

# Remembrance of Things Past: Historical Commemoration in an Educational Setting

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## INTRODUCTION

On the eve of Anzac Day 2012, Julia Gillard, the former Australian labour prime minister, expressed her hope that the Centenary of Anzac would be “like the bicentenary” (Harris, [n.d.](#)). She spoke without irony, yet it was in part the “ideological vacuum” (Bendle, [2015](#)) at the heart of that celebration that made it clear, once and presumably for all, that Anzac Day was a less complicated and infinitely less divisive choice as a national day. Though the campaign against the Turks on Gallipoli which commenced for Australians on April 25, 1915, was ultimately a failure, it maintains a hold on the national consciousness that shows no signs of abating (Beaumont, [2015](#); Donoghue & Tranter, [2015](#)). Early commemorations could hardly ignore that the nation had fought in support of King and Empire, yet over time it increasingly became a celebration of Australian manliness grounded in the discovery of an imagined national character (Fischer, [2012](#)). In the modern context, the “spirit of Anzac” is now widely regarded as the “linchpin of Australian national identity” (Deane, 2002 cited in Fischer, [2012](#), p. 222). Its capacity to generate an “all-inclusive experience of Australian multicultural togetherness” (Fischer, [2012](#), p. 226) where once it had been the jealously guarded domain of the white Anglo Saxon male is indicative of the malleability that in part explains its enduring fascination (Seal, [2011](#)). Later experiences of war, even the brutal campaigns against the Japanese and the suffering of Australian prisoners of war, were seamlessly integrated into the broader Anzac narrative.

Yet for all this national certitude, or perhaps in some cases, national acquiescence, what form this commemoration might take in an institution such as

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St Joseph's Nudgee College, a day and boarding school established by the Irish Christian Brothers in Brisbane, Australia, was a complex question. The College, in collaboration with the St Joseph's Nudgee College Foundation was successful in being awarded a Queensland Anzac Centenary Grant during 2014. In 2015, it followed this success with an Australian Government Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund Public Grant in partnership with the University of Southern Queensland (USQ). The availability of such significant government funding brought into the open the question of how two educational institutions might balance their participation in a celebration of national virtues grounded in military history through an arts-based approach and the responsibility to interrogate the experience in an academically credible manner.

### BACKGROUND

In 1901, the separate British self-governing colonies agreed to federate and subsequently emerged as the Commonwealth of Australia. This had been precipitated by a growing sense of nationalism, particularly amongst native-born Australians. It was a process both informed and problematized by the strong links to the then British Empire and the view that Britain was "home". Twenty-five percent of the Australian population at the time was, however, Irish Catholic, and given their political and religious background, it is unsurprising that they were characterized as "a separate and disruptive group of immigrants" (Frances, 2011, p. 444). Denied their own priests and forced to practise their religion in secret until the 1820s, schools were in the vanguard of efforts to inculcate the importance of citizenship and to ensure Irish Catholic culture and religion survived. This was not a context-specific aberration, for as Southcott (2012, p. 43) observes, "nationalism is a pervasive and often unstated force in shaping educational systems". Beyond what is taught in the official curriculum, schools play their part in the creation of future citizens who are aware of the rights and duties inherent in being a "participating member of a political community" (Birrell, 2001, p. 25).

St Joseph's Nudgee College, an all boys' day and boarding school established in 1891 in the Edmund Rice tradition, commenced operations with an initial enrolment of 41 students. Though it drew its early enrolments from working-class Irish Catholics, it has now evolved into an elite educational institution with an enrolment of 1500 students. Kerby (2013, p. 13) argues that the Christian Brothers are pragmatists at heart who have engaged in Catholic education as "a statement both of religious affiliation and a shared commitment to social mobility". It is an intellectual inheritance that shaped the community's view of how to celebrate the Anzac commemoration. It was an institution founded with a clear agenda to act as a vehicle for the socio-economic advancement of a Catholic minority that felt itself disenfranchised and overrepresented in the lower classes. Nevertheless, the community was well aware that they were Australian and therefore members of an Empire in a manner different from the Irish in Ireland. Despite their strong links with Ireland, the Brothers inculcated in their students a strong commitment to the ideal of service in the

Australian national interest. Yet the support for an Imperial war was mixed, and it is not surprising, therefore, that the first mention of Anzac Day in the College annuals only occurs in the early 1950s, particularly as over 250 past students had enlisted for service during (WWI) with 53 fatalities. Later, as Anzac Day surged in popularity after the ideologically confused and ultimately unfulfilling celebration of the nation's bicentenary in 1988, the Annuals again reported on the commemorations in a manner that emphasized its integration into the broader life of the College and its core values.

As one of the oldest schools in Queensland the establishment of a College Museum in 2011 under the leadership of Dr Martin Kerby, the inaugural museum curator and archivist, was seen as an overdue recognition of the rich history of the community. Kerby had been teaching history at the College since 2000 and had authored several books documenting its military, sporting and cultural history (Kerby, 2002, 2011, 2014, 2015a). Kerby is acutely aware of the Irish Catholic tradition of the school but contends that it is “no longer a mono-cultural, insular environment whose members share a common Catholicity and an Irish cultural heritage based on shared assumptions and shared experiences” (Kerby & Baguley, 2010, p. 35). In his role, therefore, he was cognizant of providing a commemoration that would both honour the history of the College and also acknowledge and respect the diverse cultural heritage of the current school community. The Queensland Anzac Centenary Grant had broad parameters in relation to how the funding could be used, prompting Kerby to adopt an arts-based approach in order to provide a “corrective to the stereotypes that dominate our discussion of war and national identity”, one that would offer a distinctive point of difference (Kerby, Baguley, & Tuppurainen-Mason, 2016). This culminated in the creation of a six-panel textile artwork documenting the experience of past students from the College during WWI and a children's picture book illustrated by a final year visual art student at USQ and written by two female librarians at the College. The additional opportunities offered by the Australian Government Arts and Culture grant resulted in four large-scale dioramas, a sound and light show projected on the façade of the heritage listed buildings of the College and an exhibition of military memorabilia in the College Museum. The Centenary of the Gallipoli landing and the 125th anniversary of the College fell in the same year, a fortuitous coincidence that permitted a more authentic grounding of military history in the broader history of the College. A brief description of each grant outcome is provided in the next section.

## THE GRANT OUTCOMES: QUEENSLAND ANZAC CENTENARY GRANT

### *Textile Panels*

The panels are part of a broader historical tradition of marking seminal moments with commemorative textiles, one that permitted the exploration of a discourse less wedded to traditional masculine notions of history. The

six 150 cm (w) × 63 cm (h) panels were intended to raise awareness of their historical link to commemorative textiles and to provide an important counterpoint to the traditional masculine representations of the Anzac virtues—courage, integrity, resilience, mateship, teamwork, duty and sacrifice (Queensland Anzac Centenary Grants Program, 2014). They also give voice to the female contribution to WWI through the use of textile techniques and by the inclusion of women’s involvement where appropriate.

### *Children’s Picture Book*

The 32 page children’s picture book was the result of a collaboration between two Nudgee College librarians who wrote the text and a final year visual art student at USQ who created the 16 illustrations. Designed to appeal to primary school students, the book tells the story of two Nudgee boys who enlist after leaving the College and who subsequently served overseas. The illustrations are both literal and symbolic, drawing on both the familiar and unfamiliar, satisfying those who favour traditional modes of representation and those whose tastes are more eclectic. The original artworks from the book were exhibited on the showcase evening.

## THE GRANT OUTCOMES: AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ARTS AND CULTURE PUBLIC FUND GRANT

### *The Dioramas*

Four large-scale dioramas representing Gallipoli (1915), Amiens (1918), North Africa (1942) and Papua New Guinea (1942) were created for the Australian Government grant. Each campaign was chosen for its historical importance, its significance for Australian society and the participation of past Nudgee students. The dioramas covered 27 m<sup>2</sup>, used almost 500 figures, 40 vehicles and aircraft and consumed an estimated 24 L of Poly(vinyl acetate) (PVA) glue, 25 kg of sand, 6 kg of grout, 4 kg of plaster and 2000 plastic sandbags. Though this activity appeared to one College leader as something from “left field”, the dioramas were in fact inspired by those at the Australian War Memorial which have long been considered national treasures. Charles Bean, the official historian and inaugural director, conceived of them as a fusion of art and history which would help “people in Australia to understand the devastation and danger of battle, and the sacrifice and sufferings of the people to whom the Memorial is dedicated” (Australian War Memorial, n.d.).

### *Sound and Light Show*

The evening Sound and Light Show held at the College on October 24, 2015, was the grant outcome that generated the most enthusiasm at a community level. The use of the Italianate style facade of the original 1891 building, the vital presence of the College’s resurgent music department and the enthusiastic

participation of the events manager/head of the audio visual department ensured that it captured the imagination of the community. This outcome involved collaboration between many different sectors and was framed by a script that contextualized the war experience of past Nudgee students in the broader narrative of the College's 125th anniversary.

### *Exhibition of Military Memorabilia*

In addition to a growing collection of cultural and sporting memorabilia, the Nudgee College Museum has a number of significant pieces of military memorabilia. As students viewed the dioramas, they could also learn about related objects such as uniforms, medals, diaries, crockery and photographs. In addition, Kerby ensured stories of past students and their military service were prominently displayed for the student body and wider school community.

Although the five projects were distinct, they were also interrelated through their shared educational purpose of informing students about the Anzac Centenary Commemoration in a way which promoted "thinking citizenship" (Southcott, 2012, p. 55). Underpinning the projects was the educational opportunity to engage the students and broader school community in a conversation about the Anzac legacy. The project team sought to provide spaces for discussion about the values that underpin the desire to defend and protect and to provide the students with male role models at a formative time in their lives (Keddie & Mills, 2007; Lingard, Martino, & Mills, 2009). The arts and cultural activities provided another avenue for those students who may have difficulties with literacy to engage in an auditory, visual, spatial, social, aural and physical way with the events being depicted through outputs from both grants (Barton, 2014; The New London Group, 1996). Both grant bodies gave permission for the outcomes to be showcased together.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### *Methodology*

The arts are inseparable from broader social contexts and should never be portrayed as neutral or universal (Mahon, 2000), although they have traditionally been used to share information between generations (Huss, Kaufman, Avgar, & Shuker, 2016). Beaumont (2015, p. 543) cautions against using hegemonic narratives, including those connected with national stories such as Anzac Day, that can "exclude alternative versions of events". Therefore, utilizing the arts and their "unique symbol systems that convey meaning in a variety of ways" allows for "personal expression and the sharing of knowledge, ideas, feelings and emotions in a range of modes" of particular relevance to the educational sector (Jeanneret, 2009, p. 15). As Harris and Ammermann (2016, p. 105) note, "the strength of both creativity and arts engagement in education has always been its diversity and multiplicity". Ewing (2010, p. 47) posits that "critical engagement through arts processes can help us to see things from

a different perspective and suggest connections between different phenomena that were not previously recognised". Eisner (2002) argues that it is not possible to convey the full range of human experience through only one or two forms of representation. Jeanneret (2009) concedes, however, that "some aspects of human experience are simply better expressed through some modes than through others" (p. 15).

The importance of the arts in fostering a sense of community and cultural citizenship was one of the findings in Bamford's (2006) global study on the impact of the arts in education. In addition, she found that "quality arts education within schools can lead to social, economic and educational improvements within communities" (Bamford, 2006, p. 122). Wright (2003, p. 33) argues that schools have their own "social and political character and set of values and policies" and therefore society must "articulate a philosophy of education that concentrates on what we consider *worth passing on* to future generations" (p. 301). The symbolism and imagery prominent in both the yearly marking of Anzac Day and the current Centenary commemorations "permeate[s] all aspects of Australian community life" (Crotty & Stockings, 2014, p. 582). The opportunity, therefore, to engage the school community through the arts in an exploration of the Anzac legacy was one which was enriched by the multimodal nature of the arts.

This focus also complemented the Australian Government's aim to provide funding for grants specifically related to arts and culture. The objectives of the Australian Government Arts and Culture Public Grants Program are (Australian Government, n.d.):

1. Empowering communities, individuals, organizations and artists to commemorate and remember their own history of service and sacrifice through high quality arts and culture activities.
2. Ensuring communities have the opportunity to access and contribute to quality arts and cultural activities that commemorate the Anzac Centenary across the duration of the commemorative period.
3. Encouraging Australian artists to explore a wide range of themes, and engage and educate audiences about the experiences, values and emotions of the men and women involved in Australia's military past in powerful and diverse ways.

The grant outcomes used the arts in ways that were both relevant and authentic to the school and wider community.

In order to undertake this research, a range of data were collected in order to "understand events from the viewpoints of the participants" (Burns, 2000, p. 11) using naturalistic investigative methods. A qualitative approach that utilized semi-structured interviews, anonymous surveys, observations and visual documentation was employed. The range of evidence that it generated facilitated a site-specific case study. Case study's distinctive strength is being able to deal with a variety of evidence, such as interviews, surveys and observations, to ensure that a diversity of voices are represented in the research (Best & Kahn, 2006). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 253) contend that

case study provides a “unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand the perceptions of a group of people more clearly than simply presenting them with abstract theories or principles”.

Ethical approval was sought and granted from the university’s ethics department (Approval No: H15REA022) in addition to relevant school sector permission. For this chapter, we have utilized data gathered from a school-wide survey and interview data with key personnel involved in the evening sound and light show.

### *School-Wide Survey*

The anonymous school-wide survey distributed electronically through Survey Monkey was comprised of the following nine multiple choice questions with one short response question. The questions sought to provide insights into prior knowledge of the Anzac Centenary Commemorations amongst the school community, awareness of the five projects being undertaken at the College and understanding of why the College was commemorating the war service of past students.

1. Do you identify as a primary student; secondary student (Grade 7–10); senior secondary student (Grade 11–12); teacher; administrative staff; or other (please describe).
2. How long have you been at St Joseph’s Nudgee College? 1–2 years, 3–5 years, 5–10 years, 10–15 years, more than 15 years.
3. If you have visited the Nudgee College Museum which section or sections do you like the most? (You can tick more than one box)
4. If you have seen the Honour Boards (near the Chapel) at Nudgee do you know who they represent? Choose one of the following: past students who received the top mark in their grade, past students who excelled in sport; past students who saw military service, and past students who died during military service.
5. What does the word Anzac mean? Please choose one of the following: Australian and New Zealand Automotive Corps, Australian and New Zealand Army Camp, Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, and Australian and New Zealand Ancillary Camp/ or N/A
6. Choose one of the following to describe what the Centenary commemorates: the Centenary celebrates 100 years since the creation of Anzac biscuits, the Centenary marks 100 years since the commencement of WWI, the Centenary marks the day Australian soldiers travelled overseas; and the Centenary celebrates the creation of the Australian and New Zealand flags/ or N/A
7. If you are aware of the Anzac commemoration events happening at Nudgee College, please tick the ones you have heard something about (you can tick more than one answer): commemorative embroidery, children’s book, diorama displays, museum exhibition, and/or sound and light show.



8. Do you have any relatives or family members who have seen war service?  
Yes, no and not sure.
9. Why do you think it is important for Nudgee College to commemorate the war service of past students: (short response).

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

The semi-structured interviews were based on the following six questions which allowed for further scope if needed:

1. How did you hear about this project?
2. What is your role in the project?
3. What experience/expertise do you bring to this project?
4. What do you know about the wartime experiences of the Nudgee College community?
5. What excites you about this project?
6. How is your part in the project progressing?

The interview data were then analysed using thematic analysis. The researchers individually read the interview transcripts to search for patterns in the data which they then grouped into themes and compared results. Some themes were merged during this process whilst others were renamed or deleted. The predominant themes emerging from the data were then agreed upon: collaborative leadership, ideological considerations and the transformative potential of the arts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following section will discuss the results of the school-wide survey, open responses and the interview data.

Although the school-wide-survey response was initially disappointing it became apparent that this reflected the intense time pressures confronting both teachers and students at this time of the school year. There were 125 respondents to the survey with the majority coming from the primary school. The first question elicited the following responses:

<i>Do you identify as a:</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>%</i>
Primary student (years 5–6)	73	58.4 %
Lower secondary student (years 7–10)	34	27.2 %
Senior secondary student (years 11–12)	13	10.4 %
Teacher	4	3.2 %
Administrative staff	0	0 %
Other	1	0.8 %
Total	125	



The question regarding the areas of the Nudgee College Museum that the respondents favoured allowed for multiple areas of interest to be identified. Given the importance of sports at the College, it is not surprising that the dedicated rugby room received the highest rating with 80 of the respondents (64 %) nominating it first. However, the four large-scale diorama displays also received 80 responses which seemed to confirm the renewed interest in dioramas which the younger generation of digitally savvy students had not previously encountered. This was followed by the military history display with 65 (52 %) of respondents, the cultural history display with 45 (36 %) of respondents and the religious history display 18 (14.4 %) of respondents. Seven respondents revealed that they had not visited the Nudgee College Museum.

The survey then explored the extent to which the school community was aware of the Anzac Centenary. It utilized artefacts already at the College such as the Honour Boards which list the names of students who were killed in Australia's wars. The highest number of responses 47 (38.52 %) recognized that the Honour Boards were for past students who were killed or died of wounds or disease during the course of their wartime service and 32 respondents (26.23 %) were aware that the Honour Boards listed past students who went to war. In a sense, both responses indicate an awareness of the boards. The WWI Honour Board has enlistments with a small cross besides those who lost their lives, while the WWII Honour Board lists only those who were killed. The different approach was probably the result of space considerations given that the numbers of enlistments in WWII was more than five times greater than the earlier conflict. Surprisingly 33 respondents (27.05 %) had never seen the Honour Boards although they are next to the doorway of the Chapel which the students visit on a semi-regular basis. Nine respondents (7.38 %) believed that they listed past students who excelled in sport and one respondent (0.82 %) thought they were for past students who received the highest mark in their grade; the former was confused perhaps by the proximity of the Chapel entrance to the Main Oval and the later by academic awards being referred to as "Academic Honours".

When asked what the acronym ANZAC meant, 105 (84.68 %) respondents correctly identified Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. Ten students (8.06 %) checked Australian and New Zealand Army Camp. Six respondents (4.84 %) were unsure, two respondents (1.61 %) thought the correct response was Australian and New Zealand Army Corps and one respondent (0.81 %) nominated Australian and New Zealand Ancillary Camp. The majority of responses indicated that although the acronym Anzac has entered the language as a word in its own right, the majority of respondents were nevertheless aware of its actual meaning.

The following question asked the school community to nominate the significance of the Centenary. Eighty-seven respondents (70.73 %) correctly identified that the Centenary marks 100 years since the commencement of WWI. The next highest response was from 17 (13.82 %) respondents who ticked that they were not sure of the correct response. This was followed by

16 (13.01 %) respondents who thought the Anzac Centenary marked the day Australian soldiers travelled overseas. Two respondents (1.63 %) thought it celebrated 100 years since the creation of Anzac biscuits with one respondent (0.81 %) who thought it celebrated the creation of the Australian and New Zealand flags.

The next question asked respondents if they were aware of the commemoration events happening at the College and if so to nominate which ones. Given the timing of the survey which occurred at the beginning of the grant, 69 respondents (57.02 %) said they had not heard of any of the events. This was followed by 39 (32.23 %) respondents having heard about or seen the diorama displays and museum exhibition. This would have been helped by the fact that the diorama process had begun several months before the College was officially informed they had been awarded the grant. In addition, the school year is punctuated by a series of ritualized gatherings that mark the progress of the school year, ranging from opening masses, sports days, cultural events and graduation masses and dinners. There is a tendency to deal with each one in turn, with the focus only shifting to one after the preceding one has occurred. This created challenges in promoting the grant outcomes in the midst of preparations for functions equally as important to other sections of the College as the Centenary commemorations were to the grant team. The next highest figure was 25 (20.66 %) respondents who had heard about the evening sound and light show which had just been advertised through the school magazine and newsletter. Seventeen (14.05 %) respondents had heard about the children's picture book which had also been advertised through the newsletter with the commemorative textile panels receiving 7 (5.79 %) responses. It was felt that due to the overwhelming numbers (over 1000 attendees) on the night the survey certainly enhanced community awareness of these events.

The final multiple choice question asked whether the respondents had any relatives or family members who have seen war service. Eighty-six (69.35 %) respondents replied in the affirmative with 24 (19.35 %) unsure of this information and 14 (11.29 %) replying in the negative. This appeared to correlate with the response rate for the final open question which asked why the respondent thought it was important for Nudgee College to commemorate the war service of past students. There were 114 (91.2 %) responses with 11 (8.8 %) respondents skipping the question. The responses were predominately supportive of the College's desire to commemorate the Anzac Centenary with a high number of integrated responses referring to the importance of recognizing the service and sacrifice of past students, acknowledging that Australia may not have the freedom it enjoys today without their service and sacrifice, to show gratitude and respect, and to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. The uniformly respectful and positive response to this question appears to suggest that the Anzac legacy is well known to the student community, particularly given the large number of respondents with relatives who had seen military service. It also hints at how unassailable the Anzac narrative has become. In

a secular age, it has become an article of faith that often appears to transcend sectarian, class and racial divides.

The survey results provided an important preview snapshot of the school community's understanding of, and engagement with, the Anzac commemoration. The positive and mature nature of the responses provided us with important information in relation to how the grant outcomes would be presented. These decisions made with key members of the school community involved in various sections of the grants are discussed in the following section. Italics have been used to denote the direct voice of the interview participants.

### *The Sound and Light Show*

The evening Sound and Light Show held at the College on October 24, 2015, was consistent with the College's penchant for large, ritualized gatherings, ranging from liturgies to whole school cheering practices in the main grandstand. It nevertheless offered a variation on the theme different enough to promise a unique experience. The music department and particularly Mr Brett Foster and Dr Robert Keane brought their extensive experience and expertise in musical productions to this part of the project. Their knowledge of music from various periods (Keane WWI and Foster WWII and later conflicts such as Korea and Vietnam) facilitated an important connection and synergy that ensured the authentic integration of the "sound" and the "light".

Ewing (2010, p. 47) argues that "a community's habits of thinking, seeing and behaving can be transformed through active participation in creative processes, debate, identification of divergence and so on, to produce new ways of seeing, knowing and acting in the world". It was the desire to participate in just this type of creative process that explained why providing an artistic perspective to the Anzac Centenary Commemorations was enthusiastically embraced by the College community. The College's motto "Sign of Faith" underpins the College's sense of self which is reflected in its desire to remain true to its spiritual foundation and to encourage the very best qualities in its students. This attitude also informed the leadership of the project manager Dr Martin Kerby who recalled: "Years ago a colleague offered the advice that one should always work with the best people because they make everyone around them look good. It has been my privilege to have worked with the very best the community has to offer" (Kerby, 2015b, p. 29).

The following section discusses themes which arose from the interviews undertaken with key members of the school community involved in the evening sound and light show.

### *Collaborative Leadership*

Although the approach to both grants was underpinned by a desire to work with the school community in a collaborative manner, the sheer complexity of orchestrating such a large event as the showcase evening necessitated someone who had oversight of both grants and was able to work within the school and

university context. The role of “boundary spanner” (Ryan & O’Malley, 2016) was undertaken by Dr Martin Kerby who in addition to being employed by the College is also a sessional lecturer at USQ. Ryan and O’Malley (2016, p. 2) argue that boundary spanners play an important role in knowledge exchange and in “building effective personal relationships as well as demonstrating an ability to manage in non-hierarchical decision environments through negotiation and brokering”. Kerby worked extensively with the music and audio visual department to create the sound and light show as well as liaising between the various departments, the USQ and external organizations.

A collaborative leader recognizes how to build upon the strengths of members of the team and is able to utilize the social connections they have established. Kerby sought out the musical expertise of Brett Foster and Robert Keane who both had well-established careers outside of the College and had for some time been working on establishing the reputation of the music department in an environment which historically had placed greater value on sporting triumphs. As the project progressed, Foster revealed that his initial perception changed. *Originally I was thinking it would be just a music role, but really in the end it’s a collaborative team effort with anything like this because you have to take into account all aspects of the project.* Foster and Keane also provided important input into the script because as Foster noted *the music has to help tell the story.* The personal and professional networks that both musicians had established gave them access to expertise for both the rehearsals and on the evening. As Foster noted:

The other challenge, of course, is I’m working with students and our boys here are very capable, but they’re not professional musicians. Certainly I’ve got staff members and I’ve got some community members that are sitting in to help, particularly in instruments I don’t have. Being a boys’ school flutes are really hard to come by! So I’ve got some teachers and friends filling in and, as I said, working collaboratively with the boys.

This emphasis on the collaborative aspect of the grants was echoed by Raoul Carmody, the events manager and audio visual crew manager, who was the link between the College, the graphic designer and animator:

So it’s getting the story onto the building is a challenge in itself, because the building is amazing, but there’s not a lot of flat spaces ... That it itself has been a creative challenge. We’ve had some really, really good inspiration on there and some really good teams working with us to make that work.

Carmody was also able to draw on the expertise of the “AV Crew” in addition to past students who are now forging careers in the audiovisual industry. His previous work with the graphic and animation designer was also beneficial as he was aware of the quality of his work and could oversee the creation of a sound and light show as it was envisaged by Kerby.

A professional voice artist was employed to provide the narration with a rich Irish accent to emphasize the Irish Catholic heritage of the College. This recording session, attended by the music specialists, audio visual specialist and project manager, provided a rich example of collaborative “give and take” as various parts of the script were reworked and different emphases placed on words and phrases. The recording was then used as the structure to which visual images and sound effects were added. The compilation of visual images by the audio visual specialist and project manager were also discussed and debated at length until the final version was collaboratively agreed upon. The number of specialists involved in the music and animation portion of the grant, some of whom were only very loosely connected with the College, loomed as a potentially problematic issue. Yet in reality it proceeded almost seamlessly as each individual was by experience and temperament open to an authentic collaboration in which respect for personal expertise was the defining characteristic.

The success of the collaborative relationship and the distributive leadership style demonstrated by the key people involved in the sound and light show evening was also underpinned by mutually beneficial outcomes for all. These included a successful evening with good attendance from the school community for Kerby, a chance to profile and celebrate the expertise of the school choir and orchestra through a high-profile event for Foster and Keane, and the opportunity for Carmody to be involved in an event which he had been working towards for a number of years in order to showcase the expertise of the audio visual crew.

### *Ideological Considerations*

As noted from the survey which was conducted at the beginning of the grant and in parallel with planning for the sound and light show, the school community as a whole were positive about commemorating the Anzac Centenary. Due consideration was therefore given to sensitively presenting the early history of the College and the tensions between its strong links to Ireland, the service and sacrifice of past students, those presently serving and its strongly multicultural modern incarnation. Kerby acknowledged the importance of recognizing the past students who had made the ultimate sacrifice both as a collective group and as individuals by including their photographs where possible during the evening. He noted that in a small community such as the boarding school was in 1914, the loss of so many students would have been keenly felt:

We have a rich, and at times tragic, connection with the Australian military. We had boys serve in the Boer War. We had 53 killed during the First World War out of 250 who enlisted and subsequently served overseas. We had 103 killed during the Second World War, 75 of them in the Royal Australian Air Force, and we had a student killed in Vietnam in 1968.

When asked about the extent to which the Australian Government was seeking to broaden the scope of the Anzac Centenary by promoting grants which uti-

lized the arts, Kerby questioned whether it was a reinterrogation or an opportunity to be more inclusive.

There's a natural push for the arts and culture on its own terms but there is also a sense that it is a corrective. I'm not sure how profound a reinterrogation they're looking for. I think sometimes what you get with a national myth is not so much an interrogation of it, it's an attempt to bring wider groups of people into the myth of a national identity born in war by heroic, laconic diggers who are anti-authoritarian and who possess innate leadership skills. These stereotypes are not inclusive ... They cut out half of the population, the women, immediately, although the nurses are allowed to be part of it. They cut out Indigenous servicemen, the few that were able to serve. They cut out the short, the lame, the pacifists ... for a national myth, like all myths, doesn't include everyone within its parameters. So much of the interrogation of the Anzac myth is actually about making as many people as possible part of it, or more correctly the imagined national community, by trying to make it more inclusive.

In keeping with wider societal developments, the responses to the grant outcomes did not occur in a vacuum, for school culture is a complex web of traditions and rituals built up over time and is “determined by the values, shared beliefs, and behaviour of the various stakeholders within the school's community” (Carpenter, 2015, p. 682). This recognition of the importance of context is supported by Southcott (2012, p. 53), who in speaking of music education in schools, argued that “whilst there is still nationalistic pride there is also a recognition that the national identity is now one of cultural plurality in which diversity should be celebrated and should be part of the education of children”.

As is evident in the survey results, there is a recognition of the importance of the Anzac narrative and of history in general even when knowledge of that history is piecemeal. A year 5–6 student, perhaps speaking for his classmates, observed that

Nudgee has a long and important history with many old boys serving in the armed forces. Current students can feel at times they don't have a connection to our war veterans. Visiting the Nudgee Museum can show them about the history of all the Nudgee war heroes. (Student Survey Respondent #99)

The importance of connecting with the history and heritage of the College and the use of the word “heroes” emphasized the importance of ensuring the evening sound and light show was “good history”, a contested concept in itself, while also being a respectful celebration of the important virtues exemplified through the Anzac legacy. Foster recognized these twin responsibilities when he observed that through the music and the script it was important to consider *the significant points in both our history and the history of Australians at war and just trying to find things that we felt connected to those things that an audience of today would connect to.*

Carmody felt that people would probably be surprised by the content of the sound and light show, but he was also well aware that he was actively seeking an emotional as well as an intellectual response:

Things they didn't know about Nudgee, things that they had heard rumours about Nudgee will be more told truths and experiences will be displayed. I hope that what they take away from that is a sense of pride and more engagement in what Nudgee's about and what Nudgee can be about.

Though Carmody was confident that some of the story might “surprise”, the insider perspective which the participants had of the school, culture was an important consideration when assessing what and how the subject matter would be presented. The ideological tensions between the Anzac history and its mythology and the College's Irish Catholic history required the content to be both historically accurate and educational yet cognizant of the politics of public memory.

#### *Transformative Potential of the Arts*

The key people involved in the sound and light show have all worked in areas of the arts and were aware of its ability to negotiate the complex task of presenting 125 years of history with an emphasis on the military service of past and current students. Kerby saw the sound and light show as *a particularly effective collaboration between history and spectacle*. Carmody described how the audience will be *taken through quite a journey*. *The soundscape that one of the audiovisual students has put together to complement the voiceover and the orchestra is going to induce a lot of emotion through people, especially people involved in war*. The College was not breaking new ground entirely, for as Sumartojo (2015, pp. 267–268) observes, the Australian Anzac Day Dawn Service similarly includes the use of sound and light to “thicken and emphasize the narrative of loss, grief, reflection, commemoration and national identity” moving participants “through a range of affective states linked to a specifically national narrative”.

Foster discussed the powerful effect of music and its role in the sound and light show:

Music is a powerful tool for communicating emotional content. It is also innate, for our body is hardwired for music in the same way we breathe and we move. It goes even beyond the personal for societies and institutions are immortalised by the culture they bequeath to future generations. Music is a vital part of that inheritance. In a project such as “The Sound and the Fury” I am reminded of a term used in the theatre that gets to the heart of what we are looking to achieve. Corporeal reality is the moment that exists between the audience and the performers. At that exact moment there is a connection with the story, that feeling of sadness or of joy when something happens to a character that we are invested in. When you then put music to vision and engage another sense, people cease being merely spectators. They are immersed in the narrative. Music also has a wonderful



capacity to transport us to a time and place. A few lines of a chorus or a piece of familiar music can instantly communicate to the viewer something about context.

This observation confirms Haidet et al.'s, (2016, p. 324) contention that the unique qualities of the arts promote rich learning experiences, including “the metaphorical and representational nature of the arts, subjectivity contained in the arts, the ambiguous and complex qualities of the arts, and the universality of the arts”. The meaning that the viewer takes from the artwork is informed by their cultural background and experiences in addition to the time and place where the work is encountered.

Anecdotal feedback from the College and wider community confirmed that the evening sound and light show had provided an important moment for both commemoration and celebration of Nudgee's 125 year history in a manner that was respectful, artistic and emotive. The event was live streamed and was later made available on YouTube<sup>®</sup> for members of the public who were unable to attend. A selection of the College's Facebook<sup>®</sup> comments also provides important input from the school and wider community:

—Absolutely Brilliant!! Congrats on a thoroughly enjoyable, educational and entertaining event!

Like · Reply · October 25 at 7:00 pm

—A spectacular evening—so much time and planning must have gone into it and all came together on the night despite the rain. So many wonderful people have passed through the College—our boys are in great company with the 10,000 brothers.

Like · Reply · October 25 at 8:35 pm

—Proud to be of the Nudgee family, have served in the Defence force and also be Australian. Thanks for sharing so those of us who don't live close can appreciate it. May everything offered here continue for beyond another 125 years.

Unlike · Reply · 1 · October 25 at 8:53 pm

In addition, the St Joseph's Nudgee College Newsletter (29 Oct, Vol. 38, No. 33) included a tribute from the Principal Mr Peter Fullagar that offered the grant team official sanction. His statement to the school community emphasized how the collaborative culture which resulted in this successful outcome was “shaped by shared and supportive leadership trust and respect for teachers as professionals” (Carpenter, 2015, p. 689):

Last Saturday evening's production—The Sound and the Fury—was a unique occasion for the large crowd who gathered on the front lawn of the College. In its 125 year history the Treacy building has never been the backdrop for such a spectacular event that not only celebrated our proud history, but also recognised the service of many Nudgee College Old Boys in the wars of the last century. For those who missed the show, it can still be viewed online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxCyADpI1sg>

Such an event requires significant planning and coordination as well as a great deal of hard work. I am grateful for the contributions of many people but particular thanks are extended to Dr Martin Kerby (College historian and museum

curator), Associate Professor Margaret Baguley (USQ) and Mr Raoul Carmody (Events and AV manager at the College). The music that accompanied the light and sound show was a credit to our staff and our students. We are particularly grateful for the efforts of staff members Mr Brett Foster and Dr Robert Keane, as well as the boys of the Orchestra and the Choir.

The evening sound and light show was a unique opportunity made available to the school community through the generosity of government funding and the unique combination of talented and passionate people whose understanding and appreciation of the transformative potential of the arts resulted in what Foster described as *creating a little bit of a legacy*. As the responses above reveal, the arts enabled a wide range of people to engage with the Nudgee College story and in the process the show provided a rich learning experience for all concerned (Eisner, 2004; Ewing, 2010; Gibson & Anderson, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

The opportunity for the school and wider community to encounter and engage with the 125-year history of St Joseph's Nudgee College through art-based approaches provided an important context for deep and inclusive learning through the arts (Eisner, 2004; Ewing, 2010). As Ewing (2010, p. 2) reveals, the arts can "act as a catalyst for personal and social transformation in schools and the community more generally". Another important aspect described by Aprill (2001, p. 26) is the "magic transfer" of areas such as the arts in which "learning in one content area magically generat[es] knowledge or skill in another content area". In this context, it is believed that the historical events depicted will continue to resonate much more effectively in the school and wider community because of the effective use of the arts in creating a sensory experience for the viewer.

Learning about history through the evening sound and light show allowed the viewer to experience the event in a sensory way and filter it through their personal experience. This was particularly important given the difficulty inherent in the interpretation of a national myth and the complexities involved in a collaborative process. At a practical level, the sound and light show permitted a simultaneous commemoration of the college's servicemen and filled a surprising void by also serving as part of the celebration of the college's 125th year. When Marcel Proust (1992) wrote that the remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they were, he might just as easily have been evaluating the central challenge of a commemoration of Australia's involvement in WWI.

Few historical myths continue to arouse such a deep and passionate response in Australian contemporary life as Anzac. Debate over the most appropriate form of remembrance is ongoing, while many people object to it being debated at all. Some argue that questioning is profoundly disrespectful of those who gave their lives. Others believe that without such a debate, Australian national identity

will be framed by an unquestioning acceptance of a national war story that is exclusive and based on a narrow representation of Australian achievement. (Lake, Reynolds, McKenna, & Damousi, 2010, p. 94)

This particular event provided an appropriate and reflective opportunity for the school community to both learn about and appreciate its history and the service and sacrifice of its past and current students and to consider their personal reaction to the Anzac legacy. The arts provided an important way to achieve these objectives and still allow the viewer to discover and create new meanings through the way they engaged with the Nudgee story.

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