

Section A: Introduction

Chapter 1: Introduction and Methods

1.1 Heritage Interpretation

The Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage in 1995 defined interpretation as *'the process of stimulating and encouraging appreciation of our natural and cultural heritage and of communicating heritage conservation ideals and practices'* (Harmon-Price and Tweedie, 1996:3). Tourism Queensland (2000:2) noted that interpretation is *'simply communication that assists visitors in the discovery and appreciation of their environment (e.g. natural, cultural etc.)... (and is)... a skilful mix of information, inspiration, entertainment and education.'* Interpretation can also be delivered in a variety of ways (e.g. signs, tours, brochures, displays).

Despite the presence of these recently constructed definitions, there are many different assumptions found in the public domain as to what constitutes heritage interpretation. Harmon-Price and Tweedie (1996) argue that the general public poorly understands what heritage interpretation is exactly. Part of the problem may be that there are currently few standards or guidelines to follow for those working in the field of heritage interpretation.

In the past, there seemed to be an underlying notion that heritage interpreters were born and not made, and thus there was an assumption that little could be done to impart the art of interpretation. To a certain extent the characteristics that make for a good interpreter may be innate; however this does not prevent interpreters from strengthening these characteristics and learning additional skills to increase the effectiveness of interpretation. As Tilden (1977:26) writes, *'Interpretation is an art...(and) any art is in some degree teachable'*. Research on heritage interpretation is however a relatively recent field. Tilden's work *Interpreting our Heritage*, which has been regarded as a touchstone for heritage interpretation, was published as recently as 1957. The result of this relative absence of guiding research is that on global, national and more local scales, many

interpreters and other heritage professionals are currently engaged in debates about how heritage should be interpreted and what can be considered 'best practice' in the field.

The Australia ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) *Burra Charter* is often heralded as the guiding light in all matters regarding heritage conservation, both within Australia and in many nations abroad. Yet it was only in 1999 that it was amended to incorporate heritage interpretation (Australia ICOMOS, 2003). The 1999 *Burra Charter* recognised the importance of interpretation in educating visitors about heritage places and the role this could play in creating support for, and understanding of, the conservation of these places (Australia ICOMOS, 1999). Although interpretation is now listed in the *Burra Charter*, separate guidelines, such as those established for other aspects of conservation as outlined in the charter, have not yet been developed. As part of the annual Australia ICOMOS conference in late 2003, draft guidelines to the *Burra Charter* on interpretation were discussed and developed (Australia ICOMOS, 2003). It is hoped that these guidelines will contribute to the *Enane Charter*. The *Enane Charter* is an international set of guidelines on interpretation which are currently being developed by archaeologists based in Belgium in consultation with ICOMOS internationally (ibid.). Guidelines for interpretation are particularly important to ensure that interpretation is interesting, informative and above all inclusive. In Australia, with states such as NSW now requiring interpretation plans for developers who plan to work on heritage properties, the introduction of a set of guidelines will help ensure interpretation at heritage sites is of a reasonable standard.

This thesis aims to capitalise on the immediacy of movements to develop guidelines for interpretation by engaging with the issues raised at conferences such as the Australia ICOMOS 2003 Annual Conference. This thesis examines the issues of heritage interpretation in Australia, and in particular, given Australia's historical background, discusses how sites of 'shared' historic importance (sites that contain a past that is significant to both Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians) can be interpreted to present inclusive, informative and interesting portrayals of their history.

1.2 The Great Australian Silence, Black Arm Bands and White Blindfolds

In any discussion of historic heritage interpretation (as opposed to environmental interpretation for example), trends related to the portrayal of history must be considered. In recent years, debates about the nature of Australian history have become prominent. Kelly (2003:8) writes that in Australia, it was in 1992 during the time of the Keating government that history was '*harnessed... for his political purpose*' and was thus taken into the public arena. Kelly quotes Keating after his 1993 re-election when he stated that '*Politicians who believe in their cause always have a story to tell. When a government cannot convey ... a consistent story, the people lose faith in the government ... (in this cause)... the Manning Clarks of the world, can help them do it... there is something of an affinity between politicians and the historians*' (Keating quoted in Kelly, 2003:8). Kelly states that Keating was creating his own story of the nation to help establish a cultural identity that was '*republican, multicultural... (and)... integrated into the Asia-Pacific*' by drawing upon the work of historians Manning Clark and Henry Reynolds to integrate the past with the present (ibid.).

A political attack against this manoeuvre was almost inevitable. It came in the form of a rebuttal from John Howard. Howard utilised the work of the historian Geoffrey Blainey, who formulated the notion of 'black armband history', which essentially argued that historians had taken an excessively negative and unjustified view of the development of the Australian nation. Robert Manne (2003a:11) writes that '*Howard was the most consequential convert to the Blainey point of view*' and that when Howard '*became Prime Minister, the History War was finally declared*'. Tension was increasing on the battleground over the nature of Australian history.

Manne (2003a:11) makes the point that when a 'history war' occurs the focus is almost always on aspects of the past, which '*most seriously threaten to undermine the nation's rosy self regard*'. One example of Australia's 'history wars' was the subject of Stuart Macintyre's (2003) book in which the issue at the centre of the debate was the destruction of Aboriginal society. Questions such as how far the policy of removal of Aboriginal children was spread, whether the term genocide can be used in a discussion of Aboriginal

history, and how responsible is the Australian nation for the actions of the past have been at the forefront of this debate. Macintyre also highlights a new 'front' that is emerging in Australia's history war – its key protagonist being Keith Windschuttle, whose attack on Australian history is unique because it was '*one of the first to engage with the substance of history*' (Macintyre, 2003:221). Windschuttle has tried to create a new interpretation of Australian history with the publication of volume one of *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*. In his book he argues that '*the settlement of Australia was basically benign and that the destruction of Aboriginal society was a consequence of imported disease, missionary do-goodism, primitive dysfunctionality and the criminal proclivities of the Aborigines*' (ibid.). Reynolds (2003:8), one of Windschuttle's main opponents, argues that Windschuttle's agenda is to reinstate the concept of *Terra Nullius*. Windschuttle however has consistently asserted throughout 2003 that he has no political agenda and that all he aims to do is to reveal the 'truth' about Australia's history.

Windschuttle's work has been critiqued in a series of books and articles that respond to his publication such as *Whitewash*, edited by Robert Manne. During 2003, there were also frequent newspaper articles, radio and television broadcasts detailing these alternative stances on history, along with a series of debates that were held across the country. The media attention on the debate has only served to make the issues more prominent.

Disputes about the nature of Australian history have a far greater history themselves than the black armband debates of the 1990s and the recent re-emergence of history as a source of controversy with the publication of Windschuttle's series of *Quadrant* articles and now volume one of the three volume series titled *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*. Briefly, Aborigines, it has been argued, began to be excluded from Australian historical discourses when they increasingly became the subject of anthropology (Attwood, 1996). As anthropology evolved as a discipline, it became subject to theories of social evolution and the Australian Aborigines were championed as living examples of the origins of man. Aboriginal artefacts were collected as 'pure' examples of the primitive past, and contemporary Aboriginal people who had embraced aspects of European culture were regarded as 'corrupted' versions of primitive 'man'. The place of Aboriginal people in prehistory, antiquity and anthropology rather than the historical domain was being secured (ibid.). Attwood also notes that the developing spatial geography of Australia also helped

cast Aboriginal people out of contemporary historical thought, with most non-indigenous Australians living in large towns or cities and thus having little contact with Aboriginal people who lived in missions, reserves, isolated camps or as ‘fringe dwellers’.

In the 1968 series of the ABC *Boyer lectures* the anthropologist W.E.H Stanner discussed what he termed ‘*The Great Australian Silence*’ (Stanner, 1991:27). Manne (2003b) argues that what Stanner meant by this is often misunderstood. Manne writes:

‘Stanner did not mean that scholars and others had failed to show an interest in traditional Aboriginal society... anthropology was probably the most distinguished and developed of the social science disciplines in Australia. What Stanner meant was that both scholars and citizens had, thus far, failed to integrate the story of the Aboriginal dispossession and its aftermath into their understanding of the course of Australian history, reducing the whole tragic and complex story to what one historian had called a “melancholy footnote”...’

(Manne 2003b:2).

It is this inability to integrate the Indigenous past with traditionally accepted historical narratives that this thesis targets. Stanner noted that the ‘silence’ was unlikely to last long (Stanner 1991:27). Indeed Manne (2003b) writes that in 1970 Charles Rowley effectively broke the ‘silence’ with the publication of his three-volume study *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society, Outcasts in White Society* and *The Remote Aborigines*. Attwood (1996) also notes that the famed historian Henry Reynolds was also inspired by Stanner. Much more can be said about this evolution in historical discourses in Australia. However, for the purposes of this thesis, a major point to note is that although the movement to acknowledge the contemporary Indigenous past has progressed significantly in the field of history, it has yet to make its way significantly into the field of heritage interpretation. Re-examining Australian history has arguably lead to legal and political reforms and recognition as shown by examples such as the *Mabo* and *Wik* decisions, the *Native Title Act* and the *Bringing Them Home Report* (Manne, 2003b). Although heritage interpretation has, like most fields, been subject to continual innovation (Tourism Queensland, 2000), these innovations appear to have largely ignored addressing the notion of Australia’s shared

history. Of thirty case studies listed in Tourism Queensland's examples of *Innovation in Interpretation* completed in 2000 for example, not one details a program that attempts to show both the contemporary Indigenous and non-indigenous significance of the site. The interpretation programs outlined focus solely on Indigenous significance, natural significance or historic (non-indigenous) significance. This tends to reinforce stereotypes of Indigenous heritage and avoids bringing Indigenous history and heritage into the contemporary arena, confining it to the realm of 'prehistory'.

1.3 From Prehistory to History: Conceptions of Aboriginal People and their Role in Heritage Interpretation

Studies of the past are generally divided into at least two periods – prehistory and history. 'History' has been generally accepted as a period of time that is covered by written records. The length of this time varies around the world. However, as Fredericksen (2000:94) writes, it is generally '*thought to fall within the last 5000 years or so of human occupation of the planet*'. 'Prehistory' is essentially the opposite of history, a period of the past where no written records existed. There are many more possible divisions within these two areas. For example, the realm of history can be further divided into medieval, Renaissance or other similar time periods, or could be categorised by country, e.g. American or Chinese. These categorical divisions can seem somewhat arbitrary. The question then arises as to whether the division of history and prehistory is also an arbitrary construct. This issue is discussed in depth by Fredericksen with particular attention to an Australian archaeological context. Fredericksen (ibid.) sees the issue of the separation of history and prehistory in Australia as particularly complex, as Australia is a post-colonial nation '*where the historical period has been grafted by colonial conquest onto a much longer 'prehistoric' human occupation*'.

There are several problems related to the separation of the past in Australia into prehistory and history. Firstly, there are no neat divisions of time. It could be argued that writing (and thus history) came to Australia with early European explorers in the 1600s or to Northern Australia with the Macassan voyages (Fredericksen, 2000:95). However, as Fredericksen argues, none of these events marked a transfer of written culture into the Indigenous

culture. 1788 could be argued as the starting point of 'history' in Australia, however the reality is that in many parts of Australia Indigenous people continued with little or no direct impact from European settlement. The problem here is that there is no set time where the Australian Nation (or individual colonies pre 1901) as a whole began working in a written culture. It has been suggested therefore that an intermediary period of 'protohistory' be adopted in countries like Australia, where events fail to fit neatly into either prehistory or history (ibid.).

A second, and for the purposes of this thesis, perhaps the most significant problem associated with the division of the Australian past into prehistory and history, is the connotations that arise from relegating the Aboriginal past to the prehistoric era. Aboriginal culture is seen through its association with prehistory as a "primitive" culture. This is in part due to the links between archaeology and anthropology and the fact that *'archaeology is ultimately concerned with discovering how cultures function and change'* (Fredericksen, 2000:96). Relegating the Aboriginal past to the prehistoric era has ironically failed to identify the ways in which Aboriginal culture has continually evolved when faced with the challenges of European colonisation. Byrne (1996), is particularly concerned with the way that Australian archaeology has failed to identify Indigenous cultural change. He suggests that adaptation of aspects of European culture into Indigenous culture has been interpreted as a collapse of culture rather than cultural change. Byrne (1996:83) writes that the first observers saw Aborigines as *'passive recipients of European ways and products... and with few exceptions... observers failed to attend to the process by which Aborigines were recontextualising or Aboriginalising elements of European culture.'* Byrne (1996) charts how the emerging discourses of natural history, ethnology, antiquarianism and archaeology all helped in defining the image of a 'real' Aborigine as being one who lived a 'traditional' (prehistoric) lifestyle. Classificatory systems that emerged with natural history lead to Aborigines being seen as an *'extension of nature'* (Byrne, 1996:88). Ethnology utilised Darwinian ideas to identify Aborigines as a particularly primitive race. Biological concepts of race were also used to determine 'real' Aboriginality, with the concept of half and quarter castes etc. being introduced. When this concept was finally dropped as a way of identifying a person's Aboriginality, Cowlshaw (in Byrne, 1996:91) writes that social anthropologists defined who Aborigines were. The benchmark they utilised was the surviving elements of 'traditional' Aboriginal culture. Thus *'culture took the place of*

blood and the concept of 'pure' or 'full blood' was replaced by that of the 'traditional' Aborigine (ibid.). Whether the benchmark of 'purity' was blood or culture, an ideal or 'real' aboriginality was established, and antiquarianism celebrated this ideal in the collection of artefacts, which aimed to preserve the identity of 'traditional' Aboriginal Culture. Meanwhile, emerging forms of Aboriginal culture went largely unnoticed. As Byrne (1996:84) writes, *'while Aborigines were busy inventing local futures and signifying places and things which went with them, European settlers were hard at work ignoring these in favour of the places and things the 'old' Aborigines had left behind'*. This ignores that cultural change is a natural phenomenon, and does not signify a collapse of culture. Cultures across the world are in a continual process of adaptation and change.

The effects of this relegation of Aboriginal people to the prehistoric era have been numerous. Firstly, it contributed to what Stanner labelled the 'Great Australian Silence'. It meant that contemporary or post-contact Indigenous history in Australia was for many years largely ignored. This has contributed to a general lack of awareness amongst non-Indigenous Australians about the past and issues such as the removal of Aboriginal children from their families. Similarly many non-indigenous Australians have a lack of awareness of the role that many Aboriginal people played in creating the nation as we know it, men and women that historian Henry Reynolds (2000) labelled the 'Black Pioneers'.

Byrne (1996:102) suggests that the division between prehistory and history, even when a period of so called 'contact' history is acknowledged, has contributed to a lack of awareness of the significant period of what he labels the 'entanglement' of different cultural groups in Australia. This period was marked by the swapping of different aspects of cultures and traditions. Often, European culture is seen as 'pure' because it is dominant; however just as Aborigines adopted aspects of European culture, the flow also went the other way. This is not often acknowledged.

The lack of attention to contemporary Aboriginal history in turn influenced heritage interpretation. Heritage sites in Australia largely depict either Indigenous or non-indigenous significance but not both. If a site had non-indigenous significance, the Indigenous prehistory was rarely acknowledged, almost as if its purity had been affected

by the overlaying of non-indigenous history. It is only in recent years, and particularly now that the custom of holding ‘welcome to country’ ceremonies as part of community events and conferences has been embraced, that prehistory (and indeed continual historical association with sites) is routinely being acknowledged. Often however little is done beyond the identification of an Indigenous groups name before the narrative of non-indigenous history takes over. One current example of this can be seen on the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust web site. An extract of this history is given in the box below. In this example, although an Indigenous prehistory is recognised, the local Indigenous group is not named. The prehistory is briefly acknowledged with reference to the areas archaeological sites. The story of European settlement then takes over with no reference to any period of contact history.

‘Aboriginal people have lived around the Woolwich area for thousands of years. Kellys Bush contains shell middens and a scouring groove used to make stone tools.

In 1835 a family of cabinet-makers, the Clarkes, were granted land on the eastern end of the peninsula (now Woolwich). They cleared the land for cultivation and built several houses.

Atlas Engineering set up maritime operations on 10 acres at Woolwich in 1883....’

(Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, 2001).

This acknowledgment of prior Indigenous presence has almost become the norm in many local histories. Many heritage interpreters have also appeared to embrace this practice, incorporating basic prehistoric information into site interpretations. This is progressive in that it does acknowledge an Indigenous past which may previously have gone unacknowledged. However, it fails to show contemporary Indigenous associations with sites and continues the relegation of Indigenous people to the prehistoric era. A challenge that awaits heritage interpreters, and one that this thesis examines, is how to incorporate

the shared (post-contact or contemporary) history of both Australia's Indigenous and non-indigenous people in the one site. Heritage interpreters, like any member of the general public, can hold a stereotyped view of what constitutes Aboriginal heritage (Ballantyne, 1995). The challenge is for interpreters to confront these views to help create more inclusive interpretation programs.

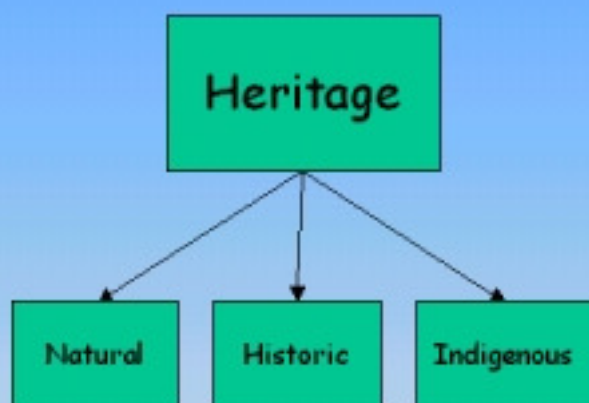
1.4 Understanding Aboriginal Perspectives of History and Heritage

Prior to this current research, the author conducted research resulting in an Honours Thesis entitled *Understanding Aboriginal Perspectives of History and Heritage in Wyndham, Western Australia* (Lawton, 2001). The purpose of this work was to examine the ways in which members of the Wyndham Aboriginal community perceived history and heritage. That research had a particular focus on 'contemporary' (or post-contact) history and heritage. In focusing on the contemporary history and heritage of a group of Indigenous people it was hoped that the work would help influence dominant perspectives within Australian society which automatically equate Aboriginal heritage with rock art, artefact scatters and occupation sites without thinking further afield to include post-contact contemporary sites. The study revealed some important findings on just how some Indigenous people perceived contemporary history and heritage. Of course whilst these views may be specific to the community which was the focus of the study, being Wyndham – a remote country town in the Kimberley Region of Western Australia, it is also possible that some of the perspectives revealed may be present in other Indigenous communities. It is therefore relevant, before proceeding into the body of this current research on heritage interpretation, to review some of the findings of the Wyndham study.

Investigating Aboriginal perspectives of heritage is of great importance. Just as Aboriginal voices have been excluded in the past from post-contact history, so too have they been excluded from defining exactly what constitutes post-contact heritage (Langford, 1983). There is a strong need to readdress this in order to ensure that the protection and interpretation of Australia's heritage is as inclusive as possible. Scholars such as Russell (1997) have been consistently arguing for a more inclusive heritage system within

Australia, one that incorporates not only Indigenous perspectives, but the perspectives of women and minority groups, and a heritage register which gives protection to broad types of heritage. The general model of heritage identification in Australia that is adopted by many heritage agencies and organisations tends to categorise heritage as being in one of three distinct groups: Indigenous, historic or natural. This can lead to items or places of heritage that are significant under multiple categories either failing to be listed or being listed for only one aspect of their significance. Denying other fields of significance can also lead to these items or places of heritage being interpreted only from the perspective of the field of significance that they were listed under. Failure to acknowledge the complexity of sites of multiple significance can lead, for example, to sites of shared history (a site of both Indigenous and non-indigenous significance) being interpreted solely from the perspective of their non-indigenous significance. For an illustration of this discussion see Figure 1.1. Acknowledging the complexity of heritage sites to include Indigenous stories in the interpretation is certainly a step in the right direction. It must however be done in consultation with relevant Indigenous people and with an understanding of their perspectives of what aspects of their history and heritage are important and are appropriate to utilise.

Models of Heritage



Above: Typical model of heritage used in Australia. This 'pigeon holes' heritage - often ignoring overlap between categories



Above: Ideal model of heritage put forward in this thesis

Figure 1.1: A traditional model of heritage identification and interpretation in Australia and a proposed, more inclusive model

The Wyndham Study revealed a number of different perspectives on issues associated with history and heritage. Of course, like any community, there were variations among it. Some interesting trends however can be noted. The older generation within the Indigenous community felt that the most important object was to preserve the stories from sites rather than the fabric of the site itself. One exception to this view was when the site was to be used to educate the younger generation of the Indigenous community and/or non-indigenous people. In these circumstances it was felt that the fabric of a site should be preserved in order to 'show' the history. The older generation perceived therefore that younger Indigenous people and non-indigenous people needed this visual reinforcement to help understand Indigenous experiences of the area's history. The audience is therefore important to consider in interpretation programs.

Another issue that was raised in the study was the importance of acknowledging the history of all Indigenous people in the area and not just traditional owners. Often, consultation processes focus solely on traditional owners of an area and ignore the often long-standing history of many Indigenous people who may have been forcibly located to an area on a mission or reserve. Their stories are just as valuable. So diversity within the Indigenous community and the range of experiences of Indigenous people needs to be considered for any historic interpretation.

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings of the Wyndham study is that Aboriginal perceptions of what constitutes contemporary or post-contact heritage is not always obvious to a non-indigenous person. For example, in Wyndham, one of the sites identified as part of the contemporary Indigenous history of the town was graffiti underneath the Old Wyndham Gaol. This graffiti revealed brief snippets of the life of some of the Indigenous inmates. It also showed a distinctly Indigenous way of measuring the time spent in prison. Rather than crossing off the number of days spent incarcerated, as shown in many non-Indigenous films, the graffiti of the Indigenous inmates showed them measuring time by how many 'moons' they had spent at the gaol (see Figure 1.2). To many non-indigenous people the graffiti under the piers of the old gaol would appear to be merely vandalism, and something that ought to be painted over. For members of the Indigenous community however it showed inmates stories and they felt it ought to be preserved, or at the very least recorded for posterity. The lesson here is that assumptions should not be made about what

should or should not be incorporated in interpretation programs as significant parts of a sites heritage without adequate consultation.



Figure 1.2: Graffiti on piers underneath the Wyndham Gaol

The Wyndham study also revealed several other findings. What is particularly important to note for this thesis is the significance of consultation and considering local¹ Indigenous perspectives. Where possible, relevant Indigenous people should also be employed in or, where projects are undertaken voluntarily, given the opportunity to be involved in telling history from their own perspectives and using methods of their own choosing. This thesis specifically discusses sites of shared Indigenous and non-indigenous heritage. In order to create truly shared histories, this thesis takes the argument that stories of sites of shared history, whilst taking these measures to incorporate Indigenous voices, should not be told exclusively from an Indigenous perspective. Where appropriate, an Indigenous perspective could be dominant at a site, particularly for example at sites of particular sensitivity. In the interests of cross-cultural understanding however, it may be better that a non-indigenous perspective also be incorporated. This could help visitors understand the multiple layers of significance that may be present in such sites.

¹ Local perspectives, as discussed previously should incorporate both traditional owners and Indigenous people who live locally but are descended from people of other areas. When dealing with contemporary or post-contact history this is particularly the case, as a broad range of indigenous people may find areas of historical importance.

1.5 Shared History and Reconciliation



Figure 1.3: A message in the sky during the Corroboree 2000 Bridge Walk in Sydney

During its ten year term, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was a strong advocate of the role of history in the reconciliation process. Indeed, the Council highlighted ‘Sharing History’ as one of a number of ‘key issues’ on which to develop papers (Clark, 1994). If many non-indigenous Australians had a better understanding of history, it was argued that they would have a greater understanding of many Aboriginal peoples’ experiences in the past, along with a greater understanding of Aboriginal culture. Also, by incorporating Aboriginal perspectives of history into official historical narratives, Aboriginal people could benefit from the stronger sense of community identity that may arise. Historians such as Henry Reynolds joined this call to establish the role of history in the reconciliation process. In his 1999 book, *Why Weren’t We Told?*, he questioned whether reconciliation would be possible at all without ‘*some convergence of histories*’ (Reynolds, 1999:171). The problem is, however, when there are such diametrically opposed views as to what the ‘real’ Australian history is, how is a convergence of views possible? The recent media interest in the release of Keith Windschuttle’s books and arguments for *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* is just one indication of the polarisation of opinions on the Australian past.

Newspaper reporters such as *The Sunday Telegraph's* Angela Shanahan, have continually entered the debate with claims that Windschuttle's central belief that '*Australian colonial history has been a prisoner of current ideological fads*' illustrates that Australians should throw off their 'black arm bands' and abandon any sense of guilt about the past (Shanahan, 2003a:71). Shanahan draws the debate about the past into the present by stating that '*Guilt was the ideological power base of Aboriginal politics... and it is at the heart of an old fashioned Marxist orthodoxy that requires history to be at the serve of politics and allows politically motivated historians to get away with obfuscation and downright falsehood.*' (ibid.). Shanahan shows here that peoples' perspectives on the past directly influence their views in the present. How people view Australia's past, influences how they view important social justice questions that face Indigenous Australians today such as the issue of a treaty, native title and land rights, compensation for members of the stolen generation and continues down to basic questions of equity in health, housing and education.

Portrayals of history clearly do therefore have the ability to influence reconciliation. Indeed they can even influence what reconciliation is perceived to be. As Goodall, citing Fiona Nicoll notes, '*there can be reconciliation between people, as they become reconciled with each other, resolving past conflicts and restoring or building new, positive relationships. But people can be reconciled to something, usually an unfortunate occurrence, learning to live with something inevitable*' (Goodall, 2002:8). For the purposes of this thesis however, reconciliation is deemed to be a process aligned with Goodall's first suggested meaning of reconciliation *with* and *between* Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Importantly, this thesis aims to stress that reconciliation needs to be a process that includes all Australians. It should not be a process that is confined to merely reconciling 'black' and 'white' Australians, but should recognise the diversity of both Indigenous and non-indigenous Australia.

So, the question then becomes what is the role of history in this kind of reconciliation? In their 1994 key issues paper, *Sharing History*, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation suggested a number of points in relation to this. In particular, as Goodall (2002) writes, the council embraced the notion of 'sharing'. Goodall (2002:7) notes that this was '*suggestive*

not only of the personal contact and warm generosity of a shared meal but of the reciprocity understood to lie at the heart of Aboriginal culture and also valued within the various “settler” religious traditions. As a new relationship with the past was in effect a primary goal of reconciliation, this was then linked to the favoured concept of sharing, and the idea of ‘sharing history’ emerged (ibid.).

Just as problems are encountered with the various meanings associated with reconciliation, so too are problems being encountered with what ‘sharing history’ means. Goodall’s 2002 paper entitled *Too Early Yet or Not Soon Enough?: Reflections on Sharing Histories as Process* provides an excellent discussion on the many problems associated with the concept of ‘shared history’. Of specific reference to this thesis is that one of the major problems has been working out exactly what ‘shared history’ is in practice. What would, for example, an interpretation program that incorporates ‘shared history’ be like? What key features (if any) would it have to have to pass as having portrayed ‘shared history’ or what could the interpretation of shared heritage look like? As Goodall (2002:8) writes, *‘the actual mechanics of “sharing” have proved harder to pin down’*.

Goodall (2002:8) states that the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation’s key issue paper took the popular position of interpreting history as *‘a set of discrete, empirically testable facts’*. Aboriginal history was simply another set of facts that for various reasons had previously been erased from the historical record. Placing the two sets of facts side by side to create a new historical narrative could therefore simply create a shared history.

Goodall (2002) points out a number of problems with interpreting history in this ‘factual’ way. Non-indigenous interviewees in one of her studies for example, found it very difficult to see Aboriginal history as part of Australian history. This may have been because they saw Indigenous people’s experiences as isolated from their own experiences of the past, or that they had a pre-conception of Indigenous history as being ‘prehistory’ (ibid. p.10). Also, whilst some non-indigenous Australians thought that ‘integrated’ histories should be a part of reconciliation, others saw the process as a kind of *‘reverse discrimination’* (ibid.). Indigenous interviewees were often very aware of the entwined nature of the Indigenous and non-indigenous past. However many were reluctant to move towards what Goodall (ibid. p.11) labels a *‘linear, coherent narrative of “Australian” history to which all could*

lay claim'. Rather, they saw the importance of retaining '*custodianship*' of their stories, and saw 'sharing history' as '*making a venue, a forum, for Aboriginal voices to be heard, "sharing" in the sense of telling their story and being heard respectfully, and, hopefully, with some understanding and sympathy*' (ibid.).

This thesis embraces an alternative perspective of history presented in Goodall's paper, and in other academic forums. It argues, that history is indeed '*not sequences of stable facts which can be added and subtracted to reach the arguable truth, but are instead interpretive narratives*' (Goodall, 2002:12). As Goodall writes (ibid.), this approach to history is still relatively '*rare in popular or official forums*'. If histories are presented as 'truth' rather than a collection of individual interpretations or perspectives of events, their politicisation and ultimately the polarisation of diametrically opposed histories will always occur. If histories are presented as '*open-ended stories about the past rather than... closed, defensive narratives*' (ibid. p.17) then there is perhaps more hope that they can be tools in aiding cross cultural understanding in the reconciliation process. Without this approach, histories will always, to some extent, be divisive. Byrne's (1996) concept of 'entanglement' may prove particularly useful in aiding the public's understanding of histories where multiple voices are presented. Where people from a range of cultural backgrounds come together, there will never be a neat, ordered historical narrative, but rather an interesting historical mix of lives and influences. This thesis interprets, 'shared history' as a way (and there are undoubtedly many, and perhaps endless ways) of presenting these 'entanglements', without falling into the trap of presenting them as 'the one truth'. Incorporating 'shared history' into heritage interpretation, allows, at least to a certain extent, the acknowledgement that the past is viewed in a variety of ways by people from a whole range of cultural backgrounds, and that no one way represents that 'truth'.

Importantly, this thesis also rejects the appropriation of the Indigenous past by and for non-indigenous people. In his 1996 paper, *Deep Nation*, Byrne argued that non-indigenous Australians have embraced the concept of a prehistoric Indigenous past as a means of giving them the sense of 'deep time' and attachment to the land that they lack because they have only a relatively short history in Australia. The *1994 Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's Key Issue Paper* however seems to almost advocate this appropriation, stating that '*By actively sharing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' history and*

culture, non-indigenous Australians are able to lengthen and strengthen their association with this land.' (Clark, 1994:1). Non-indigenous Australians should certainly develop an understanding and appreciation of the depth of the Indigenous past in Australia, but it needs to be done with both consent and respect. The work of Peter Read, particularly in his book *Belonging* (2000), engages with the ways in which non-indigenous Australians can form relationships with the land whilst having a strong understanding of the history that has gone before them. As McKenna (2002:8) writes, it is not necessary for non-indigenous Australians to appropriate the history of Aboriginal belonging to the land. Non-indigenous Australians can, have and will find their own unique ways of identifying with the land that allows them to also respect the past.

1.6 Incorporating the Principles of Shared History into Heritage Interpretation

In 1989, Mulvaney published the book, *Encounters in Place*. This book, embraced the importance of heritage sites as '*documents of Australian history*' (Mulvaney, 1989:xvi). Heritage places could disseminate Australian history to the public. Mulvaney also stressed the importance of embracing the shared history of these sites, stating '*A mature Australian culture should identify with these monuments or symbolic sites and conserve them; the conscience-stirring places as well as sites of heroic deeds. Above all, it must accept the reality that many races contributed to our culture...*' (ibid.). Since then however, little has been done to embrace the concept of shared history in the interpretation of heritage sites. Indeed, it is only in relatively recent times that shared history has begun to be incorporated into heritage interpretation.

Ballatyne and Uzzell (1999) note that research in heritage interpretation has progressed since the 1980s, when little was available other than Tilden's broad principles which he outlined in his 1957 book *Interpreting Our Heritage*. Tilden's principles were however written in a time when '*most interpretation was based in national parks, historic homes, and monuments, concentrating on the promotion of the preservation ethic*' whereas today interpretation is used for much wider purposes (McArthur and Hall, 1993:27). Research has been conducted in the areas of visitor motivation, behaviour, and learning, along with place identity and construction (Ballatyne and Uzzell, 1999:62). There also seem to be

moves by those involved in the field of interpretation to adopt what Ballantyne and Uzzell label a 'balanced approach' towards controversial and contested heritage (ibid. p.64). That is, acknowledging '*the post-modern view of meaning making – one that acknowledges the uniqueness of individual viewpoints and perspectives*' (ibid.). Interpreters appear to be more willing to engage with issues, presenting multiple perspectives, and rather than allowing one perspective to dominate, allowing the visitor to draw their own conclusions. Many interpreters are also seeking the involvement of relevant communities in constructing, evaluating, updating and improving interpretation programs (ibid. p.66). Despite this progress however, Ballantyne and Uzzell (1999:70) note that whilst other countries have embraced the interpretation of controversial aspects of their history and heritage, '*Australians seem hesitant to do so*'. Ballantyne and Uzzell ask the question '*Are Australia interpreters willing to take up the challenge to work for positive change in society, or will they retreat to the supposed "safe ground" of neutrality?*' (ibid.). They argue that Australian interpreters should embrace what they label as 'hot' interpretation – interpretation which embraces controversial issues and presents the full range of emotive perspectives these issues invoke. In particular, they suggest aspects of Australia's past, such as the stolen generation, just one aspect of what this thesis argues is Australia's 'shared history', should be engaged with in heritage interpretation. This thesis therefore aims to expand on Ballantyne and Uzzell's suggestion to illustrate examples where shared history is being embraced in interpretation, to show it can be done successfully and also to highlight issues that interpreters need to be aware of when engaging in a project which aims to present shared histories. As Ballantyne and Uzzell (1999:71) write, interpreters in today's society need to engage with much more than the '*technical dimensions of their craft and move towards greater consideration of the social antecedents and consequences.... They need to consider... their impact on the development of visitor knowledge, attitudes and action on both local and global scales*'. In Australia, the concept of shared history needs to be at the forefront of interpreter's considerations.

1.7 Overview of the Research Project and Thesis Structure

This thesis aims to discuss the varying ways that Indigenous history can be incorporated in heritage interpretation in Australia, in order to help those in the field of heritage

interpretation to present truly ‘shared’ histories. Various examples, where Indigenous history is currently being incorporated in the interpretation of sites, or will be incorporated in the future, are taken from sample sites across Australia. The focus for this thesis is on incorporating post-contact or ‘contemporary’ Indigenous history into interpretation rather than on prehistory. Addressing prehistory is important, however purely focusing on Indigenous prehistory (as covered in section 1.3) can lead to visitors at heritage sites failing to appreciate the *continuous* association of Indigenous people to that place. Prehistory should however be acknowledged as important in its own right. Acknowledging prehistory also helps to highlight the *depth* of Indigenous peoples’ association to heritage sites. It should not however be the sole information that is given about Indigenous history. Even if a site is not currently linked to an Indigenous group, it is highly likely that the site would have had a period of ‘contact’ history that should be acknowledged.

In order to cover the various ways in which Indigenous history can be incorporated into interpretation programs, a range of heritage sites and issues have been covered in this thesis. This first Section (Section A) of the thesis (which includes Chapter One), has provided an overview of the background issues relevant to shared history and heritage interpretation. Section B of the thesis (which covers Chapters Two to Four) then goes on to deal with general examples and issues impacting upon the interpretation of sites of shared heritage. This section is largely the result of documentary research and site analysis of various monuments and museums. Section B incorporates a limited amount of social research with relevant heritage professionals. Within section B, Chapter Two deals with monuments and how they can be utilised to portray Australia’s shared history. Chapter Three investigates examples of museums that are incorporating Indigenous history. Chapter Four highlights a range of issues that are currently influencing the inclusiveness of heritage interpretation in Australia.

Section C of the thesis (which covers Chapters Five to Seven) deals specifically with the interpretation of historic sites. This is the main section of the thesis and along with documentary research and on-site analysis, it incorporates extensive social research with relevant stakeholders of the particular historic sites. The social research involved in these case studies includes in-depth interviews with key individuals involved in the establishment of the interpretation projects, or in the case of Myall Creek, a visitor survey.

To maintain the confidentiality of those who participated in the in-depth interviews, participants have been allotted a number, and when comments from participants are included in the chapters, they are attributed to their specific interviewee number rather than their name. Basic details of their associations with the historic sites are also given. Similarly, participants in the Myall Creek Survey are also identified only by their residing town to maintain confidentiality. The sites that are examined in this section have a shared Indigenous and non-indigenous heritage, however in the case of Parramatta Park and Old Government House (Chapter Five) and The Meeting Place Precinct (Chapter Six), they were previously interpreted from almost a purely non-indigenous perspective. The honest feedback of all the interviewees as to the problems faced in establishing and continuing to maintain interpretation programs that illustrate shared history have added an invaluable aspect to the research.

Finally, Section D (Chapter Eight) brings into discussion the broad range of issues covered in the first three Sections in order to draw some general conclusions about the status of heritage interpretation in Australia, the various ways in which shared history can be incorporated into historic sites, museums and other heritage sites, and the problems associated with implementing shared history/heritage projects.

In some ways it could be argued that this thesis approaches a '*Non-Traditional Thesis*'. The chapter structure fulfils part B1 of Macquarie University's Higher Degree Research Unit's *Submission of a Non-Traditional Thesis* (Macquarie University 2003, p.1), which allows a series of linked papers. The thesis is designed so that each chapter could be only slightly changed and submitted to a journal – and in fact Chapter Two was published in *Public History Review*, Volume 11, 2004. Several of the other chapters, with slight alterations, are also currently under review. In spite of the good fit of the '*Non-Traditional Thesis*' description, this thesis is submitted as a traditional thesis because, with the inclusion of the Introduction (Part A), Conclusion (Part D), and linking material in each section, the eight chapters do form '*a single, integrated, coherent body of work*' (Macquarie University 2003, p.1). The structure adopted for this thesis is fitting with the interdisciplinary nature of Indigenous Studies (the Department in which the thesis has been submitted). In contrast to more 'traditional' subject areas, like geography or sociology, Indigenous Studies does not have a prescribed thesis structure incorporating a monolithic

literature review and a research methodology set in the context of the traditions of that particular discipline. Rather, each individual chapter utilises a range of references from across many disciplines to ground its discussion.

Importantly, this thesis does not aim to develop a set of prescriptive guidelines as to how heritage interpreters should seek to incorporate shared history into heritage interpretation. The thesis aims to review various instances in which shared history has been, or plans are in place for it to be incorporated into interpretation. In doing so, it is hoped to illustrate the variety of ways in which Australia's shared history can be presented, and the problems those involved in the interpretation programs have faced along the way. Simply by 'holding up' the various examples presented in the thesis to heritage interpreters, other innovative ideas for interpretation may be sparked, along with an awareness of the kinds of processes needed to implement these projects and the pitfalls that may be faced along the way. After the various examples and case studies (Sections B and C) are discussed, the Discussion and Conclusions Section (Section D) of the thesis also poses the question of what exactly shared history is in relation to interpretive practice and discusses whether indeed it is possible to achieve it. Above all, by questioning the current state of heritage interpretation in Australia and by highlighting what is achievable (whilst acknowledging where further progress can be made), this thesis aims to inspire heritage interpreters to take a new look at Australian history. Interpreters need to ensure that any interpretation programs that they produce cover the fullest possible spectrum of attachments to place and associations to the past. Only when this is done will heritage interpretation be as inclusive as possible. As Young writes:

In interpreting historic place, we are telling stories about it, potent, politically charged stories. The first question we should ask is not "Which story should I tell?" but "Whose?" For should a class or gender or any other social group be banished to the fringes of history it is dispossessed. Instead of achieving the dignity accorded to the "actors" of history, members of such groups are relegated to the realms of the "acted upon"

(Young, 1996:151).

Section B: General Issues in Heritage

Interpretation

Chapter 2: Monuments and Memorials

*'You have fought for your country.
Where are your monuments?
The difficulties we have in belonging
these, these are your cenotaph.'*

An extract from Bruce Dawe's *For the Other Fallen* (quoted in Inglis 1998:448).

2.1 Introduction

A monument, in a western context, has traditionally been understood as *'something erected in memory of a person, event etc., as a pillar, statue, or the like'* or *'any building, megalith, etc., surviving from a past age, and regarded as of historical or archaeological importance'* (The Macquarie Essential Dictionary, 1999:511). How then is a monument distinguished from a memorial, which is *'something designed to preserve the memory of a person, event, etc., as a monument, a periodic observance, etc.'* (ibid. p.494)? Bulbeck (1988:1) argues that the distinction between the two is easily blurred. Bulbeck distinguished between the two by stating that *'the primary purpose of the memorial is remembrance, while the primary purpose of other monuments may be aesthetic or economic (e.g. tourist edifices like the "Big Pineapple" near Nambour, Queensland)'*, is therefore quite useful (1988:1). Under this definition, a monument can also clearly be a memorial, but need not necessarily be one. A memorial can be understood as a specific kind of monument, designed with the purpose of remembrance in mind. In this chapter, both terms will be used, as the literature tends to use them interchangeably. The focus of the chapter is however on those monuments and memorials which commemorate events and people of the past.

Memorials to events and people of the past are a common feature in the Australian landscape. As John Pilger, quoted by The Public Action Project, once remarked: Australia is '*a nation of remembrance*' (The Public Action Project, 1989:221). Australian cities and towns are littered with statues, plaques, obelisks and cairns that commemorate and/or celebrate aspects of Australian history. Inglis (1998:13) notes the long standing history of memorials, citing the obelisks erected by Egyptian Pharaohs to commemorate victories in war, memorial columns erected by Roman emperors, and the statues of historical figures from Ancient Greece. Monuments and memorials are a part of Australia's western cultural heritage. The term monument was derived from the Latin *monere*, which has a number of possible meanings (Bulbeck 1988:1). Bulbeck's preferred meaning is '*to name*' however, Fiske *et al.* translate *monere* as to '*warn or advise*' (1988:23). If the latter meaning is utilised, memorials can be seen as designed to give '*heavy and oppressive lessons – death speaking to life*' (ibid.). In contrast to this western tradition, traditional Aboriginal culture did not memorialise events in a way obviously visible to Australia's European colonisers. As Inglis states '*Since pillars and inscriptions were not in their culture, Aborigines raised no legible monuments to either their own traditional civil wars or their resistance against invaders.*' (1998:21).

It is generally established that the majority of memorials around Australia largely commemorate the lives of men of European origin. Until recently, women have been largely absent from the historical record as commemorated by memorials, as have minority groups within Australia such as the Aborigines (National Estate Grants Program, 1997). Miranda Morris argues that this is '*not simply [a result of] a gap in the record, but lies within the way our past has been interpreted*' (National Estate Grants Program, 1997:10). The absence of monuments and memorials to the Aboriginal past provides yet another insight to the treatment of Aboriginal history within Australia. As Inglis writes, '*monuments missing from a landscape can be as significant as those erected*' (1998:21). Inglis feels it is remarkable that the European colonisers of Australia rarely memorialised events of interaction with Aborigines (such as frontier conflicts), even though, memorialisation is a part of European culture (1998:21). Perhaps this absence of memorialisation is indicative that the European colonisers did not rate such events as having 'historic' significance, a Darwinian view that little could be learnt from the demise of an inferior, 'dying race'. Most Australian historians have '*assumed that colonists saw*

little or no need to commemorate any aspect of Australia's frontier wars' (Bonyhady, 2000:10). More likely however, it is the result of part of the complex phenomena of what Stanner (1968) labelled the 'Great Australian Silence'. As Griffiths writes *'the denial was often unconscious, or only half conscious, for it was embedded in metaphor and language and in the habits of commemoration'* (2003:138).

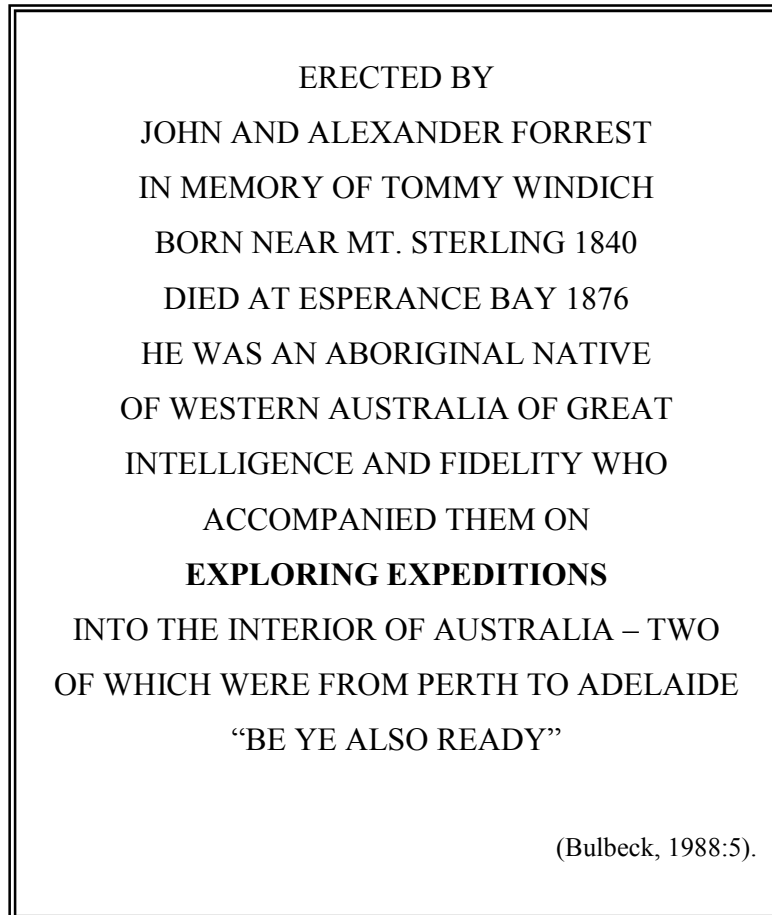
Alternatively, monuments to the Aboriginal past need not be viewed as 'missing' but as different in form to a European style of monument. Charmaine Clarke (1996:44) equates Aboriginal monuments to subtle sites in *'the living earth'* rather than those constructed from *'stones and mortar'*. Clarke writes *'monuments are not intrinsic structures, reflecting human art forms or architectural styles. It is the landscapes, the canvas of mother nature, and it is within its presence that Aboriginal people reflect, ponder and become inspired.'* (ibid.). In this interpretation, the place itself becomes a monument for Aboriginal people – somewhere to go and reflect on the stories related to that particular place. These 'monuments' are not confined to the pre-contact sites either. Across Australia, post-contact massacre sites have consistently been identified as important landmarks for Aboriginal people (Tumarkin, 2003:3).

Whether or not significant sites within the Australian landscape can, or should, be classified as kinds of Aboriginal memorials is open to debate. The relative 'invisibility' of these sites to non-indigenous Australians however, has meant that, in recent times, there has been a call to create Aboriginal memorials. It is hoped that this will ensure that Australia's monuments and memorials do not perpetuate a version of Australian history that excludes Aborigines. Indeed, as Bonyhady (2000:10) writes, the publication of Reynolds' book *The Other Side of the Frontier* in 1981, has provoked almost 20 years of debate over Aboriginal memorials.

Before examining this debate in greater detail, it is important to recognise memorials to Aboriginal people that were erected in the landscape prior to this new era of consciousness of the Aboriginal past. As Bulbeck (1988:iv) writes, there has been a *'temporal transition'* in how Aborigines have been presented through monuments, and more specifically through memorials across Australia. *'From being represented as either faithful helpers of whites or treacherous savages, there is now some attempt to represent the history of conquest as*

seen from the “other side of the frontier”’ (Bulbeck, 1988:iv). Bulbeck identifies at least three distinct types of memorials to the Aboriginal past in Australia. Between 1850 and 1961, Aborigines were depicted in a number of memorials as ‘*helpers*’ of explorers (Bulbeck, 1988:3) or as treacherous natives. Starting a little later – from the 1870s up until the 1960s, ‘*memorials were erected to the “last full blood” or the local “Aboriginal King”*’ – individuals who were often ‘*integrated into the local white community*’ (ibid.). The most recent phenomenon in the memorialisation of the Aboriginal past that Bulbeck (op. cit.) identifies is the move to acknowledge the deeds of ordinary Aboriginal people (following the trend in non-indigenous history away from the famous to the ‘everyman’). This has occurred along with a move to acknowledge whole tribal groups, and attempts to acknowledge atrocities that were inflicted on Aboriginal people by white society (op. cit.). Over the page are two examples taken from Bulbeck’s paper *The Stone Laurel: Race, Gender and Class in Australian Memorials*.

The first example, a memorial to Tommy Windich depicts the ‘helper’ style of memorial referred to by Bulbeck and was probably erected in the late 1870s:



The second example fits into the last category of more recent memorials mentioned by Bulbeck. It is a memorial to the whole of an Aboriginal tribe. Bulbeck does not give the memorial a date however it is almost certainly post 1970. It is interesting to note that both Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians can commission memorials such as this. This specific memorial, was initiated by a non-indigenous Australian, Father Enright in what Bulbeck (1988:8) labels as ‘*another attempt to forge a “one people of Australia”*’. This monument is also of interest in that it was privately funded. The monument is situated on Duck Creek Road, in South East Queensland, a road that was financed by ‘*auctioning sites along the road, on which buyers could erect cairns of their choice*’ (ibid.). Father Enright’s choice was in the spirit of reconciliation - a memorial to the local Aboriginal tribe:

WANGERRIBURRA
THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE
WHO LIVED ON, FROM, AND WITH THIS LAND,
WEST TO BIRNAM RANGE,
SOUTH TO THE MACPHERSONS,
EAST TO THE YOUNG NERANG,
NORTH OF CEDAR CREEK.
A LAND OF BEAUTY AND PLENTY.
FROM SOME OF THE NEW PEOPLE.

(Bulbeck, 1988:9).

Bulbeck writes that memorials such as the example from Duck Creek Road mentioned above, '*resolve the tensions of the frontier by both recalling and then isolating the time before white settlement*' (1988:9). The presentation of the Aboriginal past as it is presented in memorials around the nation is clearly problematic. Aboriginal people are generally only presented as participants in the nations history in a limited capacity (such as explorers aids, pastoral workers etc.). Nor have they been given much of an opportunity to present, in their own terms, their own depiction of Aboriginal people as historical. Bulbeck (ibid.) believes however, that these problems, can be somewhat alleviated by the involvement of Aboriginal people in the construction of their own memorials. Although this may seem like a straight forward solution, it is an issue that has caused much controversy in recent years. Essentially, the arguments raised for and against the proposition of the creation of memorials to the Aboriginal past, revolve around the concept of 'tradition'. Memorials and monuments, as they are understood in the western sense, were not traditionally a part of Aboriginal culture. Although Clarke (1996) believes that the natural environment functioned as a kind of monument or memorial for Aboriginal people, these 'monuments' were nothing like what most Australians would instantly recognise as a monument. It has been asserted therefore, that to represent the Aboriginal past through monuments or memorials is to represent it through the dominant culture. This, it is argued, is merely a

way of colonising the Aboriginal past, rather than letting it be expressed through the mediums traditionally observed in Aboriginal cultures, such as oral history. The counter argument to this is that Aboriginal culture – both pre and post-contact - has never been static. Throughout Australia's history, Aboriginal culture and therefore Aboriginal traditions, have evolved. This argument states that it could just as easily be interpreted as colonialism rearing its ugly head to suggest that Aboriginal people cannot represent their history through memorials as it is not an 'Aboriginal' method of signification. Changes to cultures across time need to be considered a natural component of any cultural group, and not a threat to the authenticity of ones culture.

One example of the growing desire by Aboriginal people to utilise memorials to present the Aboriginal past is known simply as *The Aboriginal Memorial* (see Figure 2.1). In 1988 Djon Mundine, who was the arts co-ordinator at Ramingining in Arnhem Land conceived the idea of a memorial to the Aboriginal dead– a collection of 200 burial poles – now housed at the National Gallery (Mundine and Jenkins, 2003). Mundine saw the memorial as '*a large war cemetery, a war memorial to all those Aborigines who died defending their country*' (Bonyhady, 2000:10). Bonyhady argues that, surprisingly, the memorial has been largely overlooked as a monument to the Aboriginal past in Australia. Bonyhady writes that generalisations about the refusal of colonists to erect monuments to Aboriginal people ignore the recognition of Aboriginal people in Australian art. '*The prime function of many colonial pictures of Aborigines was to perpetuate their memory when, as the colonists expected, they either died out altogether or were transformed by civilisation into a different people*' (Bonyhady, 2000:10) . It seems that the view that works of art can be, in effect, memorials to the Aboriginal past is still being overlooked today. Historians such as Henry Reynolds ignore it in his push to acknowledge the need to commemorate the Aboriginal past (Bonyhady, 2000).



(Image from Mundine and Jenkins, 2003).

Figure 2.1: The Aboriginal Memorial

Before this chapter explores some specific examples of memorials that aim to trigger remembrance of Australia's Aboriginal history it is appropriate to touch on two issues related to the memorialisation of the past. Firstly, the issue of on-site interpretation will be discussed, and secondly the issue of changing interpretations of the past and the static nature of monuments will also be addressed.

One question that arises when examining many memorials, in particular those situated at the actual sites where the particular events they memorialise occurred, is the issue of whether it is an intrinsic human need to have 'on-site' memorials. That is, whether we need to memorialise events at the specific places where they occurred. Tumarkin (2003:2), points to the great number of what she labels 'roadside shrines' – memorials created by traumatised friends and relatives to *'mark the exact spot of the impact of an accident, even if victims died away from the road in hospital beds or speeding ambulance cars'* to suggest that it is an intrinsic human need. Tumarkin (2003) studies what she labels *'traumascapes'* – places where traumatic events have happened and have been memorialised in one way or another. Tumarkin (2003) sees the need to memorialise events at the places where they happened across the world through many, if not all, cultures. One Australian example that highlights the strong desire for on-site interpretation is the site of the Thredbo Landslide of 1997. This site is illustrated in Figure 2.2. The left hand panel shows a memorial planting which was carried out at the site. The plaque shown in the right hand panel states *'This is the site of the Alpine Way tragedy that occurred on the 30th July 1997. The Thredbo*

Memorial Community Centre located at the Crackenback Drive commemorates the eighteen lives lost in this tragedy'. So, despite the existence of a memorial centre created off-site, the people of Thredbo still felt the need to memorialise, in one way or another, the event at the site at which it happened.



Figure 2.2: Thredbo landslide site and plaque

Exploring the issue of on-site interpretation further, the issue of the nature of these sites, these ‘traumasces’, arises. Heritage interpreters have always been aware of the power that the actual site of an historic event holds. Sites such as Sovereign Hill or Old Sydney Town (re-created historic sites) have come under much criticism because it is felt that their heritage value is doubtful and they are largely only for educational or entertainment value (Aplin, 2002:137). This can be attributed to the fact that they are recreations. People value the ‘real thing’, particularly in the case when there is emotional attachment to the events that occurred at the sites. The question is, do these ‘traumasces’ become, in effect, sacred? Tumarkin (2003:3) believes so. The community does not tolerate interference with these sacred sites. The potential power that memorial sites can hold over individuals – Indigenous or non-indigenous - needs to be remembered when examples are discussed later in this chapter.

Interestingly, sites that are not situated at the actual location of events can also arguably become sacred in nature. The public artwork Chalice (see Figure 2.3), a sculpture that sits in Cathedral Square, Christchurch, New Zealand, highlights one instance of this. The sculpture was designed by Neil Dawson to celebrate the new millennium and the 150th Anniversary of the founding of Christchurch and Canterbury by the Canterbury Association (Christchurch City Council, 2001). Chalice was installed in Cathedral Square

in the early days of September 2001 (ibid.). A few days after its installation, the collapse of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York shocked the world. The citizens of Christchurch reacted to this event by using the newly installed Chalice as a memorial site (Dawson, 2003). Following the impetus of one individual who left a wreath at its foot, hundreds of wreaths were brought and laid beneath the sculpture. Unwittingly, Chalice became the site for the people of Christchurch to remember September 11. Similarly, there are sites around Australia that have acted as memorials to events that have happened elsewhere. These sites are generally only temporarily used for this purpose and are merely an alternate to on-site memorials as people who feel the need to remember these events are geographically isolated from the actual sites where they occurred.



(Image From Christchurch City Council 2001).

Figure 2.3: Chalice, Christchurch, New Zealand

Finally, one of the reasons that monuments and memorials are controversial in their portrayal of Australian history is because they often provide a static interpretation of history. That is, how the history of the event was portrayed when it was memorialised, is the way it continues to be portrayed by a monument, despite any revisionist interpretations of the history that may have occurred. Monuments need not present a static portrayal of history. It is possible, to a certain extent, for them to be interactive. One example of how a monument can be at least partially interactive is the Welcome Wall at the Australian Maritime Museum (see Figure 2.4). The Welcome Wall is a monument to the people who

have immigrated to Australia in the past 215 odd years. Anyone who wishes to add names of people who have immigrated to Australia, to the wall can do so (though there is a fee involved as the wall is only partially sponsored). As the brochure for the wall suggests, *'The Welcome Wall is a truly national project. You can register the names of people who arrived anywhere in Australia, or live anywhere in Australia now.'* (Australian National Maritime Museum, n.d.). It is in this sense that the Welcome Wall is an interactive monument that can evolve over time. Not only can new names be added, but also extracts from oral histories that are incorporated throughout can be added to in order to shed new light on Australia's history.



Figure 2.4: The Welcome Wall

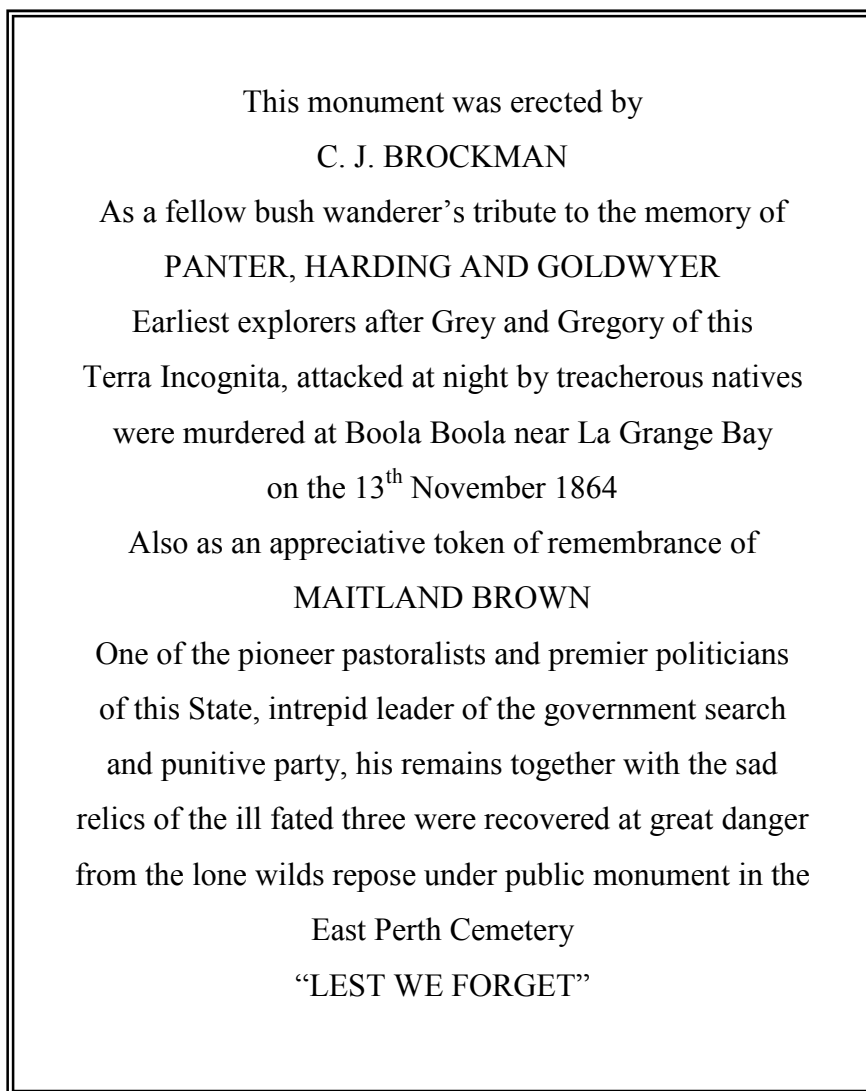
Interactive monuments are therefore possible. Of course, it is not necessarily desirable for every monument to be altered to include contemporary interpretations of the past. How history is portrayed at a particular time can often reveal as much about a particular age as could an unadulterated factual account of history – were such a thing possible. It is important therefore, for at least some monuments to be preserved in their original state, to illustrate changing social views. Nevertheless, drawing the public's attention to monuments that may be culturally insensitive can be beneficial in raising the awareness of Australia's post-contact Aboriginal past. The first example in a series of monuments discussed in detail in this chapter illustrates one such case.

2.2 Explorer's Monument – Fremantle, Western Australia



Figure 2.5: Explorer's Monument, Fremantle

The monument generally referred to as the 'Explorer's Monument' is situated in the Esplanade Reserve in Fremantle, Western Australia. It was erected in 1913 as a memorial to three 'explorers' Panter, Harding and Goldwyer and also to the pastoralist and politician Maitland Brown (The Public Action Project, 1989:226). The main inscription on the monument reads as follows:



Many of the stories told about trying to acknowledge contemporary Aboriginal heritage in Australia are stories of struggle. Ah Kit (1994) discusses the attempt of the Aboriginal community of the town of Katherine in the Northern Territory to establish a walking trail that illustrated the Aboriginal heritage of the town. Their attempts were met with various kinds of opposition from members of the wider community and even the local council. The treatment that some of the few Aboriginal monuments in Australia have been subject to is often a sad story. There are instances of monuments that commemorate the Aboriginal dead being vandalised and even blown up. There are also non-indigenous monuments that can be particularly offensive to Aboriginal people. However these are rarely recognised. To the general community they are monuments to famous men like Captain James Cook and the 'other side' of the story is rarely seen. The Explorer's Monument in Fremantle is

just one example of a monument that an Aboriginal community found particularly offensive. The language of the memorial is *'the language of colonialism'*, describing Australia as a *'terra incognita'* and the history is told only from the non-indigenous perspective (The Public Action Project, 1989:225). The words are not the only aspect of the monument that is seen as offensive. The images depict Aboriginal people chained around the neck, and two bodies protruding from a picture of the explorer's tent to illustrate that they were *'butchered in their sleep'* exacerbate the one sided view presented and are representative of a distorted view of history (Frances and Scates, 1989:74-5). Scates (1989:27) writes that the inquest report suggested that Goldwyer had actually stood guard while Panter and Harding slept, and had fired four shots before he was killed. With a guard keeping watch, Panter and Goldwyer were hardly *'butchered'* while sleeping innocently. The monument depicts aboriginal people as the *'treacherous natives'* that Bulbeck (1988) identified as being common in monuments during the early colonial period - yet this monument was erected in 1913. No commentary is made on the monument as to the morality of the whites conducting a punitive expedition in which *'At least four Aboriginals died for each of the explorers... killed without even the pretence of a trial'* (The Public Action Project, 1989:225).

Provoked by the presentation of Australian history in the bicentennial year (Frances and Scates, 1989:72-3), the Public Action Project was created. The project, initially a teaching exercise at a West Australian University to illustrate some of the issues associated with frontier history, soon evolved into an examination of the origins of the monument and an attempt to re-write the history that it portrayed (The Public Action Project, 1989:222). In researching the monument, the Public Action Project engaged in extensive research into the history of the event it commemorated. They found that *'the monument distorts and disguises the real causes behind the explorers' deaths'* (ibid. 1989:228). For example, documentary evidence found by the Public Action Project indicated that the *'killing of Panter and his party may well have been retaliation for the indignities suffered by Aboriginal people'* (ibid. 1989:229). Scates writes that the journals the explorers kept suggested that they *'may have desecrated a sacred site, an act of which often triggered violence on the frontier'* (1989:27). It was as a response to this one sided nature of history presented in the monument, along with what they saw as the historical inaccuracies, that the Public Action Project made a submission to Fremantle City Council in 1988 to include

an additional plaque on the monument that would highlight an Aboriginal perspective of the events at La Grange.

It is easy to see how such a monument would be offensive to Aboriginal people. However it can be argued that it would not be very productive to simply destroy an offensive monument such as the Explorer's Monument, although this is what some conservative members from the Fremantle City Council argued for when presented with the Public Action Groups proposal (Frances and Scates, 1989:78). Whilst contemporary Aboriginal history is still largely ignored in Australia, the solution that the Public Action Project put forward for readdressing the history of the events at La Grange is far more appropriate. Instead of simply obliterating the offensive interpretation of history, and in effect denying how the past had previously been interpreted, a counter interpretation could be given. This interpretation not only allowed Aboriginal voices to be heard, but also served to highlight the contrasting views of history and lend support to the movement to acknowledge contemporary Aboriginal history and heritage in Australia. Indeed, Bulbeck writes that allowing a monument to be '*defaced*' in this way '*provides a second disjunctural reading for the spectator which the monument does not resolve*' and is '*one of the most powerful forms of rewriting memorial history*' (Bulbeck, 1988:10). Initially, it was proposed that an alternative monument that would '*take issue with the old*' would be built (Frances and Scates, 1989:79). Standing just metres away from the original monument, the alternative interpretation presented would directly challenge the presentation of this event in Australia's history. Ultimately however, a single plaque was attached to the existing monument to highlight the counter view. Bulbeck (1988:11) believes that this is an effective way to '*allow subordinate groups to tell their history*' without necessarily erecting their own monuments. The wording of the plaque placed on the monument is as follows:

This plaque was erected by people who found the monument before you offensive.

The monument describes the events at La Grange from one perspective only:

THE VIEWPOINT OF THE WHITE 'SETTLERS'.

No mention is made of the right of Aboriginal people to defend their land or of the history of provocation which led to the explorers deaths.

The punitive party mentioned here ended in the deaths of somewhere around twenty Aboriginal people.

The whites were well-armed and equipped and none of their party were killed or wounded.

This plaque is in memory of all the Aboriginal people killed at La Grange. It also commemorates all

other Aboriginal people who died during the invasion of their country.

Lest We Forget Mapa Jarriya-Nyalaku

Not only does the Explorer's Monument represent a re-interpretation of the regional history of Fremantle, Western Australia, the monument is also representative of an important step forward nationally to re-interpret the past to include Indigenous perspectives. The monument, though specifically addressing the events at La Grange, can be used to reflect on the way much of Australian history is interpreted across the country. As such, it can heighten awareness of Indigenous perspectives of the past in general and potentially trigger those who view it to consciously question the portrayal of the past that they encounter in other places.

2.3 The Australian War Memorial – Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

The Australian War Memorial has come under much criticism from historians such as Henry Reynolds. Reynolds argues that the War Memorial ignores the warfare that occurred between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians on the frontier and yet it has a *'responsibility to commemorate Australia's military history'* (Bonyhady, 2000:10). For Reynolds therefore, the War Memorial is clearly ignoring its duty to commemorate all wars in which Australians have been involved. Whether the term 'warfare' can be applied to the conflict that occurred between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians however has been the subject of intense debate in the last few years. The recent publication of Keith Windschuttle's book – *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History (Volume One)* - at the end of 2002, has heightened debate over *'whether three words – massacre, warfare and genocide – capture the truth of British colonisation'* (Lane, 2002:12). Windschuttle is firmly of the belief that warfare cannot be applied to the British colonisation of Australia. In one interview, Windschuttle stated that:

'There was no frontier warfare. The Aborigines did not put up any kind of resistance to white colonisation. In fact, they were overawed, they were fascinated by white people, they wanted to see the products that they had, and the idea that they set up a kind of patriotic guerrilla warfare resistance to white invasion of their lands, which is the orthodox story that I'm criticising, in my view, there's no evidence for it. The evidence is, in fact, the opposite.'

(Sunday, 2003:4).

It is important to note that Windschuttle does not argue that conflict did not occur on the frontier – what he is arguing is that the degree and nature of the conflict does not constitute a kind of 'warfare'. Reynold's response to this assertion was to argue that the majority of Australian military historians classify the conflict as warfare and that Governors such as Governor Arthur in Tasmania were ordered to treat Aborigines who resisted European settlement as *'enemies of a foreign state'* (Sunday, 2003:4). The debate over which

argument should be taken as the 'accepted' version of Australian history will continue for some time. Possibly there will never be a conclusion to it. Indeed, it could be argued that multiple perspectives on Australia's history should always be presented. A question for those in the field of heritage interpretation however, is whether the view that the European colonisation of Australia was in fact a time of frontier warfare, should be incorporated in museums, monuments and other forms of representing history to the Australian public.

Currently, there is very little portrayal of any notion of 'warfare' as applied to Australian history or remembrance of the Aboriginal dead in any monuments around Australia. The Explorer's Monument discussed above, is one significant example where this has been amended. Indeed, there is also very little recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander soldiers who fought for Australia in acknowledged European wars such as the two world wars. O'Connell writes that *'there has only been one dedicated exhibition on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander soldiers... entitled "Too Dark for the Light Horse".'* (2000a:1). This exhibition was a joint production between the Australian War Memorial and David Huggonson. Although O'Connell considers the exhibition *'well researched'*, he is critical that it was *'interpreted and produced predominately by non-indigenous Australians'* (ibid.). In the War Memorial itself, there is the occasional picture of an Indigenous soldier being a token attempt to address the imbalance (O'Connell, 2000a:2). In terms of memorials, O'Connell (2000b:1) is only aware of two memorials that specifically commemorate Indigenous soldiers. Both were privately funded. One of the memorials is situated behind the War Memorial in Canberra at the base of Mount Ainslie. It is a simple plaque attached to a rock that was erected by a local non-Aboriginal citizen and reads *'Remembering the Aboriginal people who served in the Australian forces.'* (O'Connell, 2000b:2). The second monument was erected at Broadbeach on the Gold Coast by the Komburri Aboriginal Corporation for Culture in 1991. Its lengthier inscription reads:

This rock is placed here to honour Yugambeh men and women who served in defence of this country. Yugambeh is the linguistic name of the Aboriginal people whose tribal region extends inland from the Logan and Nerang rivers and includes the areas covered by all the adjacent streams and creeks. Yugambeh family groups include Komumerri, Wangeribubba, Migunburri, Munajahli, Gugigin, Birinburra and others. We honour those who served in the armed forces and those who made the supreme sacrifice. The symbolism of this rock serves to highlight the role played by Indigenous Australians in defence of this country

O'Connell (2000b:2) notes that *'the Australian War Memorial itself does not have any memorials or commemorate Indigenous soldiers fighting for Australia'*, nor does it have any memorials to colonial wars fought in Australia. The War Memorial does however have a monument in which Aboriginal people are featured.

Surrounding the Pool of Remembrance (see Figure 2.6) at the War Memorial is a series of gargoyles, designed to represent the fauna of Australia. There are kookaburra, kangaroo and cockatoo gargoyles. At the end of the line of animals, which run down both sides of the pool, is the head of an Aboriginal man (see Figure 2.7) and an Aboriginal woman is on the opposite wall. O'Connell sees this monument as being a product of its own time. The War Memorial was completed in 1941 – a time when Aboriginal people were *'counted in the National Census along with sheep and cattle'* (O'Connell, 2000a:2). It would have been seen by many Australians as entirely appropriate at that time that Aboriginal people be included as part of a representation of the native animals of Australia. How appropriate this presentation is today is questionable. O'Connell writes that it is *'significant that these two faces are the only permanent Aboriginal aspect of the War Memorial'* (O'Connell, 2000a:2). The controversy over the nature of frontier conflict and the appropriateness of the term 'warfare' aside, at the very least, the war memorial could create an alternative

memorial that commemorates the indisputable role Aboriginal servicemen have played in the various conflicts in which Australia has been represented. To have the representation of Aboriginal people at a national war memorial confined to a part of the Australian Fauna is hardly representative of the role they have played in wars – on Australian territory or elsewhere.



Figure 2.6: The Pool of Remembrance



Figure 2.7: Aboriginal head at the Pool of Remembrance

Inglis writes that the '*racial wars of this continent would never enter comfortably into national memory*' (1998:23). Perhaps this explains why it is difficult for Australia as a nation to commemorate frontier conflict. It does not however explain the lack of memorials

to Aboriginal servicemen. Indeed, Inglis writes of one example where the Aborigines Advancement League applied for a \$30,000 grant from the Australian Bicentennial Authority to create a memorial in Melbourne to all Aborigines who had died in Australian wars. However the Australian Bicentennial Authority ruled that *'this was not a project meriting bicentennial subsidy'* (1998:447). The Aborigines Advancement League erected their own monument instead - a small wooden cross. Inglis cites other similar examples of Aboriginal veterans whose attempts to gain support to erect monuments were rejected. The War Memorial's exhibition, *Too Dark for the Light Horse* is at least a step in the right direction. This may reflect also a gradual change in the War Memorial's policy. Inglis writes that in 1970 some members of the War Memorial's Council used the Memorial's statement of purpose to exclude any commemoration of conflict between black and white Australians as the memorial's purpose was the *'commemoration of Australians whose deaths are attributable to any war or war-like operation in which Australian forces have participated'* (1998:451). In 1980 however the Memorial's Act detailing its purpose was amended to state that its role was *'to disseminate information about Australian military history'* (ibid.). It seems that the War Memorial has a growing awareness of frontier conflict, and of the need to face the issue of whether or not it should be more actively portraying not only Aboriginal servicemen, but the first Australian conflicts. In 1979, Geoffrey Blainey suggested that within a decade the War Memorial would need to be portraying frontier conflict (ibid.). As yet this has not occurred, but perhaps it is still on the horizon.

2.4 Reconciliation Place – Canberra, Australian Capital Territory



Figure 2.8: 'Slivers' at Reconciliation Place

The Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard, announced in May 2000 that a 'reconciliation square' would be created in the parliamentary zone in Canberra (National Capital Authority, 2002:1). This move was designed to be symbolic of the Government's '*commitment to the ongoing reconciliation process*' (ibid.). The position of the site was cited as being symbolic of the position that reconciliation should hold in society – '*at the heart of Australia's democratic life and institutions*' (National Capital Authority, n.d.). A design competition was held during 2001 for the site, each team entering the competition required to have an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander member (National Capital Authority, 2002:1). In July 2002, Reconciliation Place, as it was now called, was officially opened.

The winning design that now features at Reconciliation Place incorporates a large grassed mound and on either side of the mound pathways that lead the visitor past what are referred to as 'slivers' (see Figure 2.8). These slithers are in essence a modern kind of monument -

public artworks that are *'made from a variety of materials and carry inscriptions and images on various themes and events significant to reconciliation'* (National Capital Authority). Initially, four slivers were installed with others to be added over time (ibid.). The four initial slivers covered the following areas:

1. *'Strength, service and sacrifice'* – this sliver features two Indigenous soldiers and a nurse along with Indigenous sports people
2. *'Ngunna yerrabi yanggu'* (You may walk on this country now) – this sliver gives an artistic interpretation in a monument of a traditional Ngunnawal (the Indigenous people of the area) welcome to country.
3. *'The 1967 Referendum'* – this sliver commemorates the referendum and events that led up to it such as the 1938 Official Day of Mourning.
4. *'Land Rights'* – This sliver particularly celebrates the Mabo decision but also comments on Indigenous relationships to the land.

(National Capital Authority, n.d.).

Further slivers were also planned, including one depicting the Stolen Generation and another sliver to be a tribute to Australia's Indigenous leaders. The sliver depicting the Stolen Generation was the subject of much controversy.

The main controversy surrounding the Stolen Generation sliver was the feeling that there had been a lack of consultation with Indigenous people over the proposed monument. An Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) press release stated that the initial proposal for the sliver *'features images and sounds of children playing happily, and was designed without any consultation with stolen generation members'* (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, 2003:1). Indeed, the disapproval by some members of the Indigenous community over the proposed monument was so great that they held a protest at the opening ceremony of Reconciliation Place (Scott, 2002). The uncertainty surrounding the Stolen Generation sliver was also present concerning Reconciliation Place in its entirety. Jennifer Martiniello represented one voice in many when she questioned the validity of Reconciliation Place, stating *'How can you have a memorial to something you haven't achieved yet?'* (Roberts, 2002:1). An architect at the National Capital Authority, the agency which oversaw the project, believes that this questioning came out of a

misinterpretation of Reconciliation Place. It is not meant to be a monument that recalls reconciliation as an event of the past, but rather one that is still occurring. Smith states '*the form of the scheme is appreciating it's a journey not a destination*' (Roberts, 2002:2). Another aspect of the concern surrounding Reconciliation Place was that its construction was really designed as a means for the government to be able to remove the Aboriginal Tent Embassy (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, 2003:1). Reconciliation Place is situated behind the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, their close proximity adding to this speculation.

After the protest over the Stolen Generation sliver at the opening of Reconciliation Place the National and State Sorry Day Committees were commissioned by the Federal Government to conduct a consultation process with the Stolen Generation as to what an appropriate compromise would be (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, 2003:1). Social Justice Commissioner Bill Jonas noted that it is ironic that without appropriate measures of consultation, Reconciliation Place would not be a place of reconciliation but rather a source of '*division and alienation*' (ibid.). Some groups have suggested that the consultation process came too late. Earlier consultation had revealed that the view of many of the Stolen Generation was that an appropriate memorial would be natural in form, '*such as a garden with running water...a place for quiet reflection*' (Brown and Kinnear, 2002:1). The lack of consultation early on however, meant that the Stolen Generation now had to work within the model of the 'slivers' already present at Reconciliation Place. The question then became how to represent in very few words and images the experiences of those taken from their families. As the Co-chairs for the National Sorry Day Committee stated, '*The most we can hope for in Reconciliation Place is a sliver or slivers that do not distort the truth of this part of our history. But we do not think such a sliver is an adequate memorial*' (Brown and Kinnear, 2002:3).

It seems that Reconciliation Place is a step forward in that it represents an attempt to incorporate Aboriginal history into the public sphere. Indeed it may have inspired the creation of a similar project in North America – The Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place which is symbolic of reconciliation with the Sioux Nation (The Wakpa Sica Historical Society, 2002). Clearly however, more consultation is needed to determine the ways in which history is depicted. In particular, regarding the Stolen Generation sliver,

Reconciliation Australia believes that *'the process of developing the monument did not adequately reflect the goals or the spirit of reconciliation'* (Roberts, 2002:3). Reconciliation Place provides an important lesson as to the necessity of consultation and the experiences learnt from the conflict that arose has the potential to positively benefit future monuments and memorials that may be constructed around Australia.²

2.5 Statue of Yagan – Perth, Western Australia



(Image from Jackson, 2001).

Figure 2.9: Statue of Yagan at Heirisson Island

Yagan is a famous figure in West Australian history. Yagan is remembered as a negotiator and a resistance leader of the Nyoongar (Aboriginal inhabitants in the South-East of Western Australia) people. Born in 1810, Yagan tried to negotiate a land treaty with white settlers and is today regarded as one of the first among Aborigines to preach reconciliation

² On Friday 28th May 2004 three new slivers were dedicated at Reconciliation Place. One sliver was on the theme of leadership, featuring Vincent Lingiari (the leader of the Wave Hill strike) and Neville Bonner (the first Aboriginal person elected to Federal Parliament). The other two were targeting the theme of separation and the Stolen Generations. The ceremony was well attended and the slivers well received. Nevertheless, it is important to learn from the controversy created in the consultation process that consultation is a key tool to creating a meaningful engagement with Australia's shared past

with British settlers. Yagan's attempts at reconciliation ended in 1883 when, together with one of his brothers, he killed two white settlers to avenge the death of a third brother at the hands of white settlers (Malan, 1997). Yagan was shot dead after being declared an outlaw. His remains were buried with the exception of his head, which was smoked and taken to England by a British Officer to sell and ended up in a Liverpool Museum. In 1964 the skull was buried in a Liverpool cemetery (ibid.).

In 1979, as part of Western Australia's 150th birthday celebrations a group of Nyoongar people tried to organise the erection of a monument to Yagan (Inglis, 1998:448). There were historians who argued in favour of the monument, stating that if the Aboriginal perspective could not be put forward after 150 years it was a sad state of affairs. The historians and Aborigines however were overruled by the WA government (ibid.). Ultimately, in the early 1980s, a statue of Yagan was built. It seems that over time, the concept of a monument that commemorated an Aboriginal resistance leader gradually became more acceptable. Yet the statue still generates controversy, and has been regularly vandalised. The nature of some of this vandalism mirrors Yagan's own fate of beheading - indeed, the statue has been beheaded three times. The statue was also spray -painted soon after it was erected and Yagan's spear has been stolen twice (Betti, 1997c).

Robert Hitchcock was the sculptor responsible for the statue of Yagan (Tickner, 2002). The statue is situated on Heirisson Island on the Swan River in Perth, Western Australia. From 1997 to the present, Hitchcock's statue has been at the centre of controversy surrounding the nature of the portrayal of Yagan and also the return of Yagan's head to the Nyoongar community. In 1997, the Prime Minister, John Howard, intervened to help members of the Nyoongar community who had been campaigning to have Yagan's head exhumed from its grave in Liverpool and returned to Australia. Many Nyoongar people, led by the Perth elder Ken Colbung, had been campaigning unsuccessfully for many years prior to the Prime Minister's intervention (Graham, 1997).

On the 1st of September 1997, Yagan's head, escorted by four Aboriginal elders, arrived back in Perth (Betti, 1997a). Initially, ten elders were to be part of the delegation to retrieve the head however the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission cut funds for six of the representatives. One letter to 'The Australian' illustrates how some members

of the public felt about the trip, and were perhaps supportive of the cutback of numbers in the delegation: *'The imminent return of the skull of Yagan will be "the catalyst for hundreds of other skeletal remains to be brought home" (20/8). As up to 10 people are to get a jaunt to England funded by the taxpayer for one skull, what will the total bill be for hundreds?'* (Burnell, 1997). Clearly, some people were concerned at the possible cost of the trip. The question arises however as to what price the Australian nation is prepared to place on symbolic acts that contribute towards reconciliation.

The number of members in the delegation to retrieve Yagan's head was in many ways a starting point for the ensuing controversy. Limiting the numbers in the delegation lead to conflict over which elders should make the trip. To a certain extent this conflict was already evident, as members of the group were already engaged in opposing native title claims (Betti, 1997b). Other events only added to the almost 'Yagan hysteria' which enveloped Perth in September and October 1997. The night Yagan's head arrived back in Australia, an attempt was made to steal the head, despite the fact that it had been taken to an unpublicised location. On the 7th of September the statue of Yagan was decapitated for the first time (O'Brien, 1997). In response to this act, Ken Colbung stated that the return of Yagan's head must have stirred up rednecks. He went on to say that the statue *'is an icon. We set it up in order to fulfil the ambition of getting Yagan's head back.'* (O'Brien, 1997). The statue and the return of Yagan's head began to be intimately linked in the public's mind.

The decapitation of Yagan's statue prompted the call for a 'Sorry Day' at the end of September 1997 which was supported by the WA Aboriginal Advancement Council (Betti, 1997c). Around the same time, a member of the Bibbulmun Aboriginal Corporation, Joe Walley, attacked the statue of Yagan because it depicted Yagan in the nude. Walley stated that *'The wrong impressions are given to school children both black and white and the wider community... The South West Nyoongar had cloaks called a boorka, made from kangaroo skins and also possum skins'* (ibid.). In 2002, the politician, Janet Woollard, again took up this claim. There were both supporters and opponents in the Nyoongar community for both Walley and Woollard. This was not the end of the controversy for the statue. After the statue was beheaded a second time there was controversy over whether the head should be replaced as some members of the Nyoongar community thought it looked

too European and was not a valid depiction of Yagan (Betti, 1998). Meanwhile, the West Australian Police were debating the merits of the various ways the statue could be better protected. A transmitter fitted inside the statue's head that could be tracked and police stakeouts of the statue were all considered financially unviable whilst the suggestion of placing bars around the statue was deemed inappropriate by the Nyoongar community (Barrass and Peace, 1997).

Whilst the controversy over Yagan's nakedness, the shape of his head and his security were occurring so too were debates over when and how Yagan's skull should be reburied. At the centre of the debate was an issue that was referred to in the introduction of this chapter – on-site interpretation and the desire of people to commemorate events at the actual place where they happened. An extensive search for the skeletal remains of Yagan's body was conducted in the Swan Valley as it was unknown exactly where the rest of his remains lay. Not only did the Nyoongar community wish to reunite Yagan's head with his body, but they also planned to create a memorial project based at the burial site. In 1998 they were given \$150,000 of funding from the WA Department of Aboriginal Affairs towards the project (Lampathakis, 1998). Despite various archaeological digs and the use of ground probing radar, Yagan's remains were never found. Disputes among those involved with the project as to where Yagan's head should then be buried, along with other bureaucratic delays has meant that Yagan's head is still to find its final resting place. The power of knowing that one is at the 'actual site' where an event happened is very strong, and the Nyoongar community have been occupied for many years still trying to determine just where that site is. In January 2003, Richard Wilkes, who chairs the committee of elders stated that *'We have been working to try and negotiate with our people, the various boards and councils and the Government, but there are many bureaucratic doors we have to go through'* (Hickman, 2003:6). Wilkes also indicated that he hoped that a burial site would be finalised by August 2003 and that the plans for an interpretive centre on the site would still go ahead (ibid.).

2.6 Warriu Park – Wyndham, Western Australia



Figure 2.10: Dreamtime Statues at Warriu Park

In a study conducted in 2001 in Wyndham, Western Australia, local Aboriginal people identified Warriu Park as a significant heritage site. One interviewee went as far as saying that *“it is the only significant statement about the past in Wyndham”* (Lawton, 2001:94). Another interviewee felt it was important because *“it depicts Aboriginal presence now and presence before invasion. It shows the contemporary well”* (ibid.). The park contains a group of monuments known as the ‘Dreamtime Statues’- three times life size bronze statues that consist of a traditional Aboriginal family group and various native animals (see Figure 2.10). The plaque underneath these statues reads *‘Warriu Park is dedicated to those who prepared us for today. Built by Joorook Ngarni ... this monument was presented to the citizens of Wyndham....’* The details of its unveiling in 1989 are listed and the plaque concludes *‘...Aboriginal spirits will always survive in this timeless and beautiful land’*.

Another interviewee saw the monuments at Warriu Park as not being the sort of representation of Aboriginal culture that would have traditionally been practised, but a necessary representation. He stated

'I think it is the vision that we as Aboriginal people must portray. To keep our images sort of projecting generation after generation. In other words trying to have a visual thing so our people can see that we need to have a connecting understanding of our cultural dreaming. To do that, seeing as all our cultural things are gone, we have to plant something in place. Now to have symbols like that is not Aboriginal. But our Aboriginal symbols in the dreaming places are there but they are classified as sacred. So we really can't do that anymore. And again we have no access to them. So we have to put these symbolic things in the open. And I believe that and that's what I have inherited from my family before me. And that's my total understanding of our people before me – of generations before. So with the obligations that I believe I have inherited I went through the process of trying to find land within Wyndham. I was successful – a little bit of land that nobody wanted ... And we went ahead – it took me 8 years to raise the money and 9 months to build it and we've done that. It's really more than a tourist attraction. A lot of people call it that but to me it's a symbolic thing for Aboriginal unity'

(Interviewee 6 in Lawton, 2001:91-92).

When Warri Park was built it was felt it would help unite the community in Wyndham, both through the recognition of Aboriginal culture and through the direct involvement of the community – for example, many of the school children were involved in the creation of the Dreamtime Statues. It also represented the handing back of a site that was historically significant to the Aboriginal community. The area was believed by some interviewees to have been used in the early days as a meeting place, and was also used for Aboriginal housing in the 1960s. The families who acquired the land for the local Aboriginal people had a vision of creating a park but lacked the money, so they started out using the area for sport and cultural functions. This is just another way in which the land acquired social significance for Aboriginal people of the area.

The Dreamtime Statues at Warri Park are representative of the significance of the area for local Aboriginal people. They mark the park as a place of Aboriginal significance in a way

that can be recognised by both the Indigenous and non-indigenous population. Warri Park is a significant example of a set of monuments constructed for Aboriginal people BY Aboriginal people. Many people visiting Wyndham may simply think of the Dreamtime Statues as just another ‘big’ lot of statues on Australia’s circuit of all things big – the big banana, the big pineapple, the big pavlova (now sadly lost to history) and the big merino to name a few. The statues are often interpreted as a tourist attraction, something to get people to the town, which like many country towns, is suffering from an economic decline. Although the statues are promoted as one of the ‘places to see’ around Wyndham, they are far more than a tourist attraction to the people involved in their construction. Monuments and memorials can mean different things to different audiences.

2.7 Conclusions

There are many more examples of monuments that are relevant to an exploration of Aboriginal history in Australia. Indeed the topic of monuments and memorials and how they portray the Indigenous past could easily be the subject of a thesis on its own. Of course these monuments and memorials are far less prevalent than those that memorialise the almost endless white, male figures seen as the ‘founding fathers of the Australian Nation’. Those monuments do however reveal much about the exclusion of Indigenous voices in the visual portrayal of Australian history. Memorials that depict Aboriginal people are however out there and more are being created each year. Not always in the traditional monumental forms of obelisks, statues and busts, but in the form of public artwork and sculptures. Australians are making gradual attempts to visually reinstate Aboriginal history back into a landscape that many non-indigenous Australians over time had arguably tried to erase it from.

Attempts to reinscribe Aboriginal people in place in this way have been going on, though not on a large scale, for sometime (though the motivations for doing this may be various). William Ricketts Sanctuary in the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria, aimed at encouraging new ways of thinking about the world by drawing on Aboriginal people from the Pitjantjara Tribe as the central focus of its sculptures (Ricketts, n.d.). Ricketts aimed to stimulate people’s awareness of the environment and spirituality and was inspired by the

Pitjantjara's connections with the natural world. Much of Ricketts' work was conducted in the 1960s. Though Ricketts had specific motivations for his work, it arguably helped raise awareness of Aboriginal people. What Ricketts work did not help was the reinstatement of Aboriginal people into the contemporary historic landscape. Ricketts work placed Aboriginal people firmly in the natural world, not as actors in the recent past. Monuments to Aboriginal people such as Johnny Mullagh, a member of the Aboriginal Cricket Team who toured England in 1866, have helped this situation (Bulbeck, 1991). Bulbeck (1991:169) writes that the '*handful of memorials ... (which) record Aboriginal workers, artists (and) sportsmen... reproduce the story of assimilation*'. To a certain extent, this is true. These memorials do however hold an important place in society as they paved the way for the transition from confining Aboriginal people in the prehistoric past to incorporating them as historical actors in contemporary Australian history.

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation recommended that as part of their 'National Strategy to Sustain the Reconciliation Process' in Australia, symbols of reconciliation needed to be established (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 2000). The creation of new monuments that represent Aboriginal experiences in Australia, or the adding of additional plaques to monuments to present an alternative view of history, such as the example given of the Explorer's Monument in Fremantle, can be seen as a practical way to enact this recommendation. What the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation does recommend, however, is that '*appropriate processes of negotiation and consultation*' with relevant communities are conducted (ibid.). Without these processes, what was designed to be a symbol of reconciliation could become just the opposite – a symbol of a divisive process. Reconciliation Place provides one example in which the community consultation process – particularly regarding the sliver to represent the experiences of the Stolen Generation – was inadequate. Learning from this experience is crucial. Unfortunately, in Canberra at least, recent events would suggest that an understanding of the need for community consultation, regardless of whether one is dealing with an Indigenous or non-indigenous community, has gone unnoticed. At the end of August 2003 the National Capital Authority came under fire for inadequate consultation with the community regarding an installation of a sculpture designed to commemorate the 2002 centenary of women's suffrage (O'Brien, 2003). Along with the Office of the Status of Women, the National Capital Authority attracted criticism for approving the sculpture titled 'Fan',

which is described as '*a red stainless steel structure... (with)... 10 rotating blades 18 meters above the ground on a row of "legs"*' (ibid. p.2). Australia ICOMOS president Kristy Buckley was particularly concerned that a monument that would '*completely dominate*' the view to Old Parliament House had been approved with so little consultation (ibid.). Of course there were those who supported the project, however, both the National Trust and Australia ICOMOS have criticised the process of approval of the sculpture. Regardless of the artistic merit, or the cause the sculpture commemorates, the story of 'fan' is yet another example illustrating the importance of adequate consultation in creating a monument that is welcomed by the majority; if not the whole of the community it is created for.

The short film directed by Sally Riley and produced by Kath Shelper entitled *Confessions of a Headhunter* (2000), provides one of the most effective social commentaries in relation to monuments in Australia. Spurred on by the vandalism of the statue of Yagan, the two leading Aboriginal characters, Frank and Vinnie, make a journey around Australia removing the heads of many white male colonial statues. They are motivated to tell history in a way that acknowledges Australia's Indigenous people. Whilst cutting off the last head of their choice, that of the statue of Captain Cook in Hyde Park, Sydney – a statue which proclaims on its plaque that Cook 'discovered this territory' – Frank speaks his mind, talking to Cook's statue, saying '*you didn't discover this territory. Eora mob was already here along with all the other black fellas. You see they didn't have to discover this territory because they belong to the land. But where's there a ...statue of them?*' (Confessions of a Headhunter, 2000)

In this humorous and thought provoking film, it is an exploration of Australia's dominant monuments that force the audience to come to an understanding of how contemporary Indigenous history in Australia has often been rendered invisible. The story ends with the creation of something from that absence. Out of the melted down heads of Captain Cook, Queen Victoria, Henry Parkes and many others, Vinnie creates a very personal monument of an Aboriginal mother and her children – probably Vinnie's own mother – a symbol of all that is precious of his history. Monuments like Warri Park, and Reconciliation Place (if the problems created over inappropriate consultation can be fixed) have the potential to also become powerful symbols.

Chapter 3: Museums

3.1 Introduction

Simpson (2001) notes that the colonial origins of museums have often influenced the way in which they depict the past. Referring to the work of Tawadros, Simpson (2001:1) states that museum displays were often based on an underlying assumption of western superiority. Australian museums have not been exempted from these trends. Simpson (ibid.) suggests that together with disciplines like anthropology, museums created a state that has been labelled by many Aboriginal writers as '*scientific colonialism*' - a form of colonialism that they argue continues today with museum collections controlling '*the representation of Aboriginal arts and culture.*' However, as Simpson (op. cit.) writes, museums are beginning to challenge their colonial past, '*undergoing a radical change in the way that they function and in their relationships with the cultures represented in collections*'. Conferences such as one held in Ottawa in November 1988 – *Preserving Our Heritage: A Working Conference for Museums and First Peoples*, are helping to integrate Indigenous perspectives into the content and philosophy of museum displays as well as addressing issues such as ownership of cultural materials and intellectual property rights (op. cit.). Displays are therefore evolving from illustrating non-indigenous perspectives of the Indigenous past, to reveal the perspectives of Indigenous people themselves. As George Erasmus (cited in Simpson 2001:v) states, '*We (the Aboriginal peoples) are well aware that many people have dedicated their time, careers and lives showing what they believe is an accurate picture of Indigenous peoples. We thank you for that, but we want to turn the page...*'

Simpson's (2001:5) study utilises case studies from museums in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand to illustrate how museums are evolving to include Indigenous perspectives. This chapter takes a similar approach, discussing the ways in which a series of sample museums around Australia are depicting Australia's shared post-contact past. It will examine, as Simpson has with her chosen case studies, '*the extent to which museums have adopted new approaches in their exhibition planning and presentation, interpretative approaches and dissemination methods, enabling communities to become actively involved*

in the representation of their own cultures' (ibid.). Where this chapter differs from Simpson's work however, is that it does not focus on issues such as the repatriation of human remains and cultural artefacts or the tension between scientific explanations of the Indigenous past versus explanation through cultural beliefs. The focus of this chapter is once again on the telling of contemporary or post-contact Aboriginal history and heritage, in order that shared contemporary historical narratives for Australia can be established. That is not to say there is no value in discussions about other issues such as the repatriation of cultural materials. It is necessary to engage with these arguments. However, those issues are not the focus of this chapter. By focusing solely on those issues, the stereotypical perspective of what constitutes Aboriginal history in Australia tends to be reinforced. The museum is often too easily depicted as being the storehouse of Aboriginal prehistory, and the contemporary Indigenous past is once again overlooked. Therefore this chapter focuses on the post-contact period to help address this imbalance.

Despite the main focus of Simpson's (2001) work dealing with the treatment of relics of the prehistoric Indigenous past, small sections do deal with the portrayal of post-contact history. Where relevant, these snippets will be discussed in this chapter, along with the work of other authors who have been reviewing museum practice in Australia. This chapter will also draw on the author's personal experiences in visiting the museums utilised as examples in the chapter. The inclusion of examples such as the National Museum of Australia is timely, having been the focus of a recent review and subject to much controversy over its display of the contemporary Indigenous past. In keeping with the vision of shared history as put forward in the introduction (Chapter One) of this thesis and in reviewing the example museums, this chapter embraces an ideal put forward by Simpson in her introductory chapter when she writes *'Museums are changing in many ways: their image as dusty, stuffy, boring and intimidating storehouses is slowly giving way to recognition that museums can be authoritative without being definitive; inclusive rather than exclusive; exciting, lively and entertaining while still being scholarly and educational.'* (Simpson, 2001:5). In particular this chapter seizes upon the notion that museums can be 'authoritative without being definitive', that is, a strict factual account of the past that appears to be set in concrete can make way to more personal interpretations, allowing for the dissemination of multiple perspectives and changing opinions over time. When dealing with Australia's shared past, museums need to acknowledge multiple

perspectives and avoid the notion of there being only one 'true' interpretation of the past. Rather, there are many perspectives of different events given the diversity of the Australian nation.

3.2 The Museum of Sydney – Sydney, New South Wales

The Museum of Sydney is a relatively new museum, having opened in 1995 (Historic Houses Trust, 2003a). Run by the Historic Houses Trust, the museum is unique in that it is both a museum and historic site – being built on the site of the First Government House, it incorporates some of the foundations and archaeological relics of that building in the museum's construction. The museum utilises the conceptual device of layers to stress that the site, and indeed Sydney itself, has a history that involves many different people from many different cultural backgrounds (ibid.). In this sense the museum is attempting to cover Sydney's shared history, and the Indigenous history of Sydney is just one of the layers that is woven into interpretation at the site. The interpretation of the different layers of history both at the site and within Sydney are also aided by the museum's key theme of Sydney being '*a meeting place of cultures*' (Hinkson, 2001:15).

The museum also incorporates interpretation of the shared Indigenous/non-indigenous past right from the forecourt at its entrance through the use of public art. Situated in the forecourt is an installation entitled *Edge of the Trees* which was created jointly by an Indigenous (Fiona Foley) and a non-indigenous artist (Janet Laurence) (Historic Houses Trust, 2003b). The work is believed to be '*the first public artwork in Sydney to be a collaboration between a European and an Aboriginal Australian*' (Historic Houses Trust, 2003a). Essentially, *Edge of the Trees* is a series of 29 columns that '*represent the 29 Aboriginal clans who originally inhabited the area, symbolic of burial poles and rock carvings*' (Salvestro, 2002). However the installation also represents other memories of the site in wood, steel and stone, including the arrival of the first fleet and the meeting of cultures. As Laurence (2003) states, the installation is '*speaking specifically of what is now absent from the site*'. The pillars are quite tall, and many are inscribed with names and

words of either those who came with the first fleet or of Eora³ people (Indigenous people of the Sydney area). Glass panels also contain objects such as feathers, hair and ash to create links with the past and the sculpture also incorporates a soundscape, which features sounds of the Eora's language. The use of audio devices to interpret the past is continued elsewhere in the museum. For example, when entering the museum, there is a dramatized dialogue between an Eora woman and the First Fleeter, Lieutenant Dawes. This helps reinforce the theme of the meeting of cultures right from the outset and provides a good illustration of the misunderstandings that occurred between Indigenous and non-indigenous cultures in the early days of the First Fleets arrival - misunderstandings that would continue to influence the relationships between these two cultures to the present day.



Figure 3.1: The Edge of the Trees sculpture

The Edge of the Trees sculpture is given this name because of the '*poetic words of historian Rhys Jones*' (Dysart, 2000:1) who described the scene he envisioned when the

³ There is some debate amongst scholars as to the correct term for the indigenous people who inhabited the area of land around Port Jackson. Whilst some suggest the term Darug is more appropriate, this section utilises the term Eora as it is used both at the museum and in literature referring to the museum (eg Prosser, 1996 and Zeppel, 1999).

Aborigines observed from the security of the bush the coming ashore of members of the First Fleet. Jones' words were designed to show more than a desire of the Aborigines to hide from the newcomers; rather he tried to illustrate two different ways of relating to the same piece of land. After stating that the Aborigines looked on *'from the Edge of the Trees'* Jones goes on to state *'Thus the same landscape perceived as alien, hostile or having no coherent form (for the non-indigenous newcomers), was to the Indigenous people their home, a familiar place, the inspiration of dreams'* (Jones quoted in Dysart, 2000:6). The initial concept of the Edge of the Trees Sculpture was conceived by the Senior Curator of the Museum of Sydney who wrote a concept brief to define the kinds of messages the final installation was to include. A number of artists were then invited to submit their vision of what the final installation of the Edge of the Trees could be. The artists chosen by the selection panel were Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley. The artists did not have free reign however, having to work in conjunction with a project team. The collaboration of Laurence and Foley seemed to represent the spirit of reconciliation, Laurence being a non-indigenous artist and Foley being an Indigenous artist. It is interesting to note that Foley is not an Eora woman and yet Edge of the Trees sees her at least in part representing the history of struggle and relationships to country of the Eora people. This may be controversial to individuals who believe that the most desirable situation is that members from particular language groups should represent themselves. This is particularly the case in representing the Eora, as they are a group who are often wrongfully assumed to have been 'wiped out' with colonisation and are therefore unable to represent themselves. An Indigenous person representing Indigenous people from a different locality than themselves can often become more acceptable however through ensuring adequate consultation with the community that they are representing (The Metropolitan Land Council, 2003).

Edge of the Trees is an installation that seems to live up to the original purpose that the design brief initially indicated it should fulfil at the Museum of Sydney. That is, it creates *'the dominant metaphor of place that locates First Government House site as a charged site, historically, culturally, spatially and emotionally. It was a contested site then; it is a contested site still'* (Dysart, 2000:34). The nature of the installation encourages visitors to wander through it, to listen to the voices and touch the poles, engaging with the history that it presents, and being confronted with the multiple perspectives of the past that are present

at this one site. The installation has also proved immensely popular with the people of Sydney and as such has been an effective way for the public to engage with the concept of shared history. Through its ability to present *'both cultures equally and harmoniously (the sculpture has) become a benchmark for one sort of visual expression of reconciliation'* (Kerr in Dysart, 2000:43). The Museum of Sydney however, is far more than a single installation in its forecourt. Sydney's shared past continues to be presented inside the building. Nevertheless, as Prosser (quoted in Dysart, 2000:97) states, Edge of the Trees may have been *'the first real attempt to collaborate and make Aboriginal history a part of the whole Australian experience'*.

The focal point for Indigenous history inside the museum is within the Cadigal room. This is interesting, as initially the museum seems to take the approach of integrating Indigenous and non-indigenous perceptions of the past through Edge of the Trees and through an additional soundscape in the entranceway. Largely confining the Indigenous history within the museum proper to one room counters this approach. If, for example, a visitor fails to enter the Cadigal Room then they will leave without a meaningful understanding of the Indigenous layer of Sydney's history. An integrated approach would ensure that all layers are given a voice regardless of which sections of the museum visitors attend.

Zeppel (1999:184), writing in 1999, states that *'The Eora Aboriginal exhibits are located in various areas of the museum, in the external plaza, foyer, level 2 and level 3'*. However these 'exhibits' are largely just audio visual 'snippets'. They are useful in reinforcing the idea to visitors that Aboriginal people would have had different perspectives of the events that are extensively dealt with in the museum through signage and displays of the non-indigenous history. However because of their nature (they are quick grab pieces) they are unable to deal with Indigenous perspectives in their complexity. This has lead to what Zeppel (ibid.) has identified as a lack of specific information about known Indigenous historical people such as Bennelong and Pemulwuy in the museum exhibits. This is disappointing as both these people have a rich history and their stories could contribute positively to a well rounded interpretation of the Aboriginal history of both the First Government House site and the wider Sydney area. As Zeppel (op. cit.) writes *'The current Eora exhibits are dispersed and, based largely on debates or images, this Aboriginal history is not clearly understood by the majority of visitors....to remedy this limited*

understanding of Aboriginal viewpoints, the current Aboriginal Visitor Services Officer....conducts short talks at the Eora exhibits.’. Whilst face-to-face interpretation such as this can effectively enrich an interpretive experience for visitors - imparting information that is not incorporated in displays, it fails to target all visitors entering the museum. Some visitors preferring to wander on their own and those that would prefer a guide would not always find one was available.

Hinkson (2001:15) writes that the museum *‘stands as a powerful symbol of the contested nature of Australia’s history’* and continues by stating that the exhibits *‘offer a sensitive and unique interpretation’* of history. Zeppel’s (1999:187) response to the museum is that it presents *‘fragmented impressions of Aboriginal responses to British settlement at Sydney Cove’* and that *‘Aboriginal associations with the site of First Government House are not clearly acknowledged or explained’*. Clearly these are two very different opinions. Interestingly, when questioned about sites that they believed effectively illustrated shared history, Interviewees for this research both praised and criticised the displays at the Museum of Sydney. Interviewee 2 believed that they had a very effective schools program however that person felt that focusing the Indigenous history into soundscapes in particular was a weakness. *‘People just don’t hang around. I mean I’ve been in the Museum of Sydney and they have the voices going and people just basically pass through the area.’* (Interviewee 2). Interviewee 1 felt the museum was particularly effective at acknowledging the existence of the multiple layers of history – it was why she *‘loved it’*. Yet she acknowledged that *‘so may people hate it’*. She felt that one of the problems was that the museum fails to tie all the bits and pieces into a cohesive narrative for the visitor to come away with. *‘I go in there – I mean I felt a little bit that way at the National Museum. You walk in and you think ‘wow there’s so much here’. But I came away with no sense of a narrative or anything that’s contained and pulling together the bits and pieces. Which really upsets me because I do like - there has to be a way of doing it well I think.’* (Interviewee 1).

Visitors seem to either embrace or be considerably frustrated by this lack of cohesion. For some it stimulates them to create their own framework for the perspectives of history that they are presented with. For others, they walk away unsatisfied. It seems that a museum will never be able to please all parties. Perhaps what is needed is a range of museums that

tackle the issue of shared history within Australia in a variety of ways. Thus those that fall out with the methods of interpretation at one institution may find their niche at another.

3.3 The National Museum – Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

In the past few years, few if any museums across Australia have been the subject of more controversy than the National Museum of Australia (NMA), situated on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra. The Museum, which opened in March 2001 (Casey, 2002), publicly acknowledges on its website that its approach to exploring the social history of Australia has developed a reputation that has been felt by some to be somewhat controversial. As the NMA website states, the museum has a *'history of challenging convention and encouraging debate about who we are as Australians and what shapes our national culture and psyche, the Museum is sometimes controversial and never dull.'* (National Museum of Australia, 2004).

Indeed, the NMA has created such controversy over everything from its displays to its architecture that even shortly before it opened the Council of the National Museum of Australia ordered an independent⁴ review of the labels for the museums displays (in order to determine if they gave a balanced view of history), which was conducted by a Professor in History from Monash University, Graeme Davison (Macintyre, 2003:193). Davison concluded that, despite the concerns of Council member David Barnett, there was *'balance across the whole museum, but not necessarily at the level of every label or exhibit.'* (Windschuttle, 2001:12). Davison stated that *'If every label had to be acceptable to every visitor... then the result will be one very bland museum... I hold the view that a museum can be simultaneously provocative and scholarly, and in a certain sense impartial... not in a sense that it won't register strongly partisan viewpoints but that the role of the Council is to make sure there's a variety of viewpoints expressed in the institution.'* (ibid.). Yet despite the thorough nature of this review and its attempts to allay concerns about so called *'systemic political bias'* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003:36) in the NMA, in 2003 a

⁴ Although Davison was recommended by Geoffrey Blainey to undertake the review, Windschuttle (2001:12) argues that he was not an *'independent observer'*, having been involved with such activities as drafting the aims of the museum.

major review of the NMA's exhibitions and programs was initiated by the Museum Council. A panel was elected by the Council to conduct the review which utilised not only submissions from the general public but consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including museum experts, historians, social commentators, and many others (ibid. pp.3-4). Comments from this review process will be incorporated throughout this discussion of the NMA and the conclusions of the review will also be considered later in the section.

Although opened in 2001, the roots of the establishment of the NMA go back much further. Some commentators suggest that it can be traced back to discussions held around the time of Federation in 1901. However, the majority trace the museums origins back to what has become known as the *Pigott Report*. The report, officially titled *Museums in Australia 1975: Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections Including the Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia* (Pigott was the Chairman of the committee), outlined in Section 12 the need to establish a national museum whose focus was on Australian history. In reviewing the state of museums across Australia, the *Pigott Report* was able to analyse not only the types of museums that dominated Australia at the time but also the philosophies that underpinned them, and which influenced both their design and foundation. The report stated that:

'A new national museum offers a chance to mend several intellectual rifts which still affect those major museums founded in the nineteenth century. ... the major museums which were created in Australia in the nineteenth century tended to divorce Aboriginal man from European man and to divorce European man from Nature. The achievements of Aboriginal society over 40,000 years were minimised; and the subtle inter-dependence of European man and Nature was also minimised. Accordingly, many of the factors which moulded the human history of both black and white settlers were neglected.'

(Committee of Inquiry into Museums and National Collections, 1975:70).

Clearly the NMA was designated from the outset as a museum which would challenge traditional ways of thinking about museology.

The *Pigott Report* recommended the Museum take on board the three major themes that the NMA utilises today: land, people and nature⁵ (Committee of Inquiry into Museums and National Collections, 1975:70-71). It also stressed the importance of the establishment of a major gallery dedicated to Australia's Aboriginal past, which recognised this as an area that had previously been neglected. Indeed, the report went so far as to say that *'If the human history of Australia were to be marked on a 12-hour clock face, the era of the white man would run for only the last three or four minutes'* (ibid. p.71). This is not to say that the report advocated a museum in which the majority of the displays were dedicated to the Aboriginal past. A major gallery dedicated to Australia's European past was also a recommendation. The report was simply trying to emphasise that a gallery focusing on Australia's Indigenous past was long overdue. A third gallery focusing on the environment was the final pillar of the committee's planned National Museum of History (ibid. p.72). The committee also wanted to stress that each theme and therefore each gallery should not be viewed in isolation. The museum had to stress the interactions between man and the environment, and as such, the committee recommended somehow joining the galleries physically in the building design to represent these interactions (ibid.). Today the NMA has also taken on board this approach of utilising the flowing architecture⁶ (amongst other attributes) of its structure to comment on the nation's history in addition to the more traditional museum display and interpretive labels. As Casey (2002:19) writes, the NMA *'tells the nation's stories through a unique fusion of architecture, landscape design, contemporary exhibition techniques, and live media based programs.'*

Two areas where the physical design of the museum is used to comment on Australian social history⁷ have been particularly controversial. The first of these is what is referred to as a 'footprint' from the Jewish Museum in Berlin. This footprint has been utilised in the Gallery of the First Australians by the museums architects - Howard Raggatt of Ashton Raggatt McDougall and Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan, Architects in Association (National Museum of Australia, 2004). Essentially, this means that a section of the design used in the Jewish Museum was replicated in the design of the Gallery of the First

⁵ The report however expressed these themes as a recommendation that the museum focus on *'the history of man and nature in this continent, their linked roles, and their interactions'* (Committee of Inquiry into Museums and National Collections 1975: 70-71)

⁶ The galleries are designed in such a way that each flows into the next

⁷ This in itself is evidence of a new approach to museology, utilising architecture as an interpretive window to the past. The NMA is said to be *'inspired by the idea of a jigsaw puzzle, the building expresses the many tangled stories that make up our history'* (National Museum of Australia 2004).

Australians. Some commentators have suggested that this amounts to plagiarism whilst others have suggested that is a completely valid way for architects to express themselves, similar to quoting a book in an essay. The issue of plagiarism aside, the use of the footprint created such controversy largely because it made a direct link between the experiences of European Jews in the Second World War to the experiences of Aboriginal Australians. Whether this is a valid comparison is subject to debate. Reed (2002:13) suggests that *'the Gallery of the First Australians is a tough building to house a tough history, and it is arguable that the connection between the slaughter of Jews in Europe and the near to total eradication of Australia's Indigenous people is not an unreasonable one to make'*. Scholars such as Keith Windschuttle, a key critical commentator on the NMA, would beg to differ (Windschuttle, 2001). It is important to note in this discussion however that the majority of visitors to the NMA would not be aware of this architectural reference (indeed it can only really be seen by utilising either aerial photographs or plans of the building). Unless specific literature (such as academic journals, or publications dealing with the museums architecture) was read prior to visiting the NMA, the visitor would be unaware as to the additional interpretation available through an examination of the museum's architecture.

The second controversial use of architecture is in the field of landscape design or landscape architecture. It is the area of the NMA known as the Garden of Australian Dreams (see Figure 3.2). Essentially, the Garden of Australian Dreams is a central *'outdoor courtyard'* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003:37). It is not a garden in the traditional sense of the word. Such gardens are filled with various greenery and flowering plants. Rather, the base of the courtyard is a concrete *'map of Australia upon which the public can walk and read complex layers of information. It is a richly patterned and written on concrete surface, the size of a small sports oval made to look like a crumpled paper or printed fabric.'* (Weller, 2002:132) The complexity of the layers⁸ available for interpretation in the Garden of Australian Dreams has been one factor in leading critics to describe it as an *"alienating" public space'* (Kremmer, 2003). The argument here is that the jumble of references, sometimes *'encoded'* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003:37) to Australian history and

⁸ For example, the basic map layer incorporates not only a traditional European style map of Australia, but Horton's map illustrating Aboriginal linguistic boundaries in Australia, representations of fence lines such as the Dingo fence, Explorer's tracks and a map of Gallipoli amongst others (Commonwealth of Australia 2003:37)

identity, is confusing to the visitor, and that without a '*brochure in hand or a knowledgeable guide to lead them through the intricacies*' (ibid.), the significance of most of the references and symbols in the garden will not be understood. At worst it will leave the visitor feeling frustrated and confused. It is certainly possible that some visitors to the NMA experience these kinds of reactions in response to the Garden of Australian Dreams. However it is also entirely possible that a similar proportion of visitors will find that the complexity of the garden and the range of understandings visitors may formulate when left to their own devices in interpreting the surroundings are both stimulating and challenging. Perhaps the best solution is to provide a small amount of interpretation to those who wish to access it.



Figure 3.2: The Garden of Australian Dreams

The 2003 Review of the NMA, although addressing aspects of the museum such as the Garden of Australian Dreams, largely dealt with what could be considered the more traditional exhibitions and programs within the museum. Before examining some of the conclusions of the panel it is important to note some of the controversy surrounding the review itself. As mentioned previously, even prior to the NMA's opening the museum was subject to criticism. After the opening there was considerable negative feedback from some sections of the media and as a result, two polarised camps began to emerge as the NMA

began to be drawn into the ‘history wars’. One camp, lead vocally by social commentators such as the *Daily Telegraph*’s Miranda Devine, asserted that the NMA’s ‘underlying message “is one of sneering ridicule for white Australia. It is as if all non-Aboriginal culture is a joke”’. (Windschuttle, 2001:14). Keith Windschuttle, also a critic of the museum since its inception, argued that ‘While many of the exhibits of white culture are presented in terms of mockery and irony, the treatment of Indigenous culture ranges from respect to reverence.’ (ibid.). Windschuttle also criticises the thematic approach of the museum by stating that in abandoning a traditional chronological approach to the presentation of the past history it ‘loses its explanatory power and degenerates into a tasteless blamange’ (ibid. p.16).

Academics such as Bain Attwood, John Mulvaney and Stuart Macintyre are representatives of the alternative camp. They argue that the museum made crucial attempts to present a balanced account of Australian social history and that the decision for the 2003 Review should be seen as part of the politicisation of the history wars and evidence of the Howard Governments continual stance against what it perceives as ‘Black Armband History’ (Nicholson, 2003). As Morgan (2002:15) writes, the Review could either be seen as ‘a necessary process for any new cultural institution ...(or as) ... primarily political.’ Attwood and Macintyre were particularly quick to point out that members of the panel of review⁹ included not only John Howard’s former speechwriter, but also his authorised biographer (ibid.). Mulvaney stated that the museum was ‘being ideologically driven by a council minority with ministerial access’ (op. cit.). Macintyre does not confine his observations of this trend to the council of the NMA, stating that ‘Since 1996 the insurgents have enjoyed official patronage. They have been appointed to the governing bodies of the ABC, the National Museum and other public agencies that present history to the public... ... They publicise their views freely through a sympathetic press’ (Macintyre, 2003:5). It is difficult to determine to what extent these allegations reflect the true situation; however it is important to note the highly controversial, political and public nature of the debate surrounding the NMA at the time of the review.

⁹ Read also comments that with such a large part (one third) of the NMA being dedicated to indigenous history, and particularly seeing that this was the area that attracted the most public criticism, it is a severe oversight that an Aboriginal Representative was not appointed to the Committee of Inquiry (Read 2003b)

The motivation behind the review process aside, the review provides an interesting insight into the ways in which both the panel and contributors to the review are interacting with the NMA. Indeed, Museums Australia, *'the peak professional body for museum and gallery workers and institutions'* (Museums Australia, 2003) released a public statement welcoming the review. Although the review continued to be the target of negative feedback regarding the motivation behind its inception, and to some extent feedback regarding some of the conclusions drawn, it is important to note that the overall conclusions were generally positive. For example, the panel took care to acknowledge that the development of a museum takes decades and felt that given the limited time period that the NMA had been operational its achievements were admirable across most areas. Of particular note is the dismissal of the charges laid against the NMA of systemic *'cultural or political bias.'* However, the review did conclude that such bias *'exists in pockets, which may be fairly easily remedied'* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003:67). Thus the review tended to target specific displays or features of the museum in order to readdress what it saw as the rare example of political or cultural bias. This thesis argues, however, that rather than branding the targeted displays as being examples of bias, they be labelled as examples of the differing approaches to museology that have been developing in the past few years.



Figure 3.3: Aboriginal Deaths in Custody - A display in the Gallery of First Australians

A balanced perspective or black armband view?

Fundamental to the clash of opinions over the NMA is the issue of what a museum should be and what is best practice in museology. Similar to the arguments put forward in the

introduction of this thesis as to the nature of history and what historians should aim towards, this thesis argues that the nature of museology is adapting to the contemporary world and that these adaptations are not only welcome, but necessary for Australian society in order that our social history be portrayed in an integrative and inclusive way.

Early on in the review, a statement is made that the panel perceives that museums have moved on to a *'conception of a national museum as an institution that somehow projects a society's sense of itself, its major and defining traits. Its focus has increasingly become national identity'* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003:6). To a certain extent this is true. Social history museums are engaging in a debate about what it means to be Australian. However, engaging in the debate does not equate to a museum providing, or even aiming to provide the definitive interpretation of Australian identity. Indeed, as Macintyre notes, the advisers for the NMA have *'not written a pursuit of the national identity into the guidelines'* (Macintyre, 2003:201). This does not mean it does not address the question of identity; nor has it been prescribed the task of presenting the Australian nation with a rigidly interpreted reflection of itself. Instead, the NMA has embarked upon Tilden's basic principle of heritage interpretation – provocation. It aims to make the visitor think about their own understanding of Australian history, and to challenge a variety of viewpoints. This thematic approach, essentially a presentation of a variety of topics and issues to the visitor, was sometimes criticised in the review with comments such as *'the risk here is of presenting an assembly of ill-coordinated fragments, merely serving to confuse the visitor'* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003:7). The basic philosophy underpinning this approach was also criticised. In a submission to the review, Professor Graeme Davison encapsulated the philosophical stance of both the NMA and new museology well, when he wrote that *"'interpretative pluralism' is the only viable philosophy in the current Australian climate"* (ibid. p.8). Davison works from a starting base that society is by nature plural and therefore it is necessary to acknowledge the different views that will arise. The panel however disagreed, stating that *'while this view is forceful, the panel is inclined to read more of a consensus than plurality at the core of national collective conscience.'* (ibid.). It is this fundamental difference in their philosophical approach to both the NMA and museology which has resulted in the criticism of various displays, and indeed is arguably the root cause of such phenomenon as the history wars and black arm band debates. How both individuals and groups perceive history becomes crucial. By assuming that there is a

collective conscience, the panel could criticise displays which they felt depicted the view of one particular cultural or political group as not being ‘in step’ with a collective national identity, as perhaps too left wing, too right wing, or even pro Indigenous at the expense of ‘the majority’. Those who approached the displays of the NMA with the viewpoint that they would not necessarily reflect one consensus but aim to show the entanglement of lives from various social backgrounds and the differing interpretations that would arise from this entanglement, would not perceive ‘*pockets of bias*’.

Given this fundamental difference in their philosophical standing point, it is amazing that the review was largely praiseworthy of the NMA. In response to Davison’s philosophy of ‘interpretative pluralism’, the panel did state that ‘*The difference between the Panel’s view and Professor Davison’s is one of emphasis, and will not lead us to apply a notably different series of judgements in reviewing the NMA*’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003:8). On the whole, the panel does seem to have been able to tolerate examples of this philosophical approach within the NMA. Where they have not been able to do so however, is in those areas which fall under aspects of what could be labelled the traditional ‘national mythology’. This ‘national mythology’ has often been used to create a single narrative approach to the Australian past. These include references to Captain Cook, convicts, and explorers such as Burke and Wills. For example, the panel criticised the entrance to the Horizon’s Gallery because of its approach to Cook. It stated that a reference at the opening of the gallery to Disaster Bay created the risk of ‘*insinuation of the subtext that European arrival was a disaster for the continent. This is an inappropriate opening message in the gallery, followed by the equally inappropriate and prominent signage: ‘Terra Nullius’. Cook is linked – pejoratively and unfairly – in an opening reference, to a debate that would arise two centuries later. If these concepts belong anywhere, it is in the downstairs part of First Australians*’ (ibid. p.23). If one approached this display with the idea of a history that fits a ‘collective nation’, then it is possible to view this as challenging to the traditional Cook foundation myth. To suggest that the reference to Disaster Bay however would imply to the visitor that Cook’s arrival was a disaster is stretching the criticism too far because Disaster Bay was appropriately named for the number of fatal shipwrecks that occurred in the area. Also, to state that a discussion of *Terra Nullius* should be abandoned to keep the purity of the Cook myth unchallenged is favouring a supposed ‘collective view’ over an equally valid interpretation of history. Adding the words ‘*Terra Nullius*’ is merely

an example of a provocation; the visitor is free to accept or reject the perspective. Further, to argue that if such an interpretative device be included, it should be relegated to a section on Aboriginal history, opposes every principle of shared history that this thesis is arguing for. It relegates a discussion of Indigenous issues, issues that are relevant to *all* Australians, to a separate, Aboriginal domain.

To conclude, the NMA is an example of a social history museum genuinely attempting to present Australia's shared past in a manner which allows for debate and discussion. The displays are not perfect. However given its relatively short existence (at least in the sense of the physical displays the museum has only been in operation a little over four years), it has done a remarkable job of presenting differing perspectives of the past. Museums Australia was particularly welcoming of the Review's acknowledgement that museums do need to '*confront "darker historical episodes" so that "collective self accounting" may occur, and, its acknowledgment of the need to incorporate the "mosaic of everyday life and its more ordinary stories".*' However, it too acknowledged that the '*proposed re-working of the post-contact galleries... presents a challenge*' (Museums Australia, 2003). This challenge comes in the form of the new museology - a museology which allows for multiple, and often open-ended perspectives. As Carol Scott, President of Museums Australia stated: '*Current museological practice presents issues in an open-ended way rather than celebrating the past people and events as closed narratives*¹⁰. *The challenge will be to produce engaging exhibitions which balance these issues*' (ibid.). Until an understanding of the basis of the philosophical principles of this new museology are widely understood and critics of the approach can view displays safe in the knowledge that challenging the past does not mean the interpretation one holds is no longer valid, but that differing views of the past can exist simultaneously, clashes will always occur. The new museology is designed for a plural society. As Macintyre (2003:201-202) writes '*The new museology, with its emphasis on selection, interpretation and display, serves this attempt to recognise diversity and create a conversation that its component communities can share.*'

¹⁰ This is particularly relevant when reviewing the criticisms of the Cook display at the beginning of the Horizon's Gallery. If we viewed Cook as part of a closed historical narrative then he would not need to be subjected to current ways of perceiving the past and the concept of *Terra Nullius* would never be brought beside the Cook narrative in order to see it through a different perspective. Utilising these new museological principles it is a valid approach to juxtapose the two in order to shed light on the differing views of the past.

3.4 Tiagarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Museum – Devonport, Tasmania

The Tiagarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Museum was originally established as a museum in 1976. However *'it has only been in the last 7 years that the Aboriginal community has been involved with Tiagarra'* (Tiagarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Museum, n.d.). The backpacker magazine *TNT* asserts that *'the main attraction (in Devonport) is the Tiagarra Aboriginal Culture and Art Centre, a short way out of town on Mersey Bluff'* (Hansford, 2004). Tourist Information Brochures available in Devonport offer a very brief description of what is available at Tiagarra, stating visitors can *'wander the Bluff headland viewing unique aboriginal rock engravings and visit the Cultural Centre to see the life of tribal Tasmanian Aboriginals portrayed in dioramas.'* (Devonport Visitor Centre, 2004). Tiagarra appeared to be promoted therefore as an attraction which focussed on the prehistoric Tasmanian past. Tiagarra itself is a Tasmanian Aboriginal word meaning 'keep' (Tiagarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Museum, n.d.). Its early establishment as a museum appeared to be focused largely on the purpose of preserving the 'lost', prehistoric past, rather than interpreting the past to show its relevance to the present. Only in the past 7 or so years with the involvement of the Aboriginal community, has it begun to address the links of the past with the present.

Given this background, Tiagarra provided the opportunity to examine a museum which largely focused on Aboriginal history as prehistory, and how it slowly evolved to incorporate the more recent past. Although small updates had been made since the museum opened (Tiagarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Museum, n.d.), the museum displays and interpretative methods appeared very dated. Signs and maps were often basic printed information sheets mounted on card (in contrast to the professional signage utilised in modern day museums) and the visitor was required to take a photocopied leaflet from the shop, to conduct a self guided tour around the museum and the rock engravings on the headland outside. The leaflet featured information about a series of numbered points around the museum and headland. The leaflet provided additional interpretation to the pre existing signage within the museum, however, its focus was still largely on prehistoric culture.

The museum was essentially a number of dioramas displaying traditional Aboriginal life in Tasmania along with a series of display cabinets featuring stone tools, baskets, necklaces and other artefacts (some were modern reconstructions). Signage and the additional self guided tour leaflet described what daily life was like for Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Approximately 95% of the museum was dedicated to this kind of display. The remaining 5 %, which attempts to engage with the contact era and the circumstances of Tasmanian Aboriginal people in the recent past will be the main focus of this section; that is, how Tiagarra is beginning to embrace the concept of a shared past (as opposed to two separate Indigenous and non-indigenous pasts). This section, will examine the museum as it was at the end of May 2004. Having grown as a tourist attraction and receiving funding from various sources, Tiagarra closed in June 2004 to begin a complete overhaul which will modernise the facilities and improve the interpretative experience. This section therefore reviews a museum that no longer exists in the form discussed. However, analysis of the displays still provides usefully commentary on the ways in which the shared past can be interpreted by museums. There are still many other museums around Australia dating from the 1970s and earlier that share similarities with a pre June 2004 Tiagarra.

The story of the contact period in Tasmania is in many ways dominated by the story of the devastation of Tasmania's Aboriginal inhabitants - devastation by disease, conflict and at times, open warfare. Contrary to popular belief (or at least the belief of much of Australia's non-indigenous population until recent times), the Tasmanian Aborigines did not 'die out' as a result of these trying circumstances. Trugannini, a famous Tasmanian Aboriginal woman of the period, has often been labelled as the 'last Tasmanian Aborigine'. However this notion is merely a continuation of a biologically determinist way of viewing what constitutes 'Aboriginality'. If she was the last of anything she was merely the last 'pure blood' Aborigine, and even this fact is debated. Today many descendants of the Tasmanian Aborigines are living both on mainland Tasmania and on the Bass Strait Islands. The contact period, despite its brutal history and indeed perhaps because of it, is rich with stories. As a museum devoted exclusively to Aboriginal history in Tasmania, Tiagarra is in a position to engage with these stories of the recent past and to help visitors gain an understanding of both contemporary Aboriginal culture and Tasmanian history in general. The almost exclusive focus on prehistory at Tiagarra however has meant that this opportunity has gone unfulfilled.

The story of the past 200 or so years in Tasmania is barely touched upon. If this theme were dealt with in depth, this period could easily be the subject of a museum in itself. Tiagarra barely devoted a paragraph of signage to these events. The more recent past was dealt with in displays in the very last corner of the museum. One wall displays photographs from 1866 of Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Names of these individuals and the places the photos are taken are the only interpretation of these photos in the museum proper (see Figure 3.4). The additional information leaflet for the guided tour merely states that:

'The photos of our traditional people are noticeably different to the mainland Aboriginal people. There are approximately 15,000 aboriginal people today who are descendants of our traditional people. To give you some indication of the devastation on the island caused by early settlers, the NorthEast Tribe (the Trawoolway people) was 500 strong in 1798. By 1830, they had demised to 72 men, 6 women and no children.'

(Tiagarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Museum, n.d.).

This touches on the events of the recent past but does not describe any of the historical acts that occurred such as the so-called Black War, or the attempts by George Augustus Robinson to make an alternative settlement away from mainland Tasmania for the remaining Aborigines. No insight is given into the personal history of any of the individuals pictured. The pictures are used primarily as a device to show the visitor what 'traditional' Tasmanian Aborigines looked like.



Figure 3.4: Photos of Aboriginal Tasmanians from 1866

Following on from the 1866 photographic display is a wall of photographs depicting ‘today’s descendants’ (see Figure 3.5). Again, no interpretation is given, and often the photographs are not even labelled. For those visitors who are already informed about Tasmanian Aboriginal history, they can identify the significance of a number of the photos. The photo of Wyabalenna Chapel on the left hand edge of the display shows the last remaining building of the settlement at Wyabalenna on Flinders Island where some 250 Tasmanian Aborigines were taken in an attempt to set up a safe refuge for them. The attempt failed, many seeing their last days at Wyabalenna. Mutton birding in the Bass Strait Islands, a traditional cultural activity which is still practised by many descendants today, is also depicted. The building containing the Aboriginal Information Service established in Hobart is also depicted. The uninformed visitor however would be given no idea of the significance of these images and no additional interpretation is given in the self guided tour leaflet. Again, the potential to give the visitor an understanding not only of the events of the more recent past but the way they have shaped Tasmanian society is there, but has not been acted upon in any effective way.



Figure 3.5: Photographic display depicting 'Today's Descendants'

The final wall in this section focuses on the issue of the protection of cultural sites. It offers a wall depicting 'contemporary research'. However, this exclusively focuses on the protection of prehistoric sites such as middens and artefact scatters. Only one aspect of the museum attempts to engage with the more contemporary past, a mural by the Tasmanian artist Max Angus.

Angus has two murals in the museum, both quite high up near the ceiling, and unfortunately the dark lighting within the building made them difficult to see in any great detail. One mural depicts the traditional life of the Tasmanian Aborigines. The other, positioned quite high up the wall abutting the ceiling above the 1866 photos is the only display in the museum that gives any insight as to what life was like for Aboriginal people in Tasmania after European occupation of their lands. It does this both visually, and through a small sign, approximately 30 x 20cm – the only sign that deals with the contemporary past in the museum. Figure 3.6 depicts the mural, and the wording of the sign is also quoted over the page.



Figure 3.6: Mural at Tiagarra – ‘Changing life of the tribal Tasmanian Aborigines’

‘Tasmanian artist Max Angus has recreated scenes of the changing life after the arrival of the Europeans.

Sealers were attracted to the dark skinned women resulting in retaliation and land competition for both grazing and settlement fed the fire of conflict. The centre-piece depicts the symbols of the introduced European life with Law, Church, Jailers and punishment for those who broke the rules.

Governor Arthur was responsible for the Black War in 1830 costing 36000 pounds and failed, however extermination was practised by many settlers and the V.D.L Massacre on Slaughter Hill is depicted as the blood red sun sets off the North West Coast.

Conciliator George Augustus Robinson travelled through remote parts of Tasmania befriending the ‘wild’ peoples and persuading 250 to take up the new life and religion at Wybalenna on Flinders Island.

However these people were taken away from their normal and natural tribal lands, familiar foods and way of life. They fretted and perished rapidly leaving behind descendants who today live on the Bass Strait Islands and in Tasmania still maintaining many of the past cultural ways’

(Signage at Tiagarra).

Personally, I would argue that this mural is quite an effective way of engaging with the past. However, ideally it would need to be supplemented with oral history, interpretation or explanations to go with the images, and extracts from the numerous sources that documented the events of the time. Tiagarra is a museum which is undoubtedly a product of its past. It was established before any engagement with the contemporary Indigenous past was common place and its focus is dominated by the prehistoric past. The attempts to introduce aspects of the more recent past have suffered because of the lack of interpretation to supplement them. How much input the Aboriginal community has had in altering displays since the museums inception is also unknown. There is, however, much potential for Tiagarra, particularly as the decision has already been made to completely overhaul the museum and works are now in progress for it to be an institution which engages with the shared history of Tasmania in meaningful and interesting ways.

3.5 Emita Museum and Wybalenna Historic Site - Flinders Island, Tasmania

While travelling from Tiagarra at Devonport to the Emita Museum and Wybalenna Historic site at Flinders Island, Tasmania, I had high expectations that if one was going to find Tasmania's contact history represented anywhere, it would be at these sites. Many museums are off-site interpretative centres. That is, they relate histories that are not specific to the site upon which they stand. The National Museum of Australia for example, though situated in Australia, does not focus on the history of Canberra or indeed a narrower history of Hospital Point where it is situated. The Emita Museum and the Wybalenna historic site had not only the potential to be like any other museum, but they held the power of being at the actual location where the history they might interpret took place. A lot has to be said for the emotive power created while visiting the actual sites where specific historical events took place. Similar to Tiagarra at Devonport, however, the more recent past was either just touched upon or at times barely even alluded to.

The Emita Museum is run entirely by volunteers from the Furneaux Historical Research Association. As a volunteer run organisation, particularly with limited funds, what they have achieved at the museum is indeed admirable, particularly in the cataloguing of articles and other reference sources related to Flinders Island. The number of artefacts in the

collection is also impressive. The museum, however, does seem to lack a sense of order or coherent framework to link the various items displayed in it. Essentially, the museum is a collection of historical memorabilia from island residents and ship wrecks displayed either haphazardly on the walls (the building is an old school house) or in the case of more valuable items, in display cabinets. There are some loose thematic boundaries. For example, one room contains memorabilia such as a telephone exchange and other items from daily life for the European inhabitants of Flinders. A second room contains items related to the natural history of Flinders (e.g. stuffed fauna, birds eggs, seas shells) and a third room is devoted to the Aboriginal Settlement at Wybalenna. Another shed is dedicated to the display of larger items (e.g. from shipwrecks) and a final shed is a replica of a mutton bird processing facility. While these displays are interesting, on the whole they are collections of objects with little or no interpretation for the visitor. Having such an impressive collection of objects related to the entire history of Flinders Island is certainly a good starting point for the museum, but interpretation would help make the collection relevant and accessible. Using such a collection an interesting and informative interpretation strategy can easily be built upon. It would be a lot harder to create an interpretive plan for a museum that had little or no artefacts to utilise as a starting point for the visitor experience.

For copyright reasons, photography of the displays within the Emita Museum is not permitted. It is therefore necessary to verbally describe the Aboriginal section. The room in which the Aboriginal section is housed is a very small room, perhaps two meters square at the most. A large cabinet is in one section of the room with a glass display of shell necklaces on top of it. Above the cabinet is a small card stating the history of the cultural practice of making these necklaces and how it continues amongst Aboriginal people today. The cabinet itself contains several drawers, able to be opened by the visitor, which show different examples of shell necklaces.

The walls of the Aboriginal history room hold many framed historical photographs (almost entirely black and white) of various Aboriginal families who are either descendants of those who came to live at Wybalenna or descendants of Aboriginal women and Bass Strait sealers. Brief historical notes are given on the photographs (names of families and their origins). On benches around the room a few artefacts such as a grinding stone are

displayed, and some historical photographs and maps of the Wybalenna Settlement. Little interpretation is given about these. The use of the grinding stone in the display is of particular interest as grinding stones have not been identified as part of the Tasmanian Aboriginal toolkit, but were however utilised on mainland Australia. It is likely therefore that the museum is using a 'typical' Aboriginal artefact to represent the Indigenous past, even though the artefact is not historically associated with the area. A typed extract from a book – *The Last Tasmanian Race* by James Bonwick is provided as the only limited commentary of the display. This extracts states:

'Between 1831 and 1835 George Augustus Robinson had brought in all the Aborigines that remained in Van Diemens Land (approximately 200) and had ultimately been settled at Pea Jacket Point (Wybalenna), Flinders Island, then known as Great Island. In October 1847 there were only 44 survivors. Some of these, particularly the latter, were half castes. There were 12 men, 22 women and 10 children or non adults. They were transferred to Oyster Cove, Tasmania, under the care of Superintendent Dr J Milligan in 1854. There remained only 3 men, 11 women and 2 children. In 1865, Billy Lane, the last of the male Aborigine died and only 4 women remained – Truginini the last survivor died in 1877.'

An additional note accompanies the extract stating *'James Bonwick wrote about Tasmanian Aborigines in 1870-1884. Please note the term 'half caste' is no longer acceptable.'* The Bonwick extract in some ways gives little more information on the historical background of the settlement at Wybalenna than the display at Tiagarra. The additional note however is evidence of the start of an attempt to provide additional interpretation of the history at Wybalenna. Again, there is a lot of potential at the Emata Museum, particularly with the collections that they have been able to establish, however currently that potential is not fulfilled.

What then does the actual historic site of Wybalenna have to offer in terms of interpreting the past? In addition, what is the relevance of an historic site in a chapter dedicated to 'museums'? To address the latter, recent trends in heritage interpretation have identified the concept of a 'cultural landscape'. That is, sites themselves can hold aspects of the past

and of the many cultures that may have inhabited them. Further developing this notion of a cultural landscape has been the concept of an ‘outdoor museum’, or letting the landscape and objects within it function as a traditional museum would. One way this could be done is by providing signage to help the visitor identify the significance of various sites within the specified area. Historic Houses have often been developed into museums in much the same way (the building itself is at once both a museum and an artefact, e.g. the Museum of Sydney which is both a museum and an archaeological site). Wybalenna has the potential to reveal the story of the Aboriginal people who inhabited the settlement, their ‘protectors’, and the wider story of Indigenous/ non-indigenous relations in Tasmania.

Disappointingly, Wybalenna was also a site with incredible potential to comment on the shared past, however it too gave little account as to the significance of the site. The only remaining building at the site was the chapel (see Figure 4.7). A lone card adorned the door of the chapel giving the following information to the visitor:

‘Built by convicts in 1838 from locally made bricks, this was the focal point of a settlement developed by George Augustus Robinson in an attempt to save the Tasmanian Aborigines from extinction. The settlement was abandoned in 1847 when the few remaining Aborigines were transferred to Oyster Cove, near Hobart. The Furneaux Island Group of the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania) purchased and restored this chapel as a memorial to the lost race. It was opened by Sir Stanley Burbury, K.B.E, Governor of Tasmania, on 9th June 1974.’

(Signage on Wybalenna Chapel).



Figure 3.7: Chapel at Wybalenna

As discussed previously in this chapter, there are many descendants of the Tasmanian Aborigines living on both mainland Tasmania and on the Bass Strait Islands. The sign on the door to the chapel, whilst valuable in providing an insight into the historical significance of the building, is invalid in that it is not a memorial to a forgotten race. Wybalenna has so much potential to become a site of innovative, interesting and informative interpretation about the Tasmanian past. It has the potential to challenge the still prominent attitude that there are no 'real' Tasmanian Aborigines left and to reveal the details of the shared past.

Recently, attempts have been made at Wybalenna to start this process. The attempts to reinterpret the historic site at Wybalenna have come in the form of a garden that is being established (Lennon, 2004). Currently, all that has been created in the garden at the chapel is a wooden gate and a table and bench, which was unveiled by the Tasmanian Premier, Paul Lennon, in April 2004. The significance of the gate and table is that they add to the interpretation of the building through the use of plaques and inscriptions upon them. The Garden is called the *Aunty Ida West Healing Garden*. The gate at the entrance to the garden (see Figure 3.8) offers the following explanation of the purpose of the garden – a memorial to the work of Ida West. It states *'In recognition of Aunty Ida West's contribution to the settlement of Tasmanian Aboriginal People' 'Healing the past'*. Unfortunately for the visitor, no explanation is given of who Ida West was or any depth of information about her significance to Wybalenna¹¹. However, the memorial is still effective in providing a sense that this is a significant Aboriginal site, linking the past to the present, and creating an understanding to the visitor that the history of the site lives on today. This is also aided by an inscription on the table in the garden (see Figure 3.9) which states *'It's pretty important you know, the land, it doesn't matter how small, it's something...just a little sacred site...that's Wybalenna. There was a massacre there; sad things there, but we try not to go over that. Where the bad was, we can always make it good – 1995 Aunty Ida West.'* Again, a powerful piece of writing which makes the visitor contemplate the site, and perhaps because it is very personal and the exact details as to who Ida West was and what she did remain unstated, creates a feeling of the intimacy

¹¹ Ida West (1919-2003) was the 2002 National Female Aboriginal Elder of the Year. She was a tireless leader of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people or 'Palawa'. What the Wybalenna Historic site does not reveal is that in 1999, after 20 years campaigning for its return, Wybalenna was handed back to the indigenous community. Ida West campaigned for numerous indigenous causes throughout her life. She was born on Cape Barren Island, moving to Flinders Island in the 1920s. (Women Tasmania, 2004).

Aboriginal people still feel for the site today. In terms of the site being used as an educative site for shared history, perhaps it is possible to include some of these details for the interpretation of the site away from this personal garden setting. The site could then be both an intimate memorial for those with personal attachments to the past, and a site where all Australians can learn about Tasmania's past. In terms of creating an effect of intimacy and contemplation, the concept of a garden, with a table and benches, is particularly effective as these are traditionally places of rest and contemplation. Perhaps, additional interpretation could be given either inside the chapel (which was locked and empty at the time of visiting) or at the front of the chapel. For example, small unobtrusive signs low to the ground outside the garden would be unlikely to intrude on the intimate atmosphere created inside the garden. It will be interesting to see whether further plans are made to expand the garden or interpretation at Wybalenna in general¹². For the moment, a start has been made on acknowledging the contemporary significance of the site. Whether more is done may well depend on what the community decides should be the purpose of the site. Some choices are for a memorial that ties the past to the present, but because of its isolation, its audience is largely those personally linked to the site, an educative site for shared history, or potentially both. *'Healing the past'* (Lennon, 2004) can be either a personal or collective experience.

¹² All that has been suggested at the moment is that the *'project concept has Auntie Ida's blessing and will include a range of improvements and site interpretation at Wybalenna in the spirit of 'healing the past'*. (Lennon 2004). Interpretation signs and a memorial wall at the cemetery have been mentioned however the details of what is to be interpreted remain unknown, perhaps undecided.



Figure 3.8: Aunty Ida West Healing Garden gate



Figure 3.9: Aunty Ida West Healing Garden table

Unlike the museum at Tiagarra, the Aboriginal community had the opportunity to be involved in how the past is interpreted at Wybalenna from the outset. Wybalenna could also be an interesting working example in confronting such issues as who should be involved in interpreting the Aboriginal past in Tasmania and how various perspectives of the past can be incorporated into an interpretation strategy.

3.6 The Melbourne Museum – Melbourne, Victoria

In a similar fashion to the Museum of Sydney, the Melbourne Museum has a dedicated gallery, called Bunjilaka, dealing with Aboriginal history and culture. Within this gallery, there are three main sections. The first titled 'Koori Voices', particularly focuses on the history of Victorian Aboriginal people – engaging with the recent past by investigating subjects such as '*cultural encounters, colonisation, political struggles and community histories*' and consistently emphasising '*the survival of Victorian Aboriginal people*' (Sculthorpe, 2001:77). The second section titled 'Belonging to Country' emphasises Indigenous links to the land and this continuing aspect of Aboriginal culture. The third section, 'Two Laws' tries to highlight some of the differences between Indigenous and non-indigenous cultures.

Interestingly, as Sculthorpe (2001:75) notes, Museum Victoria (the agency in control of the Melbourne Museum) is one of only two state museums in Australia to employ specialists in Aboriginal history. Museums such as the South Australian Museum have employed staff trained in archaeology and anthropology. The Melbourne Museum seems to have embraced the discipline of history to help create a gallery which emphasises the continuing occupation by Aboriginal people in Victoria, not only in a cultural sense, but as participants of historical events up to the present day. This serves to position Aboriginal people as historical actors, and avoids social Darwinist perspectives that are sometimes created through exhibitions which focus on Aboriginal culture. It stresses their decline in the face of European occupation, rather than emphasising historical change as a normal aspect of all cultures. The Melbourne Museum also takes a thematic rather than a chronological approach to the past, using '*key case studies to illustrate important themes*'

(ibid. p.78). Chronological approaches though, have their own advantages, for example, being able to present very full and detailed accounts of the past. However, these can leave a visitor feeling bombarded with historical knowledge. A thematic approach provides visitors with a framework from which they can ‘hang’ their experiences of the gallery from. It also easily enables the museum to establish a set of goals or objectives that they may want to achieve within the gallery. In the case of the Melbourne Museum, Museum Victoria established the objectives of *‘improving recognition of contemporary Indigenous cultures, enhancing awareness of Indigenous peoples’ right to self determination; and improving understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems and intellectual property rights.’* (ibid. p.77). These objectives are not ‘preached’ at the visitor but are integrated within the displays in a way which provoke thought on the issues. For example, a glass display cabinet which contains traditional objects and artefacts (thus serving to educate about traditional culture) also challenges the visitor to think about the ownership of these objects, and the ethics of display and who should be responsible for the telling of Indigenous stories. It is able to do this through the following quote which is printed on the outside of the glass: *‘We do not choose to be enshrined in a glass case, with our story told by an alien institution which has appointed itself as an ambassador for our culture – Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre 1997’*. Further interpretation is given on these important issues under the glass case. Importantly, the visitor is not directed to a set perspective but is encouraged to confront the questions asked by the display and to come up with their own conclusions. Under the topic of ‘Hunters and Collectors’, the following background is given and several issues raised:

‘Modern Museums have their origins in the 19th Century, when there was a fascination with all things ancient. Objects were collected and stories told about the past.

In Australia at that time, the stories told of the superiority of Europeans over Indigenous Australians, who were usually thought of as ‘primitive’.

As collections grew, the stories changed, as did many old ideas. Who does own the past in Australia? Who owns the objects here? Whose stories have they told?’

(Display Cabinet, Bunjilaka Gallery).

These are complex questions with many possible answers. When combined with the perspective given of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, they provide an interesting debate. Conflicting opinions like this act of displaying objects whilst commenting on whether this is in fact an appropriate thing to do are juxtaposed throughout the Bunjilaka Gallery, effectively provoking debate on the ways in which we interpret the past.

The more traditional aspects of Aboriginal culture and references from the prehistoric past are also continuously juxtaposed with references to contemporary cultural practices and the recent past. This not only highlights how cultural practices have been retained or have evolved over time, but helps to place Aboriginal society firmly in the present and provides a tool to illustrate the social impacts of policies from the past on Aboriginal people in Victoria and throughout Australia. One of the most successful juxtapositions (see Figure 3.10) is the positioning side by side of a bark canoe traditionally used for burials in the Murray River region and a *'hearse used by the Aboriginal Funeral Fund in the 1970s and 1980s to take people back to country for burials'* (Sculthorpe, 2001:78). Sculthorpe quotes this example as designed to illustrate the continuity of Aboriginal traditions, showing the continuing, yet evolving importance of funerary rights and practices to Aboriginal people. Yet it also provides a subtle commentary, without any direct interpretation, on the high death rate and poor health conditions not only in the 1970s and 80s but in many present day Aboriginal communities.



Figure 3.10: Funeral hearse and burial canoe

Technology is also effectively used within the Bunjilaka Gallery to confront visitors with conflicting interpretations of the past. One such example takes the form of a television news bulletin playing in one corner of the gallery. Aboriginal news readers present a perspective of the past at the time of European arrival in Australia. This is a particularly useful tool for non-indigenous people to be able to empathise with the experiences of Aboriginal people at the time of European occupation. Additionally, Indigenous people would probably find the presentation quite humorous. The bulletins are also able to integrate artefacts to show how they can help us interpret the past. For example, one presenter discussing the treatment of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley Region of Western Australia used a background clip of carved boab nuts which depicted chained Aboriginal prisoners. Boab nuts were carved with animals and traditional designs; but the carving practices evolved to reflect these new experiences that Aboriginal people were faced with. The headline of this news clip therefore focussed on the changing cultural practices brought on by the newcomers to the shore. Another example further on in the gallery juxtaposes Indigenous and non-indigenous perspectives of the past through the use of two characters speaking side by side on video screens. They were Baldwin Spencer, a non-indigenous man living in Alice Springs in the 1900s, and Irrapmwe, an Aboriginal man also from Alice Springs at that time (Sculthorpe, 2001:78). Signage at the display states that *'the dialogue imagines how these two men might view Aboriginal knowledge, law and property if they were alive today'*. The display is in the spirit of reconciliation and shows how perspectives on the past can change over time. Baldwin Spencer starts out the dialogue holding onto his old views and through conversing with Irrapmwe, he gradually changes his understanding of the past and how his views approach those of Irrapmwe.

The Bunjilaka Gallery is a very impressive example of how Indigenous history and the shared Australian past can be presented. Being contained in a separate gallery however, means that some visitors may choose to by-pass that gallery in favour of other sections of the museum. It also tends to categorise Indigenous history as totally separate from general Australian history. It was important to establish, therefore, how Indigenous history is or is not integrated into the rest of the Melbourne Museum. Unlike the Museum of Sydney, attempts have been made to be inclusive of Indigenous voices, where relevant, throughout the Museum. This is particularly evident in the upstairs section of the museum in the Australia Gallery. The opening display of the gallery, *'Windows on Victoria: Eight*

Moments in Victoria's History selects eight events to represent snapshots of Victoria's past. The first exhibit in the display features *'black perspectives on black and white cultures and white perspectives on black culture'* (Australia Gallery Signage). From the very beginning therefore, Aboriginal perspectives are seen as one way in which the past can be viewed. Importantly, the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in the display is not forced. When the perspectives are not necessarily relevant, for example in the third exhibit within the display on the history of railways, an Indigenous perspective is not included. In the final exhibit representing the Bicentenary, Indigenous perspectives are included as they are very relevant to this event. References to Aboriginal culture and perspectives are also found in other sections of the Australia Gallery, such as in the section dealing with sport and in particular AFL. This illustrates a successful attempt at not only covering Aboriginal history in some detail (in the Bunjilaka Gallery) but a museum which is attempting to present the validity of including Aboriginal perspectives in the presentation of the Australian past.

3.7 The Johnny Mullagh Cricket Centre and Museum - Harrow, Victoria

The final case study in this chapter on museums, the Johnny Mullagh Cricket Centre and Museum, was officially opened in March 2004. The museum tells the story of the first cricket team from Australia to tour England. This team, entirely made up of Aboriginal players, visited England in 1868. Johnny Mullagh was well known as the 'star' of the team and went on to play cricket as a professional. However, he never played internationally again. During his career and until the present day, Johnny Mullagh has continually been hailed as the 'Hero of Harrow' (Johnny Mullagh Cricket Centre, 2004). The establishment of this museum at Harrow is indicative of the incredibly innovative local community that has developed within the town. Harrow is a small town in Western Victoria. Yet, through the formation of the Harrow Promotion and Development Group, it has developed successful tourism ventures like the Harrow Sound and Light Show (the profits from which helped establish the Johnny Mullagh Cricket Centre) and other events which attract visitors to the town such as the 'Beaut Blokes' weekends which are designed to help aid rural living singles find partners (Harrow Promotion and Development Group, n.d.).

The museum is surprisingly both professional and reasonably large for a small rural town. It has three main sections: the first representative of Harrow and Victoria, the second representative of the ship, ‘Parramatta’ on which the cricketers travelled to England, and the third representative of the team’s time in England. The signage and displays, in contrast for example to the Erita Museum¹³, are professionally designed (see Figure 3.11). Figure 3.11 also illustrates the pluralist approach to shared history that the museum takes. Through this sign, the museum establishes Harrow from the very beginning as a town with multiple stories. The story of Johnny Mullagh is set out as the focal point of the museum but along with it is the story of the other Aboriginal cricketers as part of the story of Harrow and indeed Australia.

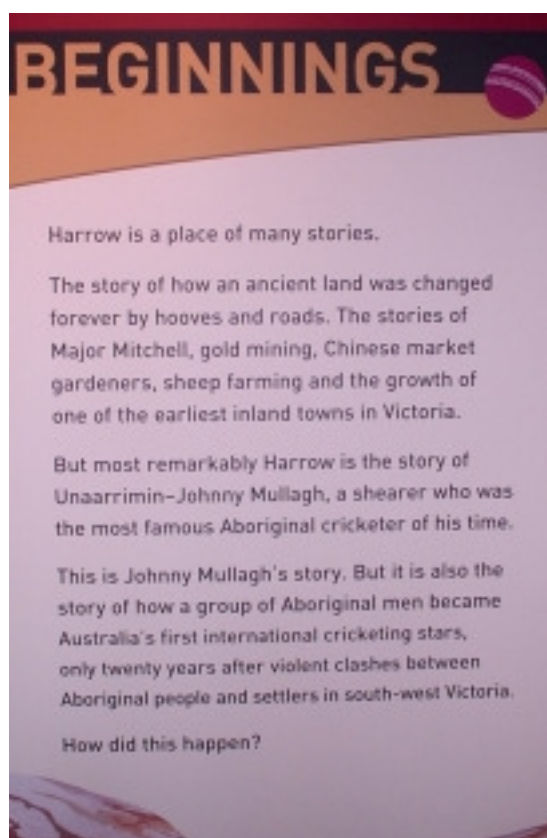


Figure 3.11: Sign at the entrance to the Johnny Mullagh Cricket Centre and Museum

¹³ Flinders Island has a far greater population than Harrow. However, the spirit of innovation evident at Harrow along with successful applications for substantial funding have meant that the product established at Harrow rivals the quality seen in the big state museums such as the Melbourne Museum.

The first section of the museum is grounded with the introduction of historical details of the Indigenous prehistory of the Harrow area and the '*ancestors of the Aboriginal cricket team*'. The signage then goes on to tell the story of European contact, noting that Aboriginal resistance to European occupation was particularly strong in Western Victoria and that '*both settlers and Aboriginal people died violently during 'guerrilla wars*'. The story is told of how local European settlers used to play cricket on Saturday afternoons and the Aborigines, often employed on the stations (though usually either unpaid or paid less than fellow non-indigenous labourers), watched on, throwing back the odd ball. The European settlers soon realising the natural skill many Aborigines held for the game. Station owners began to coach Aboriginal men in cricket and the beginnings of a team was formed.

A range of interpretive displays are used at the museum. Largely, the story is told through signage but interactive displays in particular target children to help them enjoy the museum experience (see Figure 3.12). Other examples of interactive displays include sections of the museum where batting and bowling techniques can be practised. There are novel displays such as walking through the hull of the ship to represent the journey of the cricketers to England. Photographic displays and reproductions of historic documents feature throughout and add a sense of authenticity or historical weight to the displays. Little quirky tales about various members of the touring team and other cricket anecdotes also capture the visitor's attention. Figure 3.13 provides an excellent example of this by telling the tale of a later Aboriginal cricketer, Eddie Gilbert, who bowled Donald Bradman, Australia's cricketing 'son' for a duck (nil).



Figure 3.12: Example of an interactive display targeting children

(Questions on the doors are answered when opened)

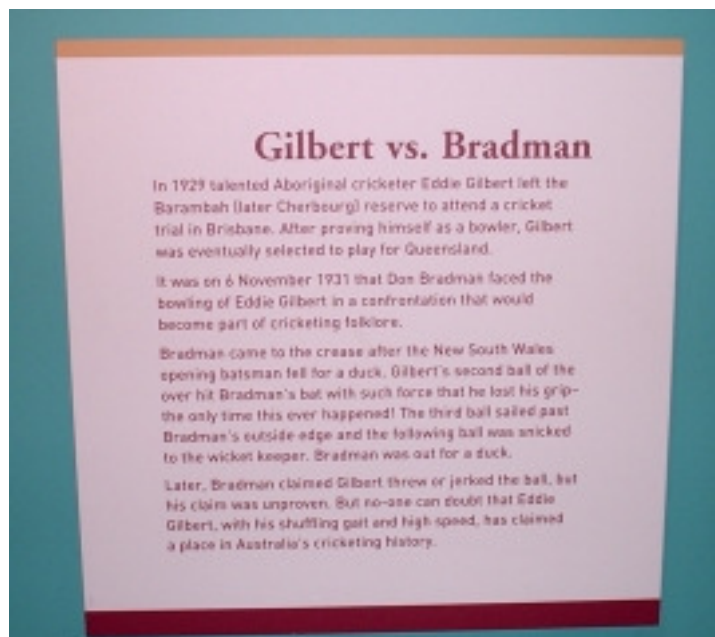


Figure 3.13: The story of Gilbert and Bradman

The displays at the museum are both entertaining and informative. They also reveal much more than the story of an international cricket tour. They allow for commentary on how non-indigenous Australians and indeed the English viewed Aboriginal people at the time. They also allow an insight into the experiences of Aboriginal people who interacted in both Indigenous and non-indigenous circles. The displays are not perfect. For example, a board listing the details of all the cricketers does not identify the localities from which they came,

a factor which would most likely be an important part of an Aboriginal person's identity at the time and even today. However, overall, they tell the stories very effectively and allow the visitor to contemplate the past. One of the last such signs comments on Johnny Mullagh's experiences in living in both the Indigenous and non-indigenous worlds. It states

'Johnny Mullagh was a man caught between two worlds. Several portraits show him in fine European dress and he greatly admired English women. On his return to Australia, he commented to Bringabert Station owner Tom Hamilton that "a white woman won't have me ...and I will never have a black one."

Signs like this leave the visitor reflecting on the impact of the past right across Australia.

3.8 Conclusions

This chapter has covered but a smattering of the museums around Australia that incorporate, or have the potential to incorporate, aspects of Australia's shared history. There are many more museums that are equally as relevant to those mentioned in the discussion here. Those that have been mentioned have been used to highlight a range of the issues museums may face when trying to comment on Australia's shared past. Some museums have met the challenges of presenting a shared past in effective and novel ways. Others still have a way to go if this is to be an end goal. Lessons can be learnt from museums that are at all these differing stages.

Sculthorpe's 2001 study analysing the presentation of the Indigenous past in a range of state museums across Australia states that *'The current level of activity in developing exhibitions relating to Indigenous peoples across Australia is probably the highest ever in Australian museum history'* (p.74). This has been combined with developments such as the employment of Indigenous staff and the appointment of Aboriginal advisory committees (ibid. p.75). In major institutions such as the National Museum of Australia, the Museum

of Sydney and the Melbourne Museum, these impacts are no doubt having a role in the presentation of Australia's shared past. The challenge remains however as to how volunteer run museums such as Emita can establish the professional interpretative programs worthy of such important historic sites to Australian history. Certainly, some grants are available but funds and resources are limited for smaller institutions. The establishment of the Johnny Mullagh Museum and Cricket Centre gives hope that with the power of innovation and strong motivation, small communities can create museums that relate the shared past in a manner that rivals that of larger institutions. The most basic point in achieving a shared representation of the past appears to be that when using a base interpretation plan that acknowledges different layers of the past, pluralities or multiple voices or perspectives, some degree of inclusiveness will be achieved in museum displays.

Chapter 4: Other Issues

4.1 Introduction

The field of heritage interpretation has a wide range of influences that impact upon it. Visitor expectations and satisfaction, for example, have continually been the subject of research in order to further improve interpretive outcomes. Aplin (2002:30) notes that heritage is by nature a social construct. *'Different people perceive and define heritage very differently depending on their educational background, previous experiences, beliefs and philosophy of life'* (ibid.). Since interpretation depends on the way in which heritage is presented, interpretation could be considered to be as subjective as heritage. As Aplin writes, *'no presentation of material is objective or value-free'* (op. cit.). Despite its subjectivity, interpretation is an important tool and, indeed, often it is this subjectivity that is able to provoke responses in visitors. In his famous work *Interpreting Our Heritage*, Tilden writes that interpretation is far more than imparting the basic facts or information, interpretation should include information. However, he states that interpretation is *'revelation based on information'* and not information itself (Tilden, 1977:9). Further, Tilden explores the subjectivity of interpretation when he states that *'The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation'* (ibid.). Provocation, as Tilden refers to it, aims to stimulate the visitors to broaden their perspectives and acknowledge different perspectives in order to truly engage with the multiple stories and values that can be present at heritage sites. For example, some visitors to historic or heritage sites will have little or no knowledge of the value of these sites to those who wish to preserve them. By presenting the different perspectives on both the history and value of sites, interpretation allows for the dissemination of multiple perspectives of information.

Interpreters must be aware not only of the subjective nature of interpretation, but of other external influences. This is in order to ensure that interpretation is as inclusive as possible. This thesis argues that, ideally, interpretation should allow the visitor to confront an array of opinions on sites rather than one fixed ideology or story. An interpreter needs to consider the full spectrum of visitors to the site who may constitute his/her audience. There may be people of non-English speaking background, people with disabilities, Indigenous

Australians, children and the elderly all accessing a site. The way in which each of these would approach interpretative strategies at sites needs to be considered. Often, and this is particularly the case when dealing with the interpretation of contemporary Indigenous history, interpretation programs assume they are targeting a non-indigenous audience who need to be 'educated' about the reality of Australia's treatment in the past of its Indigenous peoples. Speaking at a Visiting Scholars Program at the Australian National University in 2002, Heather Goodall revealed that on a guided heritage tour of Brewarrina in NSW, many of those attending the tour were actually Aboriginal people who had lived in the town. They in fact knew more about some aspects of the area's history than the guide. A similar occurrence took place on an Aboriginal Tour of Yass in 2003 where many of the participants were, in fact, Aboriginal. Acknowledging the diversity of the audience of interpretation programs is therefore crucial for programs like these to effectively involve their audiences.

Consideration of the audience and ensuring a wide range of perspectives are portrayed within interpretation programs, along with avoiding an artificially simple approach of presenting one set story line, are themes that will continue to be explored in later chapters (as will a range of other factors influencing the effectiveness of interpretation programs). The focus of this chapter is to introduce a number of key external influences on interpretation that heritage practitioners and interpreters ought to be aware of. The issues engaged with will include the relationships Australians hold to place, the role of environmental impact assessment in the identification (or lack of identification) of sites of shared history (and in particular 'contact' sites), the issue of dual naming and the rise of alternative methods of interpretation such as heritage trails. These represent a move away from institutional interpretation such as those programs found in museums and historic houses to the interpretation of whole landscapes. It should be noted that these subjects in no way form a definitive list of influences on heritage interpretation. They are, however, particularly current issues and are therefore appropriate to engage with at this time.

4.2 Australian Associations with Place

Green (1999:155) argues that one of the challenges facing interpreters today is the incorporation of spirituality into interpretation programs. Green quotes Dai Rees, stating that scientific discoveries have continually undermined traditional belief systems with the search for the 'truth' being conducted in an academically reductionist manner (ibid.). As a result, '*interpreters... are faced with the enormous challenge of being part of a tide turning process of tapping into the vestigial remnants of human spirituality.*' (op. cit.). Of course, as Green notes, the meaning of spirituality differs from person to person and can include '*poetic, dramatic, artistic, musical, cultural, religious and other holistic perceptions.*' (op. cit.). The incorporation of aspects of Australian spirituality in heritage interpretation in all its forms, is something that this thesis embraces. The conception of history, as not a linear series of facts, but rather the amalgamation of different opinions and experiences of the past, acknowledges spirituality as it does any other element of humanity.

Particularly relevant to heritage interpretation is research that has been emerging in the past few years dealing with associations with place by Australians. Often these relationships are labelled as spiritual in nature. However, it is important to acknowledge that relationships to place need not be spiritual. One researcher who has particularly focused on the relationships that Australians have to place is Professor Peter Read of the Australian National University, Canberra. Read has produced a series of three books – *Returning to Nothing* (1996), *Belonging* (2000) and most recently *Haunted Earth* (2003a). All explore different facets of Australians relationship with places. *Belonging*, focuses on how non-indigenous Australians relate to places given their knowledge of the strong attachment Indigenous Australians have had to them in the past (and often continue to hold today). *Returning to Nothing* examines peoples' relationships with places that have been 'lost' to them in some way – destroyed whether accidentally or intentionally. Finally, *Haunted Earth* analyses Australians connections with inspirited places. Read's work forms a useful platform from which to examine sites of shared history in Australia. These sites, by definition, are sites that hold significance for both Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. Sometimes that significance is easily pinpointed but sometimes one or both layers of significance may not yet be revealed. Information from interviews that Read

conducted for his book *Belonging* (2000), show that non-indigenous Australians often felt that a large proportion of the significance of many sites in Australia was generated by the fact that they contained a reminder of the Indigenous past. Many non-indigenous Australians often had somewhat romantic attachments to the land as it seemed to echo the unspoken stories of the past wherever they looked. They identify a kind of omnipresent Indigenous spirituality in the land or believed the land holds the memory of the past.

Another scholar whose work addresses this theme is Mark McKenna, author of *Looking for Blackfella's Point: An Australian History of Place*, published in 2002. McKenna attempts to reveal the hidden Indigenous history of the South East corner of NSW. McKenna (2002:9) also points out this willingness of many non-indigenous Australians to accept an Indigenous past as being an integral part of the 'bush' or the 'land' but notes that the urban environment has often erased the visibility of the Indigenous past so much so that non-indigenous Australians fail to see Indigenous layers of significance in the urban environment. Essentially, McKenna is arguing that it is far easier for non-indigenous Australians to acknowledge a 'shared history' in rural or natural settings than it is in the urban environment.

Heritage interpretation in Australia has evolved to acknowledge this Indigenous spirituality that is sensed in the natural or rural landscape. Histories that are incorporating Aboriginal prehistory or heritage interpretation have usually adopted this practice also. Interviewed as part of the social research for this study, Interviewee 3 (who is employed in cultural heritage research) described this as a '*secessionist sort of model where white people see themselves in any particular area as taking over from Aboriginal people... and their presence afterwards is sort of negated.... It's obviously a really old pattern in local history writing... and...something similar happens in heritage work.*' This thesis aims to challenge the accepted norm of including Aboriginal history in interpretation exclusively in this 'secessionist' way.

Interviewee 13, an Indigenous person employed in Aboriginal heritage identification and management, revealed that it is only in relatively recent times that any real acknowledgement of the need for general heritage agencies and organizations (e.g. agencies and organizations which were not formulated with a specific mandate to protect

Indigenous heritage but rather heritage in general such as the National Trust or in NSW the Heritage Office) to cater for the management and interpretation of Indigenous heritage sites has come about. The Heritage Office of NSW, for example has only recently employed 2 Aboriginal Heritage Officers (to cover the entire state). Interviewee 13 stated that *'The (NSW) Heritage Council took until 1997 to realise that it needed to look at Aboriginal Heritage'* and that the Heritage Council of Victoria *'have only really just kicked off their Aboriginal Heritage Unit'*. The result is a slow process of an acknowledgement of not only traditional or prehistoric Indigenous heritage by these agencies but also historic Indigenous heritage. According to Interviewee 13, in NSW, the State Heritage Register has a listing of some 1600 European Heritage sites and 4 Aboriginal ones. Hopefully, with increased recognition of Indigenous heritage within these agencies, this ratio will gradually be balanced out. However, this need not equate to a numerical balance of site listings, but rather a listing process which acknowledges both Indigenous and non-indigenous perspectives on all sites where this is relevant. Of concern is the approach taken to the identification, management and interpretation of sites of shared history currently within the NSW Heritage Office. At the present time, the Aboriginal Heritage Officers deal exclusively with sites of purely Indigenous significance. The other European Heritage Officers are therefore left to deal with sites of shared significance. Interviewee 13 believed that the gradual process of cross cultural awareness training of the European Heritage Officers was helping to ensure that they did consider Aboriginal significance when examining sites and that they were more willing to approach Indigenous communities regarding sites rather than automatically placing such cross cultural negotiations in the 'too hard basket'. Interviewee 13 believed that cross cultural awareness training should be necessary for all staff in heritage organizations if appropriate approaches to interpreting shared heritage are to be created. This may mean the employment of more Aboriginal Heritage officers to help facilitate this and, arguably, the employment of Aboriginal Heritage Officers to help in the process of the identification, management and interpretation of sites of shared history, and not just purely Indigenous history, should be facilitated.

Recognising the shared history of sites is firmly fixed in the *Burra Charter*, Australia's "Bible" for Heritage professionals. Article 13 of the 1999 *Burra Charter* addresses the 'Co-existence of cultural values' in sites and the concept of 'Cultural Landscapes' where

broad regions are acknowledged to have cultural significance. It has been enthusiastically adopted in Australia to describe many traditional Indigenous heritage sites such as Uluru. Despite these trends, there is still a general absence of an acknowledgment of any form of shared history at urban heritage sites. Two histories, with very little overlap are most commonly presented: an Indigenous history prior to white occupation, and a colonial history. The *Burra Charter* provides the principle of acknowledging multiple layers in all sites. However, until the convention of including only Aboriginal stories from the prehistoric period is broken, and broken regularly, interpreters will fall into the normative habit of seeing an acknowledgment of a site's prehistory as being 'inclusive' interpretation. Guidelines for the interpretation section of the *Burra Charter* do have the potential to amend this situation but only if they directly address the concept of shared history in urban places.

A further difficulty caused by dominant, non-indigenous perspectives fixing Indigenous significance in natural and rural settings has complicated the field of interpretation through the relationship that interpreters have with the traditional and non-traditional ¹⁴owners of an area. Traditional owners are often judged as the only Indigenous people who need to be consulted regarding heritage studies as they are seen as the custodians of the 'real' (prehistoric) history of an area. Non-traditional owners (sometimes self identified as 'historicals') can reveal a great deal about the post-contact history and heritage of an area and are arguably as much custodians of this post-contact history as anyone else. Non-traditional owners are also more than capable of holding strong attachments to country that is not traditionally their own because of historical circumstances. Sometimes it is all they have grown up knowing. This distinction between traditional and non-traditional owners has perhaps been exacerbated by the legal system and native title which rightly acknowledges the rights of traditional owners. Non-traditional owners are often overlooked but have just as much right to be spokespeople for the area's history and heritage.

An important question when considering the relationships non-indigenous Australians hold to places within Australia, centres around the idea of appropriation. The feelings of

¹⁴ As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, non-traditional owners (or 'historicals') refers to indigenous people who live and/or have grown up in particular areas but are not descended from Aboriginal groups who occupied these areas prior to white occupation. Non-traditional owners have often settled in these areas as a result of historical processes eg. being moved onto missions or reserves outside country towns or when seeking employment in difficult times.

attachment, particularly to natural or rural landscapes, is influenced by an underlying sense that they contain the essence of an Indigenous past. Is this a kind of cultural appropriation of Indigenous ways of belonging to the land by non-indigenous Australians? Do non-indigenous Australians need to develop their own unique ways of belonging? Byrne (1996) argues that the dominant place that non-indigenous Australians have given to the prehistoric Indigenous past in Australia, has been in order to create a sense of 'deep time' and a cultural identity associated with the enduring Indigenous occupation of the land. McKenna (2002) seems to acknowledge that this appropriation has occurred but believes that there are other alternatives for non-indigenous Australians. He states that:

'I am not one who believes 'the land' is the only source of spiritual belonging in Australia. Nor do I believe that non Aboriginal Australians can or should seek to appropriate an Aboriginal way of belonging to the land. We should try to understand, but we should also accept that there are some things we do not understand. This is part of learning to accept cultural difference.'

(McKenna, 2002:8).

Perhaps the value that non-indigenous Australians place on the land because of their sense of the Indigenous past that it reveals, could be interpreted as an underlying respect for Indigenous connections to land, rather than an attempt to recreate this attachment in their own relationships. Read's (2000) research interviewing many non-indigenous Australians, reveals the range of ways people can relate to place. Many questions about Australian relationships to place will remain unanswered. It is impossible to provide a definitive answer as to whether non-indigenous attachments to place that are strengthened by the Indigenous connections of the past qualifies as appropriation. It may differ from individual to individual and place to place. However, what can be argued is that highlighting the contemporary presence of Indigenous people and their continuing relationships to place can broaden non-indigenous conceptions of place. This may lead to a greater understanding of our nations past and help contribute to changing the way all Australians conceive of the present. It will also aid the acceptance of the multiple voices and values to be found in Australia today.

4.3 The Influence of Environmental Impact Assessment

The development process in Australia and in particular in NSW, may have contributed to the dominance of *prehistoric* Aboriginal history in heritage interpretation. It has been argued that the identification of Aboriginal heritage sites within Australia is largely the result of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. Essentially, property developers are required by law to employ archaeological consultants to conduct site surveys in order to determine if there are any sites of Aboriginal significance on the land. Many archaeologists in Australia have a background in prehistoric, rather than historic, archaeology which arguably influences the nature of Aboriginal heritage sites that are identified. An archaeologist trained to identify pre-contact sites is far more likely to identify pre-contact than post-contact sites (Byrne, 2002).

There is an argument that if these archaeologists were also trained in the identification of contemporary historic sites or if other specialists were brought in to the EIA process, the identification of sites of contemporary Indigenous heritage would increase and so too would the interpretation of these sites. Interviewee 3, a cultural heritage researcher, noted that there was however a recently developing trend towards what he labelled '*social archaeology*' in universities which was resulting in an increasing interest in post-contact archaeology when students moved into the workplace. Both Interviewee 3 and 4, having observed the field of EIA and archaeology in NSW felt that the training background of archaeologists in NSW played a large role in affecting the type of Indigenous heritage sites identified. Interviewee 3 also acknowledged that legislation in NSW did not exclude post-contact Aboriginal heritage (and so was not a key cause of this trend). However, he noted that '*all the Aboriginal heritage legislation in the country is very fabric orientated. It's very relic's sort of orientated. And there you come upon - you come up against the problem – it's the combination of that relic's focus I think and the growth of the impact assessment area from about 1980.*' Interestingly, Interviewee 4 (also a heritage researcher) who originally came from Western Australia, noticed a different trend there where EIA tended to be dominated by anthropologists. He felt that there was:

'a much heavier focus on ethnographic sites. Again it's related partially to the wording of the state heritage legislation. And you can effectively list any place that Aboriginal people lived at on the Aboriginal sites register in WA. So it's not as heavily focused on – there doesn't have to be anything there for it to be a site. Where as here it is much more focused on relics. So it's different there – the system has a different kind of dynamic but it is much more focused on 'traditionalness' in some ways and that's the kind of anthropological equivalent to what happens here in terms of archaeology'

(Interviewee 4).

The training background of a professional would therefore seem to be having some impacts on the area. What this thesis recommends is the encouragement of both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in heritage identification and interpretation to help counter these trends. In NSW, for example, the heritage field appears to be dominated by architects and archaeologists. 'Positions vacant' consistently require a degree in archaeology or architecture. Historians, sociologists, geographers and a wide range of other disciplines have the potential to contribute significantly in this field but are excluded. As Interviewee 3 noted, *'I'm certainly arguing for historians in a sense to be allowed in. It's an amazingly closed shop.'* The *Burra Charter* states that multiple layers of significance need to be acknowledged but, until professionals in the area are able to see beyond Aboriginal inclusion in those layers amounting to more than a description of the prehistory, true multiplicity of significance will not be acknowledged. By giving breadth to the ways in which heritage is studied, interdisciplinarity may help identify these hidden layers of significance.

4.4 Dual Naming

There are many ways in which Indigenous voices have been excluded in Australia. One example of this is in the naming of place. Many Australian place names are derived from

Aboriginal words¹⁵ but there are still places of Indigenous significance within Australia that only carry a European name. In recent years some places have had their Indigenous name restored. One of the most famous examples of this is Uluru. The rock was named Ayers Rock by the explorer William Gosse. He visited the area in July 1873 and named it after Henry Ayers, then Governor of South Australia (Wilkins, 2003). The area was established as Ayers Rock/Mount Olga National Park in 1958 but it was not until 1977 that it was renamed Uluru National Park. The land was officially returned to its traditional owners in 1985. Uluru has since been placed on the World Heritage List and the title Kata Tjuta was also added to the National Parks name (Frysinger, 2003). It is an important exercise to consider how the traditional owners of the area – the Anangu people - would have felt when an area having an incredible cultural importance to them was allotted the name of a European governor.

The issue of dual naming has become prominent in heritage circles. One of the proposals listed in the *2002 Plan of Management for Botany Bay National Park* to readdress the lack of an Indigenous interpretation of place at Botany Bay National Park is the dual naming of the site. It will be called Kamay Botany Bay National Park (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 2002). This issue will be briefly discussed further in Chapter 6. However, ‘Kamay’ is the accepted Indigenous name for the bay arrived at after consensus in community meetings. Attempts such as this to re-address Indigenous meanings in place, particularly in areas that are heavily vested with non-indigenous significance and dominated by non-indigenous interpretations of place, should be encouraged and emulated. Readdressing how the significance of Botany Bay is portrayed is particularly crucial because of the area’s status (valid or not) as the ‘birthplace’ of modern Australia.

In NSW, the first nomination to the Geographical Names Board for a dual name was Dawes Point/Tar-ra (Geographical Names Board of New South Wales, 2002). This was in response to legislation by the NSW Government encouraging the dual naming of geographical features in NSW (ibid.). Cultural features such as suburbs or localities are not however eligible for dual names. Most states and territories now have policies allowing for either dual naming or at the very least recognition of Indigenous names (Clark, 1994:36).

¹⁵ Clark (1994:33) notes that approximately 70% of the 4 million place names in Australia have an indigenous ‘*origin or inspiration*’. This is an indication of the early policies of utilising indigenous names where possible after European settlement.

Tasmania appears to be the only state that has no written policy on the use of Indigenous names (ibid.).

Two well-known examples of the early dual naming movement were in the Flinders Ranges in South Australia (in the mid 1980s) and more recently in the Grampians region in Victoria (initiated in the late 1980s and early 1990s). Interestingly, the Grampians case did not commence as an attempt to establish dual names but rather the renaming of significant Indigenous sites in the Grampians that had previously been given non-indigenous names (e.g. rock art sites) and sites that had inappropriate non-indigenous names (such as 'Blackfellow Rock') with one Indigenous name (Clark, 1994:37). Initial research and consultation was centred around the Indigenous community which gave its unanimous support. However, when consultation was extended to the non-indigenous community, an opposing faction developed. The 'Grampians Support Group' did not oppose the addition of the Indigenous names so much as the removal of European names in the area (ibid. p.38.). In 1990, the Brambuk community (the local Indigenous community) suggested the compromise of dual naming of features within the Grampians area (ibid.). The Brambuk community felt the advantages in dual naming were that there would be little confusion in identifying features if the previous non-indigenous names were retained (particularly relevant for emergency services) but perhaps most interesting of all was that dual naming allowed *'an honest acknowledgement of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial realities in Australia'* (Peckham, 1992:51). Dual naming allowed the multiple layers of the areas history to be acknowledged simultaneously.

Dual naming is just one issue that Australians may need to consider in our re-examination of our interpretation of place. As a society, we need to start examining the nature of our relationship with the land and acknowledging the many layers of significance that sites contain. Australians seem to be embracing protocols such as incorporating a welcome to country from traditional owners at important ceremonial occasions. This is just one way that the alternative layers of significance that are present in Australian places can be acknowledged. Non-indigenous Australians in particular need to realise that often the sites valued by them are the same sites that are valued by Indigenous People. As B J Cruse, an Aboriginal officer with the Land Council in Eden, *'If you want to know where our sites are just look around you', he said, 'we like the same spots you do.'* (Cruse in McKenna,

2002:4-5). In response to a question regarding dual naming during the sitting of Parliament in 2001, the Member for Granville, The Hon. Kim Yeadon, indicated the symbolic importance of the move by the NSW Government in adopting a Dual Naming Policy. He stated: *'Names are powerful things: they express identity, reflect relationships and convey value. Naming allows us to acknowledge, remember, and speak of things that matter to us'* (NSW Hansard, 2001). Mr Yeadon went on to outline that dual naming respected both Indigenous and non-indigenous traditions. He argued that it would *'not only recognise and celebrate the unique link that Aboriginal people have with land and water, it will enhance the cultural heritage of New South Wales for everybody, adding an additional layer of meaning and significance to many of our favourite places.'* (ibid.). Dual naming is yet another means of interpreting Australia's heritage. It doesn't add additional layers to sites however as Mr Yeadon suggests but merely reveals a site's Indigenous significance, an aspect of the nation's history which otherwise remains hidden. It is interesting to note the range of opinions on the issues of dual naming. Opinions of interviewees for this study ranged from seeing dual naming as one of the best ways to illustrate Australia's shared history, a process that should be implemented more regularly (e.g. Interviewees 13, 12, 11, 3, 4 and 1) to something that was seen as a tokenistic gesture of acknowledgment of the Indigenous past (Interviewee 9).

4.5 Heritage Tracks and Trails

Heritage tracks and trails are *'an increasingly popular means of promoting an area's heritage'* (Galt, 1995:1). Usually heritage trails link together significant heritage places in a town or region by some sort of route – this could be a purpose built track, a brochure which outlines relevant streets to investigate, a series of plaques to follow or some other means of linking multiple sites together. Heritage trails can be both guided or self guided (ibid.). Interestingly, heritage trails are increasingly being used to highlight Indigenous heritage. Currently, rural towns such as Benalla in Victoria are establishing heritage trails which help display both the European and Aboriginal heritage of the area (The Crossing Place Implementation Group, n.d.). Ulladulla, a town on the south coast of New South Wales has also recently developed a similar trail (Dunn, 2003). The Ulladulla Trail was developed specifically to tell both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal history of the South

Coast but to do this from an Aboriginal perspective (ibid.). Western Australia has developed many such trails to give a statewide picture of their heritage. This feat was made possible with the use of Bicentennial Grant money (Heritage Council of Western Australia, 1998a). Although many of the trails do outline both the Indigenous and non-indigenous history of the areas they describe (e.g. Heritage Council of Western Australia, 1998b, 1998c), one trail in particular stands out as a fine example of the interpretation of Western Australia's shared history. This trail is the Pigeon Heritage Trail in the West Kimberley Region of Western Australia (ibid.).

This trail tells the story of Jandamarra, an Aboriginal man also known as Pigeon, who during his lifetime established a reputation as an outlaw in the West Kimberley Region and is now looked upon as a heroic figure within the Aboriginal Resistance Movements of the colonial past. As a youth, he worked as a shearer and horseman and gained the reputation of being the best stockman in the district. However, after he was initiated when he was 15, he chose to live a more traditional lifestyle and did not return to his positions (Heritage Council of Western Australia, 1998a:3). Involved in spearing sheep, he was arrested but was not imprisoned as other Aboriginal prisoners were because his stock skills proved a valuable asset to police. Instead he was drafted into their service for 2 years (ibid. p.4). He returned to work on a property for a period. Interestingly, he was banished from the Indigenous community for continually violating traditional laws (ibid. p.6). In many ways he was a figure caught between Indigenous and non-indigenous worlds. Jandamarra became part of a highly regarded tracking team until (having captured some blood relatives and members of his own tribe) he shot P.C Richardson who was in charge of the tracking team and released the prisoners (ibid.). He may have been provoked into the attack by the news brought by his tribesmen of stock being moved out of Derby to establish new stations and by stories revealing the cruel treatment that many Aborigines were receiving. He retreated into the ranges, gathering forces to form a resistance network, aiming to ambush the party moving stock from Derby. Jandamarra was a particularly effective leader, having knowledge of police operations and access to guns. Ultimately he was shot by police. As the brochure for the heritage trail states, it could be seen as a defeat because pastoralists continued to occupy the Kimberley. However, *'the remaining Bunuba people and their descendants remained strong and proud of their heritage, compelled to*

keep their culture intact and alive. The spirit of Jandamarra, therefore, lives on.' (Heritage Council of Western Australia, 1998a).

As well as telling the story of Jandamarra/Pigeon, the trail attempts to reveal the general atmosphere of Indigenous/non-indigenous relations in the West Kimberley Region in the 1890s. It reveals stories such as Aboriginal prisoners working in chain gangs, the utilisation of the boab tree as a prison (the boab tree has a large hollow which was utilised by police when transporting prisoners overnight)¹⁶ to show the circumstances of Aboriginal prisoners and it tries to give a picture of the tension that existed in this period. Thousands of sheep were being speared and landholders were pleading with the Government to outlaw Aborigines coming onto their land. The Government was not willing to do this however and extra police were sent to the area. The trail also tries to put non-indigenous reaction to Aborigines within the context of Social Darwinism. Admirably, the interpretation also stresses the ambiguity of many of the relationships between Indigenous and non-indigenous people at the time (Heritage Council of Western Australia, 1998a:5). Aborigines who speared sheep were hunted ruthlessly and yet the skills of Aboriginal stockman were arguably essential to the success of the pastoral industry. Above all, the Pigeon Heritage Trail is an example of successful interpretation because it does not attempt to give a 'concrete' portrayal of the facts of history. The *'trail does not aim to present the final story, but rather an impression of the relationship between Europeans and Aborigines in the West Kimberley during the 1890s.'* (Heritage Council of Western Australia, 1998a:3). Visitors to the trail are presented with multiple perspectives and are therefore able to form their own opinions of the events of the time.

Aboriginal Heritage Walks have also been established in both the Sydney and Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens (Whitton, 2000). The Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens is a significant historic site for local Indigenous people. Not only was the site a traditional meeting place for the local Bunurong and Woiwurrung people it is also a significant site of post-contact history being the place where Melbourne's first Aboriginal Mission was

¹⁶ As part of honours research conducted in Wyndham, WA, the indigenous interviewees revealed alternate perspectives regarding the accepted historical wisdom of prison trees in the Kimberley. The tale commonly told is that Aboriginal prisoners were imprisoned within the hollow in the tree overnight on multi-day trips to take them to the nearest Kimberley gaol. Aboriginal perspectives of the prison trees revealed the belief that prisoners were actually chained to the outside of the tree while their police custodians slept in the dry hollow (away from monsoonal rains and mosquitos).

established two years after the founding of the city (ibid.). Further, it is a walk that aims to promote reconciliation by revealing aspects of the past, and also by providing employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people. Whitton (2000) notes one unusual feature of the walk, stating *'It's a walk with a difference. No trail is mapped out and there are no markings. So if you go to the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens looking for the walk you won't see anything!'* The walk essentially relies on guides to reveal the heritage experience. When delivered effectively, this method of interpretation is particularly powerful (Williams and Brennan, 1999), enabling the guide to reach out and relate to people on a personal level, communicating experiences of the past and revealing the relevance of the past to today. Also, many sites of shared history do not contain any obvious relics from the Indigenous past. The use of a guide in such sites can stimulate the visitors senses so they can effectively recreate the past using their imagination. Guided walks can therefore provide a solution to sites where, on the surface, it may appear there is 'nothing to interpret'.

Unlike the Melbourne Gardens, the Sydney Gardens incorporate some permanent displays. In particular, the Cadi Jam Ora (translated as 'I am in Cadi' – the local Indigenous name for the area) display (Hinkson, 2001:8). The display is essentially a garden which visually depicts the history from pre-contact times. It attempts to reconstruct what the landscape may have looked like and contrasts this with a display which illustrates land clearing for agriculture when the British arrived (ibid. p.9). Like Melbourne, the Sydney Gardens are also a significant Indigenous site. A bora ring lies under the ground within the gardens, indicating that the site was once used for initiation (ibid. p.10). Interpretation of the site focuses on the first three years of contact relations between local Indigenous people and the British colonisers (ibid. p.9).



Figure 4.1: A Guide on the Aboriginal Heritage Walk at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne pauses to explain an aspect of the areas Aboriginal history

The Fremantle Aboriginal Heritage walk is another walk which aims to reveal the often hidden Indigenous past of an urbanised area. The walk focuses on the historic waterfront precinct of Fremantle, an area that was probably exclusively interpreted for its non-indigenous historic value in the past. The walk does address the prehistory of the Fremantle region to give background to walk participants, however the main focus is on the experience of the Nyoongar people after the arrival of the British. In particular, the guided walk reveals another side to the history of one of Fremantle's historic buildings, 'The Round House', which housed Aboriginal prisoners before they were taken to Rottnest Island. The story of Yagan, an Aboriginal resistance leader is also told in detail (Department of Conservation and Land Management, n.d.). Again, no signs or plaques are incorporated on the route that is taken for the walk, the interpretation relying solely on the skills of Indigenous guides. Attending the walk in 2001, I found the interpretation given by the young female guide who took a group of approximately 10 non-indigenous visitors around Fremantle to be particularly powerful. As a guide, she was able to impart the history with passion, gaining the groups interest in the past and targeting their senses to further involve them in the interpretation. One example of this was when interpreting the prison cells of the Round House, she involved the group by positioning all 10 in the crowded cell. She then revealed that records have indicated that up to 50 Aboriginal

prisoners had been crammed into the same cell in the past including many from different language groups. We realised that even talking to others to make sense of the situation may not have been possible. Face-to-face interpretation is particularly effective to convey such emotive experiences of the past.

Another example of an innovative heritage trail incorporating principles of shared history is the Koorie Cultural Walk at Point Addis off the Great Ocean Road in Victoria. Again, the walk incorporates relevant information about the prehistory of the local Aboriginal group. The history is then expanded to talk about both contact history (stories such as local Aboriginal relationships with William Buckley – a famous convict escapee who lived with local Aboriginal people for many, many years and is described in the walk as Victoria’s ‘Robinson Crusoe’) and the history right up until the present day. The numbers of Koorie descendants living in the Geelong-Ottoway area is given at about 1800 and an attempt is made to describe the variety and blends of traditional and contemporary lifestyles that members of this community now live. Unfortunately, like any signed walk, and particularly one on a relatively remote bush headland such as Point Addis, many of the signs have been subject to vandalism (see Figure 4.2).

A final example of a heritage walk is at Yass in New South Wales. The Yass example is particularly pertinent for the precedent it sets for community involvement. As part of an Aboriginal Heritage Walk constructed in Yass, local school children were involved in the creation of a mural to tell the history. To date, the mural has not been the target of any vandalism and remains free from graffiti. Ensuring the involvement of local children not only serves as a useful tool to help teach local history, but can engender pride in their involvement in presenting the shared past.



Figure 4.2: Sign at the beginning of the Koorie Cultural Walk, Point Addis, Victoria

4.6 Conclusions

This chapter has presented a ‘snapshot’ of some of the influences that those working in the field of heritage interpretation may need to consider in order to achieve heritage interpretation programs that are inclusive. These influences may even be external influences operating in systems that ‘feed in’ – either directly or indirectly to interpretation. The influence of EIA is one such example. Environmental Impact Assessment is a process that runs independently of heritage interpretation and yet one of its outcomes – the identification of heritage sites – may influence the frequency and type of site that is available for interpretation. Influences can also be within the field of interpretation. An example of this is the rising trend of using heritage trails to interpret larger areas or cultural landscapes by linking a series of historical sites together. As with all developing trends, interpreters need to be aware of the possible pitfalls of tracks and trails as well as the features of a trail that can be best utilised to create unique heritage

experiences. For example, signage on trails can be the target of vandalism. However, when walks are not signed, relying on a guided experience, the interpretive program can never target incidental visitors to a site. If one of the aims of an interpretive program is to help educate visitors, visitors who need to book on a guided tour are likely to be those who are already reasonably knowledgeable and curious about an area's past and thus less in need of an 'educative' experience. These visitors would probably rather be engaged with or challenged to think about the history in other ways. Face to face interpretation does have this potential, as a guide who is able to create effective interpersonal communication can be an extremely powerful interpretive tool. However, it will almost always miss targeting incidental visitors unless it is economically viable to have several full time guides available on site.

Influences on interpretation may seem relatively minor but they can also have a major effect. The issue of dual naming could be considered as one such example. What's in a name? Can it really make a difference to how people view a site? Effectively, the name given to heritage sites has the potential to influence the interpretive experience right from the beginning. The name of a site is a marker of the significance of the place. A dual or Indigenous name is an indication from the outset that this is a place of shared Indigenous and non-indigenous significance. At the 2003 Australia ICOMOS conference, when discussing the presentation of the Maori past (with particular reference to the conflict that occurred after 'settlement'), Kevin Jones highlighted the importance of marking the entrance to shared sites in some way so as to obviously 'sign' the place as a site of a shared past. This could be through the use of artwork to create an entranceway (Jones, 2003) or potentially through the use of a dual name. Consideration of influences such as dual naming when developing interpretative strategies clearly has the potential to improve heritage interpretation.