
Strategic Indigenous Awareness

To understand our present
- *we must understand our past*

2010 SNAICC National Conference, Alice Springs

Grant Sarra Consultancy Services

Email: gsarra@bigpond.net.au

Mobile: 0417 502 049

I humbly acknowledge my presence on the land of the Central Arrernte people - the Traditional Owners and Custodians for Mparntwe – Alice Springs.

I acknowledge our Elders who have past – without their wisdom, strength, determination and leadership – I, and many others, would not be what we are today!

I acknowledge our Elders who are present – without your continued wisdom, strength, determination and leadership – we will continue to struggle in our future!

Despite my formal education, career background and humble achievements – I acknowledge that I am just a boy in your presence and on your country!

What's going down today

Place Australian history into an honest perspective – beyond fear, ignorance, denial, guilt or blame

Continue to think about ways to develop stronger, culturally appropriate and local-based models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood and Family Practices

Embrace Change, Dignity and Integrity

Change the way we think, feel and behave toward each other so that we can become better human beings. To do this: we must have the dignity and integrity to know what this means in relation to who we are and what our priorities are in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood and family practice

Some things to ponder beyond today.

Have we come far enough in the western world of government and bureaucracy – What are the good things we can take forward and what are the bad things can we leave behind?

If we (Aboriginal men) were as abusive toward our women and our children and as disrespectful toward our old people as the Government and the media would have us believe:

**HOW DID WE SURVIVE AS A PEOPLE IN
THIS COUNTRY FOR IN EXCESS OF 2000+
GENERATIONS?**

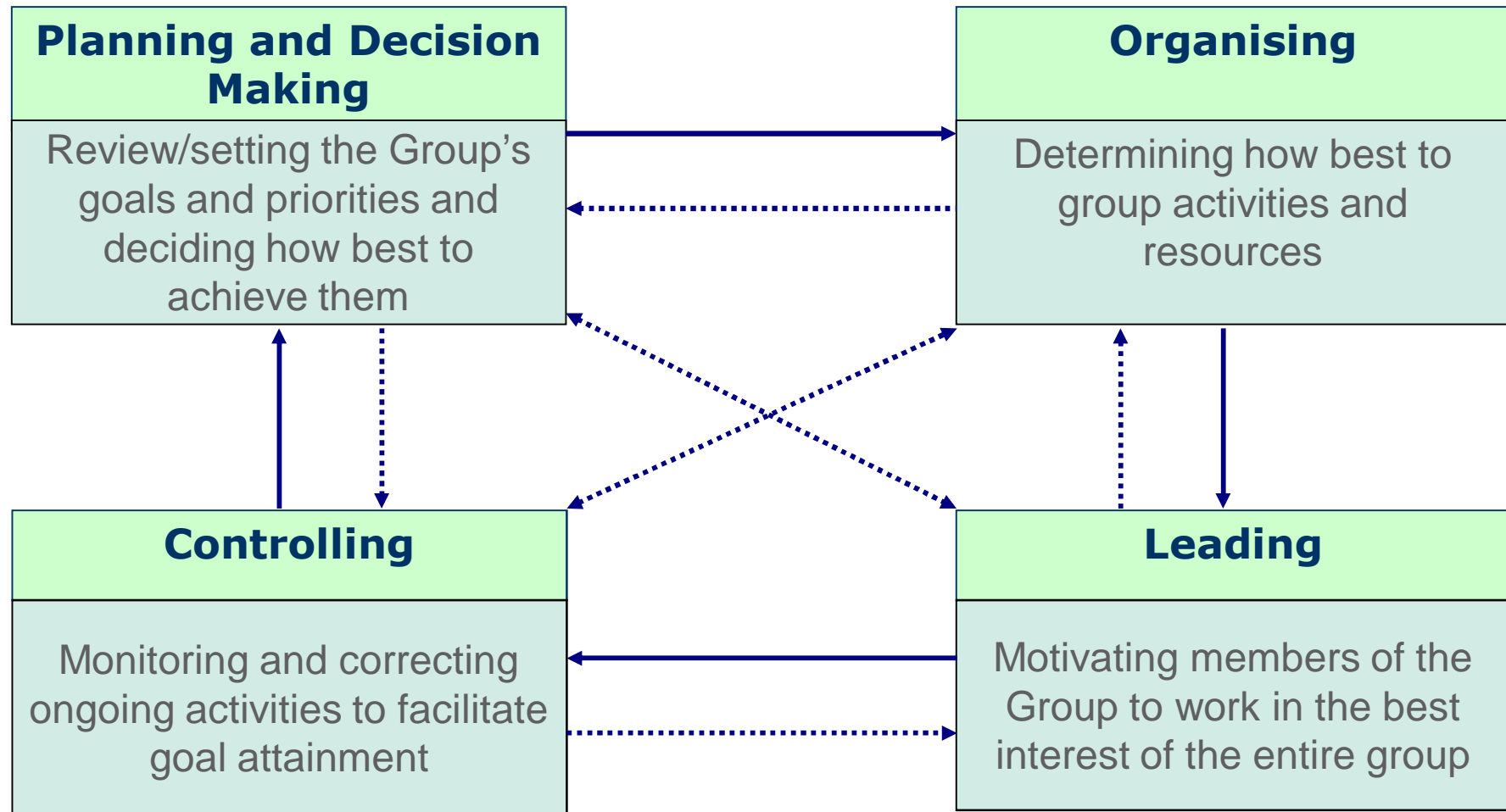
Our past effects our present.

We have all become socialised to think, feel and behave based on our past.

To be treated poorly in one's past almost inevitably results in one thinking, feeling and behaving poorly in one's present.

By healing one's past we provide a greater chance of succeeding in one's future!

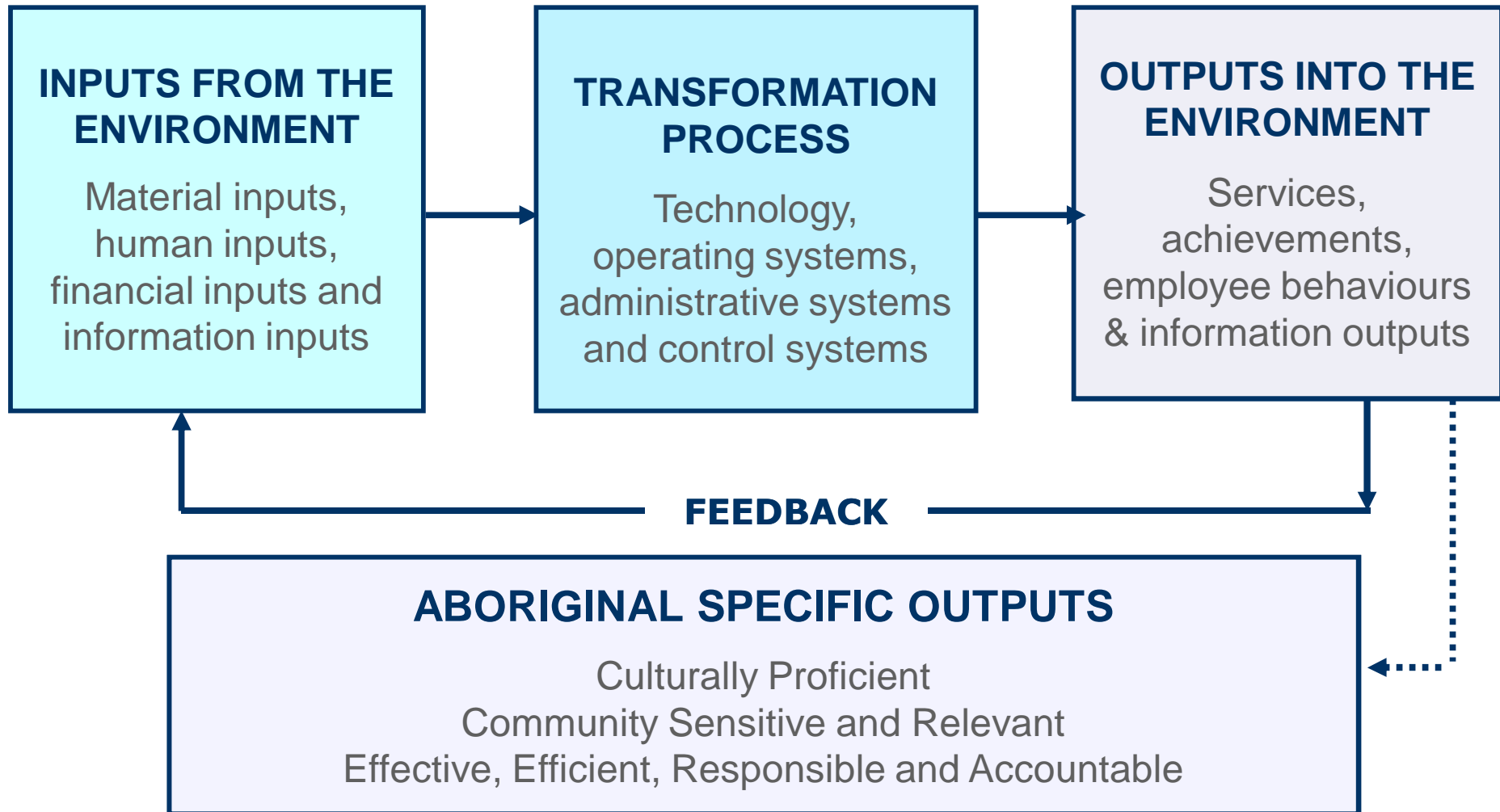
The Standard Management Functions & Process



Public Policy Problem Solving Analysis

Problem	Issues	Solutions	Action
Clearly define the problem.	What are the issues which surround the problem.	What are the possible solutions based on time, quality, cost, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency.	What is the most appropriate action to take based on time, quality, cost, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency.
<p>FORMULATE GOVERNMENT POLICY AND DIRECTION</p> <p>Develop Annual Action/Operational & Project Plans</p> <p>Review and Start again</p>			

Transforming Resource Inputs into Outputs



Cultural Sensitivity

Environmental Factors and Influences

Cultural Diversity

Accountability,
Deaths in Custody,
Psychological
Scarring,
Intergenerational
Trauma, Anger,
Bitterness,
Mistrust, Apathy,
Ignorance, Fear,
Insecurity,
Discrimination,
Racism,
Paternalism,
Fractured Kinship
Systems,
Government
Policy, Cultural
Values, Identity,
Dignity, Pride

**Accountability
Transparency
Responsible
Effective
Efficient**

**Strong Leadership
and Management**

**Closing the
Gap**

Early Childhood and
Family Support?

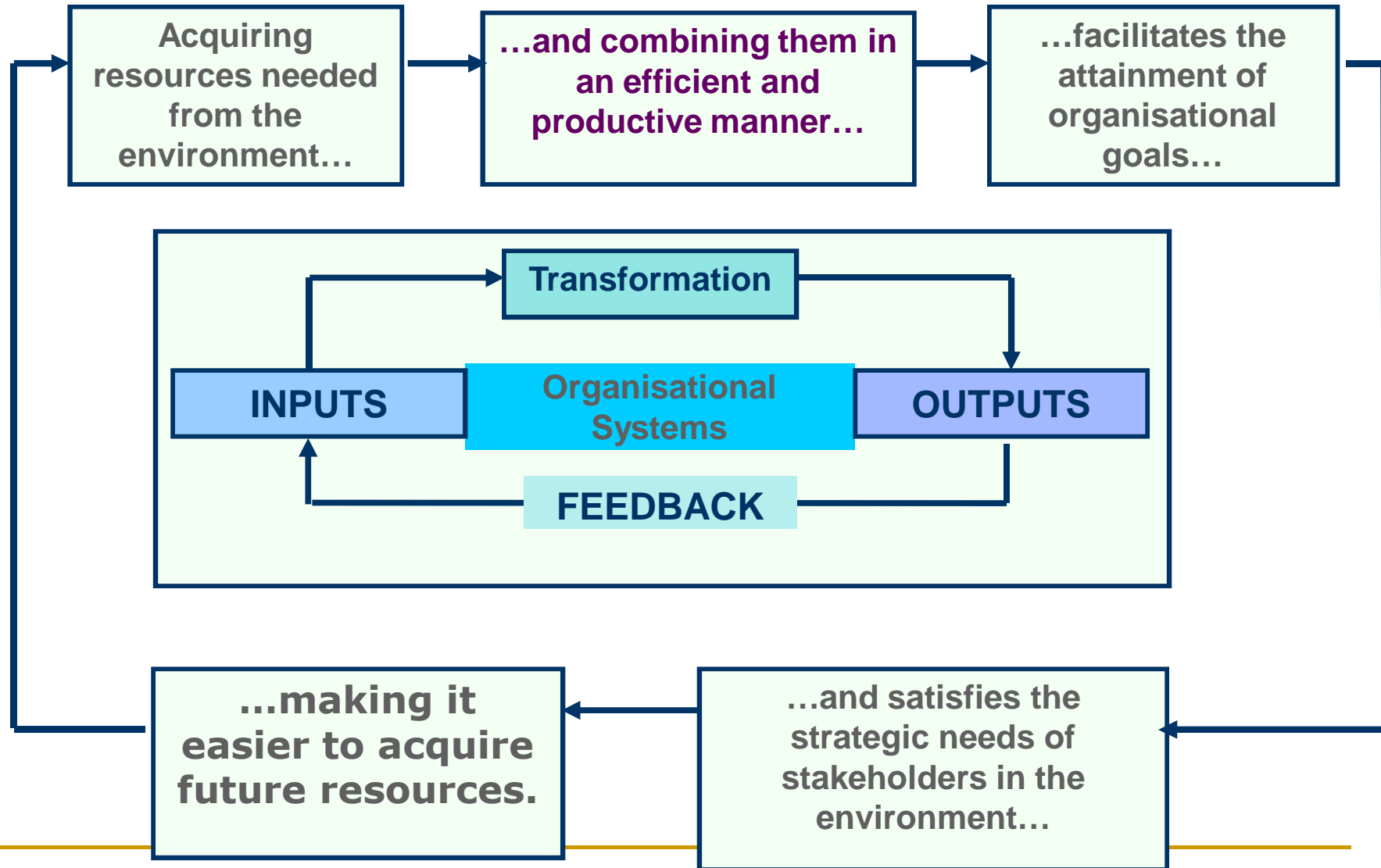
**Culturally Appropriate
and Community
Sensitive**

**Aboriginal People's
Requirements**

Identity, Client
Understanding,
Communication
Barriers, Court
Systems, Police,
Limited
Resources,
Western Law,
Customary Lore,
Technology,
Wealth
Generation,
Geographical
Isolation,
Access, Equity,
Participation,
Capacity, Stolen
Wages.

Welfare, Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, Corporate Governance, Colonisation,
Dispossession, Stolen Generations, Child Abuse, Community Factions, Confusion.

Responses to the Environment



Defining Aboriginal Traditional Society and Culture

Most ancient living culture in the world – in excess of 60,000 years - 2000 + Generations

Our story is in the land... it is written in those sacred places. My children will look after those places, that is law. Dreaming place...you can't change it, no matter who you are, No matter you rich man, no matter you king, You can't change it.'

Those trees...they grow. That grass...no matter it burn. When it drink, it grow again. When you cut tree, it pump life away, all same as blood in my arm.

This earth...I never damage, I look after. Fire is nothing, just clean up. When you burn, new grass coming up, that mean good animal soon...might be goose, long neck turtle, goanna, possum. Burn him off...new grass coming up, new life start all over.

Law never change...always stay same. Maybe it hard but proper one for all people. Not like white European law...always changing. You don't like it, you change it.

Land got to stay, always stay same. No matter little track...grass still grow, bush can grow. But soon as bitumen there all finished. Grass don't grow, maybe little bit side, but middle...nothing. You look where timber, gone, pulled out. Bulldozer rip it out. Well, you feel it in your body. You say 'That tree same as me, This piece of ground he grow you.

Aboriginal law never change. Old people tell us, 'You got to keep it.' It always stays.

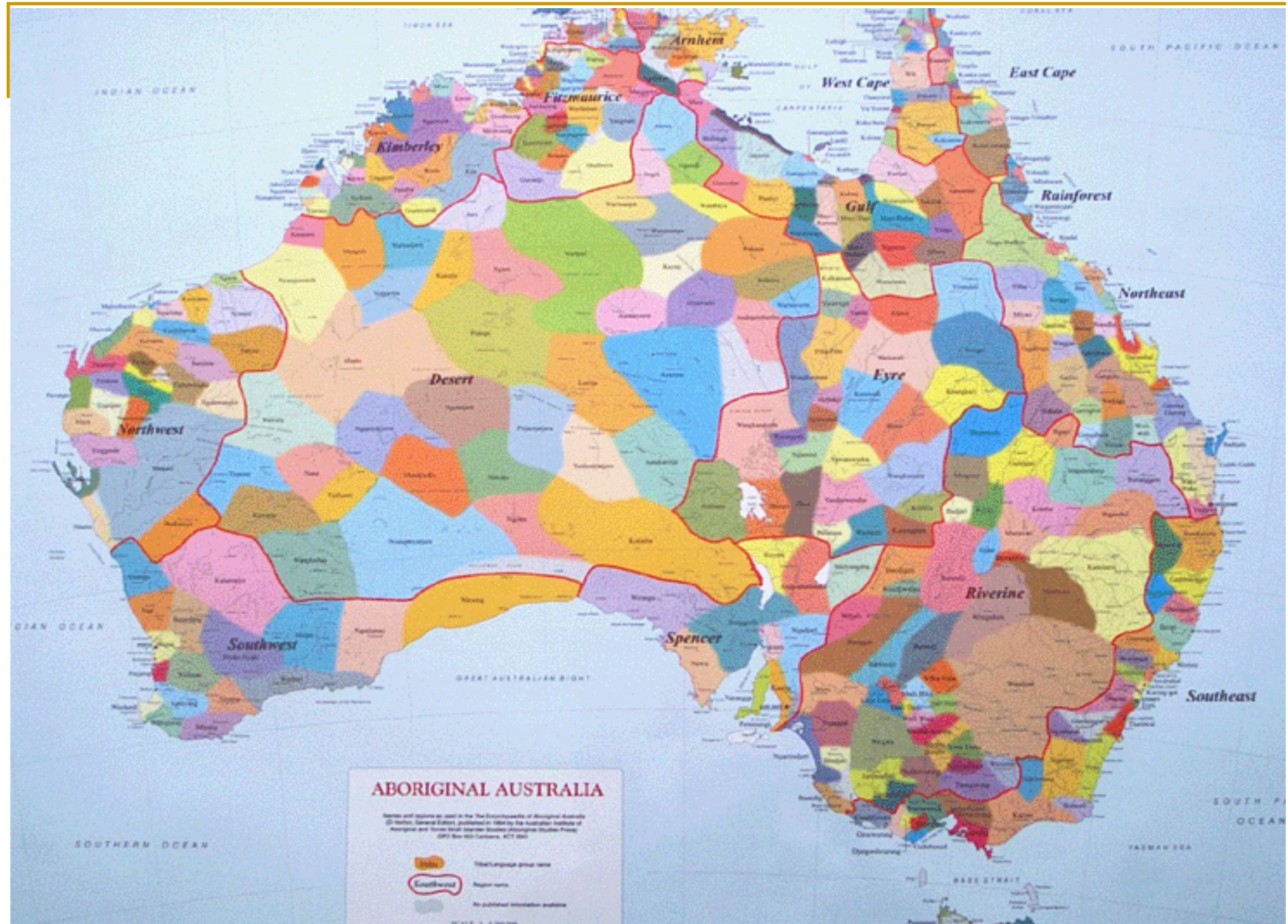
My children got to hang onto this story. This important story. I hang onto this story all my life. My father tell me this story. My children can't lose it.

This law...this country...this people...No matter what people...red, yellow, black or white...the blood is all the same. Lingo little bit different...but no matter, Country...you in other place but same feeling. Blood...bone all the same. This story is true story.

You got children... grandson. Might be your grandson will get this story... keep going... hang on like I done.

Skin can be different, but blood same. Blood and bone... all same. Man can't split himself. White European can't say 'Oh that Aborigine no good' Might be that Aborigine alright. Man can't growl at Aborigine, Aborigine can't growl at white European... Might both be good men, might both be no good...you never know. So you should get understand yourself. No matter Aborigine or white European. Bill Neidjie 1983.

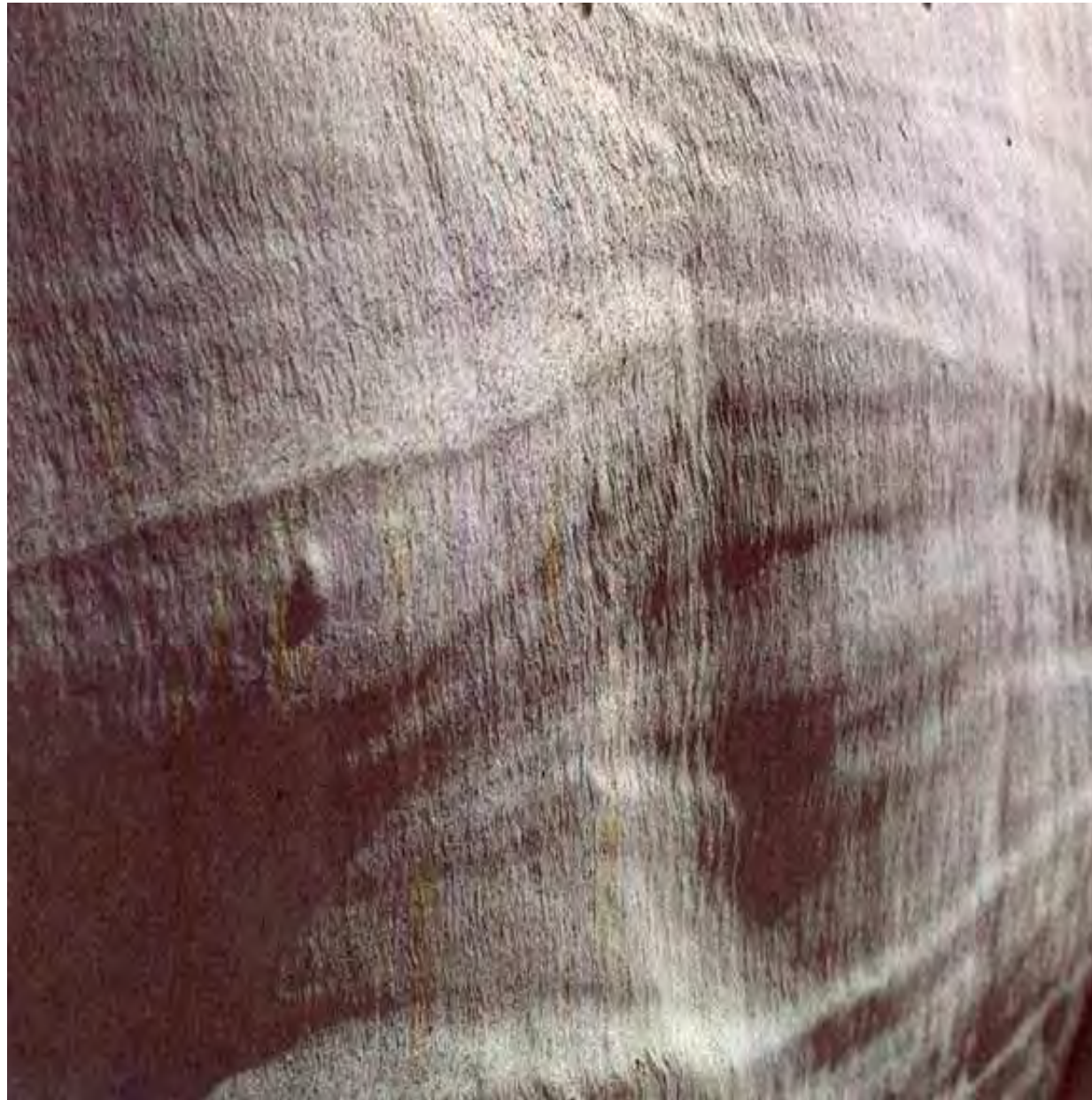
Extracts from **Kakadu Man - Bill Neidjie**, Big Bill Neidjie, Stephen Davis and Allan Fox, Mybrood P/L Inc in NSW (Allan Fox and Associates), 1986.





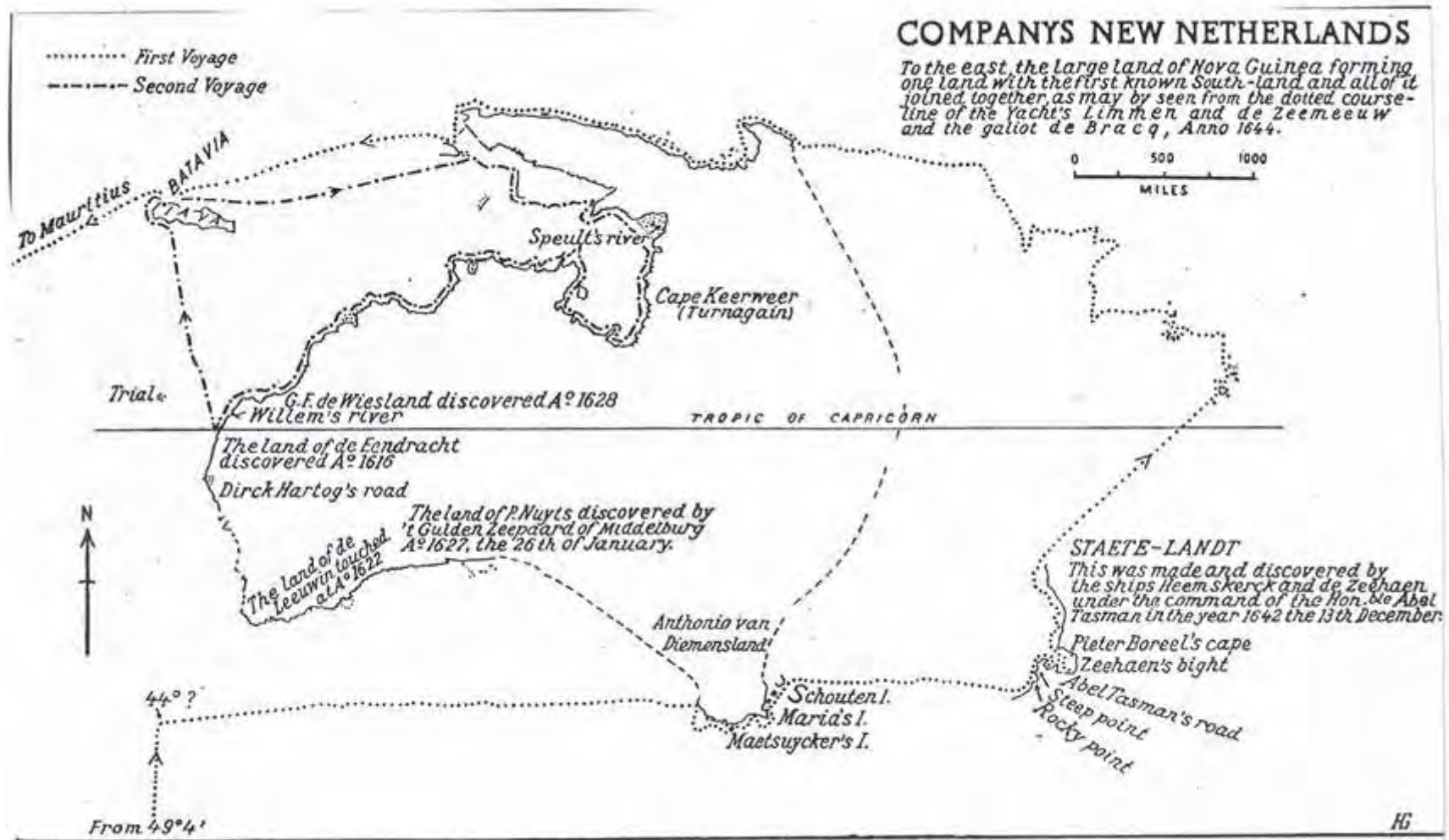






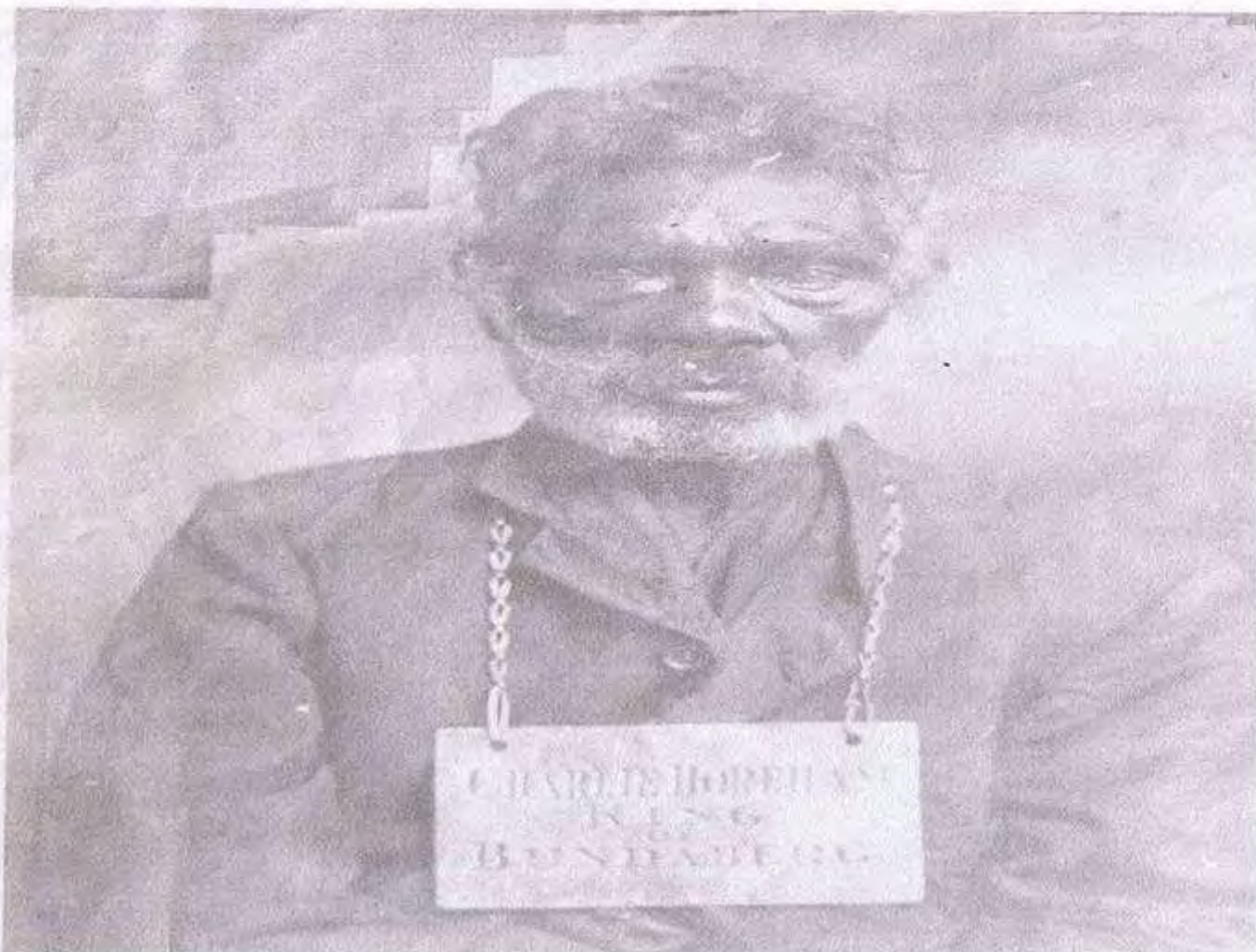
Images from **Kakadu Man - Bill Neidjie**, Big Bill Neidjie, Stephen Davis and Allan Fox, Mybrood P/L Inc in NSW (Allan Fox and Associates), 1986.

Settlement, Invasion, Colonisation?



2 Tasman's Map of his Voyages (Original in the Mitchell Library, Sydney)

Images from **A History of Australia**, Vol 1, From the Earliest Times to the Age of Macquarie C.M.H. Clarke, Melbourne University Press 1977.

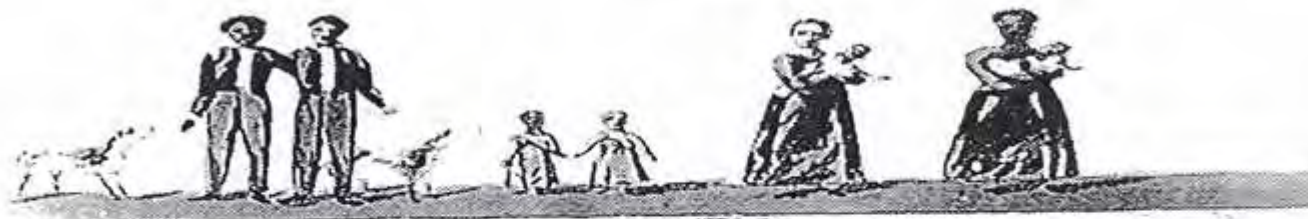


Charlie Borcham, "King of Bundaberg" — a token gesture. With the coming of white settlement Bundaberg Aborigines were soon reduced to "begging food and old clothing". Photo: BDHMS.

110 CONTACT: AN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY



GOVERNOR DAVEY'S
PROCLAMATION
TO THE ABORIGINES
1846



For the Aboriginal communities living along Tasmania's northern shores, the presence of the economic pioneers was catastrophic. The sealers not only depleted traditional Aboriginal food sources, but in time, triggered a total dislocation of indigenous social life.

Skilled in the techniques of seal catching, the Aboriginal women were eventually regarded by the sealers as an essential part of their operation. Violence, sometimes of the most brutal kind, became endemic in their relations. A group of sealers, for example, was recorded to have punished one runaway female by tying her to a tree, cutting off her ear and the flesh from one thigh and then, forcing her to eat them. An index of their endemic hatred and casual violence towards the Aborigines was provided by one of their number, who told a Tasmanian historian that he 'liked to kill a black fellow better than smoke a pipe,' adding 'and I am a rare one at that, too.'

Another confessed that he would 'as leave, shoot them as so many sparrows'. Despite his innocent-sounding name, a man called Lemon was accustomed to use them as target practice, while others confessed to feeding their dogs on Aborigines shot specifically for that purpose. Their relish for murdering the men was more than equalled by their sexual appetite for the women, and a bushranger called Carrot found a way of satisfying both urges almost simultaneously. After slaughtering a Tasmanian man, he then abducted and raped his widow and forced her to carry her husband's severed head around her neck 'as a play-thing'.

Extracts From Rivers Of Blood Rivers of Gold –Europe's Conflicts with Tribal Peoples (pp134, 136)

UNCONDITIONAL EXEMPTION FROM THE PROVISIONS OF THE ABORIGINES ACT, 1934-1939.

In pursuance of the powers conferred by section 11a of the Aborigines Act, 1934-1939, the Aborigines Protection Board, being

of opinion that

of 29

by reason of his character and standard of intelligence and development, should be exempted from the provisions of the Aborigines Act, 1934-1939, does hereby unconditionally declare that the said

shall cease to be an aborigine for the purposes of the said Act.

PHOTOGRAPH OF BEARER



Signature of Bearer.....

The Seal of the Aborigines Protection Board was hereunto affixed on the 17th

day of OCTOBER 1962, in the presence of

J. S. Cleland
Chairman
Constance M. Cooke
Member
[Signature]
Act Secretary

The following quote refers to the attitudes of Queensland politicians in 1946.

"...Queensland politicians still talked of Aboriginal inferiority and extinction. Consequently, they talked of ways of protecting and preserving Aborigines, and finding some form of employment for them, as second class citizens.

G Devries: My concern is to see that the native labour is educated to the extent that the aboriginal becomes a useful citizen. I do not say that he should be placed on the same level as the white man and I do not for a moment think that there are many in this Chamber who believe that should be so. I do not admit for a minute that the nigger, is as good as I am. The fact is that he is a human being and he is entitled to that measure of respect, which helps him to overcome his inferiority complex, and to become an asset to the nation.... I hope that the aboriginal race is never exterminated - and I do not think we shall live to see the day when it does disappear - but I cannot allow natives to intermingle freely and unfettered with the white community".

Extracts From W. Ross. Johnson, [A Documentary History of Queensland, from reminiscences, diaries, parliamentary papers, newspapers, letters and photographs](#), p.143).

In 1951 the Federal Government convened a Australian Council for Native Welfare composed of various responsible Ministers and their advisors.

The policy of Assimilation was formulated as follows:

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 as other Australians ”.

Race and Racism in Australia, McConnochie, Hollingsworth & Pettman,1988, p 111

1967 Referendum

Two Referendums are being held on the same day on two separate proposed laws for the alteration of the Constitution. At the Referendums each voter should indicate separately his vote in relation to EACH proposed law as follows:

If HE APPROVES the proposed law—by writing the word YES in the space provided on the ballot-paper opposite the question; or

If HE DOES NOT APPROVE the proposed law—by writing the word NO in the space provided on the ballot-paper opposite the question.

The two questions will be set out on the ballot-paper thus:

DO YOU APPROVE the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution entitled—

“An Act to alter the Constitution so that the Number of Members of the House of Representatives may be increased without necessarily increasing the Number of Senators”?

DO YOU APPROVE the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution entitled—

“An Act to alter the Constitution so as to omit certain words relating to the People of the Aboriginal Race in any State and so that Aboriginals are to be counted in reckoning the Population”?

**YOU MUST VOTE IN RESPECT OF EACH
PROPOSED LAW
VOTING IS COMPULSORY**

Factors that will improve effective communication

Acknowledge the cultural diversity of our people.

Put yourself into the shoes of other people to better understand their situation.

Prior to visiting a community, take the time to consider where the community and its' people have come from socially, economically, culturally and spiritually.

Keep your eyes and ears open, your mouth initially closed out of respect for people and country, and your heart in the right place.

Without being disrespectful – read the non-verbal communications processes and cues.

Recognise that the people will read your non-verbal behaviour and actions

Be respectful of all people in the community.

Be clear about what positions people hold within the community and according to culture.

Recognise that conflicts do exist in some communities - don't judge them, work with all relevant groups.

Speak with the right people. Ensure the appropriate community representatives make decisions.

Be aware of the “protective do-gooder” personalities in some communities.

Recognise that there will be levels of anger, bitterness and frustration – don't take it personally.

Remember that you are dealing with “real people with real problems and issues”.

Establish a common purpose – what are the mutual outcomes/goals.

Be patient - stay focused on the bigger picture.

Highlight the need and encourage leadership to progress within a mutually agreed time-frame.

Balance western and Indigenous ways of doing business – seek out the common or middle ground AND always use effective/respected go-betweens.

Keep the people in the communication process consistent – don't chop and change.

Through your action and your commitment show that you care and that you are sincere and genuine.

Be comfortable and confident in your own self and cultural identity.

Treat others as you want to be treated - be kind, sensitive, honest, courteous and polite.

Build relationships that are based on honesty, sincerity and trust.

Recognise that once your meeting has finished, you can leave and go home – the community and the people remain.

If you make decisions, create hope or agree to outcomes – make sure that you respond within a reasonable timeframe.

Don't ever promise anything that cannot be delivered. Don't bullshit with people's lives - be honest and upfront.

Encourage and build cross-agency partnerships to avoid duplication and minimise community disruption.

Factors that will inhibit effective communication

Entering communications with preconceived ideas, prejudices or stereotypes.

Assuming all Indigenous groups are homogenous.

Trying to incorporate “urban” concepts to address remote or rural area issues and vice versa.

Disrespecting traditional communication processes and protocols.

Expecting decisions to be always made in accordance with corporate/government timelines – trying to force the outcome to meet deadlines.

Sending junior staff to speak at meetings where crucial decisions need to be made.

Sending men to talk about traditional women’s issues and vice versa.

Trying to communicate with people at inappropriate times, eg. Deaths, funerals.

Turning up unannounced at communities or organisations.

Looking down your nose at, or judging the community, the people or their situation.

Assuming that you know it all - and they know nothing.

Becoming an “over-night expert” on all things Indigenous.

Being rude, disrespectful or arrogant.

Patronising people.

Playing one person, group or faction against the other.

Promising things that can't be delivered.

Pulling the wool over people's eyes and having the wool pulled over your eyes.

Speaking above "or below" the people - using inappropriate language.

Not using appropriate go-betweens.

Trying to speak traditional language or dialects when you don't know how.

Pretending that you are interested when you are not.

Imposing your own values and beliefs where they not be appropriate.

Misinterpreting non-verbal communication cues.

Inappropriately touching.

Failing to promptly follow-up or provide feedback.
