

A Typology of the Traditional Games of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples



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Wener ganbony tilletkerrin? *What shall we play (at) first*
(Language of the Western people of Victoria)

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Ken Edwards

Artwork by Aboriginal artist *Maxine Zealey* (of the Gureng Gureng people in Queensland).

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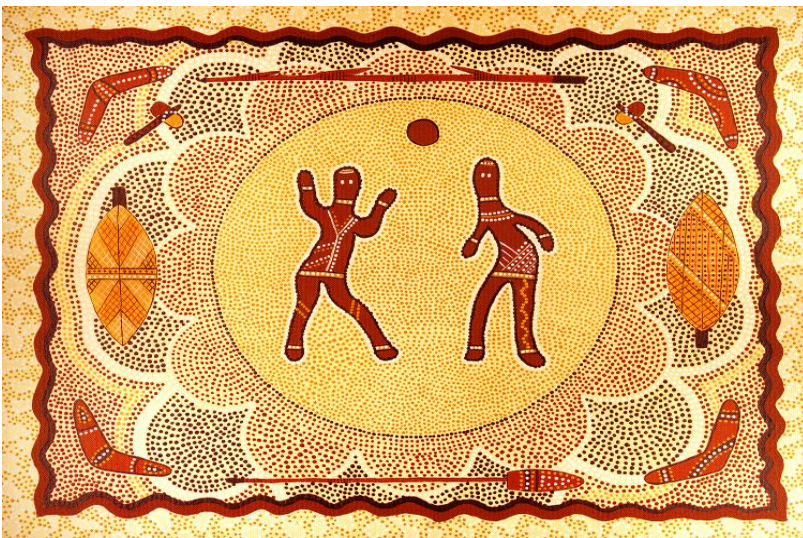
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Great excitement existed amongst the players in this game, which was begun in this manner: each player had one of these toys in his hands, standing at a mark on the ground some 30 yards or 40 yards from the disc. The thrower standing on the mark would measure the distance with his eye, and turning round would walk some few yards to the rear, and suddenly turning to the front would run back to the mark, discharging his *weitweit* with great force at the disc. Its rapid flight under this vigorous impulse is so rapid that the eye cannot follow it. (Worsnop, T., 1897: 165).
Worsnop, Thomas. *The Prehistoric Arts, Manufactures, Works, Weapons, etc., of the Aborigines of Australia*. Government Printers Office, Adelaide, S.A., 1897: 165

This book is dedicated to ***Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*** in recognition of their 'ownership' of play and movement expressions which contribute towards the Australian sporting culture.

Ken Edwards



Artwork by Maxine Zealey

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- **Categories of Games (Love, 1983).**
- **Categories of Games (Kovacic 2011).**
- **Structure of the model employed to classify Aboriginal Games and Pastimes (Salter, 1967).**
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Preface

The faculties and talents that sustained people and societies for generations were activities such as making fire, tracking, finding raw materials and properly preparing them, fashioning implements and using them correctly, swimming, climbing trees, navigating, assessing distances, predicting weather, assisting childbirths and treating wounds or illnesses, dancing, singing, playing games, telling stories.
Dissanayake, E. *Art and Intimacy: how the arts began.* University of Washington Press, Seattle, USA, 2000: 118.

Since the time of first European settlement material on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has been collected and a significant amount relates to traditional games. Although there are doubts about the objectivity and accuracy of descriptions of a significant proportion of this information the sheer volume available does allow the opportunity to examine various aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Taken as a whole the accounts reflect a degree of 'playfulness' within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Traditional games were regularly closely associated with the process of learning the basic survival skills: the procuring of food, the making of gathering, hunting and fishing implements, or simply imitating adults in whatever they were doing.

Despite the number of accounts of traditional games they often tell us little of how they were played, by whom, when, where and to what end. Overall, the traditional games undertaken were commonly associated with simple and unwritten 'rules'.

This publication is designed to outline information on traditional games and details relevant to **A Typology of the Traditional Games of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples**. The typology has been developed as a result of an extensive review of information on traditional games which has been researched over many years.

The use of a typology provides a convenient way of classifying and organising the body of knowledge about the traditional games in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. It also allows for a greater understanding of the similarities and differences between different types of traditional games and provides the opportunity to identify their integration within culture as well as with other cultural aspects.

Ken Edwards



Introduction

Australia is one of the oldest land masses in the world, the sixth largest country in total area and the biggest island on the planet. Only a small proportion (just 6 per cent) is fertile country and it is one of the driest land areas. The Australian landmass stretches 4000 kilometres from east to west and 3700 kilometres from north to south.

The Commonwealth of Australia covers the continent of Australia (**Figure 1.**) with an area of around 7,659,861 square kilometres and a coastline of 36,700 kilometres in length (or more than 120,000 kilometres if estuaries and all the islands are included). It includes sundry smaller islands (around 1800 in total) such as Fraser Island; the large island of Tasmania (68,332 square kilometres); and, the over 100 relatively small and mostly uninhabited islands or cays (of which only about 40 are regularly marked on maps) of the Torres Strait Islands region.



Figure 1: Continent of Australia.

The main states and territories of Australia are New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.

The Torres Strait Islands region (**Figure 2.**) covers about 48,000 square kilometres within a 150 kilometre wide area between Cape York in North Queensland and Papua New Guinea. The Commonwealth of Australia also has control over some areas of land that are well offshore including Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island and Christmas Island as well as designated territory in Antarctica.



Figure 2: Torres Strait Islands Region.

The Torres Strait Islands have islands with local and names given to them by colonists. Some islands are known by both names and there is an increasing acceptance and use of the local names. The **Eastern Islands** include Mer, Erub, and Ugar Islands. **Central Islands** are Iama, Masig, Warraber and Poruma Islands. **Western Islands** consist of the islands of Badu, Moa, Mabuiag, Waiben, Kiriri, Ngurupai and Muralag. Saibai, Boigu and Dauan are the **Northern Islands**. In addition to the various islands there are **Cape York communities** of Bamaga and Seisa

The name *Australia* derives from the Latin word *Australis*, meaning 'of the south'. For centuries, it was legend that there was an unknown great south land – *Terra Australis Incognita*. This description was used in writings about exploration to the region. The name 'Australia' gained popular acceptance following the publication in 1814 of Matthew Flinders' account of his circumnavigation of the continent, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*. Flinders used the name 'Australia'. Governor Lachlan Macquarie subsequently used it in his official reports and recommended it be adopted. In 1824, the British Admiralty agreed that the continent be officially named 'Australia'.

Aboriginal peoples of Australia are considered to represent one of the oldest continuous cultures in the world with estimates for mainland Aboriginal Australians and Tasmanians ranging between 40-60 thousand years or more *before present* (BP) time. At the time of European colonisation in 1788 it is generally believed that there were around 250 distinct language groups (making up culturally and linguistically diverse societies) in mainland Australia with around 700 dialects. The cultures were based on oral traditions and were male elder dominated. Aboriginal cultures had strong hunter-gatherer traditions (but not exclusively) and always had great respect and care for the natural environment.

Torres Strait Islander people are generally believed to have originally travelled down from coastal and Fly River regions of Papua New Guinea. There has been regular contact between Papuan people and Aboriginal people for at least the last few thousand years. Some authorities have provided evidence of sustained settlement in the Torres Strait area for possibly 2,000-4,000 years BP time.

The total population of the Australian continent at the time of colonisation has variously been estimated at numbering between 250,000 and 750,000 – with some general agreement of a fairly static total of 300,000 to 400,000 people. The largest populations were in coastal and riverine Australia, particularly along the east coast and throughout the Murray-Darling basin. Estimates for the population of Torres Strait Islanders at the same time were of approximately 4000-5000 people. About 5000-7000 people were believed to have lived in Tasmania.

Regardless of the scientific interpretations of their origins Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do not view the division of pre-history and history in the same way as Europeans. It is relevant to note that many Aboriginal people believe that they have always been a part of the land.

Although a level of continuity, equilibrium and stability are hallmarks of traditional cultures it is important to recognise that economic and creative links between the different groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are important elements in the nature of existing and evolving cultures.

The present population of Australia is just under 23 million. Almost 545,000 people have identified themselves as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin – this is just 2.3% of the total Australian population. Of the people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander 90% are Aboriginal, 6% are Torres Strait Islander and 4% identify as having both an Aboriginal and a Torres Strait Islander background.

Definitions and Terminology

The term **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** is used in this publication to denote **Indigenous Australians**. The **Australian Aboriginal peoples** and **Torres Strait Islander peoples** are distinct groups and have significant differences *socio-culturally, politically and physically*. Although **Aboriginal** was the preferred general term recommended by the now defunct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) many **Aboriginal** people believe that the term carries a great deal of 'cultural baggage'. There are regional terms that are used by many **Aboriginal people**. For example, *Koori* (most of New South Wales and Victoria), *Murri* (most of south and central Queensland), *Bama* (north Queensland), *Nyoongah* (around Perth), *Mulba* (in the Pilbara region) and *Nunga* (southern South Australia) are some of the preferred terms around Australia. **Torres Strait Islanders** is commonly used to refer to the culturally distinct people of the Torres Strait Islands but many of these people identify with a particular island, village and/or family name.

Regions of Australia

A commonly used outline of regions of Australia as a basis to study cultural aspects related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has been presented by Horton (1994). The regions identified by Horton reflect a general connection between many drainage boundaries and the location of linguistic boundaries, suggesting a connection between ecological zones and culture areas. The sea, rivers and waterways of Australia have always played an important role in many cultures. The early people lived along the coastline before moving inland following rivers systems.

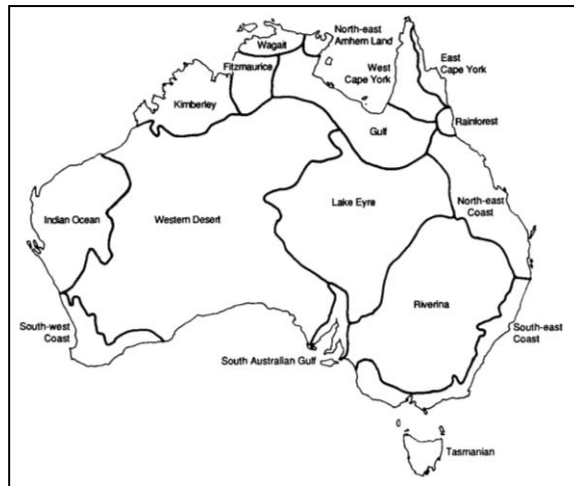


Figure 3: Map of Regions: Torres Strait; East Cape Rainforest; Northeast; Riverine; Southeast; Tasmania; Spencer; Eyre; Desert; Southwest; Northwest; Kimberley; Fitzmaurice; North; Arnhem; Gulf; West Cape (based on work by Horton, 1994).

Horton, David (ed.) *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Vol. 1 and 2. Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, 1994.

Play

Researchers generally agree that **eight features** characterise ordinary play: **Play is:**

- (1) pleasurable and enjoyable,
- (2) has no extrinsic goals
- (3) is spontaneous,
- (4) involves active engagement,
- (5) is generally all-engrossing,
- (6) often has a private reality,
- (7) is nonliteral, and
- (8) can contain a certain element of make-believe. (Carlisle, R., 2009)

Carlisle, Rodney P. *Encyclopedia of play in today's society*. 2 Vols. SAGE, Thousand Oaks, California, U.S.A., 2009.

Despite these criteria for judging play they have some boundaries which are imprecise.

The concept of play as it is commonly recognised needs some re-interpretation or re-thinking to account for the nature of the play in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Care must be taken when discussing or judging the concept of play based on contemporary work and from a European-based perspective. European (or Western) perspectives of play as it was observed in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures commonly viewed play as:

- imitation or preparation for life
- expressive activity or projection of self
- a game or sports activity
- an unimportant or miscellaneous pastime

To these interpretations can be added aspects that might better reflect what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples themselves understood to be the nature and role of what is 'play' in their cultures. Play often serves specific functions within a society and demonstrates cultural values and norms. Play, therefore, might also be seen to be:

- incorporated in ceremonial practices or in rituals such as religious observances
- a means to express or eliminate conflict
- a mechanism to develop individual and group identity, a sense of belonging and community
- a part of daily life and in learning about the way the culture works
- a component in significant life events such as inter-group feasting
- a way of social interaction – both regulated and improvised
- a part of collective memory of a cultural group and part of the knowledge to be passed on to others

Although there is a good deal of consistency and commonality in some types of play activities undertaken within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural groups there is also a wide range when taken as a whole.

Definition of Traditional Games

The word *'tradition'* derives from the Latin *trado*, to hand over or give up. Tradition is the generally seen as the action by which elements of a culture are delivered from one generation to the next. When there is a loss of traditions due to disruption or the imposition of different values by another cultural group this usually results in the breakdown of the values and a certain loss of identity. It is often only those cultural aspects which are variable and can be adapted to the purposes of cultural group that have the best chance of survival.

'Traditional' is commonly used to describe activities that are related more to a traditional or long- lasting culture than to a specific event or period of time. The term 'traditional games' is now commonly used worldwide to describe aspects of the 'traditional' or 'culturally relevant' play and movement cultural heritage or cultural expressions of identifiable cultural groups. However, the use of the term as a general concept may misrepresent the differences in the structure, function and meaning of play and movement expressions in and between cultural groups. To overcome any uncertainty all the play and movement expressions found within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are viewed in their widest possible way.

To more precisely reflect the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context an attempt has been made to outline a definition which specifically considers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The definition draws significant elements from the definition of *folklife* outlined by the *Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia* (1987).

A proposed definition for traditional games within the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context is:

Traditional games includes all aspects of traditional and contemporary *play and movement expressions* that are, or have been, developed, repeated and shared informally and/or formally within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and its identifiable present-day cultural groups or communities, and are generally accepted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as being a part of, and/or an adequate reflection of their social identity.

Before white settlement in 1788 there was a great variety of traditional games undertaken (as part of play and movement expressions) and integrated into the wider culture of the various groups. In the continuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural groups traditional games will commonly – though not always – derive from, or have their origins, from the play and movement cultural heritage or cultural expressions that may have been undertaken in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures since before the influence of European colonisation. The influence of colonisation occurred at different times and places and in different ways for various groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and this influenced the traditional games.

The definition proposed has resisted the temptation to restrict its terms of reference to traditional games that already existed or had their origin *before or during the process of colonisation*. The definition seeks to embrace the view that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are *ongoing* and will recognise that they will always have some transformation.

Traditional games are recognised as part of the wider cultural heritage or cultural expressions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and are an important part of their identities. Any definition of traditional games in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context must be recognisant of the unique constructs of *time*, especially because there are few available records of any description from before white intervention. Just as events of the past are often described by Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islander peoples using a place or event-based orientation, so too must 'traditional' games be defined in a task, place or event-orientation, rather than from a specific arbitrary point on a time-line. To this end, traditional games, as a reflection of play and movement related cultural heritage or cultural expressions, need to be **culturally, socially, economically, environmentally, politically and spiritually** connected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Traditional games need not be associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all of these aspects to be considered 'traditional' – any one association warrants being considered 'traditional' partly because of the recognised interactions between these aspects.

In the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures evident before or since colonisation there may have been no concepts comparable to current interpretations relevant to various forms of play and movement expressions, including dance. The proposed or 'working' definition outlined attempts to capture all the recordable aspects of the *recreation, leisure, games and play* (including *toys and playthings*), *relevant movement expressions* (including those from the arts such as *dance and drama*), *pastimes or pursuits* such as guessing games and some other *physical activities* (for example, swimming) found in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. It should be noted here that the traditional games that are played by an identifiable cultural group or 'sub-groups' such as children *are not part of a distinct sub-culture* even though they may be mentioned or outlined in this way.

The traditional games investigated were those found throughout Australia, whether on the Australian continent, the large 'island' of Tasmania or the region designated as the Torres Strait Islands. It is accepted that further research may well determine the need not only for a refined definition but the possibility of different definitions to represent the wider cultural differences that occur between the cultures of Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islander peoples or the differences between 'traditional' cultures, contemporary cultures and those that have been influenced by other world cultures.

It is recognised that traditional games in the time before pre-contact were mainly learned orally, by imitation or in performance, and are generally maintained without the benefit of formal instruction or institutional direction although they may have been part of formal ritual cultural practices and beliefs. In some forms it is acknowledged that traditional games may be influenced by or influence knowledge from other areas within a holistic cultural heritage or cultural expression. For example, the close connections and interactions between dance, music, art and play were usually not seen as separate entities, especially within cultures who had high levels of religious significance associated with many aspects of daily life.

Prior to white settlement traditional games were a part of the daily lifestyle of the people. They were often a seamless and certainly not always separate part of the way the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was expressed on a daily basis. There were some traditional games undertaken at particular times of the day /or

seasons or as part of special rituals and ceremonies (such as initiation) or at special large social gatherings.

Like many aspects of culture traditional games are always subject to change over time and should never be seen as *static* and *unchanging*. Within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures its members are 'traditional games bearers' who inherit or acquire (as part of their cultural heritage or cultural expressions) the knowledge and skills required to maintain knowledge relevant to their traditional games. Where the knowledge of traditional games has been 'lost' to particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures the people who identify with that particular group assume the role of 'Traditional Owners' of any knowledge that is later discovered for their cultural group.

Recognition of the 'living' or ongoing cultural heritage or cultural expression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples demands the consideration of and inclusion of aspects from both more traditional to current day expressions. In a more contemporary setting the definition of traditional games proposed does not exclude 'new' games, pastimes, toys or activities which may have been adopted, modified or have developed a special identity within a few or many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures since white intervention. For example, the use of wire and tins cans to construct imitation cars or 'rollers' in many parts of central and northern Australia has developed several forms and unique identities and now forms part of the traditional games in various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Traditional games will usually not include aspects of modern sports where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples participate unless there are identifiable cultural heritage or cultural expression features or 'styles' play adopted by or unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures evident in Australia.

Conclusion

It is possible to examine the traditional games that have been undertaken in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and view them not just as a representative of a particular aspect of cultural heritage or cultural expressions but as a way in which particular cultures are, or were, defined. There is no doubt that practices such as the traditional games have always made a significant contribution towards the social and cultural life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and help form their unique individual and group cultural identities.

Traditional Games: Related Terms and Concepts

The usual understanding of *games* sees them a contest according to rules and decided by skill, strength or luck. In this study no attempt has been made to distinguish between the terms of *play, games and sports. Recreation, pastimes, diversions and leisure* are also words used to describe types of activities related to *humans in movement* and which are separate to survival or some other cultural activities. Although the traditional lifestyles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may incorporate aspects which seem applicable to these concepts they do not provide an interpretation, reflection or cultural perspective relevant to their lifestyle. The apparent overlap of some concepts can be seen in the way that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures did not appear to separate or differentiate between aspects such as dance, music, art and play in the same way as other cultures. Some traditional games were played either separately or as part of various cultural practices and may have involved interactions with other **performance or movement activities** such as singing and dancing. The meaning of *play, games* or related *movement performance activities* as either integrated or separate concepts or aspects within an artificially designated **play and movement expressions sub-culture** does not exist. The identification of traditional games within a society is to some extent a function of the ideas and total view of those who think about or experience them.

The accounts of traditional games often need to be placed in the cultural context for a particular group even if they can no longer be meaningfully interpreted by that continuing group. For many of the hunter-gatherer and some other types of societies once present there was a relatively large amount of *leisure time* available for cultural practices which included traditional games. Based on accounts available there were a limited number of games in some cultural groups while other groups had a much larger number of traditional games recorded. Where food-gathering for survival in small family groups was required there were fewer games and less time available for traditional games.

Although the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples sought to amuse themselves they appreciated the benefits of *relaxing* or '*doing nothing*' as opposed to the need to always be doing something. The concept or idea of *boredom* may have had different meanings and interpretations in various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

A large number of records about specific cultural groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people indicate the use of *specific terms and words for particular play activities and traditional games*. This evidence indicates that there was recognition of the role, nature and type of activities undertaken.

General areas of traditional games that have been identified from research undertaken include:

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| ▪ skipping games; | ▪ hide and seek games; | ▪ water games; |
| ▪ ball games; | ▪ throwing games | ▪ mock fighting games; |
| ▪ top spinning; | (including spear and | ▪ hitting games; |
| ▪ dodging games; | boomerang); | ▪ tag games; |
| ▪ string games; | ▪ wrestling games; | ▪ running games; and |
| ▪ tracking games; | ▪ imitation games; | ▪ fire games. |

Overview of Traditional Games

For eight years ... I lived as a child, playing happily along the river bank, swimming in safe waterholes where the crocodiles wouldn't get me, fighting mock wars with toy spears, camping always with nothing more than a blanket to protect me from the rain and the cold, hunting through the bush with my parents in search of the food we must find to live.

Lockwood, Douglas. I, The Aboriginal. Rigby, Adelaide, S.A., 1962.

Pre-contact Australia was characterised by many and diverse groups of people who spoke different languages and often had quite distinct cultural beliefs, practices and traditions. Traditional games were undertaken either in everyday life activities or as part of special ceremonial and ritual observances. The traditional games observed and recorded since the colonisation of Australia in 1788 may not necessarily represent their total number or cultural significance either over a longer period of time or in a particular context.

It is always difficult to generalise based on recorded accounts of traditional games even when there are many similar accounts from different places. This may be because of bias of the observer (in part due to the time period) or their background and method of recording the traditional games. Making observations and passing judgments about particular cultures often also reveals the values of those who make these statements. The background of many of the observers did not include personal involvement with games or sport. Furthermore, many accounts come from before the concepts we accept as *sport* and *games* were part of a wider acceptance of their nature and role in cultures.

In the great volume of information available on Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures there is much in the descriptions about traditional games that is vague and incomplete. Quite often descriptions of traditional games derive from the memory of older informants rather than through observation and performance.

An overview of traditional games cannot cover all of the information available but can provide some understanding of the features of traditional games in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. It is sometimes difficult to make generalisations about the nature and type of traditional games given the diversity of cultures that were, and in some cases still are, evident. Many of the traditional games have features in common with cultures from other parts of the world but this is more of a reflection of the type of cultures and their level of complexity than any suggestion of cultural links.

Some points relevant to traditional games:

- A large number of games undertaken in the various cultural groups were almost universal in nature while many others were limited to a small group of people, cultural group or wider regional or cultural groupings.
- When time and opportunity arose the children in particular undertook a wide range of games. The children would also use their creativity and imagination to invent and perform their own songs, dances and forms of play. Play was generally influenced by the natural environment, knowledge of games and cultural constraints (such as their gender and designated roles).
- The traditional games undertaken ranged from the seemingly trivial and improvised play activities to 'sporting' type contests at larger social gatherings. Events such as corroborees were instrumental in the cultural process and accounts included guessing

games based on mime, or dramatic play games based on the hunting of animals such as the kangaroo and emu.

■ **Education** stressed the relationship of individuals with their social and natural environment and was the responsibility of the wider group or community. Certain of these educational responsibilities involved kinship and other relationships. Because of the generally informal organisation within the cultural groups many skills and games were learned by **observation, imitation and practice or performance** rather than any overt form of **direct instruction**. Because of the male elder-oriented cultures evident the younger male members of the group (usually the boys) were under their direction and control during significant cultural events (such as ceremonial observances) or in skill training. For example, elders supervised, directed or organised training in skill activities or contests such as boomerang and spear throwing – which might include the manufacture of miniature weapons.

■ There was a significant role of mothers, grandparents and older girls in supervising the **play and education** of the **younger children**. In a game from north Queensland the children would imitate being punished by their grandmothers for their 'misbehaviour.' The physical punishment of children was not common across cultural groups and typically the children were quite indulged. Young children were often cared for and used as a plaything – usually by the older girls and women. Men generally had little to do with infants and children until they were around **four or five**. Looking after the younger children required for the refinement of a range of social and physical skills and behaviours needed in adult roles as a mother. This role also prepared the girls to become more patient and develop the ability to come up with interesting and amusing ideas to keep the younger children occupied and content. The games also acted as part of obedience and responsibility training for the girls and reinforced the need within the cultural group to look after each other.

■ Play and games serve as an essential part of the learning process particularly when children practice the roles and skills they need as adults. The majority of play evident in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures was *imitative of adult activities* and was related to immersion in the cultural practices of the group. **Imitation activities** undertaken included hunting or food-gathering, dancing, social gatherings, leisure time and being parents. Various ceremonial practices, including 'secret' rituals, were also observed and imitated by children in their play.

■ As part of opportunities for learning it was often usual for children to join adults in their play and vice versa. Adults played some games with the children to share the fun and enjoyment but also to teach them how to play the game or help develop skills for adult life. As well as developing **fine and gross motor skills** the traditional games were also associated with other abilities such as **memorising, sequencing, spatial awareness** and **language**. For example, children would often join in corroborees and attempt to imitate and commit to memory the various dances and other aspects.

■ In many of the cultural groups the adults did not usually determine the nature of children's general play, especially for the younger ones. The life of the younger children in relation to playing games was essentially one of *freedom* but for cultural and other reasons there were also elements of *control* or *order* evident. **Spontaneous or improvised** play opportunities were provided by the natural environment and daily activities. For example, children crouching around a fire on a cold winter morning could be an opportunity to play communication and 'shivering' games and at the same time

reinforce social bonding. Another example of social interaction and play was to be found in the opportunity provided by water for a range of enjoyable and often improvised activities.

■ During the **early years of life** there was often little elaboration or introduction of variation or complexity during the course of the children's play. Observations were made of toddlers amusing themselves by playing with objects such as a piece of bark. In **later years** the games tended to be more organised and complex and displayed a greater level of ingenuity and innovation.

■ Traditional games were not only relevant to the development of **survival skills** but also to enjoyment. Although there were always abundant opportunities for play and games from the **age of around five** the play of young children was commonly influenced by food-gathering and other tasks. The uninitiated young children often accompanied the women on food-gathering excursions and this provided exploration experiences and opportunities for play. The need for the children to learn about food-gathering from a young age was often an influence on the type and amount of time spent in certain types of play. On their trips the children would track small animals or spear small fish as part of play and these might also be used as a food source. In some cases animals were collected as 'pets' or short-term playthings and contributed to their knowledge about animals.

■ The **human body is associated with movement** and activities such as running, swimming, climbing and diving were undertaken in play. The direct involvement of the children in active games provided a way of developing specific physical skills as well as an understanding of the way to play the game. Preparation for and survival in adult life involved the development of good physical skills and many of these skills and techniques were developed and practised, though not wholly, through the playing of games. A common activity was young boys throwing toy spears or sticks at each other in evasion games or throwing spears at moving objects such as a disc made from bark.

■ **Play related skill or training games** appear to occur more frequently and with greater diversity in cultural groups where the use of children in the acquisition of food was important. In arid parts of central Australia the small family-based groups had greater survival demands and less time available for a wide variety of games than the people along the more resource rich areas of the coastline. Over time the processes of *transmission and replication* of traditional games in this context usually resulted in a smaller number of simplified games when compared to elsewhere. In places where there were abundant food supplies and a bigger population there were large group activities with more game variations and a fuller expression of game complexity beyond skill and training games.

■ Games often promoted goodwill and interpersonal relationships and were essential training for children in **social interaction**. Children learned to cooperate and to develop respect of the physical abilities of others through games. Social contact and interactions between individuals and groups through daily life, corroborees, seasonal feasts, meetings, music, art and games provided pleasure but was also an opportunity for information exchange. **Inter-group interactions** provided for the exchange of goods as well as songs, dances and games. There are accounts available about a throwing stick game (weeet-weeet) played in central and southern Australia whose distribution was associated with cultural groups along the trading and ritual exchange routes.

■ Accompanying the women on food-gathering or being supervised in the camp by older women provided the children with opportunities to listen to conversations and its associated **gossip**. These activities provided the opportunity for the children to learn language and various appropriate cultural values of the group. As children grew older more information was passed on about their culture. When they finally became an 'adult' they increasingly become responsible for passing on the information they had learned to the younger people. Adults and elders would pass on much knowledge by talking with the younger people and children, and through songs, dance, games, art and storytelling.

■ **Storytelling** was a large part of daily and ritual life and was not only about entertaining people but used by elders in educating children about the way of life. Stories were told during daily activities or while or sitting around the campfire at night. Spontaneous speech play such as in talking 'nonsense' was also observed. Special words and descriptions for games were evident and were also included in some stories/legends.

■ In the camp area usually all the uninitiated children, both in **gender specific and different age groupings**, generally played together in informal or more organised groups or sub-groups. Individual play was evident but group play was predominant. Much of the conflict resolution and social control associated with games participation was usually informal and often handled by the peers and the older children.

■ There was clear evidence of strong communal pressure demanding participation in many traditional games and no one was usually excluded. Depending on the circumstances an involvement in traditional games was **voluntary** or **obligatory** but often obligatory from a certain age. For some of the traditional games there was a loose distinction between players and spectators and people would frequently change their roles. In some ball games lasting several hours observed in southern Australia there was a mix of genders and age-groups and a free interchange over time between participation and spectatorship in the game and performance in other daily activities.

■ Although children invariably played because of the **fun, enjoyment and self-satisfaction** offered it also served as a means of overcoming **loneliness, fear of group rejection, anxiety** and so on. Game participation was an important part of the socialisation process – participation in the games contributed to group solidarity through the reinforcement of social roles and the attainment of individual acceptance. The *shared experiences* provided by involvement in traditional games provided a lifetime of memories. For example, a game of running and chasing around the camp area in the late afternoon while kicking up clouds of dust might later in life be associated with fond recollections of 'simpler' times and fun with friends.

■ During the **early and middle childhood years** some games developed from basic tossing and catching games into simple aimed throwing and object launching contests. Around the **age of five or six** gender differences were more obvious and boys tended to more boisterous than the girls, play in groups together, roam over a wider area, and were more aggressive in their play. Boys tended to play more games of physical skill and would have wrestling and other 'rough and tumble' type games with other boys. Activities such as wrestling provided practice of skills required as an adult. **Play fighting** was usually an informal activity for the boys and in some areas intra-group contests were held while it was the men who participated in inter-group wrestling events.

■ The involvement by boys and men in mock combat contests were often a replacement for wars and inter-group conflicts and provided a type of 'serious' and 'threatening' excitement which often became an inter-group experience. Large inter-group battle/sport tournaments (*pruns*) were regular social calendar in parts of north Queensland.

■ In addition to contests of strength boys focused on skills developed through running and stepping races, throwing stones or other objects at targets and hunting games. The tendency to engage in aimed-throwing games remained popular even after mature throwing patterns developed at around the **age of seven**. A favourite activity for the boys was in groups to throw grass or blunted toy spears at another group.

■ The male dominant cultures placed a high value on power and assertiveness and these values were reflected in many of the games played. The popularity of strength activities and the exclusion of women from some games reflected the social organisation. The wrestling games, with their accompanying risk of injury, were less common in the cultures with small family-based groups. This was perhaps partly because all the individuals were needed to ensure the day to day economic survival of the group. Although physical contact activities were mainly undertaken by the older boys and men some cultural groups allowed the girls and the women to undertake their own forms of play fighting and the women might be involved in certain roles in inter-group 'fights' or mock contests.

■ The infliction of injury was not an aim of games but on some occasions and in a few games a high level of socially tolerated physical contact was allowed in a few cultural groups. A hockey-type game from south-western Australia was played between different groups as part of seasonal feasting and the contests occasionally resulted, on occasion, in serious **injury or death** but it was not associated with the usual consequences of ritual punishment of the offender.

■ Children around the **age of nine and ten** often had the most interest and involvement in a variety of games. This age was just prior to when children began undertaking more adult roles and often there were associated changes in the types and purposes of games. Although children of most ages can *invent, devise, improvise, or create* games developmentally the children in this age group usually had the maturity, skill, interest, time and proficiency to frequently play and develop game variations. Children would modify rules and other elements of their games in order to make them more fun and exploration and testing were important parts in developing new games or variations of existing ones. The processes of *problem-solving and decision-making* were regularly associated with their games.

■ As part of their educative and social roles adults would make or help the children make toy or scaled down versions of adult tools such as spears and digging sticks. The older children were usually expected to fashion their own **toys and playthings**. The boys would often improvise by using long grass or reeds as spears and use them in their imaginative, spontaneous or more organised games. While some toys were models of traditional tools and weapons such as boomerangs, spears, baskets or boats, in a more contemporary context 'modern' toys included model airplanes, torches or telephones. Toys and playthings such as dolls were made and used for *pleasure, fantasy and imitation* and were sometimes associated with solitary play.

■ Culturally dictated roles and certain rites of passage such as initiation were assigned to boys – and often the girls – at ages usually ranging from **11 to 14 years** or more. The initiation ceremonies were usually brief and intense in nature and were a time when important cultural knowledge was transmitted. In many of the cultures the girls in their early teenage years would become the wives of older men and assume adult roles. After initiation the young men would join the men in hunting and would usually not be allowed to associate with the women and girls (even their siblings) without some form of ritual punishment. **The young men joined the game practices of the men and were often prohibited from playing certain games of their childhood.** Games, such as spear dodging contests, were directly or indirectly related to important cultural and survival practices and were encouraged by the elders.

■ In many team games recorded in more populated areas there was no limit on the number of players and few conventions related to teams of equal numbers. The natural environment was the playing area and for some games there was little restriction on the size of the playing area. There was often an understanding about the ‘rules’ of play which were usually few and simple enough to be understood by all players.

■ Sex role differentiation and group and individual roles were sometimes evident in play but generally these were at a low level in many of the games, especially in the younger age groups. Many times play involved kinship, totem or other groupings. Games might be played with all the people involved while others were undertaken in various sub-groups. In larger groups such as at large gatherings of people the children might break into a variety of groups to play. The range of playing groups might include the adults and children together (**Inter-generational or cross-generational**) or the men and women engaged in groups by themselves. In a game from southern Australia involved the women played together by spinning gypsum balls in their food-gathering bowls and gossiping. There were times when the women worked while men engaged in games.

■ Although a great many games had an emphasis on a high level of physical activity some games might involve little of no physical activity. Although the concept of ‘physical fitness’ was not specifically articulated a high level of physical fitness was nevertheless very important to the life of children and adults and many games either developed or required certain movement and fitness capacities. For example, some inter-group contests such as a team wrestling contest from southern Queensland required physical preparation and performance particularly with regards to **coordination, strength and agility.**

■ Some traditional games and dances had a spiritual significance and were associated with ritual practices such as initiation ceremonies. The merging of certain cultural aspects represented the ability to integrate or merge two apparently contrary forms and attitudes – such as **ritual and play, spiritual beliefs and frivolity.** A ball game from northern-western Australia which was played as part of a religious ceremony was one example of the connection.

■ As forms of cultural heritage or cultural expressions some traditional games had a role in social regulation within cultural groups. Special events such as inter-group meetings, ritual activities or even sex games allowed opportunities for role reversal or variation to normal social norms and practices. In the initiation ceremony of one cultural group the young men played a game with the married women. The **reversal of gender** and/or other social roles was also evident in the game of hide and seek played in a few areas.

■ String games can be identified as being almost universally part of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander *play and movement expressions*. The playing of string games, either singly or with groups of players was a commonly recorded activity within Australia as it was in other cultures around the world. The string games had different levels of meaning and forms in different cultures and were associated with the opportunity to exchange ideas/knowledge or communicate and have fun with others. Usually string games were played by the girls and women, sometimes at special times and for special purposes, such as during the first pregnancy or as part of storytelling. In some areas men also played string games. String figure designs often represented animals and people, or abstract ideas such as the forces of nature and as people played the string game designs would usually change quickly from one thing to another.

■ Different types and levels of **cooperation and/or competition** were evident in many games such as ball games, wrestling activities and skill contests. Games were often more about *physical performance* than about competition and more about self-satisfaction and individual and group identity than the externalities of material rewards, and public victories. While competition was present in many games it did not dominate participation and the majority of records indicate co-operation as the basis of the majority of the games recorded. In games of competition the *identity* of the individual or competing groups was at stake rather than simply their ability at the game in question. **Fair play** was generally a feature of games and notions such as 'cheating' and bad-tempered performance may well have had different cultural interpretations.

■ In the various cultural groups there were 'winners' in some games but the usual practice was 'cooperative competition' where **winning** was not overwhelmingly important. While winning in some games might provide an individual with an improved level of self-esteem it was possible only within accepted cultural boundaries. A ball game from southern Australia had the best player given the ball until the next time the game was to be played but the player did not have any other special rights within the group. The character 'failings' of individuals who saw themselves as special or considered skilled was an occasional theme in stories and legends. For example, a great boomerang thrower might be used to highlight how their great skill in one area might expose or result in personal weakness and failing in important aspects of their character.

■ Games participation was generally less likely to glorify the ideal of youth and their physical superiority and more likely to favour **experience and mastery**. This notion reinforced the social maintenance and cultural values of the group. An example of this was seen in a keep-away type of boomerang game from southern Australia which involved throwing and running. The older men competed against the younger men and boys with the older men usually showing their skill and superior strategy to 'wear down' their younger opponents.

■ Although traditional games often reinforced a group or collective emphasis some individual identity or 'glorification' was evident in a few cultural groups. Because there was no apparent concept of what we now see as **sporting heritage** there is only limited evidence of the recounting of the achievements of individuals in traditional games. Only rarely does the information available refer to a 'champion' in association with the playing of games. However, in one cultural group from eastern Australia an individual who was considered to be very good at games was accorded the 'honour' after their death of being buried at the place where many of their games were played.

- **European Influence:**

■ Since the European colonisation of Australia most of the pre-existing 'traditional' games have disappeared and the culture which developed and supported this has been largely destroyed. Many traditional games that now form part of continuing cultures have been subject to change and/or have developed new forms. For example, marbles have replaced natural materials such as nuts and stones, small bark canoes are made of sheets of roofing iron, and introduced rabbits have provided hunting and tracking practice as well as a food source.

■ Due to the complex processes of *innovation* and *adaptation* it is often difficult to determine from a current review of information which games are *traditional*, have been *introduced* or are of more *recent* origin within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The understanding of traditional games has been complicated by the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture was recorded by various observers over time. Some games claimed as traditional may not be so or have been transformed in some ways since they were observed and recorded. In some respects it may be meaningless to seek to establish an arbitrary distinction between the traditional and contemporary aspects of traditional games within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

■ Although in traditional cultures no traditional games of chance were observed there is evidence of a couple of games of chance being introduced into parts of northern Australia at some time in the past by Macassan traders from what is now Indonesia. Card games, especially the game or euchre, were introduced by Europeans and were readily accepted and later incorporated the 'foreign' concept of gambling. Aboriginal people in central Australia have since developed their own card games such as *kuns* which have specific rules and have become important parts of socialising (and often gambling) in many remote communities.

■ Various games and sports were introduced into missions and settlements as part of government assimilation policies and were to some extent an assertion of power. The emphasis on sports with a number of rules and a competitive nature often replaced the more simplified nature of traditional games. Sometimes their introduction often led to a re-shaping of the cultures in an unforeseen, minor and seemingly harmless way. However, sports such as cricket were intentionally introduced and promoted to modify the existing cultures for perceived benefits. For example, cricket was introduced in mission stations as a way of 'civilising' the people and teaching them British values.

■ While some of the introduced games and sports developed in the same general form as the original other games introduced to the children through mission schools were often adapted by them and developed a different agenda and purpose – 'Indigenous' styles and features. For example, the introduction to missions and government settlements of a rounders type games led to different rules and forms of the game in various geographical locations.

■ Over the time of 'Settler culture' sports such as football and cricket became a mechanism where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples sought to free themselves of prevailing social attitudes of the time and the control exerted on their lives by government policies. For some of the men in particular the opportunity provided by sporting competition to temporarily leave a mission provided some hope and motivation.

■ The games and sports of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are now closely associated with the games and sports of the wider community. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples sport is the one aspect of mainstream culture more than any other where they have participated with the most acceptance and success. Even so, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sportspeople have had to deal with a dominant culture which traditionally has been restrictive. In recent times issues of racism have been more firmly dealt by sporting organisations and various governments. The need for skill and excitement in sport has projected more talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players into the elite levels of some sports such as the various football codes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players have been more widely accepted and encouraged and have been able to be rewarded financially for their efforts.

■ In a few places – mainly in central and northern Australia – a small number of traditional games from before colonisation have persisted in something close to their original form. A 'leaf' game which involves gossiping is still played by girls on some small remote communities in central Australia. Some other traditional games such as ball hitting games found in north Queensland have been modified either as part of the remnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures or as part of evolving ones. In central Australia one popular introduced activity has taken on certain unique Aboriginal characteristics and has developed some variations between communities. The children in this activity use cans and fencing wire to fashion 'rollers' or 'motor cars' which they use in games and races, often in school carnivals.

■ Skill practices and games associated with traditional hunting techniques such as spear and boomerang throwing have, in more recent times, taken on new roles and meanings and have become events at sports events for Aboriginal people in central Australia. Although boomerang throwing has an Aboriginal Australian origin and has become an international sport it is now no longer particularly relevant to Aboriginal people except in some remote regions and as part of infrequent events.

■ Modern sports, in contrast to most traditional games, are seen as a separate component of daily life and are often associated with high levels of competition and mass support where victory (and the pursuit of it) may bring great rewards and 'failure' can lead to *hostility* and *rejection*. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have generally embraced the ideals and concepts of modern Australian sport with a resultant loss to their traditional games cultural heritage or cultural expressions.

Conclusion

Sport and physical activity has an important role in Australian society. However, the nature and role of traditional games within Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, both past and present, is often overlooked or is poorly understood. Australia needs to develop a pride and respect for its cultural heritage or cultural expressions such as traditional games – both its present and ongoing manifestations but also its cultural roots. A study of traditional games should be considered to be an important part of the cultural, social and historical record of a country and can provide a means of investigating culture change.

The information presented in this section has sought to briefly identify and outline the type and nature of some of the traditional games undertaken or developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of continuing cultures. It is not a definitive outline.

Outline of Types of Traditional Games

Traditional games were often associated with the enculturation process related to the central beliefs, values and behavioural characteristics of a particular group of people. The traditional games within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultures were often integrated into and inseparable from daily life and cultural practices. Many traditional games provide a symbolic identification with a particular cultural group. The traditional games of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be considered to be important aspects of the cultural heritage or cultural expressions of Australia.

- **Skipping**

A favourite game of the Juwalarai people of New South Wales was *brambahl* or skipping. As a long rope was turned by two players the player in the middle performed a number of actions such as jumping like a frog or taking thorns out of their feet. The winner was the player who could vary their performance the most.

A skipping game played called *jirrakayi-ku* (which means *jumping* in the Panyima dialect) was played in northern Victoria. In playing this game as many as 12 players at a time skipped.

- **Disc Game**

Spearing the disc or bark or disc rolling was a favourite game in most parts of Australia and there were different versions. In one area it was called *gorri* and a player would call *gool-gool* before rolling the disc in front of a line of throwers. Sometimes the disc would be bounced along the ground or thrown into the air.

- **Spear Games**

A spear dodging game called *tambil tambil* was played by the Jagara people of southern Queensland. One player stood 10-15 metres out in front of the rest of the group and hopped around as the other player tried to hit them. In another version played elsewhere the player being used as a target could use a small shield to protect themselves. In the Wembawemba language of western Victoria the word *ngalembert* referred to an 'expert at dodging spears.'

- **Animal Tracking**

The study and imitation of animal tracks was an important part of the education of young children. In places competitions were held to see who could guess the tracks that were drawn by another player.

- **Swimming and Diving**

Swimming and diving games were popular activities in many parts of Australia and the Torres Strait. Swimming races, diving for objects and water games were common. In the game called *marutchi* (or black swan) which was played in southern Queensland one player would act as the *marutchi* and avoid being captured by 3 or 4 players as long as they could. When captured they would be taken to the side of the water and the game would continue with a new *marutchi*.

- **Stone Bowling**

The Waljibiri people of Central Australia played a stone bowling game. One player threw a stone which was used as a target by the second player. Players alternated turns.

- **Stone Rolling**

Turlurlu is the name of a traditional ball rolling and hitting game played by the boys in the Great Sandy Desert of Central Australia. Each player held a *mukurru*, or fighting stick, as a bat. Each team took turns to bowl (underarm roll) a *kamikami* at the opposing team and aiming to make it pass through the line without being hit.

- **String Games**

Using a length of twine people of all ages often amused themselves for hours at a time with *cat's cradle* or *string figure games*. These were played almost everywhere throughout Australia and also in the Torres Strait. Elaborate figures resembling such things as animals and natural objects were made. This game was called *meeroo-meeroo* in the southern part of West Australia, *kamai* in a part of north Queensland and *wame* in the Torres Strait. Sometimes songs were sung with the game or stories told.

- **Throw Object Games**

A game of throwing skill was played in north Queensland. A large bone with twine attached to it was thrown over a net and into a hole.

In the object throwing game from the Torres Strait *kolap* beans were used. Two players were in a team and sat diagonally opposite each other about 5-7 metres apart. Each group had a small mat in front of them. Players had four *kolap* beans which they attempted to throw to land on the mat opposite them. Players took turns. A team attempted to reach twenty.

- **Imitation Activities**

Imitation activities were a common part of the education process in all parts of Australia and the Torres Strait. For girls playing at houses, grown-ups, marriage and so on were very popular activities. The boys often imitated the role of the men in hunting. In some places the adults also played. The Gingin people of West Australia had an imitation feast game called *beejan eeja*. The players pretended to make a fire and cook some meat returned by the hunters.

- **Guessing Games**

The Injibandi people of Western Australia had guessing games such as *wabbagunja kambong*. Guessing games were often played around the camp fire after the day's hunting was over. Women might also play these guessing games amongst themselves while returning from a root-gathering expedition. Players attempted to guess what another player had seen.

- **Tag Games**

Young children in the Bloomfield area of North Queensland played the game of *puuny* (march-fly). Shutting their eyes the player who takes the part of the *puuny* (march-fly) runs about trying to catch another player in the group. As soon as they are successful they make an unpleasant noise (imitating the insect's buzz) near the ear of the player caught and also give them a 'pretend' pinch (indicative of the sting). The player caught becomes the new *puuny* and the game continues.

- **Wrestling Games**

The *kal boming (fire hitting)* game was played in the Southern districts of Western Australia and called for both agility and strength. A fire was lit either on the ground or the top of a *Xanthorrhoea* ('grass tree') and the players divided themselves into teams. One side tried to put the fire out with short branches of trees while the other side defended it.

A wrestling game of the Ngungar people of the south-west of Western Australia was called *meetcha kambong*. A *meetcha* (nut) was buried about 20cms underground. Four or five players guarded it while an equal number attempted to dig it up. Only pushing and pulling was allowed.

Each year teams from far and wide gathered at a 'place of wrestling' (at Dingulami) in Kabi Kabi territory in Southern Queensland for a wrestling competition. Each pair in the competition attempted to push each other back over a line.

Various forms of wrestling for a bunch of emu feathers or similar held by a player were played in different areas of the southern parts of Australia.

Tur-dur-er-rin was a wrestling game from Victoria. Wrestlers placed their hands on each other's upper arms near the shoulders, and holding on tight, moved around, pushing and pulling in an attempt to knock the other to the ground.

- **Pushing Game**

A pushing game similar in nature to tug-of-war was played in north Queensland. Instead of pulling, players push against each other.

- **Finding Objects**

A finding object game played in north Queensland was called *koabangan*. The players sit in a circle with their heads low and hands over their faces. One player hides a goanna-claw in a fork of a nearby bushy tree. Upon a signal being given by the 'hider' the players jump up and start looking for the hidden object – without damaging the tree. The player finding the object has the next turn.

- **Rolling Pebbles**

A favourite pastime of the Aboriginal children in the Numinbah Valley area of South Queensland was rolling small round pebbles down long sheets of bark. These were folded in a tubular fashion. Competitions were held to see whose pebble appeared first at the end of the tunnel.

- **Keep Away Games**

A keep away game of catch-ball of the north-west central districts of Queensland was played everywhere by both gender. Because the action of the players jumping up to catch the ball resembled the movements of a kangaroo the Kalkadoon people sometimes described this game as the 'kangaroo-play.' The ball itself was made of a piece of opossum, wallaby, or kangaroo hide tied up with twine.

- **Tops**

The Lake Eyre women made small gypsum balls to spin. The game was played by several people at once and the player whose ball spun the longest was the winner. Another competition was to insert a small piece of wood into a ball to make a top for a

similar competition. Sometimes 2 women competed against each other. In another form of the game 2 balls were spun in a large bowl (*pirrha*).

Stone top spinning matches were a popular activity on many islands of the Torres Strait. On Miriam (Murray) Island top spinning (*kolap omen*) contests have been regularly held. The large tops were spun on a smooth surface and could go for 25 minutes or more. The players sing songs during the spinning matches.

- **Boomerangs**

The people at Cloncurry in Queensland fixed a peg into the ground and the player who could strike or come nearest to it with the boomerang was declared the best player.

In Western Australia *kailee* (kylie) throwing up into the air was played. The *kailees* were thrown almost straight up into the sky. The thrower whose *kailee* remained longest in the air and flew the highest won the game.

In southern New South Wales boomerang throwing contests were held to see how many times in a row a thrower could jump over the returning boomerang.

In the Boulia district of Queensland where they could throw a figure-of-eight with a boomerang 5, 6, or perhaps more players stood in Indian file. Each individual, with raised arms, rested their hands on the shoulders of the player in front. Another player, some distance away, faced the front of the file threw the boomerang over their heads. As it circled round they all followed it in its flight. The game was to avoid being hit. Each player took it in turn to throw the boomerang.

A keep-away boomerang game was played by the Wogadj people of Central Australia. This was a game which encouraged a lot of running. In the game a boomerang was thrown along the ground. The older men usually played against the younger men.

- **Cross Boomerang**

A cross boomerang of North Queensland was known as *pirbu-pirbu*. Another version of the *cross boomerang* was made by some of the smaller children using thick swamp grass or similar. The two strips were pierced and tied (as in the case of the wooden ones) or they were plaited together. It was thrown with a twist of the wrist up into the air and returned in a right or left spiral.

- **Toy Boomerangs**

In addition to the non-returning and returning boomerangs used in many parts of Australia there were a number of miniature or 'toy' boomerangs used by the Aboriginal people.

Near Taroom in Queensland *diamond-shaped pieces of bark* were used to throw at each other to curve around trees 30-50 metres apart and hit an opponent.

- **Throwing Sticks**

A game that the people of parts of Victoria spent considerable time at was play-stick throwing. The *playing stick game* of the Wonkonguru people was the *kulchera*. This is the *wit-wit* (*weet weet*) of some Victorian groups. The *kulchera* was thrown with an underhand throw through a bush so that it would ricochet off the hard ground. The player whose *kulchera* travelled the longest was the winner. Red, yellow, black and white *kulchera* were used with each player with their own colour.

- **Ball Games**

A ball game played by the Kabi Kabi people of southern Queensland was played with a ball made of kangaroo skin which was called a *buroinjin*. Teams from different groups often played against each other. When a player was tagged they had to throw the ball up and away from them.

Amongst some people of the Western district of Victoria ball players were referred to as *beiin*. In this game each team attempted to keep possession of a ball by kicking it to each other.

Boogalah was a ball game played by both gender of the Juwalarai people in New South Wales. One team stood in a group in the middle of the playing area. The other team was in a circle around them. The *boogalah* was thrown high into the air and the players all attempted to catch it for their totem (team). The players in the circle could not move to catch the *boogalah* until it was thrown in the air. If a player from the outside circle caught it their side (totem) went into the middle to swap places with the other team (totem).

- **Hockey Games**

A hockey game called *meetcha boma* (*nut striking*) was played in the Perth area. A *meeja* or *meetcha* (red gum nut) was used as the ball and a piece of wood with a crooked root (*bandeegurt*) as the hockey stick. The stick was generally bent into shape with the aid of fire. Players did not attempt to dribble the ball but just hit it – one contact.

Various Accounts of Traditional Games

Wrestling was also stated to have been a favourite game with the young natives. The young men engaged in this pastime placed their hands on each other's shoulders, and struggled, pushed and pulled until one of them fell. The victor at once returned to his place, often quite exhausted with the contest, which generally lasted some time. 36/93

Kailee throwing up into the air was another game. The *kailees* were propelled almost perpendicularly into the sky. The thrower whose *kailee* remained longest in the rotary motion and flew the highest, won the game. In the West Kimberly district [E of Peak Hill], one end of the *lanjee* (*kailee*) was set alight and the motion of the weapon fanning the flame, the end burned while the *lanjee* remained in the air. The highest weapon and the longest in rotary motion won. This game was always played at night. 36/93

Girls have also a game played with a lighted firestick, similar to the European game. A firestick is taken and twirled round and round, the player calling out the names of all the fish she can think of until the light goes out. 36/95, (34/253)

Bates, D. *Songs, Dances, Games etc. Section 11: 1a, 1e, 3a(ii), 4a, 5. Daisy Bates Collection. National Library of Australia, Canberra, A.C.T., 1929.*

The only game I have recorded is one in which a ball made from bark was used. This ball was thrown between the male and female members of the tribe until finally one side dropped it. The other side was naturally considered the winner.

The life of these aboriginal children is a very happy and care-free one. They are petted and fondled over in an effusive manner by all the older folk ... Most of their waking hours are spent in play and their happy laughter may be heard at almost any hour of the day and far into the night.

Webb, Thomas Theodor. *Aboriginals and Adventure in Arnhem Land. Personal archives of Professor A.P. Elkin 1904-1975. Series 7, box 22, item 97. Elkin Collection, University of Sydney Archives, Sydney, N.S.W., 1947.*

Little boys amused by throwing burning sticks into the trees so that the sparks fell down in bright showers.

Tindale, Norman B. *Journal of an Anthropological Expedition to the Mann and Musgrave Ranges, North West of South Australia, May-July 1933, and a Personal Record of the Anthropological Expedition to Ernabella, Aug. 1933. Journal <manuscript AA 338, series AA338/1/9>. Norman Tindale Collection. South Australian Museum, Adelaide, S.A., 1933: 73.*

"Murungurry": While the young fellows engaged in athletics and acrobatics, the old men played a kind of bowls. Any level bit of ground was the green; the bowls were smooth stones collected from the rocky beds of running streams and prized according to their roundness. The majority were a bit eccentric; they also varied in size and weight; but the old fellows enjoyed their game as long as their favourite bowls were not chipped by hard knocks. I have come upon broken bowls on old camping grounds.

"Murungurry". 'Aboriginalities'. *The Bulletin (Sydney)*, 10 November 1927: 42.

Their children used to play games with fish-eyes (or pearl substitutes) but as adults and all threw pearls away as useless children preferred fish-eyes because the pearls shone too well and could be easily spotted in the sand when playing at hiding fish-eyes.

Hall, Allen H. *Dipple Dialect from Fraser Island (Gari) from the Badyala People <manuscript, 2 pages>. Mowra word list. Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, A.C.T., 1970.*

Children arrived to sit quietly for a while until their fathers or father's brothers had meat for them. Soon they were surrounded by dogs as they ate their share throwing pieces of bone and unwanted fragments to their dogs. Cuffing others dogs and playing as they ate the continued to smash up the bones & suck the marrow in them until there was little left for the dogs. Other children, whose parents were not yet arrived played in various ways, swinging on mulga branches, trying to give each other pick a back rides or riding on branches while they waited for food to come to them.

Milerum (Clarence Long). *Data for Consideration in the Milerum Work. Tindale Collection. South Australian Museum, Adelaide, S.A., 19--.*

(b) Playing at *Mud-Slides* is very common in and among the moist salt-pans at the back of Princess Charlotte Bay: men, women, and children, all joining in the fun, and laughing at every mishap. A corresponding amusement is indulged in by the little boys along the mud banks, at the low water, in the neighbourhood of Cardwell, etc. They get a longish piece of bark, rest on it with the left knee and shin, and balance themselves in front by holding on tight with both hands, Pl. I., 4. They obtain the necessary impetus by kicking backwards in the mud with the right leg, and, with this movement rapidly repeated, they can skim along the mud-flats at a comparatively high rate of speed. (As might at first sight have been suggested, I do not consider this particular pastime to be imitative of canoeing).

Roth, Walter E. *North Queensland Ethnography: Bulletin No. 4. Games, Sports and Amusements. Edmund Gregory, Government Printer, William Street, Brisbane, Qld., 1902.*

4. Games of imitation.

Here as elsewhere children delight in imitating the occupations of their elders, and this mimicry forms a not unimportant part of their education. That this was so in the past is evident from the injunction of lads at initiation in Tutu to abstain in future from playing with play canoes and toy spears. Not only are models of canoes still made for boys to play with (*Album*, I. pl. 346, No. 9), but I have seen in Mer fully rigged models of luggers and schooners with which the young men amused themselves, and the spirit of emulation was gratified by racing one against another (cf Holmes, p. 283).

Mabuiag children play a catching game called *udai (wadai)* or *damadiai*; the former is the red flat bean of a *Mucuna*, the latter is a hard fruit that comes from New Guinea. Boys and girls go in pairs into the sea, a boy tries to throw a bean to another boy which his partner attempts to intercept; should she succeed she in her turn throws it to another girl and her partner tries to forestall her.

Haddon, A.C. 'Chapter XVII. Games and Toys'. In Haddon, A.C., Quiggin, A. Hingston., Rivers, W.H.R., Ray, S.H., Myers, C.S. and Bruce, R. (eds), *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits: Volume IV. Arts and Crafts. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K., 1912: (313)-341.*

Swimming. The blacks here swim in a far more vertical position than we do: furthermore, instead of "breasting" the water, the right shoulder appears to occupy the most advanced position. The right arm, starting with bent elbows, makes a clean sweep downwards, outwards, and backwards until, at the end of the stroke, the elbow is fully extended. The left arm remains sharply bent throughout its stroke, and limits a far smaller circle, the elbow appearing above the water-surface at each stroke. The legs, not

much separated, would appear to work dog-fashion. If I could liken this manner of swimming to anything of ours, it would be something after the style of the ordinary side-stroke. (42)

Roth, Walter E. [*Scientific Report to the Under-Secretary*]. *On the Natives of the (Lower) Tully River*. W.E. Roth Collection. Typescript held in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W., 19 September, 1900.

20. Domestication of Animals.

Small carpet-snakes may be caught, have their teeth rubbed down with a stick and kept in gourds, calabashes etc. They are not fed, but just caged, so to speak, until they die. Young cassowaries are also often caught and fed, and allowed to grow up, pick up what they can, and follow the blacks from camp to camp.⁽¹⁾

Roth, Walter E. [*Scientific Report to the Under-Secretary*]. *On the Natives of the (Lower) Tully River by Walter E. Roth. Appendix to the Report on Same Subject 20th September 1900*. W.E. Roth Collection. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W., 7 December, 1900.

During the winter months they amuse themselves by spinning round balls made of copri (gypsum) on flat pieces of wood.

Wells, Francis H. 'The Habits, Customs, and Ceremonies of the Aboriginals on the Diamantina, Herbert, and Eleanor Rivers, in East-Central Australia'. *Report of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Advancement of Science*, vol. 5, 1893 [1894]: 518.

There is great excitement over Bubberah, or come-back boomerang throwing.

Every candidate has a little fire, where, after having rubbed his *bubberah* with charred grass and fat, he warms it, eyes it up and down to see that it is true, then out he comes, weapon in hand. He looks at the winning spot, and with a scientific flourish of his arm sends his *bubberah* forth on its circular flight; you would think it was going into the Beyond, when it curves round and comes gyrating back to the given spot. Here again the old ones score.

Langloh-Parker, K. *The Euahlayi Tribe: a study of Aboriginal life in Australia*. Archibald Constable and Company, London, U.K., 1905: 127.

Each morning as the sun rose the small boys, armed with short play spears, repaired to a clearing outside the camp for about half an hour's spear practice. There was rarely any supervision of this, and the boys entered the spirit of the thing as earnestly as a mob of urchins play football on a vacant allotment. They were extremely skilled, and soon learnt to be ready with their spears. [Cape York, Qld.]

Thomson, Donald F. *Children of the Wilderness*. Currey O'Neil, South Yarra, Vic., 1983: 29.

I noticed that many of the river-gums of that area had pieces of bark cut out of them in the form of a circle and on inquiring of Djuwerri he explained they were called Juta[word in italics], a sort of wheel to roll along the ground for children to throw small spears at.

Harney, William Edward (Bill). *To Ayers Rock and Beyond*. Hale, London, U.K., 1963: 167.

The children would be lined up on the beach and had races to the water. They also had races on their hands up the main street for 50 yards or so.

Schomberg, Neil. *Angels in Paradise: True Stories and Incidents of the Torres Strait from August 1921 to February 1936*. [n.p.], 1992: 57.

Lake Albert Murray. At a corroborree (various dances)

Their last amusement was that of sitting cross-legged round a fire, in a circle, singing and beating time with spears and wirris; suddenly they all stretched out their right arms as if pointing to some unseen object, displayed their teeth, and rolled their eyes in a dreadful manner, and then jumped on their feet with a shout that echoed for miles through the stillness of the night.

Angas, George F. *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand: being an artist's impressions of countries and people at the antipodes*. 2 Vols. Smith, Elder and Co., London, U.K., 1847: 63.

SPORTS AND PASTIMES.—Black boys have no amusements save those derived from hunting and practice at throwing spears and boomerangs, sham fights with light reed spears, the "tholong" (point of wood) blunted, to perfect themselves in the art of war, or chase. It can be safely said that the girls have no amusements, their joys, poor creatures, are indeed few, in the interval between the cradle and the grave.

One of the pastimes indulged in by boys is the game of "Currum-currum." A currum is a circle of bark cut from a gum-tree, for choice, about the size of a breakfast plate, which one of the boys bowls for the others to spear at as it passes. It requires some skill to hit with a spear, as it passes at a high rate of speed. The bowler takes his currum about fifteen [sic] yards away, and the boys, with spears of wood, stand in a row, and as the currum passes each has his shot in turn, and the one who hits the object takes the place of the bowler. The bowler cries, "be-u-yah" (Are you ready?) and when all say ready, he calls out, "Currum-ba-lee," and bowls.

Mitchell, John F.H. 'Tribal Customs and Ceremonies'. *Science of Man and Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society of Australia*, vol. 8, no. 5, 1906: 12-13.

In returning we came on a place where the natives seemed to have been playing at some sort of game. Several flat tabular pieces of stone, about the size of an octave volume, were stuck upright in the sand in a certain order, while others, both flat and round, were lying dispersed about.

Jukes, Joseph Beete. *Narrative of the Surveying Voyage of HMS Fly, commanded by Captain F.P. Blackwood, RN, in Torres Strait, New Guinea, and other Islands of the Eastern Archipelago, during the Years 1842-1846: together with an excursion into the eastern part of Java*. Vol. 1. Boone, London, U.K., 1847: 35.

In the days of my boyhood, the natives used to talk a bit of English and most of us boys used to talk a little bit of their lingo. We used to go fishing and swimming and sky-larking in the water with the native boys and they used to come shooting with us. They were very good for this as they were clever stalkers.

Shenton, Mrs. E. 'Reminiscences of Perth: Perth 1830-1840'. *Journal and Proceedings of the Western Australian Historical Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1927: 1-4.

They get the large stalk of the fern leaf, which they heat in the fire and then stick in the ground, which makes an explosion like a musket.
Tasmania. George Augustus Robison 1830.

Plomley, N.J.B. (ed.) *Friendly Mission: the Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robertson 1829-1834*. Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, Tas., 1966: 370.

Games, Dances.—124. Dancing, singing, playing with the ball, "Chuboochuboo," sham fighting, racing, swimming and diving, and many other simple games of amusement. 125. "Chuboochuboo" is a wallaby skin, stuffed with grass, and about the size of a football. Men, women, and children play the game by throwing it up in the air and catching it with their hands. The principle of it is to keep it going in the air and not let it fall to the ground; there is great merriment over the game and never any quarrelling. "Kurdiewonkana." This dance men and women only take part in, regular form and position, keeping splendid time to the rattle of the beat of two boomerangs; some of the women keep time by clapping their hands between their thighs; promiscuous sexual intercourse follows after the dance, jealousy is forbidden. "Sham fighting." All men take part, throwing their weapons lightly in good part, humorous and never any quarrelling, and on this occasion young men who are to be circumcised are announced after the dance.

Gason, Samuel. 'Of the Tribes, Dieyerie, Auminie, Yandrawontha, Yarawuarka, Pilladapa, Lat. 31° S, Long. 138° 55'E'. *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 24, 1895: 174.

Another subject of contest is spear throwing. First, a selection is made of boys or young men. This time a Dingo boy and a Wombat boy meet in a contest to test their skill in long-distance throwing of their spears. The spears are made of reeds that grow on the banks of the river Murray, or Lake Alexandrina, or Lake Albert. The spear is about six feet long.

The Dingo boy outclasses the Wombat boy in distance-throwing. Now the Wombat boy challenges the Dingo boy at target-throwing. In this the Wombat boy excels, and wins the prize. This may be a newly made shield.

Dawson, James. *Australian Aborigines: The Languages and Customs of Several Tribes of Aborigines in the Western District of Victoria, Australia*. George Robertson, Melbourne, Vic., 1881: 85.

Hockey, much modified when I'm not present, is producing a crop of cracked shins and battered heads – very enthusiastic.

MacFarlane, Philip H. *Six years in Torres Strait, 1948-1954: St. Paul's Mission, Moa Island*. *MacFarlane Collection*. AIATSIS, Canberra, A.C.T., 1949: 17.

In the matter of sports, games, and pastimes, the aborigines have not any great diversity, but such as they have they enjoy to the very utmost; indeed they frequently continue some of their games until fatigue culminates in exhaustion. If they only displayed one half the zeal in procuring and conserving food for consumption during the cold wet months of winter that their various games call forth, there would not be a tithe of the misery in their midst that now prevails, and which is principally due to the many privations of that inclement season. The preparation and conservation of food for hard times should be a duty of the highest moment to them, but such being deemed an irksome task it is consequently distasteful, whereas playing games, however hard they may work in doing so, is merely recreation, and not at all incumbent; play is therefore held in high esteem and enjoyed accordingly.

Beveridge, Peter. 'Of the Aborigines inhabiting the Great Lacustrine and Riverina Depression of the Lower Murray, Lower Murrumbidgee, Lower Lachlan, and Lower Darling'. *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales for 1883*, vol. 17, 1884: 50.

There is another game, in which thirty or more boys stand in a row extending for seventy or eighty yards, and two boys at the ends stand in a line parallel to this, each at a distance of forty yards from it. They have a weapon made of two crossed sticks, each nine inches long, three inches wide, and half an inch thick. One boy takes this weapon and discharges it in the direction of his companion who stands at the other end of the line. It trundles or spins along the ground, like a hoop or wheel. The other boys who stand in a row have spears or boomerangs, or any weapons they may fancy. With these weapons they try to stop the motion of the sticks. The crossed sticks are supposed to be a wallaby or a kangaroo, and this sport is designed to teach the boys to become skilled hunters of game that is in the act of running. Sport is more keenly exciting when the animal is running, or when the bird is on the wing, than it is at rest on the ground.

Smith, William Ramsay. *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines*. Ballantyne Press, London, U.K., 1930: 240-241.

The boys of the Arundta and Aluridga tribes construct a small cylindrical stick sharpened at both ends, which they lay on the ground; then, with a longer stick held in the right hand, they strike one end of it, to make it bounce with considerable force. Competitions are held to see who can, by this method, drive the small object farthest. The game is much the same as our familiar 'tip-cat'.

Basedow, Herbert. *The Australian Aboriginal*. F.W. Preece and Sons, Adelaide, S.A., 1925: 78.

For a long time we had our own game. We'd throw a ball to each other and the other side would try and grab it. We'd toss it in the air and chase each other around. We would play all day. Today they play white man's way. But before we used a ball made from human hair. We would tie the hairstrung together to make that ball. It was a really good game that belonged to Aboriginal people called "pultja". We never used to fight or get hurt from that game. We played it just for fun and never fought over it. We looked forward to playing it every day. Just to see who'd win. (*Unidentified elder of the Walpiri people, Yuemendu, in Central Australia*).

Batty, David. *Motorcar Ngutju; Payback; The Chase: The Rainmaker* <video>. *Bush Mechanics: the series*. Film Australia. Distributed by Roadshow Entertainment, Sydney, N.S.W., 2001.

The children play a kind of football, the ball being made of opossum wool, spun by gins, and made into a ball about 11/2 inches in diameter, they do not take sides. One person kicks the ball up in the air, and then there is a general scramble to see who can kick it again before it touches the ground; the main object is to keep the ball from doing so, if it does, however do so, they start afresh. It requires great agility and suppleness of limb to play the game with any great skill. Whoever kicks the ball the most number of times is considered the best player. When any of the players miss the ball the others all laugh at him.

Bowler, S.C.R. 'Aboriginal Customs, Bogan and Lachlan River Aborigines'. *Science of Man and Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society of Australia*, vol. 4, no. 9, 1901: 147.

Traditional Games and Culture

The distinct cultures of all groups of people worldwide should be considered as equal, and none can be judged better than others, only different. A feature of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures was their number and diversity. The fact that these cultures were later influenced by various European social and cultural aspects does not detract from the significance of their individual and collective identities. Although not without its problems arranging specific knowledge about cultures into separate or distinguishable parts provides an opportunity to more fully understand how certain aspects of cultures function as a whole. The identification and review of **traditional games** as a separate yet inclusive or integrated part of culture can provide useful insights at various levels. However, the traditional games that are played by identifiable cultural groups or sub-groups are **not part of a distinct sub-culture** even though they may be mentioned in this way. The notion of a distinct traditional games sub-culture may have some appeal but because of the interactions with other cultural practices traditional games should be seen as part of a complex network that defines a particular group of people. The traditional games of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have, along with other play and movement expressions such as art, music, and dance, helped form part of the unique cultural heritage or cultural expressions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Australia as a whole.

Traditional games existed both as part of some of the formal cultural observances of the people, such as initiation ceremonies, but occasionally also as something which appears to be outside the normal cultural structure of a particular cultural group, such as seen in daily activities and spontaneous play. Sometimes the formal and informal – or *recognised* and *unrecognised* – cultural aspects were related in some ways. For example, the imitation of adult activities undertaken by children may have taken place as part of certain cultural practices associated with their education but sometimes they were undertaken in various forms amongst the children and away from other members of the group (and/or as a disapproved of and occasionally punished activity when performed in the presence of adults). Although the children played in ‘secret’ away from the adults did not mean that this represented a **children’s play sub-culture** in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural context.

The type and nature of traditional games can reveal much about the specific cultural groups that played them. Although some traditional games have a degree of continuity they are often associated with change as part of a **dynamic process**. A focus only on particular types of traditional games displays a disregard for their *range and complexity*. Similar types of traditional games are often associated with particular modes of involvement and cultural practices which distinguish them from other cultural groups. Over time these unique features become part of the traditions of particular cultural groups. For example, the mock battle ‘games’ that were regularly played in north Queensland involved different groups who each had their own types of body and implement decorations, ways of preparing for the event, chants and other game involvement differences, such as the role of the women in the contests.

Between the various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural groups the same or similar traditional games often have a wide range of variations with usually one or two variations specific to a particular group or place. These variations or versions of traditional games take many forms including adaptation to a local situation, absorption of new cultural influences, amalgamations, extensions, contractions and so on.

A Proposed Typology of Traditional Games

The word **typology** comes from the Greek word *typos*, which means an impression or a pattern. As a systematic classification or categorisation of a particular area of study *typology* is usually considered to be synonymous with *taxonomy*. In a typology the various *categories and its sub-categories* each contain features which relate to each other and are usually, but may not necessarily be, exclusive of the other categories.

World-wide research in the field of game typologies has been rather diffuse and varied. There are many different game typologies/classification systems related to games available and a number of these were reviewed. 'Straight' typologies have the concern of only accounting for organised and long-lasting events. They do not account for localised, situational or transient games and pastimes.

Often games are categorised according to various criteria such as their **function**, their **aim**, or according to the **implements and techniques** used. One of the problems of classifying games is that often they cannot be adequately identified based on a collection of characteristics.

Kotzman has outlined the problem of using categories as it related to a study of children's games:

The problem of classifying games into appropriate descriptive categories has also presented difficulties because games are micro-cosms of life and can be classified in as many ways. Therefore, whether a classificatory system is based on the psychological, historical, developmental, educational, sociological or structural characteristics, there is bound to be a certain arbitrariness in the approach, as well as a great deal of overlapping between categories. (Kotzman, A., 1973: 20)

Kotzman, A. 'A Sociological View of Children's Traditional Spontaneous Games.' Unpublished Honours thesis. Melbourne: Monash University, 1973.

- Research on Traditional Games within Australia

It is difficult to generalise about many of the features of the traditional games of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples given the diversity of cultures that were, and still are, evident. The total amount of information on traditional games in Australia is extensive and written accounts date from soon after European colonisation in 1788. Accounts vary from small pieces of information to more detailed descriptions and explanations.

A report by Roth (1902) provided an extensive description and classification of games played by children and adults of various groups living in the North Queensland area. Research in the Torres Strait Islands by Haddon (1912) resulted in a chapter on *Games and Toys* within a major published report. Aboriginal children's games are also discussed in Berndt (1940), Harney (1952), and Salter (1967, 1974). The work of people such as Basedow (1925), McCarthy (1960), Robertson (1975), Oates (1979), Miller (1983), Factor (1988), Atkinson (1991) and Haagen (1994) also provide information about traditional games. Margaret Lawrie made several visits to the Torres Strait Islands area between the 1960s and 1970s and recorded many of the stories, language and traditional games of the people.

The most reliable and accurate form of information about traditional games would usually come from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Unfortunately this information is not readily available. A significant Aboriginal perspective was provided by Gaiarbau (*Gidba*) or Willie MacKenzie. Gaiarbau gave invaluable information to interviewer Lindsey Winterbotham and which was finally published in 1982. Aboriginal David Unaipon in the 1920s provided information to other authors who shamelessly used it without acknowledgement. Unaipon

also had published some information that included traditional games although some of this was quite inaccurate. Various Aboriginal informants (mainly in Western Australia) provided the 'researcher' Daisy Bates with traditional games information. In South Australia Milerum (Clarence Long) was notable for some of his own accounts as well as providing information to Tindale (1920s).

- Typologies/Classification of Traditional Games within Australia

A few examples of typology (or classification) attempts have been outlined as a way to understand and systematically deal with the information available on the traditional games of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Walter E Roth

Roth was the Chief Protector of Aboriginals in Queensland during the early 1900s. In this position he conducted a series of ethnographic studies of Aboriginal groups located in this region, with a particular interest in games and play (Roth 1897). In his report, *Games, Sports and Amusements*, Roth (1902) presented a detailed description and classification of these games played by North Queensland groups. **In the early part of his report Roth noted:**

1. Classification.—At the very outset, I may be allowed to express regret that the classification of the subject-matter which has been adopted in the following pages is only tentative, though, on the other hand, it has been found to answer the purpose of allowing the many different methods of recreation and amusement to be arranged in certain well-defined groups. These groups, without any attempt at placing them in their order of origin and development, or relative importance, may be briefly noted as follows: (Roth, W.E., 1902)

Roth went on to outline and explain his different categories. **The various categories he classified the games under were:**

- **Imaginative Games;**
- **Realistic Games;**
- **Imitative Games;**
- **Discriminative Games;**
- **Disputative Games;**
- **Toys (Propulsive Games);**
- **Music (Exultative Games); and,**
- **Introduced Games.**

His report includes 39 plates of drawings and photographs depicting examples of the games, with specific emphasis given to string figure illustrations.

Roth, Walter E. *North Queensland Ethnography: Bulletin No. 4. Games, Sports and Amusements.* Edmund Gregory, Government Printer, William Street, Brisbane, Qld., 1902.

Alfred Cort Haddon

Haddon is known for his extensive fieldwork in the Torres Strait Islands during 1888–89 and as leader of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition of 1898–99. The team of anthropologists he led collected a great deal of material on the local cultures, culminating in six reports for the years 1902–35. Most of the research was focused on Mer (Murray) Island, with less attention to other local places, such as Saibai Island. In Volume 4 of his *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits: Arts and crafts*, Haddon included a 'Games and Toys' section. This chapter has many references to traditional games in local legends, religious practices and other cultural activities.

In explaining his attempt to classify the games Haddon said:

It is not an easy matter to classify the games played by the adults and children of various peoples, nor can one draw a hard and fast line between games played without apparatus, those played with objects which may be either actual tools or implements of toy imitations of them, or playing with toys. The following enumeration is not intended as a classification but as a simple method of grouping to facilitate reference.

1. Games of movement that develop and exercise the bodily powers.
2. Games of dexterity and skill.
3. Games of emulation.
4. Games of imitation.
5. Game of divination.
6. Various Toys.
7. String Figures and Tricks. (Haddon, A.C., 1912: 313)

Haddon, A.C. 'Chapter XVII. Games and Toys'. In Haddon, A.C., Quiggin, A. Hingston., Rivers, W.H.R., Ray, S.H., Myers, C.S. and Bruce, R. (eds), *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits: Volume IV. Arts and Crafts*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K., 1912: (313)-341.

Michael Salter (1967)

Salter (1967) provided a comprehensive overview of the traditional games of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Although his thesis relied solely on information that could be accessed in American libraries, it is nonetheless a significant source of information. In his Master of Arts thesis at the University of Alberta on the 'Games and Pastimes of the Australian Aboriginal', Salter sought to develop a classification that would include both games and pastimes. This is shown in **Figure 4. Salter divided the culture into the following major components:**

- A. Economic Activities;
- B. Political Activities;
- C. Ceremonial Activities;
- D. Cultural Identification;
- E. Social Interaction.

In relation to the major components Roth stated that:

The various recreational activities of the culture have been identified in accordance with their affinity of each of the above. These six major aspects of society, along with their related play activities, have been viewed individually, and an attempt made to differentiate between the games and pastimes of each (Salter, M., 1967: 12).

For each of the games and pastimes identified the predominant characteristic exhibited was determined, and this was **categorised according to the following classification:**

- A. Chance;
- B. Dexterity;
- C. Enigma;
- D. Exultation;
- E. Imitation;
- F. Pursuit;
- G. Strategy;
- H. Vertigo.

With regards to the model he developed Salter said:

A certain amount of overlap is to be expected in a classification of this nature. In an attempt to minimise this overlap, each activity was viewed in accordance with its place in society at the time it was first recorded, rather than the position that it may once have occupied. Thus, an activity that may previously have had religious overtones has not been included under the heading of Ceremonial Rites, unless the relationships are still evident, but was classified elsewhere.

Similarly, some of the more sophisticated recreational activities exhibit several of the eight fundamental characteristics of play that were employed to classify the games and pastimes of these people. Only the most pertinent characteristics have been recorded. (Salter, M., 1967: 12-14)

Salter did not differentiate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and referred to Aboriginal games and pastimes to cover both cultural groups. **Of the 94 games (see Appendix 2) Salter identified and classified, the associations with cultural domains were, as follows:**

- economic pursuits, 29;
- social interaction, 22;
- political activity, 13;
- cultural identification, 13;
- domestic aspects, 9;
- ceremonial rituals, 8.

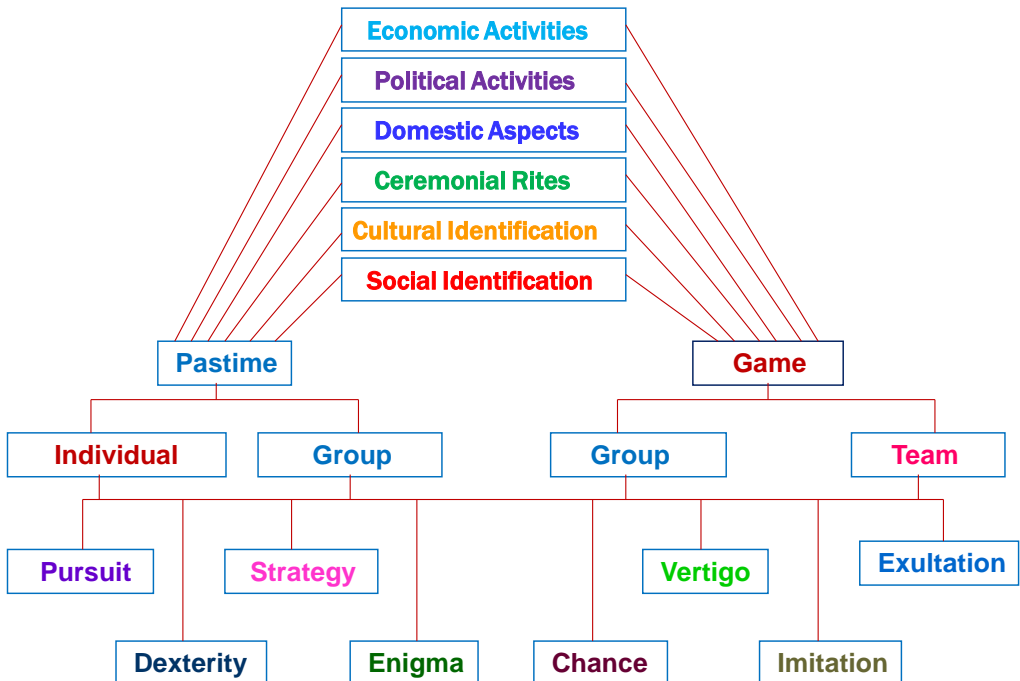


Figure 4: Structure of the model employed to classify Aboriginal Games and Pastimes (Salter, 1967).

As a result of his study, Salter suggested that:

1. The games of the Australian Aborigines appear to have been played solely for the enjoyment they afforded.
 2. In most areas, victory in a game was of minor importance, and only rarely was any form of trophy awarded to the winner.
 3. Participation was close to maximum in that all who wished to participate were welcomed.
 4. Although a certain amount of skill was desirable for most games, the lack of emphasis on winning permitted the less skilful to participate in, and enjoy, the activity.
 5. Game rules were few, and simple enough to be understood by players of all ages.
 6. The attitude of the players was such that the majority of games were played without an official.
 7. A large percentage of the play activities were of a group nature rather than of a team type, thus, while competition was present, it did not dominate play.
 8. Play activities were used to solidify internal relationships and promote goodwill and social intercourse externally.
 9. Play had a definite place and function in the culture of the Australian Aborigines. It served as a respite from work and as a medium through which the values considered important to the Aborigines could be learned.
- Their play, like their culture, was relatively simple with basic rewards being enjoyment and self-satisfaction (Salter, M., 1967: 191-2).

Salter, Michael A. 'Games and Pastimes of the Australian Aboriginal'. M.A. thesis, Department of Physical Education, University of Alberta, 1967.

Lyn Love (1983)

In an article, 'A Selection of Aboriginal Children's Games', Lyn Love discussed traditional play, noting that children "engaged in activities that stimulated their imagination, developed muscle co-ordination and strengthened powers of observation ... much of their play directly related to the skills and knowledge which would for them be essential to survival" (Love, 1983: 4).

Without discussing her reasoning Love outlined and explained various 'categories' of games:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ imitative play and make-believe;○ finger games;○ memory and guessing games;○ play with natural materials;○ play with animals;○ throwing and catching games; | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ chasing and finding games;○ games with toys;○ singing and dancing games;○ storytelling play; and○ verbal play. |
|--|--|

Some of the games and activities listed under the categories included:

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● tracking games;● pets;● mimic;● play 'house';● dancing;● fire games;● water games;● mud games;● tobogganning; | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● toy weapons;● throwing - spear;● toy canoe;● hand games;● string games;● insect games;● hide and seek;● skipping;● climbing; | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● sand games;● duck game;● stick game;● toys;● dolls;● ball games;● spinning tops;● whistles;● mock fighting; | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● defending;● moving target;● boomerang;● weet-weet (throwing stick);● corroboree |
|---|--|---|---|

Although the work of Love does seek to provide a framework for understanding Aboriginal games, it provides more of a general interest overview than any detailed outline of a classification system.

Love, Lyn. 'A Selection of Aboriginal Children's Games'. *Anthropological Society of Queensland Newsletter*, no. 141, 26 July 1983: 4-12.

Leonarda Kovacic (2001)

Leonarda Kovacic (2001) in a study on the **Gamilaroi** people in New South Wales noted that games have been categorised according to various criteria and suggested that the games of Aboriginal people fell roughly into **three categories**:

1. Traditional;
2. Introduced;
3. Games of Uncertain Origin/Games with Universal Distribution.

Kovacic, Leonarda. 'Cataloguing Culture: in search of the origins of written records, material culture and oral histories of the Gamaroi, [i.e. Gamilaroi] Northern New South Wales'. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The Australian Centre, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne, 2001.

- Typologies/Classification of Games Examples

In 1981 Renson and Smulders constructed a typology based on the study of folk games collected as part of their Flemish Folk Games File of Belgium. The folk (traditional) games were defined as “*traditional, local, active games of a recreational character, requiring specific physical skills, strategy or chance, or a combination of these three elements*” (Renson,R. and Smulders, H., 1981: 97-8). **The categories outlined in the typology were:**

- Ball games;
- Bowling games;
- Animal games;
- Shooting games;
- Jousting and Fighting games;
- Locomotion games;
- Throwing games;
- Party games;
- Children's games and Festival games.

At the *European Seminar on Traditional Games* in 1988, “the participants concluded that was necessary to have an empirical classification in order to list the material logically and to facilitate comparisons between different countries or regions” (Renson, Manson and De Vroede 1991: 69). In 1989 a draft classification of **eight categories**, which was broken into several subcategories, was developed.

The categories outlined were:

1. Ball games;
2. Bowl and pin games;
3. Throwing games;
4. Shooting games;
5. Fighting games;
6. Animal games;
7. Locomotion games;
8. Acrobatics.

The classification was designed to meet the definition of traditional games adopted at the 1988 Seminar:

- a. traditional games which existed, or had their roots in physical activities before spread of modern internationally organized sport;
- b. traditional games when physical skill was preponderant over other characteristics such as strategy (as in chess) and pure chance (as in dice games);
- c. neither competition nor the need for training were absolute criteria, but most traditional games to be included would include elements of both (some might also be professional); even if most traditional games were not structured in an organizational sense, the playing of the game itself would follow a recognizable structure, and have teaching and learning characteristics;
- d. children's games which satisfied these criteria
- e. some traditional games would be national, others purely local;
- f. emphasis should be given to games which still survive

(Renson, Manson and De Vroede, 1991: 69).

A differentiation between 'traditional' and 'modern' activities was based upon a selection – with good social reasons – of the Industrial Revolution in Britain as a starting point for gradual transition of some traditional (folk) games into modern sports. In discussing the nature of traditional games, Renson (1997), in later work, alluded to the **invention, re-invention, adoption and adaptation** of traditional game forms and functions, concluding that many traditions are, in fact, phenomena that are quite recently invented.

In 1992 Van Mele and Renson adopted the typology of traditional games relevant to Europe and applied it to accounts of games in South America, where the specification of an activity as 'traditional' distinguished it from 'modern sports' which gained worldwide popularity during the twentieth century. The sports and games discussed in this particular study were thought to have their roots in South America, however it was virtually impossible not consider influences that originated from outside South America. A key effect of the strong foreign influences that pervaded South America since European settlement was the modification of games and the incorporation of components from other countries, most notably Spain. As these activities had been subject to a process of acculturation, they were included in the inventory of traditional South American games.

A similar situation with regards to the nature of traditional games is evident in Australia. Cultural diversity, geographical size, diversity and isolation, and a strong British influence in the early stages of settlement has meant that in *many* of the sports and games which were later to influence the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures had their roots outside of Australia.

References:

1. Renson, R. and Smulders, H. 'Research Methods and Development of the Flemish Folk Games File'. *International Review of Sport Sociology*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1981: 97-107.
2. Renson, Roland, Manson, Michel and De Vroede, Erik. 'Typology for the Classification of Traditional Games in Europe'. In De Vroede, Erik and Renson, Roland (eds), *Proceedings of the Second European Seminar on Traditional Games*. Vlaamse Volkssport Centrale, Leuven, Belgium, 1991. # Updates and additions by Guy Jaouen, Spring 2001, and Pere Lavega Burgués. European Traditional Games and Sports Association: <http://www.jugaje.com/en/>
3. Renson, Roland. 'Save our Sports'. *UNESCO Courier*, 1992: 41-47.
4. Renson, R. 'The Reinvention of Tradition in Sports and Games'. *Journal of Comparative Physical Education and Sport*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1997: 46-52.
5. van Mele, Veerle and Renson, Roland. *Traditional games in South America*. 1st edn. (ICSSPE Sport. Science Studies 4). Karl Hofmann, Schorndorf, Germany, 1992.

- The COMET Model

In addition to the typologies outlined a number of other classification systems were examined. One of these was the COMET model. The COMET model is a recent theoretical framework which has been based on an exhaustive review of existing literature and classifications.

COMET taxonomic proposal, by considering the variables of the internal logic of the game (players, opponents, equipment, space and time), and taking regard of different indicators for each of the variables separately, allows the classification of the diverse manifestation that relates to playful choices (through various categories), and also makes possible the accomplishment of a rigorous analysis of all of them (Bantulà i Janot, 2005).

C-Companions (Players); O-Opponents; M-Materials (Equipment); E-Space (Environment); T-Time
(The letters indicate the presence of the variables)

1. COMET
2. T
3. E
4. ET
5. M
6. MT
7. ME
8. MET
9. O
10. OT
11. OE
12. OET
13. OM
14. OMT
15. OME
16. OMET
17. C
18. CT
19. CE
20. CET
21. CM
22. CMT
23. CME
24. CMET
25. CO
26. COT
27. COE
28. COET
29. COM
30. COMT
31. COME
32. COMET

Despite some appeal in applying some of the information about **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** traditional games to this model it was felt that it could have greater potential in both reviewing the available information and perhaps in the future developing a complementary way of considering the information researched.

Bantulà i Janot, Jaume. 'Joc Motor Tradicional: Estudi taxonòmic i comparatiu (Traditional Game Engine: taxonomic and comparative study)'. Ph.D. thesis. University of Barcelona, Spain, 2005.

- Development of a typology

Because the existing typologies reviewed did not appear to adequately deal with all the information available on the **traditional games of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** it was considered necessary to develop a new typology. The typology was intended to be used as a basis to outline the different types of traditional games and show both designated 'boundaries' as well as interactions (and any overlapping). The information collected and reviewed provided some indication of the **categories** and **sub-categories** that could be developed but intensive review and revising was necessary in formulating the final typology.

The typology has attempted to be reflective of both **traditional** and more **contemporary** (and **continuing**) traditional games. It has sought to accommodate all the possible information available that might refer to traditional games that have existed in the past or still survive. Typologies typically are effective in depicting more traditional, organised and long-lasting traditional games but efforts have been made to consider and incorporate **localised, situational or transient** traditional games. The typology proposed also seeks to accommodate traditional games that could be developed within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities in the **future**.

- Limitations of the proposed typology

The information used in designing the typology comes from a great many sources and covers an extended period of time and includes observations made during periods of significant cultural change following European colonisation.

- Even allowing for the guidelines offered by the typology developed it was found that there was *information that could not be placed with a great degree of certainty*. It is also accepted that many of the **categories** and **sub-categories** in the proposed typology contain entries that are not mutually exclusive and many traditional games may be placed under different **categories** (and **sub-categories**).
- There is a level of confidence in suggesting that the comprehensive nature of the research undertaken prior to constructing the typology has resulted in some useful insights into the type and role of traditional games in many cultural groups. However, it is worth noting that there are **a significant number of traditional games that have existed at some time that have not have been observed or remembered and are not recorded**. This is particularly the case of localised, situational or transient games. As many games appear and then disappear or are changing in nature due to various social and cultural forces they may often only be relevant to a particular historical moment in time.
- It is recognised that **traditional games that are described and categorised in isolation to their particular cultural context have the problem of not displaying the interaction system of which they are part**. Traditional games, though often played separately, were most often not seen as separate to other cultural activities. They have close and sometimes indistinguishable associations with areas that might usually be now considered to be separate *performance or movement activities* (such as singing and dancing).

The proposed typology seeks to provide a framework with which to outline the information collected and to analyse patterns and features that are central to an understanding of traditional games within the way of life of people in cultures which can be specifically identified with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (and the communities or regions within them). The typology attempts to incorporate traditional games from the pre-contact period as well as those since colonisation to the present-day.

Overview of the Proposed Typology

The use of typologies (as a classification system) has both benefits and difficulties. The typology proposed is an attempt to develop the level of understanding and contribute towards a greater depth of knowledge which has been available since the seminal work of Michael Salter (1967) on the '**Games and Pastimes of the Australian Aboriginal.**'

A. Games and Pastimes

This **list of categories** is elaborated from the work conducted on developing traditional games in Europe. **The list developed for Games and Pastimes consists of:**

1. Ball Games
2. Roll/Bowl Games
3. Throwing Games
4. Shooting/Propelling Object Games
5. Fighting Games
6. Animal Play and Games
7. Locomotion Games and Activities
8. Body Movement Games and Activities

Significant aspects of the typologies of traditional games developed by Renson and Smulders (1981) and Renson, Manson and De Vroede (1991) – and later adjustments – were modified and expanded upon and incorporated into the main **category** area of **Games and Pastimes** in the proposed typology. Some minor variation in the wording of the title of some of the **categories** between the European model and the one developed here was also made.

The main difference from the **categories** outlined in the European traditional games typology is that the **category** of **Acrobatics** was replaced by what may appear to be the wider and more general **category** of **Body Movement Games and Activities**.

While there appears to be a deal of similarity between the **categories** of **Locomotion Games and Activities** and **Body Movement Games and Activities** a review of these **categories** will reveal the specific emphasis of each one in addition to some areas of overlap.

Within the **categories** of this typology there was some adherence to many of the **sub-categories** from the European model but there has also been a significant amount of adjustment and development within the various **sub-categories**. This work is seen as subject to future modification or refinement.

B. Cultural Play and Game Traditions

This section is specifically designed to incorporate and give greater clarity and relevance to the large amount of information related to the traditional games of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that was researched. It has been outlined in an attempt to 'capture' all of this information to complement and supplement the detailed outline under **Games and Pastimes**.

The various categories of Cultural Play and Game Traditions are:

1. Free and Imitation play
2. Toys and Playthings
3. Survival Games and Activities
4. Social and Cultural Games and Activities
5. Language and Communication Games and Activities
6. The Arts: Games and Activities

It is recognised that the outline of what appears to be **two separate classification systems** could be confusing and problematic but the idea has been to depict as much of the information about traditional games as possible and to do so in a manner that may provide a wide understanding for interested people.

It would be possible to include **all** the information from **Cultural Play and Game Traditions** under the **Games and Pastimes** area even though this might involve additional **sub-categories** and some re-organisation or re-design. Similarly, it could be possible to include the information in **Cultural Play and Game Traditions** within the **Games and Pastimes** area. However, after a careful consideration of the information available, it was decided to highlight particular aspects, especially as they serve to outline special areas and/or **reflect the cultures more accurately**. The key consideration was to provide an understandable and relevant organisation of the information while providing for a cultural understanding and perspective.

The area of **Cultural Play and Game Traditions** – both in name and area designation as well as the listed **categories** – could be the subject of some questioning or criticism by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In defence of the outline of this area there was a degree of clarity, convenience and indeed cultural acceptance of the decision to adopt this approach. Some feedback by individuals from **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** communities indicated general approval and support for this approach and reinforced the value of the design of the proposed typology. No concerns were raised about any confusion that might exist between the **two main categories** (**Games and Pastimes** and **Cultural Play and Game Traditions**) and there was an acceptance that information could appear under different **categories** – both complementary to each other and integrated. The main issue that was raised while discussing the design of the typology was the need to be as accurate and comprehensive as possible while incorporating the information available from all parts of Australia.

From a conceptual viewpoint the **Games and Pastimes category** might be seen to represent **FORMS** and/or **TYPES** of traditional games and the **Cultural Play and Game Traditions category** represents traditional games in the context of **PLAY, PLACE** (within the culture) and **PURPOSE**.



- The proposed typology

As has been previously outlined the proposed typology (see **Figure 5**) represents an attempt to systematically outline and review an extensive amount of research information conducted into the traditional games of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It draws on accounts from many sources and recognises the ongoing nature of traditional games cultures. The **two main categories** (**Games and Pastimes** and **Cultural Play and Game Traditions**) should be seen to be closely related to each other and combine to contribute towards a detailed consideration of the traditional games of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (**Figure 6** and **Figure 7** seek to show the association between the **two main categories**).

The **categories** under each of the main **categories** (**Games and Pastimes** and **Cultural Play and Game Traditions**) are presented so that they comprehensively capture as much of the traditional game information reported about the different societies as possible. However, the presentation of various **categories** and **sub-categories** does not preclude the further refinement and the use of further or different **sub-categories** within each. It should also be noted that the various **categories** and **sub-categories** outlined are not mutually exclusive and it is possible for activities to be 'classified' or placed in one or more **categories** and/or **sub-categories**. This is not seen as necessarily detracting from the usefulness of the typology in gaining an appreciation of the extent of traditional games of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Despite the diversity of cultures evident in Australia the proposed typology displays a unique identity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures when compared to other parts of the world. However, in making this comment it is recognised that there are many common or universal traditional games aspects evident.

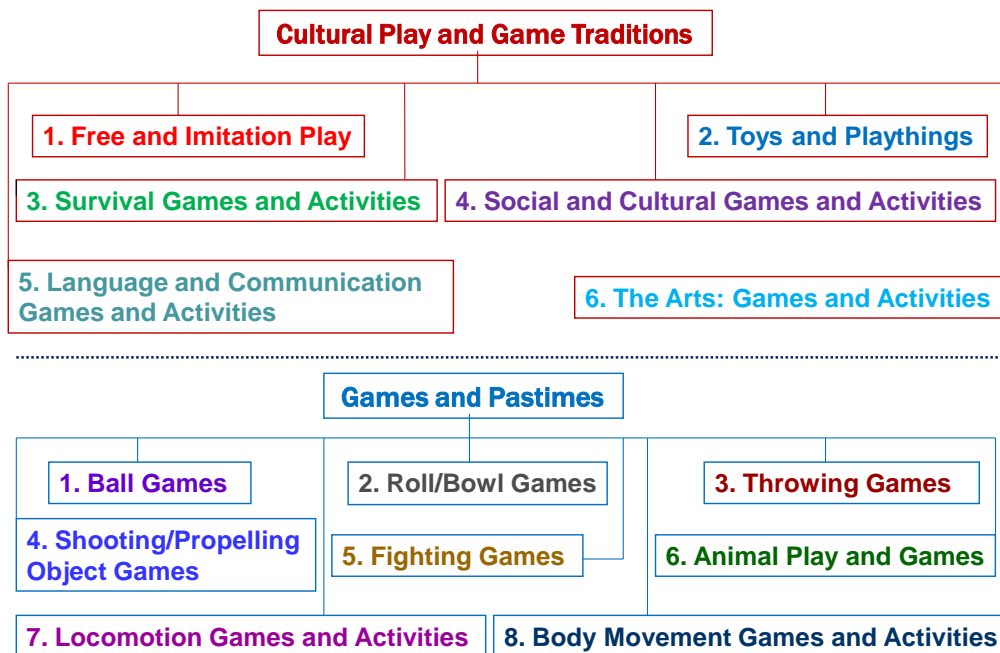


Figure 5: Proposed typology of traditional games of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

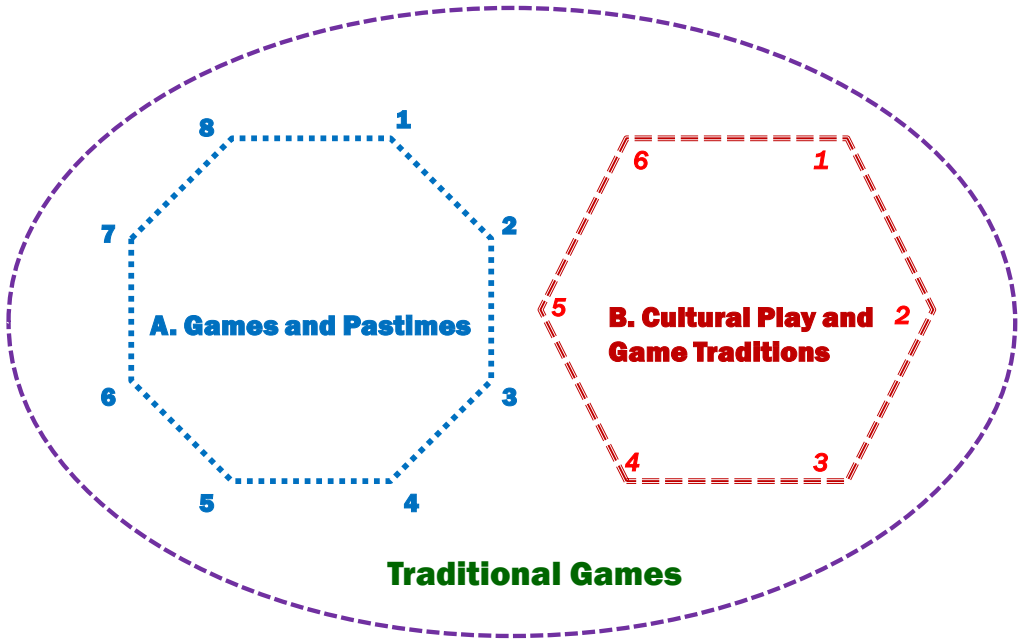


Figure 6: Structure of the classification areas developed as part of the proposed typology.

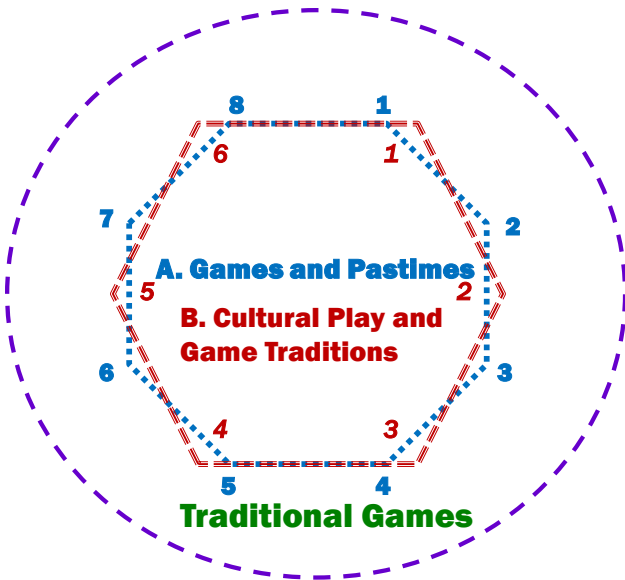


Figure 7: Integration of the classification areas developed as part of the proposed typology.

Explanation and Outline of the Typology

● Main Areas/Categories:

A. Games and Pastimes

B. Cultural Play and Game Traditions

The *two major category areas* above are detailed further under a number of individual *categories and sub-categories*.

● Individual Categories:

In the typology each of the individual *categories* are systematically outlined. For example, **1. Ball Games**.

The full list of all the *categories* under both *main category areas* is listed below:

A. Games and Pastimes	B. Cultural Play and Game Traditions
1. Ball Games	1. Free and imitation play
2. Roll/Bowl Games	2. Toys and Playthings
3. Throwing Games	3. Survival Games and Activities
4. Shooting/Propelling Object Games	4. Social and Cultural Games and Activities
5. Fighting Games	5. Language and Communication Games and Activities
6. Animal Play and Games	6. The Arts: Games and Activities
7. Locomotion Games and Activities	
8. Body Movement Games and Activities	

● Relevant information in relation to a category:

The information presented is to provide background and some context for each particular *category (and/or sub-categories)*. It is recognised that there is opportunity for much greater refinement of the information outlined.

The use of **brackets and information in italics** for some entries at the *category and/or sub-category* levels provides the opportunity for further information to clarify or expand on a particular point and/or concept.

This use is highlighted in the example below:

7. Locomotion Games and Activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ to move oneself, being moved by an object, or, moving an object [*movements are dynamic, taking place with more or less intensity or force, and speed*]
- ◆ general lack of intense or specific fitness or physical training games although improved physical fitness was sometimes an outcome [*no evidence that physical fitness was a recognised cultural concept although fitness aspects such as speed, strength, suppleness and stamina may have been developed*]
- ◆ many games had a high or medium level of physical activity but some games might involve little or no physical activity

● **Sub-categories:**

Under each **category** there has been an identification of further **sub-categories** to explain, refine and outline the **category** information. From the **category** of **Roll/Bowl Games** an example of **sub-categories** is outlined below:

2.1. roll/bowl to hit or to approach

2.1.1. without instrument (usually from the hands)

2.1.1.1. marbles (nuts, small stone or clay balls)

● **Examples of games:**

The examples of particular games and activities outlined reflect a cross-section or 'snapshot' of some of the cultural groups from where information was available. They should not be seen as representative of all the cultural groups found in Australia. It should be noted that there were some traditional games that were evident in most, or all, cultures while some were specific to a particular cultural group (sometimes at a certain period of time or season).

It is worth remembering that there is some question about the accuracy of various observations and the interpretation of some of the accounts used as a basis of the examples outlined. The information outlined below is taken from a sub-category of **Locomotion Games and Activities:**

7.1. moving oneself

7.1.1. without instruments/objects

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ movement or physical activity not caused by an instrument/object

7.1.1.1. walking, running and chasing

some examples:

- various types and forms of running contests or play (e.g., running and bounding/stepping on rocks; endurance running activities; running along the beach chasing after wind-blown bushes)
- cooperative races where players of different ages, running speed and gender attempt to finish together
- running activities (e.g., run at speed along the beach and pick up and drop or place coconuts on the sand) <TSI>
- walking/running long distances (e.g., 'walkabout' play or follow the leader games up and down hills etc. → may include various physical skills/tasks, including carrying a child)

- Special Identification of games:

In some examples outlined there has been a designation of an area or source to provide some extra clarity. For example, <TSI> indicates that the activity is primarily associated with the Torres Strait Island area and <mission play> indicates that the activity was commonly associated with missions or government settlements. The examples to illustrate the above comments are selected from different categories of the typology:

- making an art and play association (e.g., paint spinning tops with legendary figures of cultural significance) <TSI>
- play with cattle (e.g., chasing and moving cattle as a herd) <mission play>

Overview of the Categories and Sub-Categories

A. Games and Pastimes

1. Ball Games

1.1. without Instruments

- 1.1.1. with the hands or with the upper limbs (elbow, arm)
- 1.1.2. with the feet or lower limbs (foot, leg, knee)
- 1.1.3. with both (hands or upper limbs and feet and lower limbs)

1.2. with Instrument

- 1.2.1. stick or bat

2. Roll/Bowl Games

2.1. roll/bowl to hit or to approach

- 2.1.1. without instrument (usually from the hands)
 - 2.1.1.1. marbles (nuts, small stone or clay balls)
 - 2.1.1.2. round bowls
 - 2.1.1.3. flat bowls

2.2. roll/bowl to hit and knock down

- 2.2.1. without instrument (usually from the hands)
 - 2.2.1.1. rounded objects (stones and clay balls)

3. Throwing Games

3.1. disc and rings

- 3.1.1. discs or pucks
- 3.1.2. rings (quoits)

3.2. projectiles

- 3.2.1. sticks/spears
 - 3.2.1.1. thrown from the hand
 - 3.2.1.2. throwing stick (woomera) to project a stick/spear
- 3.2.2. boomerangs
- 3.2.3. darts
- 3.2.4. stones, seeds or shells
- 3.2.5. bark
- 3.2.6. clubs/waddies
- 3.2.7. play throwing sticks or 'weet-weet'
- 3.2.8. mud balls
- 3.2.9. airborne 'toys'
- 3.2.10. miscellaneous objects

3.3. top games

3.4. games of throw and catch

3.5. miscellaneous

- 3.5.1. whips
- 3.5.2. bullroarers
- 3.5.3. spinners

4. Shooting/Propelling Object Games

4.1. bow and arrow

4.2. catapult/shanghal or 'gling'

4.3. woomera (spear thrower)

4.4. mud ball 'sling'/mud-stick

4.5. blowpipe

4.6. use of fire 'guns'/explosions

- 4.6.1. tree 'guns'
- 4.6.2. fire explosions

4.7. striking/hitting to propel/shoot

4.8. grass dart

4.9. using body parts to shoot/propel

5. Fighting Games

5.1. wrestling/fighting without arms/weapons

- 5.1.1. wrestling/throwing
- 5.1.2. pushing/shoving and pulling
- 5.1.3. slapping and hitting (with evasion)

5.2. confrontation with arms/weapons

- 5.2.1. hand weapons and/or thrown weapons/objects
 - 5.2.1.1. wooden swords
 - 5.2.1.2. nullas nullas and waddies
 - 5.2.1.3. digging sticks
 - 5.2.1.4. sticks and spears
 - 5.2.1.5. shields/woomeras
 - 5.2.1.6. boomerangs

6. Animal Play and Games

6.1. play with animals

6.2. 'confrontation' with animals

6.3. confrontation between animals

- 6.3.1. animal fights
- 6.3.2. racing between animals

7. Locomotion Games and Activities

7.1. moving oneself

7.1.1. without instruments/objects

7.1.1.1. walking, running and chasing

7.1.1.2. swimming and diving

7.1.1.3. hopping, jumping and

skipping

7.1.1.4. climbing

7.1.1.5. balancing

7.1.1.6. miscellaneous: (rolling and sliding ...)

7.1.2. with instruments/objects

7.2. being moved

7.2.1. by animals

7.2.2. by another person or persons

7.2.3. by water

7.2.4. by a 'vehicle' or craft

7.3. moving an object

7.3.1. lift and carry

7.3.2. pull or paddle

7.3.3. push

7.4. moving and being moved by an object

8. Body Movement Games and Activities

8.1. acrobatic feats/skills/challenges and activities

8.1.1. acrobatic/gymnastic activities

8.1.2. physical ability/challenge

8.1.3. tricks and stunts

8.1.4. physical strength activities

8.2. manipulative/making

8.2.1. string games

8.2.2. making play objects

8.2.3. using body for making shapes

8.3. social physical contact

8.3.1. person to person contact

8.3.2. handling objects and social contact

8.4. sensorimotor activities

8.4.1. sensory activities

8.5. miscellaneous bodily activities

8.5.1. bodily functions/actions

8.5.2. physical 'prowess'

B. Cultural Play and Game Traditions

1. Free and Imitation play

1.1. role play and pretending/acting/miming/imitation

1.1.1. role play enactment/mimicry (may include role reversal)

1.1.2. imaginary/pretend/acting games

1.2. free and/or spontaneous play

2. Toys and Playthings

2.1. toys and playthings

2.1.1. playing with made or available toys and playthings

2.1.2. making and collecting things

2.1.2.1. made with or by others

2.1.2.2. made by self

2.1.3. collecting things

3. Survival Games and Activities

3.1. tracking/hunting games and food gathering practices

3.1.1. tracking/hunting

3.1.2. food gathering

3.2. mind and memory

3.2.1. observation and/or guessing or recall

3.2.2. finding or seeking games

4. Social and Cultural Games and Activities

4.1. daily life

4.1.1. camp fire and evening games

4.1.1.1. fire games

4.1.1.2. camp fire games

4.1.2. travelling or daily-time games

4.1.3. sexual relationships games

4.1.4. social relationships/situations

4.1.5. gender play

4.1.6. ceremonial rites or events

4.1.7. education/information

transmission

4.2. communal events/social gatherings and activities

4.2.1. Inter-group/clan/community social activities/contests

4.2.2. traditional gatherings and activities

4.3. traditional and contemporary play cultures

4.3.1. introduced games and activities

4.3.1.1. European originated games and events

4.3.1.2. mission or settlement games

4.3.1.3. fringe dwellers or town camp games

4.3.2. contemporary indigenous identity games

4.3.2.1. Indigenous identity

4.3.2.2. children's games

4.3.2.3. 'dysfunctional' society play

4.3.2.4. card playing

4.3.2.5. gambling and games of chance

chance

4.3.3. traditional games heritage

5. Language and Communication Games and Activities

5.1. language and verbal communication

5.1.1. socialising/talking and listening

5.1.2. talking/verbal communication in play

5.1.3. talking as part of storytelling activities

5.2. non-verbal communication

6. The Arts: Games and Activities

6.1. music and singing/chanting

6.1.1. musical instruments

6.1.2. playing with sound producing 'instruments'

6.1.3. 'musical' or rhythmical sounds without 'instruments' or singing

6.1.4. musical sounds and singing

6.1.5. sounds from the environment without instruments and with singing

6.1.6. singing and whistling play

6.1.6.1. singing play songs

6.1.6.2. whistling in play

6.2. the visual arts

6.2.1. drawing, painting, decorating or displaying

6.2.2. sand and earth modelling or sculpturing

6.3. dance

6.3.1. dance/rhythmic activities

6.4. drama

6.4.1. acting contests

6.4.2. storytelling as performance

6.5. media

6.4.1. media products

The Typology

A typology provides a convenient way of organising a body of information into **categories** and various levels of **sub-categories** down to specific examples of traditional games. It should be remembered that many games do not belong to only **category** but frequently contain elements of two or more **categories** and/or **sub-categories**.

The information in the typology presented below **cannot possibly cover all the information** available on the traditional games of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** peoples. In outlining the information it is acknowledged that as well as outlining unique traditional games there are many types and features of traditional games in common with cultures from other parts of the world.

A. Games and Pastimes

1. Ball Games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ there is usually interaction between the players by means of the ball
- ♦ a combination of physical skills or body actions such as running, jumping and swerving along with some strategies may occur
- ♦ the 'ball' is made of a single substance such as rock, kelp, hair-string, snow or clay but could also be of a composite nature with feathers, woven leaves, fur, string, grass, etc.
- ♦ often involves catching/stopping or controlling the ball
- ♦ physical interaction and joyous participation were usually involved (sometimes activities were as seasonal)
- ♦ sometimes involved game 'rules' and cultural adherence often evident (e.g., a game might involve play between totem groups)

1.1. without Instruments

1.1.1. with the hands or with the upper limbs (elbow, arm)

some examples:

- hand hitting (e.g., use a pandanus palm nut to hit)
- throwing and catching games (e.g., keep-away game with girl and boy partners in shallow water; passing and catching games in totem groups)
- highest throw into the air
- throw ball up in the air and catch games (individual, small group or teams)

1.1.2. with the feet or lower limbs (foot, leg, knee)

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ involves kicking/volleying but can include holding or handling a ball or object to start or re-start the game

some examples:

- keep it up/volleying (e.g., throw or kick ball in the air and then use only kicks to keep it up from hitting the ground)
- kicking to each other with little or no kicking of the ball when it is on the ground
- players try to make the highest kick

1.1.3. with both (hands or upper limbs and feet and lower limbs)

some examples:

- keep-away (e.g., a game of kicking and some passing the ball after catching it while opposing players attempt to intercept/gain the ball)
- kick into the air (e.g., players aim to kick the ball high in the air and leap the highest to catch it)

1.2. with Instrument

1.2.1. stick or bat

some examples:

- hitting/hockey games (e.g., use of a bent stick and large gum nut as the 'ball' in a team game with little or no dribbling or controlling the ball)
- hitting or rolling stones and stopping them with a stick
- use flat pieces of wood as bats to hit a light ball

2. Roll/Bowl Games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ sphericity is a general characteristic element of the 'bowl' or 'ball'
- ◆ the bowl/ball is usually not malleable
- ◆ the bowl/ball rolls
- ◆ a combination of physical skills and strategies may occur

2.1. roll/bowl to hit or to approach
some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ 'to approach' or to roll/hit
- 2.1.1. without instrument (usually from the hands)**

2.1.1.1. marbles (nuts, small stone or clay balls)

some examples:

- marble type rolling games using stones or nuts/marbles (e.g., rolling or shooting/propelling at another 'marble')
[evidence of mingling of play practices with European play culture]
- roll pebbles down bark tubes for 'fun' or to hit a 'target' at the end of the tube/tunnel

2.1.1.2. round bowls

some examples:

- clay balls rolled to hit others (e.g., contest where balls are rolled towards each other to collide)
- stone bowls (e.g., bowls type game played on flat ground)
- coconut bowling to hit other coconuts

2.1.1.3. flat bowls

some examples:

- bark discs in play rolling at 'targets' *[discs also used as a moving target in spear games]*
- large flat seeds rolled to hit targets (or other seeds)

2.2. roll/bowl to hit and knock down
some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ to roll/hit or knock down

2.2.1. without instrument (usually from the hands)

2.2.1.1. rounded objects (stones and clay balls)

some examples:

- roll rounded stones or rocks to knock down skittle/stick-type 'targets' as part of play
- underarm throw/roll small rounded stones or balls at a stationary or rolling bark disc or other target → to hit and knock over

3. Throwing Games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ throwing at an object is the major characteristic (and may also incorporate catching of this object)
- ◆ some activities were restricted to boys and men
- ◆ may have inter-group and 'political' associations
- ◆ a combination of physical skills and basic strategies may occur
- ◆ concepts of 'luck' and skill may be involved together
- ◆ range from play practice activities to practice of specific survival skills or skills to use as part of games (such as ball games)
- ◆ hunting, survival skills and play relationships may be evident [through 'traditional' education – including practice – boys became successful hunters]

3.1. disc and rings

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ dexterity is involved

3.1.1. discs or pucks

some examples:

- throw a flat stone to land in a target area
- throw dried cow dung at opposing players or for distance and/or accuracy
- throw flattened stone 'puck' at sticks or other 'targets'

3.1.2. rings (quoits)

some examples:

- small string hoops and/or quoits in throw and catch play

3.2. projectiles

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ usually involves accuracy/target but could involve distance-height
- ◆ includes rolling/bouncing, sliding or throwing (overarm, sidearm, round arm or underarm) of an object
- ◆ different types, sizes (e.g., small/minature or full-size) and shapes of projectiles are manufactured or used

3.2.1. sticks/spears

3.2.1.1. thrown from the hand

some examples:

- grass/reed/wood spears in skill contests or games → thrown at a person/'prey' fixed or moving target (such as small hoops or a bark disc)
- throwing and catching light sticks or spears (either blunted or sharp)
- spear throwing for distance and/or accuracy competitions (e.g., use a banana stem as a target – and may involve skill and luck where a spear rebounds off the ground into the target)
- group spear games (e.g., throw a blunted spear which is deflected by players with shields around a circle of players)
- spear skill games (e.g., rolling target games with bark disc, wooden ball, iron ring; keep ball targets in spear throwing practice play or contest)
- throwing heated/burning sticks/spears into the air or trees [*fireworks*]
- spear throw and dodge (e.g., play practice combat or punishment ordeal and avoidance practice)

3.2.1.2. throwing stick (woomera) to project a stick/spear

some examples:

- use of a woomera to launch a spear in accuracy contests/games

3.2.2. boomerangs

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ use returning and/or non-returning types
 - ◆ various sizes, shapes (e.g., cross and hooked boomerang) and forms (e.g., miniature bark boomerang, tin boomerang)
- #### some examples:
- boomerang games (e.g., team keep-away; a group of players in a line behind each other and working to avoid the end player being contacted by a thrown boomerang)
 - boomerang skill contests (e.g., target, distance and accuracy contests; roll or throw boomerang along the ground; throw and catch) [*play practice of skills*]
 - skill and game play combined when giant boomerangs thrown from hills into the air for extended flight contests
 - boomerang 'battles' (e.g., throw bark boomerangs to curve around trees to hit a hiding opponent)

- toy cross-boomerangs thrown to return to land at the feet in a skill contest

3.2.3. darts

some examples:

- 'dart' or arrow throwing/shooting <TSI>

3.2.4. stones, seeds or shells

some relevant points and/or concepts:

♦ rocks and stones of every size were always an attraction to use as a throwing object

some examples:

- stone skipping on water play ('ducks and drakes')
- stone throwing for accuracy at targets or objects (e.g., throw stones at targets or animals such as birds for 'fun' or at other players)
- players throw and catch stones (e.g., including throwing and catching over an object like a windbreak shelter)
- throw rocks for distance (e.g., lift and throw large rocks in one action)
- use shells for games similar to 'knucklebones')
- underarm throws of small shells into a target hole
- throwing game with large seeds (e.g., kolap seeds/beans to land on a 'target' mat in a team game) <TSI>

3.2.5. bark

some examples:

- throwing pieces of bark at a target or another player as part of parrying or dodging and avoidance (or in physical skill activities)

3.2.6. clubs/waddles

some examples:

- club/waddy throwing (includes miniature versions) – may be as part of mock fights

3.2.7. play throwing sticks or 'weet-weet'

some examples:

- inter-group and individual 'weet-weet' or 'kangaroo rat' throwing contests and games (e.g., distance and/or accuracy contest by throwing along ground, through bushes, or into a mound of earth)
- play 'throwing stick' sliding/gliding along sand on beach <TSI>

3.2.8. mud balls

some examples:

- use of hands or stick to throw/sling mud balls (or clumps of mud) at targets or others

3.2.9. airborne 'toys'

some examples:

- throw or propel/flick leaves into the air (e.g., flick leaf to spiral into fire updraft; 'propeller' seeds thrown into the air)
- returning toys – including small toy 'boomerang' shapes (e.g., twisted leaves or miniature bark boomerangs flicked or thrown to return)

3.2.10. miscellaneous objects

some examples:

- an emu shin bone tied on twine and thrown into a hole ('pit') as part of a throwing contest around a camp fire

3.3. top games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

♦ 'throwing' may include the use of the thumb and fingers, or palms of the hand to impart spin to a spinning top of some type

some examples:

- ball-spinning contests/activities (e.g., stones, gypsum balls, etc.)
- top spinning/spinning toys (e.g., gourd and stick, wooden) which can include 'humming' varieties of tops
- top spinning matches/contests using large decorated stone tops <TSI>

3.4. games of throw and catch

some relevant points and/or concepts:

♦ may be associated with stationary play or high levels of physical activity which may involve various body movements or actions and ball handling skills

some examples:

- throwing and catching activities/games (e.g., 'knucklebone'/jackstone type of games)
- 'juggling' of objects
- throwing and catching twine or stuffed skin balls as part of ball games (e.g., keep-away games)
- throwing clay and feather balls in throw and catch small group games/play

3.5. miscellaneous

some relevant points and/or concepts:

♦ to 'throw' an object with an attached end piece

3.5.1. whips

some examples:

- 'throwing' and cracking toy whips (sometimes a whip has a small board at the end of length of twine to give the 'crack')

3.5.2. bullroarers

some examples:

- swinging ('throwing') toy bullroarers for sound effect/fun (e.g., imitation, sacred, religious or spiritual play/activities using a bullroarer) [*play with bullroarers was not allowed in many cultural groups for religious reasons*]

3.5.3. spinners

some examples:

- push and pull on twisted twine ('throw') to propel an attached object (e.g., 'propeller' stick; a small gourd with loop of string through it to become a 'whirler')

4. Shooting/Propelling Object Games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ often with a 'propulsive' instrument
- ◆ may be associated with 'throwing' of projectiles using a body part or parts
- ◆ distance, accuracy or height
- ◆ a combination of physical skill and strategies may occur (and luck is also involved to an extent)

4.1. bow (and arrow)

some examples:

- contests of shooting arrows at various targets such as trees <TSI>
- bows and arrows as a plaything (e.g., shooting at ants) <TSI>
- miniature toy bows and arrows as playthings <from a mainland Australia location>

4.2. catapult/shanghal or 'gng'

some examples:

- slingshot/shanghai to shoot a stone at targets (including birds etc.) [*some adoption from European play cultures but now with strong indigenous identification in many areas*]

4.3. woomera (spear thrower)

some examples:

- use a woomera to throw or propel a spear at targets in contests/practices

4.4. mud ball 'sllng'/mud-stlck

some examples:

- use a flexible switch/stick to throw or sling/project mud balls or clumps of clay at targets or other players

4.5. blowplpe

some examples:

- toy blowpipe/peashooters (e.g., blowing seeds) <TSI>
- blow spittle through hollow grass stems at each other

4.6. use of fire 'guns'/exploslons

4.6.1. tree 'guns'

some examples:

- heated tree gum is propelled into the air from burnt logs → for explosive noise and effect at night and/or as 'fireworks'

4.6.2. fire explosions

some examples:

- heating nuts, stones, gum in fire for explosive effect (e.g., heated fern leaf stalks; bunya nuts heated to explode or project the nut)

4.7. striking/hitting to propel/shoot

some examples:

- hitting for distance as in 'tip cat' (e.g., flick/propel a stick or stone into the air and hit it)
- heat a shaped bark object and strike it against another object (such as a log) to propel the heated object into the air as part of fireworks playing
- throwing stick/'weet-weet' throwing contests and games where the playing stick is thrown off a 'launch-pad' of a log or bushes, along the ground or through a bush, etc.

4.8. grass dart

some examples:

- shooting the petiole/grass stem of certain grasses at targets (e.g., shooting into flies or at small birds for fun)

4.9. uslng body parts to shoot/propel

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ some association of shooting with throwing, kicking and other body handling or other movement skills

some examples:

- shooting/propelling an object such as a stone by using the thumb or fingers as part of play or in games (e.g., shooting or flicking a marble)
- use a finger as a 'woomera' to throw/give impetus to a small stick
- striking a ball or object with the body or body part in play (e.g., kicking a ball with foot; hitting a ball with an arm; and activities such as swatting flies for fun)
- push a person into the air using the legs → hard push off sandy bottom of water to propel a person standing on the shoulders into the air for a 'splashdown'

5. Fighting Games

5.1. wrestling/fighting without arms/ weapons

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ confrontation between people without weapons or instruments (could involve the use of an instrument in a 'passive' way)
- ◆ occasionally different customs and beliefs of groups could become reasons for disdain and mocking [*through ritualised or actual fighting contests*]
- ◆ individuals and/or team activities [*inter-group wrestling contests might be organised through the use of message sticks*]
- ◆ attacking and/or defending roles sometimes with the potential for hurt or more serious physical injury including death [*the infliction of injury and death was not an aim*]
- ◆ wrestling games, with their accompanying risk of injury, were less common in the cultures with small family-based groups [*all the individuals were needed to ensure the day to day economic survival of the small group*]
- ◆ activities may be associated with *competition* and *winning* (individual identity) but most often group identity and solidarity was emphasised [*the concepts of winning and losing could vary between cultural groups but generally winning was not an important goal*]
- ◆ different starting positions and performance actions for the same games and different) games/contests – depending on the cultural group – were evident
- ◆ *courage* and *bravery* are usually involved while fitness aspects such as coordination, strength, endurance and special body handling skills such as agility were required and developed
- ◆ activities may be associated with certain rituals such as throwing ash/dust in the air for a wrestling challenge
- ◆ socially tolerated physical contact was allowed in many types of wrestling games and contests but not in others [*physical exertion in contests produced feelings of*

pleasure associated with success and control]

- ◆ *psychological* aspects such as 'mental toughness' along with tactics and strategies might be used/employed [*vigorous and stressful group contest events lead to a situation where individuals are conducive to accepting and incorporating collective values*]
- ◆ activities undertaken may have some inter-group and 'political' associations or be part of economic aspects (such as trading)
- ◆ activities were mainly undertaken by the older boys and men but some cultural groups included girls and the women in their own forms of play fighting

5.1.1. wrestling/throwing

some examples:

- various forms of wrestling (individual or team contests) involving tripping, throwing, lifting and pushing and pulling (e.g., wrestling for possession of emu feathers representing a young girl; team wrestling contest over a buried red gum nut) and often incorporating specific moves or tactics

5.1.2. pushing/shoving and pulling

some examples:

- team pushing and shoving games (e.g., attempt to push past opponents to put out a small fire; pushing and tripping contests)
- spontaneous rough and tumble play activities including pretend/play fighting without implements and with imitation arguing (some physical contact at times) [*might also include imitation of aggression, antisocial or heroic actions*]
- players push and shove each other in the water (e.g., wrestle to duck/push each other underwater)
- pushing on each end of a log/wooden pole in a strength contest or in play
- pulling on opposite ends of a stick of rope in a tug-of-war contest

5.1.3. slapping and hitting (with evasion)

some examples:

- slapping and hitting games (e.g., general running about and evading while attempting to hit opponents)

5.2. confrontation with arms/weapons

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ confrontation between people with weapons or instruments
- ◆ individual, inter-clan/'tribal' or inter-group tournaments/mock battles/mimic war/sham or mock fights using toy or 'real' weapons, shields, woomeras etc. [*many groups allowed the women to be involved in certain roles in large inter-group warfare or 'fights'*]
- ◆ fighting games were often a replacement or substitute for 'wars' or inter-group conflicts [*a type of serious and threatening excitement which was often an inter-group experience*]
- ◆ mock warfare between individuals or small groups was often used to resolve social conflicts and tensions
- ◆ individual or group parrying/mock fights helped develop physical skills and fitness
- ◆ activities often involved hitting and/or dodging/evading/deflecting and sometimes catching of thrown objects → which developed reaction time, coordination and flexibility
- ◆ use of one or a combination of objects or weapons in contests
- ◆ often a 'blurring' between 'real' conflict, ritual, competition, dispute resolution and fun [*these aspects may be interchangeable in some circumstances*]

5.2.1. hand weapons and/or thrown weapons/objects

5.2.1.1. wooden swords

some examples:

- use of toy or full-sized versions of wooden swords in contests <this activity restricted to rainforests in a part of north Queensland>

5.2.1.2. nullas nullas and waddles

some examples:

- throwing and dodging contests including waddies used as part of large group 'battles' (e.g., regular social calendar event with tournament type battles/sport) <called 'pruns' in north Queensland>

5.2.1.3. digging sticks

some examples:

- digging stick fighting (e.g., women use digging sticks in a fighting contest where the feet are the target)

5.2.1.4. sticks and spears

some examples:

- fighting with sticks/spears to hit and evade

5.2.1.5. shields/woomeras

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ used in conjunction with boomerangs, spears etc. or by themselves

some examples:

- player versus player 'battering' contests or in mock inter-group battles

5.2.1.6. boomerangs

some examples:

- throw to hit each other with small bark boomerangs (involves dodging) while sometimes using shields/woomeras to protect the body

6. Animal Play and Games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ animal play provides a vital connection to the environment
- ◆ children were particularly interested in living creatures of any kind
- ◆ the animal is the playing object in either organised or informal play (in contests such as hunting/chasing games) and through taught animal behaviour or in contests between animals [*the antics and interactions with animals as pets or 'companion animals' – even on a temporary basis → amuse and educate*]
- ◆ cultural beliefs may relate to animals to play with or use (such as dolphins used to assist in fishing) [*generally dolphins not seen as a food source (usually a totem) → can serve as entertainment, food-gathering and ritual functions all at the same time*]
- ◆ the 'modern' concept or perception of cruelty to animals was generally not culturally recognised [*some 'cruel' play/games in evidence*]
- ◆ activities either involved captured 'wild' animals, domesticated or partly domesticated pets (or 'companion animals') or as interactions with animals in the wild
- ◆ activities may be closely related to imitation play activities such as hunting and which incorporate imaginary or symbolic/substitute 'animals' such as small turtles to represent crocodiles etc.

6.1. play with animals

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ play with or involving animals

some examples:

- trapping, keeping, playing with and/or 'training' young pets or 'companion animals' such as dingos, carpet snakes, lizards, cockatoos, cassowaries, turtles, frogs, and various marsupials such as possums and young wallabies
- 'training' dingos to do tricks
- raiding bird nests for fun to catch small birds
- insect games (e.g., ants and 'ant-lion' game/play; tracking a bee to a honey nest –

or 'sugar-bag' → attach a small marker and let the bee fly off to the nest)

- general or recreational playing with animals (e.g., carrying around small possums on the head; fondling and wrestling with dingo pups; teasing or taunting animals for fun)
- playing on a beach with sea slugs at low tide (e.g., standing on sea slugs for fun)
- communication and interaction with another species (e.g., use of 'trained' dolphins/porpoises to assist with catching schools of fish)
- chasing and catching small sharks as part of play or to 'play' with <TSI>
- coursing type play (e.g., repeatedly catch, release and chase and catch a small dingo, marsupials or rats) [*hunting play*]
- chasing and catching butterflies for fun
- ride goats or donkeys for enjoyment or in races
- play with cattle (e.g., chasing and moving cattle as a herd) <mission play>

6.2. 'confrontation' with animals

some examples:

- hunting (e.g., children hunting small turtles as a sport) and killing (e.g., killing birds for amusement)
- use captured young animals as spear and stone throwing target practice [*hunting play*]
- play hunting of game animals using pet dingos for fun or as part of a training game
- insect target games (e.g., spearing ants or shooting/catching flies)
- chasing or stalking/using stealth and capturing small animals (e.g., small fish, grasshoppers, crabs, yabbies, frogs, young wallabies) in play
- teasing and wrestling with dingo pups
- teasing and running away from goats <mission play>

6.3. confrontation between animals

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ may be actual or 'imagined' confrontation

6.3.1. animal fights

some examples:

- trapping animals and letting them fight (including play fighting) each other for amusement/entertainment (e.g. capture lizard and snake and watch them fight; encouraging pet dingos to fight/play fight each other or to catch other animals in 'sport')
- feeding ants to an 'ant-lion' for amusement

6.3.2. racing between animals

some examples:

- conducting races between animals (e.g., have dingo pets run to food; goat races)
- play races between animals for entertainment (e.g., 'races' with hatchling sea turtles heading for the water)

7. Locomotion Games and Activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ to move oneself, being moved by an object, or, moving an object [*movements are dynamic, taking place with more or less intensity or force, and speed*]
- ♦ general lack of intense or specific fitness or physical training games although improved physical fitness was sometimes an outcome [*no evidence that physical fitness was a recognised cultural concept although fitness aspects such as speed, strength, suppleness and stamina may have been developed*]
- ♦ many games had a high or medium level of physical activity but some games might involve little or no physical activity

7.1. moving oneself

7.1.1. without instruments/objects

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ movement or physical activity not caused by an instrument/object

7.1.1.1. walking, running and chasing

some examples:

- various types and forms of running contests or play (e.g., running and bounding/stepping on rocks; endurance running activities; running along the beach chasing after wind-blown bushes)
- cooperative races where players of different ages, running speed and gender attempt to finish together
- running activities (e.g., run at speed along the beach and pick up and drop or place coconuts on the sand) <TSI>
- walking/running long distances (e.g., 'walkabout' play or follow the leader games up and down hills etc. → may include various physical skills/tasks, including carrying a child)
- running around in general play (e.g., running and kicking up/making dust as part of group play/fun/group mayhem; running around to become warm on a cold morning; running around in shallow water in imitation baby shark chase play where a player acts as the 'shark')

- chasing games in opposing groups or where a player attempts to catch others as a 'chaser'
- running about by oneself or with others to catch small animals (e.g., chasing baby turtles or grasshoppers)
- team movement games (e.g., players in a line holding hands 'roll up' and then unwind as a prelude to a running and chasing activity)
- running in tag or other games while in opposing groups (e.g., march fly pinching game) <played in north Queensland>
- run around while rolling a tyre or other object <mission play>

7.1.1.2. swimming and diving

some examples:

- various swimming strokes (e.g., single over-arm sidestroke and 'dog paddle') including distance underwater swimming (e.g., might include making bubbles to imitate a crocodile; swim and then dive underwater; stay underwater for a long as possible)
- water activities/games/play for fun at the 'bogey' or swimming hole (e.g., splashing; swim chasing; water catch of ball/object; pulling and grabbing group game; a large group of girls splashing and generally playing around in the sea) <TSI>
- diving activities (e.g., diving underwater for objects contests; jump from a height; 'bomb' or splash diving)
- combined diving and swimming games and activities

7.1.1.3. hopping, jumping and skipping

some examples:

- jumping: including high jumping; jumping in the air for fun/joy/excitement
- hopping (e.g., in 'hopscotch' type activities)
- jumping games/activities (e.g., hopping/jumping around like a kangaroo; jumping over bushes)
- various individual and/or group skipping games (e.g., vine swung from side to side for young children to jump; skipping contest with the miming of various actions; swapping places while skipping)

- different skills/physical actions as part of a corroboree (e.g., jumping, turning, and bending down in certain play corroborees – and usually includes a rhythmic aspect)

- jumping and skipping around for fun (could also include various other body movements in combination or sequence)

- combined skill activities (e.g., run and jump into a pile of sand; run and jump for distance down sand hills)

7.1.1.4. climbing

some examples:

- tree climbing contests (e.g., climb a very tall tree) by adults using different methods was seen in different areas (climbing using climbing aids such as vines and/or toe-notches)

- small tree climbing by children for fun (e.g., climb a small tree and sit or swing in branches)

- climbing sand hills, rocky outcrops etc. as part of 'fun' play or in games

7.1.1.5. balancing

some examples:

- balancing activities (e.g., stand and balance on rocks/logs while stationary or running; balancing and stepping on rocks or logs etc.)

7.1.1.6. miscellaneous: (rolling and sliding ...)

some examples:

- rolling down sand hills

- slide down muddy creek banks (e.g., slide in mud on back with feet first, on the side of body, or on the stomach)

- group sliding games (e.g., follow the leader in file and group push along the ground with hands; slide on bottom down mound of earth, river bank etc.)

- jump off a moving truck and then roll as part of imitation of movies stunt [*modern dangerous play*]

7.1.2. with instruments/objects

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ instruments/objects or playthings are associated with the movement/physical activity undertaken

- ♦ can be associated with various body skills and movements and usually related to moving an object

some examples:

- using a scooter to push self along <mission play>

7.2. being moved

7.2.1. by animals

some examples:

- donkey and goat riding races <common mission or remote community activities>

7.2.2. by another person or persons

some examples:

- carry another person on the back in play
- sliding down sand hills (e.g., slide in pairs with a player sitting or lying on the back of the other player)

7.2.3. by water

some examples:

- swimming and 'catching' the waves (bodysurfing) at the beach

- floating and being carried along by the current in a stream

7.2.4. by a 'vehicle' or craft

some examples:

- sailing in small boats – moved by the wind and/or moving water

- sliding/tobogganing down a rocky outcrop on rushes/grass 'seat'

- using wooden boards or small canoes to 'ride' the waves at the beach

- curl up inside a rubber car tube and roll down a small hill <mission play in many places>

- use of vine, rope or tree branches as a swing (e.g., swing with a rope or vine out over water)

- play on logs or use a log over rocks as a 'see saw'

- sit on a small tree or bush and bounce up and down (e.g., ride a 'hobby horse')

- hang upside down on the low branches of a tree and bounce up and down

- diving or falling/jumping off 'diving boards' into water

7.3. moving an object

7.3.1. lift and carry

some examples:

- carrying a person on back or shoulders in play/games (e.g., pick-a-back and throw or fall with 'passenger' back into the water)
- carrying pets around on head (e.g., pet possum carried around on the head)
- older children carry babies around in different ways as part of role play and fun (e.g., on hip, on the shoulders or cradled on the chest)
- lifting and carrying and/or throwing large rocks [*sometimes related to strength contests*]
- children carrying around sticks or branches for fun and/or in imitation play

7.3.2. pull or paddle

some examples:

- use hands or paddles in canoe and raft races
- pulling other people along who are sitting on branches
- run and pull along wooden animal toys through the water using a rope <TSI>

7.3.3. push

some examples:

- push/steer or 'drive' tin can 'rollers' or 'motor cars' modern [*now has an indigenous belonging and sense of identity but originally from a European culture origin*]
- run around pushing on car tyres to roll them (with or without someone in the tyre) <mission play>
- push large rocks along the ground and off a hill
- mud skipping/sliding or 'skating' using a wooden 'slide' or scooter → use one leg for pushing across mud-flats at low tide

7.4. moving and being moved by an object

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ involves a combination of actions to move an object and also being moved by the object (such as through its inertia)

some examples:

- group swimming while holding onto a log in long distance swimming contest
- jumping/leaping over objects with a wooden pole
- use a pole to push a raft through the water in play races
- balance on a large drum and roll it around using the feet (pushing action)
- using climbing vines to climb a tree

8. Body Movement Games and Activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ movement areas might include: body awareness; relationship with others/object; time, force and flow of body movement; and spatial awareness
- ♦ related to locomotion movement activities (such as running, swimming, climbing and diving) and were undertaken everywhere *[activities are not only relevant to the development of survival skills but also to enjoyment]*
- ♦ most games fit into the categories of skill games or games of low organisation *[more 'complex' or 'modern' cultures have more complex games and more types of games because of nature of the societies created]*
 - ♦ often there was little distinction between work and leisure or nonwork, or between what has to be done and what people want to do *[an integration or interplay between play and other daily activities a feature]*
 - ♦ often the continuity, effort, pleasure and endless repetition associated with many motor activities was satisfying for individuals and groups
 - ♦ activities or performances usually require the use of the body in various movements (often skilful movements) *[play and movement expressions within cultures display a wide variety of motor experiences]*
 - ♦ there is an interaction and relationship with locomotion skills and other body activities and skills → use of various body parts, particularly the limbs
 - ♦ fingers, hands and arms were the primary instruments for 'making' things and in a great many movement activities *[hands were used throw, hit, pull, push, catch, lift, carry, pat, twirl etc.]*
 - ♦ incorporates individual basic movement skills which may be combined in more complex forms (such as in sensorimotor play)
 - ♦ games and activities provided a way of developing specific physical skills (and also understanding the way to play the game)
 - ♦ physical activities develop and transfer many fine and gross motor skills that are needed in dealing with the natural

environment → associated with survival skills and activities

- ♦ activities may result in the 'development' of physical fitness and skills as well as a particular physique or *appearance*
- ♦ perception, emotion/motivation, and cognition are also related to bodily movement (inseparable from intentional motor activity)
- ♦ many activities develop physical agility, courage, or strength *[many games had an emphasis on physical activity and skills]*

8.1. acrobatic feats/skills/challenges and activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ performances often require skilful control of the body and/or objects
- ♦ acrobatics usually incorporates human feats of balance, agility, coordination, strength and flexibility

8.1.1. acrobatic/gymnastic activities

some examples:

- play/games and dance with 'gymnastic' or acrobatic skills (e.g., rolling and tumbling; performing handstands)
- bending, twisting and dodging to avoid thrown objects – often in an exaggerated manner → as part of throwing and parrying and dodging activities (e.g., dung or mud throwing group play; general 'mayhem' play using grass spears to hit others in the thighs or legs)

8.1.2. physical ability/challenge

some examples:

- thigh quivering and body shaking (usually associated with dance activities)
- holding breath while staying underwater contests
- fire stick twirling – associated with a communication game (e.g., calling out the names of different types of fish before the flame of the twirling stick goes out)
- challenge games/activities (e.g., swim underwater for distance)
- endurance feats (e.g., run, walk, or swim for long distances – often not seen as a contest)
- hand/finger games (e.g., catching cockatoos game; 'bean tree game'; cracking

open beans for food game; group fingers chasing in concentric circles game; general 'handsie' play) sometimes associated with pinching, finding a hidden finger in sand etc.

8.1.3. tricks and stunts

some examples:

- stick twist – propeller (e.g., wind up a stick attached to twine around the necks of two players and release → 'lightning' game)
- 'magic' tricks or deception (e.g., pretend to swallow and take stones out of the body or make reappear in another manner)
- jump stick stunt where a player holds onto their big toes and jumps sideways over a stick on the ground
- walk on hands or walk on knees
- balance body (e.g., standing balances on a small tree stump)
- balancing stones on top of each other on each end of a 'see-saw'
- stacking sand-filled containers such as tin cans in a 'free' or structured way <mission play>

8.1.4. physical strength activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ related to throwing and strength contests

some examples:

- lifting heavy objects or other people in strength tests/contests or games or for fun
- pushing large rocks along in a race

8.2. manipulative/making

8.2.1. string games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ string games are played by manipulating string (in a loop)
- ♦ playing of string games, either singly or with groups of players, was a commonly recorded activity in traditional cultures
- ♦ can involve successive hand, finger, teeth, arm, feet and single or multiple-person manipulations
- ♦ may be associated with cultural events or social events (e.g., played in one area by young women pregnant with their first child) and might include connection with special songs or religious activities
- ♦ dexterity (adroitness with the hands and sometime also the feet) was a feature
- ♦ often undertaken as a 'fill-in-time' activity

- ♦ can be age, gender, season etc. specific [*usually string games were played by girls and women though in some areas men and boys also played them*]

- ♦ similar or the same string figure designs were often associated with different levels of meaning, traditions or cultural significance in different geographical areas

- ♦ activities were often associated with the opportunity to exchange ideas/knowledge or communicate and have fun with others [*related to communal meetings and inter-group exchanges*]

- ♦ the number and types of string figures performed varied between cultural groups

- ♦ string figure designs often represented animals and people, or abstract ideas such as the forces of nature

some examples:

- cat's cradle/string games/string tricks for amusement and cultural aspects may have ritual, magical and mystical qualities and/or social purposes involving one, two or more people (e.g., making shapes to represent totem animals; part of storytelling associated with religious beliefs)
- playing with string made of bark fibre, sinew etc. to create designs for fun or decoration
- string figures were performed to display skill at performing stunts or tricks or to depict plants, wildlife etc.
- string figures may be associated with other activities (e.g., singing songs and making string figures)

- inventing or developing new string games may be undertaken [*as people played the string games designs might change quickly from one design to another*]

8.2.2. making play objects

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ undertaken alone or in groups and either with or without guidance or instruction from others (usually adults) [*related to all aspects of toys and playthings*]

some examples:

- leaf plaiting and weaving
- making toys of various types
- making leaf whirlers or 'propellers'

8.2.3. using body for making shapes some relevant points and/or concepts:

♦ using the body for making shapes or to perform certain body actions or postures (could incorporate performance art)

some examples:

- miming and posturing of body
- vigorous physical actions as part of dance/corroborees (e.g., jumping and turning and imitating the actions of animals)
- sign language with hands and arms
- personalised pleasure of playing with or manipulating their own body parts (e.g., picking nose for amusement; waving around arms) or other actions (e.g., hair braiding; partly cover someone with sand)

8.3. social physical contact

8.3.1. person to person contact

some examples:

- touching/moving other people (e.g., rubbing game and louse searching game → social reinforcement <TSI>; pinching games; 'massaging' or rocking babies for enjoyment; playing 'handsies' with others)
- pulling or pushing on body parts of others (such as head or fingers)

8.3.2. handling objects and social contact

some examples:

- handling or manipulating objects (e.g., stones, shells, logs) along with others in a group at the same time (and involving physical contact with others) – as opposed to the same activities in solitary play

8.4. sensorimotor activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ use of senses (touch, sight, taste, hearing and smell) with bodily kinaesthetic awareness in play [*utilises the senses to build symbolic meaning in support of learning new concepts → draws on both concrete and abstract imagery*]
- ♦ incorporates movement and sensation and the interaction between the two (and which is a part of most play activities)
- ♦ sense perceptions and motor skills have beneficial effects on cognition

♦ most activities combine the use of one or more senses [*sights, sounds, and smells in particular had important meanings*]

8.4.1. sensory activities

some examples:

- splashing around in the water
- handling/touching objects (including with eyes closed)
- sensual enjoyment of moving around (e.g., run around with wind blowing through the hair)
- walking or running around in games with the eyes closed
- listening to play legends and recounting these (e.g., Dreaming stories for children)
- smelling flowers as part of play
- tasting foods in group play
- sound making or making noises for fun (e.g., whistling using gum leaf; cooeeing)
- looking/observing (e.g., trying to observe/find someone swimming around underwater in a team game)

8.5. miscellaneous bodily activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

♦ may incorporate bodily functions such as eating, drinking, urinating, defecating, and copulating

8.5.1. bodily functions/actions

some examples:

- farting (passing wind) 'contests' or for general amusement around the campfire
- spitting at each other for accuracy in 'fun' games
- flicking saliva in play
- play urination (e.g., boys urinating play for distance, at a target, longest etc.)
- nose picking, coughing, blowing nose, scratching for play, fun, or amusement

8.5.2. physical 'prowess'

some examples:

- on a cold morning children huddle together and make themselves shiver and chatter teeth for the amusement of others or as a group activity to get warm
- individual physical 'distortions' or actions (e.g. tongue to touch nose; cracking knuckles; 'suck' in stomach; big toe in mouth to show flexibility)

Cultural Play and Game Traditions

1. Free and Imitation play

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ play is an essential part of human life and is necessary for children's healthy development, helping them acquire physical, social, and cognitive skills needed for adult roles (for adults, play provides a release from the pressure and stresses of everyday life) *[adult play usually serves different psychological and social functions than it does for children]*
- ◆ the concept and accepted definitions of play may need some re-interpretation to account for the types of cultures evident in Australia
- ◆ people in the various cultures were dependent upon natural cycles and their life meanings – this had an influence on the type and nature of traditional games in cultures
- ◆ play and movement expressions of societies include common abilities that are visuo-spatial, mechanical, musical, oral-verbal, social and bodily (or kinaesthetic) – that is, *nonliterate [individuals vary in the degree that these abilities are developed but competence in all and special skill in one or two areas was often expected]*
- ◆ providing children with skills, opportunities for varied physical activities, and rich emotional and intellectual resources when young can lead to more diverse, more 'complex' and more frequent play (even in environmentally well-adapted 'simple' cultures)
- ◆ infants and small children naturally imitate others and change over time what they choose or need to imitate *[imitation is an unconscious way to please]*
- ◆ children spontaneously imitate the activities of their elders – hunting, cooking, food-gathering *[usually this kind of imitation play is called either 'play' or 'make-believe']*
- ◆ unstructured play, spontaneous and free play occurs when an individual freely engages in play *[play may be seen as the 'work' of children but can also be undertaken by all people as a 'fun' activity]*

- ◆ spontaneous or improvised play opportunities (such as with play objects) were provided by the natural environment and daily activities *[these activities include hunting or food-gathering, dancing, social gatherings, leisure time and being parents]*
- ◆ a reasonably prolonged period of free play for children in the rich, diverse range of play and movement expressions was evident (usually up to 12-14 years of age) *[there was a significant role of mothers, grandparents and older girls in supervising the play and education of the younger children]*
- ◆ the majority of games were undertaken by children between the ages of 7 and 12 (7 is about the age at which children begin to take on responsibilities that contributed to the survival of the community) *[through play children learn skills required for later life such as aiming and targeting using toy spears, boomerangs, bows and arrows, throwing stones, and food gathering skills]*
- ◆ many activities generally involved no identifiable simple (and adaptable) 'rules' and may have involved easily made equipment
- ◆ play incorporates the terms and concepts of free, imitation, 'make believe' play and imagination, pretending, symbolic, fantasy, sociodramatic or dramatic play
- ◆ play is often associated with children and 'free' play, or spontaneous play as part of separate individual or group interaction activities *[children are innately prepared to play]*
- ◆ some children's activities may be commanded or directed/educative activities overseen or supervised by adults *[cross or inter-generational involvement in 'free' time]*
- ◆ play commonly involved interactions with various other performance or movement activities (such as singing and dancing)
- ◆ activities may be invented/designed or devised/improvised/created with or without 'props' (such as natural materials) and/or associated with special language or songs → and often displaying ingenuity or creativity in play *[activities provided a reliable]*

framework for enjoyable play, as well as opportunities for creativity and exploration]

◆ many activities encompass/reflect universal play and movement expressions found in many other cultures worldwide as well as exhibiting unique aspects or forms *[activities demonstrate that play has a central role in humans and there is a natural desire to play from a young age]*

◆ children's activities could be undertaken within the camp or during daily activities and can be away in 'secret' – may be in specific gender groups (specific girl and boy play)

◆ the existence of discrete so-called children's play *sub-cultures* were not just about learning to become adults but sometimes also learn to challenge 'rules' and make changes and invent new activities *[traditional games that are played by identifiable or sub-groups are **not part of a distinct sub-culture** even though they may be mentioned in this way]*

◆ the links to boundary testing and creativity are particularly strong in 'original' play *[in the challenges imposed by tradition and change there are always limits to cultural invention]*

◆ any emotions displayed in play can be intended, contrived or spontaneous *[play can be a significant insight into a child's emotional life and development → play can be used as a way to express feelings, conflicts, and problems]*

◆ freedom of choice is often a component of play – as opposed to disciplined or controlled play *[freedom and order can co-exist]*

◆ individuals invariably develop a rapport or social relationship with others through play *[cooperative games/activities with some competitive individual and/or group games or activities were evident]*

◆ 'unoccupied play' where people are not actively engaged in play is evident despite group play activities often being obligatory or expected *[a large number of the games are of a group nature rather than a team type]*

◆ depending on the circumstances an involvement in traditional games was voluntary, obligatory (or expected) *[often*

obligatory as part of cultural events from a certain age]

◆ groups may change names (if any) of games, types of play activities and/or the nature of spontaneous play over time → dynamic nature of play

◆ through their play children learn much about the world around them and help to maintain the rituals and values of the culture

◆ a few cultures appear to have sought to prevent or restrict aspects of play in children – especially the number or diversity of games (particularly those deemed as 'frivolous') because they did not consider it important to the social or economic survival of the group *[some cultures might also be seen to have introduced practices that appear to be counterproductive to cultural stability]*

◆ making and using a 'playground' or special play area may be evident but usually play areas were rarely defined *[often play area use related to the semi-nomadic nature of many groups]*

◆ movement and sensation (sensorimotor activities) are involved in play

◆ play will often include 'rule' challengers, benders, ignorers and manipulators *[the notions of experiment, exploration and unexpected or unintended outcomes are associated with these aspects]*

◆ play teaches children to fit into a group as well as providing opportunities to please others and to receive positive attention and approbation *[individuals feel valued and validated and free to use their imaginations]*

◆ individuals often are able to select or elect to play with or include/exclude others as playmates

◆ an overlap of play forms and fluidity between play and other daily activities is a feature and there is often little identification of games as being special events or a separate part to daily life *[some games were played on special occasions (such as religious ceremonies, inter-group meetings and initiation rites) as well as during periods of inactivity]*

- ◆ some play and movement expressions in cultures may not be able to be classified or were largely unnoticed by observers and have no record
- ◆ play is a highly social and interactive activity but playing alone is still an important aspect of child development especially at young ages *[alone or solitary (as opposed to interactive) play is not encouraged in many groups where group cohesion and social and 'muscular' or physical bonds are important]*
- ◆ disorderly play with identity, fate, fantasy, power, frivolity and so on by children may lead to adult disapproval and restriction
- ◆ there was a general lack of disputes during children's games though sometimes games could erupt in disputes and violence (with associated dispute resolution), or more rarely, feuds – usually with conflict resolution undertaken by the group of players
- ◆ the ambiguous nature of much play influences participation and transmission to others *[games are used as a medium to convey important values and through participation provide essential training in social interaction]*
- ◆ components of play and movement expressions in cultures include the spaces and places, 'rules' for behaviour and other symbols, signs and codes of operation and the cultural processes of the group *[generally there was freedom in play for children but there were also some elements of control or order evident]*
- ◆ children of most ages invent, devise, improvise, or create games developmentally *[there is evidence from many cultural groups that children had the skill, interest, time and proficiency both to develop games and to participate in them at almost every available opportunity]*
- ◆ play as a process is a way of organising behaviour and as such almost always has additional meanings – religious, political, and social *[play and games relate to the whole of a particular culture and 'reward' and reinforce behaviours that have cultural 'value' or importance]*

Note: It is recognised that there is considerable overlap and interaction in the different categories outlined below but they represent an attempt to describe play in the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context.

1.1. role play and pretending/acting/miming/imitation

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ imitation of activities of adulthood, animals etc., or some associated social and cultural aspects in order to rehearse reality
- ◆ may be used for relaxation, 'escape,' a means of learning new skills, or a means of play
- ◆ imitation/pretending is a universal play activity and the majority of play evident was imitation activities reflecting adult activities (such as hunting) and related to immersion in the cultural practices of the group *[in play children imitate the activities of adults and thereby learn the ways of their society]*
- ◆ much imitative play may be direct teaching through play → the behaviour or action is modelled through learning by observation, copying and practising (with sometimes adult supervision)
- ◆ pretend to be another person or 'thing' and/or pretend to be in a particular situation

1.1.1. role play enactment/mimicry (may include role reversal)

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ culturally dictated roles and certain rites of passage at prescribed times where young people leave one identity to assume another one were evident *[play and games were involved in some cultural groups on occasions such as initiation ceremonies]*
- ◆ special events such as inter-group meetings, ritual activities or even sex games also allowed opportunities for role reversal or variation to normal social norms and practices

some examples:

- children's 'play-about' corroboree and ceremonies of their own design or imitation including pretend sleeping after a corroboree *[children would often join in corroborees and attempt to imitate and commit to memory the various dances and other aspects]*

- playing or 'keeping' house/cubby-house (e.g., 'mothers and fathers'; sex games/erotic play which might also imitate wife-stealing; dance/corroboree involving adultery)
- imitation of animal behaviour
- imitation of family life with a spontaneous story as individual members are added to the scene
- acting out/imitation of a story (e.g., sorcery story related to spirits or a 'bunyip' that might take a person away; imitation play of finding a dead person's spirit)
- imitation/mimicry or poking fun at the antics and actions of adults
- food gathering games (e.g., playing the honey game with the hands; collecting food such as grass seeds for fun)
- acting and imitating a 'healing man' or good spirit with large eyes made out of paperbark and with colourful body decorations
- blunt spear game and imaginary killing of a player followed by imitation of ritual of death, mourning/wailing and funeral ceremony
- use digging sticks to make trenches/holes to play in or in imitation of food-gathering by the women
- imitate being punished by for misbehaviour (e.g., beat shadow of a person in imitation of ritual punishment) [*hitting of children was not common in many of the societies → tolerant and often indulgent parents*]
- reversal of gender and/or other social roles was seen in games such as hide and seek

1.1.2. Imaginary/pretend/acting games **some examples:**

- imagination, pretend or mock activities such as hunting (e.g., catching duck game, crocodile hunting); mourning; imitation fights; food gathering/foraging, cooking and eating; cracking or opening beans; pursued by 'evil spirits' in chase and catch imitation or superstition game; punishment/violence imitation (e.g., smacked by granny); ceremonial and religious/divinatory play (e.g., guess names of 'admirers') which in some areas includes the use of bullroarers;

bird calls; gossip games (e.g., using leaves and a stick to accompany)

- play at 'minding own business' and not gossiping while others are gossiping
- imitation of actions which subverted or challenged social 'rules' often reflected reality (e.g., imitation of wife stealing)

1.2. free and/or spontaneous play **some relevant points and/or concepts:**

- ♦ free play provides a vehicle for the expression of important human aspects and cultural identity
- ♦ free play activities usually required simple skills and easily acquired or manufactured equipment

♦ children seek to modify rules and other elements of their games in order to make them more fun

♦ free play displayed often unencumbered physical, social, emotional, mental, intellectual and spiritual expressions by being happy, carefree, having a contented disposition, chattering and laughing, fun-loving and making fun (e.g., playing pranks), sense of humour, sharing enjoyment, and exuberance [*shared experiences in play provided a lifetime of memories*]

some examples:

- playing with natural materials (e.g., use sand or mud to partly cover self or others; playing in slow moving floodwaters)
- spontaneous, improvised or invented play/games for fun (e.g., group follow the leader play or 'walkabout' type games; pick-a-back; songs or dances; running through a 'willie-willie' or small whirlwind for fun; hunting play (e.g., playing with ants and/or ants nests); supervising and playing with younger children (e.g., carrying a player on the shoulders and in other ways); solitary, self improvised play etc. (e.g., play with improvised or manufactured toys/objects)
- engaged in spontaneous group play (e.g., general melee; free playing around; snowball 'fights' <seen in Tasmania
- general free 'horse-play', making 'trouble,' mischief or being a 'nuisance' for fun (e.g., fun to overcome boredom, fill in time, test 'boundaries' by teasing, bullying or annoying

others or challenging 'rules' of play and/or the society)

- spontaneous games of imagination (e.g., making up stories; miming the actions of an animal or person)

- spontaneous playing at smiling and sharing materials

- infant/toddler playing and returning from time to time for breast feeding (includes mother and baby/child spontaneous play)

[mutuality between mother and infant (the prototype for intimacy and love) is part of belonging to, and acceptance by, a social group]

- adults and older children playing with toddlers *[helps people become more patient and develop the ability to develop interesting and amusing ideas to keep the younger children occupied and content]*

- relaxing and/or day-dreaming for enjoyment (e.g., lying in grass and looking at the sky; watching animals as part of filling in time or for observation or learning)

- different types of free playing alone or solitary play (e.g., small child in random play with an object; balancing on objects)

- free playing when children are left behind at camp → play either child centric/led free play or under the care of elders at the camp)

- children seek companionship through communal play (e.g., playing in groups and wandering around in a 'mini-walkabout' → freedom in play)

- mock pleasure/excitement and spontaneous 'serious' play (e.g., play sorting out arguments in play by adjusting play behaviour or modifying performances to meet the situation)

- watching/spectators at play/games (e.g., adults either observing, monitoring or supervising children at free play or watching for entertainment/amusement – sometimes adults join in some games and players can opt in or out of the game)

- finding and/or making fun while playing or competing in games → alternate to free play from the game being played

2. Toys and Playthings

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ improvise or use of natural resources found in the environment (such as seeds and charcoal) and materials manufactured from them (with traditional techniques) or use 'modern' – often discarded – materials (such as wire and tin) to play with or use to make objects, shapes etc. [*working with 'natural' materials contributes to personal pleasure*]
- ◆ making of models or miniature representations of objects for self or group expression/entertainment or amusement
- ◆ there may be either a 'loose', not clear or clear designation of the playing area for using toys and playthings
 - ◆ creativity and imagination may be evident in the design of toys and playthings
 - ◆ frequently there was a use of toys and playthings such as balls, ropes, stones, sticks and miscellaneous objects as important parts of games [*playing with toys/objects provided a tactile experience usually through the use of the hands*]
 - ◆ there was an overlap between making, collecting and playing with objects
 - ◆ toys and playthings and the resulting activities were induced/controlled by the environmental context and the resources available
 - ◆ toys and playthings were often associated with physical activity (an essential part of play and movement expressions within cultures)
 - ◆ scientific concepts/technology are evident in the design and manufacture of playthings such as boomerangs, spinning tops etc.
 - ◆ children often made their own toys but also these were also made with or by others [*a certain enjoyment was evident in the mundane, repetitive actions of scraping, sanding, etc. that are part of careful making of objects*]
 - ◆ adults were responsible for passing on the knowledge to the younger people (this included information about toys and playthings)

2.1. toys and playthings

2.1.1. playing with made or available toys and playthings

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ toys and playthings in play were made and used for pleasure, fantasy and imitation and sometimes were associated with solitary play
- some examples:**
 - 'dolls' of various shapes (e.g., forked stick to represent carrying baby on the shoulders), sizes and materials (e.g., mud, cane, rags, milk bottles)
 - wind toys such as twirlers and propellers, 'whizzers' and 'spinners' (e.g., push and pull on each end of loop of string to cause a stick or gourd in the centre to spin)
 - a toy windmill made from pandanus palm leaves (and other palm frond playthings)
 - toy rattles using seeds etc.
 - toy digging sticks
 - toy shields
 - doll play where a doll is placed in a large tin and pulled along by an attached string
 - rollers or 'motorcars' → taken on an indigenous identity [*tin cans filled with sand or dirt and pulled or pushed along by a rope/wire*]
 - toy canoes or playing in small boats (e.g., paddling small boats in the ocean and through small waves and catching or 'bodysurfing' waves)
 - toy fishing gear (imitation or 'real' fishing)
 - toy food collecting bags ('dilly bags')
 - use of plant toys to use in games or free play (e.g., paddymelons as balls; pandanus palm nuts in hand hitting play)
 - miniature bark seed winnowing containers (these were also used to spin clay balls for amusement in contests)
 - pushing oneself or another around and playing with discarded wheelchairs <observed in some remote settlements>
 - solitary toddler play with an object (e.g., throw a piece of bark into the air and attempt to catch it)
 - dugong rib rainbow serpent toy → play and spiritual aspects
 - use old bottles etc. as vases for wild flowers in playing 'house' <mission game>

2.1.2. making and collecting things

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ made/collected (and sometimes traded) by self, with or by playmates or adults as part of preparation for later life (or learning through fun)
- ◆ interchange between self-made items and group made efforts were common
- ◆ often involved observation of an object then imitation and practice → relates to adults or other children [*learn with persistence, often with encouragement from others*]
- ◆ material toy play sustains physical effort or learning to use time and escape boredom

2.1.2.1. made with or by others

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ adults or other children would often make or help make toys or scaled down versions of adult tools such as spears and digging sticks

some examples:

- miniature weapons (e.g., making boomerang and spear – made by father for a son)
- sailboat for races <TSI>
- masks and headdress <TSI>
- ceremonial costumes in play (e.g., play at dressing up in costumes with decorations and ‘performing’)
- toy coolamons (or carry containers)
- making of models as part of education (e.g., carving of a model fish by elders as part of a story and to point out dangers coral reef waters)
- boab nut art carving for entertainment
- toy message sticks and ‘messengers’ [*larger versions of these were used to inform of wrestling contests or corroborees etc.*]
- making and playing with a ‘spare parts’ bicycle <mission play>
- make a toy wooden bird to pull through the water <TSI>
- making corrugated iron canoes for play <mission play>

2.1.2.2. made by self

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ older children were generally expected to fashion their own toys and playthings [*an accepted cultural learning practice*]
- ◆ might be made alone or while in a group and with or without input from others

some examples:

- making/modelling clay breasts and babies for ‘mother’ play
- miniature shelters or tree ‘houses’
- toy log raft
- making toy ‘charms’ (including by threading shells to make necklaces)
- use stones, flowers, seeds, or other objects to make ‘arrangements’ as a plaything and/or defining the play area
- making animal tracks in the sand using a shaped mould of hardened clay or with shaped wood or sticks and using the hands
- making clay marbles/balls for use in games
- making hairstring balls or small hoops for ‘fun’ play and/or mock ceremonial play
- plaiting twine or plant leaves to make objects for amusement decoration (e.g., weaving necklaces from flowers)
- making mini-rugs or cloaks out of possum or wallaby hides as playthings
- playing with sticks and stones (e.g., to make structures/constructions)
- making toys from discarded materials or objects such as cans

2.1.3. collecting things

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ as a ‘hobby’ or for interest sake and/or to use as toys or playthings

some examples:

- collecting shells, stones (e.g., includes stone mementos of ‘fun’ times) and other objects, food or animals (e.g., collecting tadpoles)
- collecting and using plants for ornaments and decorations (e.g., eucalyptus nuts for hair decorations; flowers for necklaces)
- collecting bird’s eggs and/or nests

3. Survival Games and Activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ survival in the natural world depends on seeking and responding to mutuality, belonging to a group, finding and making (and sharing) meaning, and handling and making things with the hands (thereby acquiring a sense of competence for life) [*play and movement expressions in cultures have both a role in and are a product of survival activities*]
- ◆ survival in sometimes demanding environments required an ability to adapt to changing environments and situations [*all people are ultimately competing to live and to reproduce and play includes activities that reflects/imitates this situation*]
- ◆ education/training imitation and 'fun' activities are related to learning or preparation for adult role and economic subsistence/survival and also often associated with – but not necessarily including skilled physical performances such as spear throwing, etc.
- ◆ survival games taught and developed fine and gross motor skills as well as other abilities such as memorising, sequencing, spatial awareness and language [*activities provided practice for mental alertness*]
- ◆ many of the skills and techniques essential for survival were learned and perfected through the playing of games
- ◆ activities often involves pleasure or excitement in often changing chase or adventure circumstances
- ◆ experiential learning through the use of tracking and other skills → usually undertaken in groups under adult (often elders) supervision
- ◆ learning for survival play may be scaffolded through a progression of activities and closely integrated with other aspects of daily life (including ceremonial life) [*rituals are often more prominent in societies that are 'struggling' with the hardships of disease, scarcity and death*]
- ◆ survival activities represent a significant part of the play of children and use an instinctive way to learn and practice skills

[cultures value the basic biological requirements for survival and well-being]

- ◆ practice survival play activities and repetition of essential survival skills in play may overcome developmental delays or physical limitations in some individuals (which may otherwise affect individual or group needs)
- ◆ survival play activities undertaken may have a playful, serious or even harmful outcome or function (such as killing animals or self-harm) [*harm may occur in play despite a tendency of observers to only idealise the positive aspects of play and games*]
- ◆ there was a need/role of adults to sanction and intervene in some areas of children's play – especially if seen to be inappropriate, harmful or dangerous – to provide for necessary survival skill development (and proficiency such as visual literacy and spatial awareness)
- ◆ the distinctiveness of certain survival and economic activities in relation to the concepts of play and games may appear to be uncertain or unclear
- ◆ small family-based groups in more remote areas had greater survival demands and less time available for games than the people in resource rich areas [*processes of transmission and replication of games in remote areas usually resulted in more simplified games and a reduced number compared to other locations*]
- ◆ where there is hunger or external threats to survival then aspects such as ease, fun, and irreverence are not choices of life-style [*play related skill or training games were more frequent and diverse in cultures where the use of children in the acquisition of food was important*]
- ◆ tracking, homing, navigating, and finding water skills required ready ability to notice the possibilities and vagaries of terrain, wind, waves, and weather [*survival learning and practice through play associated with these skills allowed for important information to be learned*]

3.1. tracking/hunting games and food gathering practices

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ usually associated with 'good' play and allows adults to transmit important skills and social values
- ♦ stealth, 'hunting' and stalking prey involved (including acting/imitation of these actions and/or skills)
- ♦ survival skills were enhanced if certain kinds of signals and activities were innately fascinating (and potentially a source of play and/or entertainment)

3.1.1. tracking/hunting

some examples:

- tracking skills/games (including making, imitating or recognising animal tracks and exploring other signs of animals)
- imitation hunting (e.g., imitate hunting of a crocodile) and play using small game animals (including trapping and keeping animals to learn about them)
- imitate bird calls to track/find birds
- tracking, chasing and food gathering activities as a game (e.g., play hunt, then kill small mice and have a mock feast for 'fun')
- chase and attempt to spear small fish in the shallows of water as part of play <TSI>

3.1.2. food gathering

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ food-gathering excursions for young children (with the women) provided exploration experiences and opportunities for play and learning about tracking, hunting of small animals and food-gathering [*food availability was often an influence on the type and amount of time spent in play*]
- ♦ children in many societies begin very early to contribute with their hands to family subsistence [*where daily survival in a society is important children assume a contributing role by around 7*]
- ♦ opportunities to listen to conversations and its associated gossip during food gathering expeditions (often in a social entertainment context) allowed the children to learn language and other communication skills (as well as appropriate cultural values of the group)

- ♦ play at food gathering activities undertaken in a survival sense can provide a relief from environmental stress, including hunger and so on

some examples:

- imitation food gathering using miniature digging sticks while gossiping
- digging holes to play in while on hunting expeditions with the women
- food digging/gathering/hunting expeditions with adults (e.g., learning the skills through play by gathering small food items in a playful way)

3.2. mind and memory

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ the processes of problem-solving and decision-making were regularly associated with play
 - ♦ feats of memory such as recalling objects or events of the day were part of games (and also preparation for adulthood) [*close observation and associated learning was essential to the survival of people*]
 - ♦ associated with calculation, mental alertness and memorising powers [*universal processes of human cognition were practised*]
 - ♦ survival was enhanced when close attention was paid to learning about, remembering and applying details of flora and fauna [*games and activities allowed for important information to be gained*]
- #### **3.2.1. observation and/or guessing or recall**
- ##### **some examples:**
- hiding and finding objects (e.g., seeds, stones, fish eye lens, or grub 'hidden' in sand) and guessing games (e.g., guess number of objects; play finding an object using observation and/or guessing; play 'I spy' game)
 - looking at or observing animal tracks and naming animals
 - recalling objects, events etc. (e.g., recount events of the day around the evening campfire for enjoyment and social interaction)

- imitate being bitten by a snake and surviving (using observed and learned information)
- thinking and memory testing (associated with tracking skill games)
- mind/memory games where objects such as sticks and stones are used to represent landmarks and are recalled
- recalling stories and/or events (e.g., recount events of the day as an individual or in a group activity) *[with correction by others if necessary through associated listening skills]*
- elders observing the tracking, boomerang throwing and other skills of young boys and comment on them
- watching others at play (e.g., 'cheering' spectator/onlooker playing while watching and cheering a group ball game – also may include swapping between playing and watching)

3.2.2. finding or seeking games

some examples:

- hide and seek (e.g., hide in a hole such as in the wombat game; find water birds or bee-droppings for enjoyment; hiding a stone to play 'hot' and 'cold' type game; chasing and finding games)
- play hiding by self or in a group *[may not be associated with finding but incorporates problem solving and/or decision making]*
- hide underwater in murky water while breathing through hollow reeds as other players search/observe to try to find them

4. Social and Cultural Games and Activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ often there is an integration of 'work,' play, religious and other aspects all at the same time or with an exchange of aspects [*people lived in societies with firm understandings of the way the world works and their place in it*]
- ♦ play and games in the cultures present ranged from the apparently minor activities of children to more significant 'sporting' type occasions associated with group or inter-group contests [*all games have a basic pattern of organisation – relates to companions, opponents, materials, space and time*]
- ♦ play is a significant way through which children learn social and cultural norms, expectations, and ways of being → become acculturated and enculturated [*culturally, unwritten rules and traditions perform a large part in learning about one's society*]
- ♦ through playing with cultural artefacts and enacting social roles with others children (often in play) become members of their society and develop deep understanding of cultural systems
- ♦ areas of cultural practice (including games) require practice, but they are generally straightforward, presented as normal, necessary, and within the ability of nearly everyone [*play or game contests may or may not be related to social and cultural practices*]
- ♦ traditional life recognises no sharp separation between 'work' and play/leisure (or 'nonwork') [*play or game contests may or may not be related to social and cultural practices*]
- ♦ fundamental struggles and outcomes such as failing and succeeding, giving and loving involve common emotions such as joy, grief, desire, anger, frustration, and anxiety, duty, obligation, shame, and redemption → these can be learnt and dealt with through the medium of games and related activities such as everyday experiences, ceremonies and conversations

- ♦ cultural values, information exchange, economic system, gender, environment, and tradition (and the interplay between these and other factors) had an influence on the type and nature of games played in a particular culture
- ♦ ritual or ceremonial practices (including those with, or incorporating, a play element) related to the clan or group often involved all people in inter-generational participation [*custom and authority provides psychological security and satisfaction by dealing with individual and group anxiety*]
- ♦ play activities provided a mechanism for conformism in some cultural aspects but also some opportunity for self-expression (while not compromising the need for group identity and solidarity) [*individual wishes as a general rule were often subsumed within the authority of the group → learn to put others above self in some games*]
- ♦ many of the activities were undertaken in the context of camp life/daily lifestyle, or while travelling or hunting/food gathering, or in some other ritual, religious or cultural activity
- ♦ through play and games children learn the skills of reading others' facial expressions, forming friendships, building alliances, or making compromises [*introduction in a playful context to societal 'rules,' symbols and relationships*]
- ♦ some activities may reinforce roles such as male elders or mothers and grandmothers (within the social structure) and set boundaries for individual interactions (often age and gender specific) or be inclusive of all members of the group [*shared emotional experiences and memorable moments are experienced through ceremonial events*]
- ♦ many activities are part of lifelong learning/education/training in either a formal or informal training or learning environment
- ♦ activities may either challenge (such as through role reversal or social variation) or avoid challenge to social order, practices or social taboos/'secret' religious and other cultural practices

- ◆ games and activities are related to the environment and social/cultural context (e.g., ingenious games and associated artefacts were created) *[overall there was a great range and diversity of games amongst the various groups]*
- ◆ often there was no differentiation made between concepts of play, games, songs, dance and other daily ceremonial activities or observances → combined or integrated in a series of ways
- ◆ the role of play and games (in the past, present and future of a society) is recognised as important contributors in the creation, development and maintenance of value and belief systems *[play and movement expressions in cultures are products of particular societies]*
- ◆ play activities may be formal but usually an informal means of expressing a shared common heritage *[games are often the mirror of a society but this is only possible to judge if fully investigated in specific contexts]*
- ◆ some games give a statement or a perception of a person's totem, gender, role and abilities (social distinctions in play may occur)
- ◆ complex interactions between play culture aspects merging with, or as part of other cultural aspects such as initiation ceremonies, were evident *[sometimes represented the ability to merge apparently contrary forms and attitudes – such as ritual and play, spiritual beliefs and frivolity]*
- ◆ the number and kind of games played and the nature of involvement in them varied between cultural groups *[significant differences in actual and/or observed play as a whole]*
- ◆ the natural environment was the playing area and for some games there was often little restriction on the size of the playing area *[the natural world was the source both of practical and material requirements]*
- ◆ cooperation was generally the basis of the majority of the games but competition was present in many games *[competition in activities varied between cultural groups and was often related to group size and the level*

of dependency of group cohesion for survival – when competition was evident people were generally encouraged (though not always successfully) not to get too serious or upset when someone was better than them]

- ◆ various lifestyles such as hunter-gatherer practices provided ample rest time for cultural practices and social recreation and leisure or play pursuits *[some lifestyles resulted in a great diversity of games when compared to other societies]*
- ◆ for most individuals games and play had an influence throughout their lifespan
- ◆ play and games provided benefits to individual and group health and wellness *[success in games, hunting and moderate exercise makes people feel good – physical exercise/exertion is typically how the people led much of their lives]*
- ◆ religion and religious beliefs (in explaining much of the known and 'unknown' of existence) were all encompassing aspects of the various cultures and were reflected in elements related to play cultures
- ◆ some forms of play (related to cultural aspects) dramatise a situation in a repeated manner so that it is instinctively recognised or remembered
- ◆ play allows for the enactment and manipulation of roles, identities, customs, rituals, traditions, and everyday ways of life *[use of special names, joking relationships etc. in play and cultural processes allows members to create and experiment with their individual and group identity]*
- ◆ obligatory participation/inclusion of all in some games and play irrespective of age, gender, developmental limitations and physique etc. may be related to social and cultural practices
- ◆ play cultures of a unique nature were developed by specific groups and in certain geographical areas (such as a unique traditional games culture on the coast of the Newcastle area) *[many similar games were found in most areas but some were unique to a particular group of people or area]*
- ◆ play and movement expressions in cultures are closely associated with lifestyle

activities such music, dance, art as well as various ritual practices

- ◆ symbolism may be attached to play activities undertaken [*elaborating meanings and competencies are a way to recognise their importance*]
- ◆ there was a tendency for some similar games to exhibit regional variation in forms ('rules,' equipment etc.) and may be associated with different traditions or ritual significance [*differences provide a unique and specific cultural identity to a society*]
- ◆ often the small and physically diverse groups of children did not allow for large group activities, game variations or full expression of game complexity [*special cultural standards were applicable to some games and the level of complexity in games often reflects the level of cultural complexity*]
- ◆ game participation was part of the socialisation process [*much of the social control was usually informal and handled by the players → contributed to group solidarity and the attainment of individual acceptance*]
- ◆ in many games participation was less likely to glorify the ideal of youth and their physical superiority and more likely to favour experience and mastery [*this notion reinforced the social maintenance and cultural values of the group*]
- ◆ a general feature in the play and movement expressions in cultures was there was often an understanding about the 'rules' of games (if evident they were usually few and simple enough to be understood by all players) [*any 'rules' were subject to negotiation, elaboration and modification as part of a collective contract of participants*]
- ◆ the male dominant cultures evident placed a high value on power and assertiveness and these values were reflected in many of the games played [*the prevalence and popularity of 'strength' related activities in many cultures and exclusion of women from many games reflected the social organisation*]
- ◆ as part of the male elder-oriented cultures the younger members of the group (usually the boys) were occasionally under their direction and control during significant

cultural functions and practices (including some play activities and games)

- ◆ since the European colonisation of Australia most of the traditional games have disappeared and the culture which developed and supported this has been largely destroyed [*loss of cultural heritage and identity influences ongoing cultures*]
- ◆ the biological significance of any cultural practice tends to keep it viable, even though many cultural practices may seem 'fantastic' and unusual [*many cultural practices associated with play have little if any vital advantage or disadvantage*]
- ◆ maturity of judgement about moral and aesthetic matters (which are considered inseparable) is cultivated over a lifetime [*play and movement expressions in cultures were part of a life cycle process and at times incorporated their moral and aesthetic matters*]
- ◆ play and movement expressions in cultures display a level of 'richness' which can counteract perceptions about games reflecting a simple level of societal organisation (the various societies developed largely isolated from outside influences but were affected by the environment)

4.1. daily life

4.1.1. camp fire and evening games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ the camp fire and the night (especially as a recreational time) were an essential part of group cultural identity and cohesion [*the individual usually needs to be seen as part of the group → social interaction/socialisation with reinforcement of group values*]
- ◆ play as entertainment for self and others (usually in a group setting) was part of healthy development of individuals and the group
- ◆ the periodicity of light and darkness, dictated times for travelling, hunting and returning to camp (and for coming together and time for work, rest and play)
- ◆ benign pastimes evident include socialising and cooking as well as otherwise making things by hand, games, storytelling, imagination and other activities

4.1.1.1. fire games

some examples:

- leaf spirals in the smoke updraft of a camp fire (e.g., small leaves or bark flicked or thrown above the flames with a 'competition' to see which leaf goes the highest)
- bonfire/burning bushes as a play activity by children (e.g., setting trees or bushes on fire for amusement)
- lighted sticks, spears and boomerangs thrown into the air (e.g., throw lighted spears into trees and the children run through the falling embers; several lighted boomerangs thrown for a 'fireworks' display)
- fire making contests (different techniques)
- fire explosions (e.g., nuts and bark)

4.1.1.2. camp fire games

some examples:

- socialising through singing songs, storytelling of legends etc. for amusement at meal time [*perpetuate and reinforce oral traditions through inter-generational transmission*]
- fun corroborees and/or 'make-believe' cultural ceremonies around the camp fire (usually by children)
- general play around the camp fires at night and in the dark (e.g., playing while waiting to eat after a meal)
- playing ticks or pranks on others around a camp fire
- imitation family meal time and talking using a small fire
- camp life fun (e.g., running around the camp before evening meal and kicking up dust; squatting around a fire on a cold and frosty morning and talking to amuse others; non-active games such as talking while shivering and touching each other)
- sun, star and moon related games (e.g., moon acting and play game)
- visiting and talking to other groups around camp fires for enjoyment
- religious spirit play (e.g., being afraid of the dark game around the camp fire)

4.1.2. travelling or daily-time games

some examples:

- setting grass foot-traps for others to be caught in while walking through long grass
- finding fun or making humour in talking about daily events and excitement in walking about and playing in the bush [*unique aspects of humour were evident for various groups*]
- masks worn in play by mothers to 'scare' children <TSI>
- play around in the ashes after a bush fire for amusement
- boomerang throwing games while travelling (including a throw into the air as a signal to stop play at the end of the day)

4.1.3. sexual relationships games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ sex play or games with sexual connotations (for one or more reasons such as pleasure, imitation play, relaxation, or part of ceremonial activities etc.) [*emotional engagement or 'investment' is often evident*]
- ◆ sex play (imitation and actual) was often part of children play away from adults [*in many groups children sex play was strongly disapproved of by adults*]

some examples:

- sex games and activities (e.g., pretend or actual sexual intercourse in play or role reversal initiation; sexual intercourse for 'fun' and in competition for entertainment; imitation sexual intercourse by children)

4.1.4. social relationships/situations

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ play involves socialisation and social interaction (and can result in sociological benefits such as social skills such as respect behaviour and dignity) [*societies 'make' individuals – identity and a world view largely depends on the cultural group*]
- ◆ people are biologically and psychologically prepared to love and be loved and this can be seen in play and movement expressions in cultures
- ◆ religious beliefs (as a part of socio-cultural practices) were often an overriding part of life and influenced play and movement expressions

- ◆ accidental death or injury occurred occasionally in play/games but did not usually invoke usual ritual punishment or cultural sanctions
- ◆ mother and infant mutuality also develops with others and serves to unite the group – this is often developed or expressed through play [*mutuality leads to friendship, love, and affiliation but can also proliferate into violence and aggression within and between groups*]
- ◆ role/totem/social position or reinforcement of clan or group cultural identification/bonds was evident in the play and movement expressions [*certain responsibilities involved kinship and other relationships*]
- ◆ some evidence of group/clan specific games (age, gender, clan or whole group) [*relationship with others and the special context may affect participation in particular activities and games*]
- ◆ identification of winners when game contests are held might occasionally occur [*'champions' were usually not acknowledged and accorded any special role or status*]
- ◆ games were often played by adults with children to share fun as well as teaching them skills needed for adult roles [*children also joined with adults in their play → inter-generational play*]
- ◆ improvising, creating and playing games was a rewarding social pastime [*manipulative deceit by individuals to have their own way with others was sometimes evident in games*]
- ◆ punishment related games reinforced individual and group roles and cultural standards
- ◆ all the uninitiated children, both in gender specific and different age groupings, generally played together in informal or more organised groups or sub-groups – individual play was also evident but group play was predominant
- ◆ peers and the older children were involved in reinforcing social roles as well as any conflict resolution during play [*games often promoted goodwill and interpersonal*

relationships and were essential training for children in social interaction]

- ◆ children learned to cooperate with others and to develop respect of the physical abilities (both skilled and unskilled) of others through games [*self-interest was still also important at times*]
 - ◆ ceremonies and rituals (including those incorporating elements of play) confirm social roles and their required behaviours and privileges [*people learn what to expect, depending on their roles and direct people away from narrow self-interest to group belonging and meaning*]
 - ◆ some games and activities were associated with material culture (such as initiation artefacts)
- some examples:**
- 'punishment' play (e.g., imitation of being smacked/disciplined by 'granny' even though children generally were seldom punished)
 - 'taboo' games (e.g., imitation wife-stealing; playing with people from the 'wrong' totem)
 - social distinctions in play may occur (e.g., only initiated men were allowed to do certain play activities such as 'weet-weet' contests; boys required to stop playing certain games or with girls when initiated)
 - role reversal play (e.g., initiated boys attempt to play 'sexual' games with married women)
 - food hiding and presentation/feasting games <TSI>
 - death in play sometimes occurred (e.g., a child hits a playmate over the head in imitation fighting and kills them by mistake; players struck and killed in a hockey type game)
 - imitation death play and funeral wailing
 - material culture and games and activities (e.g., throw ash in the air as a challenged in wrestling contest; feather decorated 'prize' spear; spinning top carry baskets)
 - competitive individual and/or intergroup activities were evident (e.g., 'best' player may keep ball until next game; prize spear for group wrestling contest; a 'excellent' player buried on the beach where games were usually played <Newcastle area>)

4.1.5. gender play

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ gender role differentiation and group and individual roles were evident in play and movement expressions in cultures [*generally gender-role differentiation is at a low level in many of the children's games but increased as the children grew older*]
- ◆ there may or may not be commonality in gender-role differentiation in play from one geographical location to another [*as children matured, more games were identified as being for males or females, and the games were more reflective of life lessons necessary to function in the society*]
- ◆ as children matured more games were gender based and reflected the values and life lessons required to function in society [*greater inhibitions in cross-gender than in cross-generational play*]
- ◆ traditionally inter-gender play and interactions were common with siblings and both genders but this interaction usually (but not always) ended at male initiation time
- ◆ play may occur within a single gender, between both genders and loosely defined or mixed age groups [*some games were age specific and this influenced the nature of gender participation*]
- ◆ gender and age specific play preferences may occur within a specific cultural groups [*overall boys generally do more play fighting, chasing and 'rough and tumble' play and girls may have more oral play activities and repeated actions*]
- ◆ play was influenced by the natural environment and by the cultural constraints associated with gender and designated social roles
- ◆ girls looking after and playing with the younger children → required for the refinement of a range of social and physical skills and behaviours needed in adult roles as a mother [*obedience and responsibility training for the girls reinforced the need within the cultural group to look after each other*]
- ◆ girls in their early teenage years would become the wives of elders and assume

adult roles and this often influenced the play activities undertaken

- ◆ initiated young men joined the game practices of the men and were often prohibited from playing certain games of their childhood or interacting with children and girls

some examples:

- female aggressive play (e.g., digging stick play fights between girls) as practice for adult supporting roles to men in battles [*women in supporting and limited participation roles in mock battles*]
- mixed gender games and contests between boys and girls (e.g., water throw and catch game with a girl and boy as partners against another pair) <TSI>
- cooperative activities and rhythmic play or dance by both genders together
- gender based cultural role play (e.g., boys play boomerang games while girls do digging for food play)
- role and/or gender reversal games (e.g., women imitate the men hunting in an acting dance or fun corroboree)
- young children were often cared for and used as a plaything – usually by the older girls and women [*adult role preparation*]
- gender specific games, such as spear dodging contests for initiated boys, were directly or indirectly related to important cultural practices and so these were encouraged

4.1.6. ceremonial rites or events

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ various ceremonial practices (including 'secret' rituals) were observed and imitated by children in their play [*ceremony transmits the emotional dispositions on which a society depends for its existence*]

some examples:

- initiation ceremony games of ritual significance (e.g., opossum game in trees as part of an initiation ceremony)
- play cicatrices by imitation cutting of the skin
- silence to deal with imitation pain as part of initiation ceremony practices such as circumcision

- touch fire stick on skin for scarring practice
- imitate death and mourners at a funeral and finding a dead person's spirit or ghost
- death and religion play (e.g., climbing and playing on burial poles at a cemetery <northern Australia>)
- recreational talking, fantasising about suicide and death/funeral for peer, social esteem and community recognition [*often a prelude to actual suicide* <a 'modern' and remote community observed activity>]
- custom/religious 'play' (e.g., bury birth cord for child to become a healthy person and a good swimmer)
- games played as part of special events, occasions, or occurrences (e.g., playing ball games to end a period of mourning or grieving)

4.1.7. education/Information transmission

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ for children life is a succession of increasingly complex skills to be learned and problems to be solved [*in the early years of life there is little elaboration or introduction of variation or complexity in play (simple activities with solitary play) but in later years the games tend to become more organised and complex and displayed a greater level of ingenuity and innovation*]
- ◆ generally informal but also formal situations where many skills and some games were learned by observation, imitation and practice or performance rather than any overt form of instruction [*informal organisation was a common feature and children usually learned games by watching and/or doing, not by verbal instruction – although there was some peer/adult advice or assistance at times*]
- ◆ the learner usually concentrates on understanding, or being involved, in the overall nature or concept of a game before focusing on the details [*learning wholes rather than parts or sequenced steps → often 'clumsy' initial efforts*]
- ◆ education stressed the relationship of individuals with their social and natural environment [*the play and movement*

expressions in cultures reflect the particular environmental context and nature of oral traditions]

- ◆ through games children learned something about the cultural values of the group and life skills associated with their designated adult roles [*roles of gender in specific circumstances and including role play and role reversal or modification on special occasions – or education gained through children's songs and stories*]
- ◆ ensuring the education of children (including through games) was generally the responsibility of the wider group or community (and including peers) [*the responsibility of teaching others leads to patience and personal skill refinement*]
- ◆ supervised or organised training in skill activities or contests – which might include the manufacture of miniature weapons – was often under the direction of elders
- ◆ an understanding of the cultural significance of a play and movement expressions in the lifespan (and as a central part of the functioning and identity of the group) is evident
- ◆ acculturation and enculturation process are imparted through education – passing on skills, beliefs and values is related to the importance of games playing in the life cycle
- ◆ visual and spatial learning is a central part of education and was evident in games and activities
- ◆ education – including through play and movement expressions within cultures – led people to know, understand and 'like' the world they inhabit (and reinforced a close cultural association to the land)
- ◆ learning through play is often group-oriented, localised and connected to real-life purposes and contexts
- ◆ body language plays an important role in learning as part of play and movement expressions within the wider culture)
- ◆ indirect rather than direct orientation to learning concepts, avoidance of direct questioning, avoidance of direct instruction and behaviour management were features of societies [*kinaesthetic, hands-on learning*

was a characteristic → play and games reflected this situation]

♦ children use their acquired knowledge and may be agents of change or develop original forms of play in a culture which can result in new, creative, or novel outcomes

♦ games provide for a multitude of learning opportunities for members of a society [learn about how to play the games and why they were played]

some examples:

- observation, memory, calculation, imitation and practice related to the environment (e.g., imitation cutting bite site in case of snake bite; imitation of insect bite/sting to learn about risks; play/fun with fire sticks to burn small bushes → often associated with food gathering; play in context of totem/clan)
- excitable and sometimes sensual nature of play (e.g., be 'caught' in the joy of splashing around in the water)
- learn by doing such as taking playful risks for fun (e.g., jumping from trees into water for feet to stick in the mud at the bottom)
- wrestling contests for boys under the mentoring, command or instruction of adults
- the educative role of adults in interpreting omens that might be relevant in play etc.
- evidence of an appreciation of intellectual (scientific and technological) aspects related to toys and playthings (e.g., design and construction of toy boats and spinning tops)
- ball games involving all age groups and genders or in totem and/or gender and age groupings → social interaction and learning
- formal and/or informal instruction where children were taught to swim by repeatedly throwing/placing them in water
- training and supervised practice by boys in throwing spears and boomerangs
- exchanged and learned games or 'traded' play information (e.g., fun corroborees from another clan)
- taking turns or sharing a toy and practising being generous or expressing appreciation of the efforts of other players

- mock hunting for boys and food-gathering activities for girls as part of learning adult roles through games

- watching/observing falling stars for enjoyment as well as cultural transmission of knowledge via stories at the same time <TSI>

- education through storytelling involving legends with play themes or aspects
 - religious practice and games (e.g., top spinners' spindle hung over body of owner as part of funeral rites – religion and sport mix) <TSI>

- imitate animal sounds taught by others such as elders

- practice tracking or physical skills (such as spear throwing) for future adult role

- use of games to teach concepts such as time, weight, counting, refraction of light etc. (e.g., learning/teaching how to spear fish in water and practice of this skill)

- playing cooperative games or being involved in cooperative activities to reinforce group interaction and place or identity of the individual or group within the whole group (e.g., playing a keep-away boomerang game between younger and older males where the younger players learn to work together in their team by learning from the example of the older men)

- playing games to learn navigation (e.g., practice lighting small fires in a line as a practice of navigational tool in crossing a desert)

- observe a spear being made and try to imitate/copy a miniature or toy version (continually repeat the process to master the skills → little direct instruction provided)

4.2. communal events/social gatherings and activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

♦ socio-cultural rules and roles during play required observation of kinship relationships so if playing imitation family the 'couple' would be able to marry in reality → need to resolve 'challenges' to kinship relationships in play [regulations such as kinship indicate individual and group identity]

- ◆ incorporates organised clan or community recreation/leisure/ sport/social interaction and values in a contemporary indigenous oriented context
- ◆ involves more modern and introduced or developed and/or non-traditional in origin (including from other cultures)
- ◆ community/clan and individual and/or group interaction between gender groups or in separate gender games
- ◆ some events and activities have adopted or taken on an indigenous perspective, style, innovation or adaptation/modification or has evolved and displayed a specific group 'ownership' or identity
- ◆ includes traditional games that have been transmitted or are modified according to environmental and socioeconomic conditions – as part of dynamic and ongoing indigenous cultures [*recognition of the continuing nature of play and movement expressions within identifiable and continuing Indigenous communities*]
- ◆ for some games there was a loose distinction between players and spectators as people would change their roles [*in many team games recorded there was no limit on the number of players and few conventions related to teams of equal numbers*]
- ◆ includes group interaction events: festivals or gatherings for food-gathering and feasting, religious/cultural ceremonies such as initiation ceremonies
- ◆ in 'modern' indigenous play and movement expressions in the cultural context various indigenous-focused sports events and/or activities with indigenous background (such as spear throwing contest) are conducted
- ◆ prevailing role of 'officials' in events with elders often organising and controlling sport events in remote communities (often to reassert traditional respect and authority traditions) [*games often illustrate dependency or referral to traditions*]
- ◆ usually organised, 'sanctioned' and 'controlled' by some agreed regulations or processes of consultation within the group

4.2.1. Inter-group/clan/community social activities/contests

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ at times individual and inter-group social interaction or cultural practices and contests with prizes for some competitions
- ◆ often associated with the exchange of traditional practices, beliefs, games, dances etc. at gatherings/meetings for ceremonies, ritual trading and/or feasting (e.g., weet-weet contests associated with gatherings for trading)
- ◆ largely cooperative activities but may be either competitive or non-competitive (or incorporate aspects of both) [*children's play may be viewed as containing a 'competitive' element where individuals test themselves against others*]
- ◆ at gatherings some contests or competition activities such as hunting, fishing, mock combat, wrestling, boomerang throwing, throwing stick ('weet-weet'), corroboree etc.
- ◆ social skills and the learning of socially acceptable behaviours such as sharing are evident in some games and activities
- ◆ in the traditional context people from neighbouring areas would occasionally visit and compete in various traditional games [*there were often designated or specially prepared areas used for certain traditional games*]

some examples:

- children hunting in small clan groups to catch small game such as lizards for fun
- individual and inter-group fishing contests
- fishing for personal pleasure and fun (with food gathering not the primary motive)
- ritual water fights between clan groups

4.2.2. traditional gatherings and activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ includes gatherings for ritual practices, feasts etc. and often includes inter-group contests

some examples:

- bunya nut festival and various events including 'tournaments' such as seasonal or yearly combined mullet fishing and hockey contests

- regular inter-group mock battles (e.g., pruns) [*great physical exertion, sustained concentration, or both → the concept of 'flow'*]

4.3. traditional and contemporary play and movement expressions

4.3.1. Introduced games and activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ today the boundaries between *traditional* and more *contemporary* traditional games cultural heritage or cultural expressions is blurred
- ◆ surviving traditional games are continually evolving and although but may no longer be played in their customary form or with conventional implements
- ◆ all traditional games can have useful functions in contemporary society by developing interpersonal and physical skills [*cultural heritage or cultural expressions that can particularly instil pride and sense of ownership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*]
- ◆ includes intermingling of cultural influences from Australian, European and other cultures (representing introduced non-traditional/non-cultural activities) as part of an indigenous identity [*traditional games are influenced and often modified when a culture is in contact with other cultures, particularly a 'dominant' culture*]
- ◆ includes some more 'modern' developments, indigenisation, evolving indigenous play and movement expressions and part of culture and recognition of the variety of current contexts of indigenous populations/communities
- ◆ provides evidence of lifestyle influences and social issues within once existing, ongoing and/or evolving play and movement expressions within cultures [*societies under 'threat' from internal or external factors often lose much of their play and movement expressions and/or it is transformed in other ways*]
- ◆ includes indigenous only games and activities as well as racial interaction play → in part a recognition and acceptance of some evidence of racism in sport

- ◆ specific group/community rules or indigenous identity found in many cases in the activities undertaken [*uncertain origins of activities and varied cultural meanings are associated with many of the activities*]

- ◆ some activities provide evidence of the repression of traditional play and movement expressions in culture as a result of European contact and actions in missions and settlements which resulted in both intended (new play forms) and unintended (loss of play cultural identity) consequences [*limiting social gatherings and interactions results in modification or loss within play and movement expressions within cultures*]

- ◆ some introduced games developed in their original form while others have developed a unique indigenous identity

4.3.1.1. European originated games and events

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ games might have been used for specific purposes such as to replace existing games and/or for social reasons (such as in the perceived 'civilising' influence of cricket) [*some introduced or 'imposed' activities may take on a different meanings and/or forms which are more consistent or acceptable to the existing culture*]
- ◆ includes activities for the entertainment and enjoyment of people which were determined by Europeans [*introduction of European play aspects led to a re-shaping of some cultures in minor or more dramatic ways*]
- ◆ many games and activities were introduced to replace loss (or lack of recognition or acceptance) of existing play and movement expressions within cultures
- ◆ historical sporting events were sometimes organised for the entertainment of Europeans but were supported by indigenous participation (sometimes through coercion or 'reward')
- ◆ some non-traditional games and activities from other cultures (other than European) have also developed an indigenous identity to form part of continuing play and movement expressions within cultures [*most*]

traditional games that have survived cultural disruption have been subject to change]

some examples:

- 'blackboy' horse races [*once held specifically for Aboriginal stockmen at some country race meetings*]
- Aboriginal boat races (included at regattas) for prizes and the amusement of observers and participants [*historical*]
- introduction and/or adoption and playing of introduced games with a distinct European origin (e.g., stockman's games such as mumble peg; playing of various sports such as Australian football)
- strategy games with board games such as draughts and card games like euchre introduced and readily accepted by indigenous peoples

4.3.1.2. mission or settlement

games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ usually associated with European activities and sometimes combined with and/or modified from traditional activities
- ◆ includes activities that were modified or developed (or integrated into existing games) in forming an indigenous identity
- ◆ specific games and sports were introduced into missions and settlements as part of government assimilation policies (sometimes with a specific purpose such as a 'civilising' agenda)

some examples:

- 'mission rules' or playing identity (e.g., versions/variations of mission hockey, 'mission rounders' or cricket games; 'blackfella basketball')
- mission or settlement athletic carnival events (e.g., sack races; egg and spoon; spear throwing contests; coconut tree climbing etc.)
- informal mission ball games such as throw a ball into the air and catch as part of after work group entertainment
- 'games' of power or to exert authority – by white officials at settlements (e.g., abuse of fun concept by use of game activities as punishment → have a mission inmate wear a 'bad' dress or outfit and parade around the

streets to shame person and to 'amuse' others)

- imitation play of being 'stolen' children while playing [*the so-called 'stolen' children were taken away from their parents by white authorities supposedly for their welfare*]
- writing love letters for fun <mission game which illustrates that love is associated with play and movement expressions within cultures>
- playing with mirrors 'catching the light' in flirting between girls and boys <mission dormitory play>
- raiding fruit orchards for fun and food <mission play>
- billy cart races and goat races <mission play>

4.3.1.3. fringe dwellers or town camp games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ distinctive play and movement expressions within cultures have evolved games and play forms unique to the environment of *living near settlements* – yet somewhat separated from them (often living in shacks along the river bank)

some examples:

- imitation drinking games by children
- wandering around in groups with 'gings' (shanghais) shooting at targets

4.3.2. contemporary indigenous identity games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ local variations of games (such as rounders) are closely related and intertwined with other areas of culture but recognise the continuing and evolving nature of indigenous play and movement expressions in cultures – and the ability of indigenous people to develop and support these [*in a traditional context an assigned individual identity was closely linked to that of the group*]
- ◆ includes activities that have been modified or influenced by various other games but reflects an indigenous identity which may be group/community specific
- ◆ play activities incorporate various aspects of the lifestyle experience of people (often in remote indigenous communities) [*a certain*

indigenous 'style' of performing activities → games are vehicles of cultural expression]

◆ generally the games and sport culture of Indigenous Australians is now closely associated with the games and sports of the wider community [*sports events can be like a kind of theatre which reflect the identity of its participants*]

4.3.2.1. Indigenous Identity

some relevant points and/or concepts:

◆ introduced or modified toys and playthings or games and may include 'rules' or objects made with or by others

some examples:

- toy ear phones using coconut halves
- pull along toys (e.g., pulling along a plastic drink container attached to a line; making of 'motor cars' using tin cans and fencing wire for a 'steering wheel')
- shanghais/slingshots or 'gings' for playing (e.g., shoot in air, at discarded bottles or tins or at birds etc.)
- distinctive style of play (e.g., 'desert' football or Tiwi style in AFL; rugby league 'knockout' carnivals with attacking style of play used by teams → 'chip and chase')

4.3.2.2. children's games

some relevant points and/or concepts:

◆ includes introduced, modified to an indigenous identity or invented games and activities reflective of, or a part of, a 'traditional' or more contemporary indigenous play and movement expressions of children within cultures

some examples:

- various playground games such as hopscotch, dodge ball, knucklebones or jackstones etc. infused with an indigenous identity
- general playing with water for fun (e.g., playing with water coming out of a tap or hose) <remote area play>
- stand in a line and wind up and unwind as a group (may be associated with traditional stories such as the giant snake/serpent who formed the land) <TSI>
- imaginary air raid play <mission play>
- imitation of cheating, 'cheap shots' or foul play from sport made into game play

- watching TV for recreation (including integration and/or imitation of behaviours observed such as movie stunt activities; yarning; 'fooling around')
- combined Christian and traditional spiritual or supernatural components in play situations (e.g., playing 'spirit' or ghost games combining traditional religious influences of animal spirits and imitation of Christian rites or beliefs) [*religion was not an optional activity → a strong connection between spiritual aspects and activities of daily lives such as play activities was evident*]
- cooperative marbles where play a marbles game but share the marbles with other player(s) to continue playing [*reinforce group sharing values in the community*]

4.3.2.3. 'dysfunctional' society play

some relevant points and/or concepts:

◆ imitation as a way of understanding or reflecting dysfunctional behaviour in some 'challenged' indigenous communities

◆ reflective of some activities in wider Australian society but often more 'destructive' on the community due to isolation, boredom and other factors

some examples:

- imitation play of dysfunctional community behaviour (e.g., drunkenness; swearing and violence towards women and intergroup aggression; 'sit-down money' (social security benefits) play; gambling and drug dealing – including by children)
- sex games for fun and reward (e.g., sex games for alcohol – mainly beer or wine – and cigarettes; having babies for status and 'fun'; watching pornography and imitating or performing highly sexualised behaviour by self or with others – with or without their consent)
- anti-social behaviour for entertainment – including later recollection for group amusement (e.g., deliberate poor school or sports playing attitude; breaking windows or committing other activities such as stealing fruit for entertainment or 'thrills')
- playing in groups/gangs and wandering or roaming around community at night as recreation (includes association in some

'troubled' communities with violence, alcohol, petrol and glue-sniffing for entertainment or as part of group identity)

- social drinking of alcohol for entertainment and enjoyment or getting drunk for diversion or as part of drinking games – including gossiping and social group reinforcement (e.g., drinking and talking in drinking rings or groups where a flagon of wine is passed around to share while talking/'skiting' to each other)

4.3.2.4. card playing

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ may involve gambling
- ◆ can incorporate invented and 'introduced' card games (which have developed an indigenous identity or form)

some examples:

- strategy or decision making through card games (e.g., 'kuns' – example of Aboriginal 'invented' card game and rules)
- long-standing enjoyment of the game of euchre [*introduced game which became associated with camp and fringe dwellers*]

4.3.2.5. gambling and games of chance

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ no accounts exist of *games of chance* as part of historical/traditional play and movement expressions within cultures [*games of chance do not reflect traditional activities but have been developed*]
- ◆ may involve gambling on card playing and/or other games of chance for recreation
- ◆ can incorporate more traditional and 'introduced' games and activities (including those that have developed a new indigenous identity or form)
- ◆ where money or property is gambled this is usually kept by the winner but may be shared between all players

some examples:

- gambling or games of chance (e.g., throwing coins into a hole/target)
- gambling on cards or dice (e.g., gambling on guessing dice total for money – but sometimes with tree leaves as a substitute for money)

- throwing cans or other objects to land in a certain way as a game of chance or luck
- gambling/chance games (e.g., stone objects found in northern Australia that might be evidence of strategy/chance games → likely Indonesian traders historical influence)
- elderly socialise and participate in a group social activity by card playing in the shade of trees for fun

Note: *Play and movement expressions within cultures are continually evolving. Although they are games that may no longer be played in their customary form or with conventional implements, these still have functions in modern society for all people through the concurrent development of interpersonal and physical skills.*

4.3.3. traditional games heritage

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ evidence of persistence and change over time as part of ongoing and evolving play and movement expressions within cultures [*traditional games are reflective of the values and beliefs systems operating within cultures, the social structure and practices evident, and the and bio-geographical setting and the associated way of life*]
- ◆ games helped to reinforce culture and the values considered important to the people [*many games are typical human activities rather than typical of the culture in which they are played*]
- ◆ games capture or retain many of the rich and varied traditions of 'lost', dwindling or 'new' societies [*for cultural identity of groups the traditional games need to be researched, recorded and preserved*]
- ◆ internalisation/adoption or innovation, invention (and re-invention) and adaptation of traditional – and some introduced games – is in evidence [*includes game development, invention, hybridisation and experimentation*]
- ◆ there is a record of cultural disintegration and loss of traditional games as a result of European colonisation [*stressed or dominated cultures results in the disruption of some or most aspects of play and movement expressions within the culture*]

- ◆ includes revival and popularising of 'traditional' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island games and pastimes as important cultural aspects (as relevant to the whole community/indigenous population) *[games are traditionally both the products of culture and mechanisms for the transmission of culture]*
- ◆ recognises that individual groups from different areas treasured and developed their own specialised games and pastimes (sometimes over generations) *[games pass from generation to generation, formally or informally often by word of mouth or imitation]*
- ◆ the concept of a traditional games heritage inadequately acknowledges 'lost' and unrecorded games or play activities and whose true meaning is unrecognised or 'misunderstood' *[play and movement expressions within cultures are generally varied and often original when taken as a whole]*
- ◆ some revitalised traditional games have been heavily developed/modified for modern usage but still retain elements of inclusiveness, bodily movement and group interaction *[for many activities modernisation has required the need for rule development and/or standardisation and invented traditions for safety and relevance to the wider community]*
- ◆ cooperation, humour, equality, fair play, respect for others, caring and skill were generally representative of the traditional play and movement expressions within cultures but competition, disputes and violence can occur *[play and games should make people feel good about themselves and their culture]*
- ◆ variations and slight differences of the same play activity or game each time it was played as well as differences between different geographical locations existed
- ◆ play and movement expressions within cultures ranged from the seemingly trivial and improvised play activities to 'sporting' type contests at larger social gatherings *[very few traditional games have survived at all or*

- in anything like their original form and these are usually found in isolated areas]*
- ◆ experiences provided through involvement in traditional games shape individual knowledge and understanding in many different areas of a culture *[some indigenous people are 'bi-cultural' and this influences their perceptions and engagement with aspects of continuing play and movement expressions within cultures]*
 - ◆ various traditional games allow for inter-generational social interactions and exchange of information and skills *[games are part of the collective memory of societies]*
 - ◆ most traditional games are at reasonably unsophisticated levels of play and do not meet accepted 'modern' criteria for a sport *[the games that were played were a reflection of the adaptation and levels of societies that once existed]*
 - ◆ traditional games often reinforce a group or collective emphasis although individual identity was also evident in some games
 - ◆ there was no apparent traditional concept of what we now see as sporting heritage and there is only limited evidence of the recounting of the achievements of individuals in traditional games *[games can provide a means of investigating culture change]*
 - ◆ the complex processes of innovation and adaptation can make it difficult to determine which games are traditional and which have been introduced *[some games claimed as traditional may not be or have been transformed in some way from other sources]*
 - ◆ games were often more about physical performance than about competition and more about self-satisfaction and individual and group identity than the externalities of material rewards and public victories *[fair play was a feature of traditional games but notions such as 'cheating' or 'winning' might well have had different cultural meanings and interpretations]*
 - ◆ continuing traditional groups may change the names of games, 'rules' etc. over time as

part of evolving/dynamic play and movement expressions within cultures
[traditional games do provide for localisation within developing global identities]

- ◆ historic changes observed in play provide important insights into the development and changes in societies

- ◆ inherited play and movement expressions within cultures often interact as a feedback and reference points to characteristics of current play and movement expressions

- ◆ re-constructed games are based on accepted accounts (and, where possible, have the approval of representatives of the traditional owners) and has led to their acceptance as a part of indigenous cultural heritage *[inventions (as genuine aspects) in play and games as well as associated values and rules are common components in the ongoing development of 'authentic play and movement expressions within cultures']*

- ◆ traditional societies developed a wide variety of games and associated toys and playthings and these help form part of the surviving indigenous cultural heritage *[play is contextualised to societies and their own unique features]*

- ◆ exploration and testing were important in developing new games or variations of existing traditional games

- ◆ some traditional games have developed from combined experiences (such as from on the missions) and the intellectual knowledge and oral traditions of groups

- ◆ revived traditional games may be used for cultural regeneration and enrichment, as a force for reconciliation, group identity and a form of interaction between groups in current Australian society *[a sense of belonging as a group member may help indigenous people to acquire greater meaning in their life and cultural competence and understanding]*

- ◆ an appreciation of the various types of games, physical fitness benefits and the skills of others and self is evident in ongoing play and movement expressions within cultures

- ◆ recognise the universality, diversity and ongoing nature of the culture of play and movement expression *[a number of games were almost universal while many others were limited to a small group of people or region]*

- ◆ games that persist over time are often those that have been able to adapt most to changing conditions

- ◆ traditional games and associated toys and playthings in traditional societies reflected their physical environment, natural resources, geographic location and the time in which the people lived

- ◆ many surviving traditional games have stability (they stay much the same) and variation (they are played with many minor variations) *[stability and variation, across both time and space, are characteristic of nearly every kind of traditional cultural activity, including traditional games]*

- ◆ some games are continually evolving (and although they may no longer be played in their customary form or with conventional implements) may have functions in modern society through the development of interpersonal and physical skills *[the modification and re-interpretation of culture to suit the ongoing culture evident → cultural construction]*

- ◆ traditional games provide a unique understanding of the activities of people of other times and of different cultural groups *[the teaching of traditional games can also lead to an understanding of various social science concepts and generalisations]*

- ◆ linear perspectives in passing on traditions and associated information may marginalise people and prevent the constructing of new identities (such as hybridised indigenous play and movement expressions within cultures)

- ◆ there has been a lack of accounts by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about their traditional games *[a reliance on European information may distort the nature and role of traditional games within and between cultural groups]*

some examples:

- traditional sports events (e.g., spear and boomerang throwing; fire making contests)
- 'modern' or reconstructed versions of traditional games (e.g., ball game of *marn-grook* played in demonstration matches and 'competitions'; *Coreeda* wrestling)
- toy sailboat racing events <TSI>
- activities that have assumed an indigenous identity (e.g., tin can 'rollers' or 'motor cars')
- surviving traditional activities such as beach play, stone throwing activities and gossiping games
- boomerang throwing has taken on a new role and meaning to become less of an indigenous sport but more of a modern international sport (essentially lost its relevance to almost all indigenous groups/communities)
- contemporary play and movement expressions within cultures might include: distinctive indigenous joking style/sense of humour (e.g., yarning with others and blaming 'others' for sometimes embarrassing, outrageous or absurd events that occurred or affected them; find humour in the slight misfortunes of others; playing a guitar with making up 'funny' songs while drinking alcohol; arguing for entertainment about the sporting ability of each other or a team etc.)
- opportunities to revive some activities such as 'weet-weet' and associated contests have been explored

5. Language and Communication Games and Activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ the use of verbal and non-verbal communication and interactions enhances social interaction in leisure time or cultural pursuits
- ♦ activities usually require abstract thought and intelligence (which contribute towards higher level cognitive development)
- ♦ language use is fundamental to cultural identity and the oral tradition of societies (e.g., story/conversation games, and songs) *[often complex orally transmitted structures]*

- ♦ activities may include, or be associated with, special words and expressions or names for games (although many games had no identifiable names)
- ♦ play and playful learning contributes towards linguistic and visual literacy development and spatial awareness (including kinaesthetic knowledge or learning through movement)
- ♦ the oral tradition of the various cultures and the role of language, especially through songs, was also an important component in many traditional games
- ♦ spontaneous speech play such as in talking 'nonsense' was also observed
- ♦ language and communication use, along with the use of silence, are features of learning

5.1. language and verbal communication

5.1.1. socialising/talking and listening some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ communication and social interaction with associated entertainment or enjoyment aspects

some examples:

- joking relationships and social distinction or categories and roles as a part of a game
- social pretend or practice clan interaction
- insult play (e.g., dramatised or exaggerated exchange of insults)
- sitting around in a group under the shade of a tree and talking (and perhaps playing cards) for enjoyment

5.1.2. talking/verbal communication in play

some examples:

- word play and games (e.g., play 'I spy' guessing; vernacular language; secret games; counting and chanting; 'spontaneous' word games for fun)
- vocabulary games (e.g., learning words for objects; twirling a lighted stick and saying names of different types of fish)
- talking/speaking/communication for the fun/enjoyment and self-satisfaction of conversation or for pretence (e.g., talking while shivering from cold; talking nonsense; take a breath and talk as long as possible)

game; speech making as a form of contest or play; using imagination to make up a story; talking/yarning as a form of verbal entertainment)

- joking games and relationships between children for enjoyment
- talking in 'lingo' to wagtail birds for fun
- riddles and teasing/taunting play activities (e.g., verbal jousting/duelling; group teasing; and jingles)
- swearing/'bad' language/dirty talk or singing erotic songs for amusement
- arguing/bickering for entertainment (e.g., play insolence to adults)
- emotional play such as talking and crying at the same time or in play crying songs
- verbal dexterity play and nonsense word play (e.g., call and response play)
- practising or imitating greetings and introductions for fun
- mimicry talents with contests (e.g., imitation bird calls) [*recognises communication between animals and uses their 'language'*]
- invented code, 'secret' or 'special' words and/or language games (e.g., 'pig latin' type games)
- whispering and making 'language'/sounds
- talking 'gibberish' and associated with tickling, giggling and laughing play
- command games (e.g., following instructions and performing actions or replicating/repeating instructions or commands)
- memorisation and/or repetition of words, songs and stories
- recitation games utilising memory, hand and eye coordination, physical ability (either competition or cooperation)
- verbal jousting/acting games/contests (e.g., acting losing temper in play)
- games of deception (e.g., lying with nodding or smiling to keep information from another person in a play situation) [*may involve deliberately utilising body language to create a 'double' meaning*]
- courtship play often with 'childish' words things to create and display intimacy

5.1.3. talking as part of storytelling activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ telling and recalling of stories was a large part of daily and ritual life and was not only about entertaining people but for use by elders in educating children about the way of life [*storytelling (and communication) may be associated with dramatic performance*]
- ♦ traditional stories/narratives may be deliberate fabrications → give emotional significance to the lives of individuals and groups
- ♦ human minds are predisposed to narratives [*stories were made up, told or retold during daily activities or while or sitting around the campfire at night*]
- ♦ narratives and associated pedagogies are environment and place-based rather than time-based (drawn from the living landscape within a framework of profound ancestral and personal relationships with place) [*there is a strong connection between land and knowledge/learning*]
- ♦ the oral tradition of cultures makes use of personal and wider narratives in knowledge transmission and transformation [*elders teach using stories, drawing lessons from narratives to actively involve learners in introspection and analysis*]
- ♦ some stories/legends observed and recorded incorporated play and games references

some examples:

- storytelling and a gossip game combined where events are recreated or there is a telling of a story (e.g., leaf game which may also include stick, shells, stones, flowers etc.)
- story contests/games (e.g., making up stories)
- making up/telling funny stories and yarns and 'inventing' conversation or words
- sand storytelling with the use of a stick to beat time and leaves to explain/act out the 'gossip' – combined activity play
- recounting stories and listening skills (e.g., memories of special events of elders)
- interpreting dreams, clouds, shadows etc. in a group conversation for entertainment

- telling legends as a game or referring to games (e.g., play and game references in stories of cultural significance such as the sun as a ball and in wrestling etc.)

5.2. non-verbal communication

some relevant points and/or concepts:

◆ using gestures, body movements with hands or 'body language' such as facial expressions and eye-contact to communicate (miming and 'sign' language important aspects of communication) [*nonverbal signs of being attuned to others*]

◆ people often think and perceive in a way that is not constrained by the serial and sequential nature of verbal thinking

◆ learners test knowledge non-verbally through experience, introspection and practice

some examples:

- miming/acting games/activities which can be associated with other non-verbal responses (e.g., use of body language, posture etc. including dancing)
- sign language (e.g., use of hands and arms to make sign language to communicate through imitation activities such as the stalking of animals)
 - making faces/grimaces for fun
 - non-verbal greetings/exchanges as parts of play
 - lip reading silent speech engagement
 - play cues, rhythmic and modal signals between individuals (e.g., playmates able to 'read' the intended actions of each other in a particular game situation – or feel a 'special connection')
- miming as a game or part of general play (e.g., pretend moon, hunting etc.) and charades type activities/guessing games with cues

6. The Arts: Games and Activities

some relevant points and/or concepts:

◆ the arts encompass those artistic pursuits that express and communicate what it is to be human *[the arts are products of cultures and people have often expended vast quantities of time, energy, and material resources in this pursuit of specialness, of excess, of elaboration in the arts]*

◆ the arts is seen to generally consist of five art forms: dance, music, drama, visual arts and media arts as distinct subjects *[each form of the arts is unique with its own discrete knowledge, symbols, language and skills → as opposed to another view that the five art forms are organically connected, and not easily separable in some contexts]*

◆ the expanded forms of the arts includes music, chant or song, poetic language, ordered movement and gesture or dance, mime, and drama, as well as visual art and media *[the arts of time are music, dance, 'mark making,' or performance]*

◆ through engagement in the arts people learn to value, evaluate, challenge, feel, respond to and enjoy artistic experiences *[concept formation, memory and reflective thinking are all developed through the arts]*

◆ arts experiences are active and people perform actions that require practice, refinement and concentration *[people develop physical skills, learn processes and techniques (some skills demand repetition to develop and others might be mastered quickly) → all require persistence, practice, application and resilience]*

◆ the arts requires people to focus on the use of their senses *[develop the capacity to express, through a range of art forms, information accessed through tactile, aural, visual and kinaesthetic means]*

◆ through the arts societies develop, share and pass on understandings of themselves, histories, cultures and worlds to future generations *[the arts uses systems, stories, objects, events, ideas or symbols]*

◆ the arts allows people to learn about themselves and the ways in which they interact with others – they learn to work in

groups, to express ideas and communicate *[the arts can be examined in different social and cultural contexts]*

◆ abilities integral to the arts include; visuo-spatial assessment and memory; manual dexterity and mechanical insight and improvisation; kinaesthetic control, grace, and economy of movement; storytelling and other verbal-persuasive skills; musicality; and social sensitivity *[the quality of emotionally satisfying fullness in the artistic activities may be contrasted to the often temporary excitement of many games and pastimes]*

◆ the arts provide avenues for a sense of belonging, meaning, competence, and an enlargement of the sense of being *[humans have an inborn capacity for engaging in and responding to the arts]*

◆ the arts of the past contain the 'treasures' of humankind *[the arts often are the records of cultures that once existed or have developed new forms – the records include aspects related to play and movement expressions within cultures]*

◆ the arts comprises ceremonial songs, dances, paintings, sacred objects, and ritual incantations associated with ancestral beings that allow people to become directly involved with the ancestral past *[the arts may be associated with magical powers, religious ceremonies etc.]*

◆ people used all that was needed for their lives from natural materials such as fibre, grass, leaves, mud, stone, cane, bark, and wood and these were also used in expressions of the arts *[choices and judgements associated with the arts applied to the use of materials – often as part of overlapping and intertwined play and movement expressions (including arts) within cultures]*

◆ exchange and trading of materials such as ochre, manufactured items, dances and songs across extended distances and through inter-group meetings were important aspects *[play and movement expressions were a part of, and integrated into, the full range of cultural and social processes]*

- ◆ oral cultures are preserved and perpetuated by means of the arts [*an oral society influences the way the brain thinks*]
- ◆ children naturally draw, sing, dance, and play with words, they also spontaneously like to make believe, dress up in costumes, and adorn their possessions and surroundings [*performing arts, as part of the arts, includes (but is not limited to): acrobatics; comedy; dance; magic; music; film; juggling; and, martial or fighting arts*]
- ◆ as well as aiding learning about the world, the arts are intrinsically motivating to the activity of learning itself [*engagement in the arts can reinforce probable success and this can incorporate or influence play and movement expressions within cultures*]
- ◆ a person engaged in the arts is aware of improvement achieved by direct effort [*much like an athlete perfecting a movement of skill*]
- ◆ the arts may be a positive way for people to delight in their own ability and achievements [*pleasure or happiness is also relevant to most play activities*]
- ◆ people are intrigued or excited by natural phenomena and natural forces (and seek to explain these in ways and through processes they understand and use), incorporating them into their creations, both actual (through the arts and in play and movement expressions found in cultures) and through imagination [*often there is little or no distinction between the arts and what constitutes games and aspects of a play and movement expressions within the culture*]
- ◆ the arts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures show preservation and adaptation as well as absorption of 'outside' influences and development of new forms and identity [*cultures are diverse and not uniform or unchanging*]

6.1. music and singing/chanting

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ music is a unique way of organising and making sense of sound [*people appreciate and value the aesthetic qualities of music and express feelings, ideas and identities*]
- ◆ includes whistling; singing and chanting; playing instruments; creating or composing music; performing, listening to and viewing performances; interpreting music in other art forms; combining music with movement; and, other art forms and reflecting on (and appreciating) music
- ◆ incorporates a full range of musical sounds from objects/instruments, made by a player, or arising from the environment [*music is a fundamental form of both personal and cultural expression → can manipulate pitch, rhythm, dynamics, harmony, timbre, texture and form to develop musical ideas and create musical works*]
- ◆ people respond to and participate in rhyme, mime, vocal play, singing, and moving to music as part of cultural expectations

6.1.1. musical instruments

some examples:

- making and 'playing' toy musical instruments such as gum leaf, reed whistle, flutes, seed rattles, shell trumpet, clap sticks, drums or miniature didgeridoo
- musical accompaniment provided or given by others while talking, singing, playing or dancing
- musical games using 'instruments' (e.g., dance around to improvised music made by players using clap sticks)
- hitting objects with other objects (e.g., hit sticks against trees etc. to make 'music'; walking around banging on pieces of tin for amusement)

6.1.2. playing with sound producing 'Instruments'

some examples:

- toy bullroarers [*where culturally accepted*]
- cracking whips
- percussion toys
- use of clap sticks or boomerangs

6.1.3. 'musical' or rhythmical sounds without 'instruments' or singing

some examples:

- making 'musical' sounds by laughing, flicking lip, yelling, etc. (e.g., calling out or 'cooeing' for enjoyment/ amusement; pretend crying for fun; whistling as a signal in play)
- clapping hands and clapping games (which sometimes might also involve singing, talking or making other sounds with a rhythmic component)
- imitate animal calls/sounds (e.g., owl, plover, dingo)
- using body or body actions (e.g., flatulence contests for amusement) [*farting for fun was commonly an activity of the men only*]
- 'rhythmic' coughing and other body actions (e.g., slapping body to make noise)
- purposeful yelling and stamping feet for amusement around small fires

6.1.4. musical sounds and singing

some examples:

- singing action songs (e.g., singing and performing actions while also using clap sticks)
- singing to the accompaniment of musical instruments (e.g., singing and dancing a fun corroboree with the sounds of a didgeridoo)

6.1.5. sounds from the environment without instruments and with singing

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ entertainment play with or without instruments and singing
- ♦ may be associated with listening and mimicry for entertainment or in play

some examples:

- listening to wind, water or other natural sounds as part of entertainment or as part of solitary play or a group game [*relates to education and may be associated with imitation of these sounds*]
- listening to animal sounds as part of a game or as a prelude to practice for mimicry

6.1.6. singing and whistling play

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ may be associated with singing of a narrative song in a game
- ♦ musical instruments are not used in association with the activities (but music, rhythm and imagination may be involved and intermingle in many other activities)

6.1.6.1. singing play songs

some examples:

- talking in 'rhythmical' manner and singing during games/contests (e.g., top spinning songs) <TSI>
- singing/chanting games (sometimes with musical devices such as clap sticks)
- rhymes and chants in play
- counting by singing in play or as part of play and games
- play songs – usually related to games or sung while playing (e.g., catching and throwing a ball while singing; adapted songs for use in chasing games; play 'increase' songs)
- action/game songs (often related to games such as string figures)
- use of play emotions in songs (e.g., sing with pretend anger, happiness, sadness etc.)
- conducting 'mock' arguments through songs
- comic dance songs
- singing work/hunting songs for amusement
- singing children's songs (e.g., secret children's songs, play love songs) or children making up songs in play (e.g., 'puzzle' type songs)
- singing songs in games which may include physical actions and other sounds (e.g., sing in 'ant-lion' imitation pinching game)

6.1.6.2. whistling in play

some examples:

- whistling a tune in play (sometimes to accompany others)
- whistling while taking part in general play – and perhaps also to end play
- whistling, singing and talking combined in play and with or without musical instruments to accompany

6.2. the visual arts

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ the visual arts in traditional cultures is based on conventions (and methods) and includes drawing, painting (including face and body art), clay (and mud) sculpture, constructions (using shells, wood, feathers, stones etc), textiles/fibre (using grass etc.), fabrics (such as possum skin pelts) as well as performance art [*the various forms are ways to communicate, learn about self, and help make meaning of the world*]
- ◆ in visual objects there are associations with shape, colour, and tactility and affect people [*often involved the use of different textures*]
- ◆ the visual arts is used for particular aesthetic, spiritual and practical purposes (such as constructing and decorating their environments and commenting on beliefs and values) [*much of the experience of the world is visual → stimulates thinking and feelings*]
- ◆ activities include paintings, stencilled handprints, and other markings on cave walls, engravings on bone, and moulded clay or carved figures [*reflect the traditions and modern day expressions of cultural groups*]
- ◆ the visual arts involve people making objects and images through which ideas, experiences and feelings are made tangible [*link social, cultural and spiritual action and belief and inform relationships with other people and the environment*]
- ◆ the visual arts reflects ongoing cultures by communicating information, promoting inquiry, expressing ideas and presenting challenges to evolve new art forms and technologies [*this is also associated with changes in games and activities that are relevant to the visual arts*]
- ◆ through performance arts there may be associations with some other movement actions or movement activities [*enhancement of body movement skills in many activities – visual symbols were also an important part of the performance through markings on the body etc.*]

- ◆ the visual arts can be associated with games and activities associated with self-fulfilment, pleasure etc. [*self-fulfilment is the natural pursuit and meaning of life*]
- ◆ artistic, rhythmic/musical and visual literacy development and spatial awareness evident [*people of all ages dress up, sing, dance, and do whatever painting or decorating of their belongings is customary*]
- ◆ the visual arts provides meaning in life that generally cannot be put into words so there is a need for the nonverbal, emotional experience offered by art [*complex ideas can be captured through metaphors in visual art*]

6.2.1. drawing, painting, decorating or displaying

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ◆ *drawing* is a means of making an image, using any of a wide variety of tools and techniques [*involves making marks on a surface by applying pressure from a tool, or moving a tool across a surface*]
- ◆ includes various forms such as drawing, performance art, sculpture with objects, carving etc. [*allows for the expression of personal and collective identities and the opportunity to tell stories*]
- ◆ incorporates artwork (including rock art) with different colours, styles and shapes including about games [*contemporary art expressions incorporating sporting themes are reflections of ongoing cultures*]
- ◆ people used the skins and bones of animals to serve as implements and tools and sometimes decorated them in play
- ◆ people often adorned themselves and their artefacts – including toys and playthings [*skilful work was often involved*]
- ◆ a sense of competence is developed through handling and making [*investigation of the material world is mainly with hands*]
- ◆ as with other areas of the arts there was no common artistic expression between the cultural groups evident in Australia
- ◆ visual art on the Australian continent, with the exception of rock art, was often conceived in a nomadic lifestyle [*practical, spiritual and ceremonial lives were integrated influences*]

some examples:

- use of coloured pigments to draw/paint or colour skin and/or make outlines of certain patterns on body in imitation of ritual dance preparations, for mock battle or play (e.g., players paint mud on each other or do 'body art' on others)
- paint/decorate ornaments or toys and playthings using ochre etc.
- make and decorate masks using a large leaf or pretend wigs with plants or bird nest
- making models out of clay of breasts and babies for imitation play
 - drawing in sand or on earth in various forms of play (e.g., gossip game with leaves and stick)
- cave paintings of play (e.g., wrestling and ball playing)
- carving/making and painting play objects, including balls, making string figures etc.
- making an art and play association (e.g., paint spinning tops with legendary figures of cultural significance) <TSI>
- charcoal and ochre drawings and stencils on rocks or in shelters for play (and/or ritual significance)
- body performance art such as in 'posing' or modelling of the body for enjoyment (e.g., imitate walks of people)
- 'artistic' representation of human actions in play (e.g., use of shaken ferns to imitate people walking)
- making shadows or shapes (e.g., form animal and bird shapes) using hands and/or other objects
- arranging rocks or other objects in play or as part of 'art' games (e.g., use stones to make/construct a miniature playground area) [*rocks and stones used for their beauty or sense of presence and power*]
- kinaesthetic artwork such as hanging items in trees for effect [*which move through the wind's energy*]
- ancestral designs carved and painted on shields

6.2.2. sand and earth modelling or sculpturing

some examples:

- sand and earth mounds (e.g., play modelling/sculpture of shapes such as a turtle etc.)
- sand modelling and storytelling combined

6.3. dance

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ dance is a fundamental expressive movement with intent, purpose and form [*dance communication is through movement and expressed through the body of the dancer → transform, communicate, and interpret ideas, feelings and experiences*]
- ♦ activities such as group dancing and rhythmic clapping promotes the development of a collective group identity [*play cultures often reflect and/or develop identities*]
- ♦ dancing serves as ritual, social bonding, cultural identification, a form of energy or stress release, personal expression and aesthetic experience [*dance can also used to describe methods of non-verbal communication (body language) between humans or animals, motion in inanimate objects, and certain musical forms or genres → dance functions as an essential component of artistic, aesthetic and cultural education*]
- ♦ dance includes developing a movement vocabulary, creating, learning and performing dances and linking dance to other art forms – including in play situations [*an appreciation of the history, culture and context of dances and dancing is also relevant*]
- ♦ rhythmic activities, dance and music (and sometimes singing and playing) activities were usually involved – but not always [*sounds, facial expressions, and movements are associated with rhythmic activities*]
- ♦ dance activities may be undertaken with or without music and/or singing [*people are inherently receptive to certain structural and performative activities*]
- ♦ various forms and styles were found in the various cultural groups, taking place in a

range of contexts for various purposes (and engaged in by people of all ages and expertise)

♦ *children learn about themselves and the world through dance → dance develops creative potential through physical, non-verbal expression*

♦ dancers must be as aware of their arms and hands as of their legs and feet (since hands are so expressive) [*dancers are both performers and the instruments through which dance is expressed*]

6.3.1. dance/rhythmic activities

some examples:

- play-about and 'fun' corroboree performances (e.g., parodies of daily life events; activities to amuse and improve the mood of people such as 'shake-a-leg' dance or thigh quivering)
- invented/created corroborees by children (e.g., football or 'battle' corroboree)
- various dance movements/play such as jump up, turn, stamp feet to music etc.
- moving body in rhythm and/or part of a dance to amuse self or as part of play (including copying actions of others)
- singing and dancing (e.g., performing actions/dancing while singing or making sounds)
- song and/or speaking 'duels' with dancing for fun
- corroboree contests (e.g., children's corroborees seen as a fun activity)

6.4. drama

some relevant points and/or concepts:

♦ drama is the expression of ideas, feelings and human experiences through movement, sound, visual image and the realisation of role [*real or imagined events are enacted by placing a role in a setting of time and space, where action (movement) and tension create a focus*]

♦ drama is essentially a noncompetitive, collaborative effort although 'competition' of some form may exist

♦ drama includes make-believe and dramatic play and is often child-driven and spontaneous

♦ drama involves dramatic play and games; verbal improvisation and improvised scenes; role playing; mime; vocal drama; poetry; storytelling; monologues and recitation; and, 'puppetry' [*drama permeated everyday lives and served a variety of purposes → helped to understand the world and contributed to individual, social and cultural identity*]

♦ drama not intended for an audience builds belief in roles and situations while drama for an 'audience' may have formal and informal settings

♦ communication in drama involves performers and audiences in interpreting meanings and developing skills of critical judgement

♦ drama is integral to children's play and is found in the oratory, rituals, ceremonies and celebrations of ongoing cultures [*drama both expresses and is defined by the culture from which it emerges*]

6.4.1. acting contests

some relevant points and/or concepts:

♦ activities may be undertaken with or without dance, music and/or singing – or even talking

♦ includes acting out stories using combinations of speech, gesture, music, dance, sound and spectacle

some examples:

• story and acting contests (e.g., imitation emu stalking game/dance which may have 'judges') [*may involve negotiating, interpreting and reflecting on role and meaning in performances*]

6.4.2. storytelling as performance

some relevant points and/or concepts:

♦ related to and integrated with various other areas of cultural practices such as talking/oration (including in play and ceremonial activities)

some examples:

• storytelling (including contests) for amusement by adults to children [*children may also tell stories to adults to better understand the nature of storytelling*]

• making up and telling stories with dramatic interpretations (including miming and acting)

6.5. media

some relevant points and/or concepts:

- ♦ media technologies are used to construct representations about real and imagined experiences *[various factors such as financial considerations, legal aspects, technology uses and organisation influence the nature of media produced, how audiences are engaged and the ideas and perspectives displayed and the cultural values represented]*
- ♦ media includes television, film/video, photography, sound recordings, radio, print media and digital or new media *[media has had an ongoing role in recording or documenting play and movement expressions within cultures in specific social, historical, political, economic and institutional contexts → engage with cultural knowledge]*
- ♦ may incorporate audience interaction with media representations *[represent people, objects, feelings and events]*

6.4.1. media products

some examples:

- posing for photographs or being photographed while playing *[photography fits visual arts as well as media category]*
- being recorded singing songs while playing with spinning tops <TSI>
- playing games for the purpose of being filmed *[historical record of games culture]*
 - films based on modern sport and role of indigenous people *[sports of ongoing cultures]*
- play and movement expressions as part of culture representations in museums etc.

* Special thanks to colleagues Dr Margaret Baguley and Dr David Cleaver for their insights and suggestions with regards to The Arts.

Conclusion

The original inhabitants of Australia ... had their own traditions of sport. There were many forms of physical contests when bands met: wrestling, spear-throwing contests, sham fights, primitive forms of football involving possum-skin balls, spinning discs and stick games.

Cashman, R. *Paradise of Sport: the rise of organised sport In Australia*. Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, Vic., 1995.

There is a record of cultural disintegration and loss of traditional games as a result of colonisation in 1788 of the continent of Australia, Tasmania to the south and the Torres Strait region in the north.

Traditional games are part of the cultural heritage or cultural expressions of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** and deserve to be studied in some detail. Cultural heritage, incorporating traditional games, is concerned with *memory, reflection* and the *transmission* of culture. The information presented in this publication is based on the understanding that there is not a *true traditional culture* that can be depicted or recorded either at a particular point in history or over a period of time – cultures are seen as ongoing and evolving (as part of a dynamic process).

The typology outlined has identified and recorded information that was researched on traditional games. For various reasons the proposed typology is not complete nor can it be considered to be entirely correct in all the areas outlined. It is expected that the proposed typology will generate interest from people studying traditional games to question aspects of the typology and suggest improvements and modifications that will make it a more useful reference.

It is acknowledged that there may be different perspectives by **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** about the notion of using a typology for examining traditional games. Despite attempts to present an acceptable way of examining traditional games within **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures** it is recognised that they may be significant differences between the approach taken and what may be seen as 'Indigenous Australian' ways to view and outline traditional games as part of cultures. There are always some risks involved in examining elements of cultures, such as traditional games, without a full outline of the context of individual cultures and associated cultural groups (and the nature of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures** as a whole).

Hopefully any criticism or different points of view about the proposed typology as a classification system does not detract from the overall benefits of highlighting and attempting to better understand traditional games as a component of ongoing **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures**. It is hoped that the proposed typology outlined might encourage further research into the role and nature of traditional games in **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures**.



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Appendices

Appendix 1: Representations of the various typologies/classifications of the traditional games of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples.

- **Categories of Games (Roth, 1902).**
- **Games and Toys (Haddon, 1912).**
- **Categories of Games (Love, 1983).**
- **Categories of Games (Kovacic 2011).**
- **Structure of the model employed to classify Aboriginal Games and Pastimes (Salter, 1967).**
- **Proposed typology of traditional games of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Edwards, 2011).**

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- 1. Imaginative Games**
 - 2. Realistic Games**
 - 3. Imitative Games**
 - 4. Discriminative Games**
 - 5. Disputative Games**
 - 6. Toys (Propulsive Games)**
 - 7. Music (Exultative Games)**
 - 8. Introduced Games**

Categories of Games (Roth, 1902).

- 1. Games of movement that develop and exercise the bodily powers.**
- 2. Games of dexterity and skill.**
- 3. Games of emulation.**
- 4. Games of imitation.**
- 5. Game of divination.**
- 6. Various Toys.**
- 7. String Figures and Tricks.**

Games and Toys (Haddon, 1912).

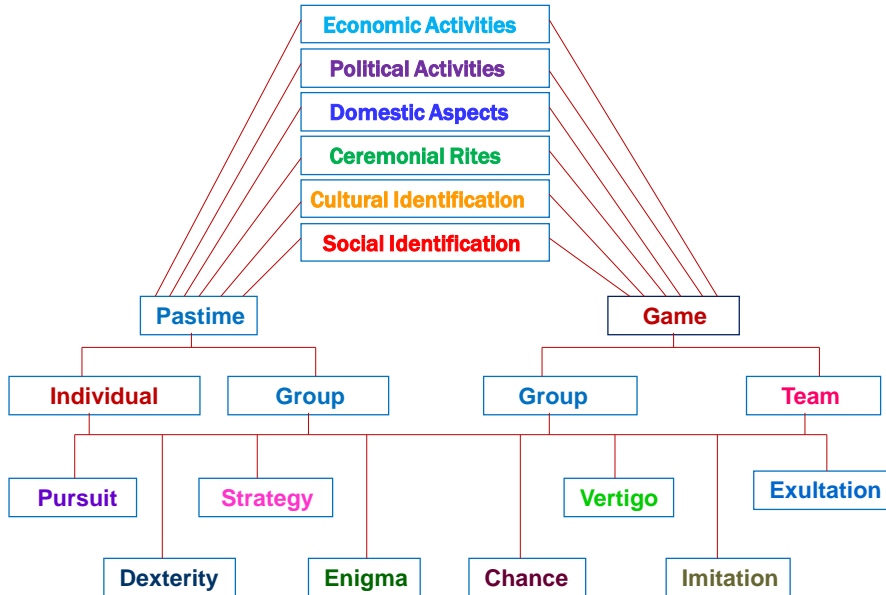
- **Imitative play and make believe**
- **Finger games**
- **Memory and guessing games**
- **Play with natural materials**
- **Play with animals**
- **Throwing and catching games**
- **Chasing and finding games**
- **Games with toys**
- **Singing and dancing games**
- **Story-telling play**
- **Verbal play**

Categories of Games (Love, 1983).

Games of Aboriginal people



Categories of Games (Kovacic 2001).

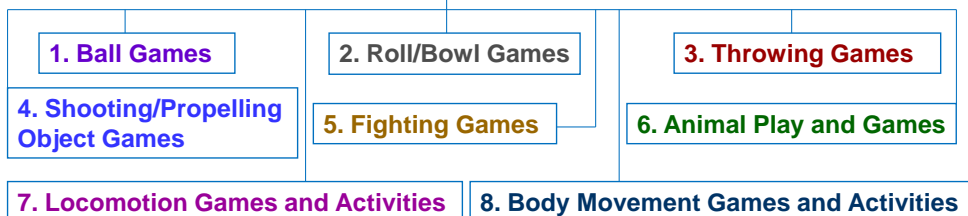


Structure of the model employed to classify Aboriginal Games and Pastimes (Salter, 1967).

Cultural Play and Game Traditions



Games and Pastimes



Proposed typology of traditional games of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Appendix 2: Games and Pastimes of the Australian Aboriginal. Major components outlined by Michael Salter.

Summarised from:

Salter, Michael A. 'Games and Pastimes of the Australian Aboriginal'. M.A. thesis, Department of Physical Education, University of Alberta, 1967.

1. Economic Activities	2. Political Activities	3. Domestic Aspects
<p>Pastimes Directly Associated with Economic Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual pastimes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tracking - tree climbing - toy canoes - pets • Group pastimes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - water birds - spear the prey - iguanas - tortoise - hunt the grub - find the minute 	<p>Pastimes Directly Associated with Political Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group pastimes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sham fights - inter-tribal tournaments 	<p>Pastimes Associated with Domestic Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual pastimes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dolls - granny - weaving • Group pastimes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - marriage - families - cooking - cracking beans
<p>Pastimes Derived from Economic Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual pastimes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shooting the petiole of the grass blade - the cross • Group pastimes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - honey gathering - bean tree - catching cookatoos (hands) 	<p>Pastimes Derived from Political Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group pastimes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - avoid the boomerang - water catch - mud fights 	
<p>Games Directly Associated with Economic Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hunting and guessing - climbing competition - coursing - crocodile - the iguana-claw - spear the disc 	<p>Games Directly Associated with Political Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - target and distance throwing - stick fighting • Team games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mock battle 	<p>Games Associated with Domestic Aspects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - firemaking contest - mungan-mungan
<p>Games Derived from Economic Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pit throwing - ducks and drakes - hide and seek - duck - hunt the eye - hunt the object - the returning boomerang • Team game <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rolling the boomerang 	<p>Games Derived from Political Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the kangaroo rat or weet weet - miniature throwing clubs - wrestling • Team games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intra and inter-tribal wrestling - tug-of-war 	

4. Ceremonial Rites	5. Cultural Identification	6. Social Interaction
<p>Pastimes Associated with Ceremonial Rites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual pastime - bullroarer • Group pastimes - opossum - spirits - koko - moon - burning skin - “play about” corroborees - tribal corroboree 	<p>Pastimes Associated with Cultural Identification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group games - art - sand drawings - story telling - singing - mimicry - march fly - ant-lion - shark - string figures 	<p>Pastimes Associated with Social Interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group pastimes - swinging - skipping - splashing - mud sliding - tobogganing - playing in the sand - “fireworks” - miniature “kali”
	<p>Games Associated with Cultural Identification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group games - emu - crocodile - lightning - memory training 	<p>Games Associated with Social Interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group games - smoke spirals - top spinning - spin ball - kolap - hand-ball - tip-cat - swimming and diving - plunging from a height - guessing game - ‘quivering’ - running

Tinderbeek tilletkerrin?
All done (with) play
(Language of the Western people of Victoria)

A Typology of the Traditional Games of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples



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