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**BEYOND
RECONCILIATION
RHETORIC**

**AN EXPLORATION OF PERSPECTIVES
ON THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS**

by

Melissa Burgess

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**Bachelor of Health Science (Honours)
in (Aboriginal Health and Community
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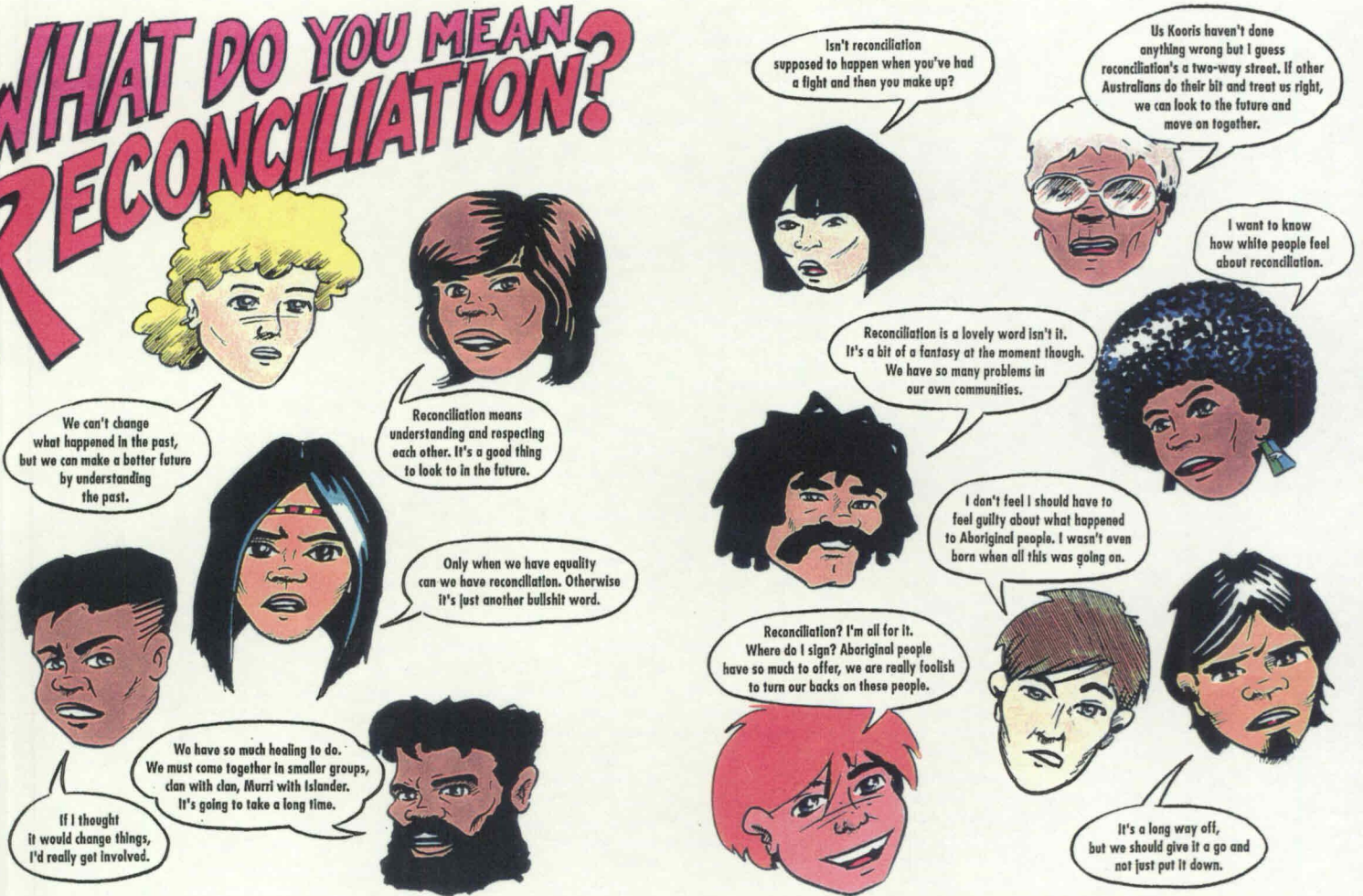
The University Of Sydney

1999

Approved by _____
Chairperson of Supervisory Committee

Date of Submission _____

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? RECONCILIATION?



colour plate 1
The Streetwise Project Committee.(1997)

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of the original research and has not been submitted for a degree to any other University or Institution.

Signed  _____
Melissa Janet Burgess

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank all of the participants who agreed to be interviewed and who played an enormous role in furthering my journey of understanding on the topics surrounding Reconciliation. Let it be known that without their participation, the richness and diversity of findings throughout the research would have been limited. It has been an honour to have had the opportunity to work with such people as ultimately these people I consider some of my greatest critics.

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Abstract

This thesis is looking at the many perspectives that are held by members of our community on the topic of Reconciliation. Views on Reconciliation have been seen thus far in very different lights, some very positive and some not so positive. A better understanding of what Reconciliation means from both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal viewpoints, provides us with a greater knowledge and further understanding of the politics impacting upon Indigenous peoples lives on a daily basis.

The thesis looks at the impacts of racism and its role in Reconciliation, it provides us with questions on ownership and motivations of those involved and forces us to look at ideologies to the likes of, one nation and issues of identity that currently face Australians. The thesis looks at both the positive and negative perspectives on Reconciliation and explores alternatives such as 'treaty', looking at the benefits of such alternatives in comparison with the Reconciliation Process.

The thesis looks at the questions of appropriateness of programs being implemented into Indigenous communities and encourages us to question not only the Reconciliation Process but also other strategies and that have been and are currently being implemented upon Indigenous communities that run on parallels to Reconciliation.

Thus the thesis attempts to bring about a greater understanding on Reconciliation to the researcher personally, yet it is with the hope and intention that this research brings about clarity to others who are also working towards forming their own understanding of what the Reconciliation process means, in its ideologies, processes and outcomes.

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1. Introduction

1.1. A Personal Perspective.

I have, throughout my life, held a steady interest in political issues in relation to human rights, equity and justice, particularly in relation to, this nations Indigenous peoples, and their relationship with non Indigenous Australia.

During my secondary schooling, with initial influence from family, and friendships with members of Indigenous communities, my studies enabled me to link my interest in Aboriginal issues with my HSC work. I was able to focus my interests in Indigenous issues, through the fields of English, Art and Aboriginal Studies. I carried on this interest by enrolling in short courses through the University of Sydney and Tranby College, these courses included, "Black in White Australia" and "Dreaming and Dispossession"

Through numerous years of living with constant media headlines about what is happening on the Reconciliation front and being involved in many of the happenings in our communities I remained confused about the real meaning of Reconciliation to Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people. The word has been rampantly used by media and pro active organisations such as Australians For Native Title And Reconciliation and Women For WIK, etc. However to many people it is a word that has been looked upon as being abused by people with little understanding of its true meaning.

After all these experiences I still see no outstanding improvements in society, in relations between Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal Australians. Improvements need to be real, not superficial. The process must bring about more than just, a 'feel good' community spirit. There needs to be genuine development in conditions Aboriginal people face, that there be improvements in the standards and levels of health ,housing, education , employment, and rates of incarceration, to name just a few areas that require attention in Aboriginal communities, ensuring that we do have practical outcomes as well.

As you can see, I have been interested in topics that surround Reconciliation for many years. Myself being non Aboriginal and working and studying amongst and with Aboriginal people, has led me to feel that there are differing attitudes in the community about the topic, which leaves me constantly struggling with contradictions about the definitions of Reconciliation. I would like to know what is factual, and to begin to understand how this impacts upon peoples thinking on the matters concerning Reconciliation, not what is being fed to us by a potentially biased media.

The referendum of 1967 not only brought about the right to vote for many Aboriginal people and acknowledgment of citizenship rights for Aboriginal people, it also gave Federal Government power to legislate over Aboriginal Affairs throughout the nation as a whole.

It was the Labor Government, under the Prime Minister at the time, Goph Whitlam (1972-75) who hesitated to create a national program for land rights, allowing the subsequent Liberal leadership of Malcolm Fraser (1975-83) to water land rights down, returning responsibility to the states thus freezing the process in all places except the Northern Territory and it was Bob Hawke (1983 to 1991) who after a promise of 'treaty' to Aboriginal communities in 1988 at Barunga , that later, could not manage to persuade his' and other parties to peruse an outright treaty. It is this series of events that lead to the introduction of the concept and policy direction of Reconciliation. Reconciliation became the catch word of the 90's in Aboriginal affairs. The government gave a life span of ten years , it intended the funding for the Reconciliation Process to conclude by 2001. This settlement on the Reconciliation process and not a treaty, was viewed by many Indigenous people as a turn around of government, in the delivery of social justice to the nations Indigenous population.

Bob Hawke's Barunga statement (June 13th 1988) promised a negotiated treaty between the Australian government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on behalf of all of the people of Australia with the premise that commencement of the treaty process would begin within the year and final agreement on the treaty would be before the end of his parliamentary life. Hawke failed to get agreement on the treaty with the Liberal government and factions of the Labor Party, and it was they who used

as a general defense, the rhetoric of one nation. As was stated by Andrew Peacock, leader of the Opposition Liberal Party at the time.

“ I don't understand, as a lawyer, how you can have a treaty with yourself. I start with the proposition that I believe in us all working for a united Australia, all people being joined together under one flag, under the rule of law operating as one nation: a whole multiplicity of backgrounds, of colour, of creed. Now if that is the case, how do you serve the purpose of a united community by suddenly embarking on a treaty within that country?”

(cited in Brennan 1991, p103)

This sentiment was then endorsed by John Howard while the Barunga statement was being made with Hawke, by saying ,

“The absurd notion of a nation trying to make a treaty with some of its own citizens could be quite horrendous”. (Late Line, 1991)

Hawke then went on to back away from his promised treaty and offered, with the new minister for Aboriginal Affairs Robert Tickner, a process of Reconciliation. Hawke went on to announce in order to appease opposition, ‘the assurance that’ it has never been in the Governments mind that the Reconciliation process lead to such an outcome as to what was intended by “treaty”. (Brennan F 1991).

From this rocky and tortuous beginning, and after years of political manipulation the exact meaning of Reconciliation has had multiple interpretations and this in turn has led to confusion. This thesis attempts to work towards identifying the different meanings of Reconciliation and in turn the reality of its implementation to the Australian community. The Council For Aboriginal Reconciliation uses a vision statement to work towards,

“A united Australia which respects this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equity for all”, (Council For Aboriginal Reconciliation, March 1999;24)

This may be seen as great potential to be used to gain for Indigenous Australians, enormous amounts of opportunity for empowerment and liberation, however it in turn may also be seen as part of the continued imposed colonisation process, that Indigenous people have been faced with throughout the events of history since 1788.

The title of the project is **Beyond Reconciliation Rhetoric: An Exploration of Perspectives on the Reconciliation Process.** My aim is to analyse and compare, the different understanding and beliefs about the process known as Reconciliation and to use these different views to construct an improved understanding of the Reconciliation Process, of what it's effects are and what it attempts to achieve. Foremost, this research will help me understand where I stand and of what my position is on the process known as Reconciliation.

In order to explore participants perceptions of Reconciliation, interviews attempt to discuss, the level of participants knowledge about Reconciliation, the source of their knowledge, their attitudes and opinions about the process and its name, the roles participants are currently playing in Reconciliation if any, and their view of the perception of the commitment that exists both at a personal and community level.

The Reconciliation Process was developed by non Aboriginal politicians. The relationship is thus seen, by many, to be non Aboriginal governmental policy. The answers to the questions I find myself asking, involve looking into whether this policy is put in place in order to work towards providing equality into basic human rights for Indigenous people, (equal to that of non Indigenous Australia) to look at the suggestion by a number of participants that it is this type of policy that contributes to the continuation in the power relationship that ultimately works towards benefiting the powerful.

We need to look at the issue of Reconciliation from different contexts, the context of those determining Reconciliation, those carrying out Reconciliation and those being affected by Reconciliation.

Chapter three looks into the structures surrounding racism and theories that have developed over history on race, and the reasons for their development in society and then the ways in which the manipulation of these ideologies occurred to create affect.

Chapter Four looks at the relationship of power structures and the connection to Reconciliation, by means of ownership in looking at who owns Reconciliation, questioning, is it government owned and therefore are we continuing in public support, to maintain the power dominant culture of the colonizers. Is it they, who over Indigenous people hold the rights to define or withdraw from participation in the Reconciliation Process. Is it they who ultimately determine relations between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australia.

Chapter Five looks at what effect, carrying out and taking part in the Reconciliation process might have, and does it in turn, promote the notions of assimilation and play a role in the continuation of the genocide of the Indigenous people of this nation. This work questions the practical outcomes and the side effects to the implementation of the Reconciliation Process.

Chapter Six pays respect to the recognition of culture that the Reconciliation Process brings and it considers the title of the process, It looks at consultation and its importance to the workability of programs in Indigenous communities.

Chapter Seven looks at what people may see as alternatives. It looks into the ideology of treaty and what this might present, the pros and cons for both Indigenous and non Indigenous peoples.

Chapter Eight Looks into issues of community support, the time frame of the Reconciliation Process, and a perspective on the importance of the celebration of diversity.

This thesis aims to contribute to the information already gathered and published on Reconciliation and to provide greater understanding of events occurring in our

community in regards to such issues, to bring greater awareness of the decisions that are being made on behalf of Aboriginal and non Aboriginal communities for the” benefit” of these communities as a whole, by both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal “leaders”.

It is in the hope that while this research occurs, that the development of this thesis will be of benefit to other people who may be struggling to understand the concept of Reconciliation themselves.

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The thesis attempts to analyse the Official Reconciliation Process and the paradox that is. It explores what it is that is at the heart of the people, (not government) that want this process to happen.

Interviews with participants were the means by which data was collected. This was the preferred method of data collection as it looked at obtaining information from a grass roots community base as well as from the source creators of the policies determining Reconciliation (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Speaking to people from various sectors of the community brought about clarification on the issues that surrounded differing perspectives regarding Reconciliation.

Interviews were recorded with the permission of participants, by means of Dictaphone, the recordings were then transcribed. The transcriptions were then analysed using qualitative research methods. Data was manually placed into codes according to recurring themes throughout all six interviews.

A literature review was undertaken, in the areas of Indigenous history, sociology, anthropology, social science, social history, ethnography and professional literature on Reconciliation.

In choosing the research methodology it was decided that I needed to use a design appropriate for meeting the requirements of my research question.

2.2 Selection Of Participants

Participants were chosen for interviewing by means of brainstorming with supervisors through various ideas about what information I was looking for, and what perspectives I needed. This brainstorming brought attention to the necessary directions I would have to explore in order to provide a variety of data sources and thus, attain quality information from the many varied viewpoints which are held by members of our

community. It was decided that it would be more advantageous to choose my participants rather than to have a random selection of people to interview. The chosen process ensured a level and a quality of data that may not be acquired otherwise. It was decided that I would interview people who were exposed to Reconciliation through their work, or interests, or affiliations. I would speak to people who already dealt with Reconciliation and had opinions and standing on the matter through what they did in their lives.

Six participants were sought (three Indigenous and three non Indigenous) to enable an even spread of viewpoints on the issue.

- The first participant (Indigenous) is someone that was known to me.
- The second person (non Indigenous) is someone I met through circumstance, they had a great deal of involvement in Reconciliation happenings and headed an organisation that promoted and supported the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.
- The third participant (non Indigenous) came from the world of politics, being a member of Pauline Hanson's One Nation.
- The fourth participant (Indigenous) is associated with the Reconciliation committee.
- The fifth participant (Indigenous) is an elder and someone who has been involved in the political movement on Aboriginal related issues throughout much of their life.
- The sixth participant, (non Indigenous) is a Social Scientist who has written extensively on the issues of Reconciliation.

2.3 Data Collection Method

Interview questions enabled the interviewer-

- 1) To begin to explore participants perceptions of what Reconciliation means to them.
- 2) To discuss, how much the participants know about the issue, and from where they obtained their information.
- 3) To discover if participants agree with the Reconciliation process and the name of

- 4) To find out what kind of role if any, participants play in the Reconciliation process.
- 5) To find out what kind of commitment exists towards the process and what is involved. (Do people care and what are they doing).
- 6) To help me understand my position on the subject, and of what my role is in the process of Reconciliation.

While waiting for confirmation of approval from The University of Sydney's Human Ethics Committee, preliminary plans were made about, selection of participants. The procedure for gaining agreement for participation from the interviewees, was by means of,

1. Contact through meeting and conversation,

Contact with participants was made through being in the right place at the right time, and through being at events such as the road shows that were conducted by the NSW State Reconciliation Committee.

2. Phone calls,

Participants that were known to the researcher through previous study and association were contacted by phone. Phone calls were also made to people who were unknown to the researcher. Phone numbers were obtained from directories through affiliation with organisations or political parties. Contact was also made to individuals the researcher had known of and admired due to their public profile, and through the exposure that the researcher had had to their work through previous studies.

3. Letters,

Letters were posted to individuals that the researcher did not know, requesting participation, however It was known that they had interests in the Reconciliation Process through their publicly professional associations (Appendix III).

4. On the advice of other persons, - snowball sampling,

Many contacts were made possible through other participant's the researcher had already spoken too. It was on the suggestion of another that the researcher speak to particular individuals due to their extensive knowledge and interest on Reconciliation issues.

5. Through means of email on the Internet,

This was achieved through writing personal messages to individuals when almost all other avenues failed, It was a way by which the researcher attempted to contact people as a last resort, and surprisingly it was successful.

In many instances I had to introduce myself, tell them where I was coming from, from which University I am associated with, what my objectives were, why I was interested in this topic and why I was interested in interviewing the particular individual.(Appendix III).

Interviews were conducted using the aid of audio equipment to record participants comments. Each interview was carried out in different settings, some in the homes of participants, and in various types of offices and workplaces that the participants belonged to. Some interviews incurred slight disruption due to the immediate surrounding environment that the interviews were conducted in and due to other external noises.

Interviews were informal and unstructured. The researcher had developed set question guidelines to work from, however in talking to different participants, with different perspectives it became evident that some questions were almost irrelevant and others more pertinent. This meant appropriating interview questions to accommodate the participant at the time, without straying from the research objectives while being cautious not to create bias in the data collection method.

2.4 Data Analysis

Tapes from interviews were listened to and transcribed manually. Each transcription was looked at for outstanding themes, these themes were developed into codes as they became recurring themes throughout the interviews. These codes later formed chapter headings and this in turn shaped issues to be discussed throughout the thesis (Glasser 1992).

“Flexible rules govern how one goes about sorting through interview transcriptions, observational notes, documents, and visual material. It is clear, however that one forms categories of information and attaches codes to these categories. These categories and codes form the basis of the emerging story to be told by the qualitative researcher (Creswell J W 1994, p 154).

2.5 Thesis Structure

The structure of this thesis was through the use of Narrative. *Qualitative research narratives present information in text or image forms (e.g., photographs, videotapes)* (Creswell 1994), and in this instance through stories and personal experience. The narrative approach enabled the researcher to attempt to remain true to the participants stories, their words and their experiences. A literature review was not incorporated in a formal sense. The literature is incorporated throughout the thesis and is used to support the participants comments.

2.6 Ethical Considerations.

Personal ethical considerations were taken into account as the study required the researcher to provide greater understanding through looking holistically at the topic area and to do this through truth and fact based on the impact that this policy is having upon Personal ethical considerations were taken into account as the study required the researcher to provide greater understanding through looking holistically at the topic area and to do this through truth and fact based on the impact that this policy is having upon Indigenous Australians.

Important considerations for this research include-

1. Conforming to ethics procedures in research of Indigenous communities.
2. Ethics in research to abide by the standard of The University of Sydney's Human Ethics Committee. (National Health and Medical Research Council 1991).

3. Providing valid data to assist in fulfilling the research objectives.
4. Attempting to ensure that the data adds significantly to the current body of knowledge.

The use of collecting qualitative data through interviews was decided upon as the best means to gather information which describe the participants perceptions of the Reconciliation experience and the way it impacts on their lives.

Proposals were sent to the University of Sydney's Human Ethics committee to gain Ethical approval. It was explained that interviews would be used in order to gain personal insights and a rich understanding of peoples perceptions of the Reconciliation Process (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Participants were assured on ethical issues,

1. That the confidentiality of data would be maintained,
In the understanding that information collected through interviews i.e., recordings and transcriptions, may be used in the thesis, it was agreed that names of participants would remain anonymous.

2. The right to privacy would be assured,
Privacy was assured, with participants being informed, that no one other than the researcher and the researchers supervisor would have access to the tapes and transcriptions. It is ensured for confidentiality purposes in accordance with The University of Sydney's Human Ethics procedures, that the storage of interview material will be kept under a locked file in the supervisors office at the University for five years.

3. That participants would remain anonymous throughout the study.
Anonymity was made possible through alternative means of reference. References to participants were always made as, Participant One, Two, Three, Four, Five, and Six.
4. It was insured also that all data collected would be for the purpose of the intended study.

These agreements were made through the Plain Language Statement (Appendix I), which promised to honor the statement, "*comments you make may be recorded in a*

thesis I am writing for my study". This statement requires a signature of agreement which is signed prior to the interviewing process.

5. Participants were provided with a Plain Language Statement that explained and outlined the study.

The above mentioned document, possessed a basic explanation of the researcher's needs and intentions and gave participants, information that provided them with the knowledge

of what their participation means and what their rights are in their role as "the participants" in the research.

6. It was explained that formal interviews would take place and that interviews would be audio taped. That these audio tapes would later be transcribed and the possibility of comments made during the interviewing process may be used in this thesis.

Participants signed a Consent Form (Appendix II), that explained the interviewing process and the means by which it would be recorded. Participants were informed that such recording of data may enable the research to use participant comments in the thesis.

7. Between participant and researcher, their was a commitment made to ensure that participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and the right to withdraw any statements they considered inappropriate or not for publication or submission, for whatever reason.

In participation there was agreement on the individuals rights throughout the entire project that participants through the Consent Form and Plain Language Statement, were ensured that they may have the final say prior to submission or any form of publication.

8. Information gathered throughout the interviews was ensured to be that of the participant, and contact numbers were provided if participants had any further questions, queries or complaints about the conduct of the research.

In stating in the Plain Language Statement, "*I consider that, information gathered throughout interviewing sessions, your information,*" I was attempting to ensure a

respect of participants words, as belonging to them.

Contact numbers were provided, these were numbers that governed the researchers behaviour throughout the process. (i.e. University Supervisor and Human Ethics Committee) This ensured honesty and provided a way for participants to feel at ease with what they were being promised as it guaranteed accountability on the researchers part.

3. Racism

My research has lead me to believe racism is the biggest barrier to equity and justice for Indigenous communities in Australia. This section begins to explore the roots of racism and how “true reconciliation” must be used to end racism.

3.1. Race as a Failed Concept

Racism as an ideology expresses social myths about other racial and ethnic groups. It devalues others, asserting and ‘explaining’ their inferiority or disadvantage in ways which blame the victim.Racism as an ideology thus furnishes common sense explanations about inequality, which distracts attention from the workings of those institutions which may systematically disadvantage people from minority racial or cultural groups .

(Pettman, J. cited in Hollingsworth 1998, p 58).

In order to understand racism we first need to comprehend its origins, how it is sustained and how such offensive behavior is legitimised in its application. Race is a construct that has been developed by society over centuries as defined by biological and social factors as a construct from science and society.

Tatz (1987), states,

Race was conceived by physical anthropologists and anatomists as a classificatory term for physical anatomies.(p 33).

In the past, society has seen race as biological determinism to create a theory of limits with an external imposition of a label which ascribes an individual’s intelligence and abilities and a falsely identified characteristic as lying forever in one, with no chance for change (Pettman 1992).

In using categories to group characteristics to define group membership, scientists have been one of the tools through which colonisers have manipulated such theories of race to benefit their objectives in cultural domination.

From the very beginning of white invasion, the very category 'Aborigine' assisted in the process of colonisation. By categorising Aboriginal people as 'primordial or primitive other', whites also asserted the superiority of their own collective European identity.

(Attwood cited in Stokes 1997, p 158)

Racism has been maintained through the manipulation of science in the creation of boundaries and barriers between races. It has been stimulated through built power relationships on the provision of domination and subordination positions, and it has also been maintained throughout the process of colonisation with structures that have been established to attain power.

The term race was created and was then used in a way to draw boundaries that simultaneously include and exclude people on the basis of perceived difference, they are imagined communities, in the sense that they exist in peoples heads. These boundaries enable naming groups that are far too large to know each other personally, yet they presuppose connectedness and belonging among in-group members (Pettman 1992, Anderson 1991). The boundaries are imagined in that they disguise differences within the categories, such as age, gender, sexuality, wealth etc. An example of applying 'race' based on difference would be that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people regardless of individual distinction i.e., such as a community in Northern Territory next to a community in Sydney, are all bundled together under the one grouping, titled "Aboriginal" and are very often thought of as one and the same in terms of culture, tradition, law and spirituality.

Racist methods have been applied to Indigenous Australians through the use of stereotyping, and grouping together of Aboriginal communities from all parts of the nation, to be identified and looked upon as one. Compounding this is the grouping together of Torres Strait Islander peoples to be seen as a collective with Aboriginal communities. Stereotyping has played a significant role in the development and the application of prejudice towards Indigenous people in Australia.

The use of judgment through stereotypes is evidenced in the ideas of non Indigenous people as to what makes a "real Aborigine". This is yet another form of racism which

holds with its negative connotations and prejudice. Since colonisation Aboriginal people have been graded, half caste, quarter caste, etc. The original intent of this process was to segregate the different groupings by moving the people with minimal Aboriginal connections away from missions and reserves so they could be assimilated into white society.

That being, a person must look Aboriginal to be considered as one, and the person who doesn't look like a full blooded tribesman, i.e. carrying spear and wearing next to nothing or even having dark skin, is simply not Aboriginal. The media helps to portray the image of a person from the bush as being a true Aboriginal, i.e. ("culturally rich"), and of an urban individual ("culturally poor") as pretending to be something they're not (Tatz cited in Mendelsohn and Baxi 1994).

Prejudice supports racism in that it is the term used to describe, (in most cases) the negative opinion or attitude adopted without sufficient evidence and on a basis of prior opinion (Gaines and Reed in Hollingsworth 1998). Prejudice is the language of Racism.

The Racial Discrimination Act in Australia was drawn up in 1975 and race as a biological concept had been officially discredited. However, groups that had been previously racialised were now reconstituted as cultural groups. The old boundaries remained the same in reality, this meant that cultural referents were used to signify race, and to continue to validate the boundaries that had been drawn for the purposes of domination. (Cowlshaw 1986).

Boundaries drawn by the dominant group around themselves for the purpose of domination, imply that inclusion within the boundary is good and exclusion is bad (Pettman J 1992).

This leads us to the thinking of why these boundaries are drawn or created, what are the ulterior motives. The race and ethnicity of the dominant groups are normalised and naturalised as if they are somehow outside culture and politics, as if they simply

There have been many ecological and cultural changes that have taken place since the middle of the nineteenth century in Australia and worldwide, however the impact of racial structuring has not been undermined. Races have been created and recreated in society by a process of exclusion and differentiation through stereotypes based on an emphasis of certain supposedly defining and inherent characteristics of various groups (Cowlshaw 1988, p 4).

Hollingsworth (1996) stated,

“By the 1840s popular and official opinion was that the Indigenous population was inherently inferior and incapable of equal participation in the new colony. Such prejudices were strengthened by the spread of Social Darwinism which authorised abusive practices and legitimated the destruction of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures” (p 116).

William Charles Wentworth, in 1819, wrote, *‘The Aborigines of this country occupy the lowest place in the gradatory scale of the human species’* (Castles, Kalantzis, Cope, Morrissey cited in Thompson 1994, p 103).

Scientists began by noting differences in characteristics, such as hair type, skin colour, lip thickness etc. However these distinguishing characteristics remain inconsistent and ever changing across groups and therefore these theories of race have failed.

3.2. Power

The social constructs of race too, have remained inconsistent since the first recorded usage of the word, in Western thought. The term race referred to differences between groups in the same community, these differences being rank or station in life. This kind of categorisation may at this time have been seen as categories of class. Whilst the situation of these groups would still be seen as somewhat different, nowadays we would not see these differences as racial. (Hollingsworth 1998, p35)

represent a societal norm. The dominant groups shift the boundaries to admit some views and undermine others, this helps maintain dominance.

An example of racism which stems from the ideologies of race, is the policy of Assimilation, where all cultures were expected to “become white”, to take on Anglo language and culture and disassociate from their own, in order to be “accepted” in society. Aboriginal children at the time were separated from their families with the intent to “breed” out and “educate” out each individual's Aboriginality. This was then rationalised, for the removal of “half caste” children, as they were “less Aboriginal”. The policy can be seen as racist in that it is based on an assumed hierarchy of cultures, i.e. Social Darwinism, this legitimised the destruction of cultures as a precondition for equality.

3.3. Labels

While the basis of racial categorisation is illusory and arbitrary, the categories themselves are very real and govern our day to day lives.

“Race is a way of naming people and of representing social identities and interests. They also have real material consequences for those who are so named and represented”

(Pettman 1988c Hall 1988a cited in Pettman 1992 p 3).

Being assigned a racial category has real social impact upon peoples' economic and political circumstance. Outcomes that stem from issues surrounding race in Australia include, the real and determining effects of racism in relation to discrimination. Racism is an issue that Indigenous groups in Australia have to deal with on a daily basis. This in turn has a significant affect upon peoples health status, as evidenced in statistics on infant deaths, (*Aboriginal babies are more than twice as likely to die at birth and of those that survive are twice as likely to have a low birth weight*), on life expectancies, (*Indigenous men 56.9 years compared to non Indigenous men 75.2 years, and Indigenous women at 61.7years compared to 81.1 years of age*). (The Australian, p1,11th August 1999)

Other areas of concern in Indigenous health include the rates of heart disease and diabetes to name but a few. Socially we see problems such as drug and alcohol issues and domestic violence and the status of mental health, and issues that surround self esteem and other issues relating to identity. These are represented through statistics on suicide and drug and alcohol abuse as well as unemployment and incarceration rates Tatz (1999) states,

“Two (of 13) types of suicide are, particularly relevant. First chronic suicide, the masking of a death wish by the excessive use of alcohol or drugs. Second, existential suicide, the ending of the unending burden of hypocrisy, the meaningless of life, the lack of motivation to continue to exist: what the concentration camp survivor Victor Frank calls “purposelessness in all things”, especially in future things.(p 2)

These are issues that have spanned throughout time and history. Historic events maintain a strong impact on people today. Much of today's present circumstance is in direct relation to past Governmental practices and the inability of government to deliver appropriate services. Racism also makes impacts upon educational experiences of students which in turn has serious consequence on opportunities to thrive, and the cycle is perpetuated.

It is these stereotypes which have been manipulated and reapplied throughout history and into the present day to support the theories of racial inferiority and to maintain a relationship between cultures based on unequal powers. It is here that the ulterior motives are power driven, creating separateness so that some groups are powerful and others powerless. Racism became a systematic idea about racial hierarchies with the expansion of European colonisation, The Europeans being the powerful and the Aboriginal population, the powerless.

The apparent legitimisation of exploitation has been made possible by the division of people into racial groups, this in turn has justified racial oppression. Colonialism brought race consciousness and racial ideologies. These concepts then became useful in the justification of what the colonists were doing to Aboriginal people at the time. e.g. continuous removal of Aboriginal people from their land, their massacre and their

confinement to reserves. An ideology like “race” was needed to explain why some people could be free and others enslaved (Pettman 1992).

3.4. Who Defines What it is to be an Aussie?

The ideologies of nationalism, racism and ethnic difference appear to naturalise racial boundaries, as if they are birth identities and in so doing, they naturalise the role and power of dominant groups by representing their “race” and culture as being the norm, and others as being deviant or deficient. Such as to “non white” racial groups being inferior to “white” racial groups, this being used to excuse racial oppression, which led to institutionalised inequality based on racial categorisation. Racism in its representations of others appeared to become acceptable, but a commonsense racism that holds the norms brought together by a couple of hundred years of pillage, massacre, slavery, colonialism, and much more. One of the participants spoke about the impact of racism on the everyday lives of Indigenous people,

.....I was talking to a girlfriend the other day who's not Aboriginal , who was telling me about a hard time she was having at work in the community and saying, you know I cant believe it you know, these arse holes are just kicking me when I'm down, and keep doing it and doing it and doing it, and I said well times that by four hundred people that live in the community and then times that by six generations of pain plus the abuse that they've suffered , you know and the pain, the grief and the loss they're feeling and then times that by another hundred, and then you might have an understanding about how the community is feeling and why. You know , your a non Indigenous worker having a hard time, that you are, beginning to be given, a minute understanding of why that community's feeling, how frustrated they are and how they're sabotaged on every step.....

Participant One.

The concept of Terra Nullius which was maintained for two hundred and five years was one means by which racism was institutionalised into the psyche of Australia's non Aboriginal population. Thompson (1994) stated,

“A land that had no legally enforceable property ownership rights prior to white settlement and or, a land without a sovereign and a territory where know one owns the land.” (p 128)

Such categorisation, grouped Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into one “racial” group in opposition with the colonists. Justification of this was the ownership or absence of ownership of private property or lands, through the white mans laws.

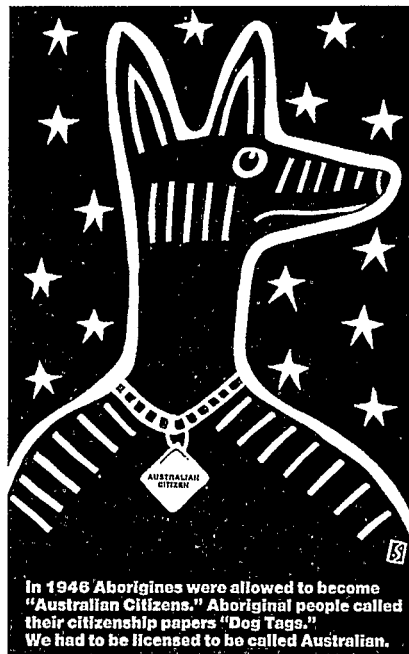
The excuse then, commonly given for treating Aboriginal people differently was that they were primitive, savage, nomadic and therefore inferior. The excuse often used now is that the damage was done by our ancestors, not ourselves. (Sargent 1994).

One participant responded-

.....I don't believe that you can reconcile something that happened two hundred years ago, particularly since the participants of that are not available now.....

Participant Three

Ways introduced by Non Aboriginal society for Aboriginal people to be accepted as part of the "majority" society was in the Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act, 1944. To receive these rights, one had to become "white". Certificates of citizenship, also known to Indigenous communities as "dog tags" were attainable through applications to a magistrate providing, one could show that he or she had dissolved all "tribal or native" associations or they could prove that they were a "fit and proper" person. "*This statute was not repelled until 1971*" (Tatz 1999, p 26).



Colour plate 2.

"Citizenship"

Screen Print by Sally Morgan cited in Morgan 1996

The implementation of the Assimilation Policy in 1951 was aimed at eradicating the so called "native problem". The ideal for government (an instrument of the "racially

superior” group) was, to achieve social rule and domination through the dispersal of Indigenous community members so that individual members would take on the ways and values of the Western culture and blend into and assimilate into the dominant society. The objective was to remove of any tradition, custom, language, religion or to any part of the culture that they originally belonged

Religion too played a significant role in the dispossession of Indigenous individuals and communities. This happened as a direct result of aspersions that have come from theories of race. Indigenous people were removed from their lands and forced onto reserves and into missions which were run by religious organisations. (HREOC 1997) Many of these missionaries were seen as , or saw themselves as ‘care takers’. Aboriginal people were treated as children not capable of caring and providing for themselves or making decisions for themselves.

Such a defense is represented here-

..... I'm not even sure we can say that categorically that the lost generation was the wrong thing to do, the intentions of the people involved at the time I believe were right , were good , whether it was right or not , it was good and there are a lot of people now the product of the stolen generation who probably would not be in the situation that they are in now, had they not been part of that, and I know from a human or a humane point of view taking kids away from their parents and splitting families is just the dregs but my understanding is that the original intention was that the children that were going to be involved in that were half caste or very mixed anyway and the belief was that they would be rejected by the white society and probably be rejected by the black society as well and that's why ah the churches , from the information from the so called missionaries suggested that that was a way to go

Participant Three

In sectors beyond religion, this mentality is continuing today and similarities may be made to the ongoing practice of implementing programs and strategies “upon” Aboriginal communities for the “benefit” of the communities. Throughout such implementation of programs there may be themes in the essence of the promotion of self determination, however these practices may still have more to do with the maintenance of the colonial relationship that has existed since 1788.

Hollingsworth (1996) stated,

“The continuing dependence of community councils and organisations on public funding forces them to devote much of their energy to satisfying budgetary accountability and constant submission writing (see Saunders, 1993). Organisations which have been established by government or are government funded community initiatives specifically for

Indigenous Australians, are often regarded as inappropriate and separatist...” (p 118).

Parts of the Reconciliation Process have been looked upon by some as similar practice to that of assimilation in the essence of blending into the rest of society and in becoming a part of a one nation rhetoric.

Through denial and failure to recognise past histories on part of non Indigenous Australians, the society continues to engulf and partake in the events of continued colonisation.

Barriers that work against “Reconciliation” include the feelings of many “white” Australians as manifestations of guilt and shame.

Patrick Dodson (1996) states,

One of your correspondents asked whether reconciliation requires present generations of Australians to take on the guilt of their forebears. It doesn't. But nor should today's Indigenous Australians continue to suffer the legacies of the past because the nation has not yet found the ways to overcome them.

(‘Australian’ 1999 13th Dec 1996, p347 cited in Attwood & Marcus.)

Participant six points out reasons for acknowledging these feelings , that they are valid and how this nation might best look at these feelings in a positive light, in the hope that they may result in positive outcomes, instead of outcomes that are detrimental to the future interpretation of Australia's history.

The majority of white Australians resent being made to feel guilty, and they say look; I was born in 1960 or 1970 or 1980, I didn't do any of these things, I didn't remove children and so on, see because they didn't..... What's at issue is not their legal guilt. They cant be charged in a court of law with illegally removing children or whatever, but they can feel, and they do feel shame. And it is the shame of being part of an Australia that did these things, and even though you weren't around forty years ago or fifty years ago or even thirty years ago, you can still feel shame, that your mother and father, or your grandmother and grandfather, even if you didn't know these people behaved in the way that they did, you can feel shame on behalf of your own society..... As long as you can explain to people that they don't have to walk around with , a hunch back of guilt, you can nevertheless feel volumes of shame and say: I am ashamed to be Australian in the context of our race relations.

Participant Six

3.5. Denial and its impact on Reconciliation

Facing Australian history in its true sense and looking at colonisation is not an easy task for many. Acknowledging the past tarnishes an ideology that Australia is a "fair" nation. As is evidenced in the national anthem "Advance Australia Fair", that is still used today as current representation for "all" Australians.

Most Australians would like to consider that they belong to an egalitarian nation. A nation that is seen as humane, democratic, thoughtful, friendly, common and considerate of human kind. However treatment of, and relations between Australia's Indigenous and non Indigenous population since British contact have never been egalitarian and this is as evidenced in health housing, education and social justice levels and Indigenous standards as never being on par or equal to that of "white" Australia.

In the building of a nation and a sense of national identity the negative aspects of history have been ignored, such as conflict and massacres that occurred and policies that were implemented such as, 'The White Australia Policy', and of the promoting or remembering of "other" histories, in the marked commemoration and remembrance akin the ANZAC's that were lost to war and who fought in the defense of their country.

Indigenous people too fought on the frontiers of their own shore line in the defense of their country, however acknowledgment there, for the lives lost is hard pushed. (Reynolds.H,1999.)

Tatz (1994) states,

Gallipoli of 77 years ago is the spiritual wellspring of a distinctive Australian manhood and nationhood, a coming of age through a crucible of stupidity and death.....The commandment of both church and state institutions is 'Lest we Forget'. (p 21).

The ANZACs are seen as heroes whereas Australia's Indigenous peoples are seen as the vanquished, or are not even seen at all. The Indigenous situation throughout history has been seen with indifference. An example of such blindness is The Stolen Generations. While clearly racially discriminatory, it was wedded to notions of

democracy, equality and social welfare, which was then regarded as progressive. (Kane cited in Stokes, 1997).

In the development of national identity Australians have been provided with a weak base of Australian history on which to build. The history has been largely of European "white" misogynist values and mores, regardless of the significance and importance of the input and roles that have been a part of this nations making by the "non white" and the feminine. Terms such as "mateship" and "fair go" have been used in an essence to explain the way of a people, what the nations made of , through the promotion of pride in Australian Nationalism. This fitted with the nations egalitarian rhetoric, as the building of a separate and new set of values which were different to that of the "mother country" which needed to be upheld, through the society by its individuals who were considered representative.

Ethnocentrism has been highly utilised in Australia to maintain a particular identity in culture, to uphold patriotism and pride as a 'collective'. Ethnocentrism through the belief of superiority of ones own people and culture almost assumes that all other cultures by comparison are inferior to that culture. Any kind of sway from ethnocentrism amongst ones own culture may be seen as disloyal. Historians or individuals exposing truths about relations between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians may be seen by some as un Australian. These kinds of truths destroy the fabric of what has been built of national identity. Racism helps the upkeep of the denial of the "true culture". Those who do expose truths against , or that involve upset to the current nationalism may be seen as outcasts to their own, traitors to their people (Reynolds 1999).

Current evidence of the importance of the notion of "mateship" as a significant feature of the "Australian way" is the draft 1999 constitutional preamble and the attempts by John Howard to include of the word "*mateship... .. I love the word*" he stated. (SMH Thursday 12th August 1999) This is a word that Howard would consider representative and a binding symbolic metaphor for the Australian way.

It was through the Hawke government (1983- 91) period that we saw a promotion of the larrikin, ... yobbo type cultural identification and then through the Keating government the reverse. Keating wanted commitment to setting out goals by which Australian national identity could be clear and coherent. This was set through the establishment of an advisory committee in 1994 to plan for the centenary of federation in 2001, the objectives being for a better sense of identity for the next century. Keating saw this as great importance as to the image this country has abroad as this has great impact on relations with other nations in particular those by which we do business with and wish to maintain close relations. (Stokes 1997). Keating explained,

"We can only play a part in it (the region) if we go to the world as one nation, as a nation united and not a nation in any way divided. That is why Australians need to be clear about their identity and proud of it. That is why we cant go hobbling to the world saying: 'Please put us in the big race, but by the way our indigenes don't have a real part of it and by the way, we are still borrowing the monarchy of another country'"

(Gordon cited in Stokes 1997, p 3).

Which ever way we look at it, we see two of Australia's prime ministers from times gone by as attempting to work towards building a stronger sense of identity for individuals to be able to claim a true sense of belonging to a nation (Hague 1998).

Ethnocentrism and essentialism are ways in which other forms of racism are being justified as a way of looking at "preserving" a culture or a "way of life". These ideologies are not assuming that there is any biological superiority complex involved, and therefor these ideologies do not consider themselves racist. These people see individuals which are outside the 'norm' to be a threat to the "dominant" culture.

I believe that there is, I suppose a debt if you like , but I wouldn't like to see it just out in money compensation terms, there is a debt to the Indigenous people , they have to accept that the country is the way it is now and they have to learn the way it is.

Participant Three.

Thus, Ethnocentrism may be seen as a contemporary version of Social Darwinism which says that too look back and reach to the poor and dispossessed would be to risk being dragged down. (Keating 1992).

Pettman (1998 and 1995), states,

“Here ethnicity combines with narrow ideas of national identity (e.g., Australianness) to exclude or marginalise those from immigrant or Indigenous backgrounds in terms of supposedly inherent cultural or moral distinctions.”

(cited in Hollingsworth 1998, p 52).

Australia is still looking to establish its identity and this is evident in 1999 in talks of a republic and the implementation of an appropriate preamble to the revised constitution. The process of Reconciliation is just one sphere where the Australian people are looking to use a process as a tool, in order to push what is the truth and what is factual to enable the recognition of past wrongs, and to hope that through finding out the truths and through understanding ,that past injustices that have been based on race will be prevented from being repeated.

As was stated by Aden Ridgeway, Senator for the Democrats, in a speech at the ‘Talkin Up’, State Reconciliation Convention of August ‘1999’, *“the preamble describes the face of the nation”*. It is this new identity which Australia seeks. The sense of a true identity , warts and all.

Participant one, lives in rural Australia and believes that a lot of racism is due to the fact that communities so isolated and that media isn’t as accessible as to what it is in the cities and thus myths are perpetuated.

So much does not get through to this town..... I think we’ve been a hot spot for racism because people haven’t felt the truth about what’s really happening.

Participant One

To prevent the same continued racism, Reconciliation could be seen as an effective instrument in prevention through education.

...if the government really wants it as a process, an effective process, then it should be happening in kindergarten right through to year twelve, there should be a curriculum targeting what Reconciliation isbecause its a process that they’re expecting the whole of the country to take part in , and to be able to take part in a process you have to be informed.

Participant One

However it has remained difficult to find out about the process of Reconciliation There have been no initiatives by the government in which to educate on the issues of

Reconciliation. There has been nothing through school curriculum, and nothing through television by means of public announcement to inform people of what is, apparently, a peoples movement. Ossie Cruse stated at the 'Talkin Up' Reconciliation that *"Government hasn't picked up the batten and carried it on , it makes you think about their political will."* Therefore it is only the people who want to know, that become informed. It leaves the community with the ever unanswered question of, what is Reconciliation?

Many have not had the opportunity to understand and I think if we started pushing it in the early years of primary school, people wouldn't be as angry, and people are hurt and they feel a lot of guilt and they feel a lot of grief and its all about because their parents didn't tell them or that their teachers didn't tell themIt hasn't been an open process, and if you want Reconciliation to be an open process then we've got to be doing it in open venues such as school.

Participant One

The news media regularly visits the word reconciliation but is often part of the system that helps to initiate and promote many of the myths that surround the wording and helps to maintain a fear element, fear of the unknown. It is this fear element that provokes racism, and the not knowing of the threat of a cost to individuals and the non Aboriginal sector of society. Non Indigenous Australians want to know the costs to the nation in financial means not just in terms of an identity crisis.

I see a tremendous waste of energy a tremendous waste of money and , and I mean going back to Pauline Hanson's first speech in parliament, she talked about the billions of dollars that had been spent on the Aboriginal cause , and where had it gone, now everybody jumped up and down and said she s anti Aboriginal , that's not so, tax payers of Australia have every right to ask where the money we're spending goes, as far as Aborigines are concerned , as far as the Navy is concerned, as far as the Army is concerned, and anything else. That doesn't make us anti army, anti navy or anti Aboriginal, if they've spent , I think the figure was something like about 13 billion dollars at that stage with very little to show for it , and why, I mean, who was getting the money?, it certainly wasn't the main population of the Indigenous people , otherwise from a health and education point of view they would be a lot better off now.

Participant Three

For those non Indigenous people who are working towards Reconciliation, it is to have pride in being Australian. To be able to form a clear sense of identity Non Indigenous people must firstly be educated in the truths of their nation's history and on the ways in which this nation has formed itself and at whose expense. People need to know the whole truth not just snippets of positivism's belonging to 'white' romanticised notions of heroes and legends. This nations people need to know why these parts of history

have been ignored until recent times. Why is it that it hasn't been important to acknowledge past wrongs, why these past wrongs have been legitimised and how they have been legitimised. Theories of race must be understood, colonisation must be understood and the impacts and outcomes must be put into perspective. This nation may then be able to live without anger, fear, and guilt.

Racism has its roots well planted in the rhetoric of this nation due to theories on race and cultural superiority. The "majority" Anglo culture has grown up in the assimilationist period and has passed these ideas onto consecutive generations of "Australians". The task of Reconciliation is to cease the continuance of the ideologies of racial hierarchy to bring about equality and appreciation of pluralism through understanding by means of education. Therefore, racism's impact upon Reconciliation is largely negative, conflicting and adversative. The hope is that through Reconciliation racism is broken down by means of past governmental practices to give light to the circumstances of the present day. However, the fact that current government has made no attempt to dispel myths that link to ultimate reconciliation (for example matters concerning WIK and native title) or to implement true education strategies to answer the nations queries on Reconciliation, lead me to questioning of the true commitment of a government to a process that is to bring about an equal and just respect between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians. It is only through knowledge that racism can be broken down and in turn it is only this breakdown of racism which may satisfy the objectives of true "reconciliation" and thus enable it to occur.



The Kelton Foundation, USA

"Your Heritage will haunt you if you don't own it.

People must come to terms with their history, their heritage."

Colour plate **3**.

"Ghosts"

4. Who Owns the Reconciliation Process?

In the Reconciliation Process, important questions arise as to the power of different groups that are involved and the importance of why people participate in the process and in turn, what this participation means to Indigenous people by way of implementation and execution.

4.1. Is it Owned by Government?

The question of who owns Reconciliation is an issue highlighted by respondents. 'Is it belonging to Aboriginal, is it belonging to non Aboriginal, is it belonging to government, (be that federal, state, or local), is it belonging to community, or is it belonging to individuals?' The ideology expressed through much professional literature produced by the Council For Aboriginal Reconciliation, is that it is belonging to all of these groups. The council promotes the idea of involving all Australians in the process and that everyone has a role to play.

Keeping in mind, Reconciliation was a commonwealth initiative and it has been something that has been set up on the basis of an Act of Parliament. One of the participants spoke about Reconciliation's beginnings,

The notion of Reconciliation and the concept of naming that process is something that really was a Government initiative, it started off with Robert Tickner in 1991, and there's actually been a legislative framework or a legislative base for the Reconciliation Process.

Participant Four

This is an act that is binding of the Government in its responsibility and commitment to the Reconciliation process. Patrick Dodson (1997) (former chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation) states,

"This is not a matter of the Aborigines against the states or the Aborigines against the public, this is a matter of its responsibility and its obligation to the totality of this nation and in particular to the relationship it needs to develop with the Indigenous population"(cited in Yunupingu 1997 p 142).

What the process comes down to is responsibility, Where do the responsibilities lie?
Participant four explains their view on how individuals can play their role in Reconciliation.

There is the national, state and local government, so there is that responsibility and in many ways we all have a role in that, we all vote, we all may not work for government and we all may not be able to effect change in that way, but there is also the sphere of sectoral responsibility and once again some people can lock into that some people cant, if you work for the department of education, if your a teacher, then there's a whole lot of stuff you can do in the class room about Reconciliation, if your an organiser in a union,, if you work for the department of health there's a stack you can do there, but I think that really where no one can shirk their responsibility in terms of Reconciliation is what I describe it as the individual responsibility. Each and every one of us in this country can contribute to the process, as humble as the act may be, in terms of delivering Reconciliation. It may be participating in a forum it may be the way you raise your childrenit may be how you educate yourself ,so you know, the wonderful thing about the process is no matter what we do and how we participate in society, we all have an opportunity to contribute.

Participant Four

In looking back to the Barunga Statement in June 1988, and the events of that time, Reconciliation could have been considered an issue to be wary of. Reconciliation could be seen in a sense as the perfect political solution... 'an agreement without a treaty'. What did this offer to Indigenous Australia? It might be looked upon as a cop out or as an easy solution to avoid any type of legally binding commitment.

Ways by which the notion of Reconciliation, as a 'cop out' has been answered by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation is through the intent to create a document or documents of Reconciliation before the end period of the councils term; 31st Dec 2000.

Mick Dodson (1999) states,

"I believe there should be a legally and politically binding document that entrenches the future formal relationship between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians, Central to the philosophical foundations of the document must be a recognition and understanding by the Australian Nation State of our distinctive status as first peoples. This must be the starting point" (p 4)

There's a problem, if all they are working towards is a document, albeit a very fine sounding document, if that's all its achieved, then its achieved very little. The document as it's already drawn up is not going to solve the problems of social discrimination, legal discrimination, economic discrimination, educational discrimination, it's not going to stop poverty, it's not going to stop violence, it's not going to stop Aborigine's being incarcerated at the rate that they are, it's not going to ameliorate the fact that most Aborigines don't live beyond the age of fifty and so on and so forth.... Words of that kind decorate a countries constitution or decorate a countries reservoir of fine policy statements,.... Now these kinds of public formulae and public pronouncements are important symbols, but if you're asking me, can we achieve a document, yes we can achieve a document, but can we achieve a document that can be translated into actual meaning, the answer is no.

Participant Six

Mick Dodson (1999) states,

"The worst thing that could happen is that the document is merely a feel good document that amounts to a new round of welfare-a new brand of assimilation" (cited in CAR p 4).

Many Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people are concerned about taking part in a process they consider to be the government's Reconciliation Process. They question their participation in, and support of, Reconciliation events and the process overall, as they believe this may play a part in the continuation of the colonisation process which they believe still exists in a new manifestation called Reconciliation. This form of neocolonialism is seen to occur through the assignment of different names i.e. Reconciliation, and through different characteristics such as self management whilst maintaining the same overall outcome and effect of ultimate control over the position and roles Indigenous people hold in Australian society. (Folds 1993, Hague 1998, Mowbray 1990)

Every legislation they've passed in this country, legitimised the theft of our country.....
.....its even worse because it means that all of our people who have died under this process, there's no peace there's no justice, and I cant do that , I cant dance on my old peoples graves, because these people, my people have died defending our country,

Participant Five

Examples of similar types of mutations of policies or government systems is as participant five says,

This is the thing about Australia, see we still here in Australia , they still have the organisation that was responsible for the forced removal of Aboriginal children and of our people then confined in concentration camps , right across Australia. This organisation is alive and well, and its just, over the years, they've just changed the name and they've changed the name that many times, just over the last twenty years that I've lost count. And that organisation is now called DOCS. So you know they've got this way of disguising things , but its still there.

Participant Five

4.2. Who defines what Reconciliation is

Government in the past has been responsible for not defining more clearly what Reconciliation is. This lack of clarity hasn't promoted better relations between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians. This has made way for the creation of fear by elements of the media regarding Reconciliation. This type of ploy keeps individuals and the Australian community in the dark about what is really happening in policy development. Such myths can be both potentially harmful or helpful depending on which bias the reporter chooses to take and what their intentions might be in carrying out such processes.

In the absence of what any definition of what Reconciliation is, its not achievable. Nobody knows what it is that's to be achieved. If you don't define it then somebody can turn around and say, we achieved it....it is absolutely incredible that as a slogan, it has come to have such an infinite number of meanings to different people.....

Participant Six

Opportunities to form study circles have been made available, through the Council's initiatives, however these have been made self managing, with no teachers or expert input into the sessions. The recording of such a venture was a program, aired by SBS on the 7th of August 1999 titled Whitey's like Us. This venture was funded by SBS Independent and the Australian Film Commission. It involved the filming of sessions between a small group of people from the northern suburbs of Sydney. They were guided by materials that had been developed by the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education to encourage learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disadvantage.

Community groups have been formed and have worked along with organisations, in partnership with Aboriginal groups. These groups have been provided as examples for others who are wanting to do something for Reconciliation. Local projects have been carried out and Australians For Reconciliation has been made available to provide a service for those who are interested in learning more. Majority interest and learning has been based upon individual peoples drive. Where are the Government initiatives? If we continue to rely on self interest, to motivate people , too many will learn nothing. An example of this occurred the other day;

The other day when I was asked, *'What are you writing your thesis on?'* I explained and she questioned, *'What sort of reconciliation; marriage?'* I was struck in amazement and asked , *'Have you never heard of the Reconciliation Process?'* and she said, *'No'*. Even after explanation on my part , she said that she had never heard of it and knew nothing about it. This is a comment coming from an educated 24 year old woman, someone who is half way through her second degree at University, having already completed a degree in, Education (personal communication, August 22,1999).

This experience highlights the is some indication of the need for government to commit itself to making the process into something that is belonging to all Australians. As participant five comments, *"you can't make decisions if you don't know the whole facts.* It might be considered hard to have an opinion let alone support a process if you know nothing about it or its intentions.

4.3. What is the motivation behind those pushing Reconciliation

.....you get non Aboriginal people who think they know everything, who go out and want to make legislation on our behalf, they use us, they just use us for their careers and Robert Tickner and other Non Aboriginal people are doing it.

Participant Five

Many people see non Aboriginal individuals who claim to be working towards the "betterment" of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as a continuation of a welfare mentality now being looked upon as neocolonialism using the rhetoric of self determination,

claiming to promote while negating opportunities for Aboriginal advancement through their own means.

“I am the child of a mother and a father , but I am not a child.” Was a comment made at the Wollongong Reconciliation Convention. This statement suggests to me that Indigenous people are pointing out to non Aboriginal policy makers and to those who work on behalf of Aboriginal communities, in the nicest possible way, that Indigenous people do have the ability to make their own decisions. It brings a personal slant to the idea of decision making, and how would “they” like it if “they” were put in the same position, if “they” were treated like children.

.....I try to, positively, in most cases push the message that, you know, we are able to make our own decisions , we can provide and we do have a lot of the knowledge to actually achieve effective programs in our community.....

Participant One

This leads to the questioning; Is doing good for the Aboriginal community in the Government’s sense, ultimately working against the good will of many a Reconciliation, supporters intention. As pointed out by Paul Knight at the ‘Talkin Up’ Reconciliation

Convention, *“Reconciliation has many meanings for every person in this room”* Various people in our communities are working towards Reconciliation at many levels, however they are working towards what their personal ideas of Reconciliation are. Is this inadvertently working towards the advantage of the government ideology on Reconciliation, which perhaps isn’t as noble as the ideals they might have us perceive .i.e. A token gesture which stops talk about a treaty or other negotiations.

4.4. Reconciliation by whose terms?

I really have a problem with Reconciliation because its something that's been pushed onto us by the Government .

Participant Five

In Prime Minister Howard's election speech of October 1998, he stated-

And I also want to commit myself very genuinely to the cause of true reconciliation with the Aboriginal people of Australia by the centenary of federation. We may differ and debate about the best way of achieving reconciliation, but I think all Australians are united in a determination to achieve it.

(cited in Walking Together, CAR. Nov1998, p4)

Does this mean that the Prime Minister of Australia will support what he considers to be Reconciliation and accept it only on 'his terms'. Is, this means of achieving Reconciliation a sacrifice to true justice and equity for all. Are we in these instances, forced to settle for second best, or as good as we can get. Or as good as the Prime Minister will let us have.

It cant continue to happen, it has to end, there has to be an end to the nightmare, the Reconciliation nightmare I'm talking about. The word is called peace, its simple , its been around for a long, long time, a lot longer than Reconciliation, and the thing is with peace there's only one way of looking at it. Peace comes with love and things like that....

Participant Five

"Senator Aden Ridgeway said the Prime minister had invited ATSIIC Chairman, Mr. Gatjil Djerrkura, and former chairwoman, Dr. Lowitja O'Donoghue, to his office yesterday, and told them he was ready to negotiate a document of reconciliation"

(Kingston 1999 August 27, S.M.H p 4).

Is this an example of maintaining control of what ultimately happens to the Indigenous people of this nation. This may be seen as a prime example of Reconciliation on the Governments terms.

4.5. Or should Reconciliation be in place because its a basic human right?

Reconciliation is not new, you know, there is a legislation that we've been pursuing but you think about the history of black and white relations in this country, you will find that its based on, in many instances, on the basis of reconciling. Aboriginal people have always said 'we want to walk together, take our hand', and you look back at the political activities of the thirties, it was about rights, you look at the '72' political activities, it was about rights, you look at what Indigenous people say at a local community level and that is that we want to get on together but we want our rights and our Aboriginality recognised. So really, its not new. What's new is the legislation, well its not that new now its nearly ten years old , its the legislation and the word reconciliation..... The test of Reconciliation is not whether the word is right or wrong its the deed and the actions that come out of it.

Participant Four

4.6. Its up to us

Djerrkura (1998) states,

“ATSIC supports the views expressed by the chairperson of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Evelyn Scott, that true reconciliation has to be the work of the whole nation, not just a few leaders”

(Djerrkura cited in Walking Together p 10)

Council For Aboriginal Reconciliation has been promoting in current times, an emphasis on individual responsibility through the use of the slogan, “Its Up To Us”, in the hope that if by the 31st of December , year 2000, the date of the councils completion, (the sunset clause that was agreed upon by government) the possibility arises that there may be no further government financial support for Reconciliation as a process, that it will be the people of the nation that will carry on in the spirit of “reconciliation” and keep the process in momentum as a peoples movement.

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation is promoting the notion that it is the whole Australian public that are being held as advocates for the Reconciliation Process and that it not be left at the feet of Indigenous Australia to deal with, or become another government initiative that “set's up to fail” Indigenous communities. This process is encouraging Australian's to determine whether government is living up to and honoring its agreements and to be holding assessment to the progression of that commitment. It is this nations responsibility and obligation in terms of the Reconciliation Process, not only to Indigenous Australians but to all (Dodson P 1997). That it will be the people who push for justice and equality for all Australians,

disallowing the process to become a feel good attempt of the development of equal human rights on part of Australia's Indigenous peoples.

I think that the strength of Reconciliation quite frankly is out there in the people's movement in the public, I think that the federal governments action's have done nothing to enhance the process of Reconciliation.... I think the federal government has been dreadful on issues of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation.

Participant Four

The thing is they've made these mistakes in the past we cant continue down that track where you continually make the mistakes of the past,..... if anything that's going to be good that's going to happen for our people its got to come from the people , there's things that have been in place in this country that have been there for a long, long time. Our way of doing things suited us for years. For years and years and there's ways of doing it and we can still go back. I seriously think and believe that this government, any government , and the people particularly, the people have got to be told about these things, told that they've been conned, they've got to be told the truth. You cant make decisions if you don't know the whole facts

Participant Five

An important part of understanding Reconciliation, is knowing the processes history and knowing the roles that have been created and maintained through the support of the process, being aware of where the strengths and weaknesses of Reconciliation lie. We need to know its history to understand where its at today, and where its headed in the future. Questions of participation in the process arise through examination of ones' role and what impact this might be having on a larger scale. We must question government's intentions and motivations and must push for an upkeep in responsibilities that are to be kept. Government must be pulled up when not meeting standards and acceptable outcomes that it professes to work towards. Ultimately there must be no acceptance of contradictions by governments between their own theories and practices. There cannot in the true sense of commitment, be talking in one language and acting in another. It is community's responsibility to keep government to their promises in every sense. However responsibilities for real change in this nation cannot be pushed onto communities to improve life circumstances in areas such as health, housing, employment and education, etc, these matters are responsibilities that must lie ultimately with the decision makers of this country.

.....Its warm, its fuzzy, its touchy feely, its a form of expressing a mix of guilt and shame,....
.....But it has no direction. While I appreciate and applaud the fact that people sign sorry books and that people plant hands in the sand, or on the lawns , and assemble outside Mossman town hall, or Bowral town hall to listen to Lois O'Donoghue and Noel Pearson, all that's great stuff, the question is, if it has no purpose, real guided purpose, its not going to go anywhere. So what we've got at the moment is a huge ground swell of public feeling, emotional feeling, that something is amiss, something is awry. The question is, what the hell is amiss and what the hell is awry. They cant tell you. Other than, we did badly by them. We must somehow atone, but how do we atone and what are we atoning for, no one has the slightest idea.....Again, its has to go further than signing sorry books.

Participant Six



Colour Plate 4.
Sea of Hands, Bondi Beach

5. In Pursuit of One Nation

Through research I have been presented with opposing ideas on Reconciliation on the grounds of the fear of what the outcomes may represent to Indigenous Australia ultimately. There is a concern amongst some respondents that the Reconciliation process is a way of ensuring assimilation through disguise and that Reconciliation is about the maintenance of government agenda through assimilationist ideologies.

The assimilation policy was clearly defined in the 1950's as,

“ It stated that all Aborigines shall attain the same manner of living as other Australians, enjoying the same rights and privileges , accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and being influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties.”

(Lippmann, cited in Eckermann, Dowd, Martin, Nixon, Gray, Chong. 1995, p 38)

Through the years, there have been many policies implemented and catch phrases adopted in the attempts to improve the status of Indigenous people's, health education and employment, etc., to equal that of what the majority of Australian society currently shares.

The use of words such as, Integration, Self Determination, and currently, Self Management have all been ways by which the government, through approaches in Aboriginal affairs have attempted to align statistics related to Indigenous well being to that of non Indigenous Australia.

“Integration puts an emphasis on positive relations between the Aboriginal and white community , while recognising that Aboriginal people may have different needs and aspirations in some aspects of their lives.

Self-Determination takes these different needs and aspirations further, literally meaning that Aboriginal people should have the right to choose their own destiny, with government in an enabling role, providing finance and technical skills, and social and economic support.

Self-Management, which is the current Federal policy, has somewhat similar stated aims, but stresses that Aboriginal groups must be held accountable for their decisions and management of finance”

(Eckermann et al 1995, p 39).

Through these policies we saw a slight improvement from what was assimilation to integration through the recognition of difference, which was void in the previous policy. We then saw further improvement through self determination. Self management claims much of the same of previous policy, however it adds new dimensions of accountability. This gives off similar reference to the assimilation type ideologies. What are the effects upon true self determination in Indigenous communities if these communities are having to be constantly answerable to government bureaucracies, and at that, is the Reconciliation process playing a role in the promotion of such ideologies, or is it in itself yet another policy in the long list of failed policies of the past 211 years?

5.1. Reconciliation and its side effects

There is a common consensus through participant views on Government words and actions.

.....I appreciate the process but I have great difficulty with what , what the process will eventually achieve, and the side effects that I've seen, , politically they haven't been positive over the last 2 years.....

I guess I'm in a great pit of inertia really, if you push this way are we just going to be pushing John Howard's message about Reconciliation, and what John Howard has managed to achieved in ATSIC in the last three years and has sort of undone so much good that Aboriginal people were doing and you know he's, he's been able to appoint non Indigenous people into ATSIC, he's been able to revoke, the land rights act, he s been able to revoke a number of really important processes, he pulled out 600 million dollars from a Community Development Employment Program and watching all of that happen makes me feel scared as an Indigenous person.....

Participant One

What is Reconciliation doing? Are we seeing government gloss over the "big Picture". Government is representing itself as being committed to providing better opportunities for Indigenous Australia through its ideas of addressing disadvantage, however, Government is presenting one image whist taking away rights, cutting funds, and increasing accountability.

Howard and Herron keep on mouthing the same tired clichés , that they're not interested in any of this: its all about, housing, health, employment etc., that this is what we've got to do. While they say that, they keep on cutting the budget for those items.

Participant Six

Is Reconciliation putting up what the public want to hear. Are the government keeping people happy using a smoke screen by feeding the media and public what they

want to hear, and keeping society occupied, whilst policies that have had detrimental effect on Indigenous communities continue to be implemented).

Through all of these attempts over the years to do what's best for Australia's Indigenous communities we are still faced with terrible statistics, there has been no change for the better, concerning issues of rights and social justice. Participant five points out-

While all these other people are running with their little ,they're playing their little games, passing legislation, my people are dying.

Participant Five

5.2. One Nation rhetoric

Australia continues to hold a strong sense of nationhood and national identity. These views are held by the likes of John Howard and Pauline Hanson. The ideology of one unified nation, in the protection of the nations state. (Hage G 1998)

“Previously, “Aboriginal people were to be brought to live amongst white people. They would proceed to act and think like them as they became progressively Europeanised. In successive generations the ‘Aboriginal strain’, would become less prominent until no one would be distinguished- or would want to be distinguished - as being of Aboriginal decent. Within a few generations the former Aborigines would actually be white people”

(Read cited in Armitage 1995, p 19).

This particular philosophy, was meant for the absorption of Aboriginal people into ‘white’ society. Today we still see similar ideas of this being presented. With the ultimate goal in mind; being ‘one race’, ‘being Anglo Australian’. Participant four in this instance, saw-

....what I see as being the only future for them, is to be as integrated as possible within the society, like the other people who come here as migrants and live..... there children mixed with other people and the second and third generation, and that's where I see is the real future of Australia. The future of Australia is not for me, its not for my children , hopefully its for my grandchildren.its the mixing and everybody being a part of the society. Their only future is to become part of it , they cant live outside of it .

Participant Three

Using the notion of one people or one nation, is maintaining assimilationist doctrines. It represents a homogenous ethnocentric society, a homogenous group sharing the same culture, the same values and lifestyles, the same right as one people.

What they're really suggesting is more of the same kind of welfare mentality that these are poor people, poverty stricken people. Forget colour, forget culture, forget history, its just an economic matter of housing, health, more doctors, more houses, more sewerage facilities, more water taps etc., etc., and then it will all come good. Well it won't!

Participant Six

This clean slate ideology, provides way for a welfare mentality, by government, regarding Indigenous groups who have needs in particular areas however it fails to recognise that to implement effective strategies for change, their must be consultation as to the appropriateness and workability of programs to be implemented. The ethnocentric rhetoric rejects differences and therefore efforts that are being made are being lost because of the lack of relativity to the communities at hand. Money then, that is being spent on Indigenous communities is in this sense being wasted because there are no effective outcomes. We then hear public outcries of 'where are our taxes going', Millions are being spent on Aboriginal affairs and yet we are still hearing the same complaints, poor health, housing, education, high infant mortality, high rates of incarceration, and the list goes on. The public then blames the Indigenous community for wasting the tax payers money, when it is not the community who are at fault, it is the policy or strategy being implemented by government organisations and agencies, and their failure to implement, or provide for implementation of appropriate services and programs through relevant community consultations.

5.3. Genocide

Policies such as Assimilation have held a strong position in supporting attempts of what is known as genocide. Genocide being in short and general terms, the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group. In regards to Reconciliation, participant one states -

My aunty says Reconciliation is really another form of genocide and you know, people think that by the year 2001 there has been Reconciliation with no acknowledgment of what has happened and where we still are, behind the 8 ball in health and education and housing and all of those things, you know, the life span, it has just become another policy like assimilation

Participant One

“Genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of difficult actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves”

(Lemkin 1944, cited in Fein 1993, p 9).

Participant five sees Reconciliation as directly working towards this ultimate goal; the goal of genocide.

..... when the genocide is complete, and I can see in about twenty five, to fifty years, because what you'll have is, they might look Aboriginal, there might be some people, Aboriginal people that might look it but they wont know, wont have anything to do with culture or anything, you know, no cultural connection to land or anything, and it will be genocide, they would have completed what they would have set out to, what they intended to do. Maybe they wont have to legitimise the theft of our land anymore, see because that's what this is really all about.

Participant Five

6. Discussions about Recognition and its importance to the Reconciliation Process

What has become evident throughout this research, is the emphasis that has been placed upon the importance of recognition of Aboriginal culture. All but one of the participants interviews revolved around such recognition if there is to be true Reconciliation or “*peace*” (participant five), between Australia’s Indigenous and non Indigenous peoples. What also became evident was the importance of that recognition as a means to social justice outcomes and real measurable outcomes for improved quality and expectancy of life.

I think what Hazel Hawke said yesterday about, it shouldn't be reconciliation it should be recognition, recognition of what has happened and, and understanding of that , and then being able to , to, to look at differences from a healthy perspective. And I don't think we can wash away the differences because I think the differences are spectacular, about our culture and other cultures within this country and I think by ignoring differences we can actually, and its what a number of policies such as assimilation attempted to do, was white wash the differences and, that's been a really unpleasant experience for a lot of Indigenous people...

Participant One

6.1. Acknowledgment / Respect

Recognition comes through acknowledgment and respect. Acknowledgment and respect comes through learning the truths of Australia’s history thoroughly, and the relationships that have existed between Indigenous and non Indigenous people over the past 211 years .We need to understanding history so that present circumstances can be comprehended.

.....its about Australians both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal, coming to terms with each other and forging a path together in a more harmonious way. Recognising Aboriginality, recognising the history , acknowledging the way in which Australia has been formed today and forging a way together.....

Participant Four

An important aspect of Reconciliation that was pointed out was the significance of the positive side to recognition. Recognition of a culture that is rich in what it brings to this nation, understanding a culture and what it brings, in that, differences can be regarded as something that is special, not always as something that needs to be realigned so that it fits into “mainstream” Australian culture. As participant two states;

..... Its also recognising gifts of Aboriginal culture and the sharing that could happen and that we can all be enriched in that process if we go about it the right way.....

Participant Two

....we also have to have acknowledgment for the things that have been achieved for 210, up until 210 years ago, and I think, I guess the terminology is again , its a white terminology , it really hasn't been sought with our consensus that its a , in fact, , my aunty was saying that she was in Alice Springs when Robert Tickner said you know, oh we've come up with this great idea , called reconciliation but Indigenous people weren't consulted on , whether that was the process that through self determination and through self management , it still wasn't a process that we had said that we wanted , so and every process that I've seen that we have not been involved in, hasn't worked for us , and I just feel that this could possibly be another act that's not going to work for us,.....

Participant One

With recognition of culture, comes understanding and thus appropriate consultation on decision making procedures that directly effect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Many of the participants had concerns on consultation prior to the commencement of the Reconciliation Process, or the lack of consultation that has been incorporated into the forming and initiation of the Reconciliation Process from its very beginnings, as commented by participant one above.

6.2 Consultation to late.

This lack of consultation was also recognised by,

.....like with this Reconciliation process, they're going around the country asking Aboriginal people what they think of it. That's a bit late isn't it? Its too late, yeah they've already drafted their document, they've been discussing it in Parliament, why weren't we invited to let these people know how we feel about it.

Participant Five

.....it was Robert Ticker's idea to run with it and I said to him, we were the first ones to have a meeting with him down there in Canberra at parliament house. We told him, its not going to work Robert Tickner, we've already had Reconciliation processes,.....

.....The way they've glossed everything up and their building up this thing, now their going to, and that's their way of consulting, even though we'll disagree with it, they'll still go ahead, I mean they've done it before, they've already done it with ATSIC.

Participant Five

If the participants are right, about the need for recognition then the problem arises, according to some of the participants that the current Reconciliation Process

contradicts recognition, arguing that it has not consulted with the key stakeholders in the development of the Reconciliation Process.

6.3. The name / A Better Term

There has been much debate over the naming of the process, but as Participant Four says,

<p>...for me, on a personal level, I've always disliked the term but I just think that that's a peripheral argument.</p> <p>Participant Four</p>	Participant Four
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Preferred wording used by respondents in their interviews for what Reconciliation is attempting to achieve, by means of recognition through social justice, and human rights, were, Recognition, Walking Together/Working Together/Learning Together, Equal Opportunity, Mutual Respect, Peace, and Restitution or Reparation.

Other ways of looking at the term Reconciliation include the ideology belonging to Paul Knight (1999), a speaker at the 'Talkin Up' Reconciliation Convention. His preferred terminology was "Friendship", as a metaphor for what the Reconciliationist's are trying to achieve. He looked upon reconciliation as more akin to a relationship. He described it as, 'friendship'. Friendship as being, less confrontational, as having respect, and support, as involving negotiation and compromise and that there is an equal level ensured. Paul Knight pointed out most importantly that "*no friendship will last if ongoing communication ceases to occur*".

Whilst being present at one leg of the NSW Reconciliation road show's in Broken Hill in July of 99, many Indigenous people from the community said that they would rather see a treaty than Reconciliation, that over nine years, Reconciliation hasn't made any significant changes to grass roots in their communities.

I've worked with a number of people who , - and my peers who believe Reconciliation is the only chance we have and I guess I'm still a bit ,either way because where I'm at , at the moment I'm still seeing that we're still third rate citizens in our own country and we have no say in what happens with us . And I don't, and I haven't seen the positive outcomes , as that woman said yesterday, you know, we're down year 9 of the Reconciliation Process and still we have no actual things to grasp onto or changes that we've seen

Participant One

Interviews brought forward attention to an almost unanimous discontent with the word Reconciliation and the emotions this word raised with its users.

The Reconciliation Process in its formal sense has been an important part of bringing recognition to Indigenous culture. The Reconciliation Process has been responsible for bringing much political attention to, and a spotlight on Indigenous issues which in turn has provided potential for such a focus to be dispersed and absorbed by community. A series of one minute television spots called "Footprints" back in 1993 were aired across the nine network and affiliated stations.

"Footprints" provided an insight into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, history, people, achievements organisations and perspectives"

(Report of The Council For Aboriginal Reconciliation, 1993, p 25).

Messages that were contained in "Footprints" encouraged pride in both the people involved and also pride in others who watched on. This series provided an opportunity to point out that Indigenous Australians , aspire to many of the same things that "white Australia" aspires to, and that these weren't only aspirations but also achievements. These types of tools may be considered responsible for breaking down stereotypes and prejudice and playing a role through education, of narrowing the gap between an ideology of "them" and "us".

.....you can make laws about discrimination but you cant change the way people think, without being educated.

Participant Three

6.4. Honesty / Informing

Non Indigenous people have benefited in a sense more so than Indigenous people. Part of Reconciliation's popularity and its strong following is as a result of non Indigenous

Australia and their push for honesty and the need to be informed on truths of Australia's past. It is the need to be informed, and the opportunity to be informed through various forms of media, that is being represented through the publication of peoples stories, through political artworks such as that of Sally Morgan, and the representation of historical happenings and personal events in music, such as groups like Tiddas. Through inquiries such as that of the 'Bringing them Home report', by being exposed through events such as Sorry Day and the signing of Sorry Books. And having access to a more critical types of discourse which reassess history, such as the work of Henry Reynolds and other historians.

All of these opportunities for insight have been the catalysts for a social awakening of the people of this nation. An awakening of something that has been kept secret or underexposed until recent years (Reynolds, H 1999). Such secrecy is indirectly linked to the shame that is attached to Australia's history. Most mature Australians that are involved in the Reconciliation Process feel the shame of this nations history and become involved in related issues as a way to deal with that shame and are making a concerted effort towards developing a more honest future, to have a proper understanding of what it means to be Australian. As Charles Perkins stated in a lecture at the University of Sydney, on the 10th of September 1999, "*Facing the Mirror is what's going to help you most*".

The greatest resource this country has is its people.

Participant Three

Howard's doing as well, and who are just as angry about what has been happening in relation to Aboriginal affairs, and a lot more people are learning because of this process, so its a tricky sort of a catch twenty two position.....

Participant One

7. Discussions about Alternatives to Reconciliation

In looking at alternatives that were brought to my attention throughout participant interviews, I was forced to consider other avenues that might be considered by members of the community to be a more appropriate a method of bringing adequate social justice measures to the people. Many see Reconciliation as the only workable solution and that we are at a time where we have to take advantage of the circumstances we're in, as we may never have this opportunity again. As is expressed by Participant Four-

.....what is the alternative, there is no alternative, well there is . The alternative is that we continue for another two centuries repeating and regurgitating the past and that is , you know, inequity, , lack of recognition of Aboriginal rights, ah, lack of recognition of Aboriginality, denying history and you know, continuing down a path of disharmony, and you've got to have rocks in your head if you want to do that. so the alternative is to pursue the notion of unity to pursue the notion of recognition , to pursue the notion of social justice outcomes for Indigenous people so its a very clear cut simple argument, you either continue on the path this county's been treading or you have a shot at a new way forward.

Participant Four

7.1 Treaty

However, there are other issues, with significant numbers in our community who are pushing for a Treaty. We need to look at what treaty means in comparison to Reconciliation and at what its benefits and disadvantages are.

The idea of a treaty in many instances is something that is preferred. A treaty is legally binding, and it is a recognition of a peoples prior occupation, or ownership of the continent.

A book, published in 1979, titled, 'It's Coming Yet...' An Aboriginal Treaty within Australia between Australians, looked at the constant and continuing need to address Aboriginal rights. Treaty being an issue that Aboriginal Australia has been struggling with for a long time and something Aboriginal people will continue to struggle with until just measures are in place.

Harris (1979) stated,

“Australia now has an opportunity in one, comprehensive Treaty, to work out the frame of a just settlement for all Aboriginal Australians. It would provide land and compensation, land as soon as possible in all states and territories (with an agreed timetable for each) and compensation in an agreed, and defined way each year as a fixed proportion of some convenient representation of the national income. So the compensation would not be a matter of litigation, because there would be no doubt about its constant annual character. However the High Court would be the arbiter ensuring that no government reneged on its Treaty obligation and that no parliament legislated against its interpretation of the Treaty”(p 21).

However, in discussion with one of the participant's that I spoke to, there was a concern with the idea of Treaty.

..I think, the ideology, and a lot of people said that, the other day,, they'd rather see a treaty rather than Reconciliation and I think it depends on where you stand and I don't see treaty happening, I don't see it as a solution either. Its to me that's almost like a war effort, promoting that, and I think we'll never, we'll never get anywhere if we continue to be perceived as angry, aggressive, always wanting, but we also have to have acknowledgment.....

Participant One

Stanner wrote, in the Australian Labour Party's discussion papers for the Aboriginal policy of 1978,

“If you study carefully the words used in any one of our formal statements of policy towards them you will not find anywhere two things said simply and clearly. The first is that we injured Aboriginal society and owe just recompense to its living members. The second is that what we will do now for them we will do in recognition of their natural rights as a distinct people, not in expression of our sufferance of them, or of our acceptance of them if they will copy our ways. I think these words, if said in the parliament of the Commonwealth, on behalf of the whole nation, might make a difference. The effect could be to make more negotiable what we will have to negotiate, anyway, if there is ever to be a true settlement. I wonder why we hesitate?”

(cited in Harris 1979, p 74)

These are the same issues that we are still working around today. These issues have been carried by this nations Indigenous people prior to 1978 and are still be carried today. An ideology expressed again, by Paul Knight at the 1999 Reconciliation Convention, was the importance that Reconciliation not be a tolerance of Indigenous peoples and cultures, but an acceptance.

I actually, firmly believe that in terms of the spirituality of this country, you know , its founded in black Australia, and that's something that all Australians share and enjoy and Aboriginal issues because of our connection to country and land will never go away, this is not going to disappear off the agenda and if people could recognise that and deal with that then that would be really good but obviously that's not going to happen.

Participant Four

8. The Future of Reconciliation

8.1 Community Support

In looking into the future, we can only hope that the support that has been formed in the essence of mutual respect continues amongst community in Australia, and that it is the people who push to "keep the bastards honest".

.....the good news is that there is an army that's growing in terms of recognising that Indigenous people have specific rights, that are the first nation, are the first peoples of this country that have continued custodianship and responsibility for country and that Aboriginality is actually a gift and not the danger or the scary thing that Australia sees itself. So I'm optimistic but the key to this is that this doesn't go off the agenda at the end of the legislative life of the council, on the 31st of December next year. And so what we have to concentrate on now is through the process of the declarations and the national strategies that I see you've in your folder there. We have to make sure that our energies now are actually about sustaining the process, keeping the pressure on and making sure that there is a community movement that doesn't let this go at the end of legislative life as the politicians will.

Participant Four

What can you do?, The answer is you have to become political. I don't mean standing on a soap box in Hyde Park, but publishing, talking, teaching, broadcasting ah, meeting, going to group functions,.....

Participant Six

8.2 Timeframe

In speaking to participants about, whether they considered Reconciliation achievable I came across a general consensus about the fact that this is a process that will not be achieved by the year 2001, however that this is a long term process that is going to take time. Participant Four speaks about whether or not Reconciliation is achievable,

.....its something that cant be rushed, its impossible , its about generational change, its about psyche and consciousness of this nation, its about, you know, people your age becoming politicians when their forty or fifty and not being like politicians now, who were raised during the assimilation era. ... and I think the key to recognising this is that we are going to have many , many years of work after the end of the legislative life of the council to bring about social justice and when you look at the appalling statistics on Aboriginal health and a whole range of other things, you know we're looking at 40, 50, 60, years down the track to bring about any equity there , so the answer is yes it can be but its not going to happen by the end of next year.....

Participant Four

We are still seeing changes daily, as far as the Council For Aboriginal Reconciliation is concerned. These changes are occurring in constant reassessment of what the needs of the people are asking for as a result of recent consultations on the draft document. This is evidenced in the Sydney Morning Herald on Thursday the 16th of September 1999. The article featuring Dr. Lowitja O'Donoghue, former chair of the Council For Aboriginal Reconciliation stating,-

"the leaders did not want reconciliation rushed for the wrong reasons, such as the Olympics and the Centenary of Federation. We want to see, at the end of the process, finished business."(cited in Kingston 1999).

Let's hope that the influence by Indigenous leaders, working on Reconciliation, continues to reject second best. If this control continues, it will be the hope that such documents and efforts of individuals involved, have not just become something that looks nice on paper, that it isn't something that is 'warm' and 'fuzzy', and that doesn't just turn out to be ten years of hard work, summarised into a nice phrase or statement. That it will be something that endorses and ensures change for Indigenous people by the means of real social justice outcomes.

8.3 Celebration of diversity

Another important issue which effects the future of relations between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians is the imperative need to celebrate the diversity of Indigenous communities.

A story that Patrick Dodson tells about diversity from an article in the Australian in 1996, is something that he sees as an important element of reconciliation.

"My Grandfather taught me that the river is the river and the sea is the sea. Each has its own complex patterns, origins and stories, and even though they come together, they will always exist in their own right. Non-Indigenous Australians cannot be expected to learn or understand the lessons of my grandfather, but simply to respect that they are central to my identity"

(cited in Attwood and Markus 1999 p 347).

Participant One pointed out to me a paragraph from Germain Greer's (1999) latest novel, 'The Whole Woman', something that compliments alongside Patrick Dodson's above statement. The essence of respecting, promoting, and celebrating diversity in the ways that perhaps we should reflect or duplicate in relation to not only this nations Indigenous peoples but to all peoples.

"Liberation struggles are not about assimilation but about asserting difference, endowing that difference with dignity and prestige and insisting on it as a condition of self-definition and self determination"(p.1).

Conclusion

When I began this research it was my intention to discover more about the meaning of Reconciliation. Reconciliation has been a topic that has surrounded me for the past nine years. It has had significant personal impact because I have always had a keen interest in Human Rights issues, particularly when it came to this nation's Indigenous people. Through relations with individuals and through many forms of media such as, political artwork, fiction, song, and current affairs, it has remained evident that Indigenous people do not share in the same "just" Australia that I as a non Indigenous person experience.

It has been the same calling, from all of these avenues and from Indigenous people all over Australia, from diversely differing communities, that Indigenous culture and peoples, must attain the same respect, rights, and social justice outcomes, equal to that of non Indigenous Australia, with recognition of the unique position Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have in being the first peoples of this nation.

Prior to this research, I understood Reconciliation to mean improving relations between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians, that is., getting along and working together without discrimination.

Due to much public interest and action throughout the community in such symbolic gestures as planting hands in the sand at Bondi Beach and free concerts in Sydney's Domain involving Indigenous artists, being presented by groups such as A.N.T.A.R, I felt as an Australian, I had an obligation to be a part of such events. However, whilst such events encouraged learning, and brought about a broader awareness of the issues that Indigenous people were facing, I couldn't help feel that there must be more to Reconciliation.

What did Reconciliation really mean? There seemed to be no clear definitions as to Reconciliation's meaning, and therefore I was wary about supporting it. I was also

concerned with what it meant to Indigenous people: did Indigenous people support this process, was it something they were wanting? I wanted to be sure that if I was supporting something, it was for the right reasons.

I needed to know whether what I had been doing all my life was enough or whether Reconciliation required something more. I was interested in a career working with Aboriginal people, to do my best in this career path I needed to have quality information about what was happening.

This thesis was the means by which I would do this. I needed to research and I needed to speak to key people in the community on what their perspectives were, in the hope that this would provide me with a more holistic view on the Reconciliation Process.

I also wanted to ensure that this thesis would bring about information that would benefit not only myself but others who are struggling to comprehend the concept of Reconciliation as well.

In my search for data I discovered many significant and varied viewpoints on Reconciliation. As I began to collect information about Reconciliation I became confused, as there were so many different view points about the value and meaning of the Reconciliation Process, some negative, some positive and some indifferent. I began to "question the solution". How could so many people be in vehement opposition to a process that was intended to bring people together?

What made the confusion even worse was the fact that many of the participants were saying the same things, but for very different reasons. The issues presented in the data collected were repetitive. For example, participant three suggested, "*I think that they're attacking it in the wrong way and I think that some of them have vested interests as well*", then later participant five suggested "*there's this big industry in our name... ...they use us for their careers*". This was confusing because these people came from opposite ends of the political spectrum and their comments were underpinned by different philosophies.

These differences at times were represented with a great deal of underlying hostility and anger towards other stakeholders in the Reconciliation Process. Such hostility appeared to be the antithesis of the rhetoric that surrounds the Reconciliation Process.

Whilst such angst exists, issues surrounding social justice, human rights, health and education are not being addressed. Community issues are ultimately abandoned and goals that have been identified are being dishonored due to the conflicts that are occurring amongst key stakeholders.

It has been argued that in fact this is the true Reconciliation agenda, to divert attention away from a so called "*more radical*" agenda, such as calls for a treaty (Harris 1979).

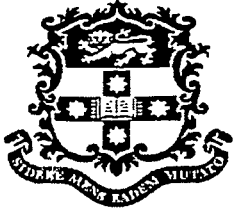
At this point of my research I can not say I am a supporter of the Reconciliation Process. I do believe in many of the ideas the Council For Aboriginal Reconciliation puts forward, such as recognition and appreciation of the history, culture and unique value that Indigenous people have as rightful stake holders in the overall well being of the Australian nation, and the need for Australia as a nation to respect the basic human rights of its Indigenous people.

I also support the aspect of the Reconciliation Process as a people process, which many people devote a great deal of time and effort to in the hope of Reconciliation one day happening. There has been great enthusiasm amongst many Australians who have gone to considerable lengths to learn more about Indigenous issues and a great deal of this has been carried out on a voluntary basis.

However, I fear that Reconciliation, in some ways, has tended to mask the true agenda of politicians whose rhetoric has supported this process. In fact Reconciliation is not a new, or even a ten year process, a search for common ground has been continuing for 210 years. And history has shown that Indigenous people have not gained any true equity in this process of healing differences.

This research provides clear evidence of the hostility that many involved in the Reconciliation Process have brought to the community. As such we must begin to question the solution.

Through this thesis and the data collected, I now feel that I have a greater understanding of the meaning of Reconciliation, and feel more confident in this knowledge, that I can move into the future and on to other ventures in related fields with an understanding of the power politics currently impacting on the lives of Indigenous people throughout Australia.



The University of Sydney
Faculty of Health Sciences
YOOROANG GARANG
The School of Indigenous Health Studies



Title.
Exploring Perspectives on Reconciliation

Subject Information.

Plain Language Statement for Participants.

In working and studying with Aboriginal people I have found myself continuously confronted with this word "reconciliation". For some time now I have been involved in the happenings in our communities in regards to developing and working towards promoting human rights with the intent of diminishing racist attitudes and misconceptions that are often held by the wider society. In speaking with Aboriginal people I have come across various attitudes and opinions on what Reconciliation means to them, yet still remain confused as what it means to me. It is my aim now to work with you to gain a greater understanding of what reconciliation means and to find out how it effects us in our daily lives.

Through my studies I will be seeking to gain further insight on the topic of "Reconciliation". The data collection method will be through formal interviewing which will be audiotaped. These interviews will be transcribed and comments you make may be recorded in a thesis I am writing for my study. This thesis is looking at exploring perspectives in Reconciliation, and helps to define for myself what Reconciliation attempts to be.

I make this commitment to you, that prior to submission or publication you will be given the opportunity to withdraw any statements, comments or reactions you consider inappropriate or not for publication for whatever reason. Each participant will be given a copy of the thesis and subsequent publications to read prior to being submitted.

I consider the information gathered throughout interviewing sessions. your information. If throughout the study you wish to withdraw your participation you may do so at any time. All names of participants shall remain anonymous.

I invite any further questions you may wish to ask. Melissa Burgess, Phone 9477 1098.

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of the research study can contact the executive officer of the Human Ethics Committee (HEC) The University of Sydney Phone (02) 9351 4811, Fax; (02) 9351 6706.

page 1 only



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page 1 only



The University of Sydney
Faculty of Health Sciences
YOOROANG GARANG
The School of Indigenous Health Studies



Dear

I am a student of the University of Sydney at Yooroang Garang, The School of Indigenous Health Studies and am in my final year of study, at present working on my honours thesis.

I am a non Aboriginal student studying in an Indigenous School. My honours thesis is titled Exploring Perspectives On Reconciliation. As part of my thesis I will be interviewing six to eight people. Four Aboriginal people and four non Aboriginal people. Non Aboriginal Interviewees will include a historian, a member of ANTAR, a representative of the One Nation Party and a person of public prominence. Aboriginal interviews will include two Indigenous elders, an academic, and a member of the Reconciliation Council.

I am excited by this research as it will give me a better understanding of my role in the process of reconciliation. In speaking with this range of people I will be provided with a broad base of knowledge and opinions about reconciliation.

The reason I am contacting you is to request your participation as a respondent for my project. I include a copy of the consent form and plain language statement which guarantees confidentiality of the information you give.

Thank you for considering this request. I would like to hear from you as soon as possible if you could contact me on.

Ph 02 9477 1098

Yours Faithfully.

Melissa Burgess
9/6/99

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P39 4.5 - needs discussion - quote doesn't stand on its own

(4) last paragraph - This process is encouraging A.A....
whole sentence doesn't make sense.

P34 5. In Pursuit of One Nation
getting to the way of using participants to drive the thesis

P 44 - First sentence doesn't make any sense
void in what previous policy - surely assimilation was based on a recognition of difference.

This whole paragraph makes little sense.

Government is representing itself... while taking away with the other - need to provide concrete examples - eg from source other than the participant budget docs, reports etc.

P45 - no change for the better concerning right or social justice ^{improvements} rights - Mabo, Wik, Terra Nullius
(depends on your definition)
- social justice - some health improvements

maybe could cite negative examples

It's just not that cut + dried

P45 5-2 Australia holds a strong sense of nationhood + national identity - should be Australians. These views are held... what views

This stuff doesn't make sense.

How does One Nation relate to

All this asking of questions is really like trashy journalism
You need to convince the reader with evidence not ask questions which seem to be truth ^{fact} disguised as a question
They are rhetorical - this is evidenced by many of the 'questions' not having question marks at the end.
but a conspiracy feel to it.

empirical reporting and discussion of possible interpretations or implications, use of literate rather than oral style. This feedback would be explanatory and advisory rather than rewriting by the supervisor. It is expected that the supervisor would have read and commented on each section of the thesis.

Sample assessment Checklist Given to Markers

Checklist yes/no

Criterion <i>check list</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Topic is clearly identified							
2. Understanding of importance of topic in relation to existing body of knowledge for Health Worker profession							
3. Comprehensive review of literature							
4. Appropriate coverage of primary and secondary sources of literature							
5. Appropriateness of approach <i>methodology</i>							
6. Problem clearly identified							
7. identification of limitations of research							
8. Identification of appropriateness of approach according to literature							
9. Validity & reliability of data <i>analysis/data</i>							
10. Clarity in presentation of data							
11. Appropriateness of findings to answering the original question							
12. Appropriate positioning of findings in existing body of knowledge found in literature.							
13. Adequate and scholarly presentation							
14. Logical sequence and meaningful presentation							
15. Problem free spelling, grammar, expression, punctuation and referencing.							
16. Free of Stereotyping and bias in choice of language.							

→ How does mechanism?

Creativity/originality

Categories -

1st class H → 85%

Div 2 class 1 74-85

Div 2 class 2 65-74

↑ automatic adm. HTS.PW

③ needed to begin with a much clearer description of Reconciliation at least from govt / Rec. Council documents - did try to do this when talking about Harke + Keating but not really clearly.

P29 - Nothing through school curricula - really - major changes to curricula in recent years not directly related to Rec. Council work but clearly linked to changes in govt policy

P30 Talks about the Reconciliation process now as if it is something tangible but it hasn't really been described.

P32 - The question ... highlighted by respondents - here starts to acknowledge + draw on participants - the research.

P35 - made for media fear campaign - examples would have been good here or even references

- how does the study circles documentary relate to who defines the process - it seems related but needed expansion + clarity.

P37 - seems to be hypothesising that Govt using Reconciliation to avoid a treaty - or this has borne out.

Would like to have seen the schedule of questions. Wouldn't the first logical one have been what do you see as Reconciliation seems to be using the participants responses to answer her own agenda rather than drive the piece - this may of course only be to do with the writing

P38 - 4 questions without? but more importantly raising questions like that + not over-avoiding substance + content.

Roslyn Poignant. "The Grid on Contested Ground. At Pickford's freight store." 1991.

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② The data is not clearly driving the arguments. I don't have a sense of the participants speaking

P25-30
Where did all the identity stuff come from

P25 - the Indigenous situation has been seen with indifference throughout her - this is clearly not true + Reynolds at least one of her sources is clear on that - he shows that there were concerns - mostly by citing examples from local newspapers.

P26 - ^{Paragraph} P22 The history has largely been of white European
this was not necessarily true of the 19th century true to a large extent in the early mid 20th but started to change around the 1970s - feminism 1980s (AB) ^{writing of history}

Appendices not labelled

Methodology section - P13 repeats about using quotes - No reference for Indigenous ethics -

P18 Segregation - needs references

- really poor paragraph structure - doesn't seem to be a logical progression

pages out of order - 15, 17, 18, 16, 19.

P19 - Assimilation - needs references

- it's a large leap from discrimination racism to poor health status - this link would have to be much more clearly delineated.

P21 - nothing - meaningless words.

P23 - was it really to achieve social rule + domination

how do we know this -

P26 - Ethnocentrism has been highly utilised...

those attitudes might be described as ethnocentrism

but not ethnocentrism has been utilised - I'm not

sure that processes are that highly organised, systematic

P27 - how can an ideology consider itself anything

Ethnocentrism seems to take on a life of its own

⑤ P46 - This clear state ideology - how does it provide use for a welfare mentality or fail to recognise need for consultation?

It's a leap from one nation concept to suggesting that diversity among communities is not recognised leading to wastage of money

middle of page no effective outcomes is clearly wrong

P47 - link 1) Genocide + Reconciliation
this really needs discussion

P48-50 - Now starting to make better use of participants + what they said

P54 - The Stanner quote - a lovely quote.

P56 - Dodson quote lovely.

P59 - Definition of Reconciliation - needed to come earlier.

The conclusion is more like a personal reflection than a summary of the findings

Seems not to have grasped the complexity of the issue
perhaps has made the mistake of making it too much
her own paper - not the participants'
maybe needed to be clearer about what social justice outcomes
(P57), 48

