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The Academic Senate on 10 April 2007 resolved that Kristina Lyn Everett had satisfied the
requirements for admission to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.


This thesis represents a major part of the prescribed program of study.

Impossible Realities: The Emergence of Traditional Aboriginal Cultural Practices in Sydney's Western Suburbs.

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Macquarie University, Sydney. Anthropology Department. Submitted for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology, 22nd November,
2006.

This work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or institution.

Signed.....

For Izabella Moana Redpath, born 7th October, 2006

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Abstract.

The thesis concerns an Aboriginal community, members of which inhabit the western suburbs of Sydney at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This particular group of people has emerged as a cultural group over the last twenty-five years. In other words, the community did not exist before the advent of Aboriginal land rights in Australia. It might be right to suggest that without land rights, native title and state celebrations and inclusions of Aboriginal peoples as multiculturalism, this particular urban community would not and could not exist at all. That, however, would be a simplistic analysis of a complex phenomenon. Land rights and native title provide the beginning of this story. It becomes much more interesting when the people concerned take it up themselves.

The main foci in the thesis are the cultural forms that this particular community overtly and intentionally produce as articulations of their identity, namely public speaking, dancing, painting and ceremony. I argue that it is only through these very deliberate collective practices of identity-making that community identity *can* be produced. This is because the place that the group claims as its own - Sydney - is always already inhabited by 'us' (the dominant society). Analysis of these cultural forms reveals that even if the existence of the group depends on land rights and attempts to attract the ultimate 'authenticity' bestowed by native title, members of this group are not conforming to native title rules pertinent to what constitutes 'genuine' 'Aboriginality' for the purposes of winning land claims. Their revived traditions are not what the state prescribes as representative of 'authentic' urban Aboriginal culture.

The thesis analyses the ways in which urban Aboriginal peoples are making themselves in the era and context of native title. It considers the consequences of being themselves.

Acknowledgments.

At the outset I would like to sincerely thank the 'darug custodian' community for the patience, kindness, and frankness they invested in our relationships for the purposes of the research. I hope they will see this thesis as a conscientious and respectful representation.

My primary supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Biddle was a rock of stability during the difficult and sometimes dangerous politics that characterised my fieldwork. Her experience and intuition are highly valued.

Professor Annette Hamilton, now Dean of Arts at the University of New South Wales, was my associate supervisor for the first year of my candidature. Her input during the early developmental phases of the research has proven crucial to its outcome.

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which needed to be asked. He has been a good friend and colleague throughout the term of the research.

Thanks also to Ms. Frances Happ, administrator Anthropology Department, Macquarie University for her support.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Estelle Dryland. Estelle has acted as 'editor *extraordinaire*'. I thank her for her attention to detail and her thrift with words.

Finally, to my husband, Ian and our family, my heartfelt thanks. You all coped brilliantly with my prolonged absences - both physical and mental - while I gave myself over to this work. Now for the next adventure.

Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal: Those who identify and are identified as Australian Aboriginal people by genetic descent and social identification. This does not include Torres Strait Islanders.

'Authenticity': Always used with inverted commas in the thesis to mark that although a flawed category, it is used by Black and White alike to denote what is considered 'real' or 'genuine'.

Black: A cultural identification. Thus this category will include a great number of technically white-skinned Aboriginal people.

black: People with dark coloured skin. These people may identify as Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

Darug Ancestor: Aboriginal people who, it is claimed, were the traditional Aboriginal owners of large parts of Sydney before British colonisation.

Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation (also referred to as 'Custodians' when appropriate): One of two organisations of Darug descendants. Full membership is limited to those of Darug descent, although non-Darug descendants may be associate members.

'darug custodians': The wider community associated with, but not the same as Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation. Darug descendant members of Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation are also 'darug custodians', but so too are their partners, other relatives or supporters who may be White settlers, Maori or Aboriginal people from places other than Sydney.

Darug descendant: People who claim a genetic link, that is, the transference of genetic substance across generations, between themselves and Aboriginal people who lived in Sydney before 1788.

Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation (also referred to as 'Tribal'): One of two state incorporated bodies of Darug descendants. Full membership is limited to those of Darug descent, although non Darug descendants may be associate members.

Indigenous: All traditional Aboriginal owners of land all over the world including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia.

Non-Aboriginal: People who identify and are identified as not being Australian Aboriginal by genetic descent and social identification.

'Non-darug custodians': All people who are not members of the 'darug custodian' community, including Darug descendant Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation members.

White: A cultural identification which refers to people who identify as members of the dominant Australian society. Some of these people may be classified as Aboriginal according to some methods of identification, but self identify(or pass) as non-Aboriginal.

white: People with light-coloured skin. These people may identify as Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

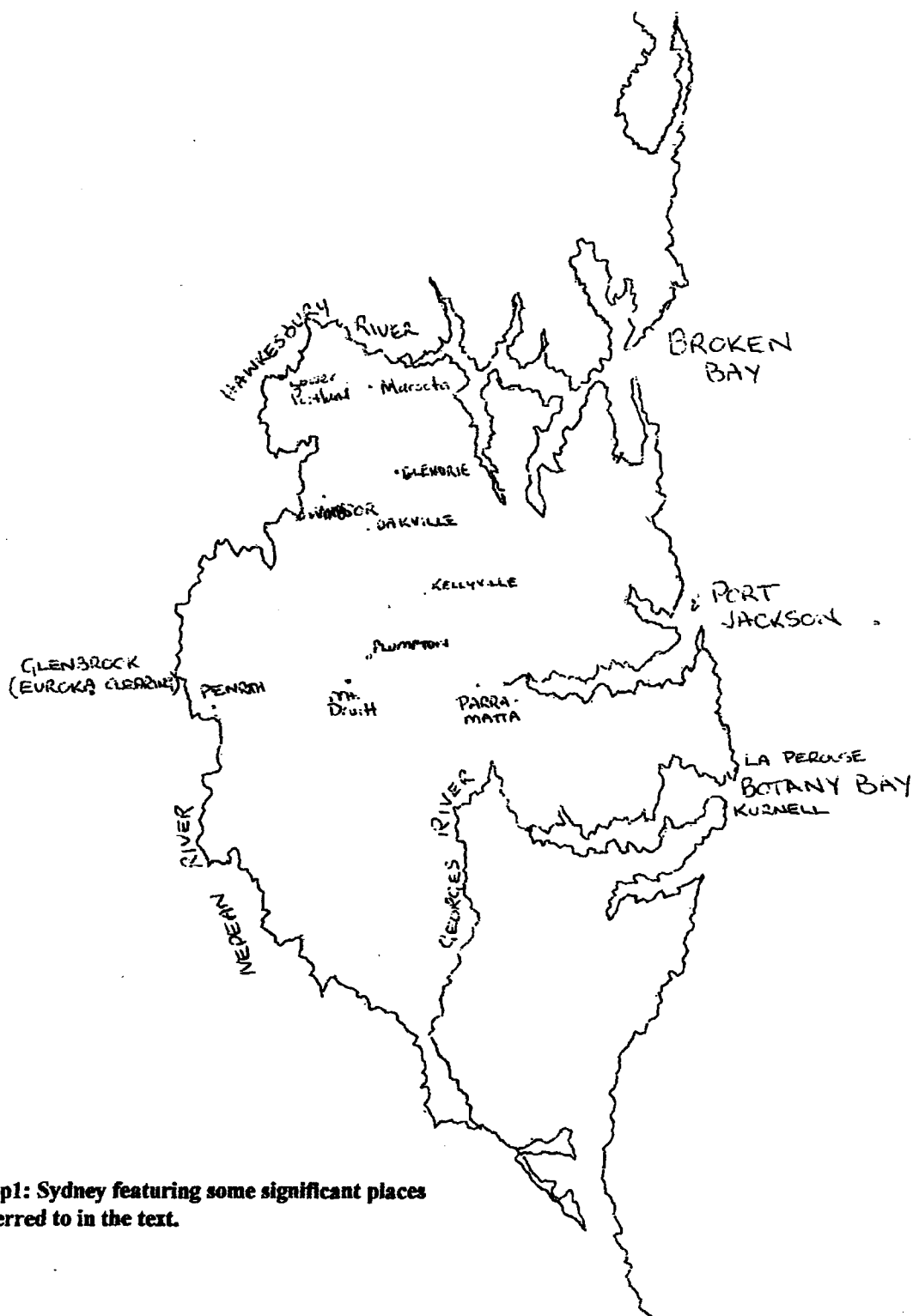
Preface.

This thesis was written in the era and context of native title in Australia. The urban Aboriginal people, with whom the thesis is concerned, emerged in conditions precipitated by land rights and native title and have only operated as a community during the last twenty-five years. In other words, the research on which the thesis depends may not have been possible had it not been for the advent of land rights and native title in Australia. Yet, although land rights and native title made the thesis possible, they also constrain it.

During my period of research, the people with whom I conducted my fieldwork were party to a number of native title claims and my supervisors warned me that my work could be subpoenaed at any time. Indeed, this is still the case. Consequently, my work has required a degree of discretion which is not always demanded of anthropologists. In other circumstances the gaps and silences which are crucial constituent components of this work might have been filled or marked differently.

Leaders of the community with whom I have conducted this study have exercised their right to read, see and retain copies of the project's products including photographs, videotapes and written texts at every stage of the work's development. The final draft of this thesis is no exception to this practice. Valuable feed-back was provided by these people, and they gave their final approval to this work prior to its submission.

Although community members support this thesis, I have changed names and used other disguises to protect the privacy of individuals.



Map1: Sydney featuring some significant places referred to in the text.



Map 2: Based on Kohen's (1993) map, these boundaries represent those currently claimed by 'darug custodians' as 'Traditional Darug Country'.

Table One.

‘darug custodian’ community members including unfinancial and non-members of Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation who attend more than five meetings or social events per annum. Please note that all figures are necessarily approximate.

‘Categories’ of ‘darug custodians’	Numbers
Darug descendants (adult members of DCAC)	29
Children of Darug descendants (under 18)	30
Spouses of Darug decendants	15
Maori community members (not including children under 18 or friends or relatives who sometimes attend events who are not members of the Corporation).	10
Non-Darug Aboriginal Associate members (Numbers do not include children under 18)	83
White middle class associate members (Not including children under 18)	32
TOTAL	199

Table Two: 'darug custodians'

Religious/Church Affiliation	Percentage of People Interviewed
Roman Catholic	75%
Protestant/Charismatic (Pentecostal, Church of Christ)	5%
No Affiliation	20%
Cult of Baiame (Attendance at ceremonies at least twice per annum)	100%
Holy Family (Attendance at services, social gatherings, welfare)	100%

Occupation	'category'	Percentage of People Interviewed
Truck driver	Darug desc. Spouse	5%
Teacher (employed)	Darug descendant	2%
Teacher (unemployed)	Darug descendant	2%
Teacher (employed)	non-Darug Aboriginal Assoc. member	3%
Heavy Plant operator	Darug desc. Spouse	5%
Office Clerk	non-Darug Aboriginal Assoc. member	7%
Police Officer	Darug descendant	2%
Labourer (for DCAC)	Darug descendant	6%
Labourer (for DCAC)	Darug Spouse	0%
Labourer (for DCAC)	Associate Aboriginal Assoc. member	12%
Unpaid Community Service	Darug descendant	24%
Unpaid Community Service	Darug Spouse	15%
Unpaid Community Service	non-Darug Aboriginal Assoc. member	17%

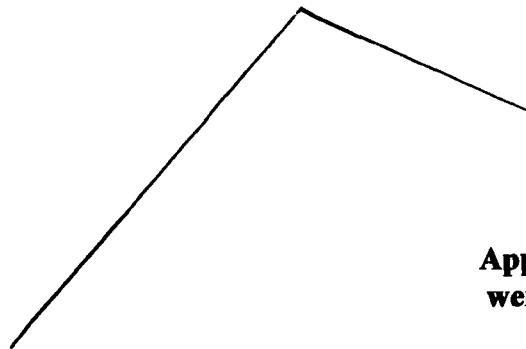
Highest Level of Formal Education	'category'	Percentage of People Interviewed
Primary	Darug descendants	0%
Primary	Darug Spouses	0%
Primary	Aboriginal & Maori Assoc.	13%
Year 10 and below	Darug descendants	20%
Year 10 and below	Darug Spouses	20%
Year 10 and below	Aboriginal & Maori Assoc.	40%
Year 12 and Tertiary	Darug descendants	2%
Year 12 and Tertiary	Darug Spouses	0%
Year 12 and Tertiary	Aboriginal & Maori Assoc.	0%

'Groups' of Darug Descendants

Approx. 5,000 living people identified by Kohen's genealogy as Darug, but who do not identify themselves as such.

Self conscious 'Sydney Aboriginal people' who originally sought Kohen's help to research a genealogy

**'DARUG LINK'
'Original' group of self-conscious
'Sydney Aboriginal People' plus
additional people identified by Kohen's genealogy
who chose to identify as Darug.**



**'CUSTODIAN'
Darug descendants**

Approx. 30 closely related people who were identified by Kohen's genealogy as direct descendants of Darug ancestors.

**'TRIBAL'
Darug descendants**

Approx. 150 people, some unrelated, others closely related, identified by Kohen's genealogy As direct descendants of Darug ancestors. Some were already self-conscious 'Sydney Aboriginal People', others have only recently 'discovered' their Aboriginality from Kohen's genealogy.