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A History of Aboriginal Illawarra, Volume 2 : Colonisation

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A History of Aboriginal Illawarra, Volume 2 : Colonisation

Abstract

Near Broulee Point, south of Batemans Bay, once stood a wooden look-out platform used for generations by Leonard Nye's family. The Dhurga were fisherfolk and through the ages they would gather to assess the seas and the weather before setting off. The job of the lookout who remained there was to signal those on the water and on the beach below about the location and direction of sea mammals and shoals of fish. Such lookout posts exist also at Hill 60 at Port Kembla and up and down the South Coast, and it is from them that people observed the passage of James Cook's ship in 1770. One of them told her granddaughter Coomee, who died at Ulladulla in 1914, all about "the first time the white birds came by". During the vessel's slow northward movement along the South Coast over eight days, heavy surf at Bulli Beach prevented a provisioning party from getting ashore on 28 April. A plaque on the roof of the bathers' pavilion at Woonona, overlooking Collins Point, commemorates this non-event.

The northern-most Dharawal clan, the Gweagal, were the first people on the east coast of the continent to meet Europeans face to face. It took several years for news, stories, songs and trade goods to travel to Illawarra from the continent's west and north coasts, so it is possible that they had heard of the half a dozen European visits that had occurred there during the previous 200 years. Over this time, a few clans absorbed a handful or two of survivors of shipwreck and piracy, and with the help of the locals, the pirate crew of William Dampier happily replenished their ship for two months at King Sound in the Kimberley. But Wik warriors, who killed nine murderous Dutch seafarers near Weipa on the Cape York Peninsula in 1606, had rebuffed all the Dutch, Spanish and French visitors particularly fiercely.

Disciplines

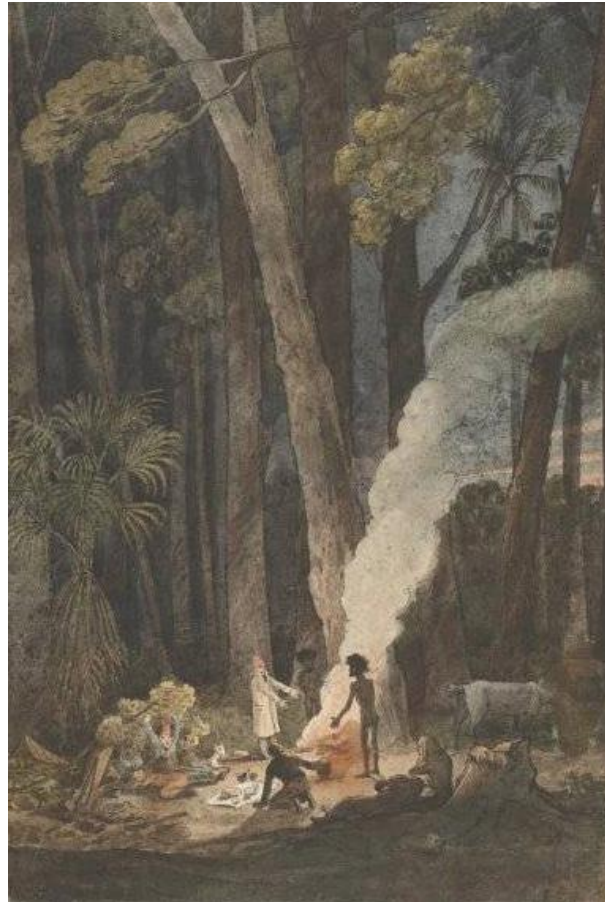
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A History of Aboriginal Illawarra Volume 2 Colonisation



Mike Donaldson, Les Bursill and Mary Jacobs

Unless you know the history, you're not going to be involved in it.

Kevin Cook

Front Cover Picture: Augustus Earle, Daybreak on the Illawarra Mountains, 1827. National Library of Australia.

Back Cover Picture: Illawarra Mercury. A May Day demonstration in Wollongong, part of a nationwide response to the cutting of services in remote communities in Western Australia in 2015. Funding was restored and increased.

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To order copies of the book, email Mary Jacobs: jacobsmary76@gmail.com

Warning: Stories, images and names of dead people in this book will cause sadness and may cause distress.

Acknowledgements and Thanks

Since the publication of *Noogaleek* nearly 20 years ago, Dharawal and Dhurga scholars have written eight histories of Illawarra, and five collections of carefully recorded memories, views and stories of about 50 people have appeared. It is this body of Aboriginal knowledge that we have relied upon in writing this story, and in adding to it, we thank its makers. Outside of Illawarra, we found the fine scholarship of Heidi Norman, Jakelin Troy and John Maynard particularly useful. Nor did we eschew the work of white historians. In particular, three very fine books by Heather Goodall, each unique, were equally invaluable.

We thank Uncle Fred Moore and Terry Fox for their support and careful reading of earlier drafts of this book, Bruce Howell, Mark Bloxsome, Barry Kelly, Karen Gough, Max Ackermann, Eileen Hayley, Joseph Davis, Richard Egan, Scott Poynting, Alastair Davidson for helpful comments, Kathleen Weekly for the indexes and Nick Southall for the layout and good advice.

Volume 1 was published in 2016 briefly covering Illawarra's Aboriginal history before colonialism. We doubt that we will be writing Volume 3, Illawarra's Aboriginal history after colonialism, but we hope those who do will find this book a useful part of its foundation, for that day will surely come.

Les Bursill, Mike Donaldson, Mary Jacobs,
Dharawal Country, December 2016.

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Table of Contents

Pictures

Dharawal Country and Environs

Dhurga Country and Environs

Strange Beings from Over the Sea 1

The Forty Year War 8

Coolangatta 19

The Gentleman's Game 21

Kings, Queens and Chiefs 25

Taking Back the Land 32

Black Diggers and the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association 41

Hill 60 45

World War Two and the Dog Licence 49

Seasonal Workers and the South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League 54

The 1967 Referendum 64

The Lands Trust and Tranby	69
Land Rights and Land Councils	75
The Stolen Generations	84
Dora and Joy Williams	91
Sandon Point	94
References	97
Indexes	109

Pictures

Captain Cook's Landing at Botany Bay AD 1770, 1865, National Library of Australia – p.2.

Sydney Parkinson, Two of the Natives of New Holland Advancing to Combat, 1770 – p.2.

Gweagal Shield Taken by Cook, British Museum – p.3.

Pemulwuy and Tedbury, Respect Unity Peace Mosaic, Gough Whitlam Park, Earlwood – p.9.

Doctor Ellis, University of Wollongong Library – p.14.

Tommy McRae and Mickey of Ulladulla, Death or Glory, 1880s, State Library of NSW – p.15.

Georgiana Lowe, Sherbrooke, 1840-50, State Library of NSW – p.17.

Coolangatta Mountain and the Estate Today – p.19.

Conrad Martens, Coolangatta Mountain, 1860 – p.20.

International Cricket Team, 1867 – p.22.

William Saddler, King Plate, 1909, Illawarra Historical Society Museum – p.25.

Charles Rodius, Portrait of Neddy Noora, Aboriginal Chief, Shoalhaven Tribe, 1834 – p.26.

King Merriman of Wallaga Lake with Neddy Noora, 1909, National Museum of Australia – p.28.

Mickey Johnson, 1896, National Portrait Gallery – p.29.

The Crowning of King Mickey Johnson at Wollongong, 1896, National Library of Australia – p.30.

Mickey Johnson, commemorative stamp, 1938 – p.31.

Wallaga Lake Reserve, 1898 – p.33.

King Merriman at a Wedding, Wallaga Lake Reserve, 1900, National Library of Australia – p.35.

Gum Leaf Band, Wallaga Lake, 1922 – p.36.

Wreck Bay Football Team 1907, Brian Egloff – p.39.

Walter Andrews, with his brothers Arthur and Thomas in WW1 – p.41.

Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association logo – p.43.

King Burruga, 1933, National Museum of Australia – p.43.

Hill 60 in World War 2, Australian War Memorial – p.46.

Hill 60 Rally, August 2006, Michael Organ – p.48.

Pearl Gibbs, Organiser for the Aboriginal Progressive Association, 1954 – p.49.

Certificate of Exemption – p.52.

Yuin Elder Max Harrison, 2015, Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness – p.53.

Mary Duroux at Wallaga Lake, 1952 – p.54.

Bean Pickers, Nowra, Wollongong City Council Library – p.55.

Members of the South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League, Canberra, 1963 – p.60.

Vote Yes, Miners' Federation Newspaper, 1967 – p.65.

Vote Yes activists celebrating at Tranby College, 1967, National Museum – p.67.

Chicka Dixon, Gary Williams & Michael Anderson at the Aboriginal Embassy, Canberra, February 1972, Koori History Website – p.68.

South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League May Day Queen, 1968 – p.69.

South Coast Labour Council and the Gerrinja Land Claim, 1974 – p.70.

Gough Whitlam and Ossie Cruse, 1981, National Portrait Gallery – p.71.

Tranby College Logo – p.72.

Kevin Cook at Tranby Aboriginal College, 1975 - p.73.

Lance Shelton, Aboriginal activist, dogman, member of NSW BLF 1965 – p.74.

Blockade at Wreck Bay, 1979 – p.75.

Nan Campbell and Other South Coast Women, Kevin Cook & Heather Goodall – p.80.

Land Rights Rally at NSW Parliament, 1981, Heather Goodall – p.82.

Gulaga Handback Ceremony, 2006 – p.84.

National Apology, 2008, Illawarra Mercury Front Page – p.85.

Children at the Bomaderry Children's Home, 1945 – p.86.

The Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls – p.88.

Dining at Kinchela Boy's Training Home, 1959 – p.89.

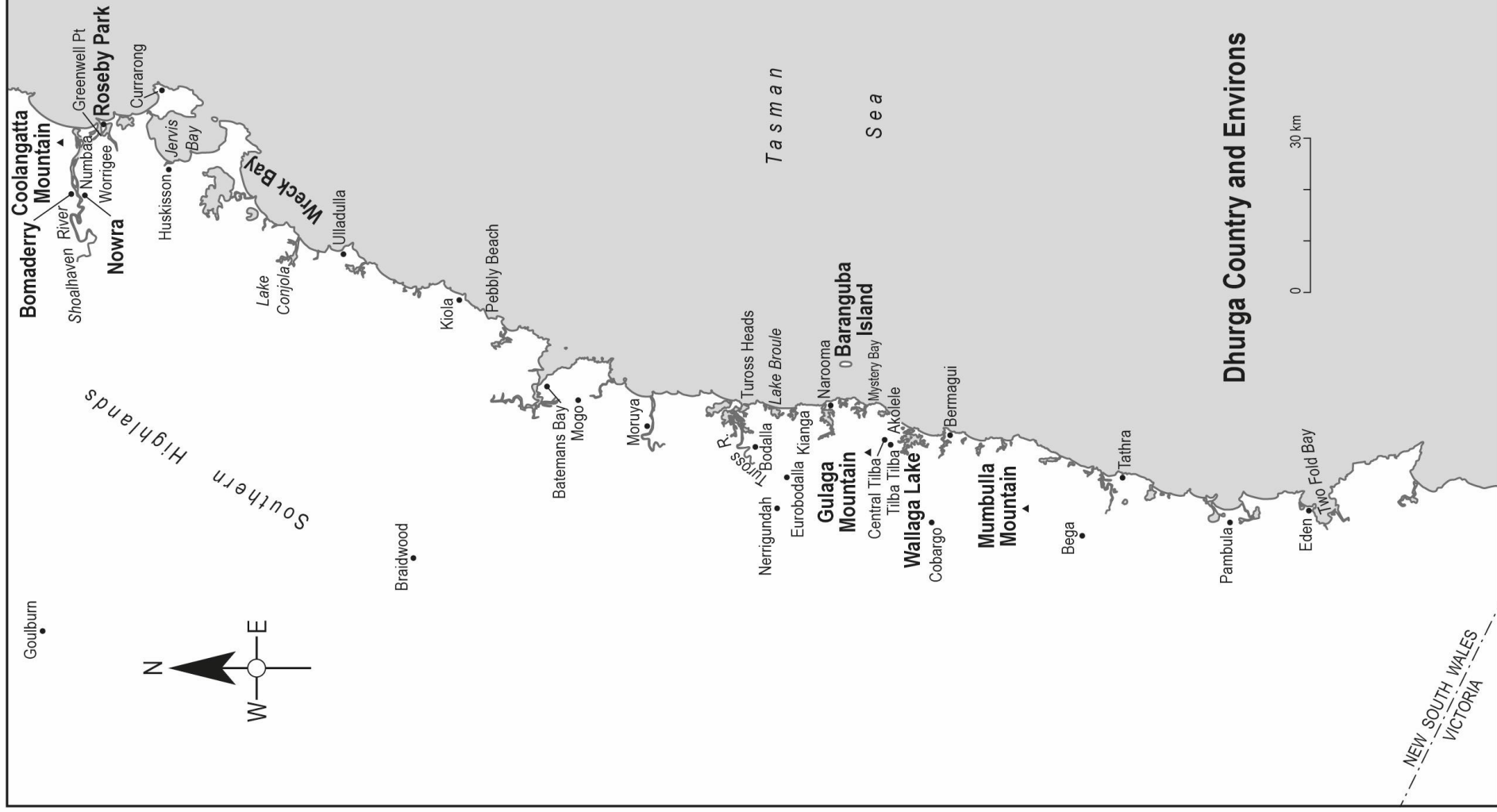
Burnum Burnum and Gubbo Ted Thomas, 1984, National Portrait Gallery – p.89.

Joy Williams at Lutanda, 1956, Peter Read – p.91.

Dora and Joy Williams, 1991, Peter Read – p.92.

Sandon Point Aboriginal Tent Embassy, 2003, Power House Museum – p.94.

Celebration at Sandon Point, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage – p.96.



A History of Aboriginal Illawarra Volume 2 Colonisation

Strange Beings from Over the Sea

Near Broulee Point, south of Batemans Bay, once stood a wooden look-out platform used for generations by Leonard Nye's family. The Dhurga were fisherfolk and through the ages they would gather to assess the seas and the weather before setting off. The job of the lookout who remained there was to signal those on the water and on the beach below about the location and direction of sea mammals and shoals of fish. Such lookout posts exist also at Hill 60 at Port Kembla and up and down the South Coast, and it is from them that people observed the passage of James Cook's ship in 1770. One of them told her granddaughter Coomee, who died at Ulladulla in 1914, all about "the first time the white birds came by". During the vessel's slow northward movement along the South Coast over eight days, heavy surf at Bulli Beach prevented a provisioning party from getting ashore on 28 April. A plaque on the roof of the bathers' pavilion at Woonona, overlooking Collins Point, commemorates this non-event.

The northern-most Dharawal clan, the Gweagal, were the first people on the east coast of the continent to meet Europeans face to face. It took several years for news, stories, songs and trade goods to travel to Illawarra from the continent's west and north coasts, so it is possible that they had heard of the half a dozen European visits that had occurred there during the previous 200 years. Over this time, a few clans absorbed a handful or two of survivors of shipwreck and piracy, and with the help of the locals, the pirate crew of William Dampier happily replenished their ship for two months at King Sound in the Kimberley. But Wik warriors, who killed nine murderous Dutch seafarers near Weipa on the Cape York Peninsula in 1606, had rebuffed all the Dutch, Spanish and French visitors particularly fiercely.

Non-Europeans were not so poorly treated. The natural scientist and cartographer Matthew Flinders believed he found in his circumnavigation of the continent in 1801, plenty of evidence that Chinese seafarers had camped in the islands of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Over more than 200 years, thousands of Macassans from Indonesia had been returning annually to camps strung out along the far north coast to harvest sea slugs (trepang). As well as building camps and a processing plant, the trepangers fell in love, fathered children, planted gardens with tamarind trees, enhanced the cuisine, changed the vocabulary of the northern languages, influenced burial customs, altered the design of canoes, introduced new

drugs, art styles and musical instruments, and brought smallpox that spread at least as far as South Australia. They took people back home with them where a few settled.

Maybe the two warriors of the Dharawal-speaking Gweagal clan armed with three-metre-long spears and woomera who confronted the 30 or 40 white men with firearms and swords rowing for the shore with James Cook, knew to expect trouble. The brothers



Sydney Parkinson, Two of the Natives of New Holland Advancing to Combat, 1770.



Captain Cook's Landing at Botany Bay 1770. 1865, National Library of Australia.

stood their ground and forbade the British to enter their country. Cook ordered a shot to be fired over their heads; but, quickly recovering from the shock, they continued to challenge the advancing invaders. Cook then directed another two shots to be fired from the boat, wounding both men who, grabbing up shields, continued toward the approaching vessels. They each hurled a spear at the aliens as they landed, but hit no-one. Cook ordered two more shots, and the older brother, later called Cooman, spearman, responded. His spear missed and they both retreated. They are said to be the warriors in this engraving of Sydney Parkinson's 1770 drawing.

Cook's party then plundered their nearby camp, stealing many things including 40-50 spears, mostly multi-pronged for fishing. Four of



Gweagal
Shield taken
by Cook,
British
Museum.

these are on display in a museum of Cambridge University in England. Rodney Kelly from Bermagui, Cooman's direct descendant, is hoping for their return to the Gweagal clan of the Dharawal people, along with this metre-long bark shield thought to be Cooman's, from the British Museum, which keeps more than 6,000 mostly plundered Aboriginal items. Cook's men left behind trinkets that archaeologists have recently recovered from where they had been left lying on the ground.

A visitor from Dhurga country, later known as Captain Brooks, and others from outside the area, witnessed Cook's attack, and news of the whites' lethal behaviour rapidly found its way to Illawarra and Shoalhaven. The Timbery family, well connected on the South Coast, was there, and Timbere was later declared King of the Five Islands by the Governor. Elder Beryl Timbery-Beller has robust views on Cook's arrival in Dharawal country:

The story of this landing has been told through generations and it marks the beginning of dispossession for Aboriginal people. The whites were so ignorant they thought there was only one race on the earth and that was the white race. So when Lieutenant James Cook first set foot over at Kundul, he said "Oh let's put a flag up somewhere, because these people are illiterate, they've got no fences". They didn't understand that we didn't need fences, that we stayed here for six to eight weeks, then moved somewhere else where there was plenty of tucker and bush medicine and we kept moving and then come back in twelve months' time when the food was all refreshed.

Most clans' protocol for encountering strangers was to ignore them politely at first, for to be inquisitive was rude. Many people believed in, and some spoke to, spirits and ghosts and a few briefly thought that the whites were magical illusions, the returning dead, or evil spirits that would go away if left alone. People from the far north coast of New South Wales sometimes refer to whites as dugai meaning corpse or, literally, stinking white flesh. Some Dhurga people call both whites and the dead mumu-gang. Gubba or gub, still commonly used in south-eastern Australia to refer to whites, means ghost. Sexual favours were diplomatic currency between clans and one can only wonder at the bravery of the first woman to have sex with one of these creatures, whom she quickly found to be only too human.

The strangers violated the country further by cutting down trees, beds of rushes and polluting a spring. The Dharawal

confronted them forcefully, but not violently, causing them to desist. The whites left their country after eight days, sailing north along the coast.

But more were on their way. Eighteen years later, in the largest planned trans-oceanic migration the European world had yet seen, 1,400 British people, many of them ill and diseased, arrived in Botany Bay in 11 ships. Mooroo-boora and almost all of the Murro-ore-dial clan, thinking they were a school of sea monsters, took off to spread the word. But this was not the response of most Dharawal people, who remembered from their childhood or had been taught by their aunts and uncles, of Cook's earlier harmful visit. They took up weapons and began to assemble on the beaches and headlands, yelling out to the approaching vessels, in polite translation, GO AWAY in the several languages they could give voice to. After a few days, these ships, too, left Dharawal country.

Shortly before the British convoy's departure, two French ships sailed into Botany Bay. Across the bay from the Dharawal, Kameygal men confronted the French, who rapidly built substantial fortifications at La Perouse, fired regularly on the locals but departed after six weeks.

The Kameygal clan of La Perouse has long-established relationships with clans on the South Coast and still has strong connections with people at Wreck Bay, south of Nowra. "We say we are Yuin people", says Marcia Ellen Duncan. "Might be part of the La Perouse mob, but we are black duck, Yuin people. I grew up at La Pa but I am Yuin from the South Coast".

The departure of the fleet from their country was a huge relief to the Dharawal, but they had no defences against the diseases the whites brought. Within a few months hundreds of people in Botany Bay and Port Hacking were dead and dying. David Collins, the Deputy Judge Advocate of the new colony, described the effects of disease in Port Jackson:

At that time a native was living with us and on our taking him down to the harbour to look for his former companions, those who witnessed his expression and agony can never forget either. He looked anxiously around him in the different coves we visited; not a vestige on the sand was to be found of human foot; the excavations in the rocks were filled with the putrid bodies of those who had fallen victims to the disorder; not a living person was anywhere to be met with. It seemed as if, flying from the contagion, they had left the dead to bury the dead. He lifted up his hands and eyes in silent agony for some time; at last he exclaimed,

“All dead! All dead!” and then hung his head in mournful silence.

On visiting Broken Bay, we found that it had not confined its effects to Port Jackson, for in many places our path was covered with skeletons, and the same spectacles were to be met with in the hollows of most of the rocks of that harbour.

In just over a year, well over half of the people of the Port Jackson area had perished. But two and a half years after the first, another fleet full of sick whites arrived. Five hundred of those 756 arrivals were hospitalised in tents at Sydney Cove. In June 1790, three more ships delivered 1,038 new arrivals, 486 sick, of whom 124 died. Two hundred and seventy-three of their compatriots had died on the voyage.

Their population expanding, the colonists turned their attention south. In 1796, 26 years after Cook’s failed attempt to land at Bulli Beach, the surf dumped a small boat and its three occupants on the sand south of Towradgi Point, the first white landing between Botany and Jervis Bays. Dharawal had them under observation and watched them struggling to relaunch their five-metre vessel. They wondered why they chose to spend yet another uncomfortable night in it, the fourth in a row, especially painful for George Bass who had been blistered all over by the sun. Next morning, people took pity on them. Dilba and another man gave them water and fish and accepted potatoes and handkerchiefs, and, squeezing into the laden boat with them, guided them southwards then through the tricky entrance into Lake Illawarra to accessible fresh water.

About 20 people were waiting on the shore, wary of Bass with his red soldier’s jacket and cautious of the musket. While some helped to repair a broken oar, fetch food and water, the others, starting with the eldest man, allowed Flinders to trim their beards with scissors, for the whites had little else of use with which to reciprocate. The two seemed frightened and were soon sent on their way, overnighting near the Bellambi boat ramp and at Coalcliff as they left Dharawal country. Bass soon recovered from the sunburn from his boat trip. The voyage along the coast, Flinders claimed, “has not, perhaps, its equal in the annals of maritime history”. A few months later he climbed the north wall of the Grose Valley with hooks and climbing irons in a vain effort to cross the Blue Mountains.

Such good health was not the fate of the 17 survivors of the wrecked *Sydney Cove*, largely Bengali, who set out in April 1797 to walk 600 kilometres from Cape Everard near the Victorian border through Dhurga and Dharawal countries to

Port Jackson, a trip habitually made over about three weeks by the locals. As explained on a plaque in the Memorial Gardens in Tathra, they wanted to get help for their shipmates marooned for nearly a year on a small island.

Led by their English officers, the Bengali seafarers moved through the country clumsily, at half speed, unable to identify the well-used paths, to see the abundant foods and medicines, to locate water or to find shelter. Although over about seven weeks they were given food and direction by some clans, only five of them made it right through Dhurga country, and only three were finally found alive by whites at Wattamolla in the Royal National Park, at the northern end of Dharawal country. Dilba was accused of the two killings and ineffectually hunted. Nonetheless, seafarers from the *Cumberland*, wrecked south of Jervis Bay in the same year, were helped safely through Illawarra to Port Jackson.

A year later, in Kudingal country at the south-eastern tip of NSW, women and children ran away from a white man who came upon them while following a well-trodden path along Ashings Beach. Flinders was back with Bass on a mapping expedition, and they had taken shelter at Twofold Bay. It is possible that the Dhurga had already encountered sealers who were active in their country, or had heard from the neighbouring Kurnai people that they kidnapped and enslaved women, and slaughtered many thousands of seals for their skins. Shortly, a man armed with confidence and a waddie approached the white man and offered him some whale meat, accepting some ship's biscuit in return. It tasted awful so he spat it out when he thought Flinders was not looking, only to catch him doing the same to his gift. He watched Flinders at his trigonometry for a while, then strolled off.

As more and more ships arrived in the colony, the white population rose to 3,000 in eight years. The sheer weight of white numbers soon overwhelmed the survivors living around Port Jackson, along its rivers and in its harbours. The whites quickly depleted the shellfish and other marine resources, killed or frightened off the animals, chopped down forests, polluted the freshwater sources and over-grazed and destroyed the grasslands. By 1810 the white population in NSW had shot up to 11,500 and by the 1820s it reached 24,000. There was no escaping them or the deadly plagues they introduced which included chickenpox, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, cholera, diphtheria, pneumonia, whooping cough, scarlet fever, typhoid fever, anthrax, typhus, syphilis, gonorrhoea and tuberculosis.

People travelled regularly between Port Jackson and the South Coast and the pestilences travelled with them. The smallpox epidemic in 1789, which preceded Illawarra's official white occupation by at least 10 years, was particularly devastating. Three escaped convicts living near Lake Illawarra in the 1790s also brought their germs with them. By

1802, smallpox had killed many people in Jervis Bay, and it struck again in the 1820s. By the end of that decade, when the population in Illawarra and Shoalhaven had been halved to about 3,000, influenza hit, wiping out whole families.

There seemed no end to the dying. James Backhouse, a white missionary with the Society of Friends, was well thought of by those he met in Illawarra. They told him that by 1836 two thirds of the population had perished from disease. Many more South Coast people died in the influenza epidemics of 1860. Venereal disease was also widespread. Though it was not usually fatal, it caused sterility and reduced the birth-rate, which remained low until well into the last century.

With the initial onset of disease, people dispersed rapidly, breaking into smaller and smaller groups as they escaped from the scene of contagion and those who were dying. Dispersing the clans, then breaking each clan first into hearth groups and then into groups of two or three was the standard response to military defeat, wildfire, flood and famine. This led, at the time of the initial fatal contact, to a diaspora of Dharawal people westward along the river valleys toward Gandangara country and south along the coast toward the Dhurga. Elder Percy Mumbler says:

The whiteman took this land by killing our people. And that's the only way he could capture this land from us, is to kill our people and frighten our people so our people will run away. Because our people just vanished. They weren't going to stop there for the last one to die. They knew what time to get, so they got out of it and that was it.

The effects of disease and dispersal were catastrophic and irreversible. Clans and languages were lost forever. Some diseases struck particularly at the old and the young, depriving the clans of their most knowledgeable members and of those who would have taken their knowledge into the future.

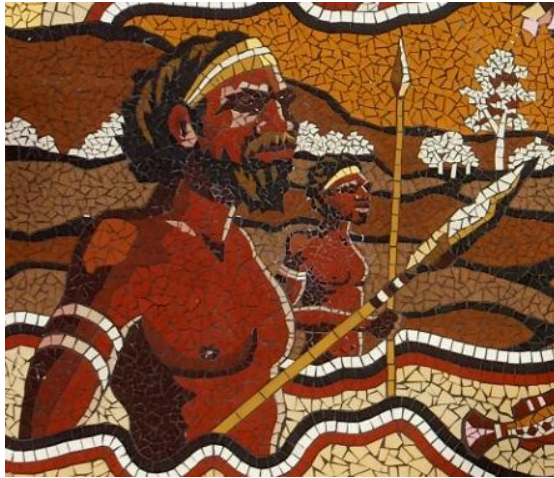
But as always, the survivors used their marriage, cultural, and totem connections with each other to endure disaster. They joined forces, shared resources and formed new communities. Caring for every tiny piece of country was no longer possible. Where no-one at all survived to manage country, distant connections tried to learn how, but they too were stretched thin. By the 1920s the national population whose antecedents had withstood an ice age, and whose cumulative population over 70,000 years had surpassed 1 billion, had fallen to about 60,000. In NSW, the enumerated population had fallen from 152,000 to just over 6,000. In Illawarra, 90 per cent of the inhabitants were wiped out. About 500 of these had been deliberately killed by settlers in a protracted war that lasted four decades.

The Forty Year War

The arrival of whaling and sealing ships to work the South Coast from 1801 initiated more than 40 years of deadly violence in Dhurga country. Warriors clashed lethally with whalers and sealers at Twofold, Batemans and Jervis Bays, enforcing the Law that the whites were intent on breaking in just about everything they did. If the Law was not enforced, even greater chaos would ensue. Timber cutters soon arrived by sea, their pillaging of the South Coast forests, illegal even under colonial law, feeding the demand for timber in Port Jackson created by the destruction of the forests around it. By 1812 at least 10 vessels had carried away the trunks of more than 400 huge sacred cedar trees cut from Shoalhaven forests. For more than 20 years Kudingal warriors attacked and killed as many white people as they could, slaughtered their livestock and plundered their ships. The whites fought back, the crew of the Venus shooting down nine attackers at Twofold Bay, and in direct violation of the Law, hanging their bodies from trees. And yet when the Endeavour and the Mercury were wrecked simultaneously while picking up cedar near the Shoalhaven River in 1813, the crews were permitted to walk without mishap along the coast to Port Jackson through Dhurga and Dharawal countries, the locals not too bothered by their thefts of fish caught along the way.

The Governor's banning of the unlawful traffic in Shoalhaven timber in 1814 did little to stop the cutting of it. The small-scale guerrilla attacks escalated. According to Burriel Paddy of Ulladulla who died in 1860 aged 80, he and other men of his clan slaughtered a crew shipwrecked on Ulladulla headland in the 1820s. Around that time, at Black Head, 10 kilometres north of the Shoalhaven River, Arawarra organized and led an attack that destroyed a party of cedar cutters. He was captured and Alexander Berry sent his head to the Edinburgh Museum in 1827 for scientific research. The body parts of more than 1,000 other people that the invaders collected and preserved have now been returned to Australia.

As these events unfolded in Dhurga country, in the north of Dharawal country, Bundle had linked up with Tjedboro (Tedbury), the son of Pemulwuy, the famous warrior who had led the Bidjigal during the 1790s against the whites who were rapidly dispossessing the people around Port Jackson of their fisheries and harvesting and hunting lands. Born at Salt Pan Creek in Dharawal country in 1765, Pemulwuy was shot down by soldiers and beheaded in 1802. His head also is thought to be in Britain.



Respect Unity Peace mosaic - detail depicting Pemulwuy and Tjedboro, Gough Whitlam Park, Earlwood.

Tjedboro, Bundle and other Dharawal warriors continued Pemulwuy's guerrilla campaign. They attacked settlers on the Cooks River in 1805 and the farmhouse of Frederick Meredith at Salt Pan Creek in the Georges River area in 1809 injuring him with a spear and forcing him to leave their country. They continued harassing farmers and robbing travellers until in 1810 Tjedboro himself was shot.

Early in 1814, Dharawal parties of 15-20 raided most of the farms in the Wallacia area, including one owned by Magistrate D'Arcy Wentworth. White women and children left the district. Meanwhile, a substantial Dhurga war party travelled north from Jervis Bay picking up supporters along the way and linking up with Gandangara warriors moving north-east from their strongholds in the Blue Mountains where a long drought was devastating their country. When in May a large group was raiding corn in a paddock near Appin, a militia of ex-soldiers fired at them and killed the young son of Yellooming. The warriors attacked before they could reload, speared and killed a veteran trooper and cut off his hand. Seeking vengeance, the whites attacked a camp at night,

murdering Bitugally's wife and two children while they slept. The woman's arm was cut off and her head scalped, the skull of one child was smashed in with the butt of a musket.

In May 1814, 400 warriors attacked the Campbell farm at Bringelly. Warriors under Wallah's leadership also attacked farms at Airds and Appin. Four white men were killed and on July 15, two children at Mulgoa were also, although their sister was spared. A week later, Governor Macquarie ordered a party of 12 armed civilians from Campbelltown to take four Aboriginal guides and to arrest or shoot dead the Gandangara men whom he held responsible. The posse sought and failed to locate the now-outlawed Goondel, Bitugally, Murrah, Yellooming and Wallah, and gave up the hunt after three weeks. That month, the construction of the road through Gandangara country over the Blue Mountains commenced. The British army depended on equipment, and carts need roads.

During the conflict, some Dharawal people found refuge with colonists they had helped previously. Young Bundle had tracked down a bushranger and in 1812 guided Surveyor George Evans along the Dreaming tracks north from Jervis

Bay via Shoalhaven and Kangaroo Valley to William Broughton's 400-hectare farm at Appin. Kogi, a charismatic Dharawal Koradji, a powerful, learned man, and soon to be declared a British Chief, fuelled his host Charles Throsby's fear with tales of cannibalism among the Gandangara. Through their country he had unsuccessfully guided an expedition sent by Governor Macquarie in 1802 to cross the Blue Mountains via the Burragorang Valley and Wollondilly River.

The Gandangara attacked several farms, including Macarthur's, successfully dispersing the white population. In March 1816, using muskets, they killed four white men in a series of attacks, and kept advancing toward Camden. The whites formed a militia of about forty equipped with muskets, pistols, pikes and pitchforks, and set out to confront them. Budbury and a small group of Dharawal met them on the bullock track. Budbury told them that the Gandangara were keen to fight and happily led the militia to their camp at what is now Elizabeth Macarthur Reserve at Ulmarra Avenue in Camden. At the whites' request, Budbury informed the Gandangara that they were to surrender and be imprisoned. The Gandangara danced, and then from the high ground, rained down spears and other projectiles on the whites who panicked, fired their weapons, hit no-one and ran for their lives.

A few days later, Macquarie ordered his crack troops, the Grenadiers, and two other detachments to catch the victors and in his words "to strike Terror amongst the Surviving Tribes". All Aboriginal people they encountered were to be taken prisoner. Eighteen good-looking, healthy children were to be selected from the prisoners of war and locked in the Native Institution at Parramatta. Anyone who resisted capture was to be shot dead and the bodies of the men hung from prominent trees as an example to others.

People again sought refuge with friendly whites. Budbury, Young Bundle, Kogi and Nighgingull and their families turned once more to the colonist Charles Throsby for safety. Two Gandangara men, Yellooming and Bitugally took refuge with Hamilton Hume and his uncle, the farmer John Kennedy, whose farm they had protected. Dharawal leaders Kogi and Budbury were hunted, and soldiers fired on people fleeing their attack at Camden. They killed an unknown number, and captured a boy.

The trackers and guides assisting the military to hunt down the Gandangara outlaws wanted no part of it. For days, they led the soldiers all through the bush around Glenfield and Appin to no-one at all. The soldiers complained bitterly that the farmers were warning the blacks, too, as several hot tips had achieved nothing except their own exhaustion and frustration.

Budbury and Young Bundle were pressed into service and they quickly disappeared as word came through that seven of the outlaws were camping with others at Appin. The only one without Aboriginal guidance, the detachment of 33 soldiers marched at 1am from where Minto Railway Station now is, more than 20 kilometres through the night, and led by a convict, arrived at a campsite on Broughton's farm. Hearing them approach, people left their shelters and hid in the bush but a crying baby gave their position away. The soldiers formed into a line, drove them towards a deep rocky gorge and opened fire as they leapt from rock to rock to escape. The Gandangara leader Cannabayagal turned to slow their advance, and was shot five times. More were shot down, others fell over the cliff. Some of those who escaped headed for sanctuary at Wallaga Lake in Dhurga country.

The massacre is thought to have been carried out in Broughton Pass or in the nearby Cataract River gorge. A memorial erected by the Wunga Mayamly Reconciliation Group in 2007 and sponsored by Wollondilly Shire Council stands on Cataract Rd near the dam. It reads:

The Massacre of men, women and children of the Dharawal Nation occurred near here on 17 April 1816. Fourteen were counted this day, but the real number will never be known. We acknowledge the impact this had and continues to have on the Aboriginal people of this land. We are deeply sorry. We will remember them.

The 14 bodies recovered comprised children and women, Cannabayagal, the Dharawal warrior Durelle and Balyin, an old man. None of them was on the Governor's list of wanted men. As a gruesome warning to the people, the bodies of Durelle and Cannabayagal were dragged up the cliff, hung from trees and later decapitated and their heads sent to England. Cannabayagal's head is now in the Australian National Museum. Two women and three children captured were taken into custody. Some soldiers then marched to Red Point (Port Kembla) and back. Another detachment headed towards Airds and set an unsuccessful ambush for Budbury, their former scout. Meanwhile Kogi eluded those sent to find him in the Salt Pan Creek area, although they did see his dog observing them and came across tracks walking towards them. Soon the troops exhausted their rations and most returned to Sydney.

Macquarie ordered that the peaceful people of Illawarra be spared his brutal reprisal, but when Duall and Quayat, both Dharawal, sought refuge at Kennedy's farm, they were captured by the soldiers left behind to guard it. They were sent to prison, and Duall was sentenced to seven years in Tasmania for encouraging his clan to attack the whites.

Although Captain Wallis, who led the massacre, was commended by Governor Macquarie for his “zeal, ability and judgement’ and promoted to Commandant of Newcastle, the Sydney Gazette commented that the result of the military campaign “has not been altogether so successful as might have been wished”. The Law required balance to be restored, the massacre to be avenged, so more violence ensued, including the killing of a soldier and the theft of uniforms at the recently-established military depot at Springwood, part of the white drive into the Blue Mountains. Attacks on Appin farms continued. The Governor proclaimed in May 1816 that no Aboriginal person could carry offensive weapons nor gather in groups of six or more within a mile of any white settlement. He commanded the settlers to use force against anyone who broke these rules. Peaceful Aboriginal persons had to be issued with passports if they wished to move more freely.

In the 45 years since Cook’s arrival, Illawarra had been pretty much free of whites who wanted to settle, but in 1815, Cookoogong and Duall led Charles Throsby down an ancient Dreaming track, now Bulli Pass, to excellent pasturage. He soon returned with his cattle and built a stockman's shanty, the first in Illawarra. Word of grassy meadows got around, other whites soon followed and Governor Macquarie sent John Oxley to survey Dharawal country for land grants to their employers. Few of them left the comforts of city life to live in rough huts, relying instead on their stockmen.

The fate of the people of Illawarra was sealed by a notice from the Governor in the Sydney Gazette of 28 September 1816.

Those who have obtained promises of allotments are hereby required to avail themselves of the approaching occasion of the surveyors being on duty in Illawarra to get their locations marked out to them and for this purpose they are required to meet the Surveyor General at the hut of Mr Throsby's Stockman in Illawarra, or the Five Islands district, at noon on Monday, 2 December 1816.

In the hut of Throsby's stockman, at what now is the corner of Smith and Harbour Streets in Wollongong, that fateful meeting resulted in 2,100 hectares of Dharawal land being given to five non-resident gentlemen. These grants were practically free and each landholder was provided with convicts to do whatever work his stockmen required. The formal stealing and occupation of Dharawal land had commenced.

But taking the land by legal fiction was one thing, securing it was another. In October 1818 Lieutenant Weston, land owner at Dapto and Cornelius O'Brien, formerly a stockman at Sandon Point and now the overseer of a property at Yallah, organised a group of seven labourers and convicts. Unusually armed with muskets, cutlasses and pikes, they headed to Kiama supposedly to fetch two muskets lent to a group of people living on the Minnamurra River. According to Young Bundle, who was long trusted by the British, the posse killed all the people at the camp. Word of the massacre spread rapidly through the community. Responding as one, they very quickly returned all the guns — quite a few — that they had borrowed from the whites, removing that excuse for further acts of evil.

The attackers admitted only to wounding a boy in self-defence. After a sharp letter of protest from Charles Throsby to Governor Macquarie, the murders were investigated by D'Arcy Wentworth, the Principal Superintendent of Police, along with other magistrates. They took no action against the killers despite a letter from Governor Macquarie to D'Arcy Wentworth expressing his “surprise, regret and displeasure” at their findings.

This process of land alienation was repeated in Shellharbour where another small group of white men met on 9 January 1821 to give to and receive from each other more Dharawal country. Very soon, D'Arcy Wentworth, the colony's Principal Superintendent of Police, Principal Surgeon and founder of the Bank of NSW, owned more than 5,000 hectares of mainly Wodi Wodi clan land, in addition to the land he already owned elsewhere. And the clearings continued.

At Five Islands one night in 1822 people raiding corn on the 120 hectares of the entrepreneur and Justice of the Peace, Captain Richard Brooks, who had extensive land holdings elsewhere in the colony, were surprised by a convict, Seth Hawker, the farm's overseer. He shot a woman in the stomach, let his dogs maul her savagely and left her to die in agony. William Graham chopped a man's hand off, and he died of his wound. The murderers were reported to the nearest constable in Appin and arrested. Eventually they were tried in the Sydney Criminal Court, and both acquitted.

When driven off their country in this way, people died by starvation or murder or, more usually, entered other countries in breach of the Law. A number of Dhurga people moved north into Dharawal country during the early 1800s, which was already under pressure from the eastward movement of Gandangara fleeing famine and warfare. Matters came to a head around 1830 in a battle between Dharawal and Gandangara fighters in the designated battleground, a large meadow at Fairy Meadow, immediately north and east of the junction of Lawrence Hargrave Dr and Mt Ousley Rd.

The Dhurga had serious problems on their south-western border and no-one knows which, if any, side they took in the clash that mobilized supporters beyond the borders of both countries and nearly every man from almost every clan within them. A white observer, Mr Lynch, declared that several hundred men on each side, totalling as many as 1,500, took part, supported by a large number of women who kept them supplied with water, food and weapons and tended to their wounds. This figure must be exaggerated, for by then the ravages of plague and warfare had reduced the maximum number of warriors in both Dharawal and Dhurga countries to no more than 500.



Doctor Ellis, University of Wollongong Library.

In the battle, spears were thrown thick, fast and fatally in a series of engagements over three days. After brutal hand-to-hand fighting, an unusually large number lay dead, over 100 according to Lynch, and victory went to the Dharawal. The vanquished Gandangara returned as they had come, up the mountain track opposite Dapto and over the highlands to Bowral and beyond. The dead of both sides were buried along the northwest bank of Fairy Creek rather than at Stuart Park, the usual burial ground.

The precipitating cause of the battle was the violation of the Law by a Dharawal Koradji who introduced himself to whites as Doctor Ellis. Some said he had abducted a young Gandangara woman. Even elopement was punishable by death for both of them, according to Elder Bert Penrith. She was present at the battle and remained in Illawarra with him for the rest of her life. An expert linguist, known by some as King of the Illawarra Blacks, he shared his extensive knowledge of his country with vigneron and sheep owner William Macarthur and with Charles Moore of Sydney's Botanic Gardens to produce a catalogue of plants, trees and shrubs for the 1854 Sydney Exhibition.

In that same year as the clash at Fairy Meadow between Dharawal and Gandangara, a battle against warriors from Monaro was fought in Dhurga country not far from Wallaga Lake where the Cobargo showground is now. According to a white observer, W.D. Tarlinton, the battle lasted all day and left 37 dead.

Whether it was by this particular fight, or by their vigorous and prolonged response to the whites who came to take recklessly from the lakes and sea, and to wreck their forests and fields, John Batman was impressed while working with his father cutting cedar in Illawarra and Shoalhaven, by the Dhurga warriors' fighting prowess. Batman, a grazier and bounty hunter, signed up Warrora and nine other warriors at the end of 1830 to join him and more than 2,000 soldiers and armed civilians in driving four of the nine Tasmanian peoples from their countries. In January 1832, Warrora was mistakenly shot down by a white sniper, almost fatally. A year later, when Governor Arthur officially ended the use of NSW men in Tasmania in this way, he was sent home with £10 (about two months pay for a white man), but without a title to the 100 acres of land that Batman had promised him.

By 1828, Charles Throsby's herd was considered the best in the colony and the 9,000 cattle outnumbered humans in Illawarra by more than five to one. This continuing destruction of Dharawal country was still being resisted and the whites were panicking. Illawarra was a fearful place. In November 1822, the home of the Western family, the first free settlers to receive a land grant in Illawarra, was burned to the ground along with their crops. Nothing remained. A contingent of soldiers established themselves in 1826 at Port Kembla, sent to enforce the land claims of settlers and to violently impose peace against all those who threatened it — escaped convicts, bush rangers, cedar cutters, sealers, whalers and Aboriginal people.



Tommy McRae and Mickey of Ulladulla, *Death or Glory*, 1880s, State Library of NSW.

But the war continued. Broger and George Murphy attacked and killed a sawyer at Gerringong in February 1829. When cattle came to Bega in 1830, warriors attacked the stockmen, forced them to abandon their camps and huts and drove off their stock. William Morris at Murramarang, Flanagan at Moruya and other stockmen sent letters to the Colonial Secretary about their bosses' cattle being speared, and demanded punitive action. Morris asked permission to "shoot such of the Blacks as are known to be ringleaders".

This was not granted, but the squatters persisted in their southward drive into Dhurga country, defying their own authorities by pushing well beyond the NSW colony's official limit of Batemans Bay, putting stockmen and shepherds in charge of the vast areas they stole. In the late 1830s, pastoralist Dr George Imlay, accompanied on a trip to New Zealand by two Kudingal men, shared with his shipboard pal, E.J. Wakefield, "exciting details of the savage and merciless predatory warfare which is constantly going on between the stockmen and the unreclaimed tribes". One of Imlay's station hands, Nelson, hunted Aboriginal people with bloodhounds and Alexander Weatherhead of Nungatta Station murdered several people by putting strychnine in the milk he left for them to steal, and disposed of their bodies. Flour was poisoned as well at Pambula, where Syms Covington, a friend and fellow traveller of Charles Darwin, was living.

The Governor ventured south to Twofold Bay to assess the situation first-hand and to visit his friends the Imlay brothers, to whom he had recently given Dhurga land and who now owned nearly one million acres and operated a whaling station there. He wrote that the countryside between Batemans Bay and Twofold Bay 200 kilometres away had already been "depasturised" by cattle and sheep. He concluded that since he was powerless to reverse the illegal land grab, he would recognise it and thus put the lawless frontier under his control and so stop the "evil" killings. In this he failed.

At Kioloa between Ulladulla and Batemans Bay, just before Christmas 1832, overseer Joseph Berryman, angered at the spearing of four cattle owned by his master Sydney Stephen, organised seven or so ticket-of-leave men, assigned servants and convicts. They fired at two men who ran to a nearby beach. Although wounded, they swam out to sea but Berryman and his mates kept shooting at them until they reached a small island. The gang then moved to a nearby camp and killed an unknown number of people including at least two men and two women, one obviously pregnant. Berryman was arrested and held at Wollongong for some time but was never brought to trial.

And yet, not far away, Dhurga looked after the 350 convicts, crew, soldiers and their families who survived when in 1835, *Hive* ran aground, the only convict transport ship wrecked in NSW. They put them in touch with Alexander Berry at Coolangatta and took nothing from the vessel. The following year, the schooner *Blackbird* was wrecked while attempting to salvage *Hive*'s stores, but its crew did manage to hang on to the £10,000 of gold coin that *Hive* was carrying, enough to pay 100 men or 300 women a good wage for a year. These events contributed to the naming of Wreck Bay, an apt title as 14 other ships have foundered there.

The war was spreading as the frontier advanced. Impelled by severe drought throughout NSW, the cattlemen drove their hungry stock further and further into Aboriginal territory. By 1841 the Wiradjuri people to the west of the Gandangara had been fighting white incursions for 20 years. South of the Dhurga in Gippsland, 200 Kurnai warriors launched a number of unsuccessful attacks on the intruders. The reprisals were brutal. At least five massacres of Kurnai people resulted. At Warrigal Creek, 160 men, women and children were trapped, surrounded and shot down, their bodies loaded onto drays and buried in an unmarked grave in the nearby sand hills.



Georgina Lowe, Sherbrooke, 1840-50, State Library of NSW.

In Illawarra, despite the military presence, the white population of 800, mainly on isolated farms, was still ill at ease, and for good reason. In response to the spreading and intensifying conflict, in 1842 a Dhurga army moved northward determined to wipe the struggling little town of Wollongong off the map. But they had not reckoned with the power and influence of Geronne, also known as King Charlie Hooka, who was alerted to their plan.

Although he did not mix much with whites, Geronne's messengers urged the settlers to flee the advancing Dhurga, to take their cattle, their chattels and themselves to safety at the local Wollongong stockade. Geronne mustered his forces and with some Gandangara men marched, two hundred chanting warriors strong, along the bullock track through Dapto village to a battlefield at Albion Park 15 kilometres away. Many were killed in the fighting, and at the battle's conclusion the victorious Dharawal returned the way they had come, in silence, carrying their dying King. The vanquished returned to their country in and

around Shoalhaven. The whites left Wollongong and returned to their homes naming a small town in Geronne's memory Kanahooka (Kana – king – Hooka). Hooka Island in Lake Illawarra is part of his country, as are Hooka Point in Berkeley, Hooka Creek and nearby Mullet Creek. A king breastplate, entitled Charley Hookah, King of Mullet Creek is in the Illawarra Historical Society Museum in Market Street, Wollongong.

In the colony between 1836 and 1844, 113 Aboriginal people and 40 whites were reported to have been killed. A police magistrate noted,

A murder committed by the blacks is paraded in the papers, and everybody is shocked; but there have been hundreds of cold-blooded murders, perpetrated by the whites on the outskirts of the Colony, which we have never heard of.

But even in the mayhem of the 40-year war, acts of human kindness also prevailed. Floods devastated the South Coast in May 1851 drowning 17 settlers at Twofold Bay and Bega. Many homes were destroyed by the rapidly rising Bega River, and intrepid swimmers rescued whites clinging to branches and flotsam, a husband and wife swam a mile to take a tinder box for fire-making to settlers stranded on a small island.

Yet still the murders continued, though not at Coolangatta where, after a very bad start, cordial relations with whites lasted 60 years.

Coolangatta

Although sealers, whalers and cedar cutters had been pillaging the South Coast for two decades, white settlement on the Shoalhaven River officially began in June 1822 when Alexander Berry arrived by ship from Port Jackson with a Dhurga Elder called Broughton by the British, and another Aboriginal man, a crew and other whites. The Governor had given 10,000 acres (4,000 hectares) of Dhurga land to Berry and his business partner soon after their arrival in the colony the previous year.

Broughton had guided Charles Throsby on his southern expeditions. While in Sydney making his claim to Dhurga land, Berry received a letter from Throsby saying that Broughton is

well acquainted with every inch of that part of the country, speaks good English, and I think may be useful to you. I have therefore told him if he will accompany you and explain to the natives there, that they are not to touch anything you have, that you will give him some tobacco, a pair of trousers, and he adds, he must have an old shirt.

Thus began a relationship that lasted over two decades. It was a rare and unusual one. Broughton's brother, along with many of his kin and friends, had taken up arms against the whites whom nearly everyone else avoided like the plague.

Soon after Broughton's arrival at Coolangatta Mountain near Shoalhaven Heads, the locals were catching fish for the white workers and assisting Berry's crew who, in return, supplied them with iron axes. Through Broughton, and Elders Wagin and Yager, the community gradually drew Berry into a reciprocal relationship from which they expected to share in his abundant wealth for he was after all, living in their country and using its resources and their labour. This Berry would not and did not want to do. His overseer launched an attack on women gathering corn in March 1824 that led to at least one death. But people continued to harvest the produce



Coolangatta Mountain and the Estate today.

growing in their country. Realising that he needed their help more than they needed his and that cockatoos destroyed more than the people ate, complaining bitterly and frequently to anyone and everyone, he left them alone to continue to use the crops. By 1830 the community had re-established cordial relations with Berry that continued with his successors until the Hay brothers evicted the Dhurga from the Estate in 1901.

Broughton worked in a variety of jobs on the Coolangatta Estate. Between October 1824 and August 1827, as a Constable, he recaptured escaped convicts who frequently stole canoes, weapons and food. He tended tobacco,



Conrad Martens, Coolangatta Mountain, 1860.

couriered letters to Sydney, cut reeds in the swamp and netted parrots for collectors. He toiled more frequently and for longer periods of time than his fellow workers who, from time to time, collected bark, fished, ferried, tracked horses, sowed and reaped crops, threshed seed, washed sheep, made yeast, washed bags and cleaned the storehouse. Broughton and his wife worked for about 38 weeks one year, and received a weekly ration of 4.5kg of flour, 3kg of beef, some sugar, tobacco and occasionally tea, much less than what usually was given to Berry's white workers.

The government that had guaranteed to supply Berry with 100 convicts, abolished the convict system in 1841, depriving his estate of most of its labour, and forcing him to find a new cheap workforce. Despite his inducements and their love of sugar and growing addictions to tea and tobacco, people declined to step into the shoes of the

convicts. Labouring on a farm for a boss, work done by men in chains, did not suit most people who vastly preferred their own way of life. When Berry once remarked to Billy, who worked for him occasionally, "Well Billy, I expected you were to have become like a white man but am sorry to find that you have again become a wild bush native". Billy told him, "Oh no sir. I am no more wild than formerly, but I have become a free man again".

Not surprisingly, the man with the most commitment to white ways of working had grown up on the estate, watching and learning. Unie began full-time work when he was about 12 years old, becoming a talented stockman and a skilful rider. He could split the head of a snake with the crack of his whip. In January 1864 while riding to Kiama from Sydney, he was picked up by the constabulary and charged with stealing his horse. The cops thought it was too fine an animal for an Aboriginal man to be riding.

When the Hay brothers, intent on breaking up Coolangatta Estate into smaller lots to sell to make more money, ended employment there, the people, mainly living at the northern foot of Coolangatta Mountain, were driven off, although health problems in their camp was the official reason given for their eviction. They were sent to a reserve at Roseby Park established by the Aborigines Protection Board in 1900 in Tern Street, Orient Point. Nellie Mooney, for many years the Chair of the Nowra Local Aboriginal Land Council, has a great-grandmother who worked on the estate where her father was born.

Dad was born on Coolangatta Mountain, out at Shoalhaven Heads. He could remember the move when the Berry family moved all the Aboriginal people away from Coolangatta to Roseby Park, or Orient Point, as the white people call it. Dad was about two years old at the time. He could just remember being put up on the horse and dray with all the family's goods and being taken down to the river and rowed across to Roseby Park.

Their evictions happened gradually and by 1901 at least 60 people remained on the estate, including the Lloyd and Nipple families, while 23 members of the Bundle and Carpenter families were living on the Roseby Park reserve.

The Gentleman's Game

Great excitement stirred Illawarra when the International Aboriginal Cricket team, mainly from the Wimmera district in western Victoria, arrived in Wollongong by steamer in early April 1867. The team was to play the first eleven of the Illawarra Club after spending the night at the Queen's Hotel in Market St, adjacent to what is now the Illawarra Historical Society Museum. Undeterred by the threatening weather, some people even camped overnight on the Race Course, now the site of the coal loader in Port Kembla's Inner Harbour.



International Aboriginal Cricket team, 1867.

Everyone confidently predicted that the visitors would thrash the white team. After a wet night, about 700, fewer than expected of Wollongong's enumerated population of 1,350, turned out on Friday to see the prophecy confirmed. It rained for two hours in the afternoon, forcing the players to stay a little longer at the luncheon provided by Mrs Davis of the Harp Inn in Corrimal Street. When play resumed, large parts of the ground were under water, but the local eleven could find no cheer in the home ground advantage.

On Saturday morning, play shifted to the Green, now Wollongong Showground, commencing with a changed Illawarra Club side as the rain that had continued through the night and into the morning flooded the roads and bridges holding up

the players living outside town. The Illawarra Mercury reported that “when the balls struck the ground, or rather water, they generally sent a splash of mud or liquid into the eager eyes of all those in close proximity”. Wiseman’s Brickyard was not far away in Burelli Street, and the newspaper advised that the churned-up ground was more suitable for brickmaking than cricket. Play concluded after only one innings, the Internationals making 116 runs, the Club just 20.

Crowd control was non-existent and spectators obstructed the sportsmen in the events that followed the cricket, at which the blacks proceeded to hammer the whites at both the standing and the running high jump. In the latter, when the visitors Yellanach and Murrumgunerrimin had each cleared the bar at 1.6 metres, ahead of the other contestants, they decided to end the competition and to share the prize of one sovereign.

The Club players were now close to complete humiliation. In the final event, the 100-yard sprint, as Murrumgunerrimin was accelerating past the early leader James Richards, Richards elbowed him, and his team mate M’Credie crossed the line in first place ahead of Murrumgunerrimin at a close second. The Aboriginal team gathered quickly together and promptly and quietly left the field, taking their supporters with them. The remaining crowd fell silent and soon dispersed.

Upset by Richards’ disgraceful and graceless behaviour, the Illawarra Mercury wrote next day, “The public had the mortification of being obliged to admit that among the much despised blackfellows there are some at least who have a better sense of right and wrong than those boasting a higher position in the social scale”. After a visit to Hobart, Charles Darwin had written in his Origin of Species a few years earlier, that Aborigines were “a set of harmless savages wandering about without knowing where they shall sleep at night”. Aboriginal people were simply and scientifically not supposed to be physically and morally superior to the cream of Illawarra’s British manhood, but in a fair match, the Mercury ruefully admitted, they clearly were.

The Internationals returned for a rematch early in November after touring regional Australia to raise funds for their tour of Hong Kong and Britain. There was, the press reported “a great want of confidence on the part of the Illawarra players”, and with fewer white spectators and improved weather, they fared no better at the cricket than before. In the 100-yard sprint, Jungunjinanuke and Zellananch were determined that there would be no chance of mischief this time. So fast were they speeding at the end of the race that Jungunjinanuke plowed into a horse and rider, bringing both to the ground and Zellananch bowled a bystander over, sent the child in her arms flying and knocked himself out for two hours.

Once overseas, the team played 47 matches in an exhausting series that criss-crossed England from May to October 1868. They played every two or three days, winning 14 games, losing 14 and drawing 19. Johnny Mullagh took over 250 wickets and made 1,698 runs. He was an ardent supporter of Aboriginal rights, refusing to dwell on the Aborigines Protection Board reserve. At Apsley, as the white players went to lunch, one asked, "What about the nigger?" The captain replied, "Let him have his dinner in the kitchen; anything is good enough for the nigger." Mullagh sat outside the hotel in protest. A memorial stands in his honour in Harrow near London.

Soon after that remarkable tour, when the Victorian colonial government passed legislation that no Aborigines were allowed to leave the colony without its permission, the interest of many of the cricketers evaporated.

Kings, Queens and Chiefs

During the 1700s and up to 1832, silver crescents about the size of a small hand, were worn on a chain round the neck of infantry officers in most British armies, including those occupying Australia, as a sign of their rank and to indicate that they were on duty. Governor Macquarie had fought in the war for independence and against the French in North America where gorgets like these were given to Native American leaders by both French and British colonisers. By the 1850s, hundreds of these were accepted in NSW by those he called “leaders of the different tribes of Indians”. Between 1816 and 1912 a very few women of Illawarra and perhaps 40 men accepted from a variety of whites, for various reasons, crescents not of silver but usually of brass or bronze, sometimes of copper, lead or iron. Many of the plates were mass produced and like William Saddler’s, seen here, usually featured a kangaroo and emu. Almost twice the size of the military gorgets, at least 13 of these crescents conferred kingship and more than 15 created chiefs in Illawarra. William Saddler’s plate is in the Illawarra Historical Society Museum in Market Street, Wollongong.

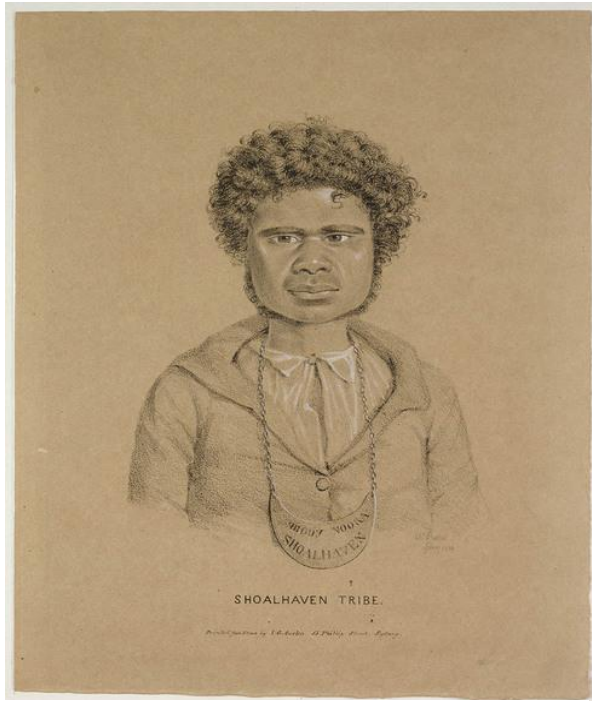
It was clear to Governor Macquarie that his men could not differentiate between Dhurga, Dharawal and Gandangara people and initially perhaps what came to be called breastplates were a means for whites to identify friendly leaders. But by 1820, Russian explorers in Sydney observed that the colonial government bypassed existing leaders and selected their own by conferring a gorget on those they preferred. The Russians noted,

The dignity and the division of the above-mentioned sign worn round the neck are bestowed on those who show most attachment to the English. Such arrangements have been introduced in order to accustom the natives to submission and, through them, to learn of escaped convicts.

Some of the other motivations for offering breastplates included gratitude, miserliness, politics, ingratiation, acknowledgement of existing status, co-option, a desire to protect the wearers from other whites, and the assertion of power.



William Saddler, King Plate, 1909, Illawarra Historical Society Museum.



Charles Rodius, Portrait of Neddy Noora,
Aboriginal Chief, Shoalhaven Tribe, 1834.

Loyalty and usefulness to the colonists, often regardless of their standing in their own communities, were the main criteria for the selection of chiefs and kings. Kogi was made Chief in 1816 for laying down arms in exchange for an unkept promise of secure land. In 1819 for their “meritorious services” in Charles Throsby’s “arduous undertaking”, Cookoogong was given a plate declaring him Chief of the Burra Burra and Duall received a badge of merit. Throsby received a thousand acres of Cookoogong’s country in return for “his discovery” of the well-used track from Cow Pastures (around Camden) to Bowral about 60 kilometres away. Neddy Noora, a guide with Broughton for Oxley’s trip in that year, received a breast plate in 1834 identifying the Shoalhaven as his chieftom when he was from Berrima. King Peiken of Ulladulla received his gorget in 1858 for being “very useful to the inhabitants of this neighborhood”.

While the criteria for being offered a breastplate were simple, the whites’ ambitions were easier for all to understand than for them to achieve. If they wanted to establish a regular and reliable contact, an ambassador, they had some success. But if they wished to create a layer of compliant puppets between themselves and those whom they dispossessed, they were soon disappointed.

But it is much harder to grasp, especially in the early 1800s, the reasons why people accepted the breastplates; after all, as settler Louisa Atkinson remarked of those near Mossvale in the 1820s, they “appear to pity Europeans as persons under self-imposed slavery to toil, holding themselves as quite their superiors”. An Aunt who passed by Broughton working at Coolangatta one day, scolded him for wasting his time, telling him in no uncertain terms that there were more important things to do with his life.

The 800 whites who lived in Illawarra in 1840 were not attractive, physically, morally or intellectually. They were ugly, smelly and diseased. Their houses were damp, infested with lice, fleas and rodents, and stank of smoke. They often ate

rotten food. They were brutal in their treatment of each other. They did not understand reciprocity. They took from country all they wanted, as often as they liked, whenever they could, without thinking of the consequences, of other people or of the future. Their ignorance of the world around them was so profound that they did not even realise it. They knew nothing of the Law except how to break it.

Like all their compatriots, those few who accepted or sought the plates from these people were well used to identifying newcomers to their country by their appearance, knowing by the scarification of their bodies, tooth avulsion, distinctive clothing, ornamentation and equipment, not only their clan but also the person's symbolic position within it. They easily understood the classes within white society, too, and that the gorgets – not possessed by the great majority of whites – were emblems of white power and authority. These people, whom they really did not want to know, were now offering them this status symbol. The gracious and prudent thing to do was to accept it.

Matora and Bungaree who had circumnavigated Australia, began the practice in 1815 when they accepted breastplates from Governor Macquarie. Matora was given the name 'Queen Gooseberry' and is the only person known to have been given two gorgets. Her husband later threw away his breastplate inscribed 'Boongaree Chief of the Broken Bay Tribe'. Among the 38 people who received breastplates from Macquarie, two were Dharawal men: Kogi, who was declared Chief of the Georges River Tribe, and Mooringally, Chief of Nattoi (Nattai).

Entrepreneurs quickly got in on the act. Alexander Berry assumed the power in 1822 by declaring Broughton a Constable and giving him a rectangular plate. Broughton, with Neddy Noora, had guided John Oxley and James Meehan, along with Hamilton Hume, to Illawarra and beyond where they carried out surveys of Dhurga land in 1819. After Berry's arrival, they both had sailed with him to Sydney and back when he returned there for further supplies. Berry also proclaimed as Chiefs Wagin and Yager, Dhurga men of political importance from Jervis Bay and from Numbaa, on the southern side of the lower Shoalhaven River near Nowra. He thought he needed their support for his settlement at Coolangatta to survive.

An Elder whose clan's territory included Coolangatta, objected to Berry's choice of chiefs and wished to become one too. Berry's overseer told him that he was too late, and that this was his own fault because he had not put in a prior bid. Wagin was now Chief, he claimed, and that was that. The Elder responded by advising the overseer that, if such was the case, then the whites settled on his clan's land had better pack up and move on. The overseer quickly offered to make

him a Constable like Broughton. He indignantly refused, but asked to be made, like Alexander Berry himself and like Charles Throsby, a Free Settler, one who owned land and moved freely without a government pass. He accepted an iron plate engraved "Free Settler of Shoal Haven", and was thence generally known as Old Settler by the Aborigines and whites in the district through which he moved freely but owned none of.

Some who accepted kingships, like the prominent Dhurga leaders Umbarra and his son Biamanga, understood that the whites were quite correctly recognising, in their own peculiar way, the standing that they already possessed in their own country. Umbarra, King Merriman, is shown here with Neddy Noora holding symbols of traditional authority along with the breast plate, in front of a specially marked tree. Others, like Mickey Johnson, who were neither Elders nor leaders, knew that they were receiving a status that might not mean much in the white world, or in the black one either, for that matter. His own subjects quite often set upon and trashed King Bungaree.

When Elder Percy Mumbler was a child in 1912, he and a large number of people witnessed the coronation of his father and Elder, Biamanga (Jack Mumbler) as "King of Wallaga Lake and Bega". Biamanga was the son of Umbarra, a powerful Dhurga Koradji who had been crowned King Merriman.

Biamanga and Umbarra were respected leaders, but not because they were kings, and nor did agreeing to become kings make them monarchists. As Percy Mumbler says,

Biamanga died a long time ago - about 1918, here in Wallaga. I saw the plate put on him when I was a young fella. It was just along the road there, along the flat there. They named him King Mumbler. But there was no such things as kings. There was elders, they're leaders of the tribe, like my uncle Percy Davis.



King Merriman of Wallaga Lake (r) with Neddy Noora, 1909, National Museum of Australia.



Mickey Johnson, 1896, National Portrait Gallery.

According to Elder Eileen Morgan, “In the early times there was no single leader. They were all leaders. Whatever they said was Law amongst our people”.

Clearly there was nothing resembling a monarchic or chiefly system among the Dharawal and Dhurga that would make them seek its confirmation from the British. But they did know about the customary transition of power by hereditary means, for to the south of them in northern Victoria, the Kulin lived in clans which transmitted leadership from father to eldest son. But unlike a clan chief in Scotland, the laird that Alexander Berry fervently strove to become at Coolangatta, the Kulin headmen were not landowners; their authority came from and was circumscribed by the Law. So while those in Illawarra who became kings did not practice monarchy, sometimes they accepted, or sought, the king plates because they confirmed an existing status in a white way, and always because they hoped it would give them some leverage in the white world to advantage their people. One thing everyone knew was that a king plate could not confer authority over them nor over their country.

The best known of the Illawarra Kings was Mickey Johnson, a champion runner. When he asked Archibald Campbell, a member of the NSW Upper House, to get him a king plate, Campbell asked Mickey over what area his kingdom would extend. Mickey admitted that there were diplomatic problems, for although his wife Rosie was Wodi Wodi, he was from the Macleay River area in northern NSW where his family had been wiped out by whites. He suggested that rather than assuming the title King of Illawarra, he instead should become King of New South Wales. On the second day of the Wollongong Show and Illawarra Centenary Celebrations in February

1896, Mickey, Rosie, their family and friends were escorted to the centre of the show ground by the officers of the Illawarra Agricultural Association to the cheers of the white and black spectators. Hundreds, especially of young people, crowded on to the ground, and had to be controlled by the police.

Mrs. Beatson, the mother of Lieutenant Beatson, Mayor of Wollongong, joined the group in the centre of the ring and, at Campbell's request, gave Mickey, on behalf of Queen Victoria, a breastplate saying simply "Mickey Johnson, King". After a burst of cheering, Mickey thanked everyone for attending and said he hoped England or Australia would never be at war, but if the English queen ever needed the assistance of his country, it would be readily given.

William Saddler, a Dharawal Elder, a renowned athlete who had toured overseas, and a driving force behind a successful fishing business in Port Kembla, watched approvingly. At the conclusion of King Mickey's speech, he stepped into the centre of the show ground and said he wished it to be publicly known that he sanctioned Mickey being king, even though, strictly speaking, he was the one who should have been, but did not want to be. More cheers rang out, many pictures were taken by several photographers, one of which is shown here. Queen Rosie and King Mickey are in the middle of the group. It is probably William Saddler standing directly behind them. Beatson is holding the king plate.

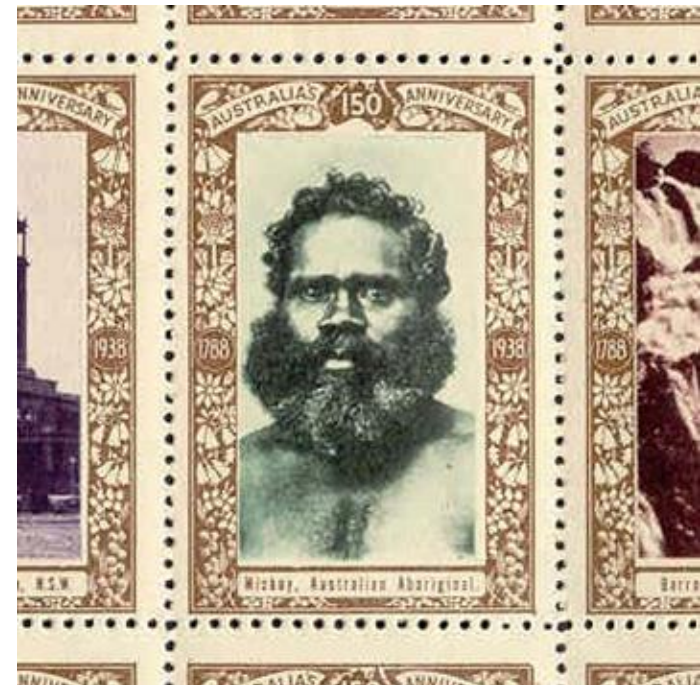


The crowning of King Mickey Johnson at Wollongong, 1896, National Library of Australia.

Mickey's great-grand-daughter, Joan Wakeman, says that he was promised land, that she has a map of, which was never delivered to him or to his descendants. Later in life, he moved to the camp at Minnamurra, upset by his treatment by the government. He died aged 72 and was buried in Kiama cemetery in 1906. He was probably the most photographed black man in New South Wales in his day and, without his family's approval, his face appeared on a stamp in 1938 commemorating the 150th anniversary of Australia's white occupation.

About a year after Mickey's death, Billy Saddler was presented the breastplate inscribed "William Saddler, King of *Illawarra*", seen on page 24. His new royal status did not prevent him and his friends Bill Johnson and Alf Cummins from being charged in 1910 by the Fisheries Inspector with unlawfully impeding, blocking the nets of, three licensed white fishermen on Perkins Beach, Port Kembla. They were found guilty in the Wollongong Court and each fined £1 and costs.

Since 1836, the charade, if that is what it was, had got well out of hand. When in that year, Piper, a guide from the Bathurst region, was given a brass plate by the Surveyor-General, he insisted on the inscription "Conqueror of the Interior" because "there were too many kings already." But the giving of breast plates continued, and not only to kings. Jerry Jerry, who saved the lives of 11 people from the shipwreck of the *Rover* in October 1841 was given one. And when he rescued six-year-old Shepherd Edgecliff Laidley from drowning in the Shoalhaven River, Baraban too was given a breast plate, emblazoned with an illustration of the event. In 1849, while a group of white bystanders stood aghast, 15 men formed a human chain through the raging surf at Batemans Bay to rescue the crew of a stricken schooner. Its captain presented each of them with a brass plate in recognition of their heroism. As unusual as this was, a brass king plate first given to Boongong Nimmitt in 1847 was used in 1949 to crown as both "King of Burrier and Chief of the Burrier Tribe", the white Deputy-Premier of NSW. The Nowra town band played Advance Australia Fair which, the local newspaper noted, was a fitting finale to the ceremony.



King Mickey Johnson, commemorative stamp, 1938.

Taking Back the Land

By the 1860s the day of the gentlemen cattle barons was done, most of their ranches had been subdivided into smaller farms and sold. Everyone realised, if they had not already, that there was no possibility of sharing anything, not the land nor its bounty, with whites. In their eyes, Aboriginal people owned absolutely nothing. Their fisheries were under severe pressure from white commercial interests, they had no title to any of their own land, nowhere to live with security, and nowhere to hunt and harvest freely.

A few dispossessed and angry Dharawal and Dhurga families had successfully got up the noses of Sydney colonial society by setting up camp on the shores of Port Jackson, drinking alcohol, begging, and demanding fishing boats and their land. Further south, by the 1840s, a few more people began to work seasonally, washing sheep, hoeing corn, and reaping. At Twofold Bay three boat crews, numbering 18, were employed at Imlay's whaling factory on the same terms as the white whalers. They built their huts on the Bay opposite the whites and as soon as the fishing season was over they returned to their clans.

In 1872, following prolonged discussion at a corroboree near Braidwood that unusually brought together Gandangara, Dhurga and Dharawal at the same time and place, a delegation of 62 senior people approached the local police officer. An Elder, Jack Bawn, told him,

I have assisted the police for many years, and we want to get some land which we can call our own in reality, where we can settle down, and which the old people can call their home. Everyone objects to our hunting on his land, and we think the blacks are entitled to live in their own country.

Further north, at Jervis Bay, 16 people signed a petition asking the colonial government for their land, saying,

We, the native blacks about Sydney, ask you if you will be kind enough to give us a piece of land at Jervis Bay, where we can make a home for ourselves and our people. We have been hunted about a good deal from one place to another, and we find it hard to get a living for ourselves and our children, but if we get a

chance and some help from the Government we might in time get a living. As it is, we find it very hard. Drink and a hard life are killing us off.

If Mickey Johnson had sought his kingship to claim land, unsuccessfully, Umbarra, King Merriman, used his to secure land around the entrance to the Tuross River. In 1872, with Richard Bollaway and Yarroro, two senior men from the Bodalla region, he began making formal submissions to local officials. Some land was registered by the colonial government as an Aboriginal reserve in 1877, the first successful land claim in Illawarra and the South Coast.

Thirty-two reserves were created in NSW between 1861 and 1884, 27 of them because people demanded to live where they had always seasonally camped. Like Tuross River, most of these reserves were set up before 1883 when the Aborigines Protection Board (APB) was established and recommended that a small amount of Crown (government-owned) land be reserved throughout NSW to which people were encouraged to move. Initially, the reserves were mainly managed by the people themselves, not by any church, and they were not controlled by the Protection Board but were “overseen” by the local copper.



Wallaga Lake Reserve 1898. King Merriman is third from the right.

On the APB reserves, rations were available for the children and the elderly. They consisted of flour, sugar, tea and sometimes meat, and were seldom sufficient to feed a household; at times they did not meet even basic nutritional needs. But the rations were regular and made life a little easier, particularly during the Depression of the 1890s. The rations were cut off by the APB in January 1889 so as "to not support idleness and to induce the able-bodied young men and young women to go away and earn their own living". An angry public meeting was held at Tilba Tilba, a strongly-worded letter of protest was sent to the Board and the rations were restored. Most of the white farmers, some of whom served on the APB Board, realised that without the rations, the pitiful wages they paid would be insufficient to maintain their workforce.

A school was established on the Roseby Park reserve in 1903, a white manager appointed in 1907. Barbara Timbery, who was born on the reserve in 1913, remembers the school and the manager very well.

I went to school on Roseby Park, to the little Aboriginal mission school there. I remember this one day, the manager had this strawberry patch and he would get the kids to go out and collect cow manure for it. Well this day he said to me, "You know what you have to do, you've got a chore to do". He gave me this bucket and wanted me to pick up the cow manure, but it was raw! Raw cow manure! Well I refused and I told him, I said, "I'm not picking that up". You see my mother had told me that I didn't have to do it. So I told him no. I can still remember his name, it was Mr. Garthwaith, and I said "No I'm not going to do that". Well he took me back to the school and pulled my ear and he said, "You're expelled". So I got expelled from that school and went over to the Greenwell Point School instead.

So from then on, I had to row across to the Greenwell Point School every day. The boats weren't very good in those days. They were really just old punts. There was this one time, I was rowing the boat over on my own, when this westerly wind started to close in. I was in the middle of the river, out there near Goodnight Island. I didn't know what to do. Then one of the paddles broke! I thought I'd drift out to sea.

When they turned 14, children were required to work 11 hours a week for their keep. Any man who refused to work on the reserve or in nearby employment for a very low wage was expelled as a trouble-maker. For many men "the mission" as the APB reserves were called, now became not a home but a base from which they travelled to find work and to which they returned to be with their families from the mainly seasonal work they found.

By 1911 when the Aborigines Protection Board had become more active in managing the reserves and in controlling the lives of the estimated 9,000 Aboriginal people in NSW, between 1,500 and 2,000 people lived on 115 reserves of about 10,500 hectares. The Board tried to ensure the assimilation of Aboriginal people into white society by obliterating their cultures and languages, which they were forbidden to practice and speak on the reserves. This proved to be a contradictory process. The Wingham Chronicle and Manning River Observer reported in December 1899 on “one of the most interesting scenes that ever occurred at Wallaga Lake” when Arthur Ashby and Mary Jane Carter, both “very decently dressed”, were married by the Reverend J. Boares under the watchful eye of King Merriman. The political significance of the ceremony was not lost on the 60 people in attendance, including Michael Darcy’s great-great-grandmother, given that the bride and groom were not citizens of the colony and were neither supposed to marry under its law nor appear in its courts other than as defendants.



King Merriman (centre) at a wedding, Wallaga Lake Reserve, 1899,
National Library of Australia.

From 1909, the APB had the power to control all Aboriginal movement, and to remove children from their parents. By 1923, when around 15 per cent of the population lived on the reserves, the Board tried to expel all adults with white ancestry, in the expectation that they would abandon their language and culture and become farm workers and domestic servants. Children with a white parent or grandparent were particularly targeted, taken from their families and placed in private homes, institutions and church-run schools and then sent to work in farms, factories and homes in distant places.

Yuin Elder Eileen Morgan recalls that all the men, including her father and brothers, worked two days each week at Wallaga Lake reserve, cutting blackberry bushes and bracken ferns, and doing other work for the Bate family, which

owned a lot of the land around the reserve. As well,

a lot of the men did work for other farmers, like contract work digging tussocks out and slashing blackberries. The Hoskins - Ned, Walter and Ernie – worked for Southams and Goodridges. The Andys men worked for Hoyers and McFauls. My father and brothers worked for Gowing, pulling corn down at the Murrah, which is a river between Bega and Bermagui on the coast road. They also pulled corn for the Youngs, near the cheese factory at Tilba Tilba. We children would go up where they were working and play hide-and-seek in the corn paddocks. They told us, “Don’t knock the corn down”.

Eileen recollects her childhood as a very happy time, even though Mrs Sampey, the reserve manager’s wife, was very strict with the women. Every Thursday morning, she would call at all the homes to make sure they met her standards of cleanliness, which Eileen thought was very silly, because they always were kept clean, and even the camps were neat and tidy.

It did not take long for 20 or so people to drain the water tank of the small house they shared, but Eileen did not mind. The family would set up camp at the Cricket Ground nearby and wait for the rain to come. “We didn’t ask for permission, we just went. Was Mr Sampey going to bring the water to them?”

In the 1920s when gum leaf music was nationally popular, 14 members of the Wallaga Lake Gum Leaf Band, some of whom are shown here, went on an extensive walking tour of the South Coast, performing hymns, popular and patriotic songs and dance music, accompanying their gum-leaf mouth organs with a kangaroo skin drum and other instruments. They fished and did casual work along the coast until, 700 kilometres and several months later, they arrived in Melbourne to perform at a ball. Some of them marched at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932, later performing with the Cummeragunga Concert Party in a tour of the Goulburn Valley and Riverina District. The Gum Leaf band was formed in 1910 not long after the reserve was established and their brand of traditional music remained popular well beyond the South Coast into the



Gum Leaf Band, Wallaga Lake, 1922, Percy Davis far left, Percy Mumbuller 4th from left, next to Harry Pickalla to the right, Nancy Sinclair.

1950s. It takes many years of practice to play the leaf well; Narooma poet, Herb Patten, is Australia's leading exponent of the art. He especially loves the sound of his totem, the white-bellied sea eagle and he can make many of the calls of the other birds of his country.

The 1929 drought and the 1930s Depression hit savagely. As the labour market collapsed, Aboriginal workers found they were often the first fired and last hired. With 85 per cent out of work, more people than ever before moved onto the reserves, representing one third of the known population of NSW by 1936. Between 1921 and 1939, the number of people living on the Wallaga Lake reserve more than doubled, provoking a severe accommodation crisis and a deterioration in peoples' health.

Under intense pressure from the Unemployed Workers' Movement, Jack Lang's Labour government introduced unemployment relief in 1930 in NSW, and for the first time, Aboriginal unemployed workers, many of them members of unions and of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), were eligible for the dole. But they found to their chagrin that while the changed law did not discriminate between Aboriginal and white unemployed, many of the Department of Labour bureaucrats and police who issued the dole most certainly did.

Unemployed workers only got the dole if they could show that they had done "white man's work" in their previous jobs. This was frequently the case but often hard to prove to the local police who most often refused the dole and told them to relocate to the nearest reserve where they would be given rations valued at half the miserable amount paid to the white unemployed. According to Eileen Pittman,

You used to get lard, tin of treacle, sometimes sugar, other times plain flour. Sometimes you'd get a tin of baking powder. The old butcher used to send the meat out. Sometimes it was rotten, so I told him, "Take it back and give it to your dog. We don't want it". He straightened up after that.

Consequently, in the early years of the Depression, people flooded the government and the Protection Board with complaints about discrimination for the dole, working for inadequate food, and being forced onto the reserves to survive.

An Elder of Wreck Bay explained in 1936,

The government gets revenue out of us. We pay on the railway for our fish to go to market and we pay our fishing licenses just like the white men. When the Depression came, we had a terrible time. We couldn't get the dole although white people got it and this isn't their country. It's our country and yet we couldn't get the dole.

By 1936 these individual grievances had become a wave of meetings, protests and strikes, continuing until 1938 at Wallaga Lake, Menindee, Burnt Bridge, Brewarrina and Purfleet reserves. There was a lot to complain about. White managers, who ran the reserves controlled by the APB, imposed their will on the residents, sometimes benignly but more often arrogantly. Lynette Simms grew up with her six brothers and sisters on the Roseby Park reserve after World War 2, the home of Jack Campbell and his wife Nancy Wellington, who was living there with her family.

It was pretty tough in those days. There were strict rules because we were living under the Welfare [formerly the APB] up there on the mission, under the control of a manager, he was in charge of us. The managers would check on us all the time. They controlled our life, controlled who could come on the mission, who could live there and who had to leave. They sort of ran our lives.

The manager at Wallaga Lake reserve in the 1940s and '50s was a hard man. In 1946 Lionel, Lyle and Wally Mongta started at Central Tilba Public School. Their first day lasted just two hours before they were sent home. On that day, the reserve manager complained to the principal of the public school that he did not want his own children to attend the school with "three black kids". For the next two years, the boys walked for two hours from Central Tilba where they lived, to Wallaga Lake and then home again, to be educated with other Aboriginal children in one of around 30 reserve schools that existed at that time. Pam Flanders, when she was not travelling with her mum and dad to Bega, Nerrigundah and Bodalla to pick beans, attended the school around that time.

My memories of the school at Wallaga Lake are wonderful. We had a lovely teacher. His name was John Mosher. On the weekends, Mr Mosher would take us kids camping, not in tents, just sleeping on the beach, with blankets under the trees and on the sand. We would play ball games and go fishing and eat lots of fruit. I remember the little old black canvas hood car that he would drive us to the beach in. He was very good to us all. I had a beautiful childhood.

But quite a few people tired of the authoritarianism of the APB reserves and walked off to set up their own camps. Free communities existed at the Cricket Ground at Wallaga Lake, at Currambine Creek near Huskisson, at Worrigee near Nowra and at Salt Pan Creek near Revesby. They were a magnet to and a refuge for those who could no longer live under dictatorial white management.

Some families continued to live in fishing camps along the South Coast. The Brierlys at the mouth of the Moruya River have been fishing commercially at least since the 1840s and the Nyes at Barling's Beach near Tomkin made a good living from the sea, supplemented by seasonal farming work. Wreck Bay had been a fishing camp for thousands of years, and by 1915 the Ardler, Bloxsome, Campbell, Cooley and Nyberg families had settled in there. Shortly after World War 1, the Timbery family rowed south from La Perouse to join them.

People built their own houses near the Bora grounds overlooking the two smaller bays, Summercloud and Mary, while living in tents made out of hessian sacks. They soon erected house frames from timber collected in the bush and covered them with bark from the stringy-bark trees growing around Blacks' Waterhole after they had softened it over the fire and flattened it under weight. The hessian from the tents was then fastened to the interior walls and white-washed with pipe clay from a nearby deposit. Driftwood was fashioned into flooring and furniture, and shutters added for light and ventilation. It was not much, but it was home.

About a decade later, in 1928, at a meeting overlooking Summercloud Bay, the community of Wreck Bay debated the pros and cons of remaining free. In the end, they voted formally for Wreck Bay to come under the Protection Board where it remained until 1965. Official reserve status brought an improvement in rivers. In the early 1930s, residents were provided with timber and corrugated iron with which they built new homes, and during the 1940s twenty proper cottages were built at last.

The Bloxsome, Butler and Nyberg families had dissented from the decision to become a mission, opted for freedom and left the reserve. But when a school started in the Bay, the dissident



Wreck Bay Football Team 1907, Brian Egloff.

families moved back to the reserve as racism was rampant at the primary school in Huskisson. The new school teacher at Wreck Bay was also the reserve manager, but he spent a good part of his day walking to and from the reserve and in undertaking administrative duties. This suited the children admirably, for classes lasted only a few hours each day, even less if their fathers and uncles landed a big catch.

The community survived as it always had, from the sea. By horse and cart and then by truck, loads of fish, sometimes hundreds of boxes, were carted along the treacherous road to the rail head at Bomaderry. Arthur McLeod remembers eight four-man crews bringing in tons of fish in the 1940s.

By the 1960s, residential expansion at Wreck Bay was threatening the community. In January 1965, people were alarmed to learn that the federal government intended to allow whites to settle in three vacant houses, from which people had been evicted for failure to pay rent. Most of the community signed a petition expressing their fears for their land and for their way of life, emphasising that they wished to stay together as an Aboriginal community. A compromise was eventually reached in which one Aboriginal family was allowed to move back into a vacant house, and the government assured the community that no Aboriginal family would be evicted to make way for a white family.

Black Diggers and the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association

When the First World War broke out in 1914, Aboriginal people were still not considered citizens of Australia, but were wards of the local Protector of Aborigines. They were paid low wages, could not vote, marry non-Aboriginal partners, buy property or enter a public bar, yet many young men wanted to join up and fight for Australia. It was not unemployment that drove them to it, for according to their enlistment papers, almost all of them had a job – as a farmhand, truck driver, butcher, musician or journalist.

They wanted to sign up to escape from the Aborigines Persecution Board and to experience freedom, but the law prevented those not of “substantially European descent” from enlisting. Many who tried to enlist were rejected because of their Aboriginality, but others slipped through by saying they were Māori, Pacific Islanders, Indian, Jewish or Portuguese. Following the defeat of the national referendum for conscription in 1917, these restrictions were changed to say that

Half-castes may be enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force provided that the examining Medical Officers are satisfied that one of the parents is of European origin.

Despite these difficulties, around 1,000 managed to join the AIF, out of an eligible male population of 15,000. About one third were killed in action or died of wounds or disease. After fighting and surviving side-by-side with whites, and earning equal (and high) pay, the men who returned home found that they could not buy a beer for their trench-mates. Their wives were still not permitted to give birth in a hospital. Merv Penrith’s mother was refused admission. Shirley Foster was born in a tent and Allan Carriage’s mum was born in a tin hut on Hill 60, where Granny Andy was the midwife.

Hubert Timbery, born to Joseph and Lizzie in Port Kembla, enlisted in 1917 when he was 18. While he was treated equally during the war, when he was discharged and applied for a veteran’s land grant, a soldier settler block, he found that they were given to white ex-servicemen only. Although 154 NSW men had volunteered and fought overseas in the war, there was no land for them. Only one returned serviceman, George Kennedy, managed to secure a block at Yelta.



Walter Andrews from Milton Ulladulla served in WW1 along with his brothers Arthur and Thomas.

Andy Bond, awarded medals, was moved from his home at Wallaga Lake to a place on Merriman Island 20 years later, an impossible situation. It is a sacred place for the Yuin people, and no boat was provided.

If anything, conditions had worsened. The Protection Board had taken children away from their mothers while their fathers fought in the war to protect them. Some had land on their reserves taken while they were fighting to protect it. The most productive land on the reserves was handed over to white farmers, particularly to white returned servicemen, as part of their repatriation. Between 1913 and 1929, 50 per cent of the land previously won as Aboriginal reserves in NSW was taken away, including King Merriman's initial claim at Tuross River.

At the same time, the systematic removal of children was escalating. In 1915, Robert Donaldson had resigned the position he had held on the Aborigines Protection Board since 1904, in order to take up one of the positions of Inspector created by the new legislation for which he had been fighting for many years as a Board member. The new laws gave him and other inspectors the power to remove as many children as they could from their families. It seemed that Donaldson's mission in life was to break up families and disperse communities. He could see nothing good in Aboriginal people at all. Until 1929, he relentlessly travelled the state, selecting children and removing them from their families. Known as the Kids Collector, he was the most feared and hated man in NSW.

Donaldson visited Eileen Morgan's school at Wallaga Lake reserve taught by its manager Mr Sampey, "about once every three months" to select children to take away with him.

Mothers were always worried about when he was coming because they were scared of him taking their children away. Many children, girls and boys, were taken away and put in institutions like the Bomaderry children's home and the other homes at Cootamundra and Kinchela.

One day in 1925, Jack Campbell was told to stay home from class. His parents had been warned that Inspector Donaldson would be raiding the reserve's school in the Macleay Valley. But the Inspector wanted the Campbell children; as he approached their home, Jack's mother fired a shotgun over his head and he scarpered back to Kempsey to fetch the police. The Campbells grabbed what they could and headed south down the coast in Jack's father's fishing boat.

After a few months, they left the closely supervised La Perouse reserve, and settled happily with 13 other families in the

community at Salt Pan Creek near Revesby, joining other refugees from APB control. Guboo Ted Thomas had arrived in 1924, having walked off the reserve at Wallaga Lake. Others from the South Coast turned up too, including Paddy Pittman and Jimmy Lukum who, according to Guboo Ted, had been “hunted off Roseby Park for shit-stirring the manager”. Jack Campbell was about 10 when he arrived by boat in 1926, and Selina and Jack Patten and their growing family joined his younger brother George and his dad there in 1929.

Joe Anderson, a descendent of one of the Dharawal men who first challenged James Cook and a nephew of Queen Rosie, also lived at Salt Pan Creek; he was also active in trying to secure the land, talking to the newspapers and attending meetings of the newly formed Australian Aborigines Progressive Association, which was particularly strong on the NSW north coast. The AAPA fought against the removal of children, for citizenship, for land rights and for Aboriginal culture. The Association wanted the Aborigines Protection Board to be abolished and replaced by an organisation controlled and staffed by Aboriginal people, and it called on the Lang Labor government to set up a Royal Commission into Aboriginal affairs. In its first six months, this all-Aboriginal organisation, with the motto Australia for Australians on its logo (seen here at left) and its demand for Aboriginal self-determination, had 500 members in 16 branches throughout NSW. In 1925, it held two conferences, the first in Sydney, which attracted 250 people and the second in Kempsey, which drew about 700.



Joe Anderson (seen here at right) talked on a soapbox at Paddy's Markets in Sydney on Friday nights about the Protection Board taking land and children away. His brother John (Jackie) was a silent movie actor, who appeared in *Robbery Under Arms* (1920) and *The Dingo* (1923). In 1933, Joe entitled himself King Burruga to demand Aboriginal representation in Federal Parliament and “more than white man's charity, the right to live!” on the Cinesound news that was played in picture theatres all around Australia. He appeared in the local press which called him the King of Thirroul.

The AAPA petitioned the NSW Premier Jack Lang, conservative Prime Minister Joseph Lyons and Governor General Isaac Isaacs in the search for a better deal. AAPA founding member Jane Duren, an Elder from Moruya fluent in the Dhurga



King Burruga, 1933, National Museum of Australia.

language, took up the fight. Despite education being compulsory, some public schools refused to enrol Aboriginal children and many of those that did would only allow them up to Year 4. "If you had one drop of Aboriginal blood in you, you couldn't be educated past fourth class," Bobby Davis said. "It was disgusting". Policies supporting segregation permitted children to attend their local public school only if they were adequately dressed and well fed, "clean, clad and courteous". From 1902, with its "exclusion on demand" policy, the NSW Minister of Education could direct head teachers to expel Aboriginal children at the request of white parents.

The Batemans Bay primary school had excluded 20 Aboriginal pupils, including Jane Duren's grandchild, and would only enrol white pupils. Jane organised local protests and wrote letter after letter explaining the situation to every person she thought might be able to end the discrimination, including to George V, the King of England. In her registered letter received at Buckingham Palace on July 27 1926 she wrote:

I beg to state that it is months and months since those children were at school and it is a shame to see them going about without education. At Batemans Bay there is a public school and why are those not allowed to attend when the school is public? Another thing Your Majesty we have compulsory education, why are they not compelled to attend school?

Even though she had written "to the Minister of Education, the Child Welfare Department, the Aborigines Protection Board, and to local Members of Parliament I cannot get fair play". She advised the King,

Even the reserve land where the coloured race were bred and born, the white race are trying to have them turned off on to another piece of land. It is unfair and I hope you will see that fair play be given to let them stay on the land that was granted to them.

Her protests were successful, and land within the town was secured, close to the school and near the sawmills where several men worked.

Hill 60

In great excitement, Rita Timbery-Bennett, George “Trimmer” Timbery and future King, William Saddler, rowed a government boat from La Perouse to the camp at Hill 60 in Port Kembla in seven hours in 1876. They had decided to set up a commercial fishing operation at the ancient campsite there and were soon feeding their own community then selling the surplus to the whites. Later they obtained more government boats, engaged more workers and began railing the iced fish to the Sydney fish market.

The settlements at Hill 60, at nearby Red Point, Coomaditchie and Tom Thumb’s Lagoon accounted for most of the 200 people living in Port Kembla and Wollongong in 1901 when the NSW government re-appropriated the land in order to transform Tom Thumb's Lagoon into Port Kembla Harbour. People resisted the attempt by the Aborigines Protection Board to force them from the Lagoon onto the official reserves in 1904. Only one family moved to the Roseby Park reserve near Nowra, the rest stayed put in their homes. But the APB called in the police and they were forcibly evicted. That year at Red Point, and again in 1914, the NSW Public Works Department tried to force people off their land.

In 1927, Joe Timbery wrote to the Central Illawarra Council to obtain security of tenure on Hill 60. In August the following year, a letter from the Association for the Protection of Native Races of Australasia also asked the Council, which planned to remove them from their land, for security of tenure for those living on the Hill. A number of residents also lodged applications to secure land titles.

Very surprisingly given its behaviour 20 years earlier, support came from the Aborigines Protection Board, which wrote that “as they are law-abiding and peaceful, a grave injustice would be done to them by interfering with their present mode of life”, and asked that no further action be taken to evict them. The Board enclosed a copy of a letter from the Port Kembla Progress Association, which advised the APB that “the Aborigines do not live on charity, and objection cannot be taken against them” and that the Port Kembla golf club, which had tried to have them evicted in 1923, now “takes no objection to them”.

The population on the Hill grew. It was an important link in the chain of still active ancient seasonal coastal camps that stretched from La Perouse to across the Victorian border. Jack Anderson had left Salt Pan Creek in 1938 to work on the

Port Kembla waterfront, where he was known as the Black Prince. He lived on Hill 60 with the families of his Aboriginal workmates, along with Horrie Duggans who was fishing by boat off Fisherman's Beach.

Dharawal was the *lingua franca* on the Hill, to Bill Holmes' dismay. A white man, he could not speak the language. No one had a car and bicycles were scarce, but one of Bill's jobs was to make the weekly grocery run into Wollongong, close to an hour's trip by horse and cart.

Nearly all the shopping was done in Wollongong and you drove to Wollongong every Saturday morning in the horse and cart. You'd tie the horse up on a verandah rail, just the same as you drive a car in today and park it. Only you could park your horse then, but you can't park your car now.

After World War 2 was declared, a military command centre was needed to defend Illawarra from the advancing Japanese. Where better than Hill 60, which had been an ocean observatory for thousands of years. The community at



Hill 60 in WW2, Australian War Memorial.

Hill 60 had been resolutely anti-fascist since the 1930s when they had thrown their weight into the bitter industrial dispute that eventually halted the shipping of war material from Australia to Japan. Nonetheless, Ossie Douglas and George Hampton had lovely cottages and gardens there and to give up one's home, to have it pulled down, cut up and sold, was a big sacrifice, one that no other section of the Illawarra population had been asked to make. During September 1942, the inhabitants left Hill 60; some, like Muriel Davis' family, went to Bundiwalla near Berry, then all around Lake Illawarra. Many people set up camp nearby among the sand dunes along Port Kembla beach and around Coomaditchie Lagoon, which Wollongong Council had declared an Official Camp for the unemployed in 1932. Many lived in sugar bag shacks and in other shelters of their own creation.

Eventually, when Heather Ball was two years old, she moved with her family into one of six little weatherboard houses at Coomaditchie, with seven more homes promised to replace those pulled down on the Hill in 1942. During the early 1950s, people regained the use of the area, and their affiliation to the place was again made clear in 1955 when residents told a government land inspector that they had no intention of moving. The Aboriginal Welfare Board (formerly the APB) applied more direct pressure to force them into Housing Commission houses planned for the surrounding area, and by March 1957 it had begun assisting in evictions of residents. In 1958, on behalf of 10 other Aboriginal families, Jack Tattersall wrote to the Minister of Lands appealing once again for secure tenure so that homes could be built for them on the site, and the families successfully resisted relocation.

The community had hoped to extend their ownership of Defence Department land, but in 1967 the area immediately behind Coomaditchie was turned over to sand mining. Uncle Fred Moore remembered being

shocked at the way they had pulled all the sand out, the way they did. They came right back, almost to the back door of people's houses, and that ended our hopes of trying to get that, because the sea come in and flooded up and it was no good. It was just a big hollow and a hole. It was a very dismal type of place. Then all of a sudden there was a council tip in there. That is how they treated the people.

Years later, Elder Reuben Brown was still making his people's connection with this place very clear.

On this land here is where my wife's mother and my great-grandmother's little sister lived in a tin shed. This is where they lived until about 1942 when the army moved them out, but that doesn't change the fact that over there is where our ancestors have been buried. We were born and raised on this land, and our ancestors were born and raised on this land - and we have never left there. They want to sell the land from under us. We've got to do something to make sure that it doesn't happen.

He was speaking at a rally of about 200 people to prevent the privatisation of the Defence Department land in August 2001. "This land was taken from the Aboriginal people," Wollongong City Council Aboriginal community development officer Sharralyn Robinson said. "We are sending a message to the government: Our land is not for sale." The rally unanimously called for the withdrawal of the sale of the land and its return to the local community. "It's sad that the government hasn't approached the community or the Elders, and just put up a For Sale sign," said Wodi Wodi Elder

Allan Carriage. "Hill 60 has a history that should be protected. It's common sense that the land should be dedicated back to the community." After lengthy negotiations and intense lobbying, in December 2001, Hill 60 was included in the NSW State Heritage Register.



Hill 60 Rally, Michael Organ.

World War Two and the Dog Licence

In 1937, while the Spanish Civil War and the Chinese struggle against the Japanese invasion were raging, William Ferguson, Jack Patten, Bert Groves and Pearl Gibbs formed the Aborigines' Progressive Association (APA). The Australian Aborigines Progressive Association had dissolved in 1927, but the new organisation continued the fight to improve the appalling conditions on many of the reserves, for basic human rights and for the abolition of the hated Aborigines Protection Board. Pearl, from Dubbo, was picking peas with her mother and stepfather near Nowra, organising the pickers to win better working and living conditions. She encouraged the women at the Wallaga Lake reserve to defy the manager and resist the regulation that they could shop only while he was present.

By 1938, the year that King Mickey Johnson's face appeared on a stamp commemorating the 150th anniversary of white occupation, the APA, with Pearl as its secretary, comprised 118 activists in 19 NSW communities. On 26 January, while white Australia celebrated the 150th anniversary of the arrival of men in chains, Pearl and William Cooper, Doug Nicholls along with Jack and George Patten and others connected with the Salt Pan Creek community, joined about 100 people in Sydney to observe a National Day of Mourning. The conference they convened strongly and unanimously condemned the maltreatment of people on the Aborigines Protection Board reserves. It called for citizenship rights and equality of opportunity in employment and education, and for the ownership of the land. Pearl, whose picture here appears also as a large mural at the corner of Darling and Trabelgar Streets in Dubbo, told a meeting of the Progressive Housewives Association,



Pearl Gibbs, organiser for the Aboriginal Progressive Association, 1954.

You white people awoke on Anniversary Day with a feeling of pride at what you had done during those 150 years, but did you think of the Aborigines' broken hearts, and that for them it was a day of mourning? What has any white man or woman done in this country to help my people, the Aborigines? The Aborigines are now taking up the matter for themselves, and asking for citizenship. It is not ridiculous or silly for them to ask for citizenship in a country that is their own.

In 1941 Pearl spoke for civil rights on 2WL in Wollongong, the first radio broadcast by an Aboriginal woman.

When the Dalfram dispute erupted on the Port Kembla waterfront at the end of 1938 and woke the nation up to the Menzies government's material support for the brutal Japanese invasion of China, Roy Burns and his brother Jack Tattersall, Bill Holmes, Stan Speechley, Lou Duren, Jack Anderson, Johnny Cummins, Danny Bell and the Booths, altogether a dozen or so wharfies, mobilised the support of the rest of the Aboriginal community for their workmates and for the Dalfram seamen too. People worked hard over two months to care for the locked-out wharfies and seafarers and their families and to assist the campaign. The skills of well-respected heavyweight boxer Roy "the Rock" Burns were well deployed. Elsie Sparks walked into the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) office in Wollongong to volunteer and was soon hard at work sorting out and replying to the deluge of correspondence from all over Australia and the world that poured in during the bitter fight that saw 4,000 steelworkers sacked over Christmas, but ended the export of war material to Japan.

The Australian Aborigines' League, established in Melbourne in 1932 to fight for parliamentary representation and equal rights, suggested the formation of an Aboriginal citizen corps to fight in the world war that the League could see coming. Some suggested that Aboriginal units, for combat or for tracking, be set up. In December 1938, Secretary William Cooper took a delegation from the League to the German consulate to protest against the persecution of Jews and others by the Nazis and subsequently compared this with the treatment of Aboriginal people.

By January 1939, the League had changed its view, saying that there should be no enlistment for Aboriginal people unless they were citizens. A nation that treated its people as less than human should not be defended. William Cooper had lost his son in World War 1 and was angry that such sacrifices had changed nothing. He spoke plainly:

The Aborigine now has no status, no rights, no land. He has no country and nothing to fight for but the privilege of defending the land which was taken from him by the white race without compensation or even kindness.

In the early 1940s, the Aborigines Protection Board was replaced by the Aborigines' Welfare Board (AWB) and people elected William Ferguson and another representative onto it. Men were encouraged to sign up as soldiers, with the promise of full citizenship after the war, and hundreds served in the 2nd AIF (Australian Imperial Force) and in the militia. Unlike in World War 1, volunteers found it surprisingly easy to enlist in the first year of the war, but from late 1940 they were turned away after the government altered the rules to exclude many non-whites. The government decided that Aboriginal enlistment was "neither necessary nor desirable", partly because it feared white soldiers would object, though

there seems to have been little racial strife in the armed services. However, when Japan entered the war, more enlisted as combatants and joined the Volunteer Defence Corps or were conscripted into the labour corps, the Civil Constructional Service. About 3,000 served in the Civil Constructional Service, working in Illawarra and all over Australia on war projects. The same number fought overseas, and many were killed, or died as prisoners of war.

The war had a huge, immediate and unpleasant effect on everyone in Illawarra, particularly on the people who lived in and around Port Kembla. The area became Fortress Kembla, comprising three substantial emplacements at the harbour, Mount St. Thomas and Hill 60 for massive guns to repel invasion and with anti-aircraft guns linked to radar stations at Croom Hill and Mount Warrigal. The control centre of this lethal network, seen earlier, was to be built on the ancient lookout at Hill 60. The nearby Steeltown School was closed down and the families living on the Hill and the beach were asked to move. With very heavy hearts, they complied.

The people living on Hill 60 had fought and won the dispute against “Pig Iron Bob” Menzies, and well understood fascism and the importance of practically combating it. Wharfies were barred from joining the military, so Lou Duren and others enlisted in the Volunteer Defence Corps instead.

We used to go out to Barrack Point for weekends, learning to throw grenades. They had little condensed milk cans from the factory, half-filled with sand and sealed up. You had to throw these so you knew just how to lob the grenades. We learned how to use machine guns and some other sorts of guns, four or five different sorts, but I don’t remember ever using an Owen gun. It was quite good. I thoroughly enjoyed myself out there.

At the war’s end, the United Nations, in a 1948 Convention, defined genocide as “acts committed to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”. But this gave little comfort to the men who had returned from defeating those who perpetrated genocide in Europe. Just as after World War 1, they lost reserve land: more than half of what little was left was taken away by 1963, and they came back to treatment from white Australia that was the same or worse than when they sailed overseas to defend it.

Like Leslie Stewart who returned from the war, Standalene Chapman, who had served in the Women’s Australian Army Corps, avoided clubs and hotels which were generally unfriendly places for women of all colours. But when Jim Davis’

dad came home from six years in the Middle East and New Guinea in 1945 having been twice cited for the Victoria Cross, he was refused entry to the Batemans Bay Returned Services League. Most Aboriginal ex-service men and women were barred from RSL clubs, except on Anzac Day. Joyce Donovan's uncle was made to go to the back door of the RSL to get someone to pass him a beer to drink outside.

In 1940, the NSW government had offered people a "limited form of citizenship" that meant that they could apply to the Welfare Board for a certificate which, theoretically, gave them the same rights as whites. These included the rights to vote, to pensions and to the unemployment benefit, to attend state schools, to drink in hotels, to travel freely and to receive award wages and working conditions.

The Certificate of Exemption, shown here (at right), was a licence to live in the white world, but getting one required total commitment. Only when applicants had convinced the sceptical District Welfare Officers that they had cut themselves off from their family, culture, language and land would they be rewarded with a certificate that the AWB said would make it less likely that their children would be taken away from them. Diligent attentiveness to the District Welfare Officers' advice would make their families eligible for a house in town, away from the influence of the reserve. The certificate was known as the "dog licence" because, as Henry Hardy explained, to get one you had to submit to being on a leash.

Her own family could not have a drink with Auntie Dorrie Moore in the Adelaide Hotel in Moruya where she worked, unless they had a dog licence. People who had one were expected not to associate with people who were not licensed, including members of their own families. The Welfare Board employed officers to check that certificate holders were living like respectable white people. According to Auntie Dorrie's niece, Maureen Davis, people had to prove that they too were respectable, and essentially to disown their Aboriginality.

NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT
ABORIGINES PROTECTION ACT, 1909-1943, SECTION 18c.
[REGULATION 56]
CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION
From Provisions of the Act and Regulations

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that

..... Aborigine, aged years, residing at

.....


is a person who in the opinion of the Aborigines Welfare Board, ought no longer be subject to the provisions/following provisions of the Aborigines Protection Act and Regulations, or any of such provisions, and he/she is accordingly exempted from such provisions:—

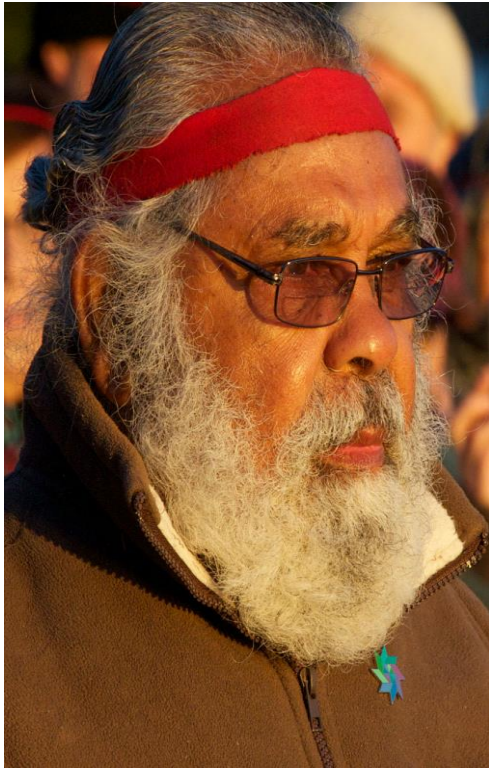
.....

..... Photograph of

Issued in compliance with the Resolution of the
Aborigines Welfare Board and dated the
..... day of
..... Chairman.
..... Member.
..... of the Aborigines Welfare Board.

Countersigned by
The Secretary,
.....





Yuin Elder Max Harrison, 2015, Ngaran
Ngaran Culture Awareness.

Once this licence was issued, you couldn't visit your family who remained on Wallaga Lake Mission and other reserves. You couldn't speak the language, or practice the culture. Our Elders did practice the culture, but it was all kept under lock and key with these licences. It was a licence that stripped us of our culture, our language, our family.

Elder Max Harrison was living off the reserve and working at a saw mill along the South Coast.

But I was still faced with that when I came down to visit mum and the family living on Wallaga because I still had to come and report to the white manager of the mission about who I was coming to see and how long I'd be there. He had a lot of power and we had no rights then, not under the Welfare Board. He could say yes or no, and if it was no, then we would drive away or go back off Wallaga and come back down around the lake way. I did that a couple of times when he wouldn't let me see Mum.

See, I was out working in the white community and I was supposed to stay out that way so that people could look on me as being a white man, assimilated, you know. And it wouldn't look too good if this hard-working black man was coming in from being a hard worker out there, coming into a place where Aboriginals had to be controlled. So I thought, "Shit, what's going on?"

Thousands of people could see what was going on, and they did not like it. Despite the freedoms and protections promised by the Certificate of Exemption, of the 14,000 people eligible in NSW, only 1,500 applied for it.

Seasonal Workers and the South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League

In the early 1930s, white farmers had begun growing beans and peas for the Sydney market and as the industry slowly grew it employed many seasonal workers like Billy Johnson who travelled and worked with 100 to 150 other pickers on farms along the South Coast. Ossie Cruse recalls,

It would be nothing for you to go to a place like Bairnsdale, Bega or Bodalla and you'd find three to six hundred Kooris just coming for the picking in the bean paddock. And they were good days when people used to share, share a lot.

This pattern of seasonal movement and work was consistent with long-established and not forgotten cycles, and for more than 30 years, many family groups, including Mary Duroux's, journeyed up and down the 350km coastal strip between Nowra and Nerrigundah as the seasons and the farmers required. Doris Kirby recollects the experience.

We had so many miles of road walking, we had to camp on the way. No one would give you a ride, we never ever got a ride. If you didn't have your fare to go on the bus, you just had to walk. People didn't have any cars in those days. Only the rich lads, only a few had cars. And when we were on the move, you had just a little swag, just a billy and a few things.



Mary Duroux at Wallaga Lake, 1952.

In later years, farmers began trucking pickers and their families, including Irene Moran's, from their reserves and camps to the farms.

They used to pick us up and take us to the bean paddocks. We all used to travel in cattle trucks, just like a herd of cattle. It was always full up. A lot of us used to sit on the edge and put our legs over the side, going through the towns and everything else. A lot of Aboriginal people travelled a lot. We had a travelling group.

Picking work peaked during the 1950s and 1960s, and some remember this life as a generally happy time, travelling

seasonally through country and living in camps. as their ancestors had done. Doris Kirby reflects,

We never had much. You might as well say we never had possessions really, just a few clothes. Oh, I enjoyed those times! They were happy days, I reckon. I remember one Christmas we only had damper to eat, damper and syrup, but we weren't whingeing. Oh, it would be lovely to go and live like that again. It'd take all the pressure off. You won't have any phone bills or electricity sort of thing. If I could live like that again, I would, I think. I would! Back then, I reckon the people were closer. Nowadays it's just greed.



Bean pickers, Nowra, Wollongong City Council Library.

Most of the people picking with Linda Davis' family were related. Pickers were often employed not individually but as a group, on the basis of the mostly amicable personal relationships that existed between the farmer and the Elders. Jeff Tungai was acutely aware that this relationship was not an equal one.

We'd be picking beans at Eurobodalla for Bob Lavis. And all the boys would be there - Colin Little, Harold Little and a few more. And we were saying, "Pick away boys. Make the white man rich. Keep him going, getting richer and richer and he'll have all the money, we'll have none". Anyway, we bought him a truck, tractor and God knows what else. We'll buy him a helicopter soon. "Keep going, keep working, keep slaving your guts out, making the white man rich". But you couldn't stop them! They wanted to work for the white man, making him richer and richer. We'd have bought half of Bodalla out now and we've got nothing left.

Linda Davis recalls living as a child around Bodalla in tents, bark huts made by her father, or in old barns along the river. Pearl Brown, who lived on Rowley's farm with her family in only one room, was happy to leave it for one of the little white huts on the hillside at Keith Lavis' place. It, too, had no sink, shower, toilet or electricity, but at least it had two rooms and a kitchen. She and her five brothers and five sisters worked with her grandmother, born in the 1870s, picking beans, peas, corn and pumpkins. After school, they would quickly change into work clothes and go to the fields to help Nanna.

In winter, we used to have to ford a freezing cold river to work in the corn paddock. It used to be really cold, our feet used to nearly fall off.

There was no rest during the school holidays either. It was, she recalls "a pretty heavy life". The hours were long, the work was hard and people's health suffered. For Cheryl Carpenter, it was not only hard going, but also her education suffered.

We had to crawl along on our knees. Sometimes we had to do the picking in the rain and we'd get all wet and muddy. Our workday was pretty long. We'd start about six o'clock in the morning and then we'd work until about four or five o'clock in the afternoon. We had an hour break for lunch. I hardly had any schooling. We were taken out of school in the picking season.

Staying in the camps was seldom romantic, particularly in bad weather. Eileen Pittman lived for eight years with 11 of her family in one tent. Cheryl Carpenter had to collect water from a rainwater tank and then heat it up in an old kerosene tin over an open fire to make cups of tea, to have a wash after work and to wash clothes.

Although it was a very tough life, many people have positive memories of the picking times because other work was hard to find, and they could follow the seasons, live as a clan, practise traditional ways, eat healthy food often, speak their own languages, travel through and teach their children about country, its Law and history. They organised their own work without the persistent supervision of a white boss.

But by the mid-1960s, the introduction of picking machinery coincided with a downturn in the bean market. As Cyril Parsons said, "They bought the machinery in after a while and that cut out a lot of work that people used to do". In 1965, the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Commission approved equal pay for Aboriginal workers and the pickers were frequently replaced by whites who drove the machinery that displaced them. By the mid-1970s, the travelling life was over.

The mechanisation of vegetable picking exacerbated the housing problem. Those pickers who had lived where they worked could no longer do so. In the 1960s, a survey of Aboriginal housing in NSW revealed that 38 per cent of households had no water supply, 41 per cent had no garbage disposal service, 37 per cent of dwellings were shacks, and more than half had insufficient beds. Gastric and respiratory diseases were exacting a heavy toll, especially on children.

While Bill Crome and Art Riches renovated the houses at Wallaga Lake reserve, Percy Mumbler, Bob Brown from Wreck Bay, his daughter Belle McLeod and others worked successfully with John Hatton, Deputy-President of Shoalhaven Shire, to have unoccupied workers' cottages from the completed Snowy Mountains scheme transported 300 kilometres to Shire land in Nowra. Most of the houses were put in Mumbulla Street, named in honour of Percy's mother, the Queen, who had lived at the famous and much-loved camp at Worrigee on the river bank just south-west of Nowra.

The six additional houses promised for the Coomaditchie reserve have never materialised, and the six that were built were small and not up to white housing standards, relying on wood burning for hot water and heating. But they were well-liked by the people who lived in them. Their friends and relatives were enduring a lot worse. Dolly Henry and her

eight children slept in one tent. Bobby Davis and Mary Davis, who had been stolen as a baby, were living in an abandoned car with their first child Richard. She had made it into a home as best she could, making curtains for the windows for privacy. "Aboriginal people had been treated so badly for so long, they were distrustful of whites", said Fred Moore, an aspiring boxer working at Nebo colliery, whose dad had fought the New Guard in the 1930s. "The first time I met Mary she peeped her head through those curtains and drew them shut again. She didn't get out of the car". Jack Tattersall, a wharfie and the father of Aunty Barbara Nicholson, and others were doing all they could to improve conditions, and help was on the way.

Joe Howe, a white communist, was working on the waterfront in Cairns when he met Joe McGinniss, a charismatic national leader of the Aboriginal Advancement League. Joe was so fired up by the encounter that when he returned to Wollongong he got in touch with Fred Moore, and his friend Bobby Davis, with whom he had worked on the waterfront. "We just couldn't stand by any longer and watch the White Australia policy treat the people like second-class citizens. It was terrible, shocking, what they did", said Fred. They decided to establish a branch of the Advancement League in Wollongong, after they had undertaken a study of peoples' living conditions on the South Coast.

The survey that they organised of seasonal pickers' housing and working conditions was probably the first sociological investigation undertaken in Illawarra. Helen Hambly, a white real estate agent who supplied the car, Dick Hunter and Ray Peckham from the building union, Joe Howe, together with Ted Harvey from the South Coast Labour Council (SCLC), all members of the Communist Party (CPA), travelled along the coast in December 1961 with Fred Moore. Fred and Ted stopped at Nowra to talk with Nan Campbell and Norma Sharman about forming a branch of the Advancement League there.

The others continued south, but stropky blacks and communists were not liked by reserve managers and they were refused entry to speak with the residents. Nonetheless, they managed to talk with people from each reserve. They were shocked by the inequality, discrimination and poor treatment they were told about. They discovered that pickers were earning £5 for a week of 12-hour days while the minimum weekly wage was £14 for eight-hour days. The study also reported that when a family travelled through a town, since they were not permitted to stay in boarding houses, the women and children would routinely sleep in the railway station and the men in the park.

The introduction to the report that Joe Howe presented to the SCLC noted that Australia's Aboriginal peoples had been made "second rate citizens" who were kept "deliberately in a humiliating condition" by both Liberal and ALP governments both of which had tried unsuccessfully to destroy "a National group with a nationality, history, and culture in their own right".

Our Aboriginal people have been hampered in their just fight to be treated as human beings in accordance with the Charter of Human rights, as endorsed by the United Nations. Through bitter experience they see governments and employers as their enemies. They are unionists, some of them, they are part of the Australian Labour movement. We in our Unions, do not practice discrimination. Our Aboriginal people are fighting for freedom in common with the African people, American negroes and others. Greet our Aborigines as friends. Your co-operation will end discrimination.

But there was also a change of emphasis in the report. It was entitled *Survey into Living and Social Conditions of Aboriginal People from Wollongong to the Victorian Border* but the concerns of the people they spoke with had shifted the investigators' initial focus away from work and living conditions to land. They found the residents at Wallaga Lake very worried that the Welfare Board would sell their land, just as it had done in 1949 with a large chunk of the reserve called Akolele, desecrating the burial grounds there. At Nowra, they found that the reserve at Roseby Park established in 1900 had come under direct threat and the people they met with insisted that land, particularly the retention and protection of the reserve, was the issue of greatest importance to them, for even after 60 years as a reserve, they still had no security of tenure. In a country that was all theirs, they still had no land at all. The Report noted,

At Roseby Park, a road has been surveyed through the property and the people fear that the Aborigines Welfare Board is planning to sell a part of their land. The Aborigine people everywhere are proud of the land where they live and strongly resent the repeated moves by the Board, to sell or lease the land. One of their main needs is to ensure that the last remaining pieces of land that are now Stations or Reserves are kept intact and become the property of the Aborigine people themselves. They ask for support from all people in this struggle to retain these areas of land, that they have for so long regarded as their property.



(L to R) Fred Moore, Olga Booth, Jock Delaney,
Mary Davis, Dolly Henry, Bobby Davis,
Canberra, 1963.

The report had its intended effect, galvanizing Aboriginal and white unionists into action. Mary Davis, Olga Booth, Gladys Douglas, Bob Davis, Dolly Henry, Linda Kennedy, Rhonda Delaney, Joe Howe and Fred Moore founded the South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League (SCAAL) in November 1961. With Bobby Davis, a grandson of Jane Duren, as its spokesman and Jock Delaney as his white chauffeur, it set about campaigning for equality and decent housing and to put an end to racial discrimination in Illawarra. SCAAL demanded justice from local government and state politicians, particularly in securing land, improving housing and ending racial discrimination. Richard Davis says of his mother Mary,

When something was needed for her people she'd find the ways and means. She'd knock on doors and go to the government agencies and push for what was needed. She was never shy, never scared or intimidated.

For although land was a high priority, it was everyday racism that occupied most of SCAAL's attention. State laws determined where people could go, what they could do, and how they could live. With the help of communists Joe Howe and Joe Davis and other militants of the WWF, the right for Aboriginal workers to drink in Port Kembla and Wollongong hotels was won and enforced. Uncle Fred Moore says when they heard that a publican would not serve someone, they would threaten to cut off their beer supply. "We just wouldn't deliver any more kegs, that was it."

But where the strength of the unions was considerably weaker, things were very different. An Australia-wide survey in 1960 had found that 22 per cent of the population approved of the South African system of apartheid, and that 19 per cent were undecided about it. On the South Coast, people were excluded not only from pubs and pools, but also from schools, and faced discrimination in shops and picture theatres. "They couldn't get a haircut in any town, they weren't allowed to touch or try on clothes in a dress shop", according to Uncle Fred Moore. "They couldn't be served in a cafe and they weren't allowed to drink alcohol. A publican could lose his licence if he dared serve an Aboriginal person an alcoholic drink."

Dolly Henry remembers the first and last time she shopped for shoes in Huskisson. "A white woman would pick what she wanted to pick for you, you couldn't pick your own. So she came to me and my sister Jessie, and she showed us some shoes. Shoes you wouldn't wear. I wouldn't wear them. We said, 'No, we didn't want them'. We wanted what we wanted".

Graham Moore, a Garrangutti man from Nowra, never forgot how, as a child,

I had to stand outside with my mum holding her hand while other people were getting their hair cut, or being in a shop getting served and we'd have to wait. I thought it was natural. When I got older, I felt within me that it was shameful to be Aboriginal, because of the legislation and the way people treated us when we came to town.

Before television, people went to the pictures as often as they could, once a week for Heather Ball's and Linda Davis' families, when they could afford it. At Batemans Bay, Aboriginal people and whites were supposed to sit on the left and right sides of the theatre. Lou and Jane Duren and others simply refused, and sat where they liked. Aboriginal people were fenced off to the front in the Nowra and Bega theatres and not allowed upstairs. They could only buy a drink in the Nowra cinema in their own cups.

"It was the first time I had ever seen anything like it", said Esma Cruse from Bundaberg when she and her husband whom she had met doing seasonal work in the area, were ordered to the front in the Bega cinema. Accustomed to the Whiteway in Port Kembla, Joan Wakeman "got the shock of my life when I went to Nowra and had to sit right down the front with my head tipped right back. At Port, we could sit anywhere we liked".

Dossie Henry's mother, Dolly,

went wild about it. She said, "I'll go with you tonight". We went in and they came over with a torch and said, "Sit over there". Mum said, "Look, I paid my money. I'm not sitting over there. I'm going to sit where I want to sit". So she sat at the back and she made all of us sit with her. We wouldn't move.

Dolly was particularly motivated by Dossie's treatment at school. While David Brown remembers that 20 per cent of the kids with him at Nowra High in the early 1950s were Aboriginal, Dossie never got that far, attending Huskisson primary school for only three years.

They wouldn't allow us to go to school at Huskisson. We were going to school but something happened and they drew the colour bar. No Aboriginal kids were allowed to go to school after that, and there was a lot of them there at the time. We used to go with Dad instead. When he was cutting wood at Huskisson, we'd go and help him. He had a cross-cut saw and me and my sister used to get on one end each and we'd cut all the ends.

From Kemblawarra school where most of the kids from Coomaditchie went, Irene Moran was lucky to get to Wollongong High. Their primary teachers had said there was no point in them going on. Once at Wollongong, Irene's pals quite happily paid the price.

The white kids would go and tell the teachers and it was always the Aboriginal kids that got punished, but out in the playground if they were called "coon" or "chocolate face" or "blackie", they'd fight.

In March 1962, Norma Sharman, Bob Brown JP, Keith Smith, Sid Duncan and Harry Hesse, a white communist school teacher, established a branch of the Advancement League in Nowra. Fred Moore was impressed by the "eager crowd", particularly by the number of young women, at the inaugural meeting. It unanimously called for fair employment in local industries, jobs for young women in shops, offices and "anywhere else they wanted to work", apprenticeships for boys, the ending of child labour on Shoalhaven farms, just pay for pickers, decent housing and accommodation, and the abolition of legal discrimination and of the APB.

The Nowra League went quickly into action. Norma Sharman and two of her girlfriends went to lunch with Fred Moore in a café, one of several businesses in Nowra that would not serve Aboriginal people. It was a nerve-wracking experience for the women, remembers Fred, for they had not sat down in a café before.

Well, we sat there and sat there and they wouldn't serve us. So I got up and said "What's your problem mate?" The man said he did not want the custom of the women because if he served them he'd get no

more business from other people. He said he would serve us if we moved to the back of the café, out of sight. We refused. Racism was pretty rampant in Nowra then. Well, we left and put out the word that if anyone refused to serve an Aboriginal person again we would ban all deliveries of food to their business.

The women returned about a week later, and were served politely. By 1964, action by the Nowra League had ended racial segregation by Nowra's businesses. A year later, when renowned U.S. Black Muslim leader Malcolm X commented that "the Aboriginal Australian isn't even permitted to get into a position where he can make his voice heard in any way shape or form", the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement, with branches throughout the country, including three on the South Coast, and with 52 organisations affiliated to it, had already been campaigning for several years for equality, equal pay, housing, medical care, education, ownership of the reserves and for a referendum to change the Australian Constitution.

In 1965, the year after Nowra's desegregation was completed, Charles Perkins, school kids from Walgett and elsewhere, Ann Curthoys and other white university student Freedom Riders from Sydney, began to desegregate municipal swimming pools in western NSW. Outback country radio rarely played protest songs like "We Shall Overcome", and the kids at Moree sang Little Pattie's "Stompin' at Maroubra" as they went into action. But while the protestors were abused, punched, pelted and run off the road at Kempsey, Moree, Walgett and Bowraville, Sue Henry was having a whale of a time at Port Kembla pool.

Sue's uncle, Lou Duren, had travelled down from Sydney for the pool's opening in February 1938. Half of Hill 60 turned up for the event. The brand-new, super-tall diving board was too high for the depth of the pool. Two men cracked their skulls. The board's height was reduced by half, and the pool attracted 6,500 patrons in the first two weeks of 1940. Sue remembered, 25 years later,

I spent most of my time at Port Kembla pool. We were there from the time we got out of bed until nearly dark. We didn't have to pay back then. The manager was really good to all the Koori kids. He'd even bring us some food during the day if we had nothing to eat.

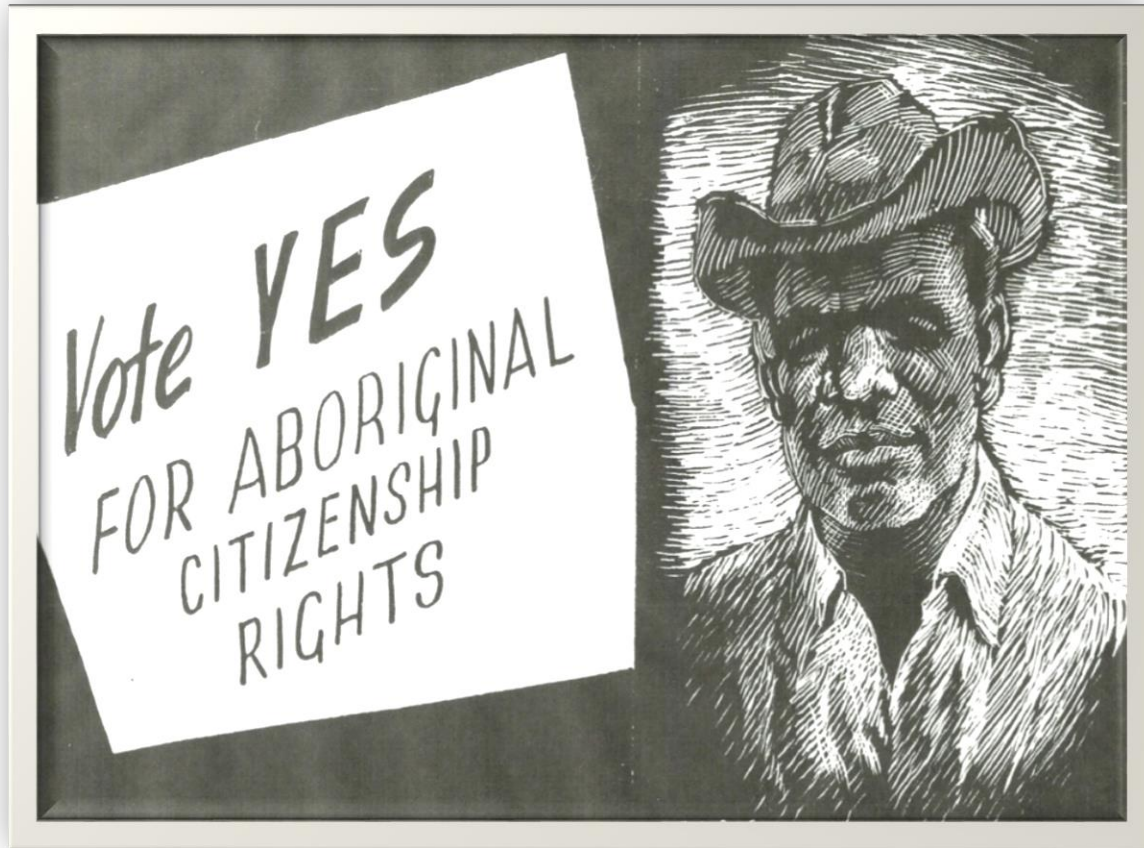
The 1967 Referendum

Further south, things were particularly hard for the 50 or so people living at Stoney Creek, a camp outside Bega now mainly used by former bean pickers who had gathered there because, they said, there was nowhere else for them to go. They included Des Pickalla who at 64 had been ejected from the Wallaga Lake reserve where his family had lived since 1891, for falling behind in his rent. There was no sanitation, bathrooms or kitchens at the camp and children did not attend school. The big growers with their new machinery were keen to get hold of the land, and everyone in town was insisting that the people be moved on to the reserve that Des had been booted out of, “for their own good”.

Matters came to a head in mid-1966, when the Aborigines Welfare Board began negotiating with the Anglican church to buy land for houses in the middle of Bega. The mayor of Bega, expressing the view of many of those who elected him, said he was “surprised, disappointed and concerned” about the plan, for the “hereditary characteristics, instinct, established habits and behavior common to their race” had not yet been “thrown off” by the people at Stoney Creek. “They are nomadic, they won’t settle down”, he said.

Margaret Dixon, Eileen Pittman and others were hard at work in the housing battle at Bega which had become caught up in the Referendum campaign, now in full swing. The national referendum was about changing the Australian constitution to give the federal government power to override discriminatory state laws that restricted who people could marry, where they could travel, how much they could earn and whether they received social welfare.

The referendum itself had been achieved by agitation since 1958 by the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement, formed about a year after Martin Luther King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In its drive to achieve 100,000 signatures on its petition calling for the referendum and an end to discrimination, Fred Moore was named “champion signature collector” in 1963 by Smoke Signals, the journal of the Advancement League, for collecting 2,500 signatures. “If we had a hundred Mr Moores we’d probably have this problem solved”, said campaign organiser Shirley Andrews. “It was easy”, said Fred. “My workmates at Nebo, all 1,000, signed, which was a pretty good start”. The miners at the other South Coast pits followed suit, and many of their Lodges gave donations to the Advancement League. Monica Chalmers, Melva Merletto and Irene Arrowsmith were particularly active around the petition, collecting signatures at stop work meetings in Wollongong Showground, and counting, bundling and dispatching the signed petitions that were rolling into the South Coast Labour Council office.



Common Cause, Miners' Federation newspaper, 1967.

Finally, pressured into holding the referendum, conservative prime ministers Bob Menzies and Harold Holt urged people to Vote No, opposed to the idea of reducing the power of the states. The referendum was about removing from the Australian constitution two references that discriminated against Aboriginal people. The first was in Section 51:

The Parliament shall have the power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to, clause xxvi, that the people of any race, other than the Aboriginal people in any State, for whom it is necessary to make special laws.

The second was in Section 127:

In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, Aboriginal natives should not be counted.

The Vote Yes campaign was in favour of removing “other than the Aboriginal people in any State” in Section 51 and the whole of Section 127.

The task of winning a “Yes” to constitutional change by referendum was a big one, for of the 12 referenda for constitutional change held since 1901, only four had been successful. Vote Yes committees sprang up around the country, under the able direction of CPA member, Faith Bandler, pictured on the following page. Bob Brown, the first Aboriginal Justice of the Peace, and Harry Hesse in Nowra were heavily involved. Along with white Anglican minister Frank Woodwell, Margaret Dixon and Eileen Pittman established the Bega Valley Aborigines Advancement Association (BVAAA). The Vote Yes committees, SCAAL, the Nowra Advancement League, BVAAA, the churches and the South Coast Labour Council worked hard to roll out the vote, and in May 1967, 91 per cent of the country voted Yes. Narrowly second to Kalgoorlie, 22 per cent in Bega voted No, and subsequently only one house for Aboriginal people was built in the town. The Bega District News warned that even this would encourage “imported Aborigines to squat nearby”.



Vote YES activists celebrating at Tranby College toast their campaign director, Faith Bandler (front, second from left), after the 1967 Referendum. Bert Groves is directly behind her and Rev. Alf Clint is behind her on the right. National Museum.

While the vote in Bega was disappointing, nonetheless, the referendum was “a real victory,” according to Uncle Fred Moore. Chicka Dixon, also in the CPA, who had grown up at Wallaga Lake and Wreck Bay and worked on the Port Kembla waterfront as a teenager during the War, had played a leading national role in the campaign as an organiser with the Waterside Workers Federation. In his view, “the 1967 Referendum ended seven years of frustration of trying to force the Feds into changing the federal constitution”.

The 1967 referendum ended the system of white managers on the reserves, and communities took the opportunity to become self-managing. It did not give people the right to vote. This had already been legislated for national elections in 1962, and Queensland was the last state to deliver Aboriginal suffrage in 1965. The 1901 Australian constitution had made Aboriginal people a state responsibility, and the referendum gave the federal government the power to override discriminatory state laws and practices. Without this capacity, the Whitlam government could not have passed the Racial Discrimination Act, as it did in 1975, which at last proscribed racism in the provision of goods and services and in accessing public places and accommodation, effectively ending discrimination in theatres, pubs, schools and shops. At this point, the Advancement League shut itself down, having done, as Uncle Fred Moore put it, “a pretty reasonable job over about twenty years”.

In the early 1970s, Fred Moore was initiated into the Gerrinja clan of the Dhurga people. In 1988, he was named Koori Citizen of the Year in recognition of his services to the South Coast Aboriginal community.



Chicka Dixon, Gary Williams & Michael Anderson at the Aboriginal Embassy, Canberra, February 1972, Koori History Website.

The Lands Trust and Tranby



Dorothy (Dossie) Henry, representing
SCAAL, May Day Queen, 1968,
Fred Moore.

The overwhelming Yes vote in the 1967 referendum did not end the oppression. The following year, when Dolly Henry's daughter Dossie, representing the South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League, was crowned the May Day Queen, their float in the unions' May Day parade in Wollongong featured placards reading "We want to be human beings" and "We want to exist".

After several years, there was disappointment that the referendum success had not led to much progress on land rights. Billy Craigie, Tony Coorey, Michael Anderson and Bert Williams travelled to Canberra with the help of the Communist Party in Sydney. On Australia Day 1972, they flew the flag newly designed by Harold Thomas and sat down on the lawns facing Parliament House under a beach umbrella with a sign that read Aboriginal Embassy. Placards read Land Rights Now Or Else and Legally This Land Is Our Land. We Shall Take It If Need Be. As John Newfong said, "The Mission has come to town".

Months later Ningla a-na: Hungry for Our Land was the rallying call at the biggest protest ever about Aboriginal issues. Marches were organised in regional cities and in state and territory capitals on National Aborigines Day, 14 July 1972. SCAAL president Jack Cummins, a communist wharfie, met with South Coast Labour Council Secretary, Merv Nixon, and members of his executive who backed the action. Four hundred Wollongong and Shellharbour Council workers took their first-ever decision to hold a political strike, to join the rally. Merv got in touch with Pastor Frank Roberts of the NSW Aboriginal Lands and Rights Council. Roberts whose family had been active in the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association in the 1930s, was well connected on the South Coast and organised a bus load to come up to the demonstration. Terry Fox, Catholic chaplain and with the South Coast Race Relations Group at the University College, pitched in along with the Young Christian Workers. Jack Campbell, Guboo Ted Thomas, Percy Mumbler, Jack Cummins and Pastor Roberts led the march down Crown Street, followed by Merv Nixon and the SCLC executive.

A year later, they marched again for the land. Nancy and Jack Campbell had organised a rent strike at the reserve, to force the Shoalhaven Council, which had its eyes on the remaining Roseby Park land, to repair or replace the dilapidated cottages there. With the election of the Whitlam ALP government in 1972, expectations were running high. Keith Smith from the Mogo community seized the chance to form the South Coast Aboriginal Legal Service and became involved in the Roseby struggle. Meanwhile property developer L.J.Hooker was said to be interested in the Wallaga Lake music reserve and Guboo Ted Thomas was stirring into action to protect it.

Under pressure to do something about the insecurity of tenure for the reserves, in 1973 the NSW government followed the example set several years earlier by the South Australian government and established the Aboriginal Lands Trust. Its job was to own, on behalf and for the benefit of Aboriginal people, the 56 remaining reserves for which it now held freehold title. The Trust had practical autonomy, control of 2,800 hectares of land and was responsible for all the buildings on the reserves. It could lease the reserves back to the local communities, but it could not give them ownership of the land they were living on. It consisted of a Board of nine Aboriginal people elected by Aboriginal voters from nine regions, an administrator, clerical staff and an office. The Trust met monthly, was independently funded and reported to the appropriate Cabinet minister. It was chaired for seven years by Pastor Ossie Cruse, the South Coast representative.

While pleased that the elected state-wide Aboriginal Board had substantial resources and some power, many Elders and activists still opposed the Trust. Jack Campbell, who had family in the Macleay Valley as well as at Roseby Park, led a campaign against it when the Trust tried to sell off land at Landillo and at Cootamundra.



Standing - Jack Campbell, George Murray, Keith Smith, Merv Nixon, Nando Lelli, Ted Barker; sitting - Ruben Smith, Bob McLeod, Percy Mumbler, Frank Roberts.



Gough Whitlam, Ossie Cruise and Michael Anderson, 1981,
National Portrait Gallery.

Kevin Cook thought that the Board was too distant from the communities, and that it was unable or unwilling to take on the political work that had to be done about the land. With the Canberra Tent Embassy and the nationwide land rights rallies, land had become a national political issue.

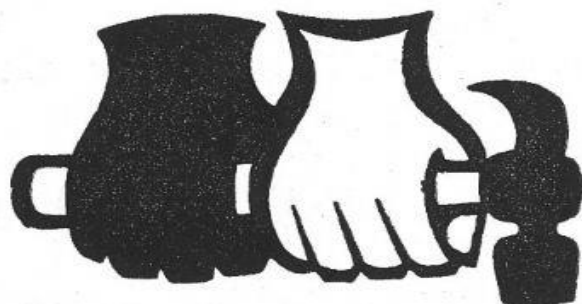
There had to be someone who took up the Land Rights issue. You know, everybody was talking about it, but the NSW Lands Trust wasn't *doing* anything. So people hated the Lands Trust with venom!

People were not shy about speaking their minds. Linda Davis, Ossie's sister, recalls one of several meetings at which her brother came under fire. Harsh words like Jacky-Jacky and Uncle Tom were used.

They were trying to stop the Lands Council getting in. They tried to stop its constitution going through. One lady was sitting beside me and she said, "That's your brother, how can you sit there and let them talk like that about him?" They were running him down.

In 1982, when the mayor of Nowra angered the town's 2,500 Aboriginal people by calling their flag "a rag" and setting it on fire, the Trust figured that it had an image problem. One of the measures it took was to send out from its office in Sydney cuff links featuring its logo as Christmas presents. Frank Walker sent his back.

The distance between the Board and the communities was too great, in the view of Kevin Cook whose connection to the longstanding and ongoing struggles at Jervis Bay and Wallaga Lake convinced him that that the Trust was too centralised. The Trust owned the land, but the land did not own the Trust. Land could not be owned by an organisation outside the community. Instead Kevin, Jack Campbell and others argued that each community should hold the title to the



We work together to live

T R A N B Y

reserves in their own country, and that meant that the Lands Trust, the current owner of the reserves, had to go. As Illawarra MP George Petersen reminded them, it could be dissolved at the stroke of a pen.

The son of Grace Speechley, Kevin Cook grew up in Cringila in the 1940s. After a time as a steelworker like his neighbours, Kevin got work in the building industry in Sydney where he soon came to the attention of Bob Pringle a leader, along with Joe Owens and Jack Munday, of the NSW Builders Labourers Federation (BLF). Cookie, as he was known, was soon in the thick of the Green Ban movement that saved some of Sydney's significant heritage sites from destruction by developers and created extensive and very pleasant public housing in Woolloomooloo.

He became a BLF organiser and Pringle sent him to Tranby Co-operative College in response to a request for support from its director Alf Flint, an Anglican minister and staunch unionist. Set up in the Sydney suburb of Glebe in 1957, Tranby trained Aboriginal people to establish and run co-operative ventures in regional NSW. Kevin and the Red Reverend got on immediately, and he was soon representing the BLF on its board of management.

Kevin believed that co-operatives are the closest thing to the way Aboriginal people live as collective owners of country, that co-operative principles are the principles that Aboriginal people live by. As he said,

Co-operatives aren't a new thing in Aboriginal communities. I think that communal living is the way forward. I think that we have to share our resources. If we don't there'll be an even larger division between the haves and the have-nots.



Kevin Cook at Tranby College, 1975.

When the NSW BLF was deregistered in 1975 and its activists blacklisted in the building industry, jobless Kevin went back to country to heal his wounds and recover his strength.

I went home and went fishing at Lake Illawarra with my uncle [Stan Speechley]. We were professional fishing and I was down there about four months, on the prawns. I learned all about the prawns, about fishing, and Stan taught me how to row. We didn't make any money, but we had a good time.

After Kevin had recuperated, Alf Clint asked him to enrol at Tranby and work with him there. When Clint retired, he became the general secretary of the college, which was soon teaching numeracy, maths, business studies, political economy and Aboriginal studies to a growing enrolment.

When the Australian Council of Trade Unions opened its Clyde Cameron College in Albury in 1977, Kevin Cook met Serge Zorino, a young communist union organiser in the Firemen and Engine Drivers Association (FEDFA). They found

they had a lot in common. On the city building sites, FEDFA members drove the lofty cranes on which Kevin as a BLF member, had ridden the hook as a dogman. As an organiser, he had worked with many builders' labourers who, like Serge, were of Italian origin. As well Kevin had fond memories of the Italian kids he had grown up with in Wollongong. He easily persuaded Serge to teach at Tranby, and Serge introduced Kevin to left-wing Italian-Australian activists and political and cultural associations.

Simultaneously, Kevin was also wooing Tom McDonald and Stan Sharkey, leaders of the Building Workers Industrial Union, who were locked in a fierce battle with his old union the BLF and with the FEDFA. At a time of bitter struggles within and between the communist movement and the ALP, Kevin made it clear that he would work with anyone and everyone in order to advance the Tranby project and Aboriginal interests. He chaired both the Council of Churches' Aboriginal Advisory Committee and the Trade Union Committee on Aboriginal Rights for a decade. With clarity of vision, backing from the communities and broad support, Tranby was ready to join the land rights movement that was picking up momentum again.



Lance Shelton, Aboriginal activist, dogman, member of NSW BLF 1965.

Land Rights and Land Councils



Blockade at Wreck Bay, 1979. Percy Mumbler second from the left.

blowing up sacred rocks and cutting down venerated trees on Biamanga and Gulaga. Mervyn Penrith, Shirley Foster, Kevin Gilbert and Ron McLeod took a petition to the Japanese Embassy in Canberra. A petition signed by a large number of South Coast Aboriginal people also accompanied the letter Merv wrote to NSW Premier Neville Wran.

Illawarra and South Coast activists well understood that to protect the land, they needed to change the laws of NSW that had taken it from them. They developed a political strategy that later became known as “walking on two legs”. This idea simply was to build a broad and focused movement to push for change on land rights (one leg), that was connected to, but not driven by, support within the NSW parliament (the other leg). Merv Penrith, Max Harrison and Terry Fox joined

By the 1970s George Brown and others had established the Wreck Bay Co-operative Housing Company and begun agitating for proper legal recognition of the community's ownership of the Wreck Bay reserve. Meetings and demonstrations in the Bay went unheeded by the federal government, which had proclaimed Jervis Bay a nature reserve in 1971. In 1975, the community travelled to Canberra and demonstrated outside Parliament House, to little effect. In 1979, on Australia Day and again in April, the community blockaded the access road into Summercloud Bay.

In 1977, when Merriman Island in Wallaga Lake became the first area in NSW to be gazetted as an Aboriginal Place, Guboo Ted Thomas and Mervyn Penrith along with Jack Campbell and Percy Mumbler, launched a protest about the logging of five mountain forests to supply pit props to the mining industry, telephone poles and logs for the local sawmills and for wood-chip exports. With the vocal support of the media worried about local jobs, a Japanese logging company was

the ALP where they linked up with Kevin Cook, Meredith Burgmann, Robert Tickner and other rank and file ALP activists to shape the desired changes into ALP policy and thence into state legislation. It was an arduous task, and Terry remembers at times they came close to giving up.

But in implementing their strategy they were crucially aided by socialist ALP parliamentarians Bill Knott (Member for Kiama) and George Petersen (Illawarra), both friends of Terry Fox, and by Maurie Keane (Woronora) and Frank Walker (Georges River). Bill and George were both staunch unionists and former members of the Communist Party. Bill Knott was well known and respected by the community, which had finally had some success with its housing problem. Bill had helped them to establish a local government housing scheme and low-interest housing loans at the Wallaga Lake reserve.

At the same time, the Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Frank Walker, was serious about addressing Aboriginal concerns. He came from a communist family and had been beaten by police at a desegregation sit-in at the Bowraville picture theatre, south west of Coffs Harbour.

Maurie Keane, who thought the treatment of Aboriginal people “unjust and unfair going way back” and was seriously committed to shaping legislation for change, had gained Premier Neville Wran’s support for the formation of a Select Committee of the NSW Parliament which would visit communities, talk to them about what needed to be done, and report back to parliament. “It will be just another bloody whitewash!”, was Bill Knott’s initial response to the idea, but Keane persisted.

Eventually, Knott was prevailed upon by Premier Neville Wran, and the Parliamentary Select Committee was up and running. Kevin Cook was very pleased. “Bill was in the Electricians’ union, the only communist, and this was when they hated communists! Bill was a union rep, he even ran for parliament as a communist. He’s a funny bloke”. But Bill only acceded to Wran on condition that George Petersen also be selected. George was well informed by Terry Fox and by a friend of Pastor Roberts, Con O’Clerkin, a communist building worker who was helping Roseby Park people with their housing.

Jack Campbell, Guboo Ted Thomas and Percy Mumbler were members of the recently-formed Black Defence Group that met in Sydney to promote justice and rights for Aboriginal people in NSW. Also involved were Barbara Flick, Isabelle

Flick, Marcia Langton and Kevin Cook, and some whites including Heather Goodall, Meredith Burgmann and Terry Fox. Kevin wasted no time in establishing the Trade Union Committee on Aboriginal Rights (TUCAR) to build support for land rights within the union movement.

As the political work proceeded, the land was stirring communities into action again. In May 1977, Kamilaroi people from around Moree demanded that their reserve at Terry Hie Hie that they had been forced off, be restored to them by the NSW government as the first step in achieving ownership of a much wider area. Their claim was widely circulated, and on the South Coast people were watching closely and discussing the possibility of making their own claims.

A few months later in October 1977 a Land Rights Conference backed by the Black Defence Group, TUCAR and Tranby was held at the Black Theatre in Redfern on Labour Day long weekend, when the Redfern All-Blacks, because they had won the previous year, were hosting the Aboriginal Football Knockout Competition. Over 200 representatives and individuals from many different countries and organisations in NSW met for three days to talk about the land and other matters.

Inspired by the Kamilaroi action at Terry Hie Hie, the Conference called for the full recognition of rights to land, demanded the abolition of the Aboriginal Lands Trust, and set up the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC). With Kevin Cook as chair, Jack Campbell and Guboo Ted Thomas were elected onto and played a leading part in the Council executive of eleven from around NSW.

No time was lost in finalising the South Coast land claims. The claim over the Roseby Park reserve was lodged with the NSW government in February 1978 with Jack Campbell as community representative, and the claim lodged over the Wallaga Lake reserve in June 1978 had Guboo Ted Thomas as signatory. These documents set out clearly and powerfully, in maps and words, the long held Dhurga demand for the land on which they had always lived and for which they wanted recognition under NSW law. Many hundreds of copies were hand printed and circulated and Koorakookoo, the Land Council newspaper, published them with advice to its readers on how to prepare and present their own land claims.

All in all, things were not looking too bad for the land rights activists. Terry Fox was as confident as he had ever been. Outside the parliament, the new Lands Council was shaping the views of the communities into policies supported

strongly enough by the rank and file of the ALP, by MPs and within the cabinet itself, to withstand the counter-attack they knew would come against the legislation they would propose.

Shortly after the formation of the Select Committee of the NSW Legislative Assembly, Guboo Ted Thomas and Terry Fox bumped into George Petersen at the Dapto petrol station. The Committee's ambit was very wide so they discussed ways to get it focused on land. Aware of the well-organised land rights activity at Wallaga Lake and of the community's determination to stop the logging of Gulaga and Biamanga, the Select Committee, at the urging of Marcia Langton and Kevin Gilbert who with Pat O'Shane were employed to liaise between the Committee and the communities, decided to conduct its first public hearing at the Lake. Said Gilbert, "We know that Wallaga Lake is well organised and it will put on a good show".

Excitement was running high on the reserve where they had erected a large marquee in which the Committee would listen to what people had to say. Percy Mumbler was one of the first to give evidence, on 7 February 1979. He told the Committee,

Our brothers and sisters came before Captain Cook put his foot on this earth and came here to control our people and be ignorant of our people in Botany Bay. He came with guns and ammunition, not with spears. He saw our brothers and sisters in the wild country. They are still here today, from the south to the north, from the east to the west. They still go on today, our brothers and sisters, and they will never die out. I want to know how he came to take this land from us. And who gave him the rights to say that he owned it?

We will not go off without full land rights. This land is ours and we must stand up and fight for it. What we want is full rights to this land that we own. We do not want any of this half-way stuff. We do not want to be asked how much land we would like, a couple of acres or twenty acres or something like that. The Aboriginal people do not want that at all. They want the full rights to this land, to do what they want to do with it and to go where they want to go, all over this country. This is our country. There is no half-way, this whole country belongs to us. That is why we are here today, to speak up for our rights. We don't want this rubbish, a little bit here and a little bit there. We want the whole lot.

I will never knock off talking about these things. We want the right to go over the whole of this country and

do what we like. We want to go where we like and live where we like and do what we like. We want the opportunity to live in a three-room house for a while and then move on if we feel like it. We do not want to be chained or handcuffed. We should never be ashamed of ourselves. We should stand up and fight for what we want.

It was breathtaking. He and Guboo Ted Thomas presented the Committee with a claim for their land, a bound photographic story of the people and places of the South Coast, as well as a petition signed by many to stop the logging of Biamanga (Mumbulla Mountain). There were a few big pictures of it hanging up inside the marquee. When Maurie Keane, the chair of the Committee, “a bit of a dreamer” according to Paul Coe, had a lapse of attention, one of the pictures fell right on top of Bill Knott, MP for Kiama. Percy Mumbler was heard to remark, “Oh dear, my daddy fell on the wrong man”.

Indeed, he had, for it was Knott and Petersen who told the Premier that if his government did not act on the Yuin concerns about the logging immediately, then they would resign from the Committee. It was, said Terry Fox, “the tipping point”. Wran gazetted Mumbulla Mountain an Aboriginal Place before the Committee had submitted its final Report.

At a later meeting in Nowra, the Committee was rattled by Bob Mcleod and some angry men covered only with spears. After so much intensive and dramatic campaigning, the Committee’s Land Rights Reports in 1980 and 1982 reflected the clear demands of the people appearing before it, including ownership of the reserves, the recognition of traditional land ownership, Aboriginal sovereignty and the right to self-determination.

By and large, the Report’s recommendations were in line with Aboriginal demands. “The Land Council wrote the legislation, we put the ideas forward, then the government put in what they wanted”, said Kevin Cook. The recommendations emphasised that land rights were of paramount importance to the Aboriginal peoples of NSW. They were “an act of elementary justice” for past attempts to destroy Aboriginal societies whose recognition should be accompanied by compensation for people’s removal from their lands, and the removal of their lands from them. On the issue of sacred and significant sites, the Committee’s view was that the government had no role in determining their continuing importance. Identifying and protecting Aboriginal sites should be solely the responsibility of Aboriginal people.

Entirely self-funding, the Land Council was particularly active during this period, lobbying churches and unions to pressure the ALP and the state government to implement the recommendations of the Select Committee's report. It organised a series of local and regional land rights meetings across NSW, one of which was held on the reserve at Menindee, 100 kilometres south east of Broken Hill. Many people of the Darling River area had close and historic attachments to the place and welcomed there the two or three hundred people who turned up from around NSW, including Merv Penrith and Jack and Nan Campbell who had travelled the 1,000 kilometres up from the South Coast. Kevin Cook recalls the gathering.



Nan Campbell (left), her sister and other South Coast women. Kevin Cook & Heather Goodall.

That Menindee meeting had everything. It had the atmosphere. It had kids. It had old people. People from the cities, from country towns, from all over New South Wales. And just by smelling what they were cooking, you could nearly tell where they came from. You know, like the goanna was there, the kangaroo, emu was from this other place, you know. And you just stuffed yourself full of really great food. But you know, some people had hardly been out of Wilcannia. But they were so articulate, the way they spoke. And they knew exactly what they wanted.

As well as making sure the communities were involved, Kevin put a lot work into gaining the official support of the

Catholic church, since most of the cabinet were Catholics. It was insufficient, however. Cabinet ministers from conservative electorates were opposed to many of the proposals of the Select Committee, even though there was no suggestion that privately-owned land would be threatened. Walker frankly admitted in later years that the mining industry was applying unsubtle pressure as well. The draft Act was amended.

On 24 March 1983, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Frank Walker introduced a watered-down Land Rights Act to the NSW Legislative Assembly. He told it,

Land rights means the recognition of the prior ownership of this State of New South Wales by Aborigines. This is the first time any Australian government has made a clear cut statement of Aboriginal prior ownership. It rejects the approach of our forebears who denied Aboriginal ownership. The proposed legislation takes the first step in this State towards redressing the injustice and neglect of real Aboriginal needs since Captain Phillip stepped upon the shores of Port Jackson in 1788.

With the passing of this “first step” legislation, the five-year campaign had made it possible to claim vacant Crown (government-owned) lands, had achieved a self-funding scheme to pay for this land and to finance community economic ventures, and had won some protection for significant sites. The Act also abolished the Lands Trust and transferred the title to the 46 square kilometres remaining of the reserves to the newly-forming local Land Councils. Even though it meant the demise of his own organisation, the Lands Trust chairman, Ossie Cruse, welcomed the new laws, saying “When I look forward I see legislation which will form the foundation of Aboriginal social and economic self-sufficiency in NSW. Its achievements have been great and its potential into the future limitless!”

But to the great anger of many Elders and activists, the Land Rights Act was accompanied by the Crown Lands (Validation of Revocations) Act which legalised the seizure, between 1909 and 1969, of most of the land of NSW reserves. In Dhurga country, this amounted to 85 per cent of the area of the originally reserved land. The Wran government correctly claimed it was handing over permanent title of 6,000 acres of reserve lands to the reserve communities, but it was, at the same time, removing the chance of those communities regaining or being compensated for the 25,000 acres of reserve lands taken away from them over the previous 70 years.

While both the laws were being debated in state parliament, thousands of people gathered outside to express their rage, frustration and sense of betrayal. Robert Tickner, a white lawyer with the just-formed Aboriginal Legal Service and future Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Hawke–Keating Government representing northern Illawarra, was so incensed that he bent one of the thick metal bars of the fence outside Parliament House. The crowd swelled, the public gallery was cleared and the arguments continued well into the night.



Percy Mumbler (speaking) at NSW Parliament with Kevin Cook, Paul Coe, Karen Flick, 1981, Heather Goodall.

Merv Penrith, Max Harrison, Terry Fox and Bill Knott met in despondency and for several hours discussed the outcome. Losing the possibility of claiming 85 of the Dhurga reserves was a very bitter pill to swallow. But in the end, they sadly agreed, the gains were real and substantial, too, and they must act on them because such opportunities may not come again for a very long time.

A couple of days later, Jack Campbell had a similar discussion with Terry Fox and Bill Knott and reached the same reluctant conclusion. Jack worked closely with Kevin Cook and was highly respected in the Illawarra and the South Coast for his commitment, energy and vision in the land rights campaign. A few months later, he died of a sudden heart attack. Many people travelled from all parts of NSW and Victoria to Roseby Park for his funeral, including Barbara Flick. Speaking in his honour, she said that many people were unsure about how to

take the legislation, had waited for a sign from Jack, and they too came to the same conclusion: they had to accept the land rights legislation and make it work. In this they proved prescient. Thanks to their determined opposition a few years later, the conservative Greiner government failed in its attempt to keep the Validation of Revocations Act while repealing the Land Rights legislation that had been won at such a high price. In 1919, NSW reserves totalled 10,500ha.

By 2008, only five years after the new Act, Aboriginal land in NSW had grown more than seven-fold to 81, 600ha.

The Act also established a new NSW Aboriginal Land Council. The 12 members appointed by Minister Walker included Merv Penrith from Wallaga Lake as its chairman and others from the existing Land Council. Delia Lowe, daughter of the late Jack Campbell, came from Roseby Park. The new committee was immediately forced to come to terms with the compromised Act. Kevin Cook told the media that in the view of the new Land Council, the Wran government had “fallen short of meeting the fair claims of Aboriginal people” and that the legislation did not “represent a settlement of just claims for land or equitable compensation”.

Activists and Elders were also concerned that despite having finally won some protection of significant sites, their management was still in the hands of white government officials. They thought that having site officers based in the Land Councils would be useful. Kevin Cook recalls,

We wanted to have laws that wouldn't allow the Department of Roads, or Telstra or anyone, to go anywhere without firstly going through the Land Council to find someone to check that what they wanted to do was all right in terms of protecting sites and important places. Jack was still the driving force behind it because we said that every Regional Land Council should have a person employed there who could do the site survey for the region. We worked it out and organised it through Tranby.

Judy Chester of the Gandangara Local Land Council recalls,

They said, “Right, you've got land rights”, but they never trained anyone. It was Tranby that came in and did all that. It was Tranby that actually trained every Land Council in New South Wales and Tranby used their own resources. And they actually went out to the communities, you know.

Land Councils were set up at Wollongong, Nowra, Batemans Bay, Mogo, Bodalla, Narooma, Wallaga Lake, Eden and Bega, part of a network of 120 Local Lands Councils that make up the NSW Aboriginal Land Council. The largest Aboriginal organisation in Australia, it has 23,000 members who are able to make claims over unused and unwanted NSW government-owned land. Crown land totalling 36 million hectares makes up about half of all the land in NSW.

On 23 June 1988, Ann Thomas addressed a meeting of 140 people at Central Tilba and spoke about the significance of Gulaga Mountain. The meeting pledged unanimous support for the protection of the whole area. The campaign to stop logging on Gulaga gained momentum and received widespread backing. Commercial logging was stopped in December 1988. The process of returning the ownership of the mountains to the Yuin took the Land Council years of negotiation with several government agencies, but the Gulaga and Mumbulla (Biamanga) Mountains were eventually taken back. In 2006, four years after Guboo Ted Thomas' death, the Yuin won freehold titles to Gulaga and Biamanga National Parks from the NSW government. The parks are now jointly managed with the National Parks and Wildlife Service by a board with a majority of Aboriginal owners.

By 2015, the NSWALC had made nearly 40,000 land claims of which 2,655 have been successful and 7,852 have been refused. The remainder, the large majority, have yet to be determined, but less than one per cent of Crown Land has so far been returned in NSW, where one third of Australia's 630,000 Aboriginal people live. By 2000, about one fifth of Australia was held by Aboriginal people, about half of that in the Northern Territory which, with South Australia and Western Australia, account for 96 per cent of all Indigenous land. New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, with 65 per cent of Indigenous people, each contain less than two per cent of Aboriginal land.



Mary Duroux and Lionel Mongta at the Gulaga Handback Ceremony, 2006.

The Stolen Generations

In late 1992, ALP Prime Minister Paul Keating spoke in Redfern to launch the 1993 United Nations Year for Indigenous People. He frankly admitted the evils of the past and apologised to Aboriginal people for them. He said that up to 50,000 children had been wrongly removed from their families between 1910 and 1970, representing between 10 and 30 per cent of Australia's Aboriginal children had been forcibly taken from their parents.



National Apology, 2008, *Illawarra Mercury*, front page.

In NSW, the Aborigines Protection Act gave the Aborigines Protection (later Welfare) Board the right "to assume full control and custody of the child of any Aborigine, if after due inquiry it is satisfied that such a course is in the interest of the moral or physical welfare of such child. The Board may remove such child to such control and care as it thinks best". It is estimated that between 1909 and 1969, one third of NSW's Aboriginal children were taken away from their families, two or three on average every week.

In May 2000, more than 250,000 people marched across the Sydney Harbour Bridge demanding acknowledgement of past wrongs and reconciliation. Sixteen years after Keating's remarkable speech, when ALP Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered the national apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008, several South Coast people went to Canberra to hear it. Among them was Ossie Stewart, taken from his family at the age of two and fostered out to a white family in Marrickville near Sydney. He returned to Wreck Bay in his teens, working up and down the coast in sawmills and picking peas for white farmers. At 70, he reflected that although he had now regained it, "the worst part of the Stolen Generations was that I lost my Aboriginality". He was moved to see so many people affected on that day, but while he and many others thought the apology was a good thing, he wasn't sure if it had made any real difference.

Many of the children removed by the APB who were old enough to be trained were taken to the Board's own institutions, the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls or the Kinchela Boy's Training Home at Kempsey. When the children were taken very young, or as babies, they were sent to the United Aborigines Mission's Children's Home at

59 Beinda St, Bomaderry, near Nowra. Established in August 1908 by the NSW United Aborigines Mission Society and supported by several Protestant churches, it was the first home set up for Aboriginal children in NSW in the 20th century and, under the supervision of the APB, operated longer than any other. By 1922, there were 45 children living there, the two oldest of whom were apprenticed to the missionaries.

Many children ran away from the homes. From an early age, they learned to vanish at the approach of flash cars and the appearance of strangers in suits and uniforms. Jean and Billy Stewart were not so lucky. They were kidnapped on their way to Terrara School by two policemen in a motorbike and sidecar, which roared up behind them. Their mother Lucy gathered up their two brothers and headed by sulky to her parent's home on the coast, where they hid from the Nowra authorities during the war years.



Children at the Bomaderry Children's Home, 1945. Burnum Burnum is second from the right wearing a dark shirt. This is the picture on the front page of the *Mercury*.

All the kids took off from Sue Henry's home when truancy officers turned up there. Fearing the worst, her gran Dolly Campbell, fired a shotgun in the air. Recovering from their fright, the officers said that the children were picking beans rather than attending school. Dolly agreed to fix the problem and after some smooth talking, they left, the kids emerging from their hiding places.

Alice Adams could not run away. At four months old, she and her four-year-old brother were taken by the AWB to the Bomaderry Children's Home, which was the only home she knew.

We used to think all the staff were our parents. Really, I think it broke my mother's heart because just after that she ended up in a mental hospital, up there at Stockton, near Newcastle. The staff were wonderful to us really. There was Auntie Laurie and Auntie Mavis, they were all pretty good. When the matron died, I really broke down and cried. Still a lot of Aboriginal people won't come to the Home because they feel it's sort of a sad place, even a bad place. But I don't mind coming here, I think it's peaceful. I feel a sense of belonging here.

Pat (Henry) Simms, the father of Sonny, on the other hand, hated the place. The children had to work hard around the Home, and the only part of his life that Pat enjoyed was his assigned daily task of collecting the eggs. He somehow always managed to find enough cracked ones for a feed for himself and his best mates along with some fresh bread slipped him by a friendly storekeeper. But he was dobbed in, sacked from his job and locked up alone in a shed as punishment.

Coral Pombo-Campbell vividly remembers what happened to her sisters and to her parents in the 1960s.

My three younger sisters were sent to Bomaderry. I don't know how long they were there. From there they were fostered out. The foster parents would come of a night-time to pick them up. But the eldest girl, Louise, would gather her two little baby sisters up and would try to run away with them. Imagine an eight-year-old girl trying to save her baby sisters from the terror and torment that they would endure throughout the years with being gone from the family. They broke my family's heart. My dad ended up in a mental institution because he had a nervous breakdown, through knowing that his five children were taken away while he was at work. And my poor mum just went within herself.

The community at Nowra did what they could to support the children at the Home. On its eastern boundary, they established a camp of various huts in which lived the Stewart, Cooley, Dixon and Brown families and others who had moved there to be near their stolen children. Guboo Ted Thomas recalls,

Kids were going to homes where they let the white people look after them. They'd say, "You're white, you're not black". When I went to visit the children's home at Bomaderry, the kids would say, "Oh, here comes a blackfella". The kids were blacker than me but the matron would say to them, "You're not black; you're white now".

Along with her friends, Lorraine Brown used to visit the children as well to play games and share meals with them.



The Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls.

The isolation from their own people was much greater and the regimes at the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls and the Kinchela Training Home for Aboriginal Boys were much harsher. At aged eight in 1921, Jessie Chapman was taken away by government officials from her family at Wreck Bay and sent to the Cootamundra Girls Home, where she lived until she was 14. She was then sent to work for white women as a domestic servant. Twenty-five years later it was still going on. In the late 1960s, Doris Kirby was one of the many young children sent there.

I was sent away to Cootamundra Girls Home when I was about four. I don't know how that happened, I was never told. I don't even remember it happening. Mum and Dad didn't want it, oh no! We were just taken away by the Welfare Board. All my brothers and sisters were taken. Joycie was sent to Sydney, Parramatta Home or some other home up there. Tommy was sent up to Taree. He was only a baby then and he was sent up there with people. There were a lot of girls there at Cootamundra, I don't know how many. I was in the homes for ten years. I come out of there when I was fourteen. My years there were happy ones.

For those children taken in their later childhood, the experience of Cootamundra was not so pleasant. Alice Adams recalls when she was 12 years old,

I hated it there. They were harsh and horribly strict. This one night all the girls were talking. You weren't allowed to talk after nine o'clock you see. So, this one night this matron made us all get out of bed and scrub the concrete outside the building, just because we were talking. We had to scrub it until it was white! It was twelve o'clock at night before she'd let us come back inside.

Joan Wakeman tried repeatedly to escape from Cootamundra. An orphan, she was sent there for persistently running away from an abusive aunt. "They didn't take any notice of Aboriginal children being flogged in those days", she said. But she found little solace at Cootamundra.

No one loved me. I was about twelve. I was determined I was going to get back home. I would walk. I was like a run-away train, always trying to get to Port Kembla. I loved it. When I'd be taken back, they'd give me a flogging for running away.

Finally, a decent white detective who recaptured her, listened to Joan's account of a stock-whip wielding matron. She was dismissed after an investigation of Joan's complaint, and Joan's life improved a little.

Whippings were part of Burnum Burnum's young life, too. He was born Harry Penrith in January 1936 in a small, corrugated iron hut that his father Charlie had built at the Wallaga Lake reserve. Lily, Harry's mother aged 21, was suffering from tuberculosis, and died before the year was out. At birth, Harry was immediately taken care of by his Aunt Ruby because of the highly infectious nature of his mother's illness. Harry's older brother and sister, Clem aged three and Irene aged two, were already in Ruby's care. Another sister, Phyllis, had died at birth the year before Harry's arrival. All three were taken to the Children's Home arriving by train at Bomaderry when Harry was only a few months old in April 1936, the worst year of the Depression.

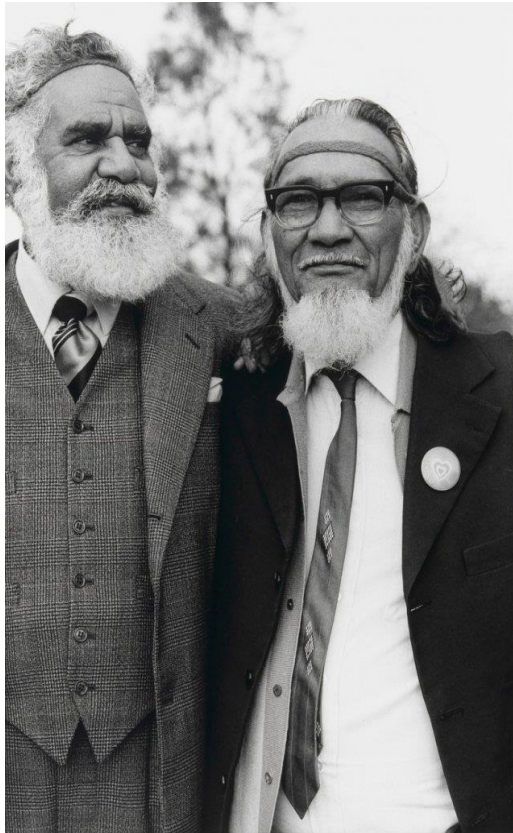
After many years there, Harry was moved to the Kinchela Boys' Home.

It was at Kinchela that I spent my teenage years, as we were trained to become farm labourers for rich landowners. Apart from the pain of being separated from my beloved sister, like all the boys at Kinchela, I felt the devastation caused by the absence of any female role model in my life. Denied any perception of the influence of a sister, mother, aunty or grandmother, we all suffered significant problems later in life coping with society in general and women in particular. Our substitute parent at Kinchela was a homosexual sadist. One time, when I accidentally broke a window while playing cricket, I was forced to drop my pants and bend over to receive lashes with a stock whip, the scars of which are still in my mind and on my buttocks.

Later in life, as Burnum Burnum, Harry became a prominent and articulate advocate of Aboriginal rights, his finest hour



Dining at Kinchela Boy's Training Home, 1959,
Australian National Museum.



Burnum Burnum and Gubbo Ted Thomas
1984, Juno Gemes, National Portrait
Gallery.

being a flamboyant stunt on 26 January 1988, a day celebrating the 200th anniversary of Australia's white occupation. While 40,000 Aboriginal people and their supporters marched in protest from Redfern Park to a rally at Hyde Park and then on to the southern side of Botany Bay in Dharawal country where Cook had shot two men, Burnum Burnum planted a huge Aboriginal flag on the White Cliffs of Dover and issued a declaration claiming England for the Aboriginal people.

The Burnum Burnum Declaration of 26 January 1988

I, Burnum Burnum, a noble man of ancient Australia, do hereby take possession of England on behalf of the Aboriginal Crown of Australia. In so doing we wish no harm to you natives, but assure you that we are here to bring you good manners, refinement and the opportunity to make "a fresh start". At the end of two hundred years, we will make a Treaty to signify occupation by peaceful means and not by conquest. For the more intelligent we bring the complex language of the Pitjantjatjara, teach you how to have a spiritual relationship with the Earth and show you how to get bush tucker. We do not intend to souvenir, pickle and preserve the heads of 2,000 of your people, nor to publicly display the skeletal remains of your Royal Highness, as was done to our Queen Truganinni for 80 years. Neither do we intend to poison your water holes, lace your bread with strychnine or introduce you to highly toxic drugs. We pledge not to sterilize your young women. Finally, we give an absolute undertaking that you shall not be placed onto the mentality of government handouts for the next five generations but you will enjoy the full benefits of Aboriginal equality.

In his honour, the Burnum Burnum Sanctuary was established in 2005 on the Woronora River in the Heathcote National Park. The Bomaderry Children's Home was purchased in 1993 by the Nowra Local Land Council which uses one of the buildings as its office.

Dora and Joy Williams

An Aborigines Protection Board Inspector took eight-year-old Dora Williams from her family in Cowra in the early 1920s. After nearly eight years in the Girls Home at Cootamundra 120 kilometres away, Dora was placed with a white family in Sydney as a domestic servant at the age of 15. At a New Year's Eve party in 1941, Dora became pregnant to her employer's son, a soldier. At 18 she gave birth to her daughter, Joy, and without her consent, was given a hysterectomy at Sydney Women's Hospital.

Cut off from her people, shamed, forced from her job, unmarried and in a city where she knew no-one, Dora was left homeless with her child. After four desperate weeks, she placed Joy into the Children's Home at Bomaderry. Dora visited Joy there, but her visits ceased when Joy was moved, at the age of five, to Lutanda Children's Home at Wentworth Falls, by train a long way from Nowra. In later years, Dora said that the transfer form she had been told to sign was blank.

It was the policy of the Aboriginal Welfare Board that those with fairer skin should be protected from their own culture. Joy was sent to Lutanda, where she was the only Aboriginal resident, rather than to the Cootamundra Girls Home in



Joy Williams on left at Lutanda Children's Home,
Peter Read.

Dora's own country. She was denied her name at Lutanda and was addressed as "Number 4". She was beaten by the staff, who on one occasion fractured her wrist and collarbone. Joy said that they also sedated her with morphine and subjected her to sexual abuse. She could not understand what she had done to be treated so badly. She superficially cut her arms to see if she really did have "mud in her veins", as the staff had told her. She recollects being ashamed when she discovered her Aboriginality at the age of 13.

On leaving Hornsby Girls' High School at 16, at the insistence of the Lutanda staff she signed on to become a nurse's aide, living at the Nurses' Home at Parramatta District Hospital. By the time she turned 18, finally free of institutional constraints, Joy was ready for mischief and

plunged into the exciting milieu of cosmopolitan Kings Cross. By 1962 she had several petty criminal convictions and had fallen in with Rosaleen Norton's group of occultists.

Soon she was diagnosed with a severe mental disorder and was sent to the North Ryde psychiatric hospital. While on weekend leave, she became pregnant with her first child, Julie Ann. Shortly after her birth and under heavy sedation, Joy signed adoption papers for Julie Ann. Her second daughter was taken and sent to the very same children's home in the Blue Mountains in which she had spent her own childhood. Her son was in and out of the Children's Court. Her life became a trail of welfare reports, alcohol and pills.

In 1973, aged 31, Joy finally tracked down the mother she had never met, but by then Dora was alcoholic and ravaged by Alzheimer's disease. So, although Joy lived with and cared for her for eight years, they never discussed the circumstances of their separation. After Dora's death, she began to piece together her own history and embraced radical politics. "I only cook on the left side of the stove, dearie", she remarked, joined the Communist Party in Wollongong and enrolled in the Arts Faculty at the University of Wollongong studying history, politics and literature. As well as publishing her poetry, she threw herself into the Black Deaths in Custody campaign in the early 1980s, organising and stirring on an impressive march down Crown Street to the police station in Church Street. Six pallbearers demanded entry, and with the mediation of Uncle Fred Moore, left inside a coffin made and painted black with the Aboriginal flag by Sharon Pusell. Joy wrote, "I could have sat on the fence for years and forgotten about being black. But, no, I wouldn't compromise, I couldn't pay the price".



Dora and Joy Williams, 1991, Peter Read.

Joy recalled that around this time, "the idea began to form in my mind that, for God's sake, the white Australian government had done something very wrong, that not only included me but thousands of others". In 1993, from her

Housing Commission flat, she began the process of suing the state of NSW for compensation for neglect, lack of due care, kidnapping, assault, cultural and maternal deprivation. She was the first Indigenous person in Australia to seek a remedy for losses suffered as a result of the long standing and vigorously enforced official child removal policies. Hers was the test case against the NSW state government for compensation for the actions of the Aboriginal Welfare Board who kept her from her mother, were responsible for the abuse she endured in the homes she was sent to, and for her own difficulties with loving and caring.

The case took more than a decade to get to trial and cost a very substantial sum in Legal Aid funds. Joy told the court that she was a victim of genocide, saying she had been taken from her mother "purely on the grounds of race and I was passed on because I had fair skin". Joy said that her difficulties in rearing her own three children were the result of an upbringing that had damaged her ability to parent, and to form lasting and loving relationships.

After listening to three weeks of testimony, Justice Studdert brought down a 432-page judgment in August 1999. It was a devastating rejection of Joy's claims. He found that she was not stolen, as her own lawyers had agreed that her mother had asked for her newborn to be made a ward of the state in 1942, and had approved of her transfer from the Bomaderry Children's Home to Lutanda four years later.

Studdert said that while one may find them objectionable today, the policies of the Welfare Board "were expressed as being directed to the betterment and welfare of Aboriginal people and it is reasonable inference that the Board believed in those policies and considered that they were soundly based". Joy responded that she was "sick of hearing that. People say, at the time they thought they were doing the right thing. I don't think time is any excuse for racism." Joy's case was again lost in the NSW Court of Appeal in 2000, and in 2001 the High Court of Australia rejected a further appeal application. Court costs were awarded against her. The Williams judgment sent a shiver through activist lawyers pursuing Stolen Generations' compensation claims. It was considered unlikely that a community legal centre or public interest law centre could take up a case like this again. Understandably upset, relieved that it was finally over with her convictions confirmed ("What else could you expect from the bosses' courts?"), Joy remained strong until her death at Primbee in 2006. Ten years later, the NSW Parliament approved a \$73 million compensation package which included payments to the 730 stolen survivors and to a fund to address the intergenerational trauma that people suffered.

Sandon Point

The year Joy Williams lost in the NSW Court of Appeal, the Tent Embassy set up at Sandon Point. For many generations, Sandon Point, sitting above the lagoon at McCauley's Beach and the confluence of three fast-flowing creeks, has been a favourite place to spend summer, the season signalled by the blossoming of wattle and the birthing of Eastern Grey kangaroos. Located at the end of a well-travelled Dreaming track, it is a place where the Dharawal clans met with Gandangara from the west, and others, to trade, to perform ceremonies, to make decisions, to reach



Sandon Point Aboriginal Tent Embassy, 2003, Power House Museum.

agreements, to make music, and to tell their stories. Even today, middens remain where they camped in six main spots along the creeks and around the large lagoon that ran south from Flanagans Creek. Thirroul Beach itself was a lightly timbered island, and its landward side, bordering the lagoon that included all of the present Beach Reserve, was a prized camping spot. In the 1930s, most of the lagoon was filled in with tailings from the nearby coal mine, destroying the island.

The area is a significant burial site, and during the laying of sewer pipes by the Water Board in the 1970s, up to eight graves were exhumed. A further two burials, found by brothers Kim and Tony Stephenson, were uncovered by large storms in 1974 and again in 1998 when the grave of a Koradji, at least 3,000 years old, was exposed.

In 1984, 40-metre-high bins were planned for Sandon Point to store coal from Appin and Coalcliff collieries on its way to Port Kembla for export. Situated right on the stormy coast, the dumped coal would have a devastating effect on the local ecology and on the residents' quality of life. With the support of former BLF secretary, Jack Munday, local residents Max and Mary Ackerman, Trevor Mott and John Puddle called a public meeting to establish the Northern Illawarra Residents Action Group (NIRAG). NIRAG launched a series of successful actions including deputations to the NSW parliament and litigation in the Land and Environment Court which halted the development.

In the late 1990s, NIRAG became actively concerned with the imminent threat to the area of large-scale residential development. A large area of land owned by the NSW Water Board had been sold to the Stockland Corporation, a multinational housing developer. Prior to the sale, the local community had sought the area as public open space. Backed by Wollongong City Council and the NSW government, Stockland planned to construct 600 expensive housing blocks where the coal dump was to be, cashing in on the beautiful coastal vista that NIRAG had saved.

When Stockland released its master plan for the area in December 2000, the Sandon Point Aboriginal Tent Embassy (SPATE) set up at McCauley's Beach. Local support for the Embassy was substantial. "We've had well over 1,000 people from the community come down to support us", said spokesman and Illawarra Local Land Council chair Roy Dootch Kennedy whose mother Linda was a South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League foundation member. "Sandon Point is the most sacred Aboriginal cultural site on the eastern seaboard and the third most major cultural site in Australia. We have an ancient burial site out here, containing at least nine bodies. This is not a collection of shells," he said.

As explained by Elder Reuben Brown,

Sandon Point is very important to us and there was a lot of movement in that area - meeting, camping, tool-making, storytelling. There was an abundance of seafood, bush tucker, medicines and fresh water. It is of spiritual significance and part of our cultural heritage. They knew every geographic feature and precise boundaries between their lands. Stories have been passed down orally. This land is not unsung land. It is of ancient and sacred significance. It is our history.

A few months later with SPATE's co-operation, a South Coast Labor Council-endorsed picket line called the Community Picket was established by the NIRAG, now including Trevor Mott, Jill Walker, Jill Merrin and other environmentalists. Yuin Elder Guboo Ted Thomas, at 93 years of age, attended in his wheelchair. About 50 activists staffed the picket 24 hours a day for seven years, the longest-running continuous picket line in the world according to the Sydney Morning Herald.

Allan Carriage, an Elder of the Wodi Wodi clan, took Stockland to the NSW Land and Environment Court. "As long as I have breath I will continue the struggle to save Sandon Point", he declared, and managed to stem the tide for a while.

Once the development recommenced in August 2000 nonetheless, 800 people rallied to vote unanimously to continue the struggle. They called on the NSW government to hold a public inquiry into why Wollongong City Council had sold the land without community consultation, for \$2.1 million, and then bought a part of it back for \$1.4 million. A Bulli man who had started his working life at the brickworks there, Michael Organ was elected at the Cunningham by-election that year to become the first Green in the national parliament and who strongly supported the campaign to preserve the area he grew up in. In his first speech to parliament, Michael credited his unexpected election in Cunningham, a safe ALP seat since its creation in 1949, to the community's struggle to stop the development at Sandon Point.

And it was a hard fight. Eviction was attempted. There were several assaults on picketers. Riot police trucked in from Sydney marched in a column two abreast down Bulli's Point Street to break a blockade well supported by the local Housing Commission residents and the surfing fraternity. Following an arson attack in 2004 while five occupants were asleep inside, SPATE was rebuilt, even more substantially. The Community Picket was also torched. Long-time Sandon Point residents and NIRAG activists Max and Mary Ackerman lost their caravan in the blaze. "We know the mongrel who did this", said Max now in his 80s, "and we have long memories".

But in the end came victory. In 2008, Wollongong City Council was sacked for corruption on other counts after an Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry. The fire ignited with embers from the 1972 Canberra Tent Embassy is still burning at Sandon Point. Artists played and children sang at SPATE in May 2007 to celebrate the declaration of 14 hectares at Sandon Point as the 55th Aboriginal Place in NSW. Non-alcoholic refreshments were provided and singer Jimmy Little, whose father is from Illawarra, gave a heartfelt performance that left no eyes dry. Community leaders spoke. South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League founder, Elder Mary Davis, said, "We got what we wanted, though not all that we wanted, land we can call our own".



Celebration at Sandon Point, Aunty Mary Davis second from right next to Uncle Reuben Brown, Roy Dootch Kennedy far left, NSW Government, Office of Environment and Heritage.

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INDEXES

Names

Adams, Alice, 86, 88
Anderson, Joe (King Burraga), 43
Anderson, John (Jack), 46, 50
Anderson, Michael, 68, 69, 71
Andy family, 36, 41
Arawarra, 8
Backhouse, James, 7
Bandler, Faith, 69-70
Bass, George, 5-6
Berry, Alexander, 8, 16, 19, 20, 21, 27, 29
Berryman, Joseph, 16
Biamanga see Mumbler, John (Jack, King)
Bitugally, 9-10
Bond, Andy 40
Broughton, William, 10, 11, 19, 20, 26, 27
Brown, Bob, 57, 62, 66
Brown, George, 75
Brown, Pearl, 55
Brown, Reuben Elder, 48, 96, 97, 99
Budbury, 10-11
Bundle, Young, 9, 10, 11, 13
Bungaree, King, 26-27
Burnum Burnum (Harry Penrith), 86, 89, 90
Jack Campbell, 38, 42-43, 69-70, 72, 75-77, 82, 83
Cannabayagal, 11
Carpenter, Cheryl, 56-57
Chapman, Standalene, 51
Collins, David, 4

Cook, Kevin, 74-77, 79, 81, 82, 84, 86, 87
 Cookoogong, 12, 25
 Cooman, 2, 3
 Coomee, 1
 Cooper, William, 49, 51, 98
 Craigie, Billy, 69
 Davis, Bobby, 44, 57, 58, 60
 Davis, Jim, 51
 Davis, Linda, 56, 61, 71
 Davis, Mary, Elder, 57, 58, 60, 96
 Davis, Percy, 28, 36
 Davis, Richard, 58, 60
 Dharawal, 1-15, 17, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 32, 43, 46, 90, 94
clans: Garrangutti, 61; Gerrinja, 68, 70; Kudingal, 6, 8, 16; Murramarang, 15; Numba, 2; Worrigea, 39, 57
 Dhurga, 1, 3, 5-9, 11, 13-17, 19-20, 24, 26-29, 32, 44, 66, 77, 81-82
clans: Gweagal, 1-3; Murro-ore-dial, 4; Wodi Wodi, 13, 29, 48, 95
 Dilba, 5-6
 Dixon, Chicka, 70, 71
 Donaldson, Robert, Inspector, 42
 Duall, 11-12, 25
 Duren, Jane, 44, 61, 62
 Duren, Lou, 51-52, 64
 Ellis, Doctor, 14
 Ferguson, William, 50, 51
 Flinders, Matthew, 1, 5-6
 Foster, Shirley, 41, 75
 Fox, Terry, 69, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 82
 Gandangara, 7, 9-11, 13-14, 17, 24, 32, 83, 94,
 Geronne (King Charlie Hooka), 17
 Gibbs, Pearl, 49, 50

Gilbert, Kevin, 75, 78
Groves, Bert, 49, 67
Harrison, Max (Dulumunmun), 53, 75, 82
Henry, Sue, 65, 89
Holmes, Bill, 47, 51
Johnson, Mickey (King), 27-30, 48
Keating, Paul, 82, 85
Kennedy, George, 41
Kennedy, John, 10, 11
Kennedy, Linda, 60
Kennedy, Roy Dootch, 95, 96
King Merriman see Umbarra
Kirby, Doris, 54, 55, 88
Knott, Bill, 76, 77, 82
Kogi, 10-11, 26-27
Langton, Marcia, 80, 81
McLeod, Bob, 70, 79
Macquarie, Lachlan, Governor, 9-13, 25, 27
Mongta, Lionel, 38, 84
Mooney, Nellie, 21
Moore, Uncle Fred, 48, 61, 61, 69, 93
Morgan, Eileen (Elder), 28, 35, 42
Mumbler, John (Jack, King, Biamanga), 27
Mumbler, Percy, 5, 11, 12, 14, 15, 20, 25, 29
Murray, George, 70
Nicholls, Doug, 50
Nye, Leonard, 1, 39
Noora, Neddy, 26-28
Paddy, Burriel, 8
Patten, Jack, 43, 50

Pemulwuy, 8-9
Penrith, Bert Elder, 14
Penrith, Harry see Burnum Burnum
Penrith, Mervyn (Merv), 41, 75, 80, 83
Petersen, George, 72, 76, 78, 79
Pombo-Campbell, 87
Saddler, Billy (King), 24, 30-31, 45
Stewart, Billy and Jean, 86-87
Stewart, Leslie, 51
Stewart, Ossie, 85
Thomas, Ann, 84
Thomas, Guboo Ted, 43, 67, 70, 75-79, 84, 87, 90, 95
Thomas, Harold, 69
Thomas, Walter, 41
Throsby, Charles, 10, 12, 13, 15, 19, 25, 28
Timbery family, 3, 39, 45
Tjedboro, 8-9
Umbarra (King Merriman), 27, 33, 35, 42
Wagin, Elder, 19, 27
Wakeman, Joan, 61, 88
Walker, Frank, 74, 79, 85
Wentworth, D'Arcy, 9, 13
Williams, Joy and Dora, 96-99
Yager, Elder, 19, 27
Yellooming, 9-10
Yuin people, 4, 35, 42, 53, 79, 84, 95

Places

Appin, 9-13, 94
Batemans Bay, 1, 16, 31, 41, 51, 61, 83
Bega, 15, 18, 28, 36, 38, 54, 61, 64, 66, 67, 83
Biamanga see Mumbulla Mountain
Black Head, 8
Bomaderry, 40, 86, 89; see also Bombaderry Children's Home in Subject index
Botany Bay, 4, 5, 78, 90
Broken Bay, 5, 27
Camden, 10, 26
Coolangatta, 16, 18, 19-21, 27, 29
Coomaditchie, 45, 46, 57, 62
Cootamundra, 70; see also Cootamundra Training Home for Aboriginal Girls in Subject index
Five Islands, 3, 12, 13
Georges River, 9, 27, 77
Jervis Bay, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 27, 32, 71, 75
Hill 60, 1, 41, 45-48, 51, 63
Kanahooka, 17
Kangaroo Valley, 10
King Sound, 1,
Kioloa, 16
Lake Illawarra, 5, 6, 17, 46, 73
La Perouse, 4, 39, 42, 45
Menindee, 39, 80
Merriman Island, 42, 75
Minnamurra/River, 13, 31
Moruya, 15, 39, 43, 52
Mulgoa, 9
Mumbulla Mountain (Biamanga), 75, 78, 79, 84

Mullet Creek, 17
Nowra, 4, 22, 25, 31, 39, 45, 49, 52, 53, 55, 56, 59, 61-63, 66, 71, 79, 85, 86, 87, 90, 91
Parramatta, 10, 88, 91
Port Hacking, 4
Port Jackson, 4, 5, 6, 8, 19, 32, 81
Port Kembla, 1, 11, 15, 22, 30, 31, 41, 45, 46, 50, 51, 60, 61, 63, 67, 88, 94
Roseby Park, 70, 76, 77, 82, 83
Salt Pan Creek, 8, 9, 11, 39, 43, 45, 49
Sandon Point, 94-100
Shellharbour, 69
Shoalhaven, 3, 7, 8, 10, 15, 17, 19, 21, 26, 27, 31, 57, 62, 70
Snowy Mountains, 57
Stoney Creek, 64
Towradgi Point, 5
Twofold Bay, 6, 8, 16, 18, 32
Ulladulla, 1, 8, 15, 16, 26, 41
Wallaga Lake, 6, 7, 11, 14, 28, 33-37, 39, 42, 43, 49, 53, 57, 59, 64, 67, 70, 71, 75, 76-78, 83, 89
Fairy Meadow, 13, 14
Weipa, 1
Wattamolla, 6
Wollongong, 12, 14, 16, 17, 21, 22, 29, 30, 31, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 55, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 69, 73, 83
Woronora River, 90
Wreck Bay, 4, 16, 36, 37-40, 57, 67, 75, 85, 87

Subjects

Aboriginal Advancement League, 58, 63, 64, see also South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League
Aboriginal Embassy see Tent Embassies
Aboriginal Land Councils see Land Councils
Aboriginal Legal Service, 70, 82
Aboriginal Welfare Board, 47, 50, 52, 53, 57, 64, 86, 88, 91, 93
Aboriginal reserves see reserves
Aborigines Protection Board, 21, 23, 33, 35, 42, 43, 44, 45, 49, 50, 63, 86, 87, 92
ancestors/ancestry, 35, 47, 56
Australian Aborigines' League, 70
Australian Aborigines Progressive Association, 41-43
Australian Labor Party, 37, 60, 71, 75, 77, 78, 81, 86, 97
Black Defence Group, 80
Black Diggers see WWI
Bomaderry Children's Home, 40, 42, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 94
breastplates, 25-31
burial sites, 14, 15, 96-97
cattle farming, 12, 15, 16, 17
Certificate of Exemption, 52-53
children, 6, 9, 10, 11, 17, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38, 40, 42-44, 56, 57, 58, 64, 65, 85, 86, 87, 88, 92, 93, 97
...removal of, 42, 42, 52, 86-91, 91-94
citizenship, 35, 41, 43, 49, 50, 52, 59, 60
...referendum 1967, 64, 65-69, 70
communists, 59, 61, 62, 70, 72, 75, 77
Communist Party of Australia, 59, 60, 77, 93
Constitution, Australian, 64-67, 68
Cootamundra Training Home for Aboriginal Girls, 42, 86, 89, 92
cricket, 22-24, 90
death

...by killing see murder
 ...from disease see disease
 ...in war see war
 Depression, 34, 37, 38, 89
 discrimination, 37, 44, 59, 60-61, 63, 65, 69
 dispersal, 7, 21, 42
 disease, 3, 4, 6, 7, 14, 25, 41, 58, 93
 Dreaming tracks, 9, 10, 12, 95
 Drought, 9, 17, 37
 education, 34, 35, 38, 40, 42, 43-44, 49, 52, 56, 57, 60, 61-62, 64, 68, 86
 Elders, 47, 53, 57, 71, 82, 84
 environmental destruction, 6, 8, 15, 16, 32, 72, 75, 78, 79, 84
 equality, 49, 59, 61, 64, 91
 equal pay, 41, 58, 63, 64; see also wages
 evictions see housing
 food, 3, 6, 11, 14, 20, 27, 37, 57, 63, 81, 96
 fishing/fisheries, 1, 2, 6, 8, 19, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 45, 46, 74
 forests/forestry, 3, 6, 8, 14, 15, 38, 39, 76
 genocide, 50, 93; see also Stolen Generations
 heads, sent to museums, 3, 8, 11, 88
 health, 5, 10, 13, 21, 37, 57, 58; see also disease
 housing, 21, 39, 47, 56, 58-59, 62, 63, 64, 65, 73, 77, 96
 hunting, 8, 15, 32
 Kinchela Boys' Training Home, 8, 42, 86, 89, 90
 Koradjis, 6, 20, 25
 Land Councils, 75-88
 land, theft of, 7, 12-13, 15, 16, 19, 45, 46, 48, 60, 65, 81
 ...Crown land, 81, 83, 84
 ...disputes over, 26, 32-40, 45, 47, 48, 50, 71
 ...grants of, 12, 15, 16, 19, 33, 44,

...land rights and Land Rights movement, 32, 33, 43-44, 69, 71, 74, 75-84, 94-96
 ...Reserve land, 22, 24, 33-40, 42-45, 51, 60, 64-65, 71-73, 76-82
 Lands Trust, 70-75, 78, 82
 language, 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 13, 35, 44, 46, 52, 53, 57, 90
 Law, 8, 12, 13, 14, 27, 29, 58
 logging see environmental destruction
 marine/coastal resources see fishing
 marriage, 7, 35, 41, 65
 medicine/medical care, 3, 6, 41, 64, 87, 88, 93, 94; see also health
 murder, massacres, 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18
 music, 1, 2, 36, 41, 61, 71, 95
 Northern Illawarra Residents Action Group, 94-96
 police, 30, 32, 37, 42, 45, 48, 76, 86, 92, 96
 population, 23, 37
 ...Aboriginal, 7, 35, 41, 45, 46
 ...colonial/white, 6, 10, 17, 35, 61
 racism, 40, 60, 68, 93; see also discrimination
 rations see food
 reserves, 21, 23, 32, 33-39, 42, 45, 49, 50, 54, 59, 63, 68, 70, 72, 75, 77, 79, 81, 82
 sacred sites, 42, 76, 79, 95
 sawmills see timber industry
 schools see education
 sealers and whalers, 6, 8, 15, 19, 32
 segregation/desegregation, 44, 63, 76
 South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League, 53-62, 64, 69, 95, 96
 South Coast Labour Council, 57, 64, 66, 69
 Stolen Generations see children, removal of
 Tent Embassies
 ...Canberra, 69, 71, 96
 ...Sandon Point, 94-97

timber industry, 44, 53, 76, 86; see also forests
trackers and guides, 5, 10, 20, 25, 27, 31, 58
trade unions/unionism, 37, 58, 59, 60, 69, 73, 74, 76, 77, 80
Tranby Co-operative College, 68, 69, 70-75
venereal disease, 7
wages, 32, 41, 52; see also equal pay
war, 7, 13, 23, 26
...between Indigenous and whites, 1-28, 9-19
...WWI, 41-42
...WWII, 50-52, 87
Waterside Workers' Federation, 51, 61, 68
women, 6, 9, 11, 14, 16, 17, 19, 25, 34, 36, 49, 51, 52, 59, 63, 64, 89, 90, 91
work, 12, 19, 20, 21, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 45, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 57, 58, 59, 63, 88, 90



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