental Sympathy," Please!**

We do not wish to be regarded with sentimental sympathy, or to be "preserved," like the koala's as exhibits; but we do ask for your real sympathy and understanding of our plight.

We do not wish to be "studied" as scientific or anthropological curiosities. All such efforts on our behalf are wasted. We have no desire to go back to the primitive conditions of the Stone Age. We ask you to teach our people to live in the Modern Age, as modern citizens. Our people are very good and quick learners. Why do you deliberately keep us backward? Is it merely to give yourselves the pleasure of feeling superior? Give our children the same chances as your own, and they will do as well as your children!

We ask for equal education, equal opportunity, equal wages, equal rights to possess property, or to be our own masters - in two words: equal citizenship! How can you honestly refuse this? In New South Wales you give us the vote, and treat us as equals at the ballot box. Then why do you impose the other unfair restriction of rights upon us? Do you really think that the 9,884 half-castes of New South Wales are in need of your special "protection?" Do you really believe that these half-castes are "naturally backward" and lacking in natural intelligence? If so, you are completely mistaken. When our people are backward, it is because your treatment has made them so. Give us the same chances as yourselves, and we will prove ourselves to be just as good, if not better, Australians, than you!

Keep your charity! We only want justice.

#### **A National Question.**

If ever there was a national question, it is this. Conditions are even worse in Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia than they are in New South Wales; but we ask New South Wales, the Mother State, to give a lead in emancipating the Aborigines. Do not be guided any longer by religious and scientific persons, no matter how well-meaning or philanthropic they may seem. Fellow-Australians, we appeal to you to be guided by your own common sense and ideas of fair play and justice! Let the Aborigines themselves tell you what they want. Give them a chance, on the same level as yourselves, in the community. You had no race prejudice

against us when you accepted half-castes and full-bloods for enlistment in the A.I.F. We were good enough to fight as Anzacs. We earned equality then. Why do you deny it to us now?

### **Exploitation of Labour**

For 150- years the Aborigines and half-castes throughout Australia have been used as cheap labour, both domestic and out-of-doors. We are to-day beyond the scope of the Arbitration Court awards, owing to the A.P. Board system of "apprenticeship" and special labour conditions for Aborigines. Why do the Labour Unions stand for this? We have no desire to provide coolie labour competition, but your Protection Acts force this status upon us. The Labour Parties and Trade Unions have given us no real help or support in our attempts to raise ourselves to citizen level. Why are they so indifferent to the dangers of this cheap, sweated labour? Why do they not raise their voices on our behalf? Their "White Australia" policy has helped to create a senseless prejudice against us, making us social outcasts in the land of our ancestors!

### **Comic Cartoons and Misrepresentation**

The popular Press of Australia makes a joke of us by presenting silly and out-of-date drawings and jokes of "Jacky" or "Binghi," which have educated city-dwellers and young Australian to look upon us as sub-human. Is this not adding insult to injury? What a dirty trick, to push us down by laws, and then to make fun of us! You kick us, and then laugh at our misfortunes. You keep us ignorant, and then accuse us of having no knowledge. Wake up, Australians, and realise that your cruel jokes have gone over the limit!

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### **Window-Dressing.**

We appeal to young Australians, or to city-dwelling Australians, whose knowledge of us is gained from the comic Press or from the "window-dressing" Aboriginal Settlement at La Perouse, to study the matter more deeply, and to realise that the typical Aboriginal or half-caste, born and bred in the bush, is just as good a citizen, and just as good and Australian, as anybody else. Aborigines are interested not only in boomerangs and gum leaves and corroborees! The overwhelming majority of us are able and willing to earn our living by honest toil, and to take our place in the community, side by side with yourselves.

### **Racial Prejudice**

Though many people have racial prejudice, or colour prejudice, we remind you that the existence of 20,000 and more half-castes in Australia is a proof that the mixture of Aboriginal and white races is practicable. Professor Archie Watson, of Adelaide University, has explained to you that Aborigines can be absorbed into the white race within three generations, without any fear of a "throw-back." This proves that the Australian Aboriginal is somewhat similar in blood to yourselves, as regards intermarriage and inter-breeding. We ask you to study this question, and to change your whole attitude towards us, to a more enlightened one. Your present official attitude is one of prejudice and misunderstanding. We ask you to be proud of the Australian Aboriginal, and to take his hand in friendship. The New Zealanders are proud of the Maoris. We ask you to be proud of the Australian Aborigines, and not to be misled any longer by the superstition that we are a naturally backward and low race. This is a scientific lie, which has helped to push our people down and down into the mire.

At worst, we are no more dirty, lazy, stupid, criminal, or immoral than yourselves. Also, your slanders against our race are a moral lie, told to throw all the blame for our troubles on to us. You, who originally conquered us by guns against our spears, now rely on superiority of

numbers to support your false claims of moral and intellectual superiority.

**A New Deal for Aborigines!**

After 150 years, we ask you to review the situation and give us a fair deal - a New Deal for Aborigines. The cards have been stacked against us, and we now ask you to play the game like decent Australians. Remember, we do not ask for charity, we ask for justice.

J.T. Patten,  
President,  
La Perouse.

W. Ferguson,  
Organising Secretary,  
Dubbo.

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**D. Assimilation 1940's to 1970's**

Extract from : *The Aborigines in Australian History, Background Notes for teachers* , 1986 NSW Dept of Education pp18-20

The Second World War resulted in enormous changes taking place in Australia. These changes affected the lives of all Australians and their impact was felt by Aboriginal people as much as by any other section of society.

The war probably made many Australians much more aware of the disadvantaged position of Aborigines in Australian society. Indeed, the mobilisation of large numbers of young Australians and their deployment in the northern part of the continent meant that many white Australians for the first time became aware of Aborigines.

The presence in Australia of large numbers of Afro-American soldiers may also have had an effect on attitudes towards Aborigines. It is certainly possible that contact with these soldiers highlighted for Aborigines their own disadvantaged position within Australian society.

In addition many Aborigines joined the armed services. Many of these were exploited and underpaid and their service has been largely unrecognised. But those in regular units received often for the first time in their lives pay and conditions equal to that of their white counterparts. As well, at least 1,000 Aborigines were employed by the army and according to

Hall (1980) they performed work which would never have been allocated to them in pre-war society.

Not everyone welcomed these changes. Many station owners in Northern Australia objected to these developments and saw them as a threat to the circumstances on which much of their wealth was based. However, the war had clearly had a significant impact on Aboriginal people and on white attitudes towards them. It was certainly no longer possible to believe that the Aboriginal people were dying out or that protectionist policies were appropriate for them.

Governments throughout Australia responded to these changing attitudes by abandoning their Protection Policies in Favour of Assimilation. This new policy acknowledged the continuing existence of Aboriginal people but was unfortunately based on the assumption that Aboriginal culture would be absorbed into the "superior" white culture. Launching the new policy at a 1951 conference of state and federal ministers, the then Minister for Territories, the Honourable Paul Hasluck, explained it by saying:

**Assimilation does not mean the suppression of the Aboriginal culture (sic) but rather that, for generation after generation, cultural adjustment will take place. The native people will grow into the society in which by force of history, they are bound to live.**

Clearly this policy was based on several misconceptions. It assumed that there was a single Aboriginal culture and that this culture should be absorbed into the "dominant" white culture. It should be easy to understand why Aboriginal people reject assimilation, but many white people continue to base their attitudes towards Aborigines on assimilationist ideas.

In the 1950's and 1960's government also seemed unaware that the foundations of assimilation lay uneasily in the quicksand of paternalism and Social Darwinism. As late as 1965, fourteen years after the launching of the policy, the Minister for Territories reaffirmed that its main aim was to absorb Aboriginal people into white Australian society. In a speech to the House of Representatives, the Minister, the Honourable C.E. Barnes, stated: 151

**The policy of assimilation seeks that all persons of Aboriginal descent will choose to attain a similar manner and standard of living to that of other Australians and live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities and influenced by the same hopes and loyalties as other Australians. Any special measures taken are regarded as temporary measures not based on race, but intended to meet their need for special care and assistance and to make the transition from one stage to another in such a way as will be favourable to their social, economic and political advancement.**

Their assimilationist vision of the future was not shared by the majority of Aborigines. However, Aboriginal people were well aware of the discriminatory laws and practices which continued to disadvantage them. Throughout the '50s and '60s Aboriginal organisations continued their political campaigns against these laws and were gradually successful in removing many of them.

These campaigns were of great importance to Aboriginal people and, indeed, to the development

of a more just and compassionate society in Australia. In the words of Chicka Dixon, an Aboriginal prominent in these campaigns:

**"changes don't come out of the generosity of politicians. They come out of political struggle."**

Unfortunately, the majority of Australians seem to know less about this struggle than they do about the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King in the United States at the same time.

In N.S.W. the most significant Aboriginal organisations before 1970 were the Aborigines Progressive Association (founded by Ferguson in 1937) and F.C.A.A.T.S.I., the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (1958). Some of those prominent in this latter organisation included Faith Bandler, Kath Walker, Mum Shirl, Kenny Brindell, Chicka Dixon and Bert Groves.

F.C.A.A.T.S.I., is perhaps best known for its role in the campaign leading up to the 1967 referendum which resulted in the Commonwealth gaining the power to legislate for Aboriginal people. The referendum also resulted in the removal of a number of other practices which discriminated against Aborigines. In N.S.W., for instance, it made the despised "dog licences" or Exemption Certificates irrelevant and ensured Aboriginal people of citizens' rights.

However, F.C.A.A.T.S.I. was also prominent in other less well-known campaigns. For instance, N.S.W. hospitals continued to practise segregation. Giving an example of this, Alice Briggs of Purfleet recalled how in 1954 she was removed from a white ward to an all-Aboriginal ward when, in the middle of labour, it was realised that she was Aboriginal. Her baby's nightdress and everything else in this ward were labelled with the letters ABO to ensure that they were not used by anyone else in the hospital. Pressure from F.C.A.A.T.S.I. resulted in the N.S.W. government deciding in 1961 to withdraw subsidies from hospitals which continued such practices.

Other Aborigines also came into prominence at this time in the campaign for civil rights. Pearl Gibbs was active in a campaign to ensure that pensions and maternity allowances were paid direct to Aboriginal people instead of to the local Protector, reserve manager or policeman. This was ultimately achieved in 1959.

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Throughout the 1960's Eric Simms and other Aboriginal Footballers playing with the South Sydney Rugby League team were also quietly active in opposing the laws preventing Aborigines from drinking in hotels. Simms and his friends simply insisted on their right to drink in hotels in the South Sydney area. This right was eventually recognised as another spin-off of the 1967 referendum.

Another prominent Aboriginal person in N.S.W. in the 1960's was Charley Perkins. With Margaret Valadian, Perkins became the first Aboriginal graduate from an Australian university. In 1964-65, he organised Freedom Rides to towns in north-western N.S.W. These fact-finding tours highlighted the appalling socio-economic conditions that had been imposed on Aboriginal communities in these towns. They also publicised some of the forms of discrimination being practised by local governments particularly in relation to housing and the provision of services to Aborigines. Discriminatory practices by some service and other clubs were also highlighted

by these Freedom Rides. Some of these practices were modified as a result of Perkins' campaigns and the publicity they generated. It is interesting to note that some of the students who supported Perkins have since achieved positions of political prominence. These include Frank Walker, The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in N.S.W., and Tom Roper, the Minister of Health in Victoria. Perkins himself is today the Director of the Aboriginal Development Commission.

Aboriginal women were also active in the political struggle at this time, continuing a tradition which had begun by earlier generations of women. N.S.W. women who were involved in the political campaigns at this time included Bobbie Sykes, Mum Shirl, Jenny Munro, Millie Butt and Pat O'Shane. Countless others have also been involved in the formation of organisations like the Murrawina pre-schools and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups.

Margaret Valadian has also remained prominent in Aboriginal Affairs. Since first graduating from Queensland University she has graduated as a Master of Social Work from the State University of New York, a Master of Education from the University of Hawaii and a Bachelor of Social Studies from the University of Queensland.

Much of her time has been devoted to furthering the case of Aboriginal education. At different times she has been a member of the Schools' Commission, the National Aboriginal Education Committee, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and the N.S.W. Board of Aboriginal Education. In Paris in 1982 she co-hosted an international seminar on adult education for indigenous peoples. She is currently a director of the Aboriginal Training Cultural Institute.

Aborigines were also active elsewhere in Australia. In 1946 Aboriginal stockmen in the Pilbara area of Western Australia organised a long-lasting strike over wages and conditions. In 1962 the people of Yirrkala in the Northern Territory sent a bark petition to Canberra protesting at the desecration of their land due to bauxite mining. In 1965 the North Australia Workers Union began a historic case in which it applied for equal pay and conditions for Aboriginal stockmen. The following year Dexter Daniels, an Aboriginal union organiser, assisted the Gurindji people of Wave Hill in organising their strike and walk-off from this Vestey-owned cattle station.

All of these events assisted in raising community awareness about Aboriginal issues and in galvanising Aboriginal organisations throughout Australia in their struggle for rights. However, the walkoff of the Gurindji, which became the longest strike in Australian history, is of particular significance. It is to this event that the first granting of Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory in 1974 can be directly traced.

While these events were occurring in Northern Australia the political campaign in N.S.W. continued. In 1970 Aborigines conducted a significant protest at the celebrations of the Bicentenary of Cook's arrival just as they had at the sesqui-centenary celebrations of white settlement in 1938. While ceremonies were being held to commemorate the arrival of Cook a group of Aborigines gathered on the shores of Botany Bay. A wreath was thrown into the Bay to commemorate all those Aboriginal people who suffered violence and dispossession as a result of Cook's "discovery."

Also in 1970 came the establishment of the Aboriginal Legal Service in Redfern and those involved included Gordon Briscoe and Mum Shirl.

In 1972 the Aboriginal Tent Embassy was established on the lawns outside Parliament House in Canberra. Aboriginal people active in this included Chicka Dixon and John Newfong.

Despite police attempts to remove it the embassy remained for six months and helped to bring national and international attention to the position of Aboriginal people. It was partly in response to the Tent Embassy that the Labor Party, then in opposition under Gough Whitlam, promised to recognise the land rights and to change government policy from integration to self-determination if it were successful in the elections later that year.

The Aboriginal people had by now clearly realised the value of organisations. After 1970, and particularly after 1972, a large number of Aboriginal organisations emerged to continue the struggle for Aboriginal rights. In Sydney alone these included:

- the Aboriginal Legal Service
- the Aboriginal Medical Service
- the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (A.E.C.G.)
- the Aboriginal Education Council
- the Murrawina Pre Schools
- the Aboriginal Training Cultural Institute
- the Aboriginal Children's Service
- the Aboriginal Housing Company
- the Aboriginal Sports Foundation
- the Aboriginal and Islander Dance Theatre Co.
- the Black Theatre Group and
- the Black Supermarket, Redfern.

Many of these organisations were also formed at a local level in country areas. Locally based legal and medical services are now functioning in many country towns and there is a state-wide network of A.E.C.G. groups. A host of other organisations also appeared throughout the state during this period. They included women's refuges, Moree Aboriginal Sobriety House (M.A.S.H.) and other alcoholic rehabilitation programs, housing companies and Aboriginal Advancement Organisations. In addition it was during this period that Aboriginal people took control themselves and self management began to become a reality.

**Section 4 The Contemporary Scene**  
**Part A Aboriginal Statistics**  
Some Estimates of the Aboriginal Population of Australia  
1788-1971



	1788	1901	1921	1947	1971	1986
New South Wales	40,000	8,065	6,067	11,560	24,128	59,012
Victoria		11,500	521	573	1,277	6,371
Queensland	100,000	26,670	15,454	16,311	31,922	61,267
South Australia	10,000	3,070	2,741	4,296	7,299	14,292
Western Australia	52,000	5,261	17,671	24,912	22,181	37,788
Tasmania	2,500	0	0	0	671	6,712
Northern Territory	35,000	23,363	17,973	15,147	23,381	34,740
A.C.T.			0	100		1,217
Australia	251,000	66,950	60,479	73,817	115,953	177,638

Sources:

1788: A.R. Radcliffe - Brown's estimates in *1930 Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, No. 23, pp. 687-696.

1901: *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, No. 1, (1901-1907), p. 145.

1921: *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, No. 17 (1924), pp. 951-961.

1947: *Statisticians Report on the 1947 Census*, pp. 153-165.

1971: *Report on the 1971 Census* (Travers p1)

From: The Aborigines in Australian History  
Some background notes for NSW Teachers and  
Facts and Figures Australia Travers 1990 and  
Report on the 1986 Census, ABS

Radcliffe-Brown's figures are, of course, no more than estimates and it is possible that the Aboriginal population in 1788 could have been much higher.

But the other figures in the table may also be underestimated. The fact that the Aboriginal population of Tasmania is indicated as nil for 1901 and 1921 suggests that the statisticians did not recognise the Aboriginality of many people whose ancestry could be traced to both races. If, as is likely this were repeated throughout Australia, then the Aboriginal populations indicated in the above table may be considerably understated.

While the Aboriginality of many people may not have been officially recorded, in practice they were often discriminated against because of it. This was a period when Aboriginal people often found themselves classified as "full bloods," "half castes", "quarter castes" and so on. The indignities associated with such terms and their divisive effects in Aboriginal communities were usually blithely ignored by those who used them.

The definition, accepted by the Aboriginal people themselves and the Government for census purposes is : An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he lives.

*1986 Census of Population and Housing.*

Australian Bureau of Statistics

by Aboriginal People Community/Local Government Area (LGA) and DAA  
Administrative Area.

Eastern Region - Sydney Census Community/LGA	1976	1981	1986
Ashfield	196	127	173
Auburn227	140	176	
Bankstown	548	267	699
Baulkham Hills	160	67	136
Blacktown	1742	1585	3089
Botany 219	195	284	
Burwood	110	47	88
Camden/Narellan	36	46	66
Campbelltown	438	775	1765
Canterbury	470	256	508
Concord	55	30	34
Drummoyne	86	23	38
Fairfield	635	423	907
Holroyd	317	147	347
Hornsby	169	85	170
Hurstville	181	86	182
Kogarah	90	26	84
Ku-ring-gai	83	19	56
Lane Cove/Hunters Hill	76	17	51
Leichardt	576	287	419
Liverpool	747	481	1003
Manly	129	102	72
Marrickville	810	633	726
Mosman	53	15	20
North Sydney	129	46	62
Parramatta	581	301	653
Penrith	761	608	1308
Randwick	884	663	827
Rockdale	185	115	182
Ryde	212	89	140
South Sydney	957	839	**
Strathfield	79	48	64
Sutherland	339	183	474
Sydney 415	223	1210	
Warringah	285	208	254
Waverley	201	89	171
Willoughby	112	31	58
Woollahra	70	48	74
Windsor/Hawkesbury	224	123	308

Total	13587	9499	16878
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North Eastern - Port Macquarie Community/LGA	1976	1981	1986
Gosford276	175	570	
Wyong 264	178	647	
Cessnock	98	116	234
Muswellbrook	21	35	174
Great Lakes	171	173	293
Hastings	77	77	347
Kempsey	761	941	1280
Lake Macquarie	408	536	1194
Maitland	256	127	399
Murrurundi	40	13	26
Newcastle	662	479	909
Nundle 12	21	20	
Port Stephens	254	208	392
Scone	49	47	69
Singleton	47	42	86
Walcha99	104	117	
Total	3495	3272	6757

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS

The following information, extracted from the 1986 Census and other surveys, shows the greatly disadvantaged position of the Aboriginal people in New South Wales, relative to that of the non-Aboriginal population.

### Age structure

At the time of the 1986 Census, the NSW Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islander) population constituted one per cent (59,011) of the total NSW population of 5,401,881. The Aboriginal population is relatively young: about 53 per cent is under 19 years of age and 3.3 percent is over 60 years of age. The figures are 31 per cent and 15.7 per cent, respectively, for the total NSW population.

Other data:

	Aborigines	Non-Aborigines
Average life expectancy	58 years	75 years
Infant mortality (per 100,00)	29	9.6
No recognised certificate/diploma	76%	8.4%
Bachelor's degree	1%	9.8%
School retention rate - year 12	10%	41%
Unemployment rate	40%	9.8%
Average yearly declared income	\$9,345	\$13,975
Housing - average occupancy rate per		

household	4	2.6 (for NSW)
Living in rented accommodation	66%	27%

Imprisonment rate for Aborigines is eight times higher than for non-Aborigines. Aborigines constitute 8 per cent of the NSW prison population (338 out of 4230) despite the fact that they form only one per cent of the total population.  
( *Koorier*, Office of Aboriginal Affairs)

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## B. Stereotypes

### Koories in our Society

Koorie or Murrie is the term some Aboriginal people in NSW use to describe themselves.

**Some myths exploded for you to Explore and Discuss**

**Myth: White people built Australia. "We" created a high standard of living out of nothing.**

**Facts:** Australia today was built by Europeans, by Chinese, by Pacific Islanders who were kidnapped and worked as slaves and by Koories who suffered the same fate. Some industries, like cattle farming in Northern Australia, could not have developed without Koorie labour. In any event, if someone walked into your house, repainted the walls, changed the furniture and made it look "nice" you would not be likely to accept that this made the house theirs.

**Myth: Aboriginal land rights claims go too far; they want all the land; this is a threat to our way of life.**

**Facts:** Land Rights claims are extremely limited. They refer only to Crown (Government) land not required for any purpose and to proper compensation for the takeover of Koorie land over the last 200 years. If all land rights claims were met in NSW, the pattern of land ownership would not change substantially. Only 179 of land right claims have succeeded, representing just 0.04% of all land in NSW. What would change would be the fact that the original owners of this continent would have the space within which to develop and sustain their culture and identity.

**Myth: Aboriginal people want to return to a primitive existence and turn the clock back.**

**Facts:** Koorie people recognise and have consistently said that any return to their traditional hunter-gatherer existence is no longer possible. Even if they wanted this lifestyle, the environment has been so corrupted that it would be impossible. The land is not open, the native plants and animals have been killed. There are many aspects of non Aboriginal society and culture which have been freely accepted by Koorie people. What Koories want is the freedom to accept some parts of non Aboriginal culture while retaining selected parts of their own culture.

**Myth: Ordinary taxpayers fund special privileges for Aborigines under the land rights legislation.**

**Fact:** Land rights are funded through 7.5% of all land tax collected by the NSW Government. Ordinary home and land owners do not pay this tax. The bulk of the revenue is paid by a small number of large land owners, mainly property investors and big companies in the Sydney area.

**Myth: Aboriginal people are divided into different factions and don't know what they want.**

**Fact:** Aboriginal people have as much diversity of political, moral and religious opinion as non-Aboriginal communities. The one unifying opinion is a desire to live in a society without

discrimination with the opportunity to advance themselves and control the future directions of Aboriginal society.

**Myth: Aborigines who are no longer tribal Aborigines are not real Aborigines.**

**Fact:** Aborigines are not any less Aborigines because they live in cities, towns, or in suburbs; or on farms or stations. This is a stereotype that shows the stagnation of people perceptions.

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**Myth: Only really black people ('full-bloods') are entitled to be considered for any form of special treatment.**

**Fact:** The classifying of people according to skin colour or by some degree of blood quantity is offensive and incorrect. Such terms are normally applied to animals. All people living in Australia are of mixed racial descent but identify as Australians. Aboriginality, like Australianism, is a phenomenon which is determined by social characteristics. Such identity has nothing to do with genetics, e.g. skin or hair colour.

**Myth: Aborigines just keep asking for hand-outs from the government. They ought to stand on their own feet.**

**Facts:** For most of the last 200 years, Koories have been deprived of the most basic human rights. Until 1959 a Koorie was not entitled to unemployment benefits or a pension. Until 1949 Koorie children were, by law, the property of the state; they could be, and were removed from their families under the "Aborigines Protection Act". Koorie people today still suffer from that legacy. Their life expectancy is about twenty years less than for other people, infant mortality is three times the general rate. Unemployment is around four times the general rate and imprisonment nearly fourteen times. Because of their race, generations have been relegated to the economic and social scrap heap. The spectacular success of health and legal services and productive co-operatives set up and run by Koorie people themselves has been ignored by the media.

**Myth: Real Aboriginal people are quite happy. The trouble is coming from people who don't look like Aborigines at all.**

**Facts:** For the last 200 years anyone with Koorie blood in them has been subjected to labelling and discrimination by society. Koorie people have the right to decide who will speak for them. Claims that "white stirrers" are responsible for Koorie demands are based on the view that Koorie people can not organise themselves and that they do not know their own people. There is certainly nothing to be gained economically or socially in claiming to be a Koorie.

**Myth: People in the bush are quite happy. The trouble is coming from people who live in the cities.**

**Facts:** Koorie people who live in cities came there in search of work. All of them came originally from country areas. The tribes who lived in what is now Sydney were wiped out in a series of battles during the first few years of the invasion. Wherever they live, Koorie people share a culture as they have shared discrimination. It is not for other people to tell them which ones are "real" and which are not. Aboriginal people in this material are referred to by their preferred expression of Koories.

## Section 5 Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Aboriginal Place Names

Awaba	Flat surface
Bebeah	Where axe stones are found
Bombi	Water swirling around rocks
Bombora	Water swirling around sunken rocks
Bongon	Like a man
Bouddi	The heart
Broula	Place of trickling water
Budgewoi	Young grass (or stinking week)
Bucketty	Mountain spring
Bulbararing	High rocky headland
Bullimar	Yours
Bumble	Native orange
Bungary Norah	Bungary's grinding stone
Buttaba	Place of plenty
Calgo	The mouth
Colo	Koala
Cooranbong	Swampy creek
Dharug	Tribal sub-name
Dooralong	Timber for spears
Durren	Messenger
Ettalong or (Ellalong)	Drinking place
Ettymylong	Drinking place
Gerrin (Long Jetty)	Danger
Girrakool	Place of waters
Girraween	Place of flowers
Gorokan	Dawn
Gwandalan	Peace

Kanwal	Place of snakes
Daragi	The Entrance
Kariong	Meeting place
Kincumber	Direction of the rising sun
Koolswong	Koala bear place
Kourong Gourong	Fast-running sea
Kulnura	In the clouds
Kurrawyba	Big rock in the sea
Mandalong	Forest oaks
Mardi	Stone knife
Mourawaring	High-up view
Munmorah	Grinding stone
Narara	Black snake
Ourimbah	Sacred initiation place
Patonga	Oysters
Tegerin	Cockle shells
Terilbah	Where white clay is found

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Terrigal	Place of little birds
Toowoan	Mating call of the wonga pigeon
Toukley	Place of brambles
Tuggerah	Savannah grassland
Tumbi Umbi	Plenty of water
Umina	Respose
Wallarah	Lookout
Wamberal	Where the sea breaks
Warrah	Honeysuckle
Woy Woy	Big Lagoon
Wybung	Dangerous sea
Wyee	Fire
Wyang	Edible yam
Wyangah	Yam patch
Yambool	Banksia flower
Yarramalong	Cedar trees
Yellawa	low-lying island

*Aboriginal Place Names in New South Wales and their Meanings.*

Barrenjoey	Young Kangaroo
Cowan	Big water; uncle.
Dural	Hollow tree on fire; smoking hollow tree
Koolewong	A native bear.
Manly	although not an Aboriginal word, the name is included because the Aborigines here were considered "manly", and from this the suburb received its name.
Mount Colah	Anger.
Narrabeen	A root word in at least thirty places in New South Wales, meaning forks, forked twisted turned about, black or dark. Names which include this root and are still

Taronga Park Turrumurra	used: Narrabarba, Narrabeen, Narrabri, Narraburra, Narrawa, Narrawin. taronga, a beautiful view. High land; small watercourse; a creek.
Wahroonga	Our home.

Aborigines of the Hunter Region: NSW Department of Education, p68.

NAME	MEANING	
Muloobinba	Place of sea fern (city of Newcastle)	
Derrigarbah	Flower on sand (Wickham)	
Waratah	Name of flower	
Yirritabah	Sacred place (Swansea Heads)	
Biddabah	Silent resting place (Warners Bay)	
Pondee	Overlooking view (Toronto itself)	
Boe-oon	Maitland (The plain)	
Bah-tah-bah	Belmont (hillside by lake)	
Kuttai	Sydney (place of lighthouse)	
Yir-annar-lai	Between Newcastle and Bar Beaches: sacred sites	
Wau-Warhan	Freeman's Waterhole	
Warrah-Walloong	Mountain in watagans	164
Pulba	Pronounced Bool-bah, meaning island. (Water home of Boor-oyir-ong, water monster who guards the island which is a most sacred place where high degree ceremonies were performed).	
My-oonna	Clear water	
Wyee	Bushfire	
Wyong Yam	place	
Gwandalan	Restful place	
Mirra-booka	Dog died here	
Nik-keenbah	place of coal (Lake Macquarie area)	
Koe-purra-bah	Place of yellow earth, which when burnt turns into red ochre used for body decoration and cave painting.	
Bongog Beach	Fraser Park	
Pallamanbah Creek	Swampy place	
Bee-wong-koola	Any place where red ti-trees grow	
Millabah	Place of furs (Speers Point)	
Peetoe-bah	Place of pipe clay	
Ngarran-bah	Where inferior brambles grow (i.e.does not produce food)	

*NSW Aboriginal Place Names and Euphanious Words, with their meaning* F.D. McCarthy (Comp)  
Australian Museum 1971.

Aboriginal Names of Parts of Port Jackson

**Bennelong Point**

Jubugali, Dabugali, Tabegulli (Bannelong, Baneelong), a native from Manly, trained by Governor Phillip to become an emissary of peace among the Port Jackson Aborigines.

**Blue's Point**



Warringarea, Warrungara, Warrungarea

**Botany Bay**

The Biddi-gal horde lived on the north shore of the bay, and the Gwea-gal on the south side.

**Bradley's Head**

Burra-gi, Burroggi

**Bumbora**

Current off Dobroyde Head

**Cabarita Point**

Parramatta River

**Cadi-gal**

The horde which occupied the southern side of Port Jackson from South Head to Long Cove.

**Careening Cove.**

Wey Wey; Wee-a-wy-ai.

**Cattai Creek**

Between South Head and Watson's Bay

**Chowder Bay (Clifton Gardens)**

Korre

**Chowder Head**

Garuga, Gorugal

**Clark Island**

Ballongololah, Billong-ololah, Biloela

**Cockatoo Island**

Warriabah, Warrinbah

**Collin's Flat (Spring Cove)**

Kayjamee, name of local horde in this area. Governor Phillip was speared at this place when a whale feast was in progress.

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**Crow's Nest**

Wargundy

**Darling Harbour**

Tumalong, Tuombalong

**Darling Point**

Eurambi, Yarranabbi, Yarrandabbi, Yaranabe

**Dawe's Point**

Tabagulla, Tilagulla, Tarra

**Double Bay**

Diendagulla

**Elizabeth Point**

Jerrewon, Jerrowan

**Farm Cove**

Koorowal, Kuruwal; Woccanmagulli Yah-loong

**Fig Tree Point**

Kooroowal, Kuruwal; A wild fig tree

**Flagstaff Point**

Kannai

**Fort Denison**

Matewanne, Mattawunga

**Garden Island**

Booroowang, Buruwang

**Goat Island**

Melmel, Melem, Milmil  
**Green or Laing's Point**  
Kubungharra, Tubbungnarra  
**Hunter's Hill**  
Moocooboola, Mukubula (between two waters)  
**Kirribilli Point**  
Drived from Kiarabilli Kurraba Point Kurraba  
**Kurraghbenna Point**  
Between Mosman's Bay and Little Sirius Cove  
**Lane Cove River**  
Turranburra, Turrumburra  
**Lavender or Hulk Bay**  
Quiberi  
**Long Nose Point**  
Yerroulbine, Yurilbin. (Swift running water)  
**Manly Beach**  
Kannai. The Kay-yee-my-gal horde lived in the Manly district  
**Mrs. Macquaries's Point**  
Wiong, Yah-loong, Youlaugh, Yourong, Yurong  
**Middle Harbour**  
Warring-ga, Boombilli, Barrabru, Barra-brui,  
(**The Spit**)  
Barrabri  
**Middle Head**  
Gurugal, Kubba-kubbi  
**Miller's Point**  
Walumetta, Wallumede (also kiarabilli)  
**Mosman's Bay**  
Gorm-bullagong

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**Neutral Bay**  
Warrabri, Wurrabirri, Wurrubirri  
**Neutral Bay Shore**  
Karrabba  
**North Harbour**  
Balgowlah, Kunna  
**North Head**  
Boral, Boray, Borre  
**North Shore**  
Cammeray, Kammeray, Cammeri, Commeru. Local horde opposite Sydney Cove, or from Greenwich to Middle Harbour.  
**Parramatta River**  
The Walumetta-gal (Walumutta, Wallumede) horde occupied the north side of the river, and the Wann-gal lived on the south shore.  
**Parriwa (Parriwi)**  
Near The Spit, Middle Harbour Point and Reserve  
**Point Piper**  
Walara, Willarra, Wollahra, Bungarrung  
**Pott's Point**

Karrajeen, Kurrajeen, Yarrandabbi  
**Robertson's Point**  
 Walwarra-, Wollwarra-, and Wutworra-jeung  
**Rose Bay**  
 Gingagull, Pannerong  
**Rushcutter's Bay**  
 Kogerrah, Kogarah; place of rushes  
**Shark Island**  
 Boambilli, Boambillia  
**Shark Point**  
 Burrawang, Burraway  
**Snapper Point**  
 Wollowi  
**South Head**  
 Burrawarra, Burrowarree  
**Sow and Pigs' Rocks**  
 Barrabbara, Birrabirra, Burrabirra  
**Spring Cove and Quarantine Station**  
 Karrangla, Kurrangli  
**Steel Point**  
 Burroway  
**Sydney Cove**  
 Warrung, Warrane (Circular Quay)  
**Taronga**  
 Beautiful view  
**Tarban Creek**  
 Also Tharbine  
**Vaucluse Bay**  
 Coolong, Kulong, Koo-e-lung; porpoise  
**Vaucluse Point**  
 Mering, Moring  
**Warringah**  
 Country to south of Middle Harbour; Middle Harbour; Grey Head

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**Watson's Bay**  
 Kulli, Kutti, Kuti  
**Woolloomooloo**  
 Wullaoomullah, Walomolo, on maps of early 1820's; Wallamulla, used by remnants of Sydney  
**Aborigines**  
 for this bya; Walla-bah-mulla, a black bush kangaroo, a young kangaroo; Wal-loo-yen-wal-  
 loo, where are you going? Also said to mean a resting place for the dead.  
**Wudyong Point**  
 Also Wodyong (Careening Cove)  
**Wyargine Point**  
 Middle Harbour

Footnote. -Authorities have not been able to define the precise names of these localities, and the alternative names and spelling are given. The meanings of the Aboriginal words are known in only a few instances.

## **Appendix B Contact Names and Address**

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189-193 Kent Street  
Sydney  
(02) 256 6888

Department of School Education Library  
Ground floor 2-10 Wentworth Street, Parramatta 2150  
PO Box 6000  
Parramatta 2124  
(02) 561 1306 ,Fax 635 4581

Local History Libraries at Local Council libraries

Local Historical Societies

N.S.W. Aboriginal Education Consultative Group  
37 Cavendish Street  
Stanmore  
(02) 550 5666

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies  
P.O. Box 553  
Canberra City  
(06) 246 1111

Field Study Centres (FSC)  
Gibberagong Field Studies Centre  
Kuring gai National Park  
Bobbin Head Via  
Turrumurra 2074  
(02) 457 8245

Blackbooks  
13 Mansfield Street  
Glebe 2077  
(02) 660 0120

National Parks and Wildlife Service, Cadman's Cottage  
110 George Street  
The Rocks  
P.O. Box 1967  
Hurstville 2220  
(02) 585 6444

State Archives  
2 Globe Street  
Sydney  
(02) 237 0100

Mitchell Library  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney 2000  
(02) 230 1414

Australian Museum Bookshop  
6-8 College Street  
Sydney  
P.O. Box A285  
Sydney South  
(02) 339 8111

Aboriginal Artist Gallery  
477 Kent Street  
Sydney 2000  
(02) 261 2929

Boomalli Co-operative  
18 Meagher Street  
Chippendale 2008  
(02) 698 2047

Royal Botanical Gardens Education Office  
Mrs Macquarie Road  
Sydney  
(02) 231 8111

Taronga Zoo Education Office  
Bradleys Head Road  
Mosman  
(02) 969 2455

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