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A history of the Wiradjuri people of New South Wales
1883 - 1969

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Mr Frank Simpson, 1910-1979,
Mt St Josephs Home, Young 1979
Abstract

This thesis is a study of the modern history of the Wiradjuri people of New South Wales. An introductory chapter reviews the period between the early European incursions into Wiradjuri country and the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board in 1883. The central seven chapters describe the period between 1880 and the abolition of the Aborigines Welfare Board (as it became known in 1940) in 1969. Because the history of the administration of Aboriginal policy in New South Wales has not been fully described elsewhere, consideration of that policy as it affected all Aborigines in the State is made where necessary. The main narrative concerns the inter-action between the Wiradjuri and official policy and at various points also an attempt is made to describe Wiradjuri attitudes and preceptions. The most important sources used are the records of the administration held in the State Archives and the recollections of Wiradjuri people interviewed, and where possible, recorded. In the 24 years between the ending of the Second World War and 1969, Wiradjuri perceptions and expectations diversified considerably and the final chapter, which reviews the period 1969-1979, indicates some of the implications of the post-war diversity.
I would have poured my spirit without stint,  
But not through wounds, not on the cess of war

Wilfred Owen, 'Strange Meeting'
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Contents

Acknowledgements iv
List of Maps vi
List of Plates vii
Introduction ix

1. The Wiradjuri People 1817-1883 1
2. The policy of voluntary concentration 1880-1909 47
3. Wiradjuri reaction 1880-1909 71
4. The dispersal of adults and children 1909-1929 110
5. The era of concentration 1929-1942 167
6. Community life 1943-1955 219
7. Dispersal resumed 1945-1969: the reserves 266
9. Wiradjuri perceptions in the 1970s 355

Appendix I The Aborigines Protection and Welfare Boards
Appendix II Wiradjuri reserves
Appendix III P. Read, 'Fathers and sons: a study of five men of 1900', Aboriginal History, 4 1/2 (1980), 97-116
Appendix IV The post-war housing scheme

Bibliography
List of maps

1. Boundaries of Wiradjuri country xi

2. Wiradjuri country in the twentieth century xviii
List of plates
(all photographs by author unless specified)

Mr Frank Simpson, 1901-1979, frontispiece

Condobolin Aborigines, 1900

Two former residents of Warangesda: Mr Edgar Howell; Mr Alf Williams

Brungle Station, 1980

Warangesda girls in the dormitory, 1899

Warangesda dormitory, 1980

Mrs Violet Bolger, Tumut, 1980; Mr Locky Ingram, Sydney 1979; Mrs Julia Wighton, Condobolin 1980

Extract 'Beera Hickey', Register of Wards

Mrs Emma Penrith, Griffith, 1980; Mr Fred Collins, Murrumburrah, 1980

Mr Sam Kennedy, Cowra, 1979

Mr Ossie Ingram at the Sandhills

The site of a Depression camp, Euabalong

Gathering of workers at Cowra after Gooloogong convention, c.1933

The church, Erambie, 1979

Erambie residents, about 1936

Erambie houses, constructed 1951-2

Mr Jim Charles, Euabalong, 1980

Mr Jim Charles and author, Euabalong, 1980, at the site of the Charles' home

Exemption certificate of Mr Frank Broughton

The Hollywood reserve, Yass, 1980

European-style houses, Wattle Hill, 1980

Mrs Winifred Marlowe, Tumut, 1980

The Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Home
Mr Richard Murray, Erambie, 1979
Mr Noel Johnson, Sydney, 1971; Sydney 1957; Adelaide 1975
Mr Colin Glass, Erambie, 1979; Mrs May Collett, Cowra, 1979; Mrs Olive Williams, Erambie, 1979; Mr Gordon Simpson, Cowra, 1979
The Murie site, Condobolin, 1980
The Marngie waterhole, Euabalong, 1980
Erambie residents, 1979
Introduction

This study of the modern history of an Australian Aboriginal tribe concerns the Wiradjuri people of New South Wales. The period of study begins at the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board in 1883. It ends at the abolition of its successor, the Aborigines Welfare Board, in 1969.

Wiradjuri country lies in the eastern-central area of New South Wales. Because of its central position and relative proximity to Sydney, it was settled earlier and more intensively than many other areas of the state. Today the effect of the form and direction of the expansion of the New South Wales pastoral industry is still apparent: it is not a coincidence that the Ngiyamba language, spoken to the west of Wiradjuri country, has survived, while the Wiradjuri language, for practical purposes, has not. Such changes in Aboriginal usage have occurred not only in proportion to the numbers of white people in a single area. They occurred also because of official policy, which though uniform in intent, was enacted most vigorously in areas where whites were most vociferous in demanding that Aborigines be controlled. It is partly because of these factors that the Wiradjuri, in attitude and societal structure, are in some ways more similar to Victorian Aborigines than to the tribes of the north-west of New South Wales.

This does not mean that the Wiradjuri are necessarily less 'traditional' than the north-western peoples. It is not possible to state with certainty what were the traditions of
Aboriginal life before the invasion. There is, in any case, little reason to doubt that Aboriginal culture, insofar as it can be described as a single culture at all, was in process of change before, as well as after, 1788. Of greater interest to the historian than an attempted enumeration of pre-invasion traditions is the way in which the traditions were perceived by later Aborigines. Traditions exist in the minds of those who live by them, and the way in which they were seen and acted upon by the Wiradjuri has been a considerable factor in their recent history. In this study the concept of the 'traditional life' refers to the perceived past rather than to absolute cultural forms predating 1788.

The study also is based on the belief that culture, as well as genetic inheritance, has determined Aboriginal self-identification. Such a starting-point is diametrically opposed to the assumption upon which the successive policies of the Aborigines Protection and Welfare Boards were based, that people who looked more European than Aboriginal, irrespective of the culture in which they were raised, ought ultimately to identify as European. The question of the proportion of a person's 'Aboriginal blood' is here taken to be culturally irrelevant. Such questions were not, unfortunately, historically irrelevant, and a good many of the following pages describe attempts to prevent 'non Aborigines' from associating with 'Aborigines' and to persuade both to become like whites. Regardless of the complexities of the legislation, the definition of Aboriginality used in this study is a simple one.
- boundaries of traditional Wiradjuri country identified by Tindale
- boundaries of area of association by Wiradjuri people: 1979-82

Boundaries of Wiradjuri country
Men and women who were raised, regarded themselves and were regarded by others as Aborigines, are taken to have been so.

The term Wiradjuri, which once most clearly distinguished the speakers of that language from those of other languages, now is defined by the identification of an extensive kin-network. The narrative concerns the beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, opportunities and actions of those who thought, and think, themselves to be Wiradjuri. At many points the narrative describes events in particular towns, yet these places, which appear to play so important a part in the story, are in a sense secondary to the system of kin-identification which criss-crosses Wiradjuri country. In 1983, almost as much as in 1883, the history of the Wiradjuri people is the history of particular families, the principal of which are Bamblett, Grant, Ingram, Coe, Johnson, Williams, Hickey, Freeman, Simpson, Glass and Murray.

Wiradjuri country, expressed thus in the living and movement patterns of certain extended families, appears to have contracted south and east since the white invasion. In the north, the missionary James Gunther heard Wiradjuri spoken most commonly at the Wellington Valley Mission in the 1830s; today Wellington Aborigines commonly identify with kin-networks to the north of the traditional Wiradjuri boundaries. It is not the identification of the people which has changed, but the people themselves: one set of people with certain family orientations, for reasons which must now be partly conjectural, has replaced another. Therefore the present day people of Wellington play no
part in this history. Similarly the Wiradjuri population of Wagga Wagga seems to have been lost to nearby towns like Narrandera before 1900. Today Wagga Wagga has a large Aboriginal population, most of which has been moved by recent government policy from areas remote from Wiradjuri kin groupings. Similarly, Hillston is taken to be the westernmost point of modern Wiradjuri country, although several nineteenth-century ethnographers placed the boundary much further west. Again the criterion is self-identification, for since 1900 people whose family orientation was to the west have moved westward, and those to the east, have moved eastwards. In the south-east, the Wiradjuri now dominate the districts of Yass and Tumut, which in pre-invasion times may have been occupied by speakers of other languages. It is arguable, and the matter is of some importance to modern Wiradjuri, whether, say, Yass or Wellington is to be regarded as within today's Wiradjuri country. Yet for the purposes of this study I have followed the identification of the Wiradjuri as they themselves described it in 1979-82.

The period 1883-1969, the period of the administration of the two Boards, has an internal unity. It was in that period that government policy towards Aborigines was at its most comprehensive and purposeful. This policy and its administration has not yet been fully described by historians, and for this reason is detailed here. Major legislative changes which affected all N.S.W. Aborigines are described, because the history of the Wiradjuri people cannot be understood unless set in that context. The story of Wiradjuri Aborigines, like that
of many other tribes, is to a great extent the history of their interaction with the administration of the whites.

There were several discernable phases of policy. Between 1883 and about 1900 there was a period of comparative benevolence, in which the members of the Aborigines Protection Board hoped that old and feeble Aborigines would remain on the newly-established stations, and the young and able-bodied would make their way into the white community. By 1900 it was apparent, at the Wiradjuri stations Warangesda and Brungle no less than elsewhere, that Aborigines could not be persuaded to abandon movement patterns of long standing. The large stations were out of control, and the official realisation that Aborigines could not be managed without statutory authority found legislative expression in the Aborigines Protection Act of 1909 and by several successive amendments to strengthen it. The policy embodied in the Act attempted to drive most of the adults from the reserves and the children into institutions. I describe it as a policy of dispersal, although it was known officially as Protection. By the beginning of the Depression in 1929, that policy too was in tatters: the Wiradjuri expelled from the reserves simply moved to new areas within the customary movement patterns, and three-quarters of the children, sometimes after searing experiences, returned to an Aboriginal community. The respite from dispersal, or Assimilation, as the policy became known officially in the late 1930s, ended by the beginning of the Second World War; the Wiradjuri in the following decades were forced or encouraged from the reserves into the country towns. In 1969 the Aborigines Welfare Board was abolished, and
its several functions incorporated into a number of old and new
government bodies. Aborigines were promised a number of
changes, including effective representation in policy making.

The theme of this history is not, however, an exposition of
government policy, nor is it merely a description of Wiradjuri
interaction with that policy. The Wiradjuri people in 1983 are
prouder, more numerous and more self-assertive than they were in
1883, and the historian must explain how, in the teeth of
goVERNment policy intended, sometimes explicitly, to achieve the
opposite result, these changes have occurred.

One explanation is based on the proposition that the mental
parameters of self-estimation - the questions of what, in the
eyes of the Wiradjuri, Aborigines ultimately were worth - have
been as potent a factor in inhibiting or initiating change as the
policies of the whites. The changing nature and variety of such
self-perceptions, involving not only a view of the traditional
past, but the expected place of Aborigines in the contemporary
world, have been crucial to the history of the Wiradjuri. Within
them may be found the rationales which, in turn, have underlain
the several solutions to the central problem of the Wiradjuri:
how to share their country with the whites. One such solution was
to withdraw into a solely Aboriginal society. Another was to join
the society of the whites by demonstrating to them that
Aborigines were their equals. A third, which did not become
explicit until a century after the invasion of Wiradjuri country,
was the belief that Aborigines were superior to, and were
owed something special by, the whites. Each of
these solutions, and others, has been important at different times during the last century. Self-perceptions influenced attitude, attitude influenced expectation, and expectation influenced the changes which occurred.

What caused the changes in self-perception? I investigate a number of the factors, such as the role of missionaries and station managers, and the effect of activities like itinerant fruit picking. Other influences were more complex. I argue, for instance, that the moving of people from reserves to towns in the 1950s, as allowed under the amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act of 1943, produced results unintended and unwanted by the senior administration. For some Aborigines, life in towns caused a desire, not to subsume an Aboriginal identity into the general Australian community, but to strip away some of the negative associations acquired after generations of Aboriginal poverty. The result was to diversify, and ultimately strengthen, the Aboriginal self-identifications of the Wiradjuri.

This history of the Wiradjuri is not the story of inevitable decline to extinction, nor yet the triumphal march, through tribulations, to self-determination. It is the story of a struggle carried out on a day-to-day basis, at one level, to stay alive, and at another, to retain as far as it was possible, the perceived values of Aboriginal society. This study indicates that in the midst of dispersal and indoctrination, southern Aboriginal culture endured as distinctively Aboriginal in organisation and values. Even amongst the children taught by whites, a co-consciousness was imbibed of some of the values of
both civilisations. Where the Wiradjuri were able to live and raise their children as they wished, they did so, and where they were not, often they did so as soon as the local repression was ended. In this centenary year of the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board, it is plain that the Wiradjuri have survived, and that their survival is due almost entirely to their own efforts. How this was achieved, and at what cost, is described in the following pages.
Wiradjuri country in the 20th century
Chapter One
The Wiradjuri people 1817 - 1883

This chapter reviews the period between the early European incursions into Wiradjuri country and the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board. First I consider some major aspects of Wiradjuri life as they were described by European ethnographers, and conclude that it is useful to think of Wiradjuri culture as part of a smooth continuum of traditions which involved the whole of south-eastern Australia. Then the activities of the European pastoralists and farmers in the period are outlined. The third section, within the limitations of the sources, describes the effect of these activities on the Wiradjuri. I conclude with an attempt to describe some important Wiradjuri self-perceptions on the eve of the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board.

In the nineteenth century the traditional boundaries of the Wiradjuri enclosed the eastern section of the country between the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee rivers. Beyond these boundaries, Wiradjuri speakers lived south of Wagga Wagga to the Murray, west of the Willandra Creek to Ivanhoe, north of the Lachlan to Wellington, and along the Tumut River. Some of what appeared to be some geographical determinants of the boundaries still can be recognised. Tindale noted that the Wiradjuri/Narinari boundary 25 km. east of Hay appeared to be marked by a change from open Eucalyptus woodland and grassed plain, first to Eucalyptus and saltbush, and further into Narinari country, to saltbush on an
almost featureless plain.¹ Flood believed that the boundary between the southern tableland tribes and the Wiradjuri was at the foot of the western slopes between Gundagai and Wagga Wagga.² Allen observed that the eastern boundary of the Cobar pedi-plain coincided almost exactly with the western limit of European agriculture today, which is close to the western boundary of traditional Wiradjuri country.³ To the west and north-west of this region lived the tribes of the Darling basin, such as the Ngiyamba and the Barkindji, who unlike the Wiradjuri inhabited the semi-desert of shrub-steppe myall and mulga. The Blue Mountains offered an obvious barrier to the Wiradjuri of the Bathurst region. Perhaps the most decisive factor imposing a geographic unity upon the Wiradjuri was the river system. The rough generalisation which describes Wiradjuri country as 'between the Murrumbidgee and the Lachlan' has a validity if the drainage patterns of the hinterland are considered. Rivers and creeks, such as the effluxion of the Willandra Billabong near Hillston, may have marked local boundaries. Peterson's 'Riverina' drainage map, while including country traditionally

1. N.B. Tindale, 'Some ecological bases for Australian tribal boundaries', in N. Peterson, (ed.), Tribes and boundaries in Australia, 1976, 12-29, p.26
occupied by other Aborigines, encloses almost all of Wiradjuri country described by Aborigines last century.¹

The Wiradjuri population at the time of contact has been estimated at 3,000.² The first observers were surprised at the evident small size of the population. Sturt, for example, noticed a larger population on the Tumut than on adjacent areas of the Murrumbidgee, and saw no more than fifty people in 180 miles. Seasonal fluctuations he thought unlikely because there were no paths to indicate travel from one place to another.³ Sturt's figures, and all figures relating to Aboriginal populations, should be approached with the greatest caution. Among the factors which Sturt did not consider were the possibility that what appeared to be fertile country to explorers was not necessarily so to the Wiradjuri, that a large river like the Murrumbidgee should not necessarily be expected to have supported a larger population than smaller rivers, that the people were already affected by European diseases, and that some special reason may have called the Aborigines away from the river at that time.

Smith's caveat that the Aboriginal population recorded in official figures may reflect the attitudes and desires of white

1. N. Peterson, 'The natural and cultural areas of Aboriginal Australia', in Peterson, op.cit., 50-71, fig. 8 p.66

2. L.R. Smith, The Aboriginal population of Australia, 1980, p.73, quoting Kryzicki, 1934. Smith notes that Kryzicki's figure may be an overestimation

3. C. Sturt, Two expeditions int. the interior of southern Australia during the years 1828, 1829, 1830 and 1831, 1833, II, pp.39, 50-51
people as much as actual numbers, is amply supported in this study, and may be applied to all nineteenth century estimations.¹ For instance, Crown Land Commissioners and district magistrates in the decade following Sturt's incursions were asked to estimate local Aboriginal populations. Their reports were that between 1840-1845, the Wiradjuri in the Bathurst area had declined by 30 per cent, in the Mudgee region by 50 per cent, and in the Murrumbidgee their number had 'diminished in the more settled districts'.² However the estimates of Kryzicki and Smith of about 3000 people seem reasonable in the light of recent fieldwork. Pearson found that the average population density in the upper Macquarie region was 1:69² km., which was similar to that of the New England Plateau, and a good deal less than the approximate 1:25² km. of the southern uplands.³ Thus Sturt's estimate of the Wiradjuri population along the Murrumbidgee may have been only a little too low.

Even if the officials exaggerated the extent of the population decline in the decades following the white invasion, there is no doubt that there was a serious decline, and that disease accounted for a good deal of this. Allen has pointed to the effects of small pox, in advance of, as well as during, the

1. Smith, op.cit., p.3
2. Report from the select committee on the condition of the Aborigines, minutes of evidence and replies to a circular letter, 31 October 1845, N.S.W.V & P., L.C., replies to q.2, pp.32, 39
first decades, and it is probable that the epidemics of the 1790s and the late 1820s had already affected the Wiradjuri population.\textsuperscript{1} Influenza and pneumonia, the latter sometimes caused when wet clothing was not removed, may also have been important.

The Wiradjuri language was spoken throughout the Wiradjuri 'tribal' area, and was understood by some adjacent tribes.\textsuperscript{2} There has been no modern study of the language, although several pastoralists, missionaries and anthropologists of the nineteenth century collected detailed word lists and some grammars. Donaldson identified Wiradjuri as one of several languages which bore a generic relationship: the language name was made up of the word for 'no', in the present case, 'wirai', followed by its comitative suffix 'having' or 'with'.\textsuperscript{3} Which word the Wiradjuri used to distinguish themselves from a tribe which did use these descriptive terms is not known. They evidently knew themselves, and were known as, as it were, the people who used 'wirai'. There did not appear to be any fluent Wiradjuri speakers surviving in 1980, although many people possessed, and used, a quite extensive vocabulary used in English sentences.

\textsuperscript{1} Allen, op.cit., 1968, p.11; cf. W. Tench, Sydney's first four years, 1961, p.229

\textsuperscript{2} A.L.P. Cameron, 'Notes on some tribes of New South Wales', J.R.A.I., 14, (1884-5), 344-370, pp.345-6

Europeans last century recognised that the Wiradjuri possessed little political unity. Curr wrote that despite the advantages of a very large territory and easy communications, the Wiradjuri had never advanced beyond the tribal life which limited 'cohesion to persons nearly related by blood'. Tindale thought the Wiradjuri had the beginnings of a more advanced political organisation, but there is no evidence that the Wiradjuri themselves were aware of this, nor desired it. We do not possess full knowledge of local organisation. Mathews wrote in 1906 that the Wiradjuri people comprise a number of sub-tribes, or independent groups, each of which has its recognised hunting grounds in some part of the tribal territory and is known by a name derived from some local feature of its district, or other distinguishing nomenclature. Every sub-tribe is still further divided into smaller groups, consisting, for example, of an old man with his wives, his sons and their wives, and the families of the latter.

In the Bathurst area Pearson noted three major clans centred on Wellington, Mudgee-Rylstone and Bathurst, which were divided for purposes of food supply into smaller groups such as those described by Mathews. The clan territories he estimated to have been some 40-48 km. in radius.

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4. M. Pearson, op.cit, p.86
5. p.81, ibid.
The Land Commissioner for the Lachlan region in 1853 described three major clan areas: on the south bank of the Lachlan, on the north bank of the Murrumbidgee, and on the Booroowa River.\(^1\)

Howitt noted three major clan-groups between Yass and Hay: Narrandera, Kutu-mundra and Murring-balla.\(^2\) Since all three have given names to European towns (Narrandera, Cootamundra and Murrumburrah) Mathews' observation again seems to be justified.

While all the evidence of the white observers is to a greater or less degree unreliable, the basic patterns of Wiradjuri land-use are clear. Population probably was greatest near permanent water, and some areas, such as Oberon-Orange, the Portland Plateau and the Hill End Plateau, may have been seldom visited.\(^3\) Whether all the Wiradjuri had access to permanent water is not known, but there is evidence to suggest that some did not. Gilmore and McGuire describe some elaborate water storage methods some distance from the Murrumbidgee.\(^4\) Allen believed that whether Aborigines of the Cobar pedi-plain had such access may have depended on political relations with neighbouring tribes, and noted Curr's comment that Aborigines of the 'back country' (probably north of the Murrumbidgee) had

1. Crown Land Commissioner E. Beckhart, Lachlan District, Annual reports on the state of Aborigines in various districts, 1853, N.S.W. State Archives
2. A.W. Howitt, The native tribes of south-east Australia, 1904, p.56
3. Pearson, op.cit., p.82
moved to the river by 1884. Although the question is unresolved, there seems to be no reason to quarrel with the traditional view that the Wiradjuri organised themselves into essentially small self-contained units which ranged widely throughout a more or less clearly defined territory.

The Wiradjuri had a two moiety matrilineal social system, that is, a system whereby descent was reckoned through the female line, and section and totem calculated to be different from the mother, but the same as the grandmother. The system was similar to that of the Kamilaroi, with which it may have had some connection. The system was not however uniform throughout Wiradjuri country. Mathews in a map of Australian class systems included only the south-western portion of Wiradjuri country into his class 'Kamilaroi organisation'; Peterson's map, after Howitt, portrays western Wiradjuri country as 'Dieri-type matrilineal moieties'.

It is probable that the Wiradjuri social system or systems were in process of slow change at the time of the white invasion, and that the people were subject to the cultural influence of, at the least, the people of the Darling region, the Kamilaroi nation, and the Murray tribes. These influences worked against the internal unity of the Wiradjuri and may have made local matters outside the 'boundaries' of more concern to the local


2. R.H. Mathews, 'Australian class systems', in American anthropologist, IX/12, (Dec. 1896), 411-416, p.411; N. Peterson, op.cit., Fig.1, p.53 (after Howitt)
Wiradjuri than events further away, but still within Wiradjuri country. It is also probable that the Wiradjuri shared the greatest internal cultural conformity, not in matters of social system, but in ceremonial and its associated beliefs. The evidence of surviving material culture indicates that the Wiradjuri influenced and were influenced by surrounding tribes in a broad sweep which acknowledged few language barriers.

Few features of material culture have been found throughout the entire territory, and most have been shown to have existed outside also. For instance, bora-rings (that is, burbang or initiation circles) suggested to Elkin links with the east coast. Cylcons, found commonly in Barkindji country, have also been found at Parkes. Black demonstrated that taphoglyphs (marked burial trees), common in western Wiradjuri country, were also found in the Gunnedah and Wollongong areas. Cooper believed that the mobiliary art of south-eastern Australia exhibited a variety of separate styles which all belonged to a unified tradition, and found little to distinguish a particularly 'tribal' style from those of

1. J. Beckett made this suggestion in connection with the Wongaibon, in 'Further notes on the social organisation of the Wongaibon of western New South Wales', Oceania, XXXIX/3 (March 1959), 200-207, p.200
2. A.P. Elkin, foreword to L. Black, The bora ground, 1944
3. L. Black, Cylcons, the mystery stones of the Darling River Valley, 1942, p.18
4. L. Black, The bora ground, diagram III, p.25
surrounding areas.¹ Recent studies by McBryde concerning the greenstone deposits at Mt Camel and Mt William, north of Melbourne, have been based on a hypothesis that the exchange of greenstone axes was part of an existing and complex network of general exchange.² A few Victorian samples have been found within Wiradjuri country, and the most important destinations of the greenstone outcrops in the Tumut district appear to have been the upper Murrumbidgee and the South Coast.³ McBryde noted that social and ceremonial contacts were recorded between Wiradjuri speakers and groups in the southern uplands speaking unrelated languages during the contact period.⁴ Patterns of Wiradjuri material culture, therefore, like those of other south-eastern tribes, seem to have been affected less by language divisions than distance from a given cultural centre.

There is evidence of some diversity of belief among the Wiradjuri whose patterns reflect the outlines of the distribution of material culture styles. For instance, there are in the nineteenth century literature and among contemporary

1. C. Cooper, 'Art of temperate southeast Australia', in Australian Gallery Directors Council, Aboriginal Australia, 1981-2, 29-40, p.31


3. McBryde, pers. comm., July 1982; 'Artefacts, language and social interaction: a case study from south-eastern Australia' draft ms., map of greenstone distribution

Wiradjuri, many references to *bugin*. Howitt stated that the people of the Murrumbidgee and Murray rivers believed *bugin* to be the medicine man or men of neighbouring tribes from lower down the river:

Watching till the victim sleeps, the *Bugin* is supposed to creep to him, pass the bone under his knees, round his neck, and through the loop end of the cord of sinew. Thus having secured his victim, the *Bugin* carries him away to extract his fat.¹

On the Murrumbidgee Mitchell described *bugin* as a night attack on another tribe.² In 1963 Barwick found that the spirits invoked to discipline some children in Victoria were 'the hairy men of Suggen Buggen'.³ The only accounts I heard in Wiradjuri country of *bugin* were in the south, near Tumut, or at Cowra amongst people who had kin-folk at Tumut.⁴

In north-western Wiradjuri country, at least one traditional story was remembered in 1980 which appeared to be much less well known in the south. The *wa'wi*, or water snake, which lived in waterholes of the Lachlan and elsewhere, appeared to be related to the mythology of the rainbow-serpent. Mathews' informants portrayed it as a creature which could change its shape from a few inches to hundreds of feet.⁵ One Wiradjuri man born at

1. A.W. Howitt, *op.cit.*, p.374
4. Recorded conversation Frank Simpson, Young, 3 and 4 April, 1979; May Collett, Cowra, 22 October 1979
Euabalong had no doubt of wa'wi's continuing existence in 1980. He stated that strangers must always be introduced to wa'wi or harm would befall them. He remembered and recited a certain form of introduction in the Wiradjuri language which his mother had used. In the literature there are many references to wa'wi's existence, for instance, at Brewarrina and Carowra Tank. Outside the north-west of Wiradjuri country, the most definite reference to wa'wi, though not so named, was made by a woman who had grown up at Brungle. She referred to the 'old man of the river', from whom her grandmother had sought permission to fish in Brungle Creek. By a splash or similar sound, he told the fishers that it was time to go. Since the grandmother in this account was born in about 1850, it is probable that the conception of wa'wi was blurred by distance from the Lachlan as well as the passage of time.

Other stories current among the Wiradjuri in the 1970s seem to have been a part, or are now a part, of general Aboriginal beliefs in New South Wales. These include accounts of a large dog-like creature, which can change its shape at will. At Cowra it was known as the 'merri-hula', possibly a corruption of 'merriwa', the Wiradjuri word for 'dog'.

1. Recorded conversation Ossie Ingram, Euabalong, 19 October, 1980
2. J. Mathews (ed.), The two worlds of Jimmie Barker, 1977, pp.128-9; Donaldson, op.cit., p.374
3. Recorded conversation Emma Penrith, Griffith, 18 September 1980
4. Recorded conversation May Collett, Cowra, 22 October 1979
south-eastern Australia there are references to such an animal, for instance at 'mission-town', in south-eastern Queensland.¹

The belief in a bird which signifies or brings bad tidings is common amongst the Wiradjuri, as it is amongst other New South Wales Aborigines.²

The movement of people around south-eastern Australia may have been almost as great outside tribal boundaries as it was within them. There is sound evidence of both types.³ Tindale believed that the maintenance of a cycle of ceremonies that moved in a ring round the whole tribal area tended to assist tribal coherence.⁴ Elkin called the Wiradjuri 'the great gatherers of the people' and Gilmore described elaborate preparations for very large ceremonies.⁵ Gatherings of over

1. A. - K. Eckermann, 'Group organisation and identification within an urban Aboriginal community', in R.M. Berndt (ed.), Aborigines and change: Australia in the '70s, 288-319, pp.306-7

2. For example, Percy Mumbler in R. Robinson, Aboriginal myths and legends, 1966, p.210

3. To the extent that such descriptions may indicate pre-invasion customs, see R.H. Mathews, 'The bunan ceremony of New South Wales', American Anthropologist, IX/10 (1896), 327-344, p.327, in which people from Yass took part in ceremonies at Braidwood and Queanbeyan; see also, same author, 'Initiation ceremonies of the Wiradjuri tribes', American anthropologist, N.S., 3/2 (April-June 1901), 337-341, p.337, in which the Wiradjuri and members of some Western tribes took part in a ceremony near Ivanhoe

4. N.B. Tindale, Aboriginal tribes of Australia..., 1974, p.201

100 people were fairly common and some writers estimated exceptional gatherings of 400 or 500.\(^1\) Perhaps as important in intra- and inter-tribal relations were raiding parties.\(^2\)

Over 1,000 people were said to have taken part in a great battle between the Murrumbidgee and the Tumut people at Wagga Wagga in 1870.\(^3\) Ten years earlier the Forbes Aborigines came to do battle at Wagga Wagga. Cameron noted that a Wiradjuri raid into Wongaibon country in about 1870 was so savage that it practically wiped out the possum totem.\(^4\)

From the evidence it appears that the maps which appear to delineate Wiradjuri country should not be taken to show much more than the areas where the Wiradjuri language was principally spoken. There is insufficient evidence to suggest even whether identification with the land was made primarily through language use, or social network, or other factors.\(^5\) It is also unwise to make deductions about ceremony and ritual based on European observations, since there had been white people in Wiradjuri country for sixty years before such ceremonies as the initiation.

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2. ibid.


4. A.L.P. Cameron to R.H. Mathews, 1 July 1897, (Elkin Collection, University of Sydney)

5. Several types of identification found in different areas of Australia were suggested by F. Merlan in 'Land, language and social identity in Aboriginal Australia', Mankind, 13/2 (Dec. 1981), 133-148
of young men were described in detail. In social organisation, customs, material culture and beliefs it is more useful to think of the Wiradjuri as part of a smooth continuum of change from one area to another rather than bounded by strict divisions. ¹

Notwithstanding the ceremonial cycles by which they were linked to other Wiradjuri groups, it is probable that the people of the Condobolin region had as much in common with the Wongaibon of Peak Hill as they did with the Wiradjuri of the Tumut River, and the people of the Tumut had as much in common with the Ngunawal of the Shoalhaven as with the Wiradjuri in the Hillston region. Certain relationships and attitudes, reflected in living, employment and movement patterns, appear to have endured the invasion and been accommodated to the white presence. These developments will later be investigated. Historians cannot take the merely antiquarian view that, since the tribal boundaries of New South Wales were to some extent the imposition of nineteenth century ethnographers, they have no validity today. The families who are the subjects of this study identify very strongly with certain towns and districts within the old language area. In the 1970s an insistence on some of the enduring bases of Aboriginal culture emphasised local, including tribal, origins. It may be that the traditional boundaries of the Wiradjuri are

¹. A similar conclusion was reached by G. Macdonald, 'The concept of boundaries in relation to the Wiradjuri people of inland New South Wales: an assessment of inter-group relations at the time of the European conquest', report prepared on behalf of the Wiradjuri Land Council, 1983, p.26
today of greater importance than they were in previous centuries.  

The first European explorers to enter Wiradjuri country were Oxley (1817), Hume and Hovell (1824), Sturt (1828-9) and Mitchell (1837 and 1845). Settlement by whites was for several decades spasmodic, and until 1850 closely followed the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan rivers. For some distance the Murrumbidgee banks were used as a stock route to Melbourne, and many of the towns and stations about which the Wiradjuri began to gather several decades later were founded in the 1840s and 1850s. For instance, Kooba Station, near to where the missionary Gribble founded the first Wiradjuri mission station, was established in 1844. Later in the 1840s expansion westward began to catch up with that in the south-west. The first pastoral leases in the Parkes district, where decades later the first Aboriginal reserves in the area were proclaimed, were at Coobang in 1847.  

In the 1860s and 1870s, although intensive inland pastoral development continued along the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan, it

1. For a similar phenomenon among some African tribes, see M.A. Tessler, W.M. O'Barr and D.H. Spain, Tradition and identity in changing Africa, 1973, p.312

2. D. Jeans, A historical geography of New South Wales, 1972, map 137

still was confined to within 20 km of each side of the rivers.¹ Enormous areas of 'backblocks' were left untouched by the whites. Gradually as stock numbers increased and technology improved, the nearer 'backblocks' were taken up as winter runs. Development away from the rivers was slow and piecemeal, and may have allowed the Wiradjuri who lived away from the rivers a decade or two's grace before the pastoralists seized the land. Buxton's opinion that the Riverina was settled mainly in a series of moves may be true also of the central and western Wiradjuri districts.² For instance, the Baldry family in 1824 owned 100 acres at Picton. One of the sons, it is said, heard of pastoral opportunities in the south-west, and with several other Picton farmers took up holdings near Gundagai in 1842. Later in the decade, some of the younger members of Baldry's family took up leases near Cootamundra, whose importance was growing as a staging post between Gundagai and Young. It had taken thirty years, and moves in two separate directions, to bring these white people to Cootamundra.³

North-west of Leeton the western portion of Wiradjuri country was occupied less rapidly and less systematically. The 'Central Lachlan' country, with its dry mallee scrub and scarce surface water was unattractive to pastoralists and was only taken up

after the plains of the Riverina and the central west had been alienated.\(^1\) In 1860 the *Sydney Morning Herald*’s correspondent for Lower Murrumbidgee reported that the most direct way to the Darling was to cross the Lachlan and head west, but that few people were willing to do this. They were ignorant of the country, they would be short of water, and they feared the plain’s blacks.\(^2\) Decades later the north-western country was still very much untouched by the whites. South of the Murrumbidgee large tracts of country were still virtually unoccupied even at the turn of the century. In 1900 the manager of Brookong Station, near Lockhart, reported that until a rabbit-proof fence was erected, the state of the neglected country to the north-west was a constant menace to the safety of the property.\(^3\)

Three factors diverted the white population into the hitherto sparsely occupied regions of Wiradjuri country. The first was the gold discoveries which brought large numbers of people to Sofala, Forbes, Young, Grenfell and Adelong. In each area the population increased dramatically. For instance, Forbes' population was 40,000 in 1861.\(^4\) Many of the miners remained

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2. *S.M.H.*, 10 March 1860
4. Unger, *op.cit.*, p.11
in the area after the fields cut out, and not only continued the demand for local grain and meat, but supplied some of the seasonal labour on the Riverina and Central Slopes upon which the squatters came to depend. Kooba station employed seventy shearers and seventy shed hands in 1870, and there were 1000 men employed in the district in 1876. 1 One station near Grenfell employed 600 men in 1911. 2

The second factor affecting the pastoral industry was the operation of the land laws. Of these the most significant were the Free Selection Acts of 1861, which increased the number of small-scale conditional-lease farmers in Wiradjuri country. Robinson, while maintaining that it is virtually impossible to discuss with confidence the regional significance of the conditional purchases, noted the very great increase in what became the wheat-belt by 1880. His figures indicated that the heaviest increases in the agricultural population occurred largely in Wiradjuri country. 3 The numbers signified the decline of the vast holdings of the squatters, the subdivision of the country into smaller units, and, since many of the farms were not self-supporting, the widespread availability of casual rural labour. In the Riverina the effects of the Free Selection

1. J. Jervis, 'Early history of Darlington Point - the township', p.5, unidentified photocopy in Griffith Public Library

2. C.J. King, An outline of closer settlement in N.S.W., 1957, I, p.123

Acts were felt later because the squatters were good lobbyists. In the 1870s though, selections increased, and at Wagga Wagga reached 700 annually. Though many leases were dummies, and many genuine leases reverted into larger-scale pastoral or agricultural holdings, the white population markedly increased.

The Crown Lands Act of 1884, which allowed selectors more land and attempted to correct some of the previous abuses, further increased the locally itinerant population of the central west. In the later 1880s the westward push swept past the regions of Young, Grenfell and Temora to Hillston, which became the pivot of various westward routes. An amendment of 1910, which declared all land within 15 miles of a railway line to be open to resumption by the Crown, increased pressure on the larger estates which had survived the selectors, droughts, strikes and finance companies.

The third factor affecting European land-use was the rapid expansion of the wheat belt. The flat red-brown soil of central Wiradjuri country was ideal for wheat growing and by 1878 wheat producers in the Central West had risen from complete obscurity to a position of dominance. The larger stations were affected as well as the smaller, though in some cases several decades elapsed before pastoralism was threatened. In 1926 a manager of Brookong Station wrote:

1. Buxton, op.cit., p.292; for general discussion on the effects of free selection, see ibid., pp.256 ff.
3. Andrews, op.cit., p.54; Robinson, op.cit., p.178
The breaking up of such a large property and the disposal of the valuable flock of merino sheep which it was carrying can only be viewed with a certain amount of regret, but the onward march of closer settlement cannot be interfered with, and, further, the prices realised for this area are above those at which grazing alone can make a profit.\textsuperscript{1}

With the extension of the railways the dominance of agriculture or mixed farming throughout the eastern two-thirds of Wiradjuri country became complete. For instance, Bathurst was linked by rail to Sydney in 1851, Cootamundra in 1877, Narrandera in 1881, Hay in 1882 and Jerilderie in 1884. The hitherto insuperable problem of access to wheat markets on the coast was solved. The railway traversed country where previously the white population was small, and numerous silo towns were established north of Leeton, such as Black Stump, and west of Junee, such as Ganmain and Coolamon.

The changes to the country were permanent. After fifteen or twenty years of grazing, thick pine scrubs appeared in huge areas between the river systems.\textsuperscript{2} Even if the land was later abandoned, as much of the western portion of Wiradjuri country temporarily was, the ecology was altered irrevocably. In 1897, 600,000 acres were abandoned between Hillston and Lake Cargelligo.\textsuperscript{3} A few years later, on similar marginal country near Mossgiel, a company inspector reported that the country had become a desert: 'No-one without they had been over this country

\begin{itemize}
  \item 1. Inspector's Annual Report, 2 February 1926, A.M.L. & F. Records, A.N.U. Archives
  \item 2. Jeans, \textit{op.cit.}, p.64
  \item 3. Andrews, \textit{op.cit.}, p.59
\end{itemize}
could imagine the state of it, houses are sanded up, miles of fences covered and small clumps of timber on the plains are sanded up to the height of the trees'. ¹

In the eastern country, the effects of the agricultural boom were economic as well as ecological. The principal change was described in the Town and Country Journal in 1907:

Each of the districts enumerated [especially round Wagga Wagga and Temora] has been transformed from a thinly-populated pastoral centre into a prosperous farming locality...Big estates have been cut up and disposed of to the wheatgrower, who has in numbers of instances been invited by big landholders to 'step in' and cultivate a part of their immense sheep runs.

The disappearance of the large individually-owned stations can be traced in Butlin's figures of holdings in the Central division of New South Wales: ³

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<td>1866</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>364</td>
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<td>1896-7</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>476</td>
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Although, as Butlin stated, the predominance of outside ownership of the stations did not necessarily mean the loss of day to day control by managers, the figures imply a much tighter

². Town and Country Journal, 2 January 1907, quoted King, op.cit., p.127
³. N.G. Butlin, 'Company ownership of N.S.W. pastoral stations, 1865-1900', Historical studies, 4/14. (May 1950) 89-111, p.95
financial rein. There was less work available generally, and therefore less for Aborigines:

The old-time squatter had no objection to having half-a-dozen or so of these young men in the 'barracks'; but his modern prototype, the 'Company' or the 'Bank', have little or no use for pastoral cadets... Besides since 'station' has given way to 'estate', the hundreds of thousands of far flung acres to the consolidated blocks of freehold, a manager and a working overseer, with three of four men, all of them paid at the lowest rates, are made to do the work of the old-time big staff.

By 1880, therefore, two quite different patterns of land-use were imposed upon Wiradjuri territory. The Aborigines organised themselves into small local groups which exploited for short seasons a number of sites. The white pastoralists also exploited particular sites, at first the stock routes and permanent water. On to this initial pattern was overlain the population distribution of the goldrushes, the Free Selection Acts, and the expansion of the wheat belt. The new white populations again exploited areas, such as Hill End, which were not necessarily much frequented by the Wiradjuri.

The first points of conflict were the areas used regularly by both Aborigines and whites, and of these the permanent waters were the most important. Good Aboriginal campsites were near water, well drained, elevated above cool air pools, level, sunny, faced to leeward, had a breeze in summer, and had local

1. op.cit., p.110
2. Town and Country Journal, 19 April 1905, quoted King, op.cit., p.276
resources of food and fuel. These same factors generally made good homesites. Certain ceremonial areas, where a good deal of food may have been available at certain times of the year, were also points of conflict. These included the Gooloogong and Darlington Point regions, and certain areas near Bathurst. Hostilities took place at these areas first; and it was towards Darlington Point and Gooloogong, decades later, that the displaced peoples began to gather.

Violence at the hands of the whites probably was the most important factor in the decline of the population. Although Wiradjuri country was not particularly infamous as an area of violent repression, there is enough evidence to conclude that shooting and poisoning were widespread. Many instances of Wiradjuri resistance to whites have survived in the literature, and I have argued elsewhere the reasons why more accounts of Aboriginal resistance have not survived in the oral records. The declaration of martial law at Bathurst in 1824 was prompted by attacks in Bathurst itself, then in the region. Gormley recalled at least one occasion when the Wiradjuri encircled and killed a mob of cattle, and another when the first occupants


2. P. Read, 'A desolation called peace: Aboriginal accounts of the battle for the Northern Territory 1860-1940', introduction pp.5-8, ms., 1981

of Buckingbong station were forced to abandon it because of Aboriginal attacks.\(^1\)

Stories of reprisals on the Wiradjuri are rather more common in the traditions of both peoples. Murrumbidgee Aborigines maintain that the local people, after a series of attacks on cattle and homesteads, were driven on to an island upstream from Narrandera and killed.\(^2\) Mrs Mary Lyons, who was eighty-three years old in 1980, stated that Poison Water Hole Creek, near Narrandera, was so named after murders by poisoned flour. When the whites arrived, she said, one man escaped by swimming away under a possum skin rug.\(^3\) Hostilities in the east and north-east continued for decades after the declaration of martial law at Bathurst. For instance, Archdeacon Gunther at the Mission station at Wellington Valley referred to the Aborigines' extermination by violence, which he thought occurred more frequently in the interior than was publicly known.\(^4\) In 1852 Colonel Mundy toured extensively the settled districts of the Central West. Describing his stay at Bathurst, he wrote:

\(^1\) Reminiscences of J. Gormley, 3, ms. written for Gundagai Independent, n.d., ms. in Mitchell Library

\(^2\) The incident is recorded in several European sources; an Aboriginal account is to be found in Anon., 'The Warangesda mission', n.d. and n.p., ms, in A.I.A.S. Library

\(^3\) Conversation with Mary Lyons, Narrandera, 23 September 1980

\(^4\) 'Annual report of the mission to the Aborigines at Wellington Valley, New Holland, for the year 1841', 7 January 1842, H.R.A., I, XXI, p.737
The squatters or their representatives at the stations combine, arm themselves and their followers, and proceed on the tracks of the blackmail barbarians, guided probably by a domesticated native, and, easily overtaking them on horseback, extermination is the word!

Dreadful tales of cold-blooded carnage have found their way into print, or are whispered about in the provinces, and although there be Crown Land Commissioners, police magistrates, and settlers of mark, who deny, qualify, or ignore these wholesale massacres of the black population, there can be no real doubt their extirpation from the land is rapidly going on.

Dame Mary Gilmore wrote extensively about the killing of Aborigines. She was born at Goulburn in 1865, and soon after, her father became manager of Cowabbie Station, north of Matong, in the Wagga Wagga district. She described in several works murders, including organised massacres, which she claimed to have heard talked about as a small child at the homestead. Once, for instance, she was suddenly removed from some Wiradjuri people with whom she was staying by her father who had received word of an impending massacre. Although her accuracy in other matters has been questioned, there is sufficient external evidence to justify a generalised truth in her writings. In the early 1870s, when several large-scale massacres are supposed to have taken place, the Wagga Wagga area had been settled for three decades, so it is unlikely that they occurred at the time and place which she described. But we have seen that the


country to the north-west was still virtually unoccupied by whites, and until the journey of James and Gardiner into the region in 1847 was completely unknown. In 1875, the period in which Gilmore's killings occurred, the correspondent of the Sydney Morning Herald wrote, 'there is a large vacant space between the Murrumbidgee and the Lachlan. It may seem incredible, but that part is so unknown and unfenced, that sheep from various stations are now running with two years fleece on... There are at this date... one million acres unoccupied within two degrees of latitude'.¹ It can be inferred that the massacres described by Mundy took place in the western Wiradjuri country as well, and, therefore, it is probable that the events which Gilmore described occurred in the 'back country' in the 1870s. Gilmore may have accidentally or deliberately misplaced these events, or may have written in the first person about killings which actually took place in Wagga Wagga earlier. The most likely explanation is that she overheard conversations among men who, unknown to her, had recently returned from other areas.

The Wiradjuri people today live mainly in a small number of areas of high population density, such as Cowra, Narrandera and Condobolin. Other towns which may once have had a high Aboriginal population, such as Parkes and Cootamundra now have few Aboriginal residents. Most of the changes can be explained by the dispersal policies of the Aborigines Protection and Welfare Boards, which are described in detail in later chapters.

1. S.M.H., 9 December 1875
Important changes had already taken place, however, by 1883, and Gilmore offered a clue to one cause of depopulation in a reference to a waterhole known as 'The Dead Water' between Gundagai and Goulburn:

...all the group in whose walk-about it had been, were killed out. The head were away, but the dead still owned it. No strange black visited it, no tribes trespassed on it. Like our cemeteries it belonged to those who were gone. There were many such places spoken of in the early days. Later on the word was blotted out in a surveyor's name or forgotten.

Probably in some areas there was an almost complete depopulation, and in the larger clan areas, the effect of declining numbers was so severe that for a variety of reasons the people who survived moved away. Pearson estimated that some 25 to 30 per cent of the local Aboriginal population may have been killed in the massacres of 1824 and there may not have been more than 20 or 30 Aborigines living in the Bathurst area by 1900.

While some of the bush people were carrying on a guerilla campaign against the whites, some of the Wiradjuri came to regard the pastoral stations as part of the exploitable environment. An initial contact was often welcomed by a new settler:

It is the custom of the respectable families in the interior to encourage a family of natives belonging to the nearest tribe to remain about the grounds or premises as much as their wandering habits will admit of, to keep off strange blacks who might otherwise make dangerous incursions... The head of this family is called a constable, and often goes by the name of his protector.

1. Gilmore, More recollections, p.34
2. Pearson, op.cit., p.216
3. Saturday magazine, 25 June 1836, p.242
Several instances of the association of one family with a pastoralist have been recorded. The numerous members of the Wiradjuri Grant family appear to be descended from John Grant, who took up large holdings at first near Canowindra, later at Merriganowrie Station near Cowra, in the 1840s. Another story relates that Hector Gallacher Glass took up a land grant somewhere near Cowra: an Aboriginal servant married Glass and the family took its name from that union. Land records do not show a land grant to Glass near Cowra, but do indicate a grant to William Glass on the Bland in 1840. A descendant of a white pioneer, Sarah Musgrave, recounted that a William Glass took up a holding in the same area, and that an Aboriginal immediately attached himself to him, and adopted his name. By 1910 Glass had abandoned his holding. Other Aboriginal families whose names are probably linked with those of European pastoralists are Broughton (Tumut area), Crowe (now disused through marriage, Tumut area), Sloane (Condobolin area) and Carberry (Darlington Point area).

1. Information leaflet, Canowindra Historical Society; conversation Flo Grant, Canberra, 28 August 1981
2. Conversation 'River Bob', Leeton, 5 October 1980
3. Register to depasture crown lands, Vol. 4, (1840-1), No. 4 of 355, 22 September 1839
5. There is no land held in the name of Glass shown on the map 'Bland Plains' (1910) County of Bland, Land district of Grenfell, Bland Shire, (copy in Mitchell Library)
The independent existence of the Wiradjuri who survived the diseases and violence depended upon the good-will of the whites in each area. In some districts, communities were able to remain fairly mobile, using the pastoral stations as an exploitable resource at certain times of the year. In the Lachlan pastoral district, Crown Land Commissioner Beckham reported in 1847 that local Aborigines gathered round one or two stations in winter and returned to hunting and fishing grounds in summer.\(^1\) Other white observers reported a similar pattern in other Wiradjuri areas, although the Aborigines probably grew more dependent on the whites by the 1860s. A folk tradition at Gobolion Station near Wellington, for instance, describes a local group which would occasionally frighten visitors in the 1870s by appearing at daybreak outside the kitchen door. At other times of the year, the people moved away from the station.\(^2\) The extent to which the good-will of the pastoralists was a necessary factor can be seen by comparing two accounts by white observers. Munday described this scene at Narragul Station, between Bathurst and Wellington:

There was a large party of natives - men, women and children - camped behind the station...From the half-drunken looks of some of the men, the greedy begging of others, and the certain indications of good understanding between their women and the station men (there was not a white woman to be seen on the place)


2. Recorded conversation Dick Brennan, Wellington, 9 June 1979; for an account of Wiradjuri mobility at Carawabitty Station, near Junee, see J. McGuire, Science of man, IV/5, (May 1902), pp.67-8
I set them down as one of the many families who have nothing to thank the English for but demoralisation and degradation."

A few years later Lawrence Struilby was working on Baroo Station some 30 km. from Bathurst. He described it as 'amusing to see the chief, after a stiff bargain, hire out a tracker to follow a stray mob of horses or cattle'.

Many of the Wiradjuri communities remained itinerant partly because there were few opportunities even for those who desired semi-permanent work. The cattle stations which allowed Aborigines, through employment, to remain based in a particular area were almost all outside Wiradjuri country. The sources indicate that anyone who was Aboriginal, or lived with Aborigines, had less chance of obtaining work. For instance, Mundy referred to a great shortage of white labour at Coombing Station, near Carcoar, without any reference to Aborigines.

Struilby's description of wool-washing and riding by Aborigines indicates that at least on some stations there was work available for Aborigines who wanted it, but that it was seldom permanent. The gold rushes may have caused a brief demand for Aboriginal labour in the absence of white, but the many accounts of the Turon goldfields make few mention of Aborigines except as onlookers. By the 1880s neither the larger stations

1. Mundy, quoted in P. Gresser, 'The Aborigines of the Bathurst district', ms., p.25 (A.I.A.S. Library)
2. J. Graham (ed.), Lawrence Struilby, or, observations and experiences during 25 years of bush life in Australia, 1863, p.130
3. Mundy, op.cit., p.291
4. Graham, op.cit., p.131
which had survived the Free Selection Acts, nor the free-selectors themselves, were able to offer much employment. As noted above, Tubbo Station, in the heartland of Wiradjuri country, employed 140 men during the shearing season, but the company records show no names which can be matched definitely with the names of men on the Warangesda mission station nearby in the 1880s. The Tubbo management contracted its shearing workforce from the Melbourne based Machine Shearers and Shed Employees Union. The scanty evidence concerning the employment of Aborigines by free selectors indicates that few could afford to pay more than day labour. For instance, the drover in Lawson's 'The drover's wife' was himself away looking for work when an Aborigine called to build a wood-pile. That the man, in Lawson's description, built the pile hollow illustrates both the casual nature of paid labour, and a contemporary attitude towards Aboriginal labour.

The competition which kept the bulk of the Wiradjuri population itinerant came from the Chinese as well. Maxwell described gangs of Chinese labourers, led by an English speaking foreman, who contracted rural labouring, particularly 'scrubbing'. In 1891 thirty-four Chinese men were engaged in the Narrandera district, and in the town itself there were as many Chinese

1. Records of Tubbo Station, held in the Archives, Riverina College of Advanced Education, Wagga Wagga
males as there were white men. The contracting teams were prepared to travel great distances and followed the 'ring-barking frontier' north-west from the Murrumbidgee in the 1890s.¹

It is evident that after a generation of widening possibilities for the Wiradjuri, conditions by the 1880s were becoming harsher. There had been few possibilities of a symbiotic relationship with the white people of the larger stations, as had occurred amongst the Barkindji in the west.² The mobile station communities of the middle decades had been tolerated rather than encouraged, and now those stations themselves were in retreat. By 1883 the movement patterns by which a fairly small number of people travelled within a radius not much greater than the former exploitative ambit were similarly threatened. It was becoming more common for such groups to gather, temporarily or semi-permanently, outside the new exploitative and resource centres - the towns.

By 1883 also there were two Wiradjuri groups somewhat outside the mainstream of daily life, which together illustrate the diversity of Wiradjuri opportunities and expectation. The first was the number who had achieved a close relationship, often through domestic work, with individual white people. Such relationships were noticed by writers throughout the century. Meredith, for example, in the Bathurst region, referred to

¹. Buxton, op.cit., p.404
². B. Hardie, Lament for the Barkindji, 1976, p.146
Aboriginal 'attaches' who became useful servants, were comfortably attired in suitable clothes, and sometimes accompanied white people to Sydney or even Adelaide.\(^1\) Sometimes a close relationship survived several generations. At North Logan Station, near Cowra, the descendants of an Aboriginal family who had served the white people for several decades finally moved, in the twentieth century, to another residence with them.\(^2\)

It is possible that such station families had an influence on the later history of the Wiradjuri which outweighed their numbers. The Wiradjuri community was a small one, especially after the killings, and those who were most adapted to the white ways were least likely to die from exposure, violence or malnutrition. They may have accepted most readily offers of education by whites, and been among the first to be attracted to government managed reserves. This does not mean that such people were less 'Wiradjuri', but that, for some, the ambit of possibilities in which they lived was still expanding. Among the adults, the changes may have been more apparent than real; the 'attaches' may have exchanged their livery for ceremonial paint rather more easily than Meredith imagined. Yet the children could and probably did perceive the itinerant Aboriginal communities, from which they were in part separated,

1. C. Meredith, Notes and sketches of New South Wales, 1844, facsimile edn., 1961, p.100; for a similar example in the Narrandera region see J. Bayliss, preface to 'The Wiradjuri Language', ms. in Mitchell Library

2. Recorded conversation Elizabeth Bennet, Cowra, 5 April 1979
differently from their parents. The propaganda of the whites may have reinforced the children's perception of themselves as different from other Aborigines. We could expect that among the boys who refused to take part in initiation ceremonies in the 1860s would be those who had grown up in a special relationship with the whites.

A second group a little outside the mainstream of community life was that already securing independent employment and living apart from Aborigines outside the immediate family. There is insufficient evidence to calculate how many families carried out subsistence farming on small blocks which they had bought, leased or simply squatted on, but an indication can be gauged from the many Wiradjuri reserves granted to individuals in the 1880s and 1890s. According to the official record, the Register of Aboriginal Reserves, there were some 20 Wiradjuri reserves granted before 1900, on many of which Aborigines had lived for some time. These reserves, in recognition of a change in the policy of the Board concerning the resettlement of Aborigines on the land, in many cases simply ratified a long-standing Aboriginal occupancy. The Register did not, of course, list

1. An example of a small farming reserve of long standing is that declared at Ilford, between Bathurst and Mudgee, in 1899. It consisted of 3 houses, and according to the Register, p.104, Aborigines had already lived there for 'a considerable number of years'.

2. In 1894 the Board authorised the allotment of small farms for personal cultivation, in contrast to the previous policy of larger-scale communal cultivation; Secretary A.P.B. to Principal Under-Secretary, 5 July 1894; Colonial Secretary In-Letters, State Archives
the number of those living quite independently of the administration. How many such people there were in 1883 is also unknown, but a chance reference by Clark to a family in the Booroowa district in 1900, employed by local farmers at timber-milling and ring-barking, suggests that in the eastern section of Wiradjuri country some at least were living without the support either of extended family or the Board.¹ These independent farmers and rural labourers probably had very different experiences from the endless antagonism met with by those who moved to the fringes of the towns. If, as this study suggests, changing circumstances alter attitudes and perceptions, it is likely that such people would be less likely to move to the larger reserves declared after 1883 unless they were promised an individual allotment. It is possible that the independence of Aborigines in certain areas in the twentieth century, and their resentment at the Board’s attempts to impose restrictions, owes a little to the farmers and labourers of earlier generations who lived apart from both whites and the larger Aboriginal communities.²

We are now in a position to review the population distribution and lifestyles of the Wiradjuri on the eve of the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board. The most noticeable feature was the diversity of experience, not only from area to area, but sometimes from station to station. Out west the free selectors

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2. For a discussion of the manifestation of this attitude in the Narrandera region, see below, Ch.5, pp.177-8
has not yet reached the big stations in sufficient numbers to threaten them, but there were nevertheless few instances of a paternal or symbiotic relationship. This extract from Such is life, set near Gunbar Station in western Wiradjuri country, indicates how the Aboriginal population had fragmented:

Did anyone know where to find a blackfellow now that he was wanted?

'Seems, there were about a dozen of them camped near the tank in the cattle-paddock for a month past, but they were just gone, nobody knew where. And there was an old lubra and a young one camped within a mile of the station, and an old fellow and his lubra near one of the boundary men's places; but they all happened to have shifted; and no one had the slightest idea where they could be found.'

Twenty years later, at a time of drought, an A.M.L. & F. Inspector visited the country near Mossgiel. He noted the abandoned runs and the effects of overstocking, and commented, 'one only sees wandering tribes of blacks, of which they number over a hundred or more.' Together the quotations indicate that out west the drought had done the work of the free selectors, and that the Wiradjuri had either returned to more traditional modes of life, or had not yet abandoned it. Both interpretations support the view that in the west the Wiradjuri continued to live independently despite a partial fragmentation of living patterns.

In the central areas there were by 1883 many more towns about which the displaced or dispersed Wiradjuri could gather.

1. J. Furphy (Tom Collins), Such is life, 1883, new edn. 1944, pp.234-5

Certain stations known to tolerate Aborigines became popular also as refuges for those fleeing from hostilities elsewhere. One such station was Tubbo, at Darlington Point. It was there in 1878 that the Reverend J.R. Gribble watched them. He was appalled at their wretched condition. Nearby were other refuges, outside Darlington Point township or up river. In February 1882 he found a camp of about thirty people living in seclusion outside Cootamundra.

In the eastern and south-eastern sections of Wiradjuri country the pressures on the Wiradjuri were most intense. In the Tumut area, agriculture allowed few camping spaces, although one local historian maintained that the relations between farmers and the Wiradjuri were better than elsewhere. Further north, at Yass, the state member for Yass Plains told parliament that the Aboriginal population had dropped from 600 in 1845 to only 60 in 1887, and that the Aborigines were bandied from one paddock to another. The member for Lachlan stated in 1897 that the Aborigines near Cowra 'had no home and no work to do'. It appears that by 1883 there was greater displacement of people,

1. J.B. Gribble, Diary, 15 September 1878
2. 15 January 1882, ibid.
3. 1 February 1882, ibid.
5. T. Colls, N.S.W.P.D., L.A., 1/34, 1887-8, pp.5883-4
and more disruption to communities, in the eastern sections of Wiradjuri country than elsewhere. It was the larger white population, which used the land more intensively, which had caused the displacement. It was to the whites' towns and stations that the Aborigines were drawn. It was the members of the white community which first began to demand in the late 1870s that government should move to control the black populations. West and north and white population was smaller, changes were more gradual, the old life of the squatters not finally surrendered, the pace of life was slower.

While it is difficult to generalise about how the Wiradjuri were living at the time of the establishment of the Board in 1883, certain themes can be detected. The size and composition of the basic unit of social organisation were rather more varied than they had been in 1830, but were still very different from those of the whites. The size of the group of people whom Gribble found at Cootamundra in 1882 is significant: about thirty, including some old people. Many of the farming reserve families whose composition is recorded in the 'Register of Aboriginal Reserves' seem to have preserved a roughly similar pattern - a few old people, a greater number of children, and an unequal number of men and women, many of whom were closely related. Where people still had the choice, even when they gathered in regions which had a high Aboriginal population, they preferred the basic unit of two or three families living together. At the same time there was another trend distinct from, but while the choice remained, not in opposition to the first. That was the gradual gathering together of people from the interior of
Condobolin Aborigines in 1900

Source: W. Bayley, Down the Lachlan years ago
Wiradjuri country towards certain towns and stations. A firm Aboriginal identity ran through the groups, especially in the areas where the population was greatest. This identity was not necessarily aggressive: the group which Gribble found at Cootamundra did not have the 'stiff bargaining power' of the 'chief' at Baroo Station. It was, nevertheless, a consciousness of difference. The Wiradjuri for the most part both expected and desired a continued separation from the whites.

The shortage of food, the hostility of the whites elsewhere, the physical availability of food resources, the desire to be with relatives, drove the Wiradjuri to particular towns - Yass and Cowra, Tumut and Darlington Point. Out west could be observed a similar, though less emphatic pattern. Euabalong was attracting a black population at the expense of Lake Cargelligo, Condobolin at the expense of Forbes. In time the officials of the Board would reach them too, and accelerate the process. In the mean time, the last aspect of Wiradjuri life of 1883 which we have to consider is the changing nature of Wiradjuri culture.

Donaldson believed that the survival of the Ngiyamba language in 1977 was due to the fact that Ngiyamba country was predominantly dry. In the absence of rivers or towns within the area, the people were not initially displaced. Later, the gathering of the Keewong and Trida people about Carowra Tank helped consolidate community life. Even so, when the last initiation ceremony was held in 1912, none of the participants were of the full descent. Most of them could speak English as well as
It will be argued that, although the gathering of large numbers of Wiradjuri at Brungle and Warangesda Aboriginal Stations in the 1880s imposed a certain homogeneity of perception and identity, Wiradjuri culture altered less rapidly and less fundamentally in the sixty years previous to 1883 than most white people imagined.

In 1883 it seemed self-evident to most white observers that the Wiradjuri culture was in decline. By the time observers were able to take detailed notes of ceremonies, only initiation ceremonies were practised on a large scale. Mathews noted that in 1895 tooth evulsion and the eating of human excreta were no longer practised, 'although both these rites were practised by the natives of these districts in the early days of European settlement'. On the Murrumbidgee he had to rely on memories more than twenty-five years old in 1897 to obtain an account of a complete ceremony. Elkin believed that by the 1890s the list of abandoned bora grounds in Wiradjuri country was already very long. Ceremonies at that time, he thought, were held in a context of cultural contact and latent racial clash, against a background, not very long past, of actual conflict, of punitive expeditions and atrocities and in the shadow of death and

1. Donaldson, op.cit., pp.14-16
3. J.H. Mathews, 'The burbang, or initiation ceremonies of the Murrumbidgee tribes', J.R.S.N.S.W., XXXI, (1897), 111-153, p.115; Mathews noted that abbreviated forms of the ceremonies were still performed in the area at the time of writing
depopulation.¹ Probably the last initiation ceremony which Wiradjuri men attended was the one in Ngiyamba country, in 1912.

It is not difficult to account for the decline of the big religious ceremonies. Some of the participants may have been away working, there may not have been older men standing in the right relationship to the initiates and communications were difficult. Perhaps it was not always known for certain where some of the groups expected to participate actually were. Local landholders may have been hostile to large gatherings of Aborigines, and had sometimes used the knowledge of proposed gatherings as an occasion for surprise attacks.² It would have been difficult to obtain sufficient food for large numbers. Novices may have run away in fear, or been protected by whites. The old men may sometimes have thought that secrets should not be passed on to young people in a world so dominated by the whites.³ Like the traditions of clientship among the African Kanuri people, large scale religious ceremonies simply could not be accommodated into the changed world in which the indigenous people were forced to live.⁴ They were too difficult to

1. A.P. Elkin, 'R.H. Mathews, his contribution to Aboriginal studies', II, Oceania, XLVI/2 (December 1975), 126-152, pp.144-5
organise and the desire to hold them may have been lost or diminished. Rituals, and the secret knowledge essential to their execution, probably declined very rapidly after a few of the regular ceremonies had been indefinitely postponed.

While there is no doubt of the actual decline of the initiation, and probably other religious, ceremonies, there is a danger that too much may be inferred from the fact. For instance, Asad warned of writers who, by 'selecting certain phenomena, by not asking certain questions, by approaching history in a certain way, tended to project certain characteristic images of the political structure of the non-European societies which they studied'. Concern with the decline of ritual may be misleading if it is taken to symbolise Wiradjuri culture as a whole. The question of what, if anything, replaced the form of the ceremonies may be important, as also are the questions of what other rituals, behavioural responses, societal structures, attitudes, beliefs and expectations continued to survive. Stanner's distinction between 'high' and 'low' religious practices, though useful in itself, may be quite unhelpful if inferences are then made about 'high' and 'low' life patterns. More recently, Dixon appears to have made the error of selecting a particular criterion to denote a generalised cultural decline in his emphasis on the deterioration of indigenous languages:


Many tribes have completely disappeared; there are others that retain considerable population but have quite lost their language...and must be indistinguishably assimilated into white society, almost inevitably at the lowest level. Their remaining sense of 'Aboriginality' depends to a large extent on a few linguistic shibboleths, the inclusion of occasional Australian words in the English sentences they use or even the use of a 'dialect grammar' - which may owe something to a now non-existent Australian language.

It will be argued in later chapters that a great deal of the day-to-day living patterns of the Wiradjuri survived the first fifty years of the conquest, and for long after. Where the old ways did not interfere with the changed and changing world in which the Wiradjuri lived, there was less cause to abandon them. For example, we shall see how smaller scale social, as opposed to religious, rituals survived for decades, that seasonal rural work, especially fruit-picking, reinforced the desires of most Aborigines for mobility within a defined area. The most authoritarian actions of the administration could not entirely prevent the basic social unit of three or four families from continuing a century after the first attempts to destroy it. Nor could the removal of perhaps one Wiradjuri child in six or seven throughout four generations prevent the practice of alternative child-rearing and family management patterns. The old styles of leadership, in which decisions were reached by consensus after long discussion, survived, as did traditional methods of resolving conflicts without the use of institutionalised force. In hand with the retention of many societal structures went a rejection of some imposed European values. Few of the Wiradjuri living in large communities seem to have accepted the dominant

work-ethic, still less the doctrine of work-without-pay-for-the-common-good which was imposed at Warangesda. Several nineteenth-century writers commented on the ephemeral nature of some conversions to Christianity.¹

The most important new element in Wiradjuri culture in 1883 was the emergence of a conscious Aboriginal identity. Before the coming of the whites, the Wiradjuri had of course only other Aborigines with whom to compare themselves. An identity which perceived symbolic as well as physical differences between the two races was a logical outcome of being kept at arms' length by the whites. It will be shown that fierce white opposition to the continued existence of the Brungle reserve in the 1880s reinforced the desire of the Tumut Aborigines to pursue a comparatively free existence, separated from the whites, within the confines of the reserve boundaries. In the decades which followed, an Aboriginal identity remained firm even among those who appeared to embrace the white values most firmly. Amongst children reared among their own people, an internalisation of Aboriginal values took place, unnoticed by the whites in the bustle of daily instruction. Only among children removed from their parents, who knew no civilisation save that of the whites, was the positive concept of Aboriginality sometimes utterly extinguished.

1. Cameron, op.cit., p.344; for the tendency of Aboriginal station youths to follow the old people on reaching puberty, see E. Beckham, 'Report upon the condition, etc., of the Aborigines inhabiting the Lachlan district during the year 1845', H.R.A., I/XXV, p.10; ibid., 1846, p.561
The establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board, therefore, came at a time when important rituals and associated beliefs were in decline, but the substructure of society remained intact. Many Wiradjuri, in short, like the people of Madagascar whom Mannoni described, had accepted everything in detail, but refused European civilisation as a whole.¹

Yet the demands of the whites were changing constantly. In the south-east where Aborigines and whites were numerous, the era of the large managed reserves was about to begin. I now investigate the policy of concentration, by which, at Warangesda and Brungle, the Wiradjuri were forced to gather, not in groups of twenty or thirty, but of ten times that size.

¹ O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban*, 1964, p.23
Chapter Two
The policy of voluntary concentration, 1880-1909

In the next two chapters I describe the establishment and subsequent history of the first Wiradjuri large-scale reserves, Warangesda and Brungle. I consider the personality and actions of the missionary J.B. Gribble, the founder of Warangesda, and note the gradual usurpation by the state of the powers of the missionaries. Brungle was founded in 1888 as an officially administered reserve and I examine the opposition of the white residents of Brungle town to its continued existence. Events in the three decades following 1880 showed that Aborigines and whites saw the reserve system differently. Chapter 3 indicates that, while some of the Wiradjuri saw reserves as sanctuaries against white discrimination, most appeared to use them in the same way that they used other camps. They saw reserves as temporary or semi-permanent stopping-places within an ambit dictated by kin, interest and employment. To the administration, the majority Aboriginal view was unacceptable; pressure was put upon successive governments to force Aborigines to remain permanently on the reserves. I

1. Warangesda Station was situated on the Murrumbidgee River about 2 km. from Darlington Point. The largest reserve in Wiradjuri country, it totalled 1981 acres and was created through 4 separate grants 1880-1883. It was revoked totally in 1923. Brungle Station was situated 1 km. from Brungle town, midway between Tumut and Gundagai. It totalled 145 acres, and was created through 3 separate grants 1888-1900. In 1983, in a much reduced form, Brungle reserve was one of the four remaining Wiradjuri reserves. Register of Aboriginal Reserves, pp.150, 45-47, State Archives
conclude that the passing of the Aborigines Protection Act in 1909 was an indication that the policy of persuading Aborigines to stay on the official camps had failed.

There are two reasons why the study of the Wiradjuri in this period is narrowly focussed. The first is that in the period before living memory, we have still to rely on written sources. These sources are, however, much less plentiful than in the first half-century of white occupation, for the period had passed in which governments and travellers regarded the Wiradjuri as worthy of much attention. Except for the detailed records of the two reserves, the sources are very fragmented. The second reason is that the principle of the managed reserve was both a departure point of government policy for the next three decades, and, for the Aborigines, the most significant force over two generations in changing lifeways, attitudes and expectations.

J.B. Gribble was a self-appointed lay-missionary who later became an ordained Anglican minister. Little is known of his early life beyond that he experienced a profound religious change at the age of fourteen.¹ His immediate model for Warangesda was Maloga Mission, founded by Daniel Matthews on the Murray in 1874.² Less consciously, he may have been

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¹ J.B. Gribble, Diary, 23 August 1873
² For the career of Matthews at Maloga, see N. Cato, *Mister Maloga*, 1976, chs.6-12
influenced by other Christian missionaries in Australia such as Lancelot Threlkeld and Bishop Salvado. 1

Gribble was a devout fundamentalist who believed that an Aboriginal mission station on the Murrumbidgee would not only offer salvation to Aborigines but also to himself. He wrote and evidently thought in evangelical terms, in which the progress of his soul towards its appointed end was a matter of daily preoccupation. He wrote in his Diary,

This evening entered into unguarded conversation. The result was inward uneasiness. I prayed, confessed, and got relief. I must ever be on the watch tower. Oh that I could live every moment with the eye of my poor soul steadily fixed on him [sic] who is the author and finisher of my salvation.

The following day he wrote that he had not been able to do much for God that day: 'I find I must be active. I cannot live idle.' 2

To Gribble there seemed good reason to be active on the Murrumbidgee. He noted in his Diary that when travelling from place to place in 1876-7 he would unexpectedly come into contact with the blacks, who were in a condition most shocking to contemplate. In some camps the children ran away terrified, while their mothers, only children themselves, cowered in their


2. Gribble, Diary, 6 June 1873

3. 7 June 1873, ibid.
dens like wild beasts.\footnote{Gribble, "Black but comely", or, glimpses of Aboriginal life in Australia, 1884, p.34} The region of Darlington Point he thought to be the very focus of iniquity.\footnote{p.42, ibid.} The situation on the river was caused, at least in part, by white hostility. Gribble's son recalled that on one of his father's expeditions to find a site for the mission station, the wife of a pastoralist stated that if she had her way, all the 'half-caste' children would be thrown into the river.\footnote{E.R. Gribble, 'Over the years', \textit{A.B.M. Review} 28/2 (April 1950), 59-63, p.59}

In 1878 it occurred to Gribble that something positive might be done 'for the present comfort and eternal good' of the Riverina Aborigines.\footnote{J.B. Gribble, Diary, 15 September 1878} Three weeks later he saw himself as a potential missionary.\footnote{9 October 1878, ibid.} He decided to establish a station near Darlington Point, and in May 1879 he set out with Matthews to select a site for a central Mission Station.\footnote{D. Matthews, Diary, 19 May 1879}

A site was chosen on crown land near the Waddi waterhole, a few kilometres from Darlington Point, between Tubbo and Kerarbury stations.\footnote{J. Horner, using information from the N.S.W. Lands Department, wrote that the original grant was excised from a block set aside for a village; letter to Diane Barwick, 21 February 1968, in her possession} In 1880 the Parkes government granted 507

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acres. Gribble’s purpose was to gather ‘as many of the Aborigines (especially the half-caste children and their young mothers) as we may have means to support’. The inmates were to be properly fed, clothed and educated. To potential sponsors Gribble promised to strive diligently to inculcate feelings of self-respect and habits of industry. He declared that he would do all in his power to reclaim the older Aborigines from drink ‘and its revolting associations’. His aim was to make the establishment a home.

How the population of the new mission station of Warangesda was gathered together is unknown, because the relevant section of Gribble’s Diary for 1880-1 has been lost. Probably the majority came from Darlington Point itself, and one or two families came from Maloga to help establish the station. Evidently the Wiradjuri did not come spontaneously in the numbers expected, for there are many references to letters or journeys of recruitment two years after the station began. For instance, in January 1882 Gribble went to meet a girl from Moss Vale sent by the police, and made arrangements for another girl to come from Narrandera. A year later he arrived with twenty-six

1. Notified 6 June 1880, ibid.
3. ibid.
4. Conversation Evelyn Glass, Darlington Point, 8 July 1980
5. Gribble, Diary, 19 January 1882
Aborigines from the Namoi River. The most detailed account of recruitment to Warangesda concerned a party which he met near Warangesda:

Feb 1st (1882) Rose early. Albert and I sought out and found blacks camp. Found about 30 men, women and children all in a sad state of semi-nakedness and hunger. Gave a man some money to buy bread. Talked kindly to all about Warangesda. Several seemed willing to go. But some of the older ones were very free in opposing my suggestion. I hope to get about a dozen away with me...

Friday 3rd. Took 12 poor waifs and strays from Cootamundra to the mission station. All at home gave the new comers a most hearty welcome.

Once people arrived at Warangesda, they had to be persuaded to stay. Shortage of food was a constant problem: at various times the station was entirely without meat or flour. Sometimes the men had to be sent away to find work or to go fishing. Departures by people recruited locally seem to have been fairly common, partly because of food shortages, and partly because Gribble's harsh discipline caused dissatisfaction. Absconding was punished. For instance, in January 1882 Gribble recorded that 'Sambo' had run away with his wife, who had induced another to escape also. He discovered that they had gone fishing up-river with other Aborigines. After some altercation he compelled them to return. Next day Gribble's 'chastisement' took place, which probably meant whipping.

1. Gribble, Diary, 17 January 1883
2. 1 February, 3 February 1882, ibid.
3. 15 January, 16 January 1882, ibid. Under the word 'chastisement', another word has been very heavily crossed out, and cannot be read. Matthews also beat adults at Maloga; cf. D. Matthews, 'Eighth annual report on the Maloga Mission', 13 April 1884
By 1882, even though Gribble continued his journeys of recruitment, his personal influence at Warangesda was in decline. The Protector of Aborigines, George Thornton, was unsympathetic to his attempts to Christianise the Aborigines. In 1883 he decided to resign, but the Bishop of Goulburn persuaded him to stay on. The station residents seemed to become less amenable to his discipline. On 25 April 1883, a baby was discovered to have been born a few days earlier, and its birth concealed. 'Fresh troubles', wrote Gribble. 'Truly this is a vexatious work. I feel disgusted with the whole thing'. In July, four people came home drunk from Darlington Point. He commented, 'These people are very hard to deal with'. In March 1884, after what appears to have been a nervous breakdown, he left for England for a year, hoping that the change would enable him to carry on.

1. Gribble, Diary, 27 February 1882: '...He said plainly that he did not think they were capable of moral or spiritual good. But I told him emphatically that we knew that they were. Thank God some of our dear people are following Christ. They love Him and enjoy the realization of His love.'

2. 16 February 1883, ibid.

3. 25 April 1883, ibid.

4. 31 July 1883, ibid.

5. 15 March 1884, ibid. Among the reasons for leaving Warangesda, Gribble noted that in the past four months he had at times been completely deranged, and had said and done things which caused him to detest himself when he remembered his conduct. Mrs Violet Edwards, conversation, Darlington Point, 8 June 1979, recalled that her grandfather was to have sailed with Gribble to England, but decided to turn back when he arrived at Sydney.
return things were as bad as ever. Warangesda was bankrupt, and Gribble at his wits' end:

Very ill at ease this morning. Mad with myself and every one else. My nerves are in an awful condition. Must leave this place. It is a certainty that I can't stand it. I am all unhinged again. Just as bad as before I went to England.

This time Gribble's mind was made up. He left for Perth on 3 June 1885.

Meanwhile events in Sydney had begun to overtake Malaga and Warangesda. After several years of lobbying, Matthews obtained church support for Malaga in 1878. From the 'Committee to Aid Malaga Mission', grew the Aborigines Protection Association, founded in 1880, which for some years backed the fund-raising and general publicity of the two mission stations. After 1880 there was a general awakening of interest in Aborigines in Sydney. Probably this was due to the Aborigines Protection Association's vigorous campaign to present Aborigines as capable of 'civilisation' and by direct pressure on ministers, as well as the effects of a diffused social Darwinism on moral duties towards 'lesser' races.

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1. Gribble, Diary, 26 March 1885
2. For a detailed account of the events, over several years, leading to the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board, see A. Curthoys, 'Race and ethnicity', Ph.D. thesis, Macquarie University, 1973, pp.190 ff.
In 1882 the Protector of Aborigines stated that the establishment of reserves for Aborigines would 'prove a powerful means of domesticating, civilizing, and making them comfortable'. The intention was to impose upon Aborigines the notions of order and industry, rather than Christian dogma per se. Curthoys, in describing the re-entry of the state into Aboriginal administration, probably under-estimated the extent to which part-Aborigines were perceived to be an inferior species whose further increase in population should be discouraged. Gribble himself had spoken of this concern in a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald in 1877:

I find that when the black girls are ruined by white men, so-called, they are then as a rule left to their own dread resources, without food, and nearly naked... And what, I ask, is the consequence? The up-rising of a race of wild half-castes in the very midst of a Christian community. And I speak within bounds when I say there are hundreds of these young half-castes in the creeks and rivers of Riverina.

It is not clear from Gribble's letter whether he believed that 'half-castes' would offer an actual threat to society. The fear was certainly expressed several times in the following two decades and the murders by Jimmy Governor of several white people in 1900 prompted more explicit warnings. The influential journal Science of man declared that danger had been shown in

1. N.S.W.L.A., Votes and proceedings, 1882/IV, p.1526
3. Gribble, quotation from undated S.M.H. letter, reprinted in Gribble, Black but comely..., p.24
'hybrids of two distinct races' in whose 'morbid imagination and brains' were acted out schemes to emulate other criminals.¹

For reasons, therefore, both humanitarian and pragmatic the state began to display a greater interest in Aborigines after 1880. One of its first activities was to set up a special Enquiry into the two southern mission stations in 1882. The report was not favourable. Among the more damaging criticism was that officials on neither station appeared to have in mind any useful purpose in the training of older children.² The Enquiry thought that the further existence of Maloga and Warangesda was justified, but added that the state should have control over them. Partly for this purpose, and generally to oversee the administration of Aborigines in New South Wales, the Aborigines Protection Board was established on 5 June 1883.³

By the establishment of a state school at Warangesda, the Aborigines Protection Board entered almost immediately into competition with the Aborigines Protection Association, and the

1. 'The half-caste murderers and how to catch them', Science of man, 7/3 (August 1900), pp.111-2. The article appears to be editorial. See also below, Ch.2, p.68, for the opinions of G. Clout, 1889


dispute marked the beginning of 80 years of squabbles over the relative domains of manager and teacher. For instance, when the Warangesda Superintendent, representing the Church-based and voluntary Aborigines Protection Association, closed the school because he wanted the older girls to whitewash the fence, he was informed that his action was 'unjustifiable and culpable' and that he had overstepped his powers.¹

Basically, as Gribble has deduced after his conversation with the Chief Protector, the secular state was much more interested in teaching Aborigines habits of obedience and industry than Christian virtues for their own sake. In 1887 District Inspector O'Byrne, of the Department of Public Instruction, inspected Warangesda and produced an unfavourable report. Among his criticisms were that the children were unpunctual, their heads were dirty, and no-one was responsible for their cleanliness. The children's reading was mumbling and indistinct. Their arithmetic was small, and they exhibited no power to reason abstract truths. O'Byrne wrote that it was utopian to expect Aborigines to act under the influence of Christian motives. He conceded that 'they had their own ideas of right and wrong' and could be made to act under these. But the total picture was that the results of the school were indifferent, and the mission a failure. The mission 'swarmed

¹. District Inspector, Department of Public Instruction, to Chief Inspector, 21 July 1888, in 'Warangesda Aboriginal School', Department of Education, State Archives
with half-castes'. His conclusion was that Warangesda should be put under the boarding-out system, and the children sent into homes as soon as possible.¹

O'Byrne's report caused a violent reaction. The Archbishop of Sydney wrote to the Aborigines Protection Board suggesting greater control.² The Bishop of Riverina thought that Warangesda should become a training place for station boys and servants, and that men should only be allowed to enter reserves to carry out labour as required.³ The members of the Board were asked to submit their individual opinions. Most thought that the powers called for by the churchmen were too strong. For instance, Edmund Fosbery, Chairman of the Board and Inspector-General of Police, was opposed to state power to detain people on reserves. 'Such a deprival of liberty', he wrote, 'would be cruel, and, moreover, impossible' since Aborigines were scattered all over the state.⁴ Only George Ardill, who was also Secretary to the Aborigines Protection Association, agreed with the Bishops. He ran his own homes for orphans and neglected children, and believed that the Board

1. District Inspector O'Byrne, Report to Chief Inspector, 19 September 1887, ibid.
2. Archbishop of Sydney to Henry Parkes, 8 November 1887, ibid.
Two former residents of Warangesda:

above, Mr Edgar Howell outside the ration shed, Warangesda, 1980
below, Mr Alf Williams, Griffith, 1979
should have power to compel children to attend school. Children should go into service and for that purpose they should be trained. The Board was considering a scheme to this end.¹ The moderate voices on the Board for the moment prevailed; curiously, it was senior officials of the Anglican Church who suggested the direction of greater coercive and repressive powers which the Board adopted in 1909.

Events in the next three or four years at Warangesda may have convinced some members of the Board of the need for state control of the church missions. The long-standing dispute between the Superintendent and the teacher at Warangesda, in effect a conflict between the concerned amateur and the professional administrator, broke into open rift in 1896 when two men banned from the mission station tried to attend the school. To do so, they had to enter the station. The teacher used the occasion to publicise the alleged shortcomings of the Association's administration. The first man, Jim Gibson, had been banned for life for 'intimacy with a notorious immoral character', which the teacher claimed showed how much the manager disliked him. The second man, Herbert Murray, had been banned for a year for pilfering the goods of an Indian hawker. The teacher's comment was that if pilfering was banishable, then almost everyone on the station should be banished. He himself had only heard of the bans through local gossip, not official notification, which he believed had been done simply to annoy

him. Almost everyone said their piece in the ensuing dispute, and the Board's on-the-spot unit of administration, the Local Board, suggested that a right of way be provided to the school.\(^1\) Perhaps during the controversy, insignificant though it was, the Board members came to the conclusion that the Association would have to go. The religious life of the Aboriginal Christians seemed to be failing. In 1894 the Wednesday night services were abandoned in the hope that people would attend the Sunday services better.\(^2\) There were almost constant shortages of food; for instance, in August 1892 there was no flour, in April 1893, there was no tea.\(^3\) A few months after the controversy of the two banished men, the suggestion was put to the Board that the Association be wound up. In June 1897 the action was complete.\(^4\) The secular state, whose aims appeared at this time to be less dictatorial and cruel than those of the Anglican church, had control over all the mission stations and reserves in the state.

The oral and written records give very little indication of how or why Brungle Aboriginal Station came to be formally established in 1888. It was one of several reserves established in Wiradjuri country in this period, such as Yass (1889), Cowra

\(^1\) T. Shropshire (teacher) to District Inspector, D.P.I., 25 May 1896; Secretary A.P.A. to Local Board Secretary G. Nobbs, 27 May 1896

\(^2\) Warangesda Mission: Manager's Diary, 5 September 1894

\(^3\) 30 June 1892, 12 April 1893, \textit{ibid.}

\(^4\) Cf. A.P.B. Annual report, 1897, p.3. None of the A.P.A. records have survived
(1890), Grong Grong (also called Narrandera, 1894) and Condobolin, (1901). Brungle differed from these reserves in that, like Warangesda, it was managed. In the light of the later history of the Wiradjuri, it is important to distinguish between the two forms of administration. In theory, both functioned in the same way as refuges for the old, the sick and the infirm. In practice, the unmanaged reserves differed little from the many unofficial camps on crown land, town common and pastoral properties on which the Wiradjuri already were living. The managed reserves, (officially known as stations) were important catalysts in cultural interaction, not only through the effects of managerial rule itself, but because they were different in character. Rations, housing and schooling were features of Warangesda and Brungle which the other reserves acquired only gradually and piecemeal.

There was, however, one common factor between reserves and stations. The larger varieties of both were established after white townspeople, reacting to a sizeable Aboriginal population in the district, put pressure on the Board to control it. All the above reserves and stations were established in this way. Thus, in the absence of records, we may draw an analogy between the establishment of Brungle Station and that of a Wiradjuri reserve for which records survive, such as Grong Grong.

In the early 1890s a considerable number of Aborigines were beginning to congregate near the Murrumbidgee towns of the Narrandera region. The Aborigines Protection Board was under some pressure to remove them to a single reserve. In 1891 the
local member of parliament, James Gormley, recommended that Aborigines be encouraged to move to the area of Grong Grong, 30 kms. from Narrandera, and the police at Narrandera passed his advice to the Board. At first the Board protested that Aborigines were better employed in industrial pursuits than in idleness on a reserve, but eight months later a proposed reserve was surveyed. The site appeared to have been chosen because it was large and fertile enough to attract the Aborigines to it, far enough away from Narrandera to make access to that town difficult, yet close enough to Grong Grong so that people buying provisions would not simply camp near that town instead. The plan failed, as is shown in Chapter 3, when most of the applications to live at Grong Grong reserve came from Aborigines wanting to leave the managerial regime of Warangesda.

Bunagle Station stood in a similar relationship to the town of Bunagle, which was close by, and the larger towns of Tumut and Gundagai. In 1883 the large Aboriginal population of the Tumut valley was scattered along the river banks, also probably tending to concentrate near the towns. Presumably it was expected that a properly established reserve, with houses, rations and a manager, would attract most of the Aborigines of the district to it. The official population figures published

1. Narrara police to A.P.B., 16 April 1891; A.P.B. to J. Gormley, 14 May 1891, Notification of surveying, 10 December 1891; Aborigines Protection Board, Minutes of meetings, 1891, State Archives. The site occupied 1300 acres fronting the Murrumbidgee River; 'Register of Aboriginal Reserves', p.130
in the Annual reports, though probably too low, confirm that Aborigines did come to the station. From 58 people in 1887 the Brungle population rose steadily to 98 in 1899. The rise was not very large; more important was the fact that the Board, in its attempt at population control, had made two mistakes. First, it underestimated the number of people who would come not from the river banks but from other reserves, who would see Brungle as a convenient stopping place, at the expense of the Board, for weeks or months. While some Wiradjuri made a more or less permanent home at the managed reserves, others, for as long as they were able, saw them as another place to visit within those same areas where visiting kinfolk had long been customary. The second mistake was to underestimate the strength of white resistance to the existence of the station.

The written records support the hypothesis that when Brungle Station was established in 1888, the initial population comprised one or two local families, with perhaps another two or three from the Tumut valley. The rest came from further away. They were attracted by kin relationships and the prospect of better food and accommodation or had been hurried on by municipal councils and landholders. Probably most were Wiradjuri speakers, and already, through previous visits, knew the Brungle area well. In January 1891 the Brungle correspondent of Gundagai Times estimated that only a tenth of the population came from the Brungle district.

1. A.P.B., Annual report, 1887, p.3; 1899, p.7
2. 'Brungle news' Gundagai Times, 6 January 1891
temporarily returned from Western Australia to a parish at Adelong, identified the rest as from the Lachlan, from Warangesda, and 'some from the different coastal districts'. Another reference to the establishment of the station mentioned the 'arrival' of the Brungle Aborigines, which supports the view that Brungle was but one area in which the Tumut Wiradjuri lived in the 1880s. Like Grong Grong, the site had been chosen not because many Wiradjuri were living there, nor because they wanted to, but to relieve what was seen by the whites to be the pressure of the Aboriginal population gathering outside Tumut and Gundagai. Now the intensity of the hostility towards a new reserve, always a force to be reckoned with when a white town was in the vicinity, was strengthened when Aborigines from beyond the Brungle environs came to the town. As was presently to become apparent, the Board had jumped from the frying pan into the fire.

The trouble began soon after the station was established. Up to that time the teacher at Brungle school, a Mr Kehoe, taught the white Brungle children for four days a week, and the children of the nearby Wyangle school for one day. In September 1888 the Wyangle school closed, and the District Inspector, the same Inspector O'Byrne who had made the adverse report on Warangesda in 1887, suggested that Kehoe's Fridays might be spent at teaching the Aboriginal children at the newly established

1. J.B. Gribble, letter to *Gundagai Times*, 23 January 1891
2. 'Upper Brungle', *Gundagai Times*, 7 March 1890
station. He could use the schoolroom, recently erected by the Aborigines Protection Board, which was as yet unused because teachers of Aboriginal children were hard to find. The plan seemed to O'Byrne to be a useful compromise: the Aboriginal children should not be begrudged this small concession, and there was in any case no dwelling for the station teacher, were one available. The white children would still have a teacher for four days a week, and the parents would have no cause to complain.

But the white residents of Brungle felt that they did have cause to complain. A petition was sent to the Department of Public Instruction protesting at the plan. The petitioners reasoned that since there were twenty-two white children at their school, they should have a full-time teacher, and threatened to withdraw the children from school if the proposal was implemented. A letter accompanying the petition from the Secretary of the Brungle Progress Association was blunt: 'I need not comment', he wrote, 'on the folly of the government attempting to teach these uncultivated youngsters under a two day a week system... we

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1. The only possibility seemed to be a Mr Ussher, recently dismissed from the Department of Public Instruction for the alleged misappropriation of school funds. However, O'Byrne's recommendation that Ussher fill the vacant position at Brungle Aboriginal school had been refused.

decidedly and wholeheartedly object to be being coupled with the blacks... in any way'.

For a full year the Aborigines Protection Board and the Department of Public Instruction dithered about whether or not a teacher, or a manager, or both, should be appointed. In vain did O'Byrne protest that it was much to the Department of Public Instruction's discredit that fifteen or sixteen black children should be left without a schoolteacher simply because Aborigines, unlike the white residents, had no-one to agitate for them. A teacher was appointed in February 1890, but after another year he had still not taken up the post.

For three or four years the divisions between the whites, the blacks, and the two government departments were seldom far from the columns of 'Brungle News' in the Gundagai Times. It appeared to that correspondent that those on the Aboriginal station who required the least of the rations got the most. The largest share, in his opinion, was taken by 'strong able fellows', who were 'well able but too lazy to work' and spent their time playing marbles. Sometimes he turned his invective upon the government officials. In refusing to appoint a teacher, he wrote, the Board and the Department of Public

1. Petition, 5 September 1888; accompanying letter by G. Clout, same date, ibid. (It had been proposed that Kehoe teach on Saturdays as well as Fridays at the Aboriginal school)

Instruction were pulling at different ends of the rope and the unfortunate blacks were the sufferers. In July 1889 he stated that the sugar issued as rations left a thick deposit of sand on the bottom of pots and that a green scum rose to the top of the surface like the stuff on waterholes. Next he attacked a complacent account of the Station in an Annual report of the Board. The residents, so the report stated, were living in 'comfortable huts'. The Board evidently drew on its imagination, he thought, as in reality, all the Aborigines were provided with was a few sheets of galvanised iron which they had thrown on to their humps in a slip-shod fashion. Some of them were covered in bark and not big enough for dog kennels. In August he wrote that there was still no sign of a superintendent or a teacher. It was a very pretty quarrel as it stood; 'a plague on both your houses'. In the mean time, 'those vagrant blacks' were 'allowed to roam at their own sweet will, and prove themselves a perfect nuisance to their neighbours'.

In September, 'Rosemount', (probably the same Secretary of the Progress Association, George Clout), wrote to the Gundagai Times in terms stronger than ever. He began by describing the 'egregious folly of locating these objectionable people in close proximity to townships or thickly populated areas'. At Brungle,

1. 'Brungle News', Gundagai Times, 31 August 1888, 12 March 1888, 2 August 1889, 12 July 1889, 23 August 1889
the camp was located in the middle of the town reserve, and land values, he wrote, had slumped. The station he saw as 'the plague spot', 'an excrescence in the beautiful valley of Brungle'. Three-quarters of the children were 'half-caste', and if they were allowed to grow up lazy and indolent, they would be worse than the 'pure-bred', and constitute 'a very dangerous element of society'. He ended by recommending work as a method which would in the course of a few years 'wipe out of existence as a separate race' the Aborigines, by absorbing them into the general population.¹

For as long as the Department of Public Instruction refused to act, the uproar increased. In January 1890, the Brungle correspondent wrote that it would be hard to find words sufficiently strong to denounce the neglect of the two government bodies. The Aborigines Protection Board had 'neither a body to be kicked or a soul to be damned'. Its members had always shirked responsibility by blaming someone else, and in the mean time, the children grew up wild and unkempt instead of useful members of society.² Two months later, a correspondent calling him- or herself 'Upper Brungle' wrote that the town had had a surfeit of 'black agony', 'this festering sore which was now a bane and a curse to a thriving, industrious and contented people'.³

¹ 'Rosemount', Gundagai Times, 3 September 1889
² 'Brungle News', 17 January 1890, ibid.
³ 'Upper Brungle', 7 March 1890, ibid.
By this time Inspector O'Byrne was himself the target of much abuse by the Brungle whites. Unremittingly he kept up his appeals to allow Ussher to be employed. On 9 April 1890 he wrote to his Department, 'Surely Ussher is good enough to teach blacks?' The next day he reported that he did not think that a better man would become available. Finally the Chief Inspector, doubtless influenced by the continued criticisms of the government Departments, agreed to his appointment. Ussher took up his position as full-time teacher in August 1890 on the understanding that he could not transfer anywhere else. In 1893 he was appointed manager of Brungle Station as well.

A year after Ussher's appointment as teacher, on Christmas Eve 1891, a wild brawl broke out on the station. The Gundagai Times described it as a bacchanalian disorder of the wildest character, marked by the 'curses, yells and demoniac howls of these unfortunate creatures'. Gribble, doubtless mindful of his experiences at Warangesda, joined in the general denunciation with the observation that if ever there was a race of human beings under the sun calculated to try the patience and disappoint the hopes of sanguine philanthropists, it was the Aborigines.

Yet in the debate as to who, if anyone, was to teach the Aboriginal children, the ultimate objection to the further existence of the station had been lost. There were many more

1. Gundagai Times, 6 January 1891
2. J. Gribble, ibid., 23 January 1891
Brungle Station, 1980. The camp, the source of annoyance to the whites of Brungle town, stood in the middle distance between the trees; at left can be seen the four Board built houses which survived the post-war assimilation policy; see below, Chapter Seven
complaints in the columns on the *Gundagai Times* until a ministerial visit in 1892 quietened the uproar. Once it was apparent that the Board would not consider the removal of the station under any circumstances, the opposition to it sank to a less vocal, but still smouldering, resentment.

By 1900, therefore, the state appeared to have wrested the control of Aboriginal administration from religious and secular forces alike. The missionaries Gribble and Matthews had departed for areas more distant from the seat of government. The churchmen and the townsfolk who wanted more draconian controls over daily life had been held in check. Yet the victory over the latter was more apparent than real: the pressure of white critical opinion, and its weapon of publicity, remained in the twentieth century a far more potent goad to Board activity than any perception by its members of Aboriginal needs. Nonetheless, in Wiradjuri country, as elsewhere, the most powerful obstacle to the enactment of policy was the Aborigines themselves. Aboriginal opposition to the system of the managed reserves, through which it was assumed that Aborigines would come to want to live permanently in designated areas, was deep and enduring. I now attempt to analyse the effects of managed station life on the Wiradjuri at this time, and in turn the effects of their opposition upon state policy.
Chapter Three
Wiradjuri reaction 1880-1909

In the first few months after the establishment of Warangesda, the Wiradjuri probably saw little reason to stay. They may have regarded the station as a resource of food and shelter to which no obligations were owed. In the same way that white men took Aboriginal women to their camps without necessarily understanding or acknowledging the reciprocal exchange thereby implied, it is doubtful if any of the Wiradjuri at first understood the implied exchange at Warangesda, that is, the acceptance of food and accommodation implied the favour to Gribble of their continued presence, their work, and the right of missionaries to teach their children.1 The Wiradjuri probably took some time to accommodate the expectations of the whites into their cultural framework, and, just as significantly, Gribble failed to perceive that they did not (or would not) acknowledge the implied exchange. Gribble and the Wiradjuri were at cross purposes: each saw the function of Warangesda in quite different ways. Fifty years earlier the German missionary Gunther met the northern Wiradjuri at Wellington Valley. In a manner analogous to Gribble's failure to comprehend why people simply came and went from his mission station, Gunther was astounded that meat was accepted with scarcely a 'thank-you'. In August 1836 he locked up two girls all day without food for what he called stealing, but what the Wiradjuri would have presumably understood as making use of an

1. For a discussion of reciprocality, which on the Daly River also involved sexually continent Europeans, see Stanner, op.cit., pp.79-80
available food source. When another girl removed the key of the store, a fellow missionary flogged her while Gunther held her arms.

After some time it presumably became apparent what Gribble wanted, even if it was not clear why he wanted it. This may have been one reason for the continued existence of the camps just outside the Warangesda boundaries. There were camps in the area before the establishment of Warangesda, but the fact that they continued despite the comparative comforts of station life indicates that not all the Aborigines were as enthusiastic about life at Warangesda as Gribble had hoped. He regarded it as a victory in 1883 when he persuaded someone to come from the camp to the station. Fourteen years later the camps were still there, and a source of annoyance to the Local Board (composed of prominent white citizens acting on behalf of the Aborigines Protection Board) as they had been to Gribble. The destruction of the camps was ordered; if the order was carried out, the camp people probably merely camped somewhere else.

Maloga and Brungle also had camps near the station boundaries. Matthews regarded them as a baneful influence on his residents and was glad when camp dwellers went away. In September 1877,

2. Gunther, op. cit., 7 September 1836
3. Gribble, Diary, 3 August 1883
4. Warangesda Mission: Manager's Diary, 17 December 1896
when the young men of the Malaga camps went shearing, the rest of the residents followed them, which suggests that the solidarity of kinship among the Aborigines was greater than the divisions between station and non-station people perceived by the missionaries.\textsuperscript{1} At Brungle in 1898, all the station residents were camped by the river. They were ordered to return to the station, because of their camp fires, and because they prevented stock from grazing near the river.\textsuperscript{2}

The existence of camps outside the managed stations can be compared to those outside pastoral properties in the 1840s, by which the Wiradjuri of the Lachlan district supplemented their food supplies in winter.\textsuperscript{3} They may be also compared to the camps which also in the 1880s were gathering outside Yass and Condobolin, Cowra and Narrandera, Euabalong, Hillston and Parkes. All three varieties of 'fringe-dwelling' were situated close enough to the towns for the Wiradjuri to take advantage of white material culture, but not so close as to come under the greater authority of the whites which more immediate residence implied. The similarities between a pastoral station, a government (or mission) station, and a town were probably very much more obvious to Aborigines than they were to whites: all three demanded certain types of behaviour which became more obligatory on a nearer approach. The ideal was a living area situated to gain a maximum of benefit with a minimum of

\textsuperscript{1} Matthews, Third Annual Report..., 1 May 1877, 7 September 1877
\textsuperscript{2} A.P.B. Annual report, 1898, p.13
\textsuperscript{3} See above, Ch.1, p.30
imposition. The Warangesda and Brungle perimeter camps seem to have perfectly answered that need.

If this is so, we must ask, why did anyone live on the stations at all? Why did they stay? The answers, though conjectural, are complex. The issues illustrate the difficulty of generalising about the nature of Aboriginal culture, even at a particular time and place, represented as it was by men and women of widely differing personalities and experience. Some people, especially women, evidently came because they felt vulnerable. Others may have come to the stations because they were in various ways in conflict with other Wiradjuri: young men at odds with the elders, women in 'wrong-side' marriages or pregnant to white men. Others were displaced by violence or other causes elsewhere in Wiradjuri country. Old people, who seem to have been infrequent residents of Maloga and Warangesda, used the stations for their own purposes, though they too sometimes came to depend economically on them. Probably few people took a conscious decision to forsake their homeland and take up permanent residence on the white men's stations. Yet the children born on the stations, or brought to them at an early age, knew no other life, and may have come to regard them as permanent or semi-permanent homes.

There was, therefore, almost certainly a difference in attitude towards the stations amongst the Wiradjuri which depended, among other factors, on age and prior experience. Fully socialised into Aboriginal lifeways, parents probably underestimated the power of the officials, through explicit and implicit teaching, to influence the minds of their children. The populations of Warangesda and Brungle began to stabilise as the children grew to their 'teens. Now the camp dwellers had a new problem. Gribble and later missionaries at Warangesda placed severe restrictions on the movement of children, and, at least, tried to prevent them leaving on excursions with their parents.1

The relatives in the perimeter camps faced similar dilemmas to that faced by the bush people of the Northern Territory whose children, at about the same time, lived in cattle stations: if they wanted to be near their children, they had to sacrifice some independence and adopt more static living patterns. Little by little Warangesda and Brungle were becoming semi-permanent homes for the children who grew up there. At the same time they functioned as bases at which a man could leave his family while he went to work, and, as the Wiradjuri became less opposed to the value of white education, as places where children could

1. For instance, the Warangesda manager, 26 November 1892, recorded: 'Mrs Little came on this a.m. to see her sister Louisa in Dorm against the rule. Manager ordered her off, caused a deal of excitement.' On 25 March 1895, the Brungle teacher/manager Ussher justified a bad Inspectorial report on his school on the grounds that he was called away from school frequently on managerial duties, and that parents persisted in taking their children away for fishing trips etc, sometimes for days; Brungle Aboriginal school file
receive European education undisturbed by the parents of white children.

Side by side with the function of convenient base or permanent home, the managed stations also provided stopping-places for travellers. The diaries of the Aborigines Protection Association superintendents at Warangesda show clearly that the movement patterns noticed earlier in the century continued at Warangesda. The daily entries concerning arrivals and departures indicate that movement took place predominantly between the Murrumbidgee towns of Hay, Narrandera, Gundagai, and the hinterland towns like Jerilderie and Carrathool. Towns which in the 1890s already had a sizeable Aboriginal population, but away from the Murrumbidgee, such as Yass and Brungle were important links also. For instance, the superintendent's Diary of November 1891 referred to three men who left for Brungle.¹ In August 1892, nine men and boys came from Yass looking for work.² In December 1892, the Inspector of Police at Yass complained of two men 'just loafing from one mission to another', and the Warangesda superintendent ordered the men to leave next day.³ To a large extent, therefore, it appears that the Wiradjuri continued to travel in movement patterns already established before Warangesda was built. In only one direction, southwards towards the Murray, were new patterns

¹ Warangesda Mission: Manager's Diary, 20 November 1891
² 5 August 1892, ibid.
³ 8 December 1892, ibid.
established. The pattern may have been established through the family of Jim Turner, who came with Gribble from Maloga to help establish Warangesda, and who remained on the Murrumbidgee. They were reinforced by links with Aborigines in the Deniliquin area, who in turn had links with the Murray. For instance, the family of Margaret Tucker grew up at Moonahcullah reserve, near Deniliquin. Frequently she and her sisters had to work on their grandfather's farm at Maloga. To avoid this, the sisters and mother ran away to Warangesda. Later, Tucker's father took her on school holidays to visit Brungle.

The fact that Tucker's family ran away to Warangesda strongly suggests that a kin relationship was already established there. Conversely, Gribble's attempts to bring Aborigines from other areas outside Wiradjuri country were unsuccessful, not only because they were probably unhappy, but because nobody is recorded to have followed them from those areas.

1. That the links between Maloga (on the Murray) and Warangesda were not as strong as they were with, for instance, Brungle, can be seen in a note by S. James to R.H. Mathews, 27 September 1897. He reported that he could find out little about Wiradjuri class systems at Maloga because there was no Wiradjuri representative there; Elkin papers, University of Sydney

2. Conversation with Turner's grand-daughter, Evelyn Glass, Darlington Point, 8 July 1980


4. For example, Gribble noted in his Diary, 17 February 1883, that three men recently arrived from the Namoi were implicated in 'immorality'; he did not punish them because it was their first known offence
the Board tried to move three women from Mossgiel to Warangesda. Their refusal over a long period to go, suggests that they had no secure base of family and kin at Warangesda. The establishment of artificial population centres like Warangesda appears to have reinforced traditional movement patterns, and done little to create new ones.

The same conclusion can be drawn from the less plentiful written records of arrivals and departures from Brungle. The most common references, made by the Brungle Local Board uncertain of official policy, were to movement between the station and Yass. The first mention was made a year after Ussher's appointment in 1890. He enquired, through the Local Board, what he should do about the arrival of families, especially from Yass. He was told that Aborigines should understand that they were entitled to government aid only in their own districts. In October 1891, two families who named Brungle as their original district were allowed to return from Yass. Six months later the police at Yass, Cowra, Young and Orange were urged not to issue free rail passes to people unless they possessed ration books issued in those areas. When a party of people whom Ussher designated 'half-castes' arrived from Yass a week later and asked to go on the ration list, they were told to remain permanently in one town or another. The exchanges

1. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 17 May 1900, 7 February 1901
2. 30 April 1891, ibid.
3. 1 October 1891, ibid.
4. 5 February 1892, 14 February 1892, ibid.
indicate that not only were traditional movement patterns within Wiradjuri country (insofar as they can be ascertained from nineteenth century records) sustained or encouraged by the establishment of Brungle, but also that the Board's attempts to impose a more static life-pattern upon the Aborigines were met with opposition.

The second most important movement pattern at Brungle was with Warangesda itself. For instance, in August 1893 a man described as 'a half-caste married to a European' came to Brungle, probably Jack Bamblett of Warangesda. The 'trial' of a Warangesda man at Brungle described below¹ suggests also that broad patterns of ritual and knowledge, as well as kinship, were shared by Aborigines of the two stations. In the first generation after the establishment of the stations, therefore, the transient populations at Warangesda and Brungle may have been as important, and possibly as numerous, as that identified by the officials as 'permanent'.

We may identify the second generation of the managed stations as those children, born at or brought to them at an early age, who grew to maturity on them. One of the most important unions was that of Jack Bamblett with Mary Cameron. Bamblett is said to have been an Aboriginal from Queensland, Cameron a Gaelic-speaking Scot from Perthshire, and a nursing sister at

¹ See below, Ch.3, p.106-7
Warangesda. Their children, mostly born at Warangesda, themselves married in accordance with the movement patterns described. One of the children married Jack Ingram, from Maloga. Another married a woman from Darlington Point. A third married Sophie Wedge, from Yass, and a fourth married a man named Howell, from the Macquarie River. Thus the descendants of the Aboriginal Bamblett, who today within and beyond Wiradjuri country number hundreds of people, are said by Aborigines to have had their origin at Warangesda. Other families who now identify as Wiradjuri trace their recent origin to Warangesda also. One of the sons of Jim Turner, of Maloga, married into a wealthy squatting family of Togammain. The grandfather of Mrs Violet Edwards, of Darlington Point, was a 'Lachlan man' who probably came to the region in the 1880s. Bill Charles was born at Maloga in 1912. His parents also were born at Maloga, but his grandparents came from the Murrumbidgee. Charles married a woman whose parents came from Hillston and

1. Recorded conversation Alf ('Knocker') Williams, Swan Hill, 17 September 1980. Mrs Helen Rowe, of Narrandera, has in her possession a genealogy of several Warangesda families, compiled by an old Narrandera resident. It shows another ascending generation: Jack Bamblett married a 'black woman' in about 1860: his son, also named Jack, married Mary Cameron. Pers. visit, 7 July 1980

2. Recorded conversation, Alf Williams, ibid., conversation Edgar ('Bushie') Howell, Narrandera, 7 July 1980

3. Conversation Evelyn Glass, Darlington Point, 8 July 1980

4. Conversation Violet Edwards, Darlington Point, 8 July 1980
Cumeroogunga and the couple settled at Warangesda. Jim Kennedy of Jerilderie married Margaret Ewan, and they lived for a time on Warangesda. Charlie Kirby, of Oxley, near Hay, married Selina Bright of Narrandera, and in the early 1900s used Warangesda as a base while Kirby found work in the district. Bill Ferguson, a white man, married an Aboriginal, Emily Ford, from Toganmain Station, in 1872. They lived at Waddi, on the edge of Warangesda, in a fringe camp for about ten years. When Emily died in childbirth, the two boys Duncan and Bill, despite 'the protests of their Aboriginal grandmother', were sent for a time to Warangesda school.

The evidence on the location of important Brungle families, such as Freeman, Williams and Hickey, does not conflict with the portrayal of the managed stations as the midwife of many modern Wiradjuri kin-groups. While none of these families state categorically that they originated at Brungle, their names are associated with the earliest official records. Only one family, Simpson, may be definitely traced to the reserve. An Aboriginal woman named Crowe, of Gobarralong Station, some 40 km. from Brungle, married a Frenchman, Clifford Charles Simpson. By 1909, without her husband, she lived on the perimeter of Brungle.

1. Conversation Bill Charles, Griffith, 6 May 1980; Hetty Charles (Hamilton), Griffith 17 May 1980
2. Conversation Liza Kennedy, Wagga Wagga, 13 July 1980
3. Recorded conversation Bush Kirby, Darlington Point, 14 July 1980
4. J. Horner, Vote Ferguson for Aboriginal freedom, 1974, pp.2,4
Station. One of her sons identified the Simpsons as having been a Brungle family. ¹

In the first ten or fifteen years of their existence, therefore, the managed stations became recognised as places in which Aborigines could rear their children in comparative comfort and as a haven for children of mixed parentage. The security afforded was heightened by the availability of work. At Warangesda, in 1891, an agreement was made with the men to 'strip the wheat clean etc. at 6d. a day and no extras'. ² In 1893, the superintendent reported that there were five men harvesting, five suckering, five woodgetting, six grubbing, and six stripping bark. ³ Across the river at Tubbo and Kooba stations, also, work was sometimes available. In August 1892, 'many men' went to Tubbo to 'try and get on shearing'. ⁴ In 1979, two men remembered that they learnt woolshed skills at Kooba in about 1915, and the Darlington Point school records refer to a family named Turner camped on Kooba in 1911. ⁵ The farming area of Brungle was only some 140 acres, which meant that there was less opportunity for work.

Without the example of Gribble in the early 1880s

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1. Recorded conversation Frank Simpson, Young, 3 April, 10 April 1979
2. Warangesda Mission: Manager's Diary, 11 December 1891
3. 29 November 1893, ibid.
4. 12 August 1892, ibid.
5. Recorded conversation Frank Broughton, Yass, 3 April, 16 April 1979; recorded conversation, Locky Ingram, Sydney, 6 June 1979; teacher, Darlington Point School to District Inspector, 1 March 1911, 'Darlington Point School', Department of Education, State Archives
there may have been less incentive for co-operative effort, and there were many complaints about 'hulking loafing fellows' from visiting officials.¹ In 1891 there were, however, fenced paddocks, horses and some dilatory preparations for tillage. By 1909, work was plentiful in the district, and, it was claimed, the men more inclined to accept work than formerly.² To the extent that men wanted work the stations provided a home, and Warangesda in addition provided plenty of work itself. In both districts there are indications that racial prejudice made it difficult for Aborigines to obtain work away from the reserves. For instance, at a station near Warangesda, four Aboriginal shearsers who had been promised pens were denied access to the shed when white shearsers objected to their presence.³ In 1904 the Political Labour League at Gundagai complained of unfair competition from Aborigines on the grounds that Aborigines received rations, and therefore would be prepared to work for less.⁴

The effects of institutionalisation upon the Wiradjuri of the large managed stations is not easy to assess, partly because they were not uniform on all people. Although movement from station to station was difficult, Aboriginal men were encouraged to look for work away from the stations, and they sometimes

1. For example, District Inspector, Report, 19 August 1891, Brungle Aboriginal School file
2. A.P.B. Annual report, 1909, p.8
3. Warangesda Mission: Manager's Diary, 18 August 1895
above, Warangeeda girls in the Dormitory, 1899
Source: A.P.B., Annual report 1899

below, the Dormitory, 1980
returned to their families infrequently.¹ Some effects of 'compound' life were noticed by Leighton amongst Japanese citizens incarcerated in California during the Second World War. He noted that opposition to the captors took American, not traditional Japanese forms. Strikers spoke in terms of the Constitution or of individual rights. Pressure groups formed among people who did not normally associate together, such as those in a particular compound, or bachelors.² In analogous ways, particularly at Warangesda, the Wiradjuri seem to have seized upon the weapons of the whites, such as the strike, the deputation and the petition; the inspiration for each probably was drawn from knowledge of activities on Victorian Aboriginal stations, as well as from whites in the immediate district.³ Most organised opposition came from what was in some ways the artificial creation of the whites: the work gangs of men ranging from youth to middle age. The greatest stability was found amongst the old people, particularly women, who often lived outside the station.

Opposition to Gribble's rule ranged from simple dissatisfaction at ration shortages to quite complicated strikes.⁴ In April

1. The Brungle manager Hubbard reported in 1898 that almost all the able-bodied men were off the station, A.P.B., Annual report, 1898, p.13

2. A. Leighton, The governing of men, 1945, pp.160, 222-3, 236

3. Cf. M.F. Christie, Aborigines in colonial Victoria 1835-1886, 1979, p.184; see Horner, op.cit., p.3 for reference to a strike by white workers in the Darlington Point district in 1891

4. Dissatisfaction over ration shortages continued under the rule of the Aborigines Protection Association; for example the Superintendent's diary of 25 May 1887 reads, 'Ration day no flour, sugar or candles to give out [pencilled note], people very dissatisfied'
1883 he faced a general rebellion. First Tom Buckley refused to continue ploughing and sowing because Gribble would not pay him 'an unreasonable supply of rations'. Next day Gribble noted:

General rebellion amongst men all this week. They want me to relax the working rule. As the government have granted a little money in aid, they think they have no right to work. These half-caste men are the ring-leaders. They have formed a deputation and have gone to Sydney to lodge a complaint.

Later in the month the men returned, having had 'no encouragement but were told to quit the mission if they would not obey the rules'.

Strikes continued to be a common feature at Warangesda in the 1890s. On 14 January 1892 'all the men jibbed... about work'. The reason may have been the very hot weather. In May 1893 a white Vigilance Committee was formed to control the behaviour of the Warangesda men. In protest there was a general strike. The manager ordered that all rations be stopped. A compromise was reached when the strikers agreed to 'knock off all the habits which the Committee were supposed to suppress'. In July work stopped again because there was no sugar.

Sometimes the whole camp disobeyed the manager's orders. For instance, in December 1894, 'most of the people went down to the

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1. Gribble, Diary, 21 April 1883
2. 25 April 1883, ibid.
3. Warrangesda Mission: Manager's Diary, 14 January 1892. There are several references to very hot weather during the month
4. 4 May 1893, ibid.
5. 3 July 1893, ibid.
races, and most of them came home drunk or under the influence of drink'.¹ Often individuals were at odds with managers over personal matters. The diaries of Gribble and the superintendents of the Protection Association were marked by lively accounts of confrontations, and at some periods in the 1890s they formed the bulk of the daily entries.² Expulsions or the deprivation of rations were the penalties for swearing, drinking, fighting, 'loafing' and gambling.³ Since rations were already shared amongst kin, and the threat of expulsion offset by an alternative life outside the mission boundaries, defiance continued openly.

Probably because the influence of Victorian Aborigines at Brungle was much less than at Warangesda, the records contain no references to strikes at Brungle. Individual refusals to work were a much more common phenomenon, and probably many were intended as a passive resistance to managerial authority. In January 1892 the Gundagai Times stated that a large number of 'able-bodied half-castes' drank and gambled; only two men could be trusted to take the dray into town without getting drunk, and of them one was in jail.⁴ Gribble complained of young men 'of the Williams type' who were too lazy to work. They gravitated to Brungle to sponge on the old people, or failing

1. Warrangesda Mission: Manager's Diary, 26 December 1894
2. For instance, 30 November 1893, ibid.
3. For instance, 17 July 1887, ibid.
4. 'Brungle News' Gundagai Times, 22 January 1892
that, made short work of the neighbours' stock. The Board's
Annual report for 1891 noted the number of young, able-bodied, unmarried men who sat about living on the women's rations. "Eighteen years later there were still complaints that men came to the station to gamble and refused to work."

Probably some of the men who refused to work were as Gribble described them. There was sometimes little work available in the Brungle district; doubtless some could see no point in the collective cultivation of the station encouraged by managers, not least because the whites were so lacking in the spirit of co-operative enterprise themselves. Yet we can categorise much of the refusal to work as passive resistance to managerial rule in the sense that Aborigines were quick to perceive the weaknesses in the administration. As at Warangesda, rations were distributed to the needy. By kin-obligation those without food could not be denied; it was perfectly obvious that ultimately the manager could do little to force them to work. If ejected it was possible to camp, like the Simpsons, on the Brungle Creek and prove, by 'trespassing' on an Aboriginal reserve, to be more of a nuisance to the manager than they had been before.

1. Gribble, Gundagai Times, 23 January 1891
2. A.P.B., Annual report, 1891, p.14
3. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 3 November 1910
4. For instance, four Aboriginal 'undesirables' refused to leave Brungle Station, and were prosecuted for trespassing; A.P.B., 'Register of Letters Received, 1910-1913', 3 November 1910, State Archives
Other Brungle Aborigines resorted to more subtle resistance to managerial rule. In May 1895, sixteen people complained by letter to the Local Board that Ussher was agisting animals for his own gain on the station. Eleven months later, a letter was received by the Department of Public Instruction, from a 'Reverend Mr McKenzie, Missionary':

It is with the greatest pleasure that I write you this for to let you know how the Brungle mission is carried on. I have been here for some time and I find that it not looked after... [illegible] it is the worst of the kind that I have seen in my travels. If that the time was got together the children is not 6 months at the school out of the 12... [illegible] They are no better than sheep having no shepherd. He [Ussher] has no control of them, and they know that he was put from the school for being a drunkard. Whenever he thinks of it he will leave the school and go to the town and get drunk. And I trust they will look into this their case as you are a man of God. I assure you it is nothing better than one of the lowest houses in Sydney through him beginning to drink and it is shameful to put him there. He has got 12 horses, they are eating the grass that should feed their sheep [illegible]... I can find from the people that it was his intention when he started it to take them off the country and not keep the place like Gribble. They ought to be made to work for themselves as in Victoria.

I can find by the public and the people themselves that C.H. Rich is the only man that can please them as he got the ground that they loved so well. It fills me with sorrow that a drunk can be a missionary. Dear friend, I trust that you will look into their miserable life. The whites go there with grog to Ussher and then get the girls outside the place.

1. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 23 May 1895
If that you think that this is not right you ought to go there and see for yourself and then you will believe. You are the best to give Rich a trial and I shall wish you good evening trusting that for the Lord's sake you will look into miserable state and feed the sheep which you will learn was Chas Rich's intention.

Yours till death,
Rev Mr McKenzie, Missionary.

The letter is in pencil, misspelled, and almost indecipherable. The two government bodies investigated, and concluded that the letter was a fake. The evidence points to it having been written by an Aborigine, or by Rich, since there are three references to him in it. Other internal evidence points to an Aboriginal source, particularly the references to Gribble and Victorian Aborigines. A third possibility is that there was some collaboration between Rich and some of the Brungle people.

Whatever the actual source, there is enough concern about matters of purely Aboriginal interest, such as the agistment question, and the possibility of the station's removal, to conclude that it represents a fair statement of one strand of Aboriginal thought at Brungle in the 1890s. The opposition to alcohol and procurement suggests a female writer, and the concern with the children suggests that the writer either had discerned one of the known pressure points by which whites could be moved, or was genuinely concerned about it. There are hints in such phrases as 'lowest house' that the writer was aware of Christian doctrine, and perhaps was influenced by it.

1. Original and transcription by Department of Public Instruction in Brungle Aboriginal School file, letter dated 4 April 1896. Spelling has been corrected to aid understanding.
The letter is instructive not only because it reveals the diversity of the methods of passive resistance, but also the world-view of some Brungle Aborigines. The writer accepted the status-quo, but wanted to achieve the best of what appeared to be possible, that is, a maximum of freedom within a minimum of perceived injustice. Resentment was directed towards an individual, rather than the system of which he was an agent. There was no claim made for social equality with the whites, little that could be construed as a forerunner of Aboriginal assimilationist demands of the 1930s. Instead the writer foresaw the continuation of a separate Aboriginal identity based on the system of the managed station, but within which the basic system of white justice would be recognised. Thus the model was fixed firmly in the writer's perception of what was possible. The conceptual parameters were embedded in the notions that Aborigines would remain living with other Aborigines. In the strikes and petitions of Warangesda can be seen the same qualities of implied bargain, an acceptance of some of the European ethical values within a predominantly Aboriginal framework. The evidence suggests that the community life of a large number of Aborigines, surrounded by a fairly hostile white community, and under the control of a single dictatorial white man, allowed these qualities to flourish. Such qualities we may describe as some of the positive aspects of life on the managed stations. The Wiradjuri learned, adapted, perceived the weaknesses of the system, and to an extent were able to offer an agreement to the whites based on the status quo of relative power.

Conflict was often most painful when officials, wittingly or not, transgressed fundamental Aboriginal religious or social
customs. To some of the arbitrary demands of managers the only alternative to obedience was to leave the station, a course surrounded by practical difficulties for those with families. For instance, in March 1883, eight men left Warangesda because 'they were not allowed to associate with the girls when they pleased'. They camped in defiance outside the mission boundaries. It is possible that some of the girls were promised to the men, and that the conflict had a cross-cultural edge to it. In December 1894 the Superintendent refused to give Mrs Hart her ration because she shared it with her husband, who had refused to work. The same month, her meat ration, and that of a Mrs Dixon was stopped because they were harbouring two girls. Probably the girls should have been in the dormitory, in which they were to learn Christianity and how to be domestic servants. The examples indicate that the conflict between managers and inmates may have been most acute when questions of customary law or specifically Aboriginal usage were challenged. Yet it is doubtful whether the missionaries realised that this kind of resistance could be distinguished from a strike for higher pay, or that there were fundamental cross-cultural differences which caused the disputes.

Though it is unwise to attempt to correlate cultural dislocation with anti-social behaviour too closely, some of the behavioural

1. Warrangesda Mission: Manager's Diary, 17 March 1888 (entry crossed out but legible)
2. 1 December 1894, ibid.
3. 14 December 1894, ibid.
patterns at the stations discerned by the missionaries may be
taken as departures from what, at any rate, was considered
normal by officials.¹ Informing against fellow-inmates was a
practice sometimes encouraged by superintendents, although the
irony of the following entry went unnoticed:

Louisa Barlow spoken to by manager in consequence of
her spreading false statements causing trouble to
others thereby. Gilbert Barlow rec'd six cuts in the
hands (strap used) for unseemly conduct with a slut
away in the scrub. This was reported by Jas. Smith,
who saw him.²

In 1887 a controversy erupted at Warangesda between the Board
and the Association after a girl was beaten by the teacher for
having done 'naughty things with a boy'. The Inspector reported
that six other girls younger than eleven had had intercourse
with 'half-caste' boys, while the teacher told other 'most
shocking things' to a magistrate.³ Like the brawl at Brungle
on Christmas Eve, 1891, too much may be inferred from such
examples about the break-down of societal controls: neither may
have been of very much concern to the Wiradjuri. Yet the
departures from the behaviour which the whites expected may
possibly be taken as outcomes of cultural conflicts which the
Aborigines, if they wanted to remain on the stations, could not
win.

¹ For an example of cross-cultural psychiatry applied to
Aborigines, see J. Cawte, Cruel, poor and brutal
nations, 1972, pp.46-7

² Warrangesda Mission: Manager's Diary, 12 November 1896

³ Inspector's Report, 19 September 1887, Warangesda
Aboriginal School file
In total the evidence of what the Aborigines of the managed stations thought and felt in the period seems to be so inconsistent that it is difficult to offer a generalisation. For instance, amidst the strikes and deputations at Warangesda, twenty-three men signed a list indicating that they wanted to attend night school.\(^1\) Several Aboriginal families applied for, and obtained, agricultural plots on Warangesda and at Grong Grong after 1894.\(^2\) While there is a possibility that some applications were made to obtain relief from managerial rule, many were genuine.\(^3\) The diary entries suggest that it is an oversimplification to present even the intransigent as wholly in opposition to the whites. When a number of women at Warangesda were told to shift their camps within sight of the manager's house, some complied, and some did not.\(^4\) Matthews referred to the death of an old woman called Maria who had formerly been one of the most bitter opponents of the station 'in decoying the young people away from us, and our influence'. Yet recently, Matthews continued, she had ended her opposition when presented with a supply of tobacco.\(^5\)

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1. Application to attend night school, 15 January 1896

2. For instance the A.P.B. Minutes of meetings record that James Dixon, 11 April 1895, and a man named Bright, 9 December 1897, applied successfully to live on the Grong Grong reserve. Both were probably Warangesda residents

3. For instance, William Dixon was still at Grong Grong in 1899, and there is no subsequent record of his leaving the reserve

4. Warrangesda Mission: Manager's Diary, 26 September 1896

5. Matthews, Fifth Annual Report..., 2 May 1879
The apparent inconsistencies of thought, and the variety of solutions pursued at the managed stations, reflect no more than the complexities of cross-cultural relations in a state of flux, compounded by the strains of institutional life. There were not many heroic stands, and not many tame submissions. Probably very few of the Wiradjuri were able to see exactly what were the challenges offered by the whites, still less how to deal with them. The innate capacity of Europeanism to change black civilisation for good or ill may not have preoccupied very many, although the worth of white individuals was probably the source of endless debate. Nor may estimations of the relative strengths of the two cultures be made by an analysis of the attitudes of people any one period. The old people who offered most opposition to the whites were amongst those who had spent part of their lives on the sheep stations or about the towns of the whites in the 1850s. The girls who grew up in the dormitory, and who later went into domestic service in the homes of the white bourgeoisie were cut off from daily Aboriginal precept and practice. Yet today some of the survivors are regarded, and regard themselves, as the sheet anchor of the older, valued Aboriginal ways. Perhaps the managers and teachers assumed that the battle for Aboriginal minds had been won: if so, they were deceived by the importance which they placed on explicit instruction, and by the assumption that the acceptance of one behavioural role precluded the internalisation of another. From both Warangesda and Brungle young men and women were sent into the white community to work, but most
carried in their heads, unknown to the whites, a co-consciousness of some of the values of both civilisations. ¹

The argument at this point is that in some areas the Wiradjuri, by weight of absolute numbers, were able sometimes to dominate managers who as yet had few legal coercive powers. Sometimes they were able to bargain. Sometimes they sought sanctuary within the reserves. Some of the challenges which the whites offered were accommodated, some could not be accepted without structural damage to Aboriginal society, and some simply were not understood. All these aspects of the conflict can be found in tracing the decline of the Wiradjuri language at the managed stations during this period. Of the three generations at Warangesda and Brungle in 1909 it is fairly certain that only the grandparents as a group knew the language well. Their children, who took part in altercations with the managers, signed their names on the evening-class list, and faked letters from imaginary white men, spoke English as their first language. They were the last generation of whom it could be said that a fair minority spoke the language well. Of the grandchildren who survived in the late 1970s, none could speak Wiradjuri. ²

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¹ Some theorists of childhood learning see parents' roles as models of behaviour which may serve as patterns for children to follow. Others see parents' most lasting influence in establishing modes of interaction with others, and the teaching of certain modes of adapting to changing life circumstances; see E.E. Maccoby, Social development, 1980, pp.25-29

² Locky Ingram, recorded conversation, Sydney, 6 June 1979
Locky Ingram, born at Deniliquin in 1905, spent his youth at Warangesda. In 1979 he knew no more than thirty or forty single Wiradjuri words, but stated that his father knew Wiradjuri.

Bill Charles, born at Warangesda in 1902, stated that his grandparents could speak Wiradjuri, but his parents could not. Frank Simpson, who grew up near Brungle, could speak a little but forgot it. Frank Broughton, born at Brungle in 1895, knew only one or two words from his youth. Alf Williams, born at Brungle in 1896, said he could not put a Wiradjuri sentence together, though his father could speak the language. He could sing one or two songs in 1980 which he had learned by rote, but no-one was able to translate them, or even confirm that the language was Wiradjuri. Fred Collins, born at Gundagai in 1910 and reared at Brungle, said that he never heard Wiradjuri spoken in his time. Far away from the managed reserves, in the north and west, the language survived a little longer among the generation born about 1900. Tilly Coe, born at Euabalong in 1906, stated that she knew only a few words, though her mother was a good speaker. She knew of a few others, since dead, who had been fluent speakers.

1. Conversation Bill Charles, Griffith, 6 May 1980
2. Recorded conversation Frank Simpson, Young, 3 April, 10 April 1979
3. Recorded conversation Frank Broughton, Yass, 3 April 1979
4. Recorded conversation Alf Williams, Swan Hill, 8 June 1980
5. Recorded conversation Fred Collins, Murrumburrah, 7 July 1980
6. Conversation Tilly Coe, Condobolin, 5 November 1980
person alive in 1980 who could definitely be stated to have been once a fluent speaker of Wiradjuri was Julia Wighton, born at Euabalong in about 1910. Her daughter stated that she had learned the language because her uncles had pulled her plaits until she made the sounds properly. In 1978 Mrs Wighton had a stroke, and was not able to remember any of the language.1

Why the language ceased to be spoken in only one or two generations remains a question to which there is no certain answer.2 There is little in the literature of linguistics to explain the deaths of languages in general. The most common factor mentioned by older Wiradjuri is that they were not allowed to learn it. Irene Vine, born at Euabalong in 1906, stated that 'nobody wanted us to learn'.3 Emma Penrith, born at Brungle in 1912, said that she learnt a few words which she specifically asked her mother, but was conscious that her mother did not want her to learn the language. Children were sent away from groups of older people talking Wiradjuri with the words, 'little pigs have long ears'. Mrs Penrith could think of no reason why her mother did not want her to learn the

1. Recorded conversation Julia Wighton and Bonnie Merritt, Condobolin, 4 November 1980
2. W. Labov noted that little progress had been made in ascertaining the empirical factors which condition linguistic change. However, he found that one factor which led to changes in pronunciation was the perception of the social status of particular linguistic forms. Internal structural pressures acted in systematic alteration with sociolinguistic forces such as those described here; W. Labov, 'On the mechanism of social change', in A.R. Keiler, (ed.) A reader in historical and comparative linguistics, 1972, 267-288
3. Conversation Irene Vine, Euabalong, 5 November 1980
Violet Bolger, born at Brungle in 1902, stated that 'they didn't want to teach it and I didn't want to learn'. The most explicit statement was made by a middle-aged woman who has spent most of her life near Cowra and Orange:

Q: Could your parents speak Wiradjuri?

Not my mum and dad, but my nanna could. She came over at Brungle. You weren't allowed to sit down and listen to them talk. Wouldn't talk it in front of you.

Q: Why not?

I don't know. That's the thing that's got us puzzled. I mean, that's why none of us know the language... They were old when I was young, that's in the '30s, before '37. They were old women, so they'd be born... two generations back. See they wouldn't even talk it in front of my mother, and that, very rarely. They were very funny people, the older ones. They had to get in that little group, then they'd talk among themselves. But if you walked up, say you were an Aborigine, and you walked up, they'd just close up like a clam.

There are at least two interpretations of this data. One is that the old people of today are victims of a general delusion that the language was withheld from them, and the other is that it actually was. There is no evidence to support the first hypothesis, and a little to support the second. The Wiradjuri speakers may have chosen not to use the language in front of the children because they were speaking of secret-sacred subjects, or even everyday matters of local politics which they did not want the children to know. Alternatively, they may have

1. Recorded conversation Emma Penrith, Griffith, 18 September 1980
2. Recorded conversation Violet Bolger, Tumut, 26 February 1980
3. Recorded conversation Val Simpson, Cowra, 15 April 1979
considered the language as part of the general body of Aboriginal knowledge which, for now obscure reasons, they did not wish to pass to their descendants. The suppression of information and a reluctance to perform ceremonies in front of children supposed to be unsympathetic has been noted in various parts of Australia. The Wiradjuri speakers may have tried to cling to their prestige by withholding the language, or may have thought that their descendants would not value it, or would be better off without Aboriginal language in a white-dominated world. The most likely explanation is that the old people did not intend to destroy the language. Yet the language acquired by children is that of the home and hearth. By a failure to use Wiradjuri consistently as a matter of daily communication, the old people unwittingly caused its destruction. The death of a language was a phenomenon totally outside their experience. There are today Aborigines in

1. For a discussion of this phenomenon see Read, op.cit., 1980, pp.103-4

2. A similar attitude was observed in Alan Sloane, formerly of Condobolin, in 1981. While he was ready to talk to the author of police brutality in that town in the 1930s and 1940s, Sloane stated that he did not tell his children for fear it would antagonise them against the whites; conversation, Canberra, 5 August 1981; for a similar view see P. Pepper, You are what you make yourself to be, 1982, p.9

3. In 1981 on the Daly River, the older Marrithiyle speakers were concerned that many of the younger people did not speak the language, but used instead the lingua-franca Ngangikurrungkur. Yet they did not associate their children's ignorance of Marrithiyel with their own failure to speak it commonly in front of them; pers. comm., Ian Green, September 1981. I am grateful to Mr Green for his comments on this section.
the Northern Territory who can scarcely believe that some southern Aborigines can speak only English.¹

The chief contribution of the managed stations to the decline of the language was the further separation of speakers from non-speakers. Although the placing of children in the dormitory was supposed to be voluntary, strong pressure was placed upon parents to leave their children there. For example, when John Glass wanted to leave the station in 1910, the Board's instructions were that the manager should persuade him to leave his children behind. His wife and family should not be allowed to want, but Glass must understand that he must leave Warangesda and seek employment elsewhere.² Somehow Glass managed to remain, for two years later he applied for rail passes to take his two children to Gooloogong, near Cowra. He was told that he could have one for himself, provided that he left his children behind.³ A decision by parents to leave the station altogether was no guarantee of safety. For instance, in 1910 when the Warangesda manager asked the Board for instructions concerning parents who refused to hand their children over to him, he was told that the whole family would have to leave. If, however, the children were then not properly cared for off the station, they would be dealt with under the Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act.⁴

¹. For example, Engineer Jack Japaljarri, in Read, op.cit., 1978, p.148
². A.P.B., Register of Letters Received, 28 July 1910
³. 8 August 1912, ibid.
⁴. 18 August 1910, ibid.
On the day that he received these instructions, the manager ordered the parents of Malinda Ingram to place their daughter in the dormitory, or they would have to leave the station. There is no record of what happened to the family, but in seeking to explain the continuing decline of the language, the fact of the withdrawal of families like the Ingrams may be as important as the placement of the girls in the dormitory or the boys on pastoral properties. It was the grandparents of those children, not the parents, who knew the language well; and the departure of a family from the station meant that this important link, tenuous though it often already was, was broken. A family expelled or voluntarily withdrawn from the managed stations had the choice of going to a well-known Aboriginal encampment, or to an area where there were few Aborigines. At the former, such as Yass, they would have lived with relatives and others in the same mental state as themselves - frightened, harrassed by police and officials of the Board armed with the Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act. At the latter, such as Cootamundra, the children had still less access to the people who would have been most concerned with the teaching of traditional knowledge and language. While their parents spoke English constantly to the whites, the children absorbed both the language and the attitudes of their parents. Of the old people quoted above, Mrs Wighton, Mrs Penrith, Mrs Bolger and Mr Collins went into service, and had no chance to hear the language spoken after the age of twelve. When the Aborigines Protection Act of 1909 formally gave the Board power to expel

1. A.P.B., Register of Letters Received, 18 August 1910
above left, Mrs Violet Bolger, Tumut, 1980

above right, Mr Locky Ingram, Sydney, 1979

below, Mrs Julia Wighton, Condobolin, 1980
Aborigines of 'lighter caste', practically all the young men on Warangesda and Brungle had to leave. Every one of the men quoted concerning the decline of the language, travelled, generally before they were twenty, away from the stations, engaged in rural labour, and spoke English to their white work mates.

The lack of statutory coercive power, and the Aborigines' ability to exploit weaknesses in the administration, prevented the state from wielding to full effect the power it had wrested from the churches and, temporarily, the country towns. The power which enabled managers to expel Aborigines was clumsy, for men defined as Aborigines on one day might be fined for trespassing on an Aboriginal reserve on the next. Sometimes magistrates interpreted the law so that being Aboriginal was an advantage. Nor did managers possess the power to restrain people from leaving. Thus in 1900 Mary McGuiness left Brungle, taking her four brothers and sisters. They went first to Goulburn, then to Yass, where they were cared for by relatives. The police were directed to take action, but no results were recorded. A year earlier, two or three families, dissatisfied with station conditions, left Brungle for the Cowra reserve. In an effort to have the children returned, according to Ferguson, the Board had to sue the parents for abducting

1. For instance, Marly Williams after conviction for theft in 1891, received the Tumut jury's recommendation for mercy because he was Aboriginal, and received a sentence of three months instead of six; Gundagai Times, 8 December 1891

2. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 15 March 1900
their own children.\textsuperscript{1} For as long as the Board retained its concept of reserves and homes for the sick, aged, female and young, those in the named categories could hold managers to ransom.\textsuperscript{2} The laws relating to children were equally unsatisfactory from the Board's viewpoint, since magistrates sometimes refused to commit as 'neglected' children whose parents had left the managed stations.\textsuperscript{3}

By 1909 the chief problem of the administration was that Aborigines were not wanting what they were supposed to want, nor doing what they were supposed to do. During the Enquiry into Warangesda after O'Byrne's report in 1884, the Board had debated whether or not Aborigines should remain on reserves, but that had not turned out to be the principal problem. Nor had it turned out to be a question of how to keep undesirable Aborigines off them. The question, quite unanticipated, was how to prevent Aborigines treating the reserves and stations as places where food and shelter were available but which could be dispensed with when there was the desire or necessity to go somewhere else. Instead of coming to live at the Board's stations and reserves, some of the Wiradjuri had chosen to remain in areas like Gooloogong, which in 1909 was not an official reserve at all, and from which the young men in turn

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] Evidence W. Ferguson, \textit{Select committee on administration of Aborigines Protection Board}, 1938, p.68
\item[2.] A.P.B., \textit{Annual report}, 1887, p.2
\item[3.] See below, Ch.4, pp.116-7
\end{itemize}
had to be driven away. Nor did people moved on from such
towns necessarily then shift to the managed reserves, but
sometimes simply to other areas where kinfolk were living. In vain did the Brungle manager Ussher protest that he had
neither effective power to expel young men nor make them
work. It was practically impossible to stop people not
officially registered as station residents from entering a
reserve, and it was equally difficult to prevent those who
should have been on the station from camping elsewhere. The
failure of the managed stations to function as they were
intended to function, that is, to attract the Aborigines to them
so that they could be taught the European useful virtues, was
brought about chiefly by the Aborigines’ refusal to comply.
Aboriginal customs and usage were threatened, the decline of the
language accelerated, but in the principal matter of population
control the Board had not been successful.

The truth of the matter was that the managed stations were
becoming unmanageable. By 1900 the drift of policy was towards
an increasing use of force. After the brawl at Brungle on
Christmas Eve, 1891, Ussher had asked for a revolver and

1. For instance, A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 14 July 1910

2. For example, the Cootamundra municipal council
strongly resisted the efforts of Aborigines to camp
near the town; on 5 April 1900 four people expelled
from the town returned to Yass; see also 15 March
1900, 27 July 1910, ibid.

3. Ussher to Chief Inspector, D.P.I., 26 August 1891,
Brungle Aboriginal School file
handcuffs, but had been refused. Eight years later, the mood of the Board had changed, for he was told that if he wanted additional powers he could be sworn in as a special constable. Pressure was mounting from whites in country towns to control the black population. By about 1905 the Board began seeking ways to codify its authority, which, except where it was expressed through the general legislation, still had no statutory force. Events in Wiradjuri country confirmed, to the Board, the need both to keep women and children under control, and to drive the men into the white community. At Brungle, it was reported, some young men, almost white, who lived on the station, would not work if they could possibly avoid it. Sixteen years earlier, the same complaint had been made. The policy of encouraging children to find work in the dormitory, or in the white community, was out of control. Two girls sent from Brungle to Junee returned home after a few months, 'although very kindly treated'. At Warangesda things were no better: in 1909 only ten girls were in the dormitory, while there were still men who, without working, lingered on or about the station. The 1910 Report, in reference to both

1. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 8 January 1891
2. 23 January 1898, ibid.
3. For instance, from Cootamundra, see above, Ch.3, p.104, note 2, from Yass, see below, Ch.4, pp.124-5
4. A.P.B., Annual report, 1909, p.8
5. 1891, p.14, ibid.
6. ibid.
the managed Wiradjuri stations, ended on a distinctly menacing note: when the Act and regulations came into force, it was promised, it would be possible to remedy this state of affairs.¹

The failure of the Board to persuade Aborigines to disperse into the community, while it provided sanctuaries for the old, sick and young, was due to its own lack of power, and to the survival, or reinforcement, of Aboriginal solidarity. In 1904 it was reported that the old King of Brungle had died. The manager maintained that very little notice was taken of his decease. The old customs of the race were fast disappearing, the habits and customs of the white people were taking their place.² Aboriginal oral evidence suggests that the white officials saw what they wanted to see. For instance, Alf Williams in about 1908, perhaps decades after the last initiation ceremony in the district had been held, witnessed a spectacular ritual at Brungle. He related that Harry Brandy, of Warangesda, had stolen a Brungle woman. Two men had been ordered to bring back the couple, or, failing that, the hands of the culprit. Brandy was captured, and returned with a 'barrister', Jim Murray. That night three large fires were lit. For three hours, six or seven elders heard the evidence. Their verdict was guilty, the punishment was death. Two of the best Brungle men then fought Brandy, who defeated them both. The 'King' of Brungle then announced that he would punish Brandy

¹ A.P.B., Annual report, 1909, p.13; Brungle, p.8, ibid.
² 1904, p.7, ibid.
personally. Brandy knelt before him, and was hit with a nulla nulla. No one was allowed to go near him. After half an hour he got up. Ten men formed a ring around him, the woman stood beside him, and they 'had a wonderful corroboree which I'll never forget'. The ceremony was conducted in Wiradjuri, which Williams was able to follow by his father whispering to him. In 1980 he was able to sing a song fragment, which had been sung as a thanksgiving at the conclusion of the ceremony.\(^1\)

The solidarity expressed in such rituals, to which there are many references in the nineteenth century literature, was further strengthened through the system of managed stations.\(^2\) A large community ranged against a single manager, and through him the local white community, encouraged a feeling of difference. Within this concept a pride in Aboriginality was not necessarily a part. It is unlikely that the constant vilifications of the station by the Brungle whites remained unknown to the residents. They were probably well aware that sand was not supposed to be in the ration sugar; parents as well as children were doubtless aware that Ussher regarded it as a foregone conclusion that it was no use trying to teach them.\(^3\)

The solidarity of the stations discouraged

1. Recorded conversation Alf Williams, by David Morrissey, Swan Hill, 8 June 1980, P. Read, Swan Hill, 17 September 1980

2. For instance, H.W. Haygarth, Recollections of bush life in Australia, 1848, p.113

3. District Inspector to Chief Inspector, D.P.I., 24 October 1893, Brungle Aboriginal School file
people from wanting to join the white society, and the low esteem in which they were held by the Board made it practically impossible to achieve this goal. Malinowski's observation that it was futile to offer a non-European citizenship unless the means whereby a person could become Europeanised were also provided, is as relevant to the managed stations as it was to Africa.\(^1\) The lesson which the white people, in particular, those at Brungle, wanted to teach the Wiradjuri was that Aborigines were worthless and the conditions of the station demonstrated this daily.\(^2\) Consequently, the principal result of this era of the managed stations was that, while Aboriginal self-esteem probably was lowered, group identity was heightened by a 'us-against-them' administration and response.

While Aborigines could not be forced, en masse, from the managed stations, the system bred formality of structure and solidity of identification. To the Aborigines' desire and intention to continue living in basically non-European ways, the Board had no answer save the codification and stiffening of its legal powers. In the Aborigines Protection Act of 1909, which can be seen, like some Victorian legislation, as an answer to Aboriginal intransigence, lay the policy which dominated the Wiradjuri for

\(^{1}\) B. Malinowsky, *The dynamics of culture change*, 1945/1961, pp.55-6

\(^{2}\) That conditions did not markedly change at Brungle can be seen in the adverse criticism of the Board by the M.L.A. in 1902. He described the people as grossly maltreated and badly fed, subject to harsh treatment, and, as punishment for some supposed or actual trivial offence, had their rations withdrawn; *N.S.W.P.D.*, L.A., 2/5, 1902, pp.804-5
the next sixty years, and dominates them still.\footnote{Christie, \textit{op.cit.}, p.194, concluded that it was no coincidence that the Victorian policy changes of 1881 were proposed at the same time that the B.P.A. failed in its attempts to break up Coranderrk Station} The Board concluded that no longer should Aborigines be afforded the basic human right to associate with whom they chose. They must be compelled to merge with the white community. The tragic era of forced dispersal had begun.
Chapter Four
The dispersal of adults and children
1909-1929

The Aborigines Protection Act of 1909 formally established the Aborigines Protection Board and declared the responsibility of government towards the relief, maintenance, custody and education of Aborigines. 1 Aborigines were defined as persons of full Aboriginal descent, and persons having an admixture of Aboriginal blood who were in receipt of government rations, or who had applied for them, or who resided on a reserve. 2 Under other provisions, only Aborigines so defined were allowed on reserves and stations, but men who, in the opinion of the Board, ought to be earning a living elsewhere were debarred. 3 Non-Aborigines were not allowed to wander with Aborigines. 4 The new Act was greeted with enthusiasm by the Board, which announced that radical changes in methods of dealing with Aborigines would now be proposed. Attention would be directed particularly to compelling the able-bodied to shift for themselves and to training the young. 5

Although the able-bodied on the reserves seemed to have been dealt with, the new Act trod rather lightly around the Board's

1. The Aborigines Protection Act, No. 25 of 1909
2. s. 3, ibid.
3. s. 8(1), (2), ibid.
4. s. 10, ibid.
5. A.P.B., Annual report, 1909, p. 2
second preoccupation - those people, not Aborigines, who idled their lives away as pensioners on the reserves. The explanation for their comparatively gentle treatment was that there were legal complications in the definition of Aboriginality. The Supreme Court, in reference to the Liquor Control Act of 1898, had ruled that 'Aboriginal natives of Australia', who were excluded from drinking, meant only people of the full descent. In 1905 the Board had had the Liquor Control Act amended to the same wide definition which was used later in the Act of 1909. The logical problem then arose of how people described as 'octoroon' or 'quadroon' could be legally debarred from reserves on the grounds that they were not Aborigines. The Board's difficulty was that it was under pressure from both townspeople to keep Aborigines from the districts, and from the government to save money and close the reserves. The conflicting pressures were evident in section 14 of the Act, which empowered the Board both to move people from near a reserve and from a township. In principle, the Board solved the difficulty by instructing managers to 'discourage any further introduction of half-castes' on to the reserves, and to restrain people who ought to be there from leaving. In practice the problem remained that Aborigines, recognised as

1. A.P.B., Annual report, 1899, p.3,
2. 1903, p.2, ibid.; see also The State Reports, New South Wales, III, 1903, under index 'Liquor Act'
3. The Aborigines Protection Act, s.14 referred to Aborigines 'who are camped or are about to camp within or near any reserve, town or township'
4. Aborigines Protection Act, 1909, Regulations Under, No.14(c), L.A. of N.S.W., issued 8 June 1910
such both by themselves and the general community, once expelled from a reserve and a town, had nowhere to go.

The practical difficulties with the definition were soon apparent. People of obviously Aboriginal appearance, who lived on the edge of towns and did not ask for rations, were by definition not Aborigines, but remained nevertheless the subjects of complaints by townspeople. In September 1915 a circular informed all managers that in the opinion of the Crown Solicitor, the term 'Aboriginal admixture' was sufficiently wide to enable 'octofoons' and 'quadroons', whether receiving rations or not, to be removed under the Act from the towns.\(^1\) This opinion served to strengthen the cause of such people to be admitted to the reserves and the difficulties remained until 1918, when an amending Act again narrowed the definition of 'Aborigine' to 'any full-blooded or half-caste aboriginal who is a native of New South Wales'.\(^2\) An exception was made in Section 9, by which the Board retained power to refuse the power to drink or purchase alcohol to anyone with 'an admixture of Aboriginal blood'.\(^3\)

There are several features of the 1918 amendment deserving comment. The first was that the Board now specifically excluded itself from control over 'quadroons' and 'octrooons', who were

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1. Circular No.90, 1 September 1915, from Secretary, A.P.B. to all managers, in Copies of Letters Sent, 1914-1927, State Archives

2. Amendment No.7 of 1918, No.2(1)(a)

3. No.2(iii), ibid.
by law now to reside off reserves. This indicates that, temporarily at least, the Board had adopted what appeared to be the easiest solution. To both the state government and to municipal councils it could argue that it was simply not responsible for fringe-camp populations: as a person was expelled from a reserve, legally he or she ceased to be Aboriginal. We shall see how in 1927 the Condobolin municipal council made nonsense of this legal fiction. The second is that little thought had been given to the consequences of expelling people from reserves. The point had been raised in the debate over the amendment. Sir James Carruthers argued that people known as Aborigines would still be regarded as such, whatever their 'caste', and would not be given jobs. The children would not be allowed into white schools. The response of the government was that a very large expenditure was entailed upon the state, and the merging of people of 'lighter caste' would result in a considerable economy.\(^1\) As a concession it was allowed that under certain conditions people of 'lighter caste' might sometimes be allowed to live on reserves.

Carruthers had touched upon an obvious flaw in the amendment which the Board, in its haste to find an administratively simple solution, had not foreseen. Since the child of two 'half-caste' parents was known as a 'quadroon', it followed that a child would have to be removed from its parents if they lived on a reserve. To avoid this, many couples left the reserves altogether. Based on a simple-minded, three-generational,

\(^1\) N.S.W.P.D., 2/68, L.C., pp.1722-4; L.A., p.1364
black-to-white progression, the policy was stupid as well as cruel. The possibility of 'back-crossing', that is, the marriage of a part-Aboriginal with a person of the full descent, simply was not allowed for.\(^1\)

The consequences of neglecting the adults and children expelled from the reserves were serious, and brought the policy to ruin by 1929. Perhaps the Board was under too much financial pressure to make its plans very carefully. A circular of 1914 warned that wartime measures made it necessary for managers to exercise the strictest economy, or salaries would suffer.\(^2\)

Then the free issue of blankets was reduced, followed by the elimination of meat from the diet of those able to hunt or fish.\(^3\) At the same time the Board was under pressure to keep Aborigines under control: despite the wartime economy measures, the expenditure of £7 was authorised for every settlement at Christmas, 1915, to prevent Aborigines from going to nearby towns.\(^4\) Alternatively, the Board may have expected family disruption. Many members believed that the extinction of

\[1.\] The point was noticed by Smith, *op.cit.*, p.33

\[2.\] Circular No.20, 11 August 1914, in *Copies of Letters Sent*

\[3.\] Circular re blankets, No.224, 31 March 1916; re meat, No.262, 23 March 1916; combined economies, No.591, 6 April 1916, No.613, 20 April 1916. Under Regulation 19, Aborigines who were aged, infirm or sick were allowed only 8lb. flour, 2lb. sugar, and 1/4lb. tea; meat, salt, tobacco and soup were to be issued only when required, on specially authorised reserves; *Copies of Letters Sent*

\[4.\] Circular No.40, 12 November 1914, *Copies of Letters Sent*
Aborigines was inevitable. Presumably the process could be hurried a little by separating the old from the young. Like generations of administrators before them, Board members believed that the best chance of merging the Aboriginal population with the European lay in re-socialising and re-educating the children.

The Act of 1909 gave the Board power to remove children for apprenticeship, with parental permission, and to commit 'neglected' children. Principally this enabled officials to remove children without visible means of support or of abode, who wandered, were insufficiently provided with basic necessities, were ill-treated, or whose parents lived immorally. Perhaps 100 Wiradjuri children were apprenticed or charged under state childrens Acts by 1915. One man, Paul Coe, of Cowra, in 1979 described his experiences as a committed state ward. He was charged with neglect under the Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act in 1911 and sent to the state home at Mittagong. Coe stated that his treatment at the home was fair, even generous. In time he became a trusted favourite. One of his tasks was to escort to the railway

1. See below, Ch.4, p.170

2. The Apprentices Act, No.41 of 1901, defined the age of apprenticeship as between 14 and 21 (Part II,s.4), the parent of any child could apply for custody of that child while serving an apprenticeship. The definitions of Neglect under the Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act, No.16 of 1905, were at Part I,s.5

3. A complaint about the Coe children was made at Cowra, Register of Letters Received, 19 February 1913. The children were removed from Carowindra in about 1913.
station the boys who were going into rural service. (He was told to pretend to them that they were going home, otherwise they would have run away.) After two years at Mittagong he was sent to Morpeth, then to Maitland as a dairy hand. An Inspector came to see him, to whom he complained of poor treatment. The complaint was thought justified and he was sent to another dairy farm at Kangaroo Valley. Coe stated that he more or less enjoyed the life there, but his testimony suggests that his good nature and capacity for hard work were much exploited by the proprietress of the farm. In about 1919, when he turned 18 and his term of committal expired, he returned to Cowra.  

Although perhaps 500 Aboriginal children were apprentices or state wards by 1915, the Board had several administrative and practical problems with the legislation. The Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act empowered magistrates to release children on probation, or commit them to the care of a near relative. Since the intention of removing Aboriginal children was primarily to 'merge' them with the white population, these features were seen to be undesirable. Alternatively, magistrates sometimes refused to commit children even though, in the opinion of the Board, they were neglected. Mary Lyons of Narrandera recalled that her father was expelled

1. Recorded conversation Paul Coe, Cowra, 18 May 1979
2. For a discussion of the number of children separated from their parents before 1915, see P. Read, 'The stolen generations', 1982, pp.8-9
3. For instance, the Board's Annual report for 1911, p.2, stated that to allow Aboriginal children to remain on reserves, in comparative idleness, would be 'a positive menace to the State'
from Warangesda in about 1912. The family went to live in a
tent on the reserve at Grong Grong, which had in the meantime
been revoked. The police came when both parents were absent.
Lyons' elder sister and a boy named Glass were both charged with
vagrancy, but the magistrate dismissed the charge. He ruled
that, although the parents were often away working, and the
domicile a tent, the children were well-dressed and well-spoken.
He ordered that the family shift to Narrandera so that the
children could go to school.\textsuperscript{1} A second difficulty with the
legislation was that, in the Board secretary's opinion, the
period of seven years maximum apprenticeship was too short. The
children he thought to be too difficult to train for domestic
service if not apprenticed until the age of fourteen.\textsuperscript{2} With a
view, therefore, of removing several 'shortcomings' in the
Aborigines Protection Act, two amendments were placed before the
parliament in 1915. The first was that the Board was empowered
to take control and custody of the child of any Aborigine if it
was satisfied that such a course was in the moral or physical
welfare of the child. No committal hearing was necessary. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Conversation Mary Lyons, Narrandera, 9 July 1980,
23 September 1980
\item \textsuperscript{2} These problems were discussed by the Board Secretary
Pettitt, in a letter to the Board, Minutes of
meetings, 16 April 1916
\end{itemize}
second was that the definition of 'child' was changed to include any person under the age of 18.¹

Mr Flowers, for the government, defended the amendment at the second reading. He stated that there were children who were neglected but not recognised to be so. The Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act was clumsy, he argued, because parents removed their children across the border to avoid the Act, or withheld their children from training 'from some frivolous objection'. The new amendment, he said, would give the Board means, 'in a few years to come, of breaking up these camps entirely'. Two opponents of the Bill attacked it as potential cruelty and slavery. The children would be exploited, claimed the member for Murrumbidgee, McGarry, by 'mean, cringing, and crawling' employers. McGarry continued, 'Improve the parent if you can, but you will never improve the child by taking it away from the parents'. Despite his emotional appeal, the amendment was carried by 31 votes to three.²

¹ Amendment No. 2 of 1915; 2,(I)(a) removed reference to the Apprentices Act of 1901, and replaced this section, dealing with the terms and conditions of apprenticeship, with 'on such terms and conditions as it may think under the circumstances of the case to be desirable'. Amendment 4 read 'The Board may assume full control and custody of the child of any aborigine, if after due inquiry it is is satisfied that such a course is in the interest of the moral or physical welfare of such child'. The part of the Amendment relating to the term of apprenticeship, Amendment 5, omitted the words 'and over five'.

Flowers' hope of 'breaking up these camps entirely' indicates that the eviction of adults from the camps and the placing of children in domestic service must be seen as two arms of a concerted and very vigorous attempt at the dispersal of New South Wales Aborigines. Each may be considered in a separate context: the closure of the camps accelerated by economic stringencies, the placement of children as an attempt by the state to impose legal restriction on all those, including Aborigines, who were seen as potential trouble-makers.  

The rationales differed, but the ends were the same - the dispersal, by separation, of Aboriginal people from each other. By 1918 the Aborigines Protection Board had been granted almost unlimited powers. It had authority to remove from its reserves, whether managed or not, all children under eighteen years, men who in the opinion of the Board should be earning a living elsewhere, and all people of more than half European descent. As in other Australian states, the whites had voted to themselves almost unlimited power to legitimise the dispersal of

1. A. Platt, The child savers, 1969, pp.98,137-9 distinguished between two kinds of governmental action directed at children in the United States. One kind he saw motivated by affirmations of traditional institutions, such as the rural farm, and family life. The second he saw directed at working-class children, in certain of whom were detected new categories of deviance, such as roaming, fighting, drinking and sexuality. The policies directed towards Aboriginal children were almost entirely within the second category; 'being Aboriginal' was considered by some managers to be in itself a category of deviance
the indigenous minority. But for all its optimism, the Board had not yet learned an important lesson from its 30 year administration. The attempts to control Brungle and Warangesda, and other large managed reserves like Brewarrina, should have indicated that it was very much easier to pass laws than to enforce them.

The principal method for reducing the number of adults on the stations was expulsion. The procedure was that a manager sent to head office a recommendation that certain men be expelled. When the recommendation was ratified, which was almost certain to be the case, the proscribed names were added to a master list which was then sent by circular to the managers of all stations and to the police who had nominal charge of the unsupervised reserves. In Wiradjuri country, the managers at Brungle and Warangesda, and the police at Yass, Cowra, Condobolin, Gooloogong and Parkes held such a list, constantly updated, of Aborigines currently banned from entering any of the Board's reserves.

1. For instance, the South Australian Aborigines Act of 1911 allowed the Chief Protector to remove any Aboriginal of 'half-caste' from one reserve to another, or to hold him or her on one reserve; the Regulations allowed children to be sent to or retained in an Aboriginal institution; cf. G. Jenkin, Conquest of the Ngarrindjeri, 1979, pp.245-6; C.M. Darcy, Children and their law makers, 1956, p.106. In Western Australia, the Act of 1905 allowed Aborigines to be removed to reserves, and certain towns could be declared off-limits. The Chief Protector was held to be the guardian of Aboriginal children, including 'half-caste' children under 16 years of age; cf. P. Biskup, Not slaves not citizens, 1973, pp.64-5. Under the Victorian Act of 1886, all people under 35 years had to leave the reserves; cf. Christie, op.cit., pp.198-199
By 1920, at least 51 men had been expelled from Brungle, 41 from Warangesda, 19 from Yass, ten from Condobolin and five from Cowra.\(^1\) One circular contained the names of eighty-eight proscribed Aborigines.\(^2\) How closely these orders, which did not specify on what grounds expulsions were made, were observed by the managers is not easy to assess. A certain amount of administrative bungling, duplicity by Aborigines and general inefficiency must have counted against their effect. The low expulsion figures for Cowra and Condobolin, which were at this time unmanaged, indicate that the police in these towns took little interest in this aspect of Board policy, and that people virtually came and went as they pleased. In addition, the figures, like all the Board's statistics, are unreliable. The number of people expelled from Brungle, for instance, was greater than some of the yearly figures for the total station population. Yet there is no doubt that the populations of the two managed stations did drastically decline between 1909 and 1920.

One reason for the decline, unanticipated by the Board, was the number of people who, when expelled, took their families with them, or who simply left the reserves to avoid the removal of their children under Section 13A of the amended Act. The sudden exodus of large numbers of families, instead of the 'idle' young men, who were more likely to camp on the perimeter or go to

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1. List compiled from available records, such as Minutes of meetings, and oral evidence

2. Circular No.51, 7 January 1915, Copies of Letters Sent
another reserve, threw the Board into a panic only months after the 1915 amendment regarding children had been made law. In 1916, all managers were asked to 'carefully consider the expulsion of married men to prevent them from taking their families with them, compelling them to become wanderers'. Female offenders, as far as possible, were not to be expelled.\(^1\) By 1921 the continuing exodus had become sufficiently a problem for the Board to admit publicly that too many Aborigines, desiring to be free of supervision and restrictions, were leaving the stations. It was feared that in many cases, ran the Annual report, they would have been better off had they remained, since they had lost the benefits of good housing, food, clothing and schooling to which they were properly entitled.\(^2\) Privately it was admitted that the real cause of the exodus was that parents wished to keep their children safe.\(^3\)

It may be wondered why the Board was so concerned at the exodus of families, since many of them, under other Sections of the Act, were not 'properly entitled' to stay. The answer lies in the unresolved tension, already noticed, between the Board's twin roles of reducing the reserves and placating the whites of the country towns. An example of this occurred at Darlington Point soon after the passing of the Act. In 1910 there were

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\begin{align*}
1. & \text{ Circular dated 16 April 1916, Copies of Letters Sent} \\
2. & \text{ A.P.B., Annual report, 1921-2, p.2} \\
3. & \text{ Circular dated 13 September 1922, Copies of Letters Sent}
\end{align*}
\]
complaints by whites of people believed to be refugees from managers intent on removing the children gathering about the town. The Warangesda manager was directed to encourage such people to return and to point out to them the likelihood of the children's committal for neglect. 1

The first attempt at the complete dispersal of an Aboriginal population from a reserve did not occur at Darlington Point, or Brungle, but at Yass. The removal of people from the reserve in that town became, in several ways, a test case for Board policy.

In 1900 the Wiradjuri at Yass were divided broadly between the townspeople and the rural people on the agricultural reserves. In town about 50 people lived on an unofficial unmanaged reserve about a kilometre north of the town and the rest lived in scattered encampments near the river. 2 The farming communities lived at Rye Park and Pudman, on eight separate sites up to 40 kilometres from Yass. In 1905 the Board, in answer to pressure from the town's white residents, made a few tentative attempts to clear the town by persuading people to live on the farming reserves. 3 They were unsuccessful, and in fact by 1909 the town population had increased through the arrival of those expelled from Brungle, Warangesda, Grong Grong and other areas. The white people, probably unaware of the

1. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 15 September 1910
2. For a fuller discussion see P. Read, 'A double headed coin: protection and assimilation at Yass 1900-1960', in B. Gammage and A. Markus (eds.) All that dirt, 9-28, p.10
3. For example, Minutes of meetings, 7 December 1905
Board's policy to reduce or close existing reserves, tried to persuade the Board to establish a managed reserve out of town.

The intense hostility of the townspeople was reflected in the Yass Courier. In July 1909 Robert Carroll, 'Geebung' Carroll and Eileen Glass were charged with indecent and riotous conduct. The men were described by the police sergeant as 'a menace and a curse to the town'.¹ A few days later the town magistrate asked if anything further had been done about shifting the blacks out of town and thought, because of the recent happenings, that the sooner this was done the better.² In October the Shire Clerk stated that the Aborigines were too near the town.³ In March 1910 a free fight developed at the Yass show, in which a white man was killed. The police evidently thought that an opportunity had arisen to rid the town of the Aboriginal 'troublemakers'. Six Aborigines were arrested and charged with murder. In May, all were acquitted after a retirement by the jury of only 20 minutes. It transpired that the fight had begun when the proprietor of a boxing troupe had refused to pay Robert Carroll the £1 he had been promised. The Crown was admonished for its poorly presented and weak prosecution.⁴

1. Yass Courier, 20 July 1909
2. 23 July 1909, ibid.
3. 5 October 1909, ibid.
4. 8 March 1910, 6 May 1910, ibid.
Thus at the same time as the Board was bent on closing or reducing its reserves, the Yass shire council kept up an unremitting pressure on the Board to open a new one. In January 1910, publicly acknowledging the demands of the whites, the Board agreed to buy 1,100 acres at Blakney Creek, 25 km. from Yass. The new reserve was to be named Edgerton. No minute of the Board shows an awareness of the irony of opening new reserves in response to white community pressures, nor that many of those of whom the whites complained had in fact been expelled from reserves elsewhere. The scheme was ill-considered and rushed. If the purpose was to remove the Wiradjuri from large country centres, it was a failure, since the new reserve was closer to Yass than Brungle was to Gundagai. If the plan was to save money, then it was a total failure, since land had to be bought, new buildings erected, and a manager's salary added to the payroll without any significant reductions in reserve expenditure elsewhere. If the plan was to offer to the Wiradjuri a reasonable alternative to living in town, that too was a failure, since hardly anybody went to Edgerton voluntarily and nobody stayed there more than three or four years. In reality the chief difference between the establishment of Edgerton and the reserves of the 1880s was that by 1910 the Wiradjuri knew a little better what was meant by life on a managed reserve. If allowed the choice, most Wiradjuri preferred to live in groups of two or three families.

1. Yass Courier, 13 January 1909; see also A.P.B. Annual report, 1909, p.5, 1910, p.5 and 1911, p.9 which refers to the installation of Yass' remaining Aborigines at Edgerton, who had 'hitherto bitterly opposed the advances of the Board in that direction'
unsupervised, at some distance from whites and other Aborigines.¹

There is no doubt that most of the Yass Aborigines were removed to Edgerton forcibly.² Since the new station was within walking distance of the town, the results were predictable. Passive resistance to managerial rule and the continual movement back to Yass by individuals rendered the station uncontrollable. Alf Williams, born in about 1895, dimly remembered a mass walk-off: 'they didn't like the manager or something, so they all just walked off into town'.³ On Edgerton itself two contradictory policies were pursued - at the height of the exodus the Board persisted in enforcing the parts of the Act which permitted expulsions. For example, Frank Bolger in 1911 was first refused permission to rejoin his wife and family on the reserve; then they all were ejected on the grounds that they were not Aborigines.⁴ It was not long before the Yass townspeople began to object. In 1912 there were complaints that Aborigines were begging on the streets.⁵ Yet in 1914, thirteen men were expelled from the reserve for refusing to work.⁶

1. Conversation Rosemary Connors, Yass, 5 July 1980; see below, Ch.6, p.227
2. For details of the removal, see Read, 'A double headed coin...' pp.13-15
3. Recorded conversation Alf Williams, Swan Hill 17 September 1980
4. Register of letters received, 1910-1913, 24 April 1911; Minutes of meetings, 25 May 1911
5. Minutes of meetings, 9 May 1912
6. A.P.B., Annual report, 1914, p.9
The expulsions, coupled with the general exodus back to Yass, soon caused the Board embarrassment. The Department of Public Instruction, in December 1915, suggested that since the Edgerton school was empty, the teacher should be transferred elsewhere. The Board replied that it would ask the police to persuade the Aborigines to return. In 1916 the huts were deserted, the farm overrun with weeds. Not even such 'persuasion' as the police could provide was sufficient. In March 1919, when the station had been abandoned for three years, the Edgerton lease finally was revoked. The Wiradjuri were living in and about Yass in almost the same manner as they had been in 1909. The brief history of Edgerton demonstrated the singular futility of expelling people from one reserve in order to build another for them somewhere else. Aboriginal self-identification, combined with the whites' rejection of practically all people who called themselves Aborigines, worked together to defeat the arbitrary definitions of Aboriginality employed by the Board. Not only were the contradictions in policy painfully obvious at Yass by 1918; so also were the foundations on which the policy was based. Regulation 14(c) instructed managers to discourage 'half-castes' entering the reserves (let alone those self-identifying Aborigines more nearly descended from whites). Yet the townspeople of Yass would not allow to remain in town those same people who, by association and culture, were commonly regarded as Aborigines.

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1. Minutes of meetings, 9 December 1915
Meanwhile, continuous pressure was applied to Aborigines living at Warangesda. Lawrie Bamblett recalled that his family moved from Warangesda in 1916 after his mother died, although the year in which this happened suggests that more pressure may have been placed on the father than the boy realised. The Bamblett family went to a flat area near the Murrumbidgee, 8 km. downstream from Narrandera, known as 'the Sandhills' - 'There was nowhere else to go'.

Bush Kirby remembered the manager 'hunting men off - for no reason - the parents couldn't put up with it'. His family returned to Oxley, near Hay, while other families left for many different towns. Effie Lyons stated that after her father was evicted in about 1912, he took his family with him from Warangesda, and 'trailed up and down the river for a while'. Her father was a shearer and in the off season, fished, or trapped and sold cockatoos. As related above, Mrs Lyons' eldest sister had a narrow escape from committal through the Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act in 1916. In the 1920s the family left Narrandera, where they had been ordered to live by the magistrate, and settled at the Sandhills.

The first step towards the complete closure of Warangesda was taken in 1920. In January it was decided to secure a list of the Board's most valuable possessions with a view to raising

1. Recorded conversation Lawrie Bamblett, Murrumburrah, 3 July 1980
2. Recorded conversation Bush Kirby, Darlington Point, 15 July 1980
3. Conversation Effie Lyons, Narrandera, 8 July 1980
income from them through leasing them to whites.\(^1\) In March 1921 the Board rather belatedly acknowledged that such a procedure was not strictly permissible; however, the revenue so obtained would be used solely for the benefit of Aborigines. Leasing should be regarded as a temporary measure and not taken as an indication that Aborigines would not want the land in future.\(^2\) Meanwhile it had already been decided, for a reason unspecified, to close the Warangesda reserve when possible. Inspector Donaldson was instructed to find out how many Aborigines would be prepared to go to Cumeroogunga, Moonahcullah or other stations.\(^3\) In July 1923, the Darlington Point police complained to the Board of 'undesirables' round the town. The Board recommended their removal, but again the fatal contradictions in policy caused an impasse, for a few months later the 'idle young half-castes' James Murray, Oscar Johnson, William Johnson and William Edwards were expelled from Warangesda.\(^4\) On 17 October 1924 the Board decided to close the station forthwith and to send the 'few remaining Aborigines' elsewhere.\(^5\) A tradition among the Darlington Point Aborigines, most of whom are descended from former residents of Warangesda, is that the last person to leave the station was Jim Turner, who, nearly 50 years earlier, had come from Maloga with Gribble to establish the station. He is said to have defended

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1. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 2 January 1920
2. 2 March 1921, ibid.
3. 12 January 1921, ibid.
4. 6 July 1923, 14 December 1923, ibid.
5. 17 October 1924, ibid.
his home at gunpoint, until at last the roof was pulled from his house.¹

The former residents now had to do what other Warangesda refugees had done for a decade: they made their way into the district. Hetty Charles remembered the roofs pulled off the last houses. With other families, she said, her parents wandered the district for years, living in tents or tin sheds; sometimes she lived in station accommodation while her father worked as a boundary rider. For a time the family lived at Cumeroogunga, then the family returned to Darlington Point, and her father worked at Kooba Station. She married, lived first at Griffith, then at Hillston.² The family of Edgar Howell left Warangesda 'just before the roofs were pulled off'. They went to live for some years near Darlington Point, and by 1930 were living at the Sandhills, Narrandera.³ Beckett noted the arrival of several families at Euabalong from Warangesda in the early 1920s.⁴

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1. Conversation Mary Callan, Darlington Point, 8 July 1980
3. Conversation Edgar ('Bushy') Howell, Narrandera, 7 July 1980
4. J. Beckett, 'A study of a mixed-blood Aboriginal minority in the pastoral west of New South Wales', M.A. thesis, A.N.U., 1958, p.125, notes that a number of people from Euabalong and Hillston went to Warangesda, but that 'When the station was broken up in the 1920s the inhabitants scattered throughout the Riverina and only a few made their way back to the [Lachlan] river'
Thus ignominiously ended the life of Warangesda station. It was the only major station to be closed in the period, and indeed the records do not satisfactorily explain why the decision was taken. Brungle, for instance, lost perhaps as many people, and more of its children, after 1909, yet the total destruction of that reserve was not attempted until the 1960s. The destruction of Warangesda looms large in the memories of the old people associated with it. In 1980 the area member of the National Aboriginal Conference organised a 'Back to Warangesda' week. Half a dozen former residents of the station wandered and reminisced among the ruined buildings. In 1982, a substantial claim was in preparation by the Aboriginal Legal Service for the return of the land to the Wiradjuri on the grounds of tradition and association.¹

The same processes of forced migration from other reserves are recorded, although with less detail, in the Board's statistics. The closure of Warangesda and the reduction of Brungle were only important aspects of major population shifts throughout Wiradjuri territory, as table 4.1 demonstrates:

¹ Pers. comm., Aboriginal Legal Service, August 1982; see also 'Warangesda land claim', n.d., c.1980, xerox copy in A.I.A.S. library. Under the proposals of the Green paper on Aboriginal Land Rights in N.S.W., issued in December 1982, it appeared that land claims based on such grounds would be inadmissible.
### Table 4.1

Movement of people identified by A.P.B. as Aborigines in Wiradjuri towns 1908-1915*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWN</th>
<th>1908</th>
<th>1915</th>
<th>GAIN +</th>
<th>LOSS -</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darlington point</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>-38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrandera</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumut (Brungle)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>-26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condobolin</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>+14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowra</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugowra</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbes</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gooloogong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yass</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>+30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wee Jasper</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rye Park</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cootamundra</td>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td>-16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canowindra</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euabalong</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillston</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junee</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>750</strong></td>
<td><strong>664</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This table has been drawn up from statistics published in the Annual report of 1908 and 1915, the last year in which the population of individual reserves was printed.

** The figure of 28 was the number of girls in the Cootamundra Home, which was established in 1911.

According to the figures, eighty-six people had 'disappeared' in seven years. There are several explanations for this phenomenon, all of which indicate that the figures may be taken as no more than general population movement. One is that the Board was becoming entangled in problems of its own making concerning who was Aboriginal. Another was that it was in the Board's own interest to demonstrate the efficacy of its policy by minimising the number of Aborigines living on reserves or town camps. Another significant factor, in the light of oral evidence, is the number of people who when expelled from the managed reserves went to live in small family groups, on
pastoral stations as resident labour, or travelled about Wiradjuri country as itinerant seasonal or day-labour. It is also probable that in some areas the police, who took the census in towns, counted only the larger and more accessible camps. For instance, the population of Narrandera is said to have been only nine, whereas the oral evidence suggests that there were at least three separate and growing camps within 10 km. of the town.¹

Despite the inaccuracy of the figures, it can be deduced that there were several kinds of places at which the Wiradjuri chose to live after the expulsions. When the exodus from Warangesda was at its height, people chose to live in areas which could be described as three concentric semi-circles - the immediate vicinity of the town of Darlington Point, in more or less static camps at Narrandera, Leeton or Grong Grong, and in a wider arc including Cowra and Euabalong. By 1924, the population may have been scattered fairly evenly among these districts. All the people had returned, in one form or another, to the semi-permanent camps from which, while resident at Warangesda, they had never been completely dissociated. There is little evidence that many people returned to the traditional country from which they may first have come to Warangesda. In the two generations of residence there, links with particular areas seem mostly to have been broken, because many did not, or could not, revisit them.

As argued above, life at the managed stations often separated generations from each other; doubtless a good deal of family history, like the Wiradjuri language, was often unlearned by the young. When Warangesda was closed, the children born in the 1890s were approaching middle age. Unlike the Yass community, which had only spent a few years at Edgerton, Warangesda people went to the new locations less through folk memory or former attachment to particular areas, more through economic forces, ties of kinship, and the knowledge of which towns tolerated a black population.

The 'safe' towns, like Narrandera, Hay and Leeton, were areas which had had an Aboriginal presence for several decades. At other towns, like Jerilderie and Junee, that continuity had been broken, and there is no evidence that anyone went permanently to those areas in the 1920s. Over several years, the camps grew, as more of the expelled Wiradjuri, acceptable through kinship or association, arrived at settlements like the Sandhills at Narrandera, or the Bend at Darlington Point, knowing that there they were comparatively free from harrassment by the Board and police. Thus the combined effect of the expulsions, the flight of people from section 13A of the Act, and the consequences of the municipal councils' attempted town clearances, was to swell the populations of the 'safe' towns. Euabalong, Hay, Leeton, Narrandera, Deniliquin, Cowra, Condobolin and Gooloogong all increased their Aboriginal populations. Meanwhile the old reserves, like Grong Grong and Coobang Creek, the farming allotments like Canowindra, Ilford and Pudman, and certain towns like Parkes and Forbes, all suffered a drastic decline in
population. The shifts to new areas were determined by local knowledge, availability of work, kinship ties, and the attitude of local councils, as well as traditional associations with the land.

It is now possible to see some of the more far-reaching consequences of the reduction of the reserves, the farming communities, and the towns. One important result was the reinforcing of the Warangesda-Brungle-Yass-Cowra axis. The increasing population at Yass through the expulsions from Brungle and Warangesda has already been noticed. In turn the drafting of people to the managed station Edgerton seems to have encouraged a number of people to leave Yass, and in the decade 1910-1920 served to re-direct the still numerous refugees from Brungle and Warangesda towards Cowra. Erambie, as the unmanaged reserve at Cowra was known, received a large influx of visitors after 1915. For instance, four children of Jack and Elizabeth Bamblett left Warangesda in the early 1920s: three of them, James, Jack and Lachlan, went to Erambie. Lachlan married Louisa Simpson, whose uncle had been refused permission to live at Brungle station. Their union, caused by the expulsions, formed one of the most durable and powerful of modern Erambie families. At about the same time, May Richie, born at Euabalong, came to Erambie because her aunt lived there, and because there was no work at Euabalong. She met James Ingram, married, and the first child, Ossie, was born in 1922. The first Erambie manager, appointed in 1924, declared that James

was too fair to remain on the station, and the family left. They went first to Wagga Wagga, then settled for some years at the Narrandera Sandhills, where lived some of James Ingram's relatives, also expelled from Warangesda.¹ Alf Williams was reared at Warangesda also. With Alfie and Archie Bamberlett he was ordered to leave Warangesda. Williams went shearing and general labouring; in the early 1920s it was suggested to him that he go to Cowra because there were 'some nice dark girls there'. He went to Erambie, and married Annie Murray, a member of one of the oldest and most respected Erambie families. When, fourteen years later, she died, Williams left Erambie and in 1930 he too was living at the Sandhills.²

In this way links between the Lachlan and the Murrumbidgee, which were to the Board both unwanted and unintended, were reinforced at Cowra in the 1920s. A relationship by birth or marriage, once established, remained as long as an individual desired it. Ossie Ingram, born at Cowra, did not retain a close connection with Erambie because he did not wish to live there permanently, but his uncle Lachlan, who remained, established, with his wife, a powerful dynasty. The dispersal policy strengthened, not weakened, the links between some of the Wiradjuri reserves.

¹. Recorded conversation Ossie Ingram, Narrandera, 19 September 1980, Euabalong, 19 October 1980
². Recorded conversation Alf Williams, Swan Hill, 17 September 1980
A pattern of behaviour by the whites re-appeared almost at once at Cowra. The residents of the town began to object to the growing number of Aborigines in what until then had been regarded as a 'safe' town. As early as 1913 there were complaints that the Erambie teacher was persuading Aborigines to disobey police instructions to leave the reserve. For a decade the townspeople demanded either that a manager be appointed, or that the reserve be closed. The Aborigines were prepared to move to Farleigh, 8 km down the Lachlan, since it was regarded as a traditional camping ground. This the whites refused to allow, since Farleigh was also a popular recreation area. In January 1924 an Aboriginal, described as 'a beastly Queenslander', was charged with assaulting a young girl. The \textit{Cowra Free Press} ran its report under the heading 'The Black Menace'. Finally in 1924 the Board gave way to the demands of the townspeople. The reserve, augmented by the almost daily arrivals from the south, the south-west and the west, was placed under the control of a manager '(a)s a result of complaints for the townspeople of Cowra regarding the necessity for resident supervision'.

There is nothing in the Board's records nor in the oral literature to suggest why Forbes' Aboriginal population declined so quickly. The official figures show a decline from

1. Register of letters received, 19 February 1913
2. A.P.B., Annual report, 1902, p.6
3. \textit{Cowra Free Press}, 8 January 1924
4. A.P.B., Annual report, 1924, p.1
seventy-nine to one in seven years. The community consisted, at least, of the farming community occupying 20 hectares at Coobang Creek, and a settlement where the Forbes Botanical Gardens are now established. The only definite records concern two police trackers, Goolagong and Grant. Goolagong went to Condobolin in about 1910, and the family of Dick Grant, who died in 1911, was supposed to be transferred there as well. In fact, the family may not have left Forbes until the 1920s.\(^1\) The most likely explanation for the decline of the Forbes Aboriginal population, then, is that through natural causes the farming leases fell vacant and were not renewed, and that the town camps were dispersed, though less dramatically than they were at Yass. It is likely that the depopulation of towns like Eurowra, Forbes, Parkes and Burcher can be explained partly through general migration from one town to another within the north-western Wiradjuri district, sometimes accelerated by the efforts of the local councils.\(^2\)

Some proportion of the Wiradjuri at Eugowra and Forbes went to live at the unofficial reserve at Gooloogong, a small town between Cowra and Forbes. Probably there had been a small but continuing Aboriginal presence at Gooloogong since the invasion.

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1. Conversation Kathy Wolfe (nee Grant) Condobolin, 7 November 1980; Register of letters received, 12 July 1911; the Forbes Times also mentions Ettie Goolagong and Lizzie Grant in a police report, 23 September 1908

2. Local historians have generally not tried very hard to explain the absence of Aborigines in their areas. For instance, M. Fitzgerald, 'Where the line ends', n.d., p.4, states of the Burcher Wiradjuri, 'Unfortunately little can be found of the early hisotry [sic] of the relevant tribe'
The first official notice of the Aboriginal population of the town was the Annual report of 1912, when the exodus from Forbes and Eugowra was at its height. Three years later a reserve of 5 acres was declared. In 1919 a visitor from the Aboriginal Inland Mission commented on the tidy, permanent nature of the reserve.

The declaration of this reserve, and the growth of the Wiradjuri community at Gooloogong, marked another low point in the Board's administration of its Act. Although the antipathy of the whites at Forbes had presumably been blunted, nothing had been achieved towards the general policy aim, which was to save money and close reserves. There were few complaints from the Gooloogong whites, since there were not many of them; but few Aborigines had been dispersed. A new reserve had been declared, and, since the police at Gooloogong were obliged to give rations to those eligible, little money had been saved. After 1924 Gooloogong received a fillip as Aborigines from Cowra came to live on the reserve. Some probably disliked the new supervised regime at Erambie, and several were expelled by the manager.

1. A.P.B., Annual report, 1912, p.17; in 1912 the population of Eugowra dropped from 47 (Annual report, 1911, p.10) to 12

2. Our Aim, XII/9, 31 May 1919, p.5; XIII/3, 31 December 1919, p.5, refers to a population at Gooloogong of 100 Aborigines

3. According to the Board's Minutes of meetings, at least seven men, some with families, had been expelled from Erambie by 1928
next four decades Gooloogong offered a convenient alternative to those at Erambie who wanted a change, or who fell out with the manager. In 1979, at least half of the older residents of Erambie had lived at Gooloogong at one time or another.¹

In the Central West Condobolin emerged as the main focus of the Wiradjuri in this period, for which economic factors as much as Board policy were responsible. After 1900 many small towns in the area declined in importance. For instance, Euabalong was in the 1890s a stock crossing and centre of various mail and telegraph routes. Yet in 1888 the District Inspector of the Department of Public Instruction estimated that the town would grow no bigger.² His prediction was accurate. In 1928 the teacher reported that the town population was dwindling rapidly as work became available elsewhere. 'The rabbits have failed', he lugubriously informed his department, 'and my school with them'.³ In the south and east of Wiradjuri country, work was probably more often available to Aboriginal men who wanted it.

The Wiradjuri of the smaller towns who could not find work appear to have followed the orientation of family and kin, so that, for example, Euabalong, which had been in the 19th century well within Wiradjuri boundaries, in the 20th became a marginal town between the Wiradjuri and Ngiyamba peoples. Thus, a Mrs Gibson, described by the Euabalong teacher in 1890 as 'belonging

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1. For instance, Ethel Wedge, Les Coe

2. Euabalong school file, District Inspector to Chief Inspector, 13 September 1888

3. Teacher to District Inspector, 20 August 1928, ibid.
to a wandering tribe of blacks', bore a surname not well known amongst Wiradjuri people today. It is probable that she had family connections with the Ngayamba who moved to Carowra Tank in 1926. Similarly Eva Pettitt, born at Carowra Tank, belonged to a family of 'Nomads practically, who stayed periodically at Hillson, Euabalong and Carowra Tank'. By contrast most of the Wiradjuri at Euabalong were in the 1920s moving east. Irene Vine, born at Euabalong in 1906, worked at Iandra Station, until her grandparents, who had reared her, died. She stated that since there was no reason to stay at Euabalong, she went to Condobolin to look for work. Tilly Coe, born in the same year, also worked at Iandra. Her father, a shearer, was accidentally drowned, so her mother took the family to Condobolin. Lillian, Kathleen and Julia Richie were placed in service at Booberoi and Iandra stations as an alternative to the Cootamundra Aboriginal girls home, founded in 1911. In about 1920, all three women moved east. In 1980, Julia lived at Condobolin, perhaps the last surviving speaker of the Wiradjuri language. The later history of wards committed to the Board indicates a similar population drift. Jack Johessda, born at Euabalong in 1922, was committed because he was 'unable to find constant employment'. In 1941 he was living at Condobolin.

1. Euabalong school file, Teacher to District Inspector, 23 May 1890
2. Register of Wards, 1916-1928, State Archives, re Eva Pettitt, File No.785, committed 4 October 1928; conversation Darcy Pettitt, Robinvale, 8 February 1981
3. Conversation Irene Vine, Euabalong, 5 November 1890
4. Conversation Tilly Coe, Condobolin, 5 November 1980
5. Recorded conversation Julia Wighton (nee Richie), and Bonnie Merritt, Condobolin, 4 November 1980
Gladys Johnson, removed from Hillston in 1924, rejoined her mother at Condobolin in 1931. Nancy Richards was removed from Euabalong to a situation in 1928, married a Condobolin man, and in 1941 lived on the Condobolin reserve. Violet Sloane, born at Eugowra, was also sent to a situation at Condobolin in 1928. In 1934 she rejoined her mother who was also, by then, living at Condobolin. Therefore, although in the north and west of Wiradjuri country the effect of the dispersal policy was less noticeable, and there was less public pressure to disperse the 'fringedwellers', economic pressures drove Aborigines to the 'safe' towns, like Condobolin, as effectively as did the official pressures elsewhere.

Yet by 1924 Condobolin was no longer a 'safe' town. The Aboriginal population has been forced, or had chosen, to come from a very wide area and for a variety of motives. This led to a concentration of people who regarded themselves as unrelated. There was considerable tension between different groups, and in the 1920s Condobolin may have become an exception to what Goodall described as 'the distribution of kinsmen'. Generally, in Goodall's view, it was impossible for a family in the north-west of the state to remain in a town if it was not related to other people. In Condobolin the association of unrelated families did occur, and this fact probably explains why, in the 1920s, a second unofficial reserve, known as the

1. Register of Wards, Johessda No.491, Johnson No.503, Richards No.729, Sloane No.730

2. H. Goodall, 'The history of Aboriginal communities in New South Wales, 1909-1939', draft Ph.D. thesis ms., University of Sydney, ch.9
Murrie, was established on the Lachlan a few kilometres from the town.

The growing Aboriginal population was not unnoticed by the whites, and it was at Condobolin in the 1920s that the contradictions in the official policy truly came home to roost. The first reference to the large and growing population was made in the *Lachlander* in 1926, when refugees from the first expulsions at Cowra probably were arriving at the unsupervised reserve. On 19 March the municipal council formally protested to the Board over the state of the reserve. The Board replied that it would be difficult to force Aborigines to remain on the reserve, especially as they had refused an offer to be removed to Euabalong.¹ No doubt mindful of its painful experience at Edgerton, the Board told the council in April that it was its experience that Aborigines could not be coerced into living in a particular area. It warned that if the removal of the reserve was insisted upon, the Aborigines, as they had done in other places, would leave the new reserve and make unauthorised camps within the precincts of the town, their last state being worse than the first. The Board seemed at last to have caught a glimpse of why its dispersal policy was failing. The municipal council, motivated by purely local concern, was unmoved. The Board's offer to build another reserve was categorically refused.² In June the Board's offer to send Inspector

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1. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 19 March 1926
Donaldson to discuss the matter was also refused, and the tone of the council meeting showed that Condobolin's reputation as a safe town was increasingly misplaced. An alderman May told the councillors that it was time they fought - 'the blacks were getting thicker in the town'. In August the Board stated that, since it had failed to persuade the residents to move, it would call for tenders to rebuild the reserve. The council again rejected the proposal, and sought a legal opinion as to whether it possessed the power to evict the Aborigines. In the meantime it insisted that the reserve be closed. In October 1926 the Board informed the council that when all the possibilities (such as rebuilding the reserve) were exhausted, it would then be necessary to revoke the reserve, its responsibility would then cease, and the council would have to find its own solution.

Back in Condobolin the feelings of the whites were running very high. The Board's statement was rightly interpreted as a thinly veiled threat. One alderman expostulated that the council wanted the reserve closed on the grounds of public health, but the Board had never given the impression of sincerity in helping the council accomplish its desires. Then came 'this threat'. Some councillors thought that the Board's bluff, if it was a bluff, should be called, but others warned that if the reserve

2. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 27 August 1926
3. Lachlander, 29 September 1926
4. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 15 October 1926
were closed, Aborigines would then live in the town and its surrounds where it would be impossible to enforce clean and healthy conditions. An alderman Condon's emotional speech carried the day. He claimed that a new reserve would be as bad as ever. The motion was carried that the Council again insist on the removal of the reserve.¹

It was entirely typical of local councils throughout Wiradjuri country that the Condobolin aldermen myopically insisted on the Aborigines' removal, giving no thought to where they might go, so long as it was outside the unit of administration. The Board at least understood what would happen if the reserve were closed. The Wiradjuri would inevitably congregate in a new town like Forbes or Parkes, whereupon the same pattern of local hostility, expense and abuse of the Board would be repeated. Nevertheless, its bluff had been called. The state would not be allowed to absolve itself of the responsibility it owed, in the eyes of the townspeople, through a merely technical definition of Aboriginality. The abolition of the reserve, as the Board members well knew, would, without absolving them of de facto responsibility, solve nothing and earn them a great deal more damaging criticism. Very belatedly, it reminded the council that Aborigines did have certain rights. Council would please furnish the Board with a list of requirements. In the meantime, it took legal advice to ascertain if it were possible to recondition the buildings without reference to the council, provided that local health and building regulations were

¹. Lachlander, 10 November 1926, 8 December 1926
met. The answer appeared to be affirmative. As it was wont to do in times of crisis, the Board took refuge in the law. Legally the Condobolin municipal council was beaten.

Caught in the crossfire were, of course, the Wiradjuri, already refugees from cruelty and racism elsewhere in their country. Memories of police brutality run long in Condobolin: stories are told of men dragged through the streets handcuffed to mounted policemen, of pursuits by alsatian dogs. The official reserve was unsafe, for dozens of people are recorded in the Board's Minutes to have been expelled from the reserve between 1920 and 1930. There was nowhere to go. The implacable council hounded anyone Aboriginal, by its own definition, not that of the Statute Book, who did not live on the reserve, and, through the Board, those who did. In May 1927 the Health Inspector complained of Aboriginal camps above the trucking yards. The Aborigines Protection Board had no intention of protecting such Aborigines. The Council resolved that 'necessary action' be taken to have the camps removed. The chilling finality of the resolution indicates that, in the last resort, the popular definition of Aboriginality was the one that counted, and that local councils might very well do as they pleased to the fringe-dwellers expelled by the Board from the Board's own reserves.

1. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 4 February 1927
2. Conversation Ossie Ingram, Narrandera, 8 June 1982, Kathy Wolfe, Condobolin, 22 April 1982
3. Lachlander, 11 May 1927
On the Condobolin reserve itself, conditions were so disgraceful that only the knowledge that life outside the reserve was worse must have stayed the resolve of some people to leave. In May 1926, just as the controversy between the Board and the council erupted, the teacher at the school on the reserve complained to the Chief Inspector of the Department of Education that there was no wood for the fire, that the room was unlined against the frosts, and that the roof leaked. The Chief Inspector replied, in a manner reminiscent of his department's attitude at Brungle in the 1880s, that the matter appeared to be the business of the Aborigines Protection Board. If wood was supplied to the school, he argued, it would be used for other purposes. In June 1927 the teacher again pointed out that all the children had had colds and earache, and cried with pain in the head or face in the middle of lessons. The children 'go deaf, dull, and seem too cold, too dull, half-fed, badly clothed, living in tents and falling-down houses, poor little things ended up in a cold schoolroom'. She declared that only four of the elder girls could read and write anything, and they were all now in domestic service. A diagram appended showed the places where one could put a hand through holes in the floor; cold air poured down on the children's heads and hands. Their feet were stiff with cold, and on the day she wrote, a child was admitted to

1. 'Condobolin Aboriginal School', Department of Education, teacher to Chief Inspector, and file note, 8 April 1926. The Aboriginal Inland Mission had run a school on the Condobolin reserve for some years, but had closed it in 1924. The school was re-opened by the Department of Education in February 1926.

2. Teacher to Chief Inspector, 22 June 1927, ibid.
hospital with congestion of the lungs. In August she wrote a
most emotional letter, in pencil and barely decipherable. She
reported that the children had had a dreadful year. Practically
every child had been in hospital, nearly all had had flu. Only
five were well, out of a class of seventeen. The response of
the Department of Public Instruction was to transfer the teacher
to Gulargambone.

By 1929, two decades of the implementation of the Aborigines
Protection Act had caused the great majority of Wiradjuri people
to move from where they had been living in 1909. The older
managed reserves, such as Warangesda and Brungle, were destroyed
or reduced, to the gain of the newer, unmanaged reserves like
Gooloogong, Condobolin and at first Cowra. In terms of general
policy, not much had been achieved for all the brutality,
expense and hostility incurred. A number of families were
probably living by themselves, as much out of fear of
Section 13A of the Act as from a genuine desire to do so, but
perhaps there were not so many more than the families who had
once lived on the now revoked and forgotten farming allotments.

At Brungle and Darlington Point, things were very much the same
as they had been in 1880. There were more Aborigines living at
Gooloogong, Yass, Cowra and Condobolin than there had been
previously, and in only a few towns, like Euabalong, Bugowra,
Forbes and Parkes, there significantly fewer Aborigines. In

1. 'P.S.' in Teacher to Chief Inspector, 22 June 1927, Condobolin Aboriginal School file
2. Teacher to Chief Inspector, 25 August 1929, transfer 21 October 1930; Condobolin Aboriginal School file
one sense, the Wiradjuri had been dispersed, but only to new areas within their own country, and the vilifications of one set of local councils had been replaced by those of another.

At such times the Board took refuge in its policies concerning children. This was regarded as one area where there was a chance that genuine dispersal might take place. It seemed that only by taking Aborigines young enough for their re-education to be possible could a genuine metamorphosis take place, a black personality become white, what were seen to be the few poor remnants of Aboriginal culture dissipated, and the Aboriginal problem solved forever.

Early in 1915 the Board began methodically to prepare for what it hoped would be its most significant achievement. Hardly was the amendment of that year made law before a circular went out to all managers warning them under pain of fine or dismissal that all 'quadroon', 'octoroon' and fairer 'half-caste' children were to be merged into the white population. Such children were not to be received at any time after May at any reserve. 1 In January 1915 the powers of the Homefinder, who arranged for domestic positions for girls after training, were increased. She was directed to take action against girls who ought to be

1. Circular to managers, 13 March 1915, Copies of Letters Sent. The policy of sending Aboriginal girls to Warangesda for training was discontinued in 1911 on the opening of the Cootamundra Home for Aboriginal Girls. Boys, if committed as state wards, were sent to the state welfare homes at Mittagong or other institutions such as training ships. The Kinchela Home for Aboriginal boys was opened in 1924
working away from reserves, and for the first time she was given
the power to by-pass the local committees.\textsuperscript{1} In March a
circular went out to all managers requesting a complete return
of all neglected and orphaned children, and the names of all
'octoroon' and 'quadroon' children, whether neglected or not.\textsuperscript{2}
In June the position of Inspector was advertised, amongst whose
duties was to give 'particular attention' to the removal of
children and to the guardianship of orphaned or neglected
children.\textsuperscript{3} In July 1915, presumably in an attempt to clear
the books, forty-six Aboriginal children were declared to be not
Aboriginal and transferred to the State Children's Relief
Board.\textsuperscript{4} In September, R.T. Donaldson was appointed to the
position of Inspector. His subsequent actions in this capacity
earned him probably the most intense and widespread hatred of
any person in New South Wales since 1788. Early in 1916 a new
curriculum was issued for Aboriginal children, in which teachers
were instructed to assist boys to become useful farm or station
labourers and the girls to become useful domestic servants.\textsuperscript{5}

In April 1916 the new secretary of the Board, A.C. Pettitt,
reviewed the newly amended policy which was about to be
implemented. He conceded that in permitting the removal of

\begin{enumerate}
\item A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 7 January 1915
\item Circular to all managers, 15 March 1915, Copies of
Letters Sent
\item A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 24 June 1915
\item 8 July 1915, \textit{ibid}.
\item N.S.W. Department of Education, 'Course of Instruction
for Aborigines Schools', 1916, p.1
\end{enumerate}
practically all Aboriginal children from birth at the Board's discretion, the amendments practically amounted to a new policy. However, experience showed that girls taken at the age of fifteen or sixteen were quite unsuitable for placing out in decent homes, since they had habits impossible to eradicate. Of the 150 children now in training, some would soon be old enough to return home. The boys, who up till now had been allowed to attend school until they were fourteen, were becoming wandering casuals. The crux of the Aboriginal question, in Pettitt's view, was the saving and training of girls and the training of boys with a view to their later marrying and becoming independent. 1 In July the legislation was gazetted, and the Cootamundra Home set to receive a new influx. Managers received batches of forms upon which they were to write the details of each commitment. The trap was set. In August 1916, just as the Second Australian Division, after a repulse 'which would have shattered weaker men' was marching out of Pozieres, 2 Aboriginal girls were about to be saved from their home, parents, culture, heritage and race, by the ill-disposed, ill-educated and frequently ill-natured managers in the employ of the Aborigines Protection Board.

Of all the Board's stations, some of those in Wiradjuri country were hit hardest in the first few months. The first entry in the Register of Wards was Matilda Williams, removed from Brungle

1. Pettitt's letter for discussion, contained in A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 3 April 1916

2. C.E.W. Bean, Official history of Australia in the war 1914-18, 1940, III, pp.724-5
on 18 August 1916. In the first two months, one third of the children removed from their parents were Wiradjuri: eleven from Brungle, nine from Yass, five from Condobolin, two from Cowra. Of all the 800 children removed from their communities in the period 1916-28, eighty-four were Wiradjuri, of whom seventy were girls. Only the facts that Warangesda children had already received official attention for decades, and that Cowra and Condobolin reserves were unmanaged in 1916, prevented the number from rising much higher.

At first most managers authorised the removal of children for 'parental neglect'. Other reasons included 'negligence of parents, and to get her away from the surroundings of Aboriginal children', 'left only with father to look after', 'unmanageable', 'bettering her condition and taking her from the surroundings of the Aboriginal camp', 'parents of drunk and disreputable character, and child neglected', 'to better her prospects in life', 'to take advantage of proper training and be protected from going to the bad which existed while she lived with her parents on the reserve'. Perhaps some of the managers were guided still by the romantic notions of 'child-saving', or perhaps the rationales of the Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act remained in their minds. After a year it became more common for managers to keep more strictly to the Act. Two later entries read merely, 'becoming fourteen years of age and fit to be apprenticed', and 'being an Aborigine'. Some children were stated to have been committed by their parents, though what direct or indirect pressures were placed upon the parents to do this are not recorded. On the basis of later evidence, it is
ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD.

Date: 23rd May 1925

Name: Beera Brungle
Age: 14
Birthday: ..........................

Place of Birth: Brungle
Religion: ..........................

Parents for Board assuming control of child: ..........................
Father: ..........................
Mother: ..........................

Father's name, occupation, and address: ..........................
Mother's name and address: ..........................

Other relatives:
How many brothers and sisters?: ..........................
Name and age: George (9), Rachel (8), Jack (7), Annie (6), Ann (5), Mary (4), Rosa (3)
Best in other situations?: ..........................
Wife, and how long?: ..........................

Further particulars (where living during childhood, and in whose care): ..........................
In Mother's care at Brungle. Abn. Stats.

Ward No. 558, Beera Hickey of Brungle, 1925

Source: Register of Wards, State Archives
highly probable that some parents committed their children on the understanding that they would be returned to them some months later. At least three children, Angela Williams of Yass, Mary Williams of Brungle and Mabel Glass of Warangesda, were the children of men expelled from the reserves previously.

Since the written and oral evidence of the effects of institutionalisation upon Wiradjuri children is much fuller for the period 1950-1970, this subject will be discussed in a later chapter. There is only a little evidence in this period of what life was like at the Cootamundra girls home. Two reports indicate that conditions were bleak and sterile. In 1927 Mrs Curry, a former employee at the home, alleged that the children had been flogged, slashed with a cane across the shoulders, and generally treated with undue severity and lack of sympathy. The Board investigated her complaints and concluded that as they lacked corroboration, they must be regarded as unfounded and unjust.

In 1937 an inspector at the home found that, although the matron endeavoured to provide recreation under strict superintendence and entertained the girls with choir practices and picnics, she appeared to be a strict disciplinarian, who should show more regard to the girls' welfare.

The matchings have been made by comparing the expulsion lists with the Register of Wards, which notes the parents and family details of each child committed. Some men, for instance, Thomas Coe, were banned from reserves after their children were committed.

1. The matchings have been made by comparing the expulsion lists with the Register of Wards, which notes the parents and family details of each child committed. Some men, for instance, Thomas Coe, were banned from reserves after their children were committed.

2. See below, Ch.8, pp.323-30

3. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 27 February 1927

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'a more sympathetic understanding of the girls' mentality and difficulty'.

Apart from the sterility of the environment, the children were kept separate from other Aborigines. If family contact was made, it was done at the home; parents could visit their children once a year, for which arrangements had to be made through the local manager.

When the girls reached fourteen years of age, they were eligible to be placed in domestic service. There they put into practice the scrubbing, sweeping and sewing for which they had been prepared in the home, either in country homesteads, or in middle-class homes in Sydney. Before a ward was so placed, the conditions of the situation were investigated by the Home Finder, but it is probable that wards were frequently placed in unsuitable surroundings. Margaret Tucker, for instance, related that she was too frightened of the consequences to complain of her cruel and deranged employer, and so remained in her employ.

It may be a sad commentary on the efficacy of the regulations protecting wards from abuse that before 1930 there is only one instance recorded in Wiradjuri country of a ward's removal from a situation at his or her request. That was Paul Coe, but Coe was removed in 1912, and hence the Inspector who

1. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 27 February 1927
2. 14 May 1919, ibid.
followed up his complaint was probably employed by the Department of Child Welfare.¹

There are several accounts of life in domestic service in this period. Violet Bolger (nee Freeman) recalled that she was removed from Brungle, and sent to a boarding-house in Sydney. She said that she was very lonely and that her single Aboriginal contact was a Brungle boy who lived at La Perouse.² Her evidence confirms the recollections of the anthropologist Marie Reay, who in the 1940s visited several girls in service to upper middle-class families in Sydney. Reay commented on the loneliness of the girls, believing that some of them spoke to no one but their employers for a week at a time.³ Emma Penrith (nee Hickey) went from Brungle to service at Summer Hill, Sydney, in 1928. She had volunteered, she said, because there was nothing to do at Brungle. Her employer was a bank manager and her duties were to keep the bank clean as well as the house. She enjoyed the life. She was paid 3 shillings and 6 pence a week, of which she received 6 pence. The rest was paid into a trust fund.⁴ Mrs Penrith stated that she was treated as one of the family: she cooked the meals for them and waited on them at table. There were no other servants in the house. Her

¹ See above, Ch.4, pp.115-6
² Recorded conversation Violet Bolger, Tumut, 26 February 1980
³ Pers. comm., Dr. Marie Reay, Canberra, 5 September 1980
⁴ Regulation 41(d) of the 'Regulations Under the Aborigines Protection Act' specified that in the third year an apprentice be paid 3s 6d, of which '6d shall be paid weekly to the apprentice as pocket money'
employer took her to the pictures, but never to dances or other social engagements: 'I never worried about it'. On her days off, she went shopping with white friends. She met no Aborigines. To the question of the possibility of her marrying a white man, she replied that she was aware of her family's opposition to it. In 1936 she went home for a holiday, then returned to Summer Hill intending to remain in service. Instead she found that her employer had died. She again returned to Brungle, and soon afterwards, married an Aborigine. ¹

Both Mrs Bolger and Mrs Penrith returned to their Aboriginal communities. Of those who did not return, were dissociated from their communities, or married white people, there are few records. The families of girls committed before 1920 have at best only vague recollections of such women. The names of several girls, committed in the 1920s, are better known to modern Wiradjuri. For example, two girls named Foote from Darlington Point were not seen again after they were removed. ²

The Register of Wards records that Mona Foote went to Summer Hill in 1921, after three years at the Cootamundra home. She gave 'very unsatisfactory service' in a number of positions and was finally sent to Brewarrina Station, used by the Board as a detention centre for recalcitrant wards, in 1924. In 1931 she married a white man. ³ The domestic record of Maud Foote,

1. Recorded conversation Emma Penrith, Griffith, 18 September 1980
2. Conversation Violet Edwards, Darlington Point, 8 July, 1980
3. Register of Wards, Entry No.251
like that of many other girls, shows a steady deterioration from 'unsuitable' (1925) through 'impertinent and disobedient' (1927) to 'absolutely impossible to control' (1928). A child was born to her, and in 1933 she was reported to be living with a married man in Griffith. In 1980, none of this information contained in the Register of Wards had been made known to the girls' relatives. In this way, two ex-residents of Warangesda vanished from the ken of their families, and may have ceased to identify as women of Aboriginal descent and culture.

Of the generation of girls removed before 1928, only one has been recently located. Her name is Mary Williams and she was committed in 1923. Her father, who took her to Cootamundra, had been expelled from Brungle in 1920 and in 1923 he was thought to have 'no home nor likelihood of same'. Mary Williams spent eight years in the Cootamundra home and in 1931, when she was fifteen, she was sent to service in Sydney. In her first situation her work was described as 'unsatisfactory'; in the second, she was 'unsuitable and disobedient'. She filled two more positions, and the last report on her is dated 1936.

1. Register of Wards, Entry No.541
2. Mary Williams was located at the request of her nephew through Link-Up, and agency established in 1980 to locate people in such circumstances. This case was investigated by Coral Edwards, Co-Ordinator and P. Read
3. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 21 January 1920, record that Williams was expelled as one of several 'idle young half-castes'; Register of Wards, Entry No.338
4. Register of Wards, ibid.
In 1961 Williams wrote to the Board seeking information about herself. She revealed that she had been placed in Parramatta Mental Hospital, suffering from tuberculosis, in about 1942 and had spent the following twenty years in several Sydney mental hospitals.\(^1\) In 1962, a further series of letters indicated that she regarded mental hospitals as a refuge from the outside world. She was nevertheless discharged from North Ryde Psychiatric Centre and, at the time of her last letter to the Board in July, was selling raffle tickets for a Catholic hostel in Summer Hill.\(^2\) The information contained in these files was shown to her nephew, who until then had been unaware of his aunt's existence. Through Link-Up, an organisation established to enable Aboriginal adults to find and return to their families, Mary Williams was located in Sydney in August 1981. What appeared to be the first information about her family she had received for more than fifty years was relayed to her. The occasion was described by the Co-ordinator of Link-Up

Having read the letters before I went to find her, I wondered what her reaction would be to have news of her family again. I was hoping it would please her. In fact it was the opposite. She was mopping the hall-way when I arrived, and I stood talking with her from the front door. One of the things I was really aware of, was how frightened she was. She had difficulty in following what I was saying about her family. All the time I was talking she kept mopping the floor. After about ten minutes, I said I was leaving and asked if I could take a couple of photos to show her nephew. She disappeared to her room to change her clothes... Fifteen minutes later she emerged.

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1. Mary Williams, letters to Board, 26 March, 2 April, 29 June 1961, in A.W.B., General Correspondence, 1949-1969, box 8/2916

2. 28 May 1962, ibid
Dressed in her best outfit: blue frock, hat, stockings, high heels, carrying a handbag, she stood near the front gate for her photos. After taking a couple of shots of her there, I asked if she would stand on the verandah. Through the camera lens I watched her step up to the verandah, pick up the broom that was leaning against the wall, and sweep the doormat before standing on it. At that moment I saw her whole life history and all the conditioning that she'd been through, how deep it went.

Mary Williams' history exemplified a logical outcome of the policy of removing very young children from their communities: as an adult she was dissociated not only from Aboriginal culture, but in a sense from whites as well. She never married, and in 1981 appeared to be comparatively lonely and friendless. As Edwards remarked, 'She should have been an Aboriginal grandmother by now, surrounded by her family, and all the warmth and love that goes with it. Instead, she says, "I don't mix with Aboriginals, you know".' The potential for such tragedies was attacked in an article in the Sydney Morning Herald in 1924, when Mary Williams had been in the Cootamundra home for a year. The Herald wrote that the separation of the girls to preserve their moral welfare was a policy which could not commend itself to those who desired to see the Aboriginal race preserved. A few went home to marry - a dozen couples had done so in 1923 - but the withholding of money in trust

1. C. Edwards, 'Is the ward clean?' in A. Markus (eds.), *op.cit.*, 4-8, p.7
2. p.8, ibid.
prevented many from doing so. The Board replied that the extinction of the race was inevitable.\textsuperscript{1} The Herald missed the point that earlier in the year a home for Aboriginal boys, Kinchela, near Kempsey, had been opened, which was to function on the same principles as the girls' home. No longer would only adult men be driven from the reserves, but younger ones, whom the Board considered to be in need of training, as well. They too would be discouraged from returning home, so that there would be on the reserves fewer available Aborigines amongst whom a mate might be found. The Herald article and the surrounding publicity appeared to have an effect nevertheless. The next Annual report conceded that although girls had to be saved from 'certain moral degradation', they ought to have a chance to meet people of their own colour.\textsuperscript{2} A year later it was claimed that 'large numbers' of marriages took place.\textsuperscript{3}

There is little record of daily life at Kinchela during the 1920s. A report of a departmental enquiry in 1935 may indicate that patterns of daily life in the home at that period may have been present since its establishment. The report showed the dangers of allowing unsuitable men to take charge of boys who had no means to redress injustice. The manager, McQuiggin, was strongly advised against taking liquor while in charge of the

\textsuperscript{1} 'Aborigines race dying out. Fate of girls few chances for marriage', S.M.H., 29 October 1924

\textsuperscript{2} A.P.B., Annual report, 1925-6, p.3

\textsuperscript{3} 1926-7, pp.2-3, ibid.
home. He was on no account to tie a boy to a tree or fence, or use hosepipe and stockwhips on them. Dietary punishments were not to be inflicted, a punishment register had to be kept, and the practice of loaning out boys to local farmers must cease. In 1980, although they experienced great difficulty in talking of their experiences at Kinchela, two men corroborated the findings of the enquiry. One stated that he had been locked in a shed for a week and told to eat hay; another had scars on his feet, which he said were inflicted while gathering the cows, without boots, before dawn on winter mornings.

The oral evidence of Fred Collins, of Brungle, provided one example of the life of farm apprentices. Collins stated that he volunteered, although the Brungle manager merely noted that he had, in 1924, 'reached the age of apprenticeship'. He was sent to a dairy farm at Gunnedah. He stated that the white farmer and his family were 'terrific people'. He slept in the homestead and ate in the kitchen. He was given a horse to ride to town and later a bicycle. To the suggestion that the Board intended that he lose his Aboriginal identity he replied noncommittally that it 'might have been too'. In 1927 he went to Brungle for a holiday, then returned to Gunnedah. In 1930 he

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1. Report of a Departmental enquiry, recommendations and discussion, A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 4 December 1935, 4 March 1936


3. Register of Wards, No.527, committal dated 11 November 1924
above, Mrs Emma Penrith (sister of Beera Hickey) Brungle 1980

below, Mr Fred Collins, Murrumburrah, 1980
again visited Brungle and married a Brungle woman. He remained a dairyman, and spent twenty years at Nowra as right hand man to another dairy farmer. Eventually he returned to Brungle. \(^1\)

Of the 12 Wiradjuri boys known to have been removed from their families in the period, all returned to Aboriginal communities. In 1919 Paul Coe, committed in 1911, returned home to Erambie. He was told that his father was absent droving, and his efforts to find him indicates that the Board had seriously underestimated the determination of children removed after early childhood, to return to their families:

In summer [1919] it was very hot. Matter of fact it was very late when I got here on the train, and I slept on the back end of the bridge down here under the trees. Went up next morning, they were in bed laying out in front there, two or three men. -I asked the first place if there were any Coes there. No, no Coes. I went to the next house, asked there. No, no Coes. I went to the third place, asked there. 'No', he said, and I just went to walk away, when 'Wait a minute. You go over there to those houses across there. You'll see a kurrajong tree. I think you've got a brother there'. Asked the old lady there, asked where the kurrajong tree was, and me brother Elijah was there, not long back from the First World War. I was there and had this money sewn up in me pocket [i.e., the pay accumulated in trust while a state ward]. Anyhow, Doolan Murray was fighting [boxing] at that time. So Elijah, me brother, and Doolan were going down [to Goulburn]. He said me father was up at Cooma minding sheep at Adaminaby. They wanted to go, and had no money, so I paid their fare to Goulburn... And I went to Cooma... caught the bus next day to Adaminaby, and walked out the next day 14 miles to where me father was.

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1. Recorded conversation Fred Collins, Murrumburrah, 7 July 1980

2. Recorded conversation Paul Coe, Cowra, 18 May 1979; for the account of Jimmie Barker of his homecoming, see J. Mathews, op.cit., p.108
The scanty evidence makes it difficult to assess the effect of the institutionalisation and training on Wiradjuri children in this period. For Emma Penrith, Violet Bolger and Paul Coe, the Board's interference was not much more than an interruption to living and working in an Aboriginal community and culture. Mary Williams' life was ruined; only Fred Collins may be said to have gained anything substantial from his period of training. Of the 70 Wiradjuri girls in training, the probably understated Board records show that in the period 1916-28, ten girls fell pregnant, ten spent periods in mental hospitals, and seven died. Of the combined boys and girls total of eighty-four, about half are stated to have either returned to their communities, or married an Aboriginal. One quarter did not return, or married a non-Aboriginal, and there is no information on the remaining quarter. An analysis by age, and the records of the better documented period after 1950, suggest that a state ward was most likely to grow to be a responsible adult if he or she was removed between the ages of ten and thirteen. Very young children, unsocialised into the Aboriginal community, often looked to the whites for sanctuary and frequently failed to find it because they were Aboriginal. Those removed after puberty were often the most resentful, most violent or unhappiest. Boys, who were seldom committed at an early age, appear to have more frequently become stable and responsible adults.

The Board might have argued that there was some purpose in 'saving' black children from the 'certain moral degradation' of the reserves. But the primary policy of resocialising Aboriginal children for life amongst Europeans was futile unless it had a very high success rate. Since, therefore, more than
half, and possibly three-quarters, of removed Wiradjuri children returned to an Aboriginal community, the policy may be said to have been useless as well as cruel. It is probable that, like the children removed in the period 1950-1970, many of those who did return to bear children were unable, because of their experiences, to function as normal adults. The destruction of Mary Williams may equally be said to have been not only wicked, but senseless, since sufficient Wiradjuri children continued to identify as Aborigines when adult to render the policy a failure. Instead, the forcible removal of children created in many Aborigines a sense of irreducible anger. The following abbreviated extract from the file of Jessie Kennedy, born at Warangesda in 1913, reveals the potential of institutionalised children, the victims of a policy which ultimately failed in its object, for suffering and derangement. Kennedy was committed 'to better her condition in life and to train for service'. Her case history after 'disposal' (that part of the case history following the training period), runs:

Transferred from Cootamundra to Longueville, 9.2.28. Sydney Rescue Home 14.2.28; Brewarrina Aboriginal Station, 17.2.28; service at Rowena 6.5.28; returned to Brewarrina 17.6.28, service at Avondale 21.7.28, unmanageable; sent to police station, Collarenebri; taken charge by sister, 21.12.28; taken Reception House 24.1.29; transferred Urunga Aboriginal Station 5.2.29; service at East Belligen, 11.2.29, uncontrollable; returned Urunga 4.4.29; tried again at service 6.4.29, again became unmanageable and violent, sent back to station; brought to Sydney and admitted Reception House. Admitted Callan Park Mental Hospital by order of Court, 1...29; 1933 heard that she had returned to Darlington Point and living with sister.

1. Register of Wards, No.738, committal dated 18 May 1917, when Kennedy was five years old
Dispersal failed. There is a logical difficulty in assessing the number of people expelled, imprisoned, or committed by the state who ceased to identify as Aboriginal, because they no longer associate with Aborigines from whom such information can be collated. Yet the thousands of Wiradjuri people who today identify as Aboriginal show that the Board did not accomplish its object. In practice, though not in theory, dispersal was localised. A good deal of the force of the evictions came from local councils which wanted merely to see the Wiradjuri out of their own areas. In reality, as the member of parliament Carruthers had predicted, people who identified or lived as Aborigines were treated as Aborigines, whatever their status in law. Aboriginal determination to remain united through kinship and other values, and the fact that the Board and the councils worked at cross purposes, doomed the policy. Indeed, just as the efforts of the Brungle whites in the 1880s and 1890s to close the reserve reinforced the residents' conception of separateness from the white community, the policy of the Aborigines Protection Board in the first two decades after the Act may have been counter-productive. A sense of Aboriginality, and of alienation from the whites, probably was induced in many people removed from their reserve, camp or family. Nevertheless a child removed in 1916, returned home after a decade, would have found startling changes. Warangesda had been destroyed, Brungle was half its former size, Erambie was in a state of flux, and Edgerton only a memory. As in the case of the Victorian stations, the farming allotments had almost entirely vanished, from Board initiative as well as Aboriginal
The communities at Hillston, Euabalong and Forbes were much reduced. There was a stable but growing population at Gooloogong, Condobolin and Darlington Point.

Economic factors temporarily put a stop to dispersal. The effect of the Depression was to concentrate the Wiradjuri, seen as an economic threat to poor or unemployed white labourers, back into the official and unofficial camps. The Wiradjuri reserve communities re-formed; at some the populations rose higher than they had been in 1909. When the dispersal policy was resumed after the Second World War, it was done in the knowledge that it was pointless to disperse people unless arrangements were made for them to go somewhere else. In the year before the onset of the Depression, it was clear that another campaign had been lost by the Aborigines Protection Board. The Wiradjuri communities were still in communities, most of the children were back with their families. The most notable result after two decades of the Act was a thicker residuum of mutual resentment and hostility.

1. There are very few records of what happened to each of the allotments, after official notice was taken of their existence in the Register of Aboriginal Reserves, there was generally no further reference to them. For an account of Aboriginal attempts to retain one in the Yass district see below, Ch.5, p.217; for an account of the Victorian farming communities at Coranderrk and Cummeroogunga, see D. Barwick, 'Coranderrk and Cummeroogunga: pioneers and policy, in T. Scarlett Epstein and D.H. Penny, (eds.), Opportunity and response, case studies and economic development, 1972, 10-68, pp.12-14
Chapter Five
The era of concentration
1929-1942

During the period of the depression Wiradjuri people moved less frequently than previously from reserve to reserve or from town to town. Through choice, economic circumstance or legislative action, most people remained on the official or unofficial camps. Therefore this chapter, after reviewing the legislative changes and their effect on the Wiradjuri in this period, describes some features of daily life in the 1930s. It deals particularly with the influence of evangelical religion. One important development at this time was the increasingly divergent self-perceptions among the Wiradjuri, conditioned by managerial rule and the localised effects of the legislation. I review some of the contemporary and more recent analyses of cultural difference, and conclude that most observers have paid insufficient attention to the potential of Aboriginal communities which share a common culture to alter their self-perceptions according to changing circumstances. In this context I trace the emergence of the 'Cowra' view of Aboriginality in the early 1940s.

By 1931 the Board was seeking an amendment to the Act which would enable it to force Aborigines from stock routes and town camps so that they would 'not be at liberty to move without permission'.¹ The dispersal policy temporarily was abandoned.

The Annual report noted large increases of people on stations

¹. A.P.B. Annual report 1931-2, p.2
who had 'been glad to take advantage of the sanctuary provided'.

Many of the new arrivals probably were itinerant or seasonal workers, for the number of people at the 'safe' towns like Narrandera, Gooloogong, Hay and Hillston, continued to grow. Several towns in which an Aboriginal population had been decreasing for some time, such as Euabalong and Orange, acquired new camps. In 19.2 the Board referred in the Annual report to the unauthorised camps, and an amendment to force people to live on the reserves was again called for. In 1936 the state government, with a view also to control the spread of infectious eye disease, passed the amendment. A magistrate could order an Aborigine to remove to a reserve if in the Board's opinion he or she was living in unsatisfactory or undesirable conditions. Mindful of the potential complications, the Board did not attempt to change the definition of 'Aborigine', which remained as 'any full-blooded or half-caste aboriginal who is a native of New South Wales'. The problem was circumvented by an additional amendment that a simple declaration that a person was an Aborigine would be taken as sufficient evidence unless the contrary could be shown by the accused. Since it could be argued that, by definition, any

1. A.P.B. Annual report 1931-2, p.2
2. The population figures for particular towns and reserves were not noted r 1915 in the Annual reports until 1938-9. In 1931 year, Erambie contained 219 people, and Euabalong in. 940-1, 58 people
3. A.P.B., Annual report 1931-2, p.2; see also 1933-4, p.2
4. Amendment of 1918, see above, Ch.4, p.112; Amendment No.32 of 1936, No.2(c)
5. No.3(d), ibid.
'fringe-dweller' lived in insanitary conditions, the amendment gave power to the police to arrest any person not living on a reserve on suspicion of being an Aborigine. Clearly a person alleged to be Aboriginal could not defend himself or herself unless aware of the official definition. In 1940 the amendment was further strengthened to mark the apogee of the legalised repression of Aborigines in New South Wales. It allowed the removal of any person declared to be an Aborigine simply if, in the Board's opinion, he or she ought to be placed under control.1

The only large camp in Wiradjuri country to which the new amendments are known to have been applied was at Orange. By 1934 the population of 'the Springs', some 5 km from the town, had grown from its 1915 figure of seven to a camp of thirty or forty people. Many people came from Cowra. For instance, Lawrie Bamblett, who grew up at Warangesda and the Sandhills,

1. Amendment No.12 of 1940, No.3(d). The causes of the about-face in government policy are not revealed in the Board's Minutes of meetings. The strongest force bearing upon the Board probably was local governments in rural areas. In times of crisis, local councils became more hostile than usual towards Aborigines. There were, for instance, many allegations of Aborigines being refused food or unemployment relief whether eligible for them or not. L. Grant told the Select Committee on administration of the Aborigines Protection Board that he had been told to 'go and see the Board' by the police in the early 1930s after he had been put on relief work (Select Committee..., 1938, p.69; see also evidence Mrs Kelly, ibid., and S.W.P.D., 2/148 (1936), p.3780). The explanation must remain at present a little hypothetical because the normal sources, such as country newspapers, contain far fewer references to Aborigines than normal because of their editors' pre-occupation with wider economic matters.
moved to Cowra in about 1932. He married a woman living at the station, who was born at Yass. Together they went to Orange in about 1934 to obtain relief work; there were, Bamblett stated, 'a lot of dark people there'. In 1939 the Board resolved that the Aborigines of Orange should be transferred to any station which they nominated. Probably most chose Cowra, for throughout the 1930s there was a good deal of travel between the two towns.

Through the social welfare legislation, even when not specifically directed at Aborigines, there was considerable legal or de facto discrimination. The N.S.W. Family Endowment Act of 1927 entitled Aborigines to the family allowance, but after 1930 it was paid to most families in food or home improvements such as furniture or renovations. Discrimination occurred in that endowments were paid directly to the Board, which often used the money for general disbursement. A large surplus of funds accumulated at Head Office, and when a family left a reserve, or was expelled, the home improvements were not transferable. The first child in each family whose

1. Recorded conversation Lawrie Bamblett, Murrumburrah, 3 July 1980
2. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 12 July 1939, 15 September 1942
3. Conversation Lawrie Bamblett
4. Family Endowment Act, No.39 of 1927, s.3; see also A.P.B., Annual report, 1927-8, p.1, 1929-30, p.1
5. This feature of the Board's administration was criticised by the Public Service Board's enquiry of 1940; Aborigines protection report and recommendations of the Public Service Board of New South Wales, 1940, N.S.W.P.P., 1938-39-40, p.16
parents received rations were ineligible for the allowance. Aborigines also were excluded from old age pensions, and mothers, either Aboriginal or married to an Aboriginal, were excluded from the maternity allowance. A person not living on a managed reserve had to have a note from a policeman before seeing a doctor.

The regulations for the emergency relief and unemployment schemes also discriminated against Aborigines. For the first few months of the Depression, Aborigines were permitted to queue with other unemployed workers, but as the Depression deepened, the antipathies between the local councils and the camps increased. In 1932 it was decided that only those Aborigines previously independent of the Board would be allowed to apply for state relief. Others had to seek rations at the nearest Aboriginal station. Criticism of the psychological effects of the dole led to the Emergency Relief Scheme in May

1. Commonwealth Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act, No.1 of 1923, s.16(1)(c); Commonwealth Maternity Allowance Act, No.8 of 1912, s.6(2)

2. Select committee... , 1938, witness A.C. Pettit, p.48

3. Capital expenditure on reserves also deteriorated markedly early in the depression. The last significant sum spent on buildings was an allocation to build thirty-three huts on eight reserves in 1931; A.P.B. Annual report, 1930-1, p.1

4. A.P.B., Annual report, 1931-2, p.1. Economic conditions in New South Wales in the early 1930s, of course, deteriorated significantly also. The basic wage dropped from 7s 4d per day in 1930-31 to 6s 3d in 1934-5. Unemployment amongst trade unionists reached a peak of 33% in 1932; see P. Peter, 'Social aspects of the Depression in New South Wales, 1930-4', Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1964, Tables 2, 16
1933. Wages were paid for work, but since such employment was regarded as a relief scheme, most Aborigines were debarred from it. It was, in any case, very difficult to obtain. One Aborigine who did was Sam Kennedy, whose mother was an Erambie woman, and whose father was European. In the 1930s he lived in a house near the Erambie station. Since he had worked independently of the Board in the late 1920s, he was therefore eligible for employment.

That was in the big depression. I was working on the sewerage. I remember if you went up and had to register, you see, on a Monday morning on the sewerage, and when you registered you got a fortnight off, then you'd get a week back on. But if you were to go, say, Sunday night, and sit there all night, and be within the first 10 in the door, you'd have a week on and only a week off. So we started getting up at midnight Sunday nights, and there was that many of them doing it at the finish you were getting there at 3 and 4 in the afternoon on Sundays, sit there till the next morning to get a job. You got nothing at all in the other week, you just had to survive, see.

The police gave temporary relief also to 'track travellers', who, moving from centre to centre, remained in each town for a few weeks only. Few Aborigines took part in this scheme, as much probably through a lack of confidence in dealing with the administration, as a disinclination to travel to towns in which they had no kinsfolk, or in which Aborigines were unwelcome. One Wiradjuri family which did take advantage of the offer was that of Henry Wedge's son, who had grown up on one of the very few remaining farming leases, at Rye Park. He married Ethel Perry, who was reared on a farm near Hillston. Together they

1. Recorded conversation Sam Kennedy, Cowra, 15 April 1979. For an account of the experiences of a white man in Wiradjuri country at this time see W. Lowenstein, (ed.), Weevils in the flour, 1978, pp.138-141
had the financial resources and confidence to deal with the bureaucracy:

They had what was called travelling relief. There was a certain town you had to go to every fortnight and get your dole, food relief. That's what it was. There was thousands and thousands on the road. Sydney was empty. We were travelling in a big covered wagon, a tent. Only had three children then. You saw more people than you ever saw... There wasn't many dark people on the road, it was all white. Nearly everyone we met, they were from Sydney. They had to go out, or starve. [When we came to a new town] we didn't go on the mission, we used to go to the police station. We had a card, traveller's card...You could get three issues. For six weeks you could stop at one place, then you had to move off.

Q: Why were there so few Kooris [Aborigines] travelling about?

I don't know. I just can't make that one out. There wasn't that many dark people. We never met any dark people. Oh, we'd see a few in Yass, but they were locals. Here, Cowra, no, you wouldn't see them. You'd only see them in the street, they used to get food relief from the managers.1

Most Aborigines who were not able to take part in the relief schemes clustered in the Aboriginal areas of the town fringes, or on or near the reserves. On the stations, managers were expected to provide work for as many as possible, and to give rations to the rest. At Cumeroogunga, a manager alleged that his predecessor refused the ration issue to certain families on the grounds that they should have been working, at a time when no work was available. The families had to subsist entirely on child endowments.2 While there is no direct evidence that

1. Recorded conversation Ethel Wedge, Erambie, 8 April 1979

2. Select Committee..., 1938, witness J. Danvers, p.77
such practices took place at Wiradjuri stations, it is very likely that only the sharing of food amongst kinfolk prevented some families from starving. Meanwhile the concentration of people into particular areas to receive rations soon caused the same problems to recur which had vexed the Board in the 1920s. At Darlington Point, the numbers of those expelled from Warangesda still living about the town were swollen by the arrival of unemployed farm labourers. The Aboriginal Inland Mission reported a community of about 100 Aborigines in 1930, and in the same year the police complained to the Board of the conduct of Aborigines in the district. They recommended the erection of five huts in the police paddock. In 1936, only twelve years after the closure of Warangesda, a new reserve was declared in the district of Darlington Point.

At Yass the return of the Edgerton residents caused a now familiar pattern of reaction by whites in the town. In 1925 the Yass shire council complained to the Board that Aborigines were camping on the town water supply catchment area. The Board replied that it did not consider itself responsible for 'lighter castes', but would look after the others. In January 1926, the question of acquiring another reserve was discussed. In May 1927, when the controversy with the Condobolin council was

1. Our Aim, XXVII/8, (24 April 1933), p.11; A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 31 July 1930; see also Narrandera Argus, 30 October 1936
2. A.P.B. Minutes of meetings, 19 June 1925
3. 22 January 1926, ibid.
nearing an end, the Yass council again complained. The Board promised to persuade the Aborigines for which it considered itself responsible to go to Brungle.\footnote{A.P.B. Minutes of meetings, 13 May 1927} As at Condobolin, the townspeople were not satisfied with a retreat into definitions. A deputation visited Head Office to demand the removal of Aborigines from the municipality.\footnote{7 July 1928, \textit{ibid.}} The anxiety of the Yass whites mounted as, with the onset of the Depression, the number of Aborigines in the town swelled. Most of them lived in family groups along the river banks; for example, Rosemary Connors, born at Brungle came to Yass in the late 1920s, and lived in a tin hut a kilometre east of the town.\footnote{Conversation Rosemary Connors, Yass, 5 July 1980}

By 1931 the Board was committed to the establishment of yet another reserve at Yass. Two possible sites were under consideration. The one chosen finally, in 1933, was on the western side of the town. It was opposite a slaughter yard, adjacent to a cemetery, at the top of a steep hill. The site was bare, stony and bleak. For a reason now obscure, it was named Hollywood. Significantly, the Board justified the establishment of the new reserve, and the compulsory transfer of the Yass residents (including Mrs Connors) in terms other than the welfare of Aborigines:
As a result of special representations which were made to the Government, funds were provided for the transfer of a large number of Aborigines, who were camped near the town water supply at Yass, to a new site on the opposite side of the town...The Board is particularly gratified at the completion of this work, the necessity for which has been apparent for a number of years, and which was very necessary also in the interests of the townspeople of Yass.¹

For the second time in two decades, and for the same reason, the Board had opened a new reserve in the same area where it had recently closed one.

On most of the managed stations there was stagnation. At Brungle, about which there is little information, four houses were built by the Board. They were without running water or electric power, and the rest of the community of perhaps 100 people, lived in tin huts with earthen floors and leaking roofs. On such stations, away from a sizeable white community, Board policy evidently was to do as little as possible unless the press brought attention to poor conditions. At Condobolin also Aborigines were not newsworthy. Amongst the many issues facing the council in the 1930s, Aborigines probably received the lowest priority. The population of the official reserve, and the unofficial camp, the Murie, probably rose steadily to at least 150 people. However, few improvements are recorded to have been made at the reserve in the 1930s. Again a lack of popular agitation meant a lack of official action. Only at Cowra, which in another context is discussed below, did the

¹. A.P.B., Annual report, 1933-4, p.2
population increases of the Depression cause important social and physical changes.

Out west, where there were fewer official reserves, the population grew on the unofficial camps. For instance, at Euabalong, there were in the 1930s at least three communities, each of five or six houses, some of which were occupied by families, formerly residents of the town, who had in the 1920s gone eastwards in search of work.¹

Community life at the Sandhills at Narrandera boomed. The population rose to over 100 occupying a dozen tin huts. The area, a Murrumbidgee river flat of some 3 hectares, was 10 km. from the town. No whites lived there. In the 1930s Aborigines came from the west, the east and the north to live, untroubled by a manager or the Board. The Sandhills in the 1930s was one of the very few areas in Wiradjuri country this century of which a picture may be drawn of Aboriginal community life when undisturbed by administrators or policemen.

While revisiting the Sandhills in 1982, Ossie Ingram was able to draw a vivid description of life in the 1930s. He came from Euabalong in about 1936. Each house, he said, was solidly constructed from timber, tin, or hessian bags soaked in cement. Furniture was generally hand-made. Each household possessed a couple of camp-ovens, saucepans and "illies which were bought in town. Practically every family owned a horse and buggy, which

¹. Recorded conversation and visit to Euabalong, Ossie Ingram, 19 September 1980
were used, in addition to fetching supplies, to sell possum-skins, rabbits and galahs. At the time, Ingram recalled, there was a strong demand for local produce: rabbits were sold at 9d. a pair, galahs for 2s. Water was brought from the river, washing done together on a certain day each week. Someone took the children by buggy to school each day in Narrandera. Many of the men, as better employment opportunities returned later in the 1930s, were away shearing for up to three months at a time, but there were always one or two men about. The women travelled to Leeton every week to sell produce, a journey which took two days. At night sing-songs were common, and dances took place at a wooden dance floor, with the Sandhills band, by the river. Cards (the game of 500) was played by men only. Wine was bought by kerosene tin or demijohn, and was brought from Narrandera one day a week. Fights were few, Ingram stated, and children well-disciplined.1

Sandhills community life, though at the same level of technology as the unemployment camps of the whites, was distinctive in several ways. First, Ingram recalled, kin-groups were identified by extended families of three or four households. Children thought of all of these houses, which stood together, as home. Bags of flour and sugar were bought by pooling the resources of the extended family, and if one of the men brought home a beast, it was shared among the several households. Contact with other people of the Sandhills was less intimate,

1. Conversation and visit to Sandhills site, Ossie Ingram, 15 July 1982; conversation and visit to Sandhills site, Edgar Howell, 7 July 1980
above, Mr Ossie Ingram at the Sandhills site, 1982

below, the site of an Aboriginal Depression camp, Euabalong
though dances and other social activities were of course communal. The Sandhills also was distinctive in that it was self-regulating. Police seldom visited the unofficial reserve, and were seldom asked to come. Arrangements were made for visitors, such as the Wallaga Lake Gum Leaf band, to call. Concerts were spontaneously organised. The high degree of responsibility and organisation apparent at the Sandhills stands in sharp contrast to complaints of passivity or irresponsibility of the residents of the managed station at Bramble. It was not surprising that Aborigines, dissatisfied with life on the Board's reserves elsewhere, came to the freedom of the Sandhills if they were acceptable through kin or association. For instance, Bob Carroll, who had married Lucy Howell of Warangesda, lived at Edgerton and in the 1920s by the Yass River. In 1934 the family was moved compulsorily to Hollywood. A whooping-cough epidemic at the new reserve was to the Carrolls the last straw: they moved to the Sandhills, and in 1982, two of their surviving sons still lived at Narrandera. Throughout the 1930s the population continued to grow. In 1941, an A.I.M. missionary reported that she had been allowed the use of one of the rooms of a house. 'All the homes were visited, about thirty in all, spread out over a fairly large area'.

1. See below, Ch.5, pp.251-2
2. Conversation Bob Carroll, Narrandera, 9 July 1980; Roy Carroll, Narrandera 15 July 1982
3. Our Aim, XXXV/4, (16 December 1941), p.9
A description of Wiradjuri community life in the 1930s is incomplete without a consideration of the influence of the Christian religion, particularly that of the Aboriginal Inland Mission. Although this branch of evangelical protestantism had been active in Wiradjuri country since about 1910, and many of its teachings had already been preached by Gribble, its influence became stronger in the 1920s. This influence reached a peak in the 1930s and 1940s and thereafter steadily declined. To Aborigines, the most memorable features of the A.I.M. were the great revivialist rallies, or conventions, held at Easter at Gooloogong or Darlington Point. Hundreds of people travelled to the conventions, sometimes from areas outside Wiradjuri country, such as Narromine or Cumeroogunga. A large hut or tent would be erected from the community meetings, and the visitors camped in tents or wagonettes. Doctrine was clear and strong. For instance, Our Aim, the A.I.M.'s official publication, reported that the theme of the 1932 convention at Gooloogong was Temptation. Most people present, it was stated, told of their chief Temptations, and how they had won the victory. The following year the crowd was exceptionally large. There were twelve addresses, lantern slides and gospel talks. Fourteen people were baptised in the river. The A.I.M. writer rhapsodised, 'Around the campfires after the meetings little circles often stood or sat till well into the night.

1. For an example of the work of the A.I.M., for instance at Brungle, see Our Aim, III/7, (March 1910), p.3

2. Our Aim, XXVI/8, (23 April 1932), p.10
Many Aborigines recall the conventions with reverence and nostalgia. They were occasions, it is said, when people met each other, enjoyed themselves, and were well-behaved. Children were looked after properly, and in turn respected their elders. Mrs Ethel Wedge, for instance, recalled the conventions as some of the happiest periods in her life:

At Gooloogong we used to have what we call a Convention amongst the blacks. Easter time, they'd come. They came on foot, pushbike, horse and sulky, springcarts, some old Model T trucks, old cars that used to be good. They had this very big shed built, that they used to have the service in. Or they'd have Open Service. Everybody got to see everybody every 12 months. They came from hundreds and hundreds of miles. I think nearly all them people's gone... We used to have beautiful Service. Lovely. No muck-up of children. Children would soon behave themselves. It was lovely. Sometimes Alec Williams led the Service. They used to call him Nunion. We had a convention here [at Erambie] a good few times, [but now] no one's interested in Christianity. They don't believe in it. I've heard people tell me, there's no such thing as God. I said, when you get sick you'll be calling for Him for help, have mercy on you. He's there to help you.

The influence of the social teachings of the Aboriginal Inland Mission was profound. Gambling, drinking, even football were discouraged, and the behavioural ethics of the urban lower middle-class were frequently invoked in Our Aim. For instance, in 1939 the Aboriginal mothers at Euabalong were complimented for the trouble they had gone to, to dress the girls in new frocks and to have the boys looking 'all nice'.

1. Our Aim, XXVII/9, (24 May 1933), pp.12-13
2. Recorded conversation Ethel Wedge, Erambie, 8 April 1979
Gathering of church workers at Cowa after the Gooloongong Convention, c.1933.

Source: W. Long, Treasure in an earthen vessel.

The church, Krambia, 1979
looked so nice in their white frocks with red buttons and ribbons, and I think all felt the extra effort was well worth while.' 1 An acceptance of the status quo, also normally associated with evangelical or fundamentalist Christianity, became in the hands of the missionaries a powerful tool to reinforce control over the Aborigines. For instance, suggestions during the Depression that Warangesda be re-opened were discouraged:

But in the course of time the Government took over and events took an unfavourable turn, on which we will not elaborate now...[But] No claim for earthly 'rights', no political agitation or protest can be compared with the power and comfort of the old-time Gospel. 2

The inculcation of the ethical values of hard work, thrift, cleanliness, diligence and acceptance of the status quo, especially among women, was an important achievement of the Aboriginal Inland Mission. For instance, Mrs Emma Penrith held firm convictions on what she should teach her grandchildren. They should not be 'light-fingered - you've got to be trustworthy'. Manners were important, she said, for people would respect you for correct speech and cleanliness. You would be judged by the way you got about and kept yourself. 3 Mrs May Williams, of Erambie, revealed that her mother made her swear on the Bible never to drink or smoke, a promise she had not broken in over fifty years. 4

Men at an impressionable age

1. Our Aim, XXXIV/1, (18 September 1939), p.10
3. Recorded conversation Emma Penrith, Griffith, 18 September 1980
4. Recorded conversation May Williams, Erambie, 12 August 1979
during the 1920s and 1930s, stressed in the 1970s the necessity of hard work, a fair deal, and avoiding the sack. 1 If people observed the precepts more often than the practices, many nevertheless found an explanation and rationale for the way life could be conducted. At the least, it provided people with an alternative in behaviour and attitude which could be utilised in an appropriate context. At the most, the doctrine was incorporated into the world-view of people, which became, to the young people of the 1970s, part of an old-fashioned, but nonetheless to be respected, Aboriginality. 2

In seeking an explanation of the success of the Aboriginal Inland Mission, notice must be taken of the kinds of white people who became missionaries. Most were untrained in theology, and had come, like Gribble, one of a sense of mission. They were unpaid. Most relied on gifts of money, food or building materials from supporters. One ex-missionary, Stan Mathews, believed that he and his wife would frequently have gone hungry had not the Aborigines at Condobolin shared food with them. Their popularity, he thought, derived from their poor status, and because they stood up to white administrators. They kept an open door at the mission house at the Condobolin

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1. Cf. the testimony of several older Wiradjuri men, in Read, op.cit., 1980, pp.101-2

2. For the effects of evangelical Protestantism in other parts of Australia, see P. Pepper, You are what you make yourself to be, 1980, pp.114-5; E. Simon, Through my eyes, 1978, pp.147-159; for a discussion of its effects among Pacific populations in North Queensland, see P.M. Mercer, op.cit., pp.457-8
reserve, and were criticised by their Aboriginal successor for having done so. \(^1\) Their poverty, acceptance of Aboriginal aid, and the ability of some of the missionaries to organise local projects like church building presented Aborigines with an alternative view of white people. The success of their teachings probably lay as much in the Aborigines' observation of their behaviour as in the doctrines themselves.

The accessibility of the Protestant missionaries contrasts with a comparative aloofness of Catholic teachers. At Cowra and Yass, where Catholic influence was strongest, the contrast was remarked on by several Aborigines. Mrs Shirley Smith (Mum Shirl) stated that she was not allowed to enter the Cowra Convent by the front door, and that her grandfather was taught religion by an old nun round the back, by the woodpile. In Mum Shirl's opinion, Catholic doctrine was not out of plumb with Aboriginal religion, it was the way which Catholics practised, or did not practise, their religion. \(^2\) Meanwhile at Yass and Cowra the Protestants kept up a running and unedifying battle with the Catholic missionaries. In the 1940s there were several references to 'false teachings' in *Our Aim* which in 1942 culminated in the following remarkable passage:

> If a Roman Catholic dies, all the folk go to the Roman Catholic Church and keep from the A.I.M., not because they don't like us, but because, in the eyes of other people, they are paying great respect to the person

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1. Conversation Stan Mathews, Brisbane, 5 January 1982
who has died. Then the Nuns get to work. The Devil is subtle, is he not? Oh! but the Conquering Saviour can break every chain and give us the victory again and again. Hallelujah!

While acknowledging the success of the Aboriginal Inland Mission, it is important to recognise its limitations. The strictures, particularly on gambling, found little favour on many reserves; at Cowra, a missionary complained that people refused to open their doors, or went out when they saw them coming. A pastor of the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship described the intentions of the A.I.M. as evangelising, the preparation of Aboriginal preachers, and the establishment of an indigenous church. Only the first he thought to have been successfully accomplished; no attempt at all had been made at the third. The missionaries' success must also be seen in the context of the general evangelical climate in which some of the Wiradjuri been surrounded since at least 1880.

Commentaries on evangelicalism elsewhere in N.S.W. have described important psychological consequences. For example, Hausfeld believed that the church, on a far north-western station, became a cult which merged selected features of 'old law' and Christianity, and created a new dogma which orthodox Christians would not recognise as Christianity.

1. Our Aim, XXXVI/2, (17 October 1942), pp.5, 11
2. XXXVIII/10 (17 June 1944), p.9, ibid.
3. Conversation Pastor Lindsay Grant, Canberra, 5 July 1982
thought that Pentacostalism among the Bandjalang, of north-eastern New South Wales, gave Aborigines a new self-respect, providing an alternative to the system of values currently in the society at large. The failure of young men to be initiated destroyed the religious distinction between sacred, initiated men, and profane, uninitiated women. Religion, he thought, provided the only avenue to leadership and status independent of white people: cultural assimilation took place without social assimilation. Elkin saw in the Aboriginal leadership, the organisation, and the great gatherings, a way of preserving the spirit of the large-scale burbangs.

The evidence provided by these writers is insufficient to show that evangelicalism was popular for the reasons suggested, or indeed that sexual differentiation or a new self-respect took place in the manner described by Calley at all. Calley's argument, in addition, assumed that the community had no structures of leadership, independent of whites, other than the one which he perceived. A more convincing, but non-functionalist, explanation of the success of the teachings of the Aboriginal Inland Mission, is that, at one level, people went to conventions because they enjoyed them; it broke a routine, they travelled, they met relations and friends. In this way, as at Warangesda, the Wiradjuri and the white


2. Recorded conversation A.P. Elkin and Bev Firth, p.10
missionaries were at cross purposes: they perceived and adopted the teachings for their own purposes. At another level, the observation of the missionaries' behaviour gave a validity to teachings already in force on the Board's reserves, and in the poorer Australian community at large. The majority took the teachings seriously, but according to personality and experience used them in different ways; perhaps a minority regularly attended conventions, yet cared nothing for the doctrines.

Our theme that differing personalities and experiences, affected by differing environments, produced a variety of attitude and expectation, is exemplified by a consideration of Wiradjuri children in the 1930s. Most reserve children during the Depression were hungry, for the adult food ration for reserve residents did not rise above 3s. 5d. per week. The level of rations for children was set at half that of adults, so that they were entitled to only 4 lb. flour, 1 lb. sugar, and 1/8 oz. tea per week, which even the Board admitted was insufficient for a healthy child. The level of schooling was roughly at a level of concern as that shown by the Board concerning the children's diet. At Brungle in 1949, the schoolroom was dark and unlit, so that school could not be held on dull days. The

1. Figure quoted by Horner, op.cit., p.29
2. Regulation 19a, Regulations Under, Aborigines Protection Act. These rations, pitiful as they were, were only to be given to children who attended school regularly. In 1930 the government conceded that the rations were insufficient, but claimed they could be supplemented by a parent's earnings, N.S.W.P.D., L.A., 2/124, pp.316, 742. A bitter critic of the Board, Mark Davidson M.L.A., claimed in 1940 that at some stations the optional meat ration was never given out, N.S.W.P.D., L.A., 2/161, p.8290
only playground was the road, which in wet weather was a sea of mud. The curriculum still was based on the assumption that Aborigines should, and would, become rural or domestic workers. The practice of station managers teaching children for half a day was based on the principle, established in 1915, that Aboriginal children did not need the full schedule of lessons laid down by the Department of Education. The teacher/manager scheme allowed the Board to retain control over all its employees and to spend the Aboriginal educational annual vote. The result was that Aboriginal children were taught half the usual curriculum for half the usual time by men, on the managed stations, with no training at all.

Despite the extraordinarily bad conditions, there was a considerable variety of attitude among adults who were at school on reserves in the 1930s. Truancy, misbehaviour and alienation, which might have been expected from such an environment, have been described by one Erambie woman, Mrs Flo Doolan. The reminiscences of another woman, of different personality and family background, are a reminder that analyses based on what should, or might, have happened, rather than what did, are of

1. Sunday Sun, 8 May 1949
2. N.S.W., Department of Education, 'Course of Instruction for the Aborigines Schools', 1938, p.1
4. Managers were not only untrained in education, but, unlike officers in mandated New Guinea, untrained in psychology or anthropology
5. Recorded conversation Flo Doolan, Erambie, 18 May 1979
little value. Mrs Val Simpson, who was at school at Erambie a few years before Flo Doolan, recalled:

There was a Mr Foster taught us school. He was a teacher and a half. He was honest, he was a Christian. Set us an example in every way...He used to hold scripture lessons in school, my word he did. Every morning when we went to school, we always said a prayer. Before we sat down, we all stood and said it. We all had our scripture lessons, and once a week he used to let the Catholic priest come for the Catholic kids...He was strict with us, but not cruel or anything like that. I always said he learnt me the best. One of the best things he ever taught me was how to behave myself. He was proud of us. And we were proud of him.

The conditions to which state wards were subjected at Kinchela and Cootamundra remained appalling. The regulations regarding truancy were tightened. Managers were advised that when a man was ejected from a station, the family should be ejected also; a close watch should then be kept so that, if necessary, action might be taken to assume control of the children.² The 1936 amendment contained a provision which made it punishable to entice a ward from an apprenticeship.³ A new amendment in 1940, following the state Child Welfare Act of 1939, added 'uncontrollable' to the categories of conditions under which children might be removed.⁴ Later in the year it was resolved that children in the Board's care should not be allowed to return home except under compelling circumstances.⁵

1. Recorded conversation Val Simpson, Cowra, 15 April 1979
2. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 15 September 1942
3. Amendment No.32 of 1936, No.2(g)
4. Amendment No 12 of 1940, No.3(e)
5. A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 19 November 1940
1943 a code of punishment was drawn up, which cited 'irreverent behaviour' as punishable. Punishments included 'isolated detention' in a room constructed for the purpose, in which children under fourteen years of age could be kept for 24 hours.\textsuperscript{1} Conditions in the institutions were at times even worse than those allowed by regulation. During an enquiry in 1942 into 'immoral practices' at Kinchela, a former manager stated that the type of work the boys were compelled to do, such as scrubbing and washing, was not the life of normal healthy boys. An inspector from the Department of Child Welfare, who conducted the inquiry, agreed, and was strongly critical of the amount of manual work which the boys were supposed to do after school. He estimated it as four hours rather than the official estimate of two, and found a corresponding lack of time and means for recreation. Consequently the children were bored and tired at the same time. There was a noticeable tendency for the boys to 'sit on their haunches, motionless and almost silent'. His recommendations included the purchase of recreational equipment, and the reduction of work which the boys had to do. Many tasks should be eliminated altogether, as they played no part in their training.\textsuperscript{2}

It was not accidental that the two enquiries which were most critical of conditions at Kinchela were conducted in the decade in which legal repression of adults was greatest and Aborigines

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} A.P.B., Minutes of meetings, 11 September 1943
\item \textsuperscript{2} Report of G. Phillips, Child Welfare Officer, 9 April 1942, in A.P.B., General Correspondence, 1949-69, box 8/2778
\end{itemize}
held in the lowest regard. Yet, as with the children who remained on the reserves, opportunities acting upon differing personalities produced, within the confines of a shameful system of institutionalisation, a considerable variety of response. This may be seen in a summary of the extant case-histories of Wiradjuri children removed in this period. Of a total of some 100, thirteen individual files on Wiradjuri children have been preserved in the records. The differing responses of the children may be gauged by abstracting from each file what each of the wards was doing at the time the last entry on the file was made. Generally this was done when the wards reached 18.

George Connolly, born at Brungle in 1932, was sent to several institutions after the Board refused a request by relatives to care for him. Convicted of several crimes, he was sent to Mt. Penang corrective institution. In 1951 he was at Yass. Clem Penrith, born in about 1930, lived at Brungle for several years before committal. He was described as 'hysterical', and possessing 'a very violent temper', and in 1946 was 'under close supervision'. George Bowden, born in 1929 at Cowra, was described by his employer as always to be found, when wanted, 'lying on his bed reading or sleeping'. In 1951 he was at Griffith. Claude Merritt, born at Yass in 1933, after periods at Kinchela and the Catholic institution Boystown, was in Parramatta Mental Hospital in 1954. Amy Duncan, born at Cowra in 1936, described as 'a moronic type of person, with a marked inferiority complex' was at her home town in 1954, pregnant,

1. The second report was that relating to McQuiggen; see above, Ch.4, pp.160-1
homeless, refusing to work, 'liable to steal and neglectful of her children' and threatening to write to the newspapers. Norman Perry, born at Cowra in about 1929, after a promising start at Kinchela, was in jail for theft, committed at Cowra, in 1955. Irene Penrith, born in about 1938, spent a few years at Brungle before being sent to Cootamundra in 1944. After a tragic life of suffering, violence and an unrequited craving for affection, she was found dead at Arncliffe, Sydney, in 1954. Betty Tighe, born at Yass in about 1931, slashed dirty water on furniture, walls and carpet at her situation in the country. In 1959 she was described by the welfare officer at Moree as 'not worth bothering about'. Annie Lyons, born at Narrandera in 1932, threatened her employer with a broom and called her a 'dirty stinking rotten liar'. She antagonised the residents of Cumeroogunga with her 'most foul tongue' and in 1947 was at Narrandera where her aunt was unable to supply her with food because of her own large family. Four children named Goolagong were removed from Gooloogong town in 1946. John, 'a solitary boy', and born in about 1930, returned to Gooloogong in 1948. In 1951 Elsie, born in 1934, dismissed from an apprenticeship for 'incompetence' and 'deceit', was in 1951 about to start another one. Fred Goolagong, born in about 1937, had his name changed to Hughes by the Board. In 1953 he agreed to remain in apprenticeship until he was 18, although he hated dairying.

1. A.W.B., General Correspondence files: George Connolly, 8/2828; Clem Penrith, 8/2825; George Bowden, 8/2781; Claude Merritt, 8/2813; Amy Duncan 8/2819; Norman Perry, 8/2802; Irene Penrith, 8/2978; Betty Tighe, 8/2810; Annie Lyons, 8/2784; John Goolagong (Hughes), 8/2828; Elsie Goolagong, 8/2773; Fred Goolagong, 8/2875
The case of Herbert Goolagong, whose name was also changed to Hughes, affords a view of the Board's lack of understanding of its wards. His first apprenticeship was at Warrawee, Sydney, where his employer expected him to sleep in a shed. The employer's wife was very annoyed at his throwing stones at native birds. He was transferred to Pilliga where he was noted to be very sulky and unresponsive after receiving letters from his brother John. These letters, 'obscene, full of rot, and not calculated to be uplifting to a boy of Hughes' type', urged him to escape to Gooloogong. Herbert absconded, was recaptured, and after a period at Pilliga Aboriginal Station, was sent to another apprenticeship. Soon afterwards he was described as 'very deceitful and untrustworthy'; then he threatened his employer with a knife. In 1951 he returned to Gooloogong. 1

Some six or seven of the thirteen wards described in the Board's files are known to have returned to Wiradjuri country; few, if any, were able to overcome the adverse effects of institutionalisation and apprenticeship. Part of their problem was that they were judged by managers to have failed because of defects in their own personalities, rather than because of shortcomings in policy or administration. According to the records, nine of the thirteen children were thought, at one point or another in their lives before they turned eighteen, to be mentally disturbed. Eight were said to be of subnormal intelligence, and eleven to have been bad or lazy workers.

1. A.W.B., General Correspondence, Herbert Goolagong (Hughes), 8/2801
I intend now to withdraw briefly from the narrative of the later 1930s in order to explore further one of the principal propositions of this study - that the mental parameters of self-estimation amongst the Wiradjuri differed in time and between communities, and that such self-estimations have been as potent a factor in initiating or inhibiting change as the policies of the administration. It is appropriate to do so at this point because it was during the 1930s that the several self-conceptions current among different Wiradjuri groups became more widely differentiated and more explicit. Already it has been indicated that to 1929 the single most important result of Board policy was to encourage a sense of difference or alienation from the whites. Now it is necessary, in order to set these widening perceptions in a theoretical context, to review some of the explanations of cultural change offered by social scientists of the 1930s and later periods.

What distinguished Aboriginal society from that of the whites? Several modern studies have indicated features of Aboriginal society, some of which may be described as survivals of the traditional past or adaptations to the white presence, and all of which enabled Aborigines to remain culturally at some distance from the Europeans. For instance, Brandl demonstrated the philosophical bases of Aboriginal child-rearing patterns, so different from European practices that they were for many years interpreted as parental disinterest.1 Sansom, describing the

1. M. Brandl, 'We are going to teach Aboriginal children: the cultural isolation of non-Aboriginal education in Australia', C.R.E.S. working paper C/WP2, xerox, 1981, pp.24-31
social structure of a Darwin fringe-camp, depicted an informal hostel, occupied by fringe-dwellers, fringe-campers and fringe-clients, in which the dwellers acted as brokers between rural Aborigines and Darwin citizens. He found social processes in the camp to be dictated by an internal dialectic. Even the consumption of alcohol followed a structured pattern by which a 'grog-session' became a jointly experienced progression in which people went through the stages of inebriation together.\(^1\)

Barwick believed that the greatest difference between Aborigines and other working-class Australians lay in their toleration of variant forms of mating relationships, and residence in large composite households.\(^2\) Kitaoji described some cultural features of a northern New South Wales community as a strong mother-child relationship which took precedence over the husband-wife relationship, the closeness of maternal relatives to give support to that relationship, and the instability of the first marriage relationship.\(^3\) In 1982 an anthropologist working amongst the Wiradjuri, particularly those at Cowra, studied fighting behaviour. Like Sansom, she identified important social controls in what appeared at times to casual observers to be anarchy. Although, since the invasion, the contexts and structuring of relationships changed, the mental constructs which had determined the relationships had not

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1. B. Sansom, *The camp at Wallaby Cross*, 1980, pp.7-8, 63-67, 265-6
necessarily done so, but, in some cases, continued to be expressed in a modified or new social context:

Fighting...establishes what is true. It is a public legitimation. Law based on community norms is effective only to the extent that such norms are shared...The Wiradjuri have moral and jural leadership in their elders and these elders are the symbols of community norms which sanction what is publicly acceptable behaviour. They are a symbolic source of legitimacy. Wiradjuri social organisation is a political entity and its legal system is maintained in part through fighting behaviour. Fighting is law in action. It is not a reflection of anarchy.

For the purpose of this discussion it is not necessary to speculate on the origins of such cultural features, nor, perhaps, to indicate further that what the municipal councils saw as the anarchic life of the Wiradjuri fringe camps was governed by common social structures and behavioural patterns. It is clear that both the people living in isolation at the Sandhills at Narrandera, or persecuted by whites at Condobolin, shared many common lifeways which were sometimes unperceived by the whites. It is from such shared lifeways, reinforced by the rejection of the whites which Board policy had encouraged, that at least one Wiradjuri community began to diverge from mainstream attitude and expectation in the 1930s. For while Wiradjuri culture was comparatively uniform throughout the different communities, the historical experience of each differed quite markedly, and it is in this variety of experience that the explanation for the changing self-perceptions must be sought. Many social scientists, to the contrary, have stressed

1. G. Macdonald, 'Fighting behaviour among the Wiradjuri', Staff Seminar Paper, Anthropology Department, University of Sydney, 29 July 1982, xerox, pp.15-16
similarities between communities, either because, in the 1930s, they were unable to discern societal structures beyond the 'chaos' of camp or reserve, or because, in later periods, they underestimated the potential of people to alter their world-view in accordance with changing circumstances.

In the 1930s, most social scientists believed that, if change was to come at all, it must be initiated by the whites. They asked if Aborigines were capable of civilisation, and if miscegenation were allowed to take place, would it be to the detriment of the Anglo-Saxon race. Markus has shown that the most advanced thinking suggested that Aboriginal genes might safely be assimilated, but was uncertain how well Aborigines could adapt culturally to European civilisation.\(^1\) Tindale and Elkin floundered between biological and cultural determinism, uncertain of the effect of an administrative attempt at propelling Aborigines towards Europeanism. Elkin, at any rate, believed that it should be tried.\(^2\)

The debate was underpinned by the assumption that Aborigines in New South Wales, except those of the full descent, lived in a state of cultural anarchy. Wandering children and camp 'brawls' were taken to symbolise chaos. Just as Frazier thought that American Negro urban culture was an 'immoral chaos' brought about by the disintegration of black folk culture under the

2. pp.94-5, Ibid.
impact of urbanisation, Aborigines appeared to Elkin to be living in a cultural vacuum. In 1944, while Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, and Vice-Chairman of the Aborigines Welfare Board (as it had become known), he wrote:

The mixed-blood people, however, have been in the unfortunate position of possessing no social life worth the name. Dotted about in small groups on Reserves and Settlements, on the outskirts of, or in towns, they have not shared in the general community, nor have they any traditional or spontaneous life of their own...In some cases they seek to return to the former [the social, philosophical and religious traditional life] and in others to work out a version of Christianity for themselves, or to follow some simple form of it, and so gain solace. It is pathetic...In the meantime, the almost a-moral type of life that many of the mixed blood live can be attributed to the absence of moral or spiritual purpose and sanction.

Southern Aborigines were held to be trapped between the lost traditional culture and the unobtainable European. The social scientists of the 1930s, failing to observe the social constructs binding the 'anarchic communities', missed not only the underlying cultural unity, but the potential of Aboriginal communities to depart from what was seen to be their inevitable destiny. Many later observers took up the theme of a 'culturally impoverished and weakly organised' society, or in the belief that the traditional culture was of little or no

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2. A.P. Elkin, *Citizenship for the Aborigines*, 1944, p.41
influence, described European models which Aborigines appeared to have imitated.¹

Many modern theorists of social change have offered somewhat deterministic explanations of social change based on the implicit assumption that local conditions prevailing on each camp and reserve were sufficiently uniform to produce predictable attitudes and expectations. For instance, the theory of 'marginal man' was based on the thesis that 'fringe-dwellers' - those on the figurative as well as physical outskirts of Europeanism, showed predictable behavioural patterns which generally included a desire to join the dominant group. Utilising this model, Kerckhoff and McCormick in 1955 reported a large proportion of Chippewa Indian children who chose to identify as European.²


² A.C. Kerckhoff and T.C. McCormick, 'Marginal status and marginal personality', Social forces, 34 (1955-6), 48-55. For an example of the 'marginal man' concept applied to Australian Aborigines see J. Beckett, 'Marginal men, a study of two half-caste Aborigines', Oceania, XXIX/1, (September 1958), 91-108
generalised sociological theory in the 1960s was the 'culture of poverty'. The chief proponent of the theory, Oscar Lewis, believed that poverty amongst certain minority groups had its own modalities and distinctive psychological and social consequences.\(^1\) The culture of poverty, Lewis argued, was not merely an index of deprivation and disorganisation, but a genuine culture in that it provided human beings with a design for living, with a ready-made set of solutions, and so served a significant adaptive function.\(^2\) Some of the features of the culture of poverty were said to be alcoholism, violence, early sexual experience, free unions, abandoned children, matrifocality, present-time orientation, fatalism, 'martyrdom' amongst women, a cult of 'machismo' among men, a high tolerance of psychological pathology, and a hatred of bureaucratic institutions.\(^3\)

White social scientists in describing change among Aborigines have been influenced to a greater or less degree by such over-arching theories of behavioural patterns amongst colonised peoples. For instance, Rowley argued that Aboriginal attitudes conformed to those of rejected racial minorities in other


\(^3\) O. Lewis, introduction to The children of Sanchez, pp.xxvi-xxvii; for an example of the concept of the 'culture of poverty' applied to an American Indian group, see B. James, 'Social-psychological dimensions of Ojibura culture', American anthropologist, 63/4, (August 1961), 721-746
western countries. Kin relationships were sustained, and large households maintained, as a cushion against poverty. Seasonal migration had more to do with the fulfilment of an absolute economic need than a desire to go 'walkabout'.\(^1\) Eckermann, evidently influenced by the 'European model' theory, argued that younger Aborigines at 'Industrial City' in south-east Queensland were predominantly oriented towards the supposed ideals of the wider society. They saw European values much more clearly defined than those of their own group, and over-emphasised their identification with them.\(^2\)

One objection to generalised theories which predict Aboriginal behavioural patterns is that they do not sufficiently allow for the possibility that individuals may choose or prefer certain forms or institutions. For instance, Langton believed that not all features of southern Aboriginal society were caused by economic circumstances. Concepts such as the 'nuclear family' were not absolutes, merely forms of social organisation favoured by some Europeans. A fatherless family was not necessarily 'incomplete'.\(^3\) Matrifocality could be seen as an accepted,

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even desired, form of family life from which men were kept excluded.  

Langton's argument was in one sense an aspect of a wider criticism of theorists who have seen societies as formed and re-formed through internal process. Parker and Kleiner reasoned, in relation to the 'culture of poverty' that the concept relied on a narrowly behaviouristic view of culture. Certain values could be deduced from behavioural responses, but aspirations and attitudes not manifested at the time of observation might not be recognised. To the categories of value-systems which may not be measured we may add, in the context of this discussion, self-perception, mindful that the self-perceptions of people in change of any sort may not be static. Any person possesses numerous frames of reference, and as Wilson argued in relation to the Cooraradale people of Western Australia, there is generally a discrepancy between a person's self-concept (in that it exists at all unrelated to others) and what he or she sees as another's perception of him. Thus he reasoned that a 'nunga' might show 'marginal' symptoms to one person, but not to another.


3. Wilson, op.cit., 1960, p.4
may tolerate a wide variety of perception amongst its members. Reay held that incompatible goals may be pursued, conflicting values held, without a group approaching disequilibrium, if the culture is adequately structured.¹

It can therefore be argued that Kerckhoff and McCormick's findings about the European orientation of the Chippewa children was faulty in that the researchers did not measure the potential of the children to alter their perceptions quickly and radically if the circumstances changed. Amongst the Wiradjuri children such changes did occur. A sociological survey carried out amongst the state wards in service in white homes in the 1920s might well have described a generation won for the whites: in the 1970s, in the changed conditions of acceptance of, or pride in, Aboriginality, some of the same ex-wards looked upon themselves as the sheet anchors of the older Aboriginal values. Similarly, it is probable that the European orientation described by Eckermann at 'Industrial City' represented only one of several self-perceptions current at the time, which were in turn superseded through changing circumstances months or years later. We may contrast the low self-esteem at 'Industrial City' with the apparent confidence and responsibility of the Wiradjuri at the Narrandera Sandhills. It is probable that the latter people, comparatively untouched by the negative associations of Aboriginality implicit in Board policy, managed the settlement without outside interference because they felt capable of doing so. In accounting for cultural change historians, as well as

¹. M. Reay, 'Native thought in rural New South Wales', Oceania, XX/2, (December 1949), 89-118, p.112
social scientists, must consider such intangible factors as aspiration, self-perception and memories of past experience. The potential for a variety of response to changing circumstances must be allowed for. More perceptive and less prescriptive theories of social change have in fact allowed for the influence of the historical past and the changing present.

Pitt-Rivers' preconditions for a given cultural state, formulated in 1927, were the interactions between the heritage of cultural forms, the cultural 'accessories' and the cultural potential of men and women.¹ In the 1970s Turner, in relation to Groote Eylandt Aborigines, reasoned that cultural change took place when traditional practices and beliefs were at variance with new wants and needs, and that, conversely, change did not take place when new shared experiences did not throw doubt on existing cultural categories.² Berndt referred to the Aboriginalisation of certain aspects of white Australian culture and society, containing elements primarily European in origin, but arranged in particular and different ways.³

This brief survey has attempted to show that a number of communities which share a fairly homogeneous culture may still differ in attitude and perception both simultaneously and over time. Not all Wiradjuri necessarily saw the inevitable destiny of Aborigines in the Board's terms of mergence with the whites,

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1. G.E. Pitt Rivers, The clash of culture and the contact of races, 1927, p.3
nor can it be assumed that those who did so in the 1930s still did so in the 1940s. The alternative lay not in the pursuit of another irreversible destiny, but, according to local experience and personality, the diversification of attitude, expectation and perception from the starting-point that Aborigines were different from white people. For that, indeed, was the lesson which the Wiradjuri had learned from the whites since 1909. The dispersal policy of the first decades and the concentration policy of the 1930s, though contradictory, acted to reinforce Wiradjuri homogeneity. No incentive was offered to join the white culture. Yet, as we shall see, from this premise of Aboriginal separateness were drawn two distinct modes of thought, and, later, codes of behaviour. Both were implicit in the internalised codes of culture and thought which isolation from white people had reinforced. Both were expressed in the 1930s in different Wiradjuri reserves.

From the position that Aborigines were different from white people was drawn the conclusion, by Aborigines, that they did not need to be so. One of the most ardent supporters of this view, which perhaps had the support of most Aborigines aware of the discussion, was Warangesda-raised William Ferguson. He looked to the ultimate assimilation of Aborigines into the white race, with the rights and status of full citizenship.¹ Ferguson wanted the Board abolished, so that Aborigines would be treated like other people. The reserves should eventually be

¹. W. Ferguson, President of Aborigines Progressive Association, speech reported in Dubbo Dispatch, 28 March 1941, clipping in Elkin collection
closed when people were provided with houses in towns, or with farms. One of the most explicit claims that the assimilation of Aborigines into the white community was possible, even desirable, was made by Ferguson and Jack Patten in the pamphlet, 'Aborigines claim citizens' rights', in 1942. It was stated that Aborigines were the original owners of the land, and that protectionist policies were killing them as surely as poisoned flour. Yet the conclusion drawn was not only that Aborigines were denied justice, but also that Aborigines in northern Australia were being kept 'uncivilized', when they were eager and willing to learn. The implication was that Aborigines should be allowed to disperse into the white community:

Professor Archie Watson, of Adelaide University, has explained to you that Aborigines can be absorbed into the white race within three generations, without any fear of 'throw-back'. This proves that the Australian Aboriginal is somewhat similar to yourselves, as regards inter-marriage and inter-breeding. We ask you to study this question and to change your whole attitude towards us, to a more enlightened one.

Oral history cannot reach to the period to find out what the Wiradjuri generally thought of these proposals, though the attitudes of many old people suggest that they were sympathetic.

1. Ferguson to Elkin, 7 April 1941; Ferguson to M. Sawtell, (Board Member), 27 March 1941, Elkin collection

to them. There might have seemed no alternative to people whose children were arbitrarily removed from them, who were discriminated against in government policy, or employment, who knew what life on a managed reserve could be like, or who, if town camp-dwellers, knew that they could be arrested at any time of suspicion of being Aboriginal. The security which the Brungle residents had sought in the continuation of reserve life had long been swept away. To many people of the 1930s it probably seemed that the future lay in an Australian community, not an Aboriginal. A scrap of evidence, which survived by chance in the parliamentary report on the Aborigines Protection Board in 1938, suggests that many of the Hollywood residents, at least, considered themselves good enough to be assimilated. From the deteriorating station, in 1937, James Carroll wrote to the Aborigines Progressive Association:

It would be far better if the A.P. Board was to pay out the coloured women their endowment in cash rather than sit back on their income, as we are not uncivilised, we are nearly white; we are quadroons and octaroons, so you can see how we are situated.

Yet from the same position also was drawn a totally different conclusion. The first manifestation of a more aggressive

1. It is difficult to establish what people thought in the 1930s, as opposed to what they now think they should have thought. Since the general political climate among Wiradjuri today is anti-assimilationist, the drift would be expected to be away from Ferguson's position; some older men, such as Paul Coe Snr, in the late 1970s, still appeared to favour, at least, a harmonious mingling of races

2. See above, Ch.3, p.90

3. J. Carroll to A.P.A., 25 November 1937, presented by witness W. Ferguson, Select committee..., p.54
self-perception in Wiradjuri country, and perhaps in New South Wales, became apparent at Cowra in the early 1940s. The Aborigines of the district had long been regarded as a strong community. An 'all-black' football team flourished for many years, whose victories over white teams are still remembered enthusiastically by former players.¹ The first official notice of the changing perceptions of the Cowra Aborigines was made by the Chief Inspector of the Board, A.W. Lipscombe, who remarked in 1940 that the residents gave the impression of 'wanting all the benefits they can obtain but are not prepared to give service in return.'² In March of the following year, the Erambie manager reported that the men on the whole refused to work for rations. They objected to the principle of being asked to work without pay.³ A month later Lipscombe observed that the Erambie people 'gave the impression of being much closer in their attitudes and outlook to the whole community than the Aborigines of other stations'. They demanded equal rights and privileges and constantly stressed their equality with the white community.⁴ Reports on 'the Cowra problem' began to arrive regularly at the Board's headquarters, and the

1. For instance, recorded conversations Frank Broughton, Yass, 3 April 1979, Sam Kennedy, Cowra, 15 April 1979
2. Report on Erambie by A.W. Lipscombe, 7 June 1940, Station managers' reports, box 3K/96509, State Archives
3. J.L. Foster, Report, 5 March 1941, ibid.
Senior Manager in April 1942, wrote that the Erambie Aborigines appeared to be capable of managing their own affairs.  

The officials missed a point or two – the Erambie people were in one sense less like white people than other Aborigines – but they had correctly picked the central characteristic of Erambie as an aggressive group identity. Unlike the Sydney Aborigines, whose radicalism was also based on their perception of what was possible, it is probable that some Erambie residents would not only have claimed former ownership of the land, but continuing ownership. Aborigines themselves, they believed, should continue as a separate element of Australian society.

It may be reasonably objected that Carroll and some of the Sydney radicals, would, if pressed, have preferred up-graded reserves to town housing, although Ferguson told Elkin in 1941 that his principal objection to the closure of reserves was that it was ‘criminal to push them off reserves to become a further menace to society by hanging around towns’. Alternatively, it may appear that too much has been construed from the comments of officials at Cowra where employment, due to war-time conditions, suddenly was becoming freely available. Yet the distinction is an important one, because it reflects a fundamental polarity between younger and older Wiradjuri today, and in the wider Aboriginal community. Moreover, the suggestion that a different, as well as a more aggressive, self-perception

2. Ferguson to Elkin, 7 April 1941, Elkin collection
emerged at Cowra in the early 1940s is reinforced by the fact of Erambie's physical difference to the other stations and reserves. In 1939 the station contained over 200 people, which, together with the residents of the nearby 'Bagtown', and several riverside camps, probably brought the total Aboriginal population to over 300. The population was not only the largest in Wiradjuri country, but the most diverse. A surviving list of residents of 1939 contains names of people whose family orientations included the towns of Yass, Brungle, Hillston, Darlington Point and Condobolin.1 A photograph of the station residents taken in the mid-1930s shows something of the diversity of age and dress.2

The reason why a strengthened concept of Aboriginality became apparent at Cowra in the early 1940s is not clear. It is too simple to suggest that it grew out of the humiliating experiences of the Depression, or that high wages produced independence of spirit.3 It is more probable that the

1. There were twenty 'red huts' at Erambie which the manager estimated in a report of 18 May 1939 to have contained an average of ten people each; Station Manager's reports, box 3K/96509; evidence re 'Bagtown', recorded conversation Gordon Simpson, Cowra, 14 August 1979; the station list of residents is dated 19 October 1938 and is also in box 3K/96509


3. A.P. Elkin, on the contrary, believed that the Depression crushed the spirit of Aborigines, so that they 'retreated into themselves': Report from the joint committee of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly upon Aboriginal welfare, 13 September 1967, II, Minutes of evidence, p.694. The argument for a connection between high wages and independence was put by R. Castle and J. Hagan in 'Seasonal work and Aboriginal employment in two rural areas of New South Wales, 1921-78', xerox, 1981, p.28
potential for a concept which looked to a separate Aboriginal existence was one which was always potential, but found positive expression only when, as Langton remarked of the 1960s, the relaxation of certain restrictions allowed latent desires for other freedoms to flourish.¹ In the late 1930s, the relaxation in the policy of concentration perhaps allowed the Erambie community to express its long-felt discontent at having to work for rations alone. An expression of self identity, common enough among individuals, became explicit as a community statement amongst the very large, stable and diversified population of Cowra. Like the proposals of the Sydney radicals, this self-concept cannot be said to have originated at a particular time and place, but it became evident at Cowra at this time. It became stronger in the 1950s, strengthened, it will be argued, by heavy-handed managerial rule.² The gulf between the two positions steadily widened, until in the 1970s the 'Cowra' view began to supersede the 'Sydney' view among Aborigines, and became in many areas the dominant intellectual force.

Thus two separate strands of Aboriginal thought may be detected in this period, which the events of the 1930s helped to make more explicit. Nor may these two be said to be the only ones. There is no evidence as to the views of Aborigines living in the comparative tranquility of the Sandhills but the history of the Narrandera people in the 1960s suggests that they were different

¹ Langton, op.cit., 1981, p.19
² See below, Ch.6, pp.252-5
again. We are again reminded of the inadequacy of cultural models which take insufficient account, not only of the possibility which exists for changing self-perceptions, (either simultaneously or in response to changing conditions), but which ignore the latent self- and world-perceptions which may be expressed if the perceptions of what is possible change. The lifeways of the people at Hollywood and Coora were almost identical, yet the aspirations and self-perceptions of the two communities differed to the extent described. The potential for these ideas lay dormant throughout Wiradjuri country in the 1920s and found little expression because they were bounded by what was perceived to be possible. By the end of the Depression the Wiradjuri were beginning to formulate some new ideas of the future of Aborigines.

Yet at the same time the Board was coming to its own conclusion that the assimilation of Aborigines into the white community ought to be stepped up. During the 1930s there had been calls from a number of groups of concerned white people for commonwealth-led reforms of Aboriginal administration. Although, as shown above, there was scientific dispute as to whether assimilation was biologically and culturally possible,

1. See below, Ch.7, pp.308-10

2. The suggestions of such groups as the Australian Federation of Women Voters and the Aborigines Friends Association included setting up a Federal department of Aboriginal Affairs, and the granting of financial aid to the states for Aboriginal projects; see Commonwealth Archives; Correspondence files of Commonwealth and State, 1939-50, Department of Interior No.33/4884. I thank Carla Hankins for drawing my attention to this file.
the Board had of course been pursuing this goal since at least 1900, and never more energetically than in the decade in which the debate was most lively. For the New South Wales authorities it was a matter of expediency. At the conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal authorities in 1937, the Board Secretary Pettitt explained:

The crux of the problem is the adoption of some means of merging the half-castes into the general community. Our experience has been that when these people are put to it to paddle their own canoe they have not made much of a success of it. They leave the reserves and generally reside on the outskirts of some town or village and there they are very apt to become a reproach to the neighbourhood.

The conference resolved that 'the destiny of the natives of Aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth', and recommended that 'all efforts be directed towards that end'. That resolution merely glossed over what had been the basic problem of the Board in enforcing its dispersal policy: it had been unable to persuade Aborigines to want to join the white community.

Pettitt was looking for such inducements. In September 1940 he put some concrete proposals to the Board. He began by explaining that the system which had been operating for many years had had the effect of making the Aborigines institutionalised. Supplies had been made available to them

2. p.1, ibid.
'without any exertion on their part'. They were not being called upon to think or shift for themselves. He presented a 7-point program: to inculcate the habit of self-help, to keep Aborigines occupied, to deal with youth, to apprentice outstanding talent, to select suitable families for removal from stations into the white community, to find employment for people away from the reserves, and to encourage local white people to become interested in Aboriginal matters.\(^1\) There was nothing particularly new about the proposals except for the plan to remove families into towns. In principle, town-housing would put an end to 'fringe-dwelling'. The 'carrot' of a modern house would reinforce the 'stick' of the closure of a reserve.

Pettitt's plan was based on the Unemployed Trust Act of 1934, which allowed men to borrow funds towards cottages on quarter-acre blocks. That Act naturally assumed that people wanted to move from the unemployment camps into the towns. Herein lay a weakness as yet unperceived by Pettitt, who apparently imagined the analogy to be exact. The consequences of his helpful-sounding proposal were indeed far-reaching, because, in fact, many Aborigines did not want to leave reserves, even if modern town houses were offered. The housing program came to be the lynchpin of the forced assimilation policy of the 1950s and 1960s. Far from the inducement which Pettitt believed it would be, the rehousing policy became, in many cases, yet another weapon of dispersal. In effect, the re-housing scheme provided the means to solve the hitherto

\(^1\) A.W.B., Minutes of meetings, 3 September 1940
intractable problem of where to put people expelled from reserves.

In legislation and executive action there was no doubt that in the early 1940s the Board was returning to its former policy of dispersal, under the new name of assimilation. The 1940 amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act added the assimilation of Aborigines to the purposes which the Board was to pursue.¹ In July 1942 the Board wrote to managers expressing its concern at the number of people of 'lighter caste' who were living on reserves. It expressed the hope that eventually all of them would be persuaded to live in the general community. In the meantime, while it was not intended to remove them from the reserves, managers were directed not to allow families who left the reserves to return.² A month later the police in country centres where no manager was present were given authority to prevent anyone from living on a reserve who might cause 'discomfort or inconvenience'.³ An amendment to the Act in 1943 empowered the Board to buy land for Aborigines, away from the reserves, for the erection of houses.⁴ The rationale for the policy was the old cliche that southern Aborigines were caught between two worlds, and that they should, for their own good, be led towards the European civilisation.

¹. Amendment No.12 of 1940, No.3(b)(i). Also in this amendment the name of the Aborigines Protection Board was changed to the Aborigines Welfare Board

². A.W.B., Minutes of meetings, 21 July 1942

³. 25 August 1942, 28 September 1942, ibid.

⁴. Amendment No.13 of 1943, No.3(a)
The Annual report of 1944 spelt out the terms under which the Wiradjuri people would live for the next two decades:

When it is considered that 95% of the so-called aborigines in New South Wales are half and light castes, whose former social fabric has been torn asunder by the onrush of western civilization, and who if left alone, would have neither the traditional background of the aboriginal way of life nor the culture of the white man to guide them, the need for this [assimilation] policy should be abundantly clear.

The era of concentration was at an end. While the Board geared up for a second phase of the dispersal policy, the Wiradjuri gradually were emerging from the camps where they had endured the worst of the Depression. Sam Kennedy, who had found work amongst white men in the relief gangs, became a contract lucerne cutter, employing eight men, near Forbes. The Perry family left Cowra for Sydney, where Henry Perry found work. Locky Ingram, reared at Warangesda, resumed itinerant shearing, and in the off-season worked as a labourer for the Cowra council. Doug Williams left his family at Hollywood to work on the Wyangala dam project. At Parkes, Tommy Lyons worked on a pick and shovel team, then after an argument with the foreman, went gold digging, and in about 1938 joined his father at the Sandhills. Paddy Naden and Frank Broughton worked on the extension of the railway line from Condobolin to Broken Hill. Ossie Ingram, fourteen years of age, got his first job at Booberoi Station, near Euabalong, and in about 1936, following a general population drift from Euabalong, went to the Sandhills. Paul Coe undertook local droving trips in the Cowra district. At Brungle, Alec Phillips applied to the Board for a house away

1. A.W.B., Annual report, 1947-8, p.3
from the reserve. His son Cyril got his first job as a dairy assistant at a farm near the station. Mary Lyons lived at the Sandhills, and bore three children beside the river. Hetty Hamilton followed, with the rest of her family, her father's employment. For eighteen years she lived in a tin shed at Murrami, near Darlington Point; when her father's employer moved to Echuca, the family shifted to Cumeroogunga. In the late 1930s the family returned to Darlington Point, where her father worked at Kooba Station. At Rye Park, Henry Wedge, who had leased one of the few remaining farming grants to a white man, had his lease revoked under circumstances which did the Board no credit. He went to live at Goolooong.2

1. Recorded conversation Sam Kennedy, Cowra, 15 April 1979; Mum Shirl and Bobbi Sykes, op.cit., p.17; recorded conversation Locky Ingram, Sydney, 6 June 1979; recorded conversation Matilda Williams, Canberra, 16 October 1979; conversation Tommy Lyons, Narrandera, 16 May 1980; conversation Paddy Naden, Condobolin, 5 November 1980; conversation Frank Broughton, Yass, 3 April 1979; recorded conversation Ossie Ingram, Euabalong, 19 September 1980; recorded conversation Paul Coe, Cowra, 18 May 1979; A.W.B., Minutes, 26 June 1940 (re Alec Phillips); recorded conversation Cyril Phillips, Brungle, 27 February 1980; conversation Mary Lyons, Narrandera, 23 September 1980; conversation Mrs Hetty Charles, Griffith, 17 May 1980

2. According to the Board's Minutes, the lease fell vacant due to the Board's twice failing to present a submission on behalf of Wedge or his relatives. Its oversight, if such it was, was compounded by the Secretary's informing the Board that no Aborigines appeared to be interested in the lease; yet a week earlier Mrs Sophie Wedge had written to the Board claiming ownership. So passed out of Aboriginal possession what appears to have been the last surviving Aboriginal farm grant in Wiradjuri country. A.W.B., General Correspondence, box 8/2826; Minutes of meetings, 15 May 1940
Almost everyone left behind them at the reserves immediate family or kinfolk. It was to the reserves that they returned when each task was done, and as employment became harder to find after the Second World War, it was the reserves which offered security against the European world. From the early 1940s, that security was again under assault.
Chapter Six
Community life
1943 - 1955

The Second World War gave the Wiradjuri for the first time in many years an opportunity for independence. Shortage of labour and high wages allowed people who wished to leave the reserves to do so, briefly, on their own terms. The new policies of the Board were postponed. There were sudden opportunities for new experiences and life-styles which the post-war contraction of labour did not completely stop. This chapter reviews the new possibilities of the period and their effect upon Wiradjuri perceptions. After a consideration of war-time labour conditions, I discuss two areas of Wiradjuri employment which rose to importance in the period, the picking industry and the skilled professions of droving and shearing. The varieties of living conditions after the war - the growth of the Aboriginal population in Griffith and Leeton, the rather dispiriting life of the old reserves like Brungle and Yass, and daily life on the managed Erambie station are then described. I conclude that by 1955 the new opportunities had further diversified Wiradjuri self-perceptions. The influence of the Aboriginal assimilationists declined, but the divergence already noticed between the isolationism of such communities as the Sandhills, and the increasingly aggressive self-identity which emerged at Erambie, grew wider.

The employment boom during the Second World War gave the Wiradjuri the opportunity of constant employment for all those
who desired it. The Board stated in 1944 that conditions had never been so good in both wages and opportunity. A few men served in the armed forces, but it is difficult to estimate the exact number. In 1955 the Area Welfare Officers were asked to submit the names of Aboriginal ex-servicemen. Ten names were submitted from Wiradjuri country, but all were men living on reserves. The names of at least two men, from Narrandera, were omitted; probably there were several others living away from the official reserves.

Of the two Narrandera soldiers, Tommy Lyons and Cecil Clayton, only one survived in 1980. He recalled that at 5s.6d. per day, with 1s. per day battle zone allowance, he earned much better pay than he could have in Australia. Many more Aborigines were employed through the Allied Works Council in the Civil Constructional Corps and the Land Army. Ossie Ingram, with several other men at the Sandhills, worked at the construction of the Narrandera military airfield. At Cowra, the industrial alcohol works, sited only a few hundred metres from

1. A.W.B., Annual report, 1943-4, p.11
2. Area Welfare Officer, Leeton District, Report, 1955, A.W.B., General Correspondence, box 8/2848. Area Welfare Officers were appointed by the Board in 1949 to supervise regional administration. The Leeton officer supervised most of Wiradjuri country
3. Conversation Tommy Lyons, Narrandera, 16 May 1980, 8 July 1980; for an account of Aboriginal experiences in the armed services in the Northern Territory in this period see R. Hall, 'Aborigines, the army and the Second World War in northern Australia', Aboriginal history, 4/1-2, (1980) 73-95
4. Recorded conversation Ossie Ingram, Narrandera, 19 October 1980
Erambie, gave many men an opportunity to earn very high wages. For instance, Frank Broughton worked at the plant in 1943-4. Then for the remainder of the war he was employed at an iron mine near Cowra, where the pay was good and transport provided by the mine proprietor. After the war he helped demolish the nearby Italian and Japanese prison camps. Sam Kennedy worked in 'classified' employment, which meant that he was not allowed to enlist in the armed services. He spent the war working for the Central West County Electricity Board, which included fitting-out factories for war-time production. He was called out to restore the lighting after the Japanese prison escape at Cowra in August 1944, and after the war he was promoted to leading hand linesman. Mrs Val Simpson, with her parents, worked at the ammunition factory at Orange.

The years 1943-4 were the peak years of Wiradjuri employment. At Cowra in 1943, according to the Board, the employment rate was 100%. At Brungle, in January 1943, four able-bodied men out of ten were in full-time employment; in April, the manager reported that the general demand for labour was good and that

1. According to the Board's Inspector Mrs English, Cowra men could earn up to £15 per week at the plant, 'The problem of Cowra', 17 December 1942, Station Managers' Reports, box 3K/96509
2. Recorded conversation Frank Broughton, Yass, 3 April 1979
3. Recorded conversation Sam Kennedy, Cowra, 15 April 1979
4. Recorded conversation Val Simpson, Cowra, 15 April 1979
5. A.W.B., Annual report, 1943-4, p.12
the boys were making camouflage netting. In November the manager compared himself to a labour bureau, because he received so many requests for labour from nearby stations. All males were employed at 15s. per week. In June 1944 he reported that all people were in work, as they were still, despite the drought, in January 1945.

The demand for labour began to taper off in mid-1945. By 1948, only 11 men at Erambie out of twenty-one were in irregular unskilled work, even though the local manager telephoned local farmers. Gradually Wiradjuri men found themselves discharged and unable to obtain new positions. Unemployment probably fell first on Aborigines who in the absence of white servicemen had occupied skilled or semi-skilled positions. For instance, Vincent Bolger, born at Yass in 1929, secured his first job in the town in a printing works, in 1944. The previous operator was demobilised, returned to Yass, and in 1946 Bolger was sacked. For a time he collected 'dead' wool from sheep carcasses at Yass, then later in 1946 he went to Cowra and worked at the Edgell vegetable processing plant. The next year he found work as a droving off-sider, and in about 1948 he went

1. Brungle Manager's monthly reports, January, April, November, 1944, Station Managers' Reports, box 3K/96508
2. June 1944, January 1945, ibid.
to Brungle, where he found employment at a nearby station. He held the job there for twelve years.¹

As work became harder to find, Wiradjuri men in search of semi-skilled work, like sleeper cutting, or unskilled work, like burrow-ripping and weed-chipping, had to travel to find it. Euabalong, which had a population of fifty-seven in 1954, became a labour reservoir for at least one large station in the area.² Work was scarce at Hillston. Many Aborigines evidently left the town in the mid 1950s, for there were only a few families living there by the end of the decade.³ One which remained was the family of Bill Charles, who had moved from Griffith partly in search of shearing work. There was less opportunity for other work. Work was available at Condobolin for the semi-skilled and unskilled, such as fencing and scrub-cutting, but the Aboriginal population was already large enough to make it permanent despite the declining economic conditions. In 1953 the Board reported that employment opportunities at Cowra had gradually deteriorated.⁴ With the characteristic propensity of the oppressor to blame the victim for social ills, it noted that it was increasingly difficult to find employment for 'mediocre' workers.⁵ The manager of the Edgell factory at Cowra declared in 1950 that not one Aborigine had proved worthy

¹ Recorded conversation Vincent Bolger, 27 February 1980
² Beckett, op.cit., 1958, p.194
³ Conversation Bill Charles, Griffith, 8 May 1980
⁴ A.W.B., Annual report, 1952-3, p.10
⁵ 1951-2, p.8, ibid.
of permanent employment since 1943. The records clearly show that Board policy had contributed to the decline of employment opportunities. The closure of reserves implied by the assimilation policy meant in practice the resumption of the previous policy of *laissez-faire* on stations out of the public eye. At Brungle the farm fell to ruin. In 1949 the *Sunday Sun* claimed that 370 acres of good land had not been touched for four years, because the Board had removed all the machinery and water-pumping equipment. The medical treatment-room was used to store fencing supplies until permission was granted to carry out repairs. The Aboriginal handyman, the only Aborigine employed on the station, stated that in 1948 a 1000 bale lucerne crop had been lost because he had not been able to obtain permission to harvest it.

The exact population changes are not easy to assess because the figures published in the *Annual reports* bore no relation to reality. For example, in about 1954 Area Welfare Officer Lambert provided the Board with population figures for individual reserves which were quite unlike those which it published for that year:

1. Edgell to F. Cahill M.L.A., 3 April 1950, General Correspondence, box 8/2809
2. *Sunday Sun*, 8 May 1949
The discrepancy between the two totals is startling, particularly since the reports of the Area Welfare Officers were the Board's principal source of information. The danger of relying on official statistics alone in any discussion relating to Aboriginal history is illustrated afresh. Even the general heading of reserve populations was inaccurate, because both the Gooloogong and Darlington Point reserves legally existed in 1955. More surprising still was that Lambert also provided figures for other areas of Aboriginal population, which were totally omitted from the Annual report of 1954-5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Board's total 'reserve dwellers'</th>
<th>Lambert's total 'reserve dwellers'</th>
<th>Lambert's total Aborigines, inc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Euabalong</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillston</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rye Park</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gooloogong</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith</td>
<td>130</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gundagai</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumut</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junee</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cootamundra</td>
<td>57 (girls home)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canowindra</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrandera</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeton</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board's total 'reserve dwellers'</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>492</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambert's total Aborigines, inc.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darlington Point, 1953, excl.</td>
<td>1027</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Darlington Point was omitted in both enumerations, though 71 were listed in the Annual report of 1953-4, p.15.
The total number of Aborigines, using all Lambert's figures except that for the Cootamundra girls home, and including the 1953 figure at Darlington Point, is 1027. The clear implication of the Board's public figures was that only Aborigines living on the official reserves need be considered by those interested in the work of the Board. The presentation was not only dishonest, but misleading, since the majority of Aborigines at Narrandera, and almost all those at Griffith and Leeton, lived in solely Aboriginal areas, and could not by the most optimistic definition be considered assimilated.

Irrespective of the discrepancies, the most important demographic changes in this period were the growing Aboriginal populations in Griffith and Leeton in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. The increase partially answered the needs of the picking and canning industries which, at several times of the year, needed large numbers of unskilled labourers. One of the first people to occupy the site at Griffith was Mrs Tilly Carberry. She was born at Erambie in 1926, and, like many people born at Cowra in the 1920s, her parents were born elsewhere in Wiradjuri country. She married a man named Bloomfield, who was born at Darlington Point. In about 1942 the couple moved from Cowra to Darlington Point; in about 1948, floods caused them to abandon their home. With another couple, they moved to Griffith. They camped at a site 3 km. west of the town beside an irrigation canal.\(^1\) The population increased

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1. Recorded conversation Tilly Carberry, Three Ways (Griffith), 12 June 1980
rapidly, at first by what Monk called a 'chain migration' process from Cowra. In the 1950s, other Aborigines came from Brungle and Condobolin. Seasonal workers usually camped at particular sites about the town - the Condobolin people, for instance, at 'Condo Road', a laneway a few kilometres south of the town. Many of those who remained settled on a marshy area near the Bloomfield's camp which became known as 'Frogs Hollow'. Mr Bert Grant, born at Condobolin, recalled that there were four or five families at Frogs Hollow in the early 1950s. They were situated 50 or 100 m. apart, for this, he said, was how Aboriginal families undisturbed by officials liked to live.

The reaction by the whites to such camps was predictable. In 1948 a deputation visited the Board's head office to object to the Aborigines' 'indiscriminate camping'. Spokesmen claimed that Aborigines simply camped on a road, and where one went, others followed. It seemed to the Aborigines a natural right. Soon a camp developed, and they had to be shifted. The children picked or stole fruit, played round, or ran wild while their parents worked. Weak-minded older girls were sexually

2. Conversation Bert Grant, Canberra, 16 June 1982
3. ibid.
exploited. It was conceded that the young men worked very well in the canneries, but by forty they were no use.¹

The gist of the protest was that Aborigines, though economically necessary to the Griffith whites, could not be adequately controlled by the council. The Aborigines needed a proper place to live. Yet, as the Superintendent pointed out to Board members in 1948, it could not build reserves every time there were complaints, or there would not be any assimilation.² The Board procrastinated, and the protests continued, although two sites were investigated in 1950.³ In 1953, another deputation visited Head Office to complain that in view of the tremendous influx of Aborigines into the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, their living conditions were a disgrace and a reflection on the lack of activity by the Board.⁴ Ideologically, legally and financially unwilling to improve reserve conditions except on those which could not be closed, the Board was again the subject of public criticism. To save face, the Board adopted the same solution it had chosen at Yass in the early 1930s: in the face of public pressure, and in defiance of its stated aims,

¹ Deputation to W. Baddely, Chief Secretary, 15 June 1948, evidence Messrs. Harris, Waters, Eticknap M.L.A., King; General Correspondence, box 8/2776
² Superintendent, A.W.B., to Chairman, discussion paper, 'Social conditions amongst Aborigines generally, necessity for increased welfare activity', 9 July 1948, p.1
³ A.W.B., Minutes of meetings, 17 January 1950
⁴ Deputation from Griffith and Dubbo, n.d., 1953, General Correspondence, box 8/2776
it conceded that another reserve would have to be supported. Six houses in the police paddock at Darlington Point (which had in turn been erected to house people displaced after Warangesda had been closed) were moved to the Bloomfield's first camp, known as Three Ways, across the channel from Frogs Hollow.\(^1\) Mr Bert Grant dated the decline of Aboriginal life at Griffith from this point. The erection of the houses, and pressure on Aborigines to live close to each other at Three Ways, ended the spacious living patterns at Frogs Hollow, although people continued to live there for another decade. Community life declined, recalled Grant, until by the 1960s he was 'burying one person per week' from the effects of alcohol.\(^2\)

At the same time, and for the same reason that well-paid unskilled work was generally available, an Aboriginal community grew at Wattle Hill, a small rise near a garbage-tip, 3 km. south-west of Leeton. Mr Lindsay Grant moved from Cowra to Leeton after the Depression. His family lived at various camps about the town and worked at the canneries throughout the war. In about 1947 he moved to Wattle Hill, where he joined many Aborigines more recently arrived at Leeton.\(^3\) These people included Ossie Ingram, who arrived at Leeton in about 1946. He worked in the canneries for two years and in the off-season in

\(^1\) Recorded conversation Tilly Carberry
\(^2\) Conversation Bert Grant
\(^3\) Conversation Lindsay Grant, Canberra, 5 July 1982
the rice-fields. Many young women, such as Mary Lyons of Narrandera came to live at Wattle Hill in the 1940s and 1950s.

The Leeton council, like that of Griffith, evidently came to the conclusion that the Aborigines employed in local industries should all live in one place. In the early 1950s it laid out the living areas of Wattle Hill and installed taps. Families lived closely together and, according to Lindsay Grant, feuds were common. Nevertheless Leeton life had distinct advantages. Work was plentiful. Though not welcome in the town, Aborigines who lived on Wattle Hill were left alone by the Board and the council until later in the 1950s. Bent or broken cans of vegetables and fruit in the nearby tip were for the taking and children were seldom hungry. Mrs Iris Clayton, who spent much of her childhood at Wattle Hill, confirmed the recollections of Lindsay Grant. She remembered a community of some 100 people, mostly from Wiradjuri regions, but some from the west. Life was happy on the hill, although it was a different matter in town. She went to Leeton town only on 'pictures nights' and encountered a good deal of racial

1. Recorded conversation Ossie Ingram, Narrandera, 19 October 1980
2. Conversation Mary Lyons, Narrandera, 23 September 1980
3. Conversation Lindsay Grant
prejudice at the local primary school. All Aboriginal children learned to fight well.¹

For the itinerant pickers too, life was very different from that on the managed reserves. At Brungle, families went to Young to pick cherries in late October. It paid poorly, according to the Brungle manager, at £3.10s. per week. People then travelled to Griffith for the apricot harvest and weed chipping at £1 per day. In January came a fortnight of pear picking, followed by prune and peach picking in February. Grapes were picked in March and May and tomatoes until the first frosts. Some people would now return to Brungle, while others remained at Griffith for carrots, parsnips and spring peas. During winter the Brungle population was greatest. Those who did not follow the westward cycle might follow the other traditional orientation of Brungle people, and pick peas and beans on the south coast, where at least one Brungle man had a contract. The third alternative for Brungle residents was to remain working in the district, which the manager estimated in 1947 could support the employment of forty people full time. Only the last group was classified as permanently resident at the station.²

Picking was hard work and paid by the piece. Pickers camped in tents or wagonettes, and in some areas, such as Young, in tin

1. Recorded conversation Iris Clayton, Canberra, 20 April 1980. In 1957, at a time when council pressure was increasing upon the Aborigines to leave Wattle Hill, Iris Clayton and her brothers and sisters were removed from their mother and declared state wards; see below, Ch.8, p.330-1

2. Manager, Brungle Station, monthly reports, November, December 1947, Station Managers' Reports, box 3K/96508
huts built by orchard owners. The description of south coast picking teams as predominantly unreliable and given to drinking is too harsh, and relies too heavily on European stereotypes of Aboriginal workers. Evidence collected from some Wiradjuri ex-pickers suggests that many people worked hard, drank little, and that some were prized employees. For example, Clem Penrith was employed during the war as a 'classified' timber-worker at Tumbarumba. After the war he took his family for several years on the seasonal picking cycle. Mrs Emma Penrith stated that in one year the family worked from Brungie to Oberon for a six-month period, in which every day, including Sundays, was worked. The family rose at 5 a.m. and worked from sun-up to 6 p.m. At night Mrs Penrith did the family washing and prepared meals for the following day. With the proceeds the Penriths were able to buy a truck.

In addition to the high wages paid to efficient piece-workers, fruit-picking offered considerable attractions to those who wished to avoid the managerial rule at Brungie and Erramie, or wanted to see friends or kinfolk. One man, Dennis Charles, worked as a stable hand at Darlington Point. In about 1952 he was offered a jockey's apprenticeship in Sydney. Instead he chose to go with the 'old people' fruit-picking. He recalled


2. Recorded conversation Emma Penrith, Griffith, 18 September 1980
nostalgically the happy times remembering particularly the wet-cell battery-powered radio which played music as the horse-drawn wagonette took the pickers to new areas. Several young people ran away from Cowra for adventure, or to avoid school. In about 1959, May Collett, aged fourteen, left Erambie and her schooling and went to Young to pick cherries. She knew that there she would be safe from discovery. She enjoyed the life, met an Aborigine whom she later married, and did not return to Erambie for several years. Other people who followed the seasonal cycle enjoyed the excitement and the feeling of solidarity. For example, Mrs Val Simpson recalled cherry-picking at Young in the 1950s:

Houses weren't thought of, you lived in tents. Mum always had two auto-tents. Kids' bedroom and their bedroom. The front flap we used to hang up, and make into a dining-area. And that's where the blokes used to come from all over, to Griffith. From Condobolin and Hillston and Brungle and Cowra, everywhere for the fruit season. They like to gamble, blacks, and so every Friday night there's be a big game of cards up at so and so's-place, Friday night, and we'd keep going till Sunday. While we were playing cards, the young people'd be out with guitars, and camp-fires and singing... Friday night, we'd have a ball. Sunday night, they might come out to where we were working for a bit of a concert, in the packing-shed. The next week, we'd go over to their place, the bosses'd arrange it. It'd be nothing to go around and find a mob of five or six dozen Kooris [Aborigines] round a camp-fire singing and playing guitars. They're all disco-happy now.

1. Recorded conversation Dennis Charles, Erambie, 12 December 1979

2. Recorded conversation May Collett, Cowra, 23 September 1979

3. Recorded conversation Val Simpson, Cowra, 15 April 1979. For another Aboriginal portrayal of the life of intinerant pickers, see K. Gilbert, The cherry pickers, (play), c. 1972, ms. in University of Queensland library
In addition to picking, there were also two skilled professions which took Wiradjuri men off the stations for long periods of time, shearing and droving. A few men, such as Locky Ingram of Cowra and Bill Charles of Hillston, became professional shearsers and worked throughout the state. Alf Merritt of Yass was famous for his speed throughout New South Wales. Several Wiradjuri men became well-known and respected drovers. Most of them, like Paul Coe and Bob Carroll, were sought after for their skill and reliability. For instance, Carroll was once commissioned to drive sheep from Tenterfield to Victoria, which took six months. Their work, through their reputations, kept them in employment for a few years longer than other Aborigines affected by the post-war contraction of the labour market.

In the 1980s the surviving drovers and shearers held a considerable variety of opinions and attitudes. The drovers particularly, who had held considerable personal responsibility and had been allowed to drink in most hotels, believed in the pride which should be taken in one's work. They asserted the value of hard work for a fair wage, in avoiding the sack, and disapproved of younger Aborigines who did not work, or took to crime. Yet it cannot be assumed that the nature of the work conditioned these attitudes, though it may have reinforced existing personality traits. It is probable that in many cases,

1. Conversation Bob Carroll, Narrandera, 9 July 1980
2. For instance, Bob Carroll's brother Roy, who also spent some time droving, resigned from the Aboriginal Legal Service because he believed that Aborigines were too often getting away with their crimes; pers. comm., Roy Carroll, June 1982
serious men, already used to working with whites, were drawn to serious employment. The men showed a considerable diversity of character. Locky Ingram, the shearer, was frequently abusive or threatening towards managers.¹ Paul Coe, the drover, was never in jail in his life, and lived at Erambie Station.² Sam Kennedy, the leading-hand linesman, did not live on the reserve and associated less closely with Aborigines outside his immediate family.³

There was a similar diversity of attitude among the seasonal workers. They were able to earn by hard work a wage considerably more than the basic wage.⁴ Yet the high wages did not necessarily provide the means of escape, which it is claimed happened on the south coast.⁵ The Wiradjuri work-gangs were similar to the drovers to the extent that high wages did not lead to a closer involvement with white society. There seems to have been no attempt to move, on the basis of high wages or steady employment, to white living areas. Almost all the seasonal workers remained based, in their own eyes, if not in those of the officials, at one of the Wiradjuri reserves. Yet they cannot be categorised as the obverse of the responsible

1. For instance, Erambie Manager's daily diary, 6 December 1947, in Station Managers' Reports, box 3K/96504
2. Pers. comm., Erambie, 8 November 1979
3. Recorded conversation Sam Kennedy, 15 April, 1979. For further discussion on the inter-action of history, personality and work in Kennedy, Ingram and Coe, see Read, op.cit., 1981
drovers. No doubt some seasonal workers were shiftless or were drunk on the job, but it is an injustice to generalise that seasonal workers' children were handed down 'not a culture, but a bottle'. Employment, whether seasonally in work-gangs, or individually, gave the Wiradjuri financial independence of the Board. If the Aboriginal workgangs produced an inward-looking solidarity, the independent employments of droving and shearing did not produce the opposite result: those men too, though sometimes voluntarily separated from other Aborigines, did not become black Europeans. They too remained based at particular reserves - at one time in the early 1950s there were nine drovers based at Bramble - and remained responsible and respected Aborigines.

For those unwilling or unable to take part in employment off the stations and reserves, life was less comfortable and probably often less enjoyable. Unlike the camps at Griffith and Leeton, the old reserves were not located in areas where there was any particular demand for labour; unless the local whites put pressure on the Board, there was no need to force the Aborigines to live in the one place. At such reserves the policy of destruction-by-attrition could be resumed without an outcry from the whites. In practical terms, it meant that on the reserves marked for revocation, the maintenance of the houses lapsed,

1. Castle and Hagan, op.cit., 1978, p.163. That the informant was Aboriginal illustrates that no clear division of attitude can necessarily be expected to emerge, in oral history, between white and Aboriginal sources.
householders were encouraged to leave, and newcomers were prevented from taking up residence.

Nowhere was this dreary policy more explicit than at Brungle. The Sunday Sun described the station soon after the manager's withdrawal in 1948. Some of the residents lived in four weatherboard houses, while the rest of the population of some sixty people lived in make-shift tin sheds, without light or electric power, mostly with earth floors. Mrs Mary Collins, whose tin shed sheltered seventeen people, had patched up her floor with tin to cover the worst holes. She was quoted as saying that most of the beds were damp all the winter because it was impossible to keep the rain from dripping on them. Repairs were not carried out because the Board wished to close the reserve. The Education Department, so the paper related, had offered to build a new school in 1947, but the Board had declined on the grounds that the residents might be moved to other towns.¹

In 1951 the Board sought to implement this plan. There were long exchanges between the Area Welfare Officer and Head Office as to who should be removed from Brungle, to where, and when. In December it was noted that thirty people were living in Lindsay Ingram's house. The officer, Applebee, was instructed to put Ingram into the now vacant manager's house, then to demolish Ingram's former residence, which would then leave standing the four Board-built cottages. Applebee was particularly instructed to exclude any wandering families who

¹. Sunday Sun, 8 May 1949
might attempt to enter the reserve, which in the light of the discussion of the picking industry probably included large numbers of people returning from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and the south coast at the beginning of winter. ¹ Meanwhile Dulcie Ingram's request to transfer to Wattle Hill was attended to promptly. The Board supplied her with fifty sheets of iron to build a house there, even though the area was not an official Aboriginal reserve.²

In June of 1952 the Board made another attempt to reduce the Brungle population. The Superintendent advised Area Welfare Officer Sephton to demolish all the remaining old buildings. Sephton advised that Mrs Collins (who since the Sunday Sun article evidently had moved from her leaking tin hut) was living in the ration hut. He suggested he put her out, so that that shed could be demolished, which would mean that Mrs Collins would then have no alternative but to move back to her husband, who still lived in the hut. Sephton also reported that he had 'interviewed' several people from Yass about not coming to Brungle any more.³

In such a manner did people live at Brungle in the early 1950s. Those lucky enough to live in the Board-built cottages had no water or electric power; those who were ejected from the

1. A.W.O. Applebee to Head Office, 5 December 1951, acknowledging instructions and submitting plans, 18 December 1951, General Correspondence, box 8/2875

2. Dulcie Ingram to A.W.B., 2 July 1952, reply 25 July 1952, ibid., box 8/2782

3. A.W.O. Sephton to Head Office, 2 June 1952, ibid., box 8/2785
station, or, who, like Emma Penrith, wished to be away from the Board's authority, lived in tin sheds by Brungle Creek.¹ Thus also was the Chairman of the Board able to assure the Department of Education in November 1952, that steps had been taken to ensure that only children of permanent residents attended the local Brungle school.² In such a manner was the struggle to bring the Brungle reserve to ruin continued by the Aborigines Welfare Board, even though it had declared publicly that the reserves were still intended for those who felt happier living with their own people.³

At Condobolin conditions were little better. In 1949, seventy-one people lived on the unofficial Murie reserve and sixty-two on the Board's reserve.⁴ Although the majority of Aborigines lived on the former, the Board acknowledged no responsibility for it. Even at the official reserve, the Board was reluctant to make repairs or improvements. It was unable to decide whether to find a site for a new reserve or to move Aborigines into town, and while it procrastinated, both reserves fell further into disrepair. In 1955 an official reported that all the Board's houses needed attention, while all the shacks at the Murie were made out of galvanised iron or flattened

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1. Recorded conversation Emma Penrith, Griffith, 18 September 1980
2. C.J. Buttsworth to Department of Education, 11 November 1952, General Correspondence, box 8/2785
3. A.W.B. Annual report, 1951-2, p.6
4. A.W.O. Leeton Area, 7 September 1949, General Correspondence, box 8/2851
kerosene tins. In 1956 the Superintendent told the local white community that the Board could not afford the supply of water pipes and taps to the reserve houses, but if the local Apex council could perform the task, the Board would be prepared to paint the taps. Four years later, in 1960, the people at the Murie were forced to drink water polluted by refuse and dead animals.

At Yass in 1948 the town clerk informed the Board that four houses at Hollywood had been pulled down for fuel. The school had been closed for 12 months and now was half-destroyed.

The police sergeant confirmed that the wood had been burnt and the iron used for additions to other houses. He described the Aborigines as cunning and dirty, but conceded that rumours that the reserve was to be abandoned might have led to the destruction of the empty houses. In 1951, Alice Dabbs, a white woman, described the reserve as 'shocking beyond words', situated on the top of a stony hill where it was impossible to grow anything.

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1. M. Wheeler to Head Office, 30 June 1955, Station Managers' Reports, box 3K/96508; recorded conversation Julia Wighton, Condobolin, 4 November 1980

2. Superintendent Saxby, 19 October 1956, General Correspondence, box 8/2837

3. Sun Herald, 20 November 1960; in the article it was alleged that the Board had not carried out any maintenance on the houses for 20 years

4. Town Clerk, Yass, to A.W.B., 4 June 1948, General Correspondence, box 8/2972

5. Sgt. Byars to A.W.B., 22 June 1948

6. Alice Dabbs to A.W.B., 2 October 1951, ibid., box 8/2783
complained that there were only two water pipes, which sometimes did not run, for the whole community. The iron houses were unlined and only two houses had stoves, which the residents had bought themselves. The Board replied that it had been worried about Yass for some time and was looking for a site for a new reserve. Local objections, it went on, were very strong.

In 1952 Area Welfare Officer Sephton was told by Superintendent Lipscombe that the Board could not afford six new cottages to replace the existing ones at Hollywood, and that he should try at least to make the existing cottages weatherproof. Children, he was informed, were undernourished and the whole community was backward. Sephton replied that the huts of the two remaining pensioners on the reserve, those of Williams and Brown, were in such a bad condition that they could not be made weatherproof. In May of the following year he reported that only two of the cottages were habitable, though in bad repair, and the rest in ruins. The circumstances by which the residents were moved to town will be described in the next chapter; it may merely be noted here that the destruction of the Hollywood reserve, like that of Brungle, was a piecemeal affair which made living conditions intolerable. It was scarcely surprising that,

1. Alice Dabbs to Hallstrom, 13 June 1951, ibid.
2. C. Evatt, Chairman, to Dabbs, undated draft letter, ibid.
3. Lipscombe to Sephton, 25 July 1952, Sephton to Lipscombe, 18 August 1952, ibid., box 8/2869
4. Sephton to Lipscombe, 3 May 1953, ibid.
again as at Brungle, people left Hollywood to form small settlements, based on kin groupings, about the town. In 1955, only half the Aboriginal population of Yass lived at Hollywood. Perhaps in ignorance of previous policy towards the Aborigines of Yass, the town clerk in 1957 informed the Board that numerous complaints had been received about Aborigines living on the North Yass water reserve.

For several reasons the Board in the early 1950s decided that Erambie Station at Cowra would remain for the foreseeable future. We have now to consider, therefore, living conditions and social life on the one Wiradjuri station for which the Board did not have plans for destruction. The manager was retained, the population level remained stable, new houses were constructed. Conditions nevertheless remained not very much better than on the reserves condemned to destruction. Remiscences and statements about daily life at Erambie, where most of the field-work relating to living conditions in this period was carried out, confirm the condemnation of Sergeant

1. For instance, Vincent Bolger, while working at the printing-office, left Hollywood with his mother, and lived with several uncles in a community of three houses on the Yass River; recorded conversation

2. The A.W.O. reported on 23 May 1955 that there were 45 people living at Hollywood, and 43 elsewhere in Yass; Station Managers' Reports, box 3K/96508

3. Town Clerk, Yass, to Superintendent A.W.B., 2 July 1957, General Correspondence, box 8/2880

4. See below, Ch. 7, pp. 283-4
Rutherford that conditions were lower than the worst slum areas of Sydney.¹

In the early 1940s, there was no running water on the station, and residents collected it from the Lachlan in buckets, in tanks on horse-drawn sledges, or stored the run-off from roofs. Washing was a communal activity, and, as at the Sandhills, performed on a certain day each week. Clean clothing was hung on thistles to dry, while fresh water was heated in containers carried down from the station.² Tap water did not come to the station until 1951.

Since the adverse report on the quality of rations supplied to Aborigines in the Public Service Board Report of 1940, rations had been made more nutritious, but not more attractive.³ The manager supplied 'dry' rations weekly:

Well I had my two children, there was no variety in it at all. Just oatmeal, a tin of jam or a tin of syrup, two cakes of Sunlight soap - they don't last you a week with your washing your body and washing your clothes. Then they'd give you oatmeal. It wasn't porridge. You'd get a bit extra Sunshine milk, it depended how many you had in your family. Then you'd get the bread every second day, two loaves of bread would have to last two days. You'd never get a bit of light, kerosene or anything. Say you didn't have the money to buy kerosene, you had to go without a light. You'd have to go down and get your meat at the

¹ Quoted, introduction to R. Merritt, The cake man, 1978, p.xxi

² Recorded conversation Gordon Simpson, Cowra, 14 August 1979

³ Report and recommendations... 1940, p.33
butchers, it wouldn't be a great deal... Some of the homes - this is fair dinkum - they had that many tins of jam and syrup in the cupboard, it was accumulating, and they had that many packets of oatmeal and sago.

In the 1940s the residences were known as 'red huts'. The "windows", made of tin, were held open with a stick. They were without sink or bath. Cooking was done on an open fire, for which empty jam or tinned milk containers served as saucepans. In 1952 the Board began building the first of eighteen new fibro cottages at Erambie. They were two or three bedroom structures; with verandah, fuel stove and glass windows they were a considerable improvement on the 'red huts'. There was still no electric power or running water, and a good deal of cooking was done outside.

The manager was responsible for community health. Outbreaks of scabies and headlice were treated by rough and ready methods, such as compulsory scrubbing with sulphur soap. Malnutrition, especially among children, was high, and the mortality rate, as at other reserves, was appalling. In 1954, a manager's survey revealed that fourteen people had died at Erambie in the previous ten years. The ages at death were cited

1. Recorded conversation Josie Ingram, Erambie, 12 March, 1979
2. Recorded conversations Gordon Simpson and Josie Ingram
3. A.W.B., Annual report, 1951-2, p.4
4. Recorded conversation Gordon Simpson
5. For instance, a child suffering from malnutrition was removed from Erambie to the Bomaderry Children's Home at the request of her mother in February 1945, General Correspondence, box 8/2853
Erambie: The banns, 1971: these are some of the nineteen constructed at Erambie in 1952.
as 52, 26, 41, 3 hours, 26, 50, 11, 1, 52, 2 days, and three children were still-born.1 Eight years later, a question in parliament prompted another survey which showed the mortality rate had not fallen. Two children out of thirty-four had died during an unspecified period, both of pneumonia. At Condobolin, one child out of eighteen had died. For both Wiradjuri towns this averaged about 56 per 1000, while the national average at this time was cited as 2.8 per 1000.2

Men could not easily obtain work on any of the Wiradjuri reserves. Erambie's 32 acres could not support a major farming effort; generally the station handyman was the only Aborigine employed. Men and women receiving rations were expected to work for them, which was calculated at 3 hours work per week at 5s. per hour. Often there was insufficient work for all recipients and the attempts to employ everyone resulted in ludicrous situations. For example, Mrs Milly Butt considered that ration recipients should have been sent to mind children, clean windows, or work in the gardens of the station residents. Instead, girls were expected to work in the manager's house:

I can remember one day, there was about six of us girls, and we were all stuck in the manager's house. I was washing up, one was wiping up, one was doing the washing, one was doing the hanging-out, one was minding the kids, one was cleaning out one room, one

1. A.W.O. Report, 21 October 1954; a similar report re Condobolin stated that twelve people had died in the previous ten years, including eight children; General Correspondence box 8/2847

2. A.W.O. Report, 30 January 1962; the average rate of Aboriginal infant mortality in New South Wales was calculated at 59.48 per 1000; ibid., box 8/3037
was cleaning out the verandah. So all of those girls, just there cleaning out this house, and she was in the lounge with her feet up on the coffee table reading a comic or something. Any of the men that worked for the rations, instead of them coming round to tidy the mission, or maybe just keep the lawn going - even if it didn't necessarily have to be on the houses, it could have been on the streets. But all they were doing was his house-work. They'd be nailing up his door or they'd be trimming his hedge.

For those on Erambie, and even more so for those living on the unmanaged stations, the power and personalities of the police overshadowed daily life. Of the Wiradjuri towns, Condobolin had the worst reputation. Police were said, for instance, to have enforced an unofficial curfew. Aboriginal men were allowed into town only after 6 a.m., and then only to a certain corner to await employment at day-labour. Those who remained in town, unemployed, by 8 a.m. were liable to be arrested for vagrancy. A Cowra man driving his employer's new car was stopped, his licence inspected, and told to report when he left Condobolin. At Griffith a citizen's action group protested for a decade over police entry into houses at the Three Ways reserve. At Cowra also, police in the 1950s had a reputation for brutality and illegal acts. Mr Eddie Smith was shot at and threatened on several occasions and once, in an attempt to make him sign a confession, was tortured by a policeman by beating

1. Recorded conversation Milly Butt, Sydney, 10 June 1979
2. Conversation Alan Sloane, Canberra, 3 October 1980
3. Recorded conversation Neville Williams, Erambie, 16 May 1979
and suspending him by handcuffs from the top of a cell door.\(^1\)

Erambie residents claimed that at certain times young Aboriginal men might be arrested almost as they stepped past the station gates and that a certain policeman stole goods from a department store and 'framed' several Aboriginal youths.\(^2\)

At Erambie the powers and personalities of individual managers were even more important in regulating the daily lives of the residents. The Act and Regulations gave very extensive powers to managers, which were in addition rendered open to abuse by lack of control in the appointing and monitoring of officials. No experience was called for, and according to Duncan, former policemen, prison warders, and regimental sergeant-majors found employment in the Board's ranks.\(^3\) Little or no experience was demanded; for instance, an Erambie manager of the early 1950s, George Pickering, was appointed to the Board because of his experience as a builder and because his wife was a nurse. He had also spent some time with the Flinders Island Aborigines.\(^4\)

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1. Recorded conversation Eddie Smith, Erambie, 18 May 1979
2. Recorded conversation Neville Williams; recorded conversation Les Coe, Erambie, 5 April 1979
4. Recorded conversation George Pickering, Cowra, 12 August 1979
Pickering was regarded as one of the better managers of Erambie. He organised food for children, concerts, and a boys' club. He called the police in only when men were drunk, since he regarded it as a sign of weakness if he could not control other situations alone. In an effort to help one man control a drinking problem, he placed a bottle in his safe, and allowed him to drink only by asking for the key. Yet Pickering, after thirty years among Aborigines, reflected most of the prejudices of his generation who had had little to do with Aborigines. He thought that they could not 'take drink'; he believed they were a stone age people who could not be pushed too fast into European civilisation. He disliked the character of part-Aborigines, 'since only the poorest [of whites] would breed with them'. The good character of certain part-Aborigines of Cowra he explained by their supposed descent from a Negro ancestor. Aborigines, he thought, lacked a sense of basic values, such as a sense of property.

The manager J. Heaney, in charge of the station in the later 1950s, is an example of how an unsuitable man, uncontrolled by the Board, could turn a station into a prison camp. He is said to have caused the removal of the foster-children of 'Mum Shirl' because she had defeated him in an unrelated court proceeding. He threatened to remove the son of Mrs Flo

1. Recorded conversation Milly Butt
2. Recorded conversation George Pickering
3. ibid.
4. Recorded conversation Mavis Bamblett, Erambie, 15 September 1979
Doolan unless he wore pants, he caused the removal of Aileen Wedge and Colin Glass, and 'vagged' (charged with vagrancy) the latter on the day he turned 16.¹ One man, 'Dadda' Williams, though of Aboriginal descent, told Heaney that he was European simply, he said, to annoy him. In consequence, Heaney used to take him 15 kilometres from Cowra in his car, leave him in the bush, and tell him to go to Sydney.² Finally, at Heaney's instigation, Williams was committed for vagrancy and served three months imprisonment.³ Official records support the general Aboriginal opinion of Heaney, which is uniformly bad. For instance, he warned Williams, after his sentence expired, not to attempt to enter the station or his children (who lived with his wife on the station) would be sent away. The Board backed his decision not to allow Williams to return even for a few days over Christmas, 1959.⁴

1. Recorded conversation Flo Doolan; recorded conversation Aileen Wedge, Erambie, 15 September 1979; recorded conversation Colin Glass, Erambie, 16 September 1979
2. Recorded conversation 'Dadda' Williams, Erambie, 12 August 1979
3. Cowra Guardian, 18 December 1959; Heaney's warning 15 January 1960; General Correspondence, box 8/2906
4. Evidently the trial had been held over, so that Williams was free. The request to allow him onto the station was rejected by the Board, whose official wrote to Mrs Williams, on 16 December 1959, 'I doubt whether the Board would again grant such permission at any time in the near future. Wishing you and your family a very happy Christmas...' ibid., box 8/2912
The manager's most effective controls on stations like Erambie were the regulations dealing with drunkenness, vagrancy and abusive language. Charges of drunkenness was the chief means used by some managers to keep 'troublesome' Aborigines under control. Few could pay the customary £5 fine and therefore had to spend a few days in prison. Many of the offences for which Aborigines were committed may be seen as protests either at managerial rule or as contempt for the Board's authority. For instance, in January 1947 Mary Moynihan was fined £5 for chopping up a door for firewood; in May Lawrie Bamblett was fined £5, and later a further £3, for obscene language to the manager; in September, Locky Ingram was charged with drunkenness and abusive language. In the 1950s, convictions for drunkenness reached extraordinary proportions. In Cowra in 1957 there were seventy-two convictions, involving fifty-seven people, out of a total Aboriginal population of 192. In the same period, ninety-two white citizens of Cowra were charged out of a total of over 7000. In September 1954, the manager

1. Regulations 27, 28, Aborigines Protection Act, 1909; see also Aborigines Welfare Board, Manual of Instructions to Managers and Matrons of Aboriginal Stations and other Field Officers, 1941, paragraph 42

2. Manager's monthly reports, 1947, Station Manager's Reports, box 3K/96504

3. Survey result, compiled by A.W.O., 24 September 1947, General Correspondence, box 8/2884. Results from other Wiradjuri towns included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Abl. pop.</th>
<th>Con - victions</th>
<th>White pop.</th>
<th>Con - victions</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Narrandera</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>5400</td>
<td>168</td>
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<td>Leeton</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8200</td>
<td>156</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yass</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>7170</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condobolin</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>5400</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
George Orley charged fifteen people with drunkenness and four for vagrancy. In January of the same year Pickering had charged only four Aborigines in the previous three months. 1

The manager's powers of entry into station residences were a considerable departure from normal conventions. By regulation he and the station matron were required to conduct weekly inspections of houses. Many women found this humiliating, and, it is said, sometimes avoided inspection by refusing entry to the officials. 2 Official power to enter residences at any time, although not defined by regulation, were also widely used and much resented. Official policy in 1947 was that residences should be regarded as part of a reserve and should therefore be construed as public property. 3 The legal position remained doubtful. An Area Welfare Officer reasoned that a manager's house, or any other dwelling on a reserve, could by implication be entered by any Aborigine. 4 Queries were raised about those who in the 1950s paid rent to the Board. Area Welfare Officer Felton, a man apparently more conscious of the moral restraints upon legislation than his superior officers, asked whether police could enter premises merely on suspicion that an

1. Manager's monthly reports, September 1954, January 1954, General Correspondence box 8/2998
2. For instance, recorded conversation Mavis Bamblett
3. Circular to all managers, 31 October 1947, General Correspondence, box 8/3001
offence was being committed or might be committed.\(^1\) Despite the uncertainties, the Board's position in 1957 was still that the house of any Aborigine living on a reserve, which was taken to include town housing, might be entered without invitation by any official.\(^2\)

At Erambie the shift towards a more aggressive self-identity continued. The powerful and frequently arbitrary role of managers stiffened the resentment of Erambie residents towards their oppression. This was demonstrated by an incident in 1954 concerning the illegal entry of alcohol on to the station. Despite the prohibition, alcohol was easily obtained and was sometimes, in fact, carried to the Aborigines by a local publican.\(^3\) It was generally consumed in the bush or smuggled on to the reserve. Managers could do little to prevent its importation and throughout the 1950s they considered alcohol consumption to be the principal problem with which they had to deal.\(^4\)

In 1954 an Aborigine, Pat Gilbert, who lived near Cowra Bridge, complained to the manager about the amount of alcohol consumed on the reserve. He received no satisfaction and carried his

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1. Felton to Superintendent Saxby, 15 July 1955, General Correspondence box 8/3001
2. Saxby to Felton, 19 July 1957, ibid.
3. Recorded conversation Eddie Smith
4. George Pickering, recorded conversation; T. Yates (Manager), Half-yearly Report, August 1958, General Correspondence, box 8/2922
complaint to the Board. Other complaints were received that Erambie overflowed with wine brought in taxis directly from hotels; even the sanitary cart brought supplies. It was alleged that children went hungry while their parents drank. One man threatened to take his complaint to the sensational newspaper Truth.

The Board, until then disinclined to take action, was evidently stung by the threat of publicity. The manager Orley, a former policeman and prison-warder and 'not altogether a tactful person', was asked for an explanation. He admitted that alcohol was brought on to the station, but generally after he had gone to bed so that he was powerless to stop it. He drew up a set of rules, which included the searching of vehicles at the front gate, the prohibition of taxis (which entailed a long walk for some residents) and the searching of individuals. A storm of protest from the Erambie residents greeted these regulations, during which several women, according to Orley, became 'utterly unreasonable', refused to listen to him and announced that they would refuse to obey. One compared the new rules to 'going back to the days of the blackfellows'; others stated that they would not report to Orley every time they entered or left the station. The new rules were circulated amongst the residents, with the request they sign it to show that they would comply. Three

1. P. Gilbert to A.W.B., 16 December 1954, General Correspondence box 8/2850
2. 'Cowra Bridge' to A.W.B., undated, G. Polonje to A.W.B., 28 December 1954, ibid.
people, the drover Paul Coe, Louisa Ingram and Muriel Merritt, refused to sign. Though the Board backed Orley's decision, the rules were ineffective. Drink was transferred through the perimeter fence or in hollowed-out loaves of bread.

The incident demonstrated the limitations of the manager's power and the folly of trying to enforce unenforceable regulations. It demonstrated also the consolidation of the self-perceptions of the 1940s. That Orley's rules were conceived as a retrograde step indicates that the residents had a conception of 'progress' through the continuing withdrawal of repressive regulations. That the incident was extrapolated and portrayed as a generalised attack upon Aboriginal freedom, further indicated by the fact that one of the women who refused to sign had recently complained of her husband's drinking, may be seen as an important step towards the demand for self-determination, rather than for the removal of individual grievances.

A collective identity, strengthened through living with other Aborigines, offered an alternative to emulating and living with Europeans which the assimilation policy implied. Through managerial rule, and for other reasons previously discussed, solidarity at Erambie continued to take more pointed forms than it did on other Wiradjuri reserves and town camps. Several

1. F. Orley, report, 4 January 1955, 18 January 1955, General Correspondence box 8/2850
2. File note, 19 January 1955, ibid.; recorded interview Flo Doolan
3. Orley, report, 18 January 1955, General Correspondence, box 8/3001
comments by white officials in the 1940s and 1950s testified to the consolidation of the view that the system of managed reserves was an oppression which ought to be ended. In 1949, an Inspector noted that a few Erambie residents were members of the local Labour League, which he thought had instilled quite a measure of political responsibility. He then made the same error as the officials of the early 1940s had made when assessing the changing attitudes at Erambie - he assumed that political responsibility led inevitably to assimilation. For it appeared, he wrote, that the smattering of political and social education had gone to heads. They had become cheeky in their new-found knowledge and tended to show little respect for the manager, or the Board's kindness to Aborigines. 1

The gradual shift to an intellectualised view of oppression was most apparent in the resistance of Erambie people to the payment of rent. The problem was one of the Board's thorniest in the last two decades of its existence, basically because it had no answer to mass defaulting. Superintendent Lipscombe fully understood the Board's dilemma and explained it to Board members in May 1952. Garnishee orders failed, he stated, because Aborigines left their jobs as soon as the orders were issued. If people were evicted, they erected sub-standard huts outside the reserves and left their new houses empty. At Cowra, only three heads of households out of seventeen regularly paid rent. 2

1. Manager's annual report, Erambie Station, 7 December 1949, General Correspondence box 8/2922
2. Lipscombe, memo for monthly meeting, 8 May 1952, ibid.
Aborigines doubtless were aware that in the last resort the Board was powerless if everyone refused to pay rent. The question remains whether Cowra people refused on philosophical grounds to pay, or because they knew that the Board was powerless, or simply because they could not afford to. The evidence is strongest in support of the first two suggestions. The Board found just as much difficulty in obtaining rent from town-dwellers at Yass, and Cowra arrears were not the largest in the state. A hint was offered by the trainee welfare officer H.J. Green (who later became Superintendent) in 1952. He noted that only two Erambie residents paid rent, and that the defaulters reasoned that they should not be compelled to make any payment for what they regarded as their right. This, he thought was simply an excuse. The Board's attitude was one of puzzlement that the Erambie people, who appeared to appreciate better than most the new conditions, would not face up to the responsibility of rental payment. Until its dissolution, the Board did not realise that there was no

1. In 1964, £5288 was owed on the 18 cottages at Erambie, which placed it third in the arrears list in N.S.W., General Correspondence box 8/2924; see also Hausfeld, op.cit., p.48 in which he stated that the residents of a northern N.S.W. station, after passing a motion in a general meeting before the officials to pay rent regularly, immediately afterwards held another meeting at which the white officials were not present, and unanimously agreed not to pay rent

2. Training file of H.J. Green, report on Erambie Station, 5 September 1952, General Correspondence, box 8/2783

3. For instance, report by Mrs English, 11 December 1951, ibid., box 8/2922
necessary paradox, but, on the contrary, there was perhaps a
direct relationship between the attitudes.

Radical changes in self-perception may be the result of years,
or decades, of changing attitudes and circumstances, although
the potential for change may be constant. Demands for change
were circumscribed by what appeared possible to change. Thus at
Warangesda the large number of Wiradjuri and the strict
managerial rule produced the potential for an aggressive self
identity such as developed at Cowra half a century later; but
the years of Christian encouragement to Aborigines to join the
white community persuaded many to believe that through education
and diligent labour it was possible to find equality with the
whites. At Brungle the rule of the pessimistic manager Ussher
and the hostility of the local whites caused people to look to
an Aboriginal enclave as the solution to prejudice and
rejection. Our consideration of social life in this period
indicates a similar divergence in attitude and expectation,
bounded by the parameters of what was perceived to be possible.
For example, the long isolation of the Narrandera Aborigines
from the Board's control made them independent, but
inward-looking. In response to a request by a white woman to
improve living conditions in 1963, the Board observed that
Narrandera Aborigines were extremely independent, resenting most
strongly any interest shown in them by the Board.\footnote{Superintendent A.W.B. to Secretary, Narrandera Leaders
Group, 20 April 1963, General Correspondence box 8/2948} Among the
many disparaging remarks made about Yass Aborigines, none
referred to the generalised opposition to authority found at Cowra. At Brungle men were considered by one official to be under the sway of the women - they let their wives set a standard to which they did not conform. Some potentially dangerous solidarity was channelled into the local football competition by the manager in 1947, which reduced internal dissension on the station to practically nil. In the same year a committee of residents was formed for the first time. But the years of the war of attrition on living standards and the enforced removals from the station had taken their toll of morale: the aims of the group were merely to look after the school, suggest improvements, and produce a newsheet. No further mention of it was made in the records. At Erambie too, there was still ambiguity in the concepts of Aboriginality presented to administrators. A committee of management formed in 1950 aimed not at the removal of managers, nor the restoration of freehold title, which might have been expected 15 years later, but at the combatting of drinking, the quelling of disturbances, and the problem of unscrupulous managers. Narrowly focussed and pragmatic as they were, these objectives were a considerable advance on the tentative proposals of Brungle.

1. A.W.O., report, 22 January 1954, General Correspondence box 8/2852
2. Manager's monthly diary, 17 August 1947, Station Managers' Reports, box 3K/96504
3. 25 March 1947, ibid.
4. Erambie Manager's report, 11 June 1950, General Correspondence, box 8/2821
In the 1950s, possibilities were expanding. At Yass and Condobolin, some people looked forward to new houses in town in the hope that assimilation would mean equality. Wattle Hill, the Sandhills and Gooloogong offered an alternative to assimilation with the whites in these towns. Life at Erambie illuminated the further possibility of the preservation of an Aboriginal identity, while at the same time adopting the material standards of European civilisation. And there was a fourth possibility too. Those who did not wish to associate with other Aborigines were free to travel far from the reserves. The cost to one family which chose this course, though, was heavy.

In the early 1940s Hetty and Bill Charles took up residence at the Three Ways reserve at Griffith. In 1941 the fourth child, Jim, was born. In about 1945 the family moved to Hillston, where the shearing was plentiful. Jim Charles believed that his mother's decision to leave Three Ways was based also on a desire to keep the children safe from welfare officers and to give her children a 'better' life than could be found on the reserves. The move was successful in that the eleven children remained with their parents. The houses in which the Charles family lived at Hillston, though made of scrap timber and iron, were kept in an exemplary fashion. When the shire clerk complained to the Board of Aborigines living on the Travelling Stock Reserve, the Area Welfare Officer reported that only one family, the Charles, was living there, whose four bedroom house was
clean and well-furnished. There was a garden, the children were clean, neatly clad, and were in regular attendance at school.  

Yet a price had to be paid for enforced isolation from reserve life, from kinfolk and from other Aborigines. 'Jim learnt inferiority at Hillston', said his mother, 'but so did we all'. As a teenager, Jim felt both inhibited, and ashamed of his inhibitions. Once at a school dance, he said, he felt too 'shame' to enter the room and lingered on the verandah. The principal noticed him and arranged a dance. Yet the shame and feeling of inferiority could not be so easily erased: the principal totally underestimated what it was to be an Aborigine at Hillston. Later Jim Charles became a shearer and found that, although no single Aborigine that he had met was aggressive towards a white man while sober, drink could give him an opposite personality. Through alcohol Charles found that he could become the lively, assertive person that he wanted to be.

Ten years later, and a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, he reflected that through his mother's teachings, and through isolation from other Aborigines, the clearest lesson he had learnt at Hillston was what white people thought of Aborigines and the ways in which he could overcome their prejudice. The way to end discrimination, he thought, lay in showing the whites that he was not like the stereotype of Aborigines. Charles carried a particular, personal burden. He felt that his clothes, attitudes, home life, had to be above reproach or the

1. A.W.O. Lambert to Saxby, 24 July 1954; General Correspondence box 8/2841

2. Conversation Hetty Charles
above, Mr Jim Charles, Hillston, 1980
down, Mr Jim Charles (right) and author, 
at the site of the Charles' home on the Traveling Stock route, 1980
stereotype would be reinforced. He believed that if, for instance, he were to buy clothes from St Vincent de Paul or wear shorts and thongs on Sundays, his neighbours would say of him, 'Look at him, he can't better himself, that bastard'. In 1980, at the site of the family home on the stock reserve he pointed to where his mother had raked and swept the earth around their home, the outward symbol that this family, at least, was as good as any white family. The burden of isolation from community life he had carried ever since.

From our study of the different kinds of community life in this period, two kinds of conclusion can be drawn. The first relates to the features shared by all who chose to live with other Aborigines at managed stations or fringe camps. It is clear that there were positive aspects of social life even where conditions were deteriorating daily, such as mutual support and self-confidence through numbers. Many white writers, justifiably outraged at the terrible conditions existing on reserves throughout New South Wales, have pointed only to their deleterious effects on personality. For instance, Monk found that by far the greatest incidence of psychological disorder in the six Aboriginal communities which she studied, occurred at Erambie. She regarded several attempted suicides in the late 1960s partly as the outcome of the effects of restriction and control inherent in station living, though she conceded that it was also likely that people who remained on reserves in 1969-70

1. Recorded conversation Jim Charles, Griffith 7 May 1980
2. Visit to Hillston, November 1980
were also less able to cope with life in the larger society. 1 Monk's surmise may be criticised from several standpoints. Like some other observers already discussed, she gave insufficient consideration to personal choice in the model of an Aboriginal world-view, in this case, to the numbers of people who had chosen to remain on the reserve as a statement of their view of Aboriginality. Her finding also ignores the support which reserve life gave people traumatised by experiences in 'the larger society'. For instance, one woman at Erambie in the late 1970s, after terrible experiences in the Cootamundra home, mental hospitals and prisons, found support in an Aboriginal environment which could scarcely have been found elsewhere. 2 Several Aborigines have also argued strongly in favour of reserve life. Poverty, it is reasoned, is relative, and where Aborigines did not consider themselves poor, they were not. 3 To some former reserve dwellers, communal life represented the sharing of food, group experiences, strength in kin structure and a feeling of solidarity with other Aborigines. 4 In a manner similar to the way in which some

1. Monk, op. cit., pp. 276-7; for another European account of reserve life which highlights bad conditions without acknowledging positive features see R. Broome, Aboriginal Australians, 1982, pp. 151-3

2. Recorded conversation Aileen Wedge. Some of Ms Wedge's account of her life is reproduced in P. Read, 'Down there with me on the 32 acres', ms. 1980, pp. 174-185


4. Conversation Darcy Pettitt, Robinvale, (ex Hillston), 8 February 1981
pastoral station Aborigines in northern Australia look back to the traditional life as the mainspring of Aboriginality, reserve or other communal life has been regarded by some in the south as a symbol of the continuity of Aboriginal values.

The second conclusion concerns the further development of the 'Cowra' view of Aboriginal identity. This sought changes in the administration of reserves, and looked beyond the day-to-day issues of oppression towards raising the status of Aborigines in society, not through isolation, but by legislative and attitudinal changes by the whites. We have seen how the actions of managers helped to sharpen these perceptions. The effect of strictly or arbitrarily enforced regulations not only antagonised those who were by nature rebellious, but also law-abiding Aborigines respected by whites. A regulation which gave particular offence was that which prevented people other than residents from entering a reserve. Those who normally accepted the manager's powers suffered most keenly at the indignity of having to ask permission before inviting a friend home. The drover Bob Carroll found it degrading.¹ A municipal council worker, Gordon Simpson, thought he 'should have been above that sort of thing'.² The former drover Les Coe was vehement in his denunciation of managerial rule:

The power they had! They'd be running to the police all the bloody time. Come up here with five or six bloody police, trying to show their authority. Trying to put men off the mission [i.e. reserve]. And bloody Heaney, he was a terrible bloody man. You couldn't

1. Conversation Bob Carroll
2. Recorded conversation Gordon Simpson
say g'day to the bastard without him running to the
police. [Go] Into your house, look under your bloody
bed or something like that. Jeez they were bastards,
some of them... Any excuse at all, you know... Just to
stand over you all the bloody time. Didn't treat you
like people, but treated you like bloody mongrel
dogs.

The regime of the managers reinforced the natural solidarity of
Wiradjuri social life. The conservatives were radicalised while
like minds could meet and talk together. The short-sighted
administration of foolish or oppressive regulations produced
opposition amongst those respected in white society equal in
vehemence to those who found recognition only in Aboriginal
society. By driving men from the reserves to look for work,
where, it was hoped, they would come to accept European
attitudes, the Board caused resentment which was increased when
these men, returning, found no recognition of their
achievements. By enforcing the humiliating regulations the
assimilation policy was not advanced. People by nature
conservative, who might have been expected to have become the
first to be assimilated, instead became some of the leaders of
the Wiradjuri communities after the Board was abolished in 1969.

In the 1930s, the nett effect of poor conditions, low morale,
split families and repressive police action may have led, at
Brungle, Yass and Condobolin, to a defensive self-identity, a
loss of faith in Aboriginal leadership. At Cowra in the 1940s
and 1950s, where the large population remained mostly intact,
perceived injustice coupled with the radicalising of the
community caused a positive self-awareness sometimes to take the
form of refusals and demands. These expressions were based, not

1. Recorded conversation Les Coe
on a conception of the rights of human beings, but of Aborigines owed something special by the whites.

Despite the changes described, the most advanced Wiradjuri concept in the period under review was that expressed to H.J. Green in 1952 - that Aborigines, since they lived on a reserve set aside for them, should not have to pay rent. The perception may well have been current long before this, and at other reserves beside Erambie, but it was noticed by a white official for the first time in 1952. The claim was hesitant, even ambiguous compared to its expression nine years later, when Daniel Ingram asserted that, since he was an Aborigine, he should not have to work.¹ Ingram's attitude was part of the still-strengthening concept of Aboriginality, present at Erambie during the 1950s, but by 1955 not yet explicit. In 1959 the trend towards a more general Aboriginal self-identification was noticed by a perceptive officer of the Board, who remarked upon what became the dominant force in Wiradjuri thought in the 1960s and 1970s. The effect of the failure of the dispersal policy was becoming apparent:

It is noticeable that the rising generation of mixed-bloods has a much better grasp of the fundamentals of modern social and domestic life than their parents and grandparents, although the majority of them elect to identify themselves with the Aboriginal community rather than the general community. This applies to the lighter castes as well as to the darker ones right up to the point where colour, caste and features are unrecognisable.

¹ Manager's report, 30 September 1961, General Correspondence, box 8/2922

² A.W.O. Metropolitan and South Coast district, Annual report, 1959, ibid., box 8/2886
In the late 1940s, the days of the managed reserves, the unmanaged reserves and the unofficial reserves appeared to be numbered. While the social life, attitudes and expectations of the Wiradjuri diversified, the Aborigines Welfare Board resumed its efforts to disperse them into the white community. The principal elements of the policy were those which the Board had used to such effect between 1909 and 1929: the breaking up of the reserves and the removal of children. For the first time, also, major inducements were offered. Psychological pressure was maintained on Aborigines by a variety of means. This chapter is a study of the effects of the first of the elements of policy. After a brief review of the changes in the concepts of assimilation among the Board officials and a consideration of some of the inducements, the attempt to break up each of the Wiradjuri reserves is examined in turn. I conclude that in absolute terms the policy of assimilation was more successful than it had been 1909-1929, partly because a greater variety of methods were employed beyond physical dispersal. However, this second and last attempt at dispersal by the Board, produced a different outcome in each town, as well as some quite unexpected results.

The 1940 amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act made assimilation the policy to be pursued by the Board.¹ Several

¹ Amendment No.12 of 1940, No.3(b)(i); see above, Ch.5, p.215
avenues to this end were established, such as the prospect of exemption from the Act and a housing loan scheme, but the details of how the policy was to be enforced were not made plain. The degree of force, if any, which was to be employed was unspecified, as were the implications of the policy for the survival, as a distinct entity, of a race of people still living physically and culturally in close association. The confusion caused by these ambiguities at the lower level of administration was not resolved by more senior officials, who were unaware of the necessity to pursue, or were unwilling to undertake, some rigorous thinking. Only A.P. Elkin, the vice-chairman of the Board for more than twenty years, showed an understanding of the processes involved, and his thinking in the period shifted from guided assimilation to a desire that Aborigines become independent of the Board.

In 1944 Elkin believed that Aborigines should be patiently and firmly encouraged in habits of cleanliness, thrift and social behaviour, initiative and in the desire that their children should make good.\(^1\) What 'firmly' meant was unclear, but more

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1. A.P. Elkin was a leading Anglican intellectual who had a profound influence on the public perception and administration of Aborigines this century. He was professor of anthropology at Sydney University and joined the Aborigines Welfare Board in 1939. He became Vice-Chairman in about 1942, retaining the post until the abolition of the Board. For a critical account of his activities before and after his appointment to the Board see H. Goodall, 'An intelligent parasite: A.P. Elkin and white perceptions of the history of Aboriginal people in New South Wales', paper presented to the Australian Historical Association, University of New South Wales, 1983, xerox. The 1944 quotation comes from op.cit., 1944, p.52.
was implied than merely granting Aborigines an opportunity 'to live in similar ways to ourselves'.\textsuperscript{1} In 1959 Elkin claimed that he certainly was not thinking of their absorption or disappearance into the general community, though he hoped the time would come when Aborigines would be able to do without the Board.\textsuperscript{2} In 1960 he admitted that the Board's policy had originally aimed at integrated town housing (by which Aboriginal homes would be placed in a predominantly white neighbourhood) but that this did not exactly coincide with what the Aborigines wanted as a whole.\textsuperscript{3}

Other senior officials of the Board spoke in more monolithic terms, even when compromise was made in practice. For instance, Chief Secretary Evatt seemed unaware that the need for force would ever be, or ever had been, a necessity when he drafted a letter in 1951. In it he announced that several years ago it had been decided to build 600 houses in New South Wales for Aboriginal families. Three or four houses were to be placed in each town, preferably at different points.\textsuperscript{4} The question of

\begin{itemize}
\item Elkin in 1967 claimed that '...they should be able to live in similar ways to ourselves' was his response to a question in about 1936 as to what the new policy ought to be; \textit{Report from the joint committee...}, 1967, II, p.691
\item A.P. Elkin, 'Historical background to the present problems', in \textit{Proceedings of conference on New South Wales Aborigines}, 1959, 3-23, pp.9-10
\item A.P. Elkin, 'A round table conference', \textit{Dawn}, 9/9, (September 1960), p.6
\item C. Evatt to D. Howie, Secretary, Sub-Committee on Human Rights, draft letter, August 1951; General Correspondence box 8/2782
\end{itemize}
what was to happen to the reserves, and the objection that in many country towns there were far more Aborigines than could live in four houses, simply were not faced. The Chairman of the Board, Kingsmill, similarly ignored the obvious question of what would happen to the reserves in a discussion paper for Board members in 1960. Assimilation was coming to a standstill, he wrote, because so much money was spent in maintaining reserves. He suggested that half the annual budget be set aside for town housing, irrespective of necessary repairs, to bring Aborigines to big centres like Sydney and Newcastle.¹

The administrators of the day-to-day policy were rather more worried by the implications of assimilation than were their superiors. In the early 1950s, the question was much discussed. For instance, in 1951 Area Welfare Officer Felton asked if assimilation meant the loss of a race's individuality, or was it only concerned with the adoption of new material, social and cultural criteria.² The question was a critical one, yet the Chairman's reply indicated that he had not grasped its significance. He replied that assimilation meant 'to absorb', and must involve to a certain degree the loss of the Aboriginal race's individuality.³ A decade later, the Area Welfare Officers met together to discuss the progress of the assimilation policy. They listed nine reasons to account for

1. Agenda of Board meeting, discussion paper for item 17, undated meeting, about November 1960; Elkin collection
2. Memo, Felton to Chairman, 4 December 1951, General Correspondence, box 8/2801
its slow progress, including strong family ties, the desire to remain with one's own people and a lack of incentive to move to towns. They recommended building larger town houses to preserve family ties, directing case work towards groups rather than individuals or families and allowing Aborigines who accepted European values to maintain a separate identity.¹

This last recommendation was the point of Felton's question in 1951 and reflected what was already happening, as will be shown, at Condobolin. Yet the recommendations went unheeded and the town housing program proceeded as if almost everyone wanted to leave the reserves, everyone wanted a house with white neighbours on each side and the few who did not were apathetic or complacent.² Elkin, at least, perceived the strength of Aboriginal opposition, though he did not publicly admit to the amount of force which was employed in the destruction of the reserves. Most of the senior executive officers not only over-rode objections to assimilation, but did not seem to understand the objections. That compromises were made was due more to circumstances outside the Board's control than to a change of heart.

Two new measures were introduced in the amendment of 1943 to induce Aborigines to take part in the white community. The

1. Minutes and report by Welfare Officers, 10-12 July 1961, A.W.B., Minutes of meetings, 4/8544

2. Unidentified comment on the findings of the Joint Committee, 1967. The memo stated that a lot of people did not want houses in town and that it might be difficult to convince them. There was no solution to their 'apathy and complacency without moral or material values'; General Correspondence, box 8/3037
scheme which allowed Aborigines to purchase houses had little consequence in Wiradjuri country since nearly all the reserve residents who chose, or were forced to move to towns, became rent-payers. More important was the system of exemption. Upon written application a person classed as Aboriginal under the Act could apply to be exempted from its provisions. A certificate so granted was subject to review, and could be withdrawn following an adverse report.\(^1\) Official propaganda maintained that exemption certificates were not discriminatory since whites also had to hold certificates to practise certain professions or drive a car. Proper social behaviour, it was argued, was a subtle form of exemption certificate, without which it was impossible to move among cultured white people.\(^2\) Amongst Aborigines it was understood that exemption, or holding a 'dog-tag', entitled a person to consume alcohol and to receive certain social service benefits.\(^3\)

On receipt of an application for exemption the Board called for a report by a manager or police officer. The official visited the applicant and on the prescribed form commented upon his or her attitudes, behaviour and home life. Many applicants probably were unaware that during the interview their house,

\(^1\) Amendment No.13 of 1943, No.3(b)

\(^2\) M. Sawtell, 'The purpose of exemption certificates', *Dawn*, 7/6 (June 1958), p.7

\(^3\) These benefits included the old age pension, provided that the claimant did not live on a reserve; cf. M. Wilkie, 'The survival of the Aboriginal family in N.S.W., 1788-1981', *Discussion paper 2 of A.C.R.P.*, p.14; xerox, 1981
garden, children and spouse were also under scrutiny. The Board generally accepted the recommendation of a report, though sometimes a negative report was over-ruled by a political motive such as the desire to exempt more Aborigines in a particular town. For example, a Hillston man in July 1947 applied for exemption. The Euabalong policeman described him as 'unthrifty', of 'medium' morality, and a drinker, whose house, effects and children were 'filthy'. He had no garden and showed little interest in his home.\(^1\) Despite the recommended rejection, the applicant was successful. In 1948 the certificate's withdrawal was recommended, since the man was alleged to have been fighting, drinking heavily and supplying alcohol to other Aborigines. Yet the certificate was retained, as it was after another adverse report in 1949.\(^2\) By a somewhat inconsistent decision, the certificate of Frank Simpson of Cowra was withdrawn in 1962. He had held it since 1950, at which time he had been described as 'a very good type', who, although placing bets, was able to provide for himself, was of 'good' morality and gave no trouble. In 1962 the manager Heaney reported that Simpson had begun drinking and the certificate was withdrawn.\(^3\)

Despite the political considerations which influenced the granting of certificates and the probability that some people

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1. Report on Herbert Pettitt, approval granted 7 October 1947, General Correspondence, box 8/2810

2. October 1948, October 1949, ibid.

3. Report on Frank Simpson, 26 September 1950; adverse report, 6 February 1962, ibid., box 8/2918
NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT
ABORIGINES PROTECTION ACT, 1909-1945, SECTION 18c
(REVISION 56)

CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION
From Provisions of the Act and Regulations

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that ...FRANK THOMAS BROUGHTON...

THREE QUARTERS Aborigine, aged 56 years, residing at ...THOMAS STREET, PARRKNS...

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

Issued on behalf of the State Government.

TWENTIETH day of ...DECEMBER, 1950...

Photograph of...

Chairman.

Affluent...

of the Aborigines Welfare Board.

Countersigned by...

The Secretary.

Signature of Holder: ...F. T. Broughton...

The exemption certificate of Frank Broughton,

Yass, 1979
regarded an application as pandering to the Board, some hundreds of Wiradjuri people received exemption. One list circulated to officials contained the names of forty-three successful Wiradjuri applicants. Some Aborigines were proud of their status, keeping their certificates years after the system fell into disuse. Others ignored or scoffed at the regulations, received alcohol from exempted Aborigines, or pretended to be Maoris when in hotel bars.

By 1960 it was clear that the system needed review. For instance, the Erambie manager reported in 1959 that most of the men working at Cowra had a few drinks after work, and did not neglect their families. In 1963, by which time 1200 Aborigines were exempt, the government proposed that among other Sections that relating to the consumption of alcohol be abolished. There was general agreement in both houses on the proposals, though one member whose electorate included Condobolin predicted that the hotels would go bankrupt because

2. For instance, Frank Broughton, of Yass
3. Mr Eddie Smith, of Cowra, when apprehended supplying alcohol to Aborigines at Young, arranged for someone else to supply it to him; recorded conversation, Erambie, 18 May 1979; Locky Ingram pretended to be Maori, and was allowed to remain in a hotel at Nowra, recorded conversation, Sydney, 6 June 1979
4. Manager's report, Erambie Station, 30 September 1961, General Correspondence, box 8/2922
5. N.S.W.P.D., L.A., 3/44, p.3184. Other Sections of the Act abolished were those which allowed the removal of an Aborigine to a reserve, removal from a township, and disallowed wandering with Aborigines; see Amendment 7 of 1963, No.2
white people would no longer drink in them. The amendment was passed. Legally the exemption system remained in force, though in practice it fell quickly into disuse.

Certification should be seen, like the town housing program itself, as part of the general encouragement of Aborigines to become assimilated. The Board's magazine Dawn became a vehicle of exhortation and recrimination. For example, an Area Welfare Officer in 1953 wrote that he had repeatedly lectured individuals and groups over such 'stupid spending' as riding in taxis. Sometimes the exhortations came close to ridicule, as on the occasion when a pensioner shared his cheque:

Unfortunately one pensioner, appears to be falling down on the job, or to be more truthful he is being dragged down by his poor type of no-hoper fellow men. The fact that he gets a regular cheque does not go unnoticed by these types, who batten on him on these occasions. Their behaviour has been noticed by the police, so we hope that this will make the old fellow 'wake up' to himself, as the saying goes.

Sometimes a reward such as a house in town was withheld until appropriate behaviour was shown. Thus, at Yass, people were told to 'regularise their matrimonial arrangements' if they wished to be considered for a town house, and a woman was not recommended for one because of the numerous relatives who, it was supposed, would 'immediately come and live with her'.

2. 'The Aborigines must help themselves', Dawn, 2/7. (July 1953), p.2
4. A.W.O., Report, 26 September 1956, General Correspondence, box 8/2852
The examples indicate that receiving a reward depended not only on adopting the desired behaviour, but eliminating some traditional practices. Sharing a cheque or a house was regarded as an inconvenient, even wilful, departure from white standards.

In the end the rewards went to those prepared to abandon older ways and beliefs. A Cowra man was granted exemption in 1959 because he had been 'permanently employed and had left the station to reside in town'. The key to a good deal of Aboriginal unhappiness in the 1950s and 1960s was, in consequence, the failure of the Board to acknowledge that Aborigines were bound by strong cultural ties. In 1948 the assimilation policy was justified on the grounds that Aborigines had neither the traditional background nor the culture of the white men to guide them. In the 1950s and 1960s the exemption policy and other encouragements still proceeded as if the European civilization was to fill a cultural vacuum.

Despite the encouragement of assimilation through exemptions and Dawn propaganda, the chief means of implementing the policy remained the closure of the reserves and the transfer of residents to towns. In Wiradjuri country, as elsewhere, three

1. Application of Gordon Simpson, 29 October 1958, approval granted 25 March 1959, General Correspondence box 8/2867

2. A.W.B., Annual report, 1947-8, p.3

3. During the 1967 Enquiry of the Joint Committee, Elkin was asked of the state of Aboriginal culture in N.S.W. He replied, 'all that has gone in their state. If they want to know anything about it they come to me'; II, p.693
groups co-operated to promote this goal in the 1950s: the Board itself, whose desire to close reserves sometimes took priority over town housing projects, the local councils, who took the view that town housing was the least undesirable of the available alternatives, and groups of concerned white people, who believed that reserve life was discriminatory and should be ended. Opposed to this scheme were some of the Wiradjuri who refused to move, the many Aborigines living off the reserves who took the places of those who had recently vacated their houses, and, by the 1960s, some of the concerned whites who now realised that some Aborigines did not want to live in towns, nor indeed become assimilated. Official policy too had by then begun to catch up with the groundswell. In 1965 the official definition of the aims of assimilation throughout the Australian states and territories was altered from the principle that Aborigines would attain the same manner of living as other Australians to one which sought that Aborigines would choose to attain a similar manner and standard of living as those of other Australians.¹

The relative strength and priorities of these groups are the themes of the following discussion and account for the differing results within the Wiradjuri region.

At Gooloogong the actions of the Board were only stayed by officials of other government departments. In July 1953 a Board official indicated that the reserve was never used by Aborigines. A week later the Lands Board was informed that the

¹ Aboriginal welfare, Conference of Commonwealth and State ministers, Adelaide, 21-22 July 1965, minutes in General Correspondence, box 8/2995
Aborigines Welfare Board had no objection to the revocation of the Gooloogong reserve. Two months later a second report indicated that some Aborigines had returned, and in April 1954, a policeman confirmed that nineteen people were living on or near to the reserve. It was a surveyor of the Lands Board who again, in 1958, pointed out to the Board that there were still Aborigines residing on the reserve. Reluctantly the Board again agreed to withhold revocation. Without further addition to the Gooloogong file, the reserve finally was revoked, after forty-six years, in August 1961.¹

At Yass also the highest priority of the Board was the closure of the reserve. The years of public criticism of Hollywood and the knowledge that all previous attempts to house the Aborigines satisfactorily had failed caused Yass to be among the first towns in the State to receive executive action after the resolution of November 1944.² In November 1946 the Lands Office was asked to provide five building blocks in Yass for 'selected families'.³ In October 1947 the question of a new reserve was deferred and the number of building sites required raised to six or eight. White objections to the existence of

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¹ Report by Board official (illegible signature), 22 July 1953, Saxby's request for information 11 August 1953, Land Board informed 18 August 1953, reports re people living at Gooloogong, 2 November 1953, 1 April 1954, Surveyors report 26 September 1958, final revocation recommended by Superintendent Green, 30 August 1961; General Correspondence, box 8/2805

² This resolution approved buying houses for Aborigines in towns, see above, Ch.5, p.214

³ A.W.B., Minutes of meetings, 26 November 1946
any reserve continued: a local paper in 1948 reasoned that shifting the Hollywood reserve would prevent extension of the residential area in the vicinity of the proposed new reserve, perturb those who had to walk past it to visit the cemetery and encourage Aborigines to come into town. It was scarcely surprising that in November 1950 the Yass municipal council resolved to co-operate in the 'absorption' of Aborigines. Thus, as in the 1920s, the feelings of the local white people strengthened the Board's hand. While the Board and the council were united, the third assimilationist force was weak in Yass, for matters of local Aboriginal concern were regarded, according to the Area Welfare Officer, as a Catholic effort. A meeting in 1953 which could have led to the establishment of an assimilation organisation fizzled out and some of the participants were described as 'well-meaning, but out of their depth'. Partly because of the lack of such an organisation, the elimination of the reserve took precedence even over the construction of houses in town for the residents whom the Board intended to expel, for there were at least ten families in residence at Hollywood in the early 1950s. Similarly, no provision was made for housing Aborigines living in poor conditions elsewhere on the fringes of Yass.

1. A.W.B. Minutes of meetings, 7 October 1947; Tribune Courier, 25 March 1948, quoted Rowley, op.cit., 1972, p.84
2. A.W.B., Minutes of meetings, 17 January 1950
3. A.W.O. Sephton, Report, September 1953, General Correspondence, box 8/2801
Six houses in town were nearing completion in December 1954. A list was drawn up of eligible families, most of whom lived on the reserve. Some Aborigines were rejected out of hand. For example, Alec Russell, a Hollywood resident, was dismissed as 'vicious, dirty, immoral and disliked by all'. Thomas Brown, a pensioner also resident on the reserve, wrote to the Board that it would be a blessing for his wife and himself to 'dwell among the white community', since both were respected by the police and a large percentage of leading citizens. His application too was rejected, probably on the grounds that the houses were intended for large families. Other applicants were rejected because they did not live at Hollywood. Ferdinand Bell, receiving notice of rejection for this reason, protested that most Hollywood people belonged to other places and had chopped up their houses, while he and his wife had been at North Yass all their lives. Area Welfare Officer Sephton argued against the renewed application on the grounds that the reserve should be demolished and thus the Board had a greater responsibility towards those residents than towards people living independently in town. Meanwhile at Hollywood conditions steadily deteriorated. Sephton described them as 'bad' in December 1954 and believed that Aborigines remaining

1. A.W.O. Sephton, Report, 8 December 1954, General Correspondence, box 8/2852

2. T. Brown to A.W.B., n.d., about September 1955, ibid., box 8/2863

there had no chance of increasing their status in the white community. ¹

By early 1955 it was apparent that even those who wished to stay on the reserve had little prospect of being allowed to. Most of those unplaced in the first six families on the housing list were forcibly moved to Erambie. Amongst them was the family of the 'vicious, dirty and immoral' Alec Russell, although Mrs Russell protested that she had lived in Yass all her life, and never under a manager. ² Mrs Rosemary Connors was told that her house was unfit for human habitation. Unless she moved either to Erambie or Wallaga Lake Station, her children would be charged with neglect and removed. ³ She too had asked for a house in town and had been refused. Thus as the opening of the six houses approached in early 1955, a large correspondence developed between the Board and dozens of Yass Aborigines, the numbers of those who positively wanted a house swollen by those who could see no alternative, now that the destruction of Hollywood was a certainty, beyond removal to Erambie.

Dawn reported that the six selected families took possession of their homes in May in an article headed

New homes welcomed

Excitement at Yass ⁴

1. A.W.O. Sephton, Report, December 1954, General Correspondence box 8/2852
3. Conversation Rosemary Connors
Although no further new houses were planned, the efforts of those displaced to obtain a house did not abate. Applications also were received from some who had moved from Yass some years previously. On the reserve, some of the vacated houses were re-occupied and the chief priority of the Board, Hollywood's revocation, remained unfulfilled. The Department of Education was asked to remove the school building, since a family lived in it, and because of a legal technicality which prevented revocation while improvements remained on a reserve. Three months after the new houses in town were occupied, three families remained at Hollywood, those of Harry Williams, who wanted to stay, Rosemary Connors, who refused to move, and Thomas Brown, who had applied for a house in town and been refused. The builder to whom the reserve cottages had already been sold was asked to hurry the demolition of the remaining ones. Mrs Connors then moved to Erambie. It was proposed that the pensioner Brown and his wife be allowed to remain for the rest of their lives in an unobtrusive corner of the reserve; then in 1956 he too received a house in town. In 1959 Williams was still listed as living at Hollywood, though probably he had been initially shifted to Erambie and later

1. For example, Frank Broughton, 7 January 1958, General Correspondence, box 8/2927
2. A.W.B. to Department of Education, 27 February 1955, ibid., box 8/2848
4. 9 August 1955, ibid., box 8/2927
5. 5 August 1955, ibid.
returned. Special efforts were directed to be made to place him in another residence. In February 1960, his family and another recently arrived at Hollywood were 'transferred' from Hollywood to Erambie. The Area Welfare Officer in response to a question from Head Office reported that it was not thought that Hollywood would ever again be required for the use of Aborigines and recommended its revocation. In 1982 the broken toys, the rusty bed-heads, the fruit-trees, tank foundations and all the other signs of former habitation were bulldozed into the ground and the area sold. The 'assimilation' of the Yass Aborigines was complete.

Although the Board's principal objective had at last been won in 1960, its problems were not at an end. In 1966, one woman owed rent of $733, and was evicted from her house in town. Another owed $743 and was allowed to remain. Many Aborigines did not return to Yass even when housing was available. The family of Douglas Williams, for example, remained at Erambie and

1. A.W.O., Report, 28 November 1958. On 15 November the demolisher was reported to be 'very anxious that action be taken to obtain the evacuation to the [Williams] house, by the family, so that he can proceed to remove the structure'; advice that Williams and another couple had been removed to Erambie was received 22 February 1960; General Correspondence box 8/2927
3. Statement of rental arrears, June 1965, ibid., box 8/2965
4. ibid.
The Hollywood reserve, Yass, 1980
retained a self confident Aboriginal identity.\(^1\) Others, such as Rosemary Connors, returned, but the solidarity of reserve life had gone. Too few of the Wiradjuri lived in town to re-form the old community. The dispersal of the Wiradjuri at Yass must in local terms be counted one of the Board's successes.

Late in 1950 rumours began to spread among the white people of Cowra that the Aborigines Welfare Board had plans to shift some of the Erambie people to the town. Opposition began at once. The director of Edgells wrote to the State member of parliament asking if Chief Secretary Evatt would like Aborigines in his own home or family life. Assuming a negative reply, he then asked why Cowra citizens should have this nuisance inflicted on them.\(^2\) Meanwhile the Federal member, who had also been approached, wrote to Evatt asking if it were true that Aborigines were to be housed at Mulyan (a Cowra suburb). He hoped it was not.\(^3\) Opposition increased when it became apparent that the planned housing project was about to begin. Evatt was concerned that a Cowra builder had been prevented or dissuaded from beginning work. It appeared that not only were the workmen opposed to the construction, but that clients had

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1. Recorded conversations Pearly Williams; Michael Williams, Erambie, 15 April 1979; Matilda House (nee Williams), Canberra, 16 October 1979; Neville Williams

2. T. Edgell to F. Cahill M.L.A., 23 November 1950, ibid., box 8/2809

threatened to withdraw their custom.\textsuperscript{1} In April 1951 Evatt announced that four houses were to be built as part of the assimilation plan and that he would not be intimidated by local prejudice.\textsuperscript{2} Local prejudice immediately increased. An alternative plan to build the houses in another area caused a petition to be sent to the Board, in which it was claimed the petitioners, who had 'nothing against the natives', had been happy with the first area selected, but would not accept the second choice.\textsuperscript{3} Evatt again expressed determination to build the houses, and the Cowra Guardian ran an article headed 'Govt. is determined on local govt. sites for abos'.\textsuperscript{4} The local State member, who had supported the petition, was informed by Evatt that half the State's Aborigines were already assimilated and that while segregation was maintained, the position could never improve. Aborigines were resentful, he argued, if held back. The goal of the Board was the 'ultimate and complete assimilation of the aborigines into the white community'.\textsuperscript{5} In less forthright tones, Evatt informed the Cowra town clerk that town housing was an approach to an important problem.\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Minute, Under Secretary to Chief Secretary, A.W.B., and subsequent discussion with Crown Solicitor, 30 March 1951, General Correspondence box 8/2781
\item Undated press cutting, April 1951, ibid.
\item Petition of Cowra residents, 9 May 1951, ibid., box 8/2809
\item Guardian, 20 May 1951, ibid.
\item Evatt to Cahill, 7 July 1951, ibid.
\item Evatt to Town Clerk, Cowra Municipal Council, 12 June 1951, ibid.
\end{enumerate}
The opposition showed that, as at Condobolin in 1926, the Board could do little in the face of local hostility to its policies. It was the council, not the Board, which on the recommendation of the Health Inspector pulled down two camps near the reserve in 1953 and it was the Board which had to find a home for the Aborigines in them.\(^1\) The Cowra town housing program remained the smallest of the Wiradjuri towns. Four houses were at length constructed at Mulyan, but a further plan to build on Billygoat Hill, a tourist area, had to be abandoned.\(^2\) The lack of an assimilation organisation and the strength of local feeling against town housing, lasting well into the 1960s, caused the Board to allow Erambie to survive. Only months after Evatt had announced that he would not be intimidated by local prejudice, the Board reported that eighteen new houses were to be constructed on the Erambie reserve.\(^3\)

A further reason for the survival of Erambie was the number of Aborigines arriving from areas where dispersal was already under way. In 1955 Mrs J. Morgan arrived from Wattle Hill claiming that the local council had evicted her.\(^4\) The families of Harry Williams, Alec Williams, Rosemary Connors and Alec Russell had come from Yass, that of Mrs Olive Williams from Brungle.\(^5\)

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1. Press cutting 24 November 1953 (Guardian), and recommendations re placement by A.W.O., 30 November 1953, General Correspondence box 8/2824
2. Recorded conversation George Pickering
3. A.W.B., Annual report, 1951-2, p.4
4. A.W.O., Report, 28 February 1955, General Correspondence, box 8/2833
5. As above, recorded conversation Olive Williams, Erambie, 12 December 1979
People displaced from Yass continued to arrive throughout the mid 1950s, until in 1957 the manager requested head office to send no more, since they were disruptive and 'a disgrace to Cowra'.

Among the 'disruptive' arrivals were the Russells, evicted from Yass in 1955. At Erambie a Board officer, Mrs Fleming, reported that they were making little improvement. In her opinion, the children were filthy and bedraggled, Mr Russell refused to work and Mrs Russell, though doing the best she could, was incapable of doing anything better. Meanwhile Mrs Russell wrote to the Board that her husband had not been able to get a job in Cowra, the children were starving and that they would have to return to Hollywood: 'youse sent us over here and let others live at Hollywood and nothing has been done about it'. Superintendent Saxby informed the Russells in November 1955 that no house was available in Yass and that their standard of living would determine their future home. The following year Area Welfare Officer Sephton wanted the family removed from Erambie. The Superintendent replied that a charge of neglect was the best way to effect this and that the Russells should be told that they could have a supervised house in Cowra town.

1. Erambie Manager, Report, 10 September 1957, General Correspondence box 8/2833
3. Alice Russell to A.W.B., 10 November 1955, ibid.
5. Correspondence A.W.O. Sephton and Superintendent, March 1956, ibid., box 8/2833
family remained. In 1956 Alec Russell owed considerable arrears of rent and, according to the manager, had 49 convictions.\(^1\) His son 'would not work', his wife was 'bad' and he occupied the worst house on the station.\(^2\) Superintendent Green advised the Chairman that he either could serve notice to quit on Russell alone and then remove his children, a process which he advised was very slow, or, alternatively, the whole family could be evicted.\(^3\) The latter course was adopted. Evicted from Yass because they were not good enough for a town house, the Russells were now evicted from Cowra because they were not good enough for a reserve. The process made nonsense of the claim that the only justification for the continuation of reserves was to allow training for assimilation.\(^4\) Mrs Russell refused a transport warrant and announced that she would walk back to Yass.\(^5\) The family wandered between Yass and Brungle. In August 1965 they were reported to be staying with another Aboriginal pensioner at Yass. The rental arrears were written off, since there appeared to be no hope of recovery.\(^6\) In 1968 Alec Russell was at

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1. Statement of rental arrears, June 1961, General Correspondence box 8/2965
2. Manager, Report, 8 May 1965, ibid., box 8/2997
3. Green, memo to Chairman, 8 June 1965, ibid.
4. Evatt to Cahill, 7 July 1951, ibid., box 8/2809
5. Senior Welfare Officer, Report, 23 July 1965, ibid., box 8/2997
6. 9 August 1965, 20 December 1965, ibid.
Brungle and characterised by an official as 'a blow-in alcoholic from Yass'.

In October 1947 the Board discussed the 'proposed distribution of the remaining Aboriginal population of Brungle' and resolved that the residents should be informed that building blocks would be purchased for them in Tumut. The scheme was not pursued, and two years later was again deferred. Throughout the 1950s, the Board's efforts were confined to such measures as 'dissuading' people from living on the reserve and demolishing empty buildings. It was not until the 1960s that efforts began in earnest to shift people to Tumut.

The requests of the residents to improve station conditions gave point to Kingsmill's assertion that assimilation was coming to a standstill while repairs to stations were made. In 1962 the residents of the four cottages at Brungle petitioned the Board to connect electricity, as had been done at Erambie a decade earlier. The ensuing discussion at Head Office revealed that, in addition, kitchen and laundries had been promised to residents prepared to sign tenancies, an agreement not honoured.

1. Canberra Times, 8 May 1968, cutting annotated by official, General Correspondence box 8/3036
2. A.W.B., Minutes of meetings, 7 October 1947
3. 20 July 1949, ibid.
4. Letter of 12 residents to A.W.B., 4 May 1962, General Correspondence, box 8/2963
by the Board. Head Office procrastinated until the State member of parliament brought pressure. Lights and one power point were installed in each of the four cottages in 1965, though the residents of the eleven shacks remained without water or power. The policy to let the condition of Brungle run down in preparation for the time when houses were made available in town remained in force. If Aborigines were induced to leave on account of the poor conditions, the Board presumably reasoned that that was so much the better. The deterioration of the reserve was to be halted only if parliament or the press, not Aborigines, brought the situation to light. Nor had local officials of the Board much power to move Head Office if their protests were unbacked by publicity. A report in 1964 that the four cottages were still without bathrooms and kitchens and had 36 broken windows between them was merely noted.

At about the same time the Board decided to abandon temporarily its long-term goal of revoking the reserve and to concentrate its efforts in removing the 80 odd people living in tin and hessian huts. An article in the Wagga Daily Advertiser contained several allegations of shack destruction. For instance, Buddy Freeman was told to pull his 'humpy' down or the Board would 'have to put a tractor through it'. Lindsay

1. Discussion of petition forwarded by C. Kelly M.L.A., 22 July 1962, General Correspondence box 8/2963
2. File note, April 1965, ibid.
3. A.W.O., Report, 10 August 1964, ibid., box 8/2973
Connelly stated, 'If you add a couple of rooms to a humpy the Board will make you pull them down again.' 1 An officer told the reporter that a grant of £600 had been made to supply kitchen and laundry facilities to the four cottages, but that no provision had been made to build new houses at Brungle in the following year. He added ambiguously that it was policy to build houses for Aborigines where necessary. 2

A month after the Commonwealth and State ministers ruled that henceforward Aborigines would be encouraged to choose a similar manner and standard of living to that of the whites, the secretary of the Riverina Aborigines Advancement Association wrote to enquire of the Board's plans for Brungle. The somewhat unguarded reply was that Brungle had not been included in the four year plan beginning in 1966. 3 The secretary at once wrote to the Deputy Minister of Education to point out that the proposal to do nothing about the reserve for the next five years was quite inadequate. He stated that it was hard to believe that needs were more pressing elsewhere, since sixteen families lived in squalid conditions, to which running water was not supplied. 4 The Superintendent conceded that 112 people lived in the four cottages and eleven shacks and that water connection

1. Daily Advertiser, 9 June 1965
2. Ibid.
3. F. Warren to A.W.B., 13 September 1965, Green to Warren, 8 October 1965, General Correspondence, box 8/3001
4. Warren to W. Fife, 3 November 1965, Ibid.; Fife was the Member for Wagga Wagga
was a possibility, but neglected to inform the secretary of the pressure put upon the shack residents to quit the reserve.  

Brungle remained the 'poor relation' of the Board's south-eastern stations as it had been since 1947.

Preoccupied with Bega and Nowra and having postponed the revocation, the Board did not even now move speedily to secure town housing. In December 1966 the Snowy Mountains Authority enquired if the Board wished to purchase any of thirty-eight portable cottages. The Superintendent replied that the Board would not be able to make the decision for a year and in November 1967 the offer was withdrawn. In October 1967 the New South Wales Real Estate Office asked if the Board wished to purchase building sites in Tumut. It replied that it wished to purchase three and the Area Welfare Officer reported in 1968 that seven Brungle families wished to go to Tumut. But by then this offer also had lapsed and in 1970 it was announced that the building program would have to be postponed until 1971.

In May 1968 the Canberra Times published an article strongly critical of the Board's performance at Brungle. Several

1. Memo on file by Green, 26 January 1966, General Correspondence box 8/3001

2. G. Sullivan to A.W.B., 22 December 1966; Green to Sullivan, 31 May 1967; file note, November 1967, ibid., box 8/3209


photographs depicted the poor living conditions. The article claimed that the Board had leased out most of the reserve to farmers in the belief that it was of no further use. After years of management, the people still could not live in town. Sores and sickness would continue until the residents were allowed to move.\(^1\) In high irritation, someone at Head Office corrected what were seen to be the article's many inaccuracies. The truth was that the war of attrition with the Brungle shack residents had been only partly successful. Several people either had departed, or wanted to: Mrs Olive Williams, for instance, went to Erambie because there was no shop or public transport.\(^2\) To the Board, the number was too small.

In 1968 the offensive was not only carried to the destruction of shacks, but to the removal of individuals. The process was exemplified in the case of Eric Marlowe. In September 1968 Area Welfare Officer Sullivan told Marlowe that he must leave his Brungle shack, and the reserve, or face a charge of refusing to obey a lawful order. The shack, Marlowe was told, must be torn down.\(^3\) In October Marlowe told Sullivan that he refused to leave the station. Sullivan countered that Marlowe had entered the station of his own free will and that he had never before resided on an Aboriginal reserve.\(^4\) He neglected to

1. *Canberra Times*, 18 May 1968
2. Recorded conversation Olive Williams
3. A.W.O. Report, 30 October 1968, General Correspondence, box 8/3036
4. Ibid.
inform Head Office, however, that Marlowe had recently married Winifred Williams, who had been born and raised on the station. Final notice to quit was served on the Marlowes on 30 October 1968 and they moved to Tumut in a house provided by the Board. It was as if the distinction between 'a similar manner of living', which presumably incorporated a choice of location, and 'the same manner of living' of the older definition of assimilation had been lost. The argument that life on a reserve did not allow a person to live as a member of a single Australian community could be countered by the fact that forced eviction from a reserve did not allow an Aborigine to choose anything but a house in town.

In 1980 Mrs Marlowe spoke of the terrible conditions at Brungle in the late 1960s and recalled that at the time she had been prepared to exchange reserve life for a proper house with a sound roof, running water and electricity. Six families left Brungle for Tumut at about the same time. She regretted that the families had not together demanded improvements to be made on the reserve, for she believed, in 1980, that their united efforts would have forced the Board to build houses for the shack dwellers on the reserve, and that, even then, several

1. Recorded conversation Winifred Marlowe, Tumut, 5 September 1980
2. A.W.O., Report, 30 October 1968, General Correspondence, box 8/3036
families would have moved back at any time had transport, supplies and reasonable accommodation been available.\footnote{Recorded conversation Winifred Marlowe; conversation Buddy Freeman, Tumut, 6 May 1980}

The usual official reaction to unsupported Aboriginal demands makes doubtful Mrs Marlowe's belief that the Board would have backed down, but the context in which some of the shack dwellers finally left Brungle is clear. In 1970 Brungle was reduced to the four, forty year old wooden cottages, an objective still short of the Board's decision of 1947. More force had been used to accomplish this limited objective than on any other of the official reserves, yet such was the strength of the Board's propaganda and the conviction of many concerned whites that Aborigines did not want to live on the reserves, that the facts of how and why the reserve was reduced have remained obscure. The policy of some government departments today appears to be based on the premise of a voluntary exodus. Thus, a survey taken in 1980 by the Federal Department of Housing and Construction and the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs noted that the history of Brungle in published documents was very sketchy, which was partly to be explained by the 'progressive diminution' of the residents. From the unexplained fact that only one family in ten had moved back to the reserve between 1970 and 1980 was deduced the conclusion that few wanted
to return, and, therefore, the Housing Commission would build no new houses there. ¹

The principal lever for the dispersal of Griffith Aborigines into the town was initially not the Board, but local pressure. The local council wanted some of the land on which the Aborigines were living for a housing estate. In 1959 the first objective was Frog's Hollow, across the channel from the Three Ways reserve, where many people who could not or did not want to stay on the reserve lived in tin, wooden or hessian shacks. ² By the time the decision to resume the area was taken, the battle to allow Aborigines to move to town was already won. Earlier in the year the council, after a heated meeting from which the press was barred, had agreed to allow Archie Bamblett to live in town. The experiment was claimed to be successful. The Sunday Telegraph described it in June 1959 as an object lesson for all Australians in the overdue and tricky business of assimilating Aborigines. Bamblett, the article related, was one of Griffith's happiest residents, and his wife regularly

¹ 'Pilot study of selected N.S.W. Aboriginal reserves', 1980, pp.13-14. In 1982, however, it was claimed that at least 15 former Brungle families would move from Tumut to the reserve as soon as facilities were provided; pers. comm. Coral Bolger, November 1982

² Riverina Advocate, 6 July 1959. Apart from Three Ways and Frogs Hollow, the principal Aboriginal living areas in 1964 were the Hill Camp, and the council camping ground; Rowley, op.cit., 1972, p.142
entertained her white neighbours and kept her house 'spotlessly clean'.

The phenomenon of local support for the Board's policy was repeated a month later when the Griffith Aboriginal Assimilation Organisation was founded. Its members passed unanimous motions in favour of assimilation, the erection of houses in the white community as quickly as possible and the selection of suitable tenants. Four more houses were built by the Board and were ready for occupation in May 1960 at 16s. per week rental.

Though only five families from more than 30 had been housed, the G.A.A.O. was exultant. In the patronising language with which Dawn customarily favoured its readers, the treasurer encouraged further applications:

...these new cottages will be let to 4 very lucky families. Many are wondering who they will be - whoever they are, I'm sure they will be proud of such lovely homes...Are you really keen to have a nice new home? Talk with your Assimilation Organisation Executive about it.

There was considerable competition for the new houses, not all of which, as at Yass, was prompted by the desire for 'a nice new home'. Mrs Betty Little revealed the ugly side of assimilation at Griffith when she asked for a house on the grounds that her previous one, where she lived with her seven children, had been

1. Sunday Telegraph, 21 June 1959
2. Riverina Advocate, 6 July 1959
3. A.W.O., Report, 18 May 1969, General Correspondence, box 8/2975
4. Dawn, 9/6 (June 1960), p.17
demolished by the council while she was away millet-cutting.\(^1\)
The letters of application and rejection followed a familiar pattern. Mrs Tilly Carberry's application was rejected on the grounds that her family was too small.\(^2\) Another man's application was rejected on the grounds that he was an 'inferior' type who had made no effort to improve his living condition.\(^3\)

As at Brungle, a distinction was drawn by the Board between the houses which it had built on the reserve and the shacks which had been erected by residents. When in 1963 a Health Inspector reported that the latter ought to be demolished, the Board concurred, but noted that as soon as one family was evicted, another moved in. A file note read, 'this illustrates the difficulties in cleaning up undesirable encampments - we now have the same conditions existing which the new houses were to solve'.\(^4\)

Although the dispersal policy at Griffith was supported by local priorities, in no Wiradjuri town were the aims of the assimilationists more diverse. The council's primary aim was the resumption of land for European-style housing and it

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1. Betty Little to A.W.B., 18 September 1961, General Correspondence, box 8/2974
2. G.A.A.O. to A.W.B., re Tilly Carberry, 2 April 1963, ibid., box 8/2975
4. A.W.O. Lambert, Report, 6 May 1963, file note by Green, ibid., box 8/2950
remained unenthusiastic about Aborigines living in town. The Board was intent on removing the fringe camps and later, if possible, the reserve itself, but knew from experience that housing had to be provided for the families it intended to disperse. Predictably, the artificial unity of these forces with the G.A.A.O. did not last and the latter was the first of the three to question the wisdom of integrated town housing. Its fifth annual report stated that it was 'wrong to insist on Aborigines abandoning their heritage by the cultural suicide of assimilation', and proposed changing the name of the organisation by substituting 'Advancement' for 'Assimilation'.  

The following year, 1965, the Annual report noted some dissatisfaction felt by white members about an apparent lack of response by Aborigines to many of their efforts. An Aboriginal sub-committee was formed, a hall was built on the reserve and more attention was given to solving mundane questions like organising concerts, repairing windows, procuring taps and clearing rubbish. In the public sphere, less emphasis was given to integrated housing, more to solving the refusal of the taxi and school bus services to enter the reserve, finding jobs and investigating complaints about the police.  

By 1966 the G.A.A.O. was trying to prevent reserve

1. Rowley, op.cit., 1972, p.143

2. G.A.A.O., Sixth Annual Report, 1964-5, in General Correspondence, box 8/3001

3. ibid.; recorded conversation D.C. Stanley-Smith (former treasurer, G.A.A.O.), Griffith, 6 May 1980; evidence E. Linacre Report from the joint committee..., II, pp.486-7
conditions from worsening and in 1967 a member of the committee told a Parliamentary Enquiry that at least a quarter of the Three Ways residents wished to remain.¹

It was apparent that not only did some Aborigines not want to live in town, but that some who tried it were unhappy. Not least of the reasons was the townsfolk's hostility to Aboriginal neighbours. For instance, one white woman poured oil on the dividing fence to prevent her Aboriginal neighbour from hanging the washing on it.² Even some of those whom the G.A.A.O. regarded as satisfactorily housed and who did not wish to return to the reserve, found life a constant strain. For instance, Mrs Pat Undy felt that she would be criticised by her white neighbours if her relatives stayed with her too long, her children walked on nearby lawns, if the dog barked or if her family shouted at one another.³ Some refused absolutely to move from the reserve, which supports Monk's hypothesis that group closeness at Three Ways acted as a deterrent to those who might have contemplated moving.⁴ By a reversal of the argument used to force Mrs Connors to leave Hollywood, Mrs Mavis Reid was told that if she left Three Ways for a house in town

1. E. Linacre, Report from the joint committee..., II, p.485
2. Recorded conversation D.C. Stanley-Smith
3. Conversation Pat Undy, Griffith, 6 May 1980
4. Monk, op.cit., p.278
she would be more likely to have returned some of her children, who had been removed from her.¹

Though the G.A.A.O. perceived the depth of opposition by some Aborigines to leaving the reserve, other concerned white opinion maintained that the only alternative to bad reserve housing was new housing in town. For instance, the Australian in 1966 reported that only five out of forty Griffith Aboriginal families thought themselves adequately housed. Only thirteen had water and electricity, eighteen had earth floors and twenty families had lived in the same house for more than twenty years.² The implication was obvious that Aborigines should live in new houses in town. By this time, though, both the council and the Board had concluded that compromise was necessary. Probably both had realised that the eviction of everyone from Three Ways could cause an intolerable demand for town housing and the proliferation of fringe camps. A constant stream of tent-dwellers were arriving in 1967 which the Board feared could be embarrassing if 'publicity-seekers' took up the matter.³ In the same year the council was content to restrict its activities to moving on families who camped away from the larger reserves.⁴ In 1969 the most important physical change was the new housing estate at

¹ Recorded conversation Mavis Reid, Three Ways, 5 May 1980
² Australian, 6 May 1966
³ Welfare officer, Report, 9 June 1967, General Correspondence, box 8/2950
⁴ A.W.O., Report, 27 July 1967, re three families moved on from a camp near the aerodrome, ibid.
Frog's Hollow. Several Aborigines lived in houses close to the site where their shacks had stood ten years before, and where, ten years before that, four or five families had lived undisturbed by the whites. \(^1\) There were fewer Aboriginal families camped elsewhere in the district, the G.A.A.O. had ceased to exist. Aborigines no longer held the public interest of the whites.

The Aborigines who remained at Three Ways had won sympathy from some of the whites who formerly had believed in integrated town housing for all. Many whites further removed from day to day contact with Aborigines misunderstood those who desired to remain. The belief that such people had in some way failed their responsibility was implied in a question directed at the Three Ways resident E.S. Charles, during the Parliamentary Enquiry in 1967. After an interview in which Charles alleged illegal police entry and Board heavy-handedness, he was asked in some irritation,

And yet you have not made any effort to establish yourself in town, to save up for a place in town at all?

to which the witness replied,

No. \(^2\)

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1. See above, Ch.6, p.227

2. Report from the joint committee... II, evidence E.S. Charles, pp.494-8
In May 1948 A.P. Elkin submitted a report on the Aborigines of Condobolin. He noted that the police spent a third of their time dealing with them and estimated that perhaps three families on the Murie, and two on the reserve, could be moved to town. The rest needed a manager and few would be induced to leave. Yet neither the Murie nor the reserve were suitable places to raise children.\(^1\)

Elkin implied that the two reserves should be closed and a new one built. The municipal council concurred, and in the late 1940s several possible sites were investigated. All were rejected, the reservoir hill, for instance, because it was a tourist attraction and another area because Aborigines travelling to town would pass through white residential areas.\(^2\) In May 1949, 129 Condobolin residents petitioned the Board to close the reserve and to shift everyone to the Murie. This the Board refused.\(^3\)

Public pressure increased on the Board to make a decision. Groups of concerned white people, such as the local branch of the Australian Labor Party, sent letters of concern at the poor state of the reserves.\(^4\) In August 1956, six years after the

1. A.P. Elkin, Report, 31 May 1948, General Correspondence, box 8/2851
2. W.A. Bayley, Down the Lachlan years ago, 1965, p.143; A.W.O., Report, 29 January 1949, General Correspondence, box 8/2851
3. Petition of Condobolin residents, 12 May 1949, ibid.
Yass council had come to the conclusion that town housing was the lesser of two evils, the Condobolin council decided to allow Aborigines to live in town on condition that their houses were of a better standard than those of the reserve.¹ It was just 30 years since the council had tried to force the Board into removing the Wiradjuri from the area altogether. In 1958 the Committee for the Assimilation of Aborigines held its first meeting.² A year later four Board-built houses in a single street were declared open.³

In 1968 the number of houses owned by the Board in Condobolin had risen to twenty-eight. Unlike other Wiradjuri towns, this meant that almost everyone who wanted to move to town was able to do so. Some Aborigines were pleased with the shift to town. For instance, Mrs Bonnie Merritt, who had lived at both the Murie and the reserve in the 1940s and 1950s, acquired her own house in about 1965. Although she conceded that some houses on both reserves had been demolished and that some people had been forced to come to town, she stated in 1980 that she would never return to a reserve. She approved of integrated housing because Aborigines never would 'straighten themselves out with Aborigine neighbours'. She believed that if 'you put them alongside white people, they've got to behave themselves'.⁴ Yet despite the

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¹ Lachlander, 31 August 1956
² Bayley, op.cit., p.145
³ A.W.O., Report, 2 August 1963, General Correspondence, box 8/2973
⁴ Recorded conversation Bonnie Merritt
number of people who were content with town life, there were indications that assimilation by dispersal was not to be achieved by a simple formula of town housing.

A significant difference between Condobolin and other Wiradjuri towns was that, because of the large number of people shifted, most town Aborigines continued to live near one another. The point was raised by the Condobolin Lachlander in 1969, which in a leading article entitled, 'The blunder of Aboriginal town housing plan' criticised the Board's local policy. It argued that by building rows of cheap houses, the Board had in effect simply removed one big reserve outside town and created several smaller ones inside. What good was that, asked the paper, to the real interests of the Aborigines? The white people suffered also, it was argued, from the inevitable depreciation of land values, the declining status of the town to prospective residents and the fall in the living environments of the ordinary residents.¹

Why such large numbers of Aborigines had been moved to town, when the usual policy was not more than six families and why they were housed in groups of adjoining dwellings in only four areas of town, are questions not answered in the records. The council's well documented dislike of the reserves and the white residents' desire to keep the Aborigines in as few areas of town as possible were probably important factors. The paper nevertheless indicated the significant fact that town housing

¹. Lachlander, 27 June 1969
did not necessarily disallow the continuation of reserve life solidarity. What developed at Condobolin, as the welfare officers had suggested in 1961, was that Aborigines, accepting some European values, maintained a separate identity.\(^1\) Iredale found in 1965 that Murie Aborigines in particular had a strong self-image as 'blacks', and rejected white values.\(^2\) It is likely that this identity, more self-defensive and inward-looking than that of Erambie Aborigines, was carried into the town where it continued to flourish through proximity to relatives and neighbours from the reserves. The dark colouring and distinctive Aboriginal features of many Condobolin Aborigines remarked by Iredale may have reinforced white hostility and helped to isolate the Aborigines.\(^3\)

Thus Mrs Merritt, though she approved of integrated housing, stated that she ceased to feel ashamed of being Aboriginal at about the same time as she left the reserve. While some of the white people in the street were threatening to sell their houses, Mrs Merritt offered to fight any who 'hunted' her children away. The solidarity of numbers which the Erambie Aborigines enjoyed evidently gave a similar strength to Mrs Merritt: 'Now I'll stand up for my rights', she declared, 'no

\(^1\) See above, Ch.7, p.270


\(^3\) p.85, ibid.
white person'll walk over me, no police, that's out, those days are gone'.

The Aboriginality of town dwellers was not that of the reserves. There was an acceptance of some of the values of the country town, such as accumulating capital, holding a job, owning a car and 'behaving yourself'. Yet identification among Condobolin Aborigines remained strong. Many town Aborigines found that they could remain apart from the whites more easily than they could at Yass, Tumut or Griffith. It was possible to live in Condobolin town, yet not speak to a white person for a week.

Town life in Condobolin had offered to Aborigines an opportunity to adopt some of the material values of the whites, but within an Aboriginal environment.

Physically, the policy of dispersal had led by 1965 to a great reduction in the size of the official reserve population. Some eighty of 348 Aborigines were housed in town. By 1970 the

1. Recorded conversation Bonnie Merritt
3. This conclusion is not in agreement with J. Western, 'The attitudes of white Australian to Australian Aborigines - some survey results', in D. Tugby, op.cit., 53-74, p.73. Western suggested that, contrary to popular mythology, contact with Aborigines and favourable attitudes went together. Among other defects in Western's methodology, it is likely that there was too great reliance on the ability and readiness of respondents to speak truthfully about their feelings on a controversial matter.
4. Iredale, op.cit., p.74
percentage of town residents was much higher, for, largely on
the initiative of the council, the Murie had been destroyed by
demolition and bulldozing. The official reserve remained,
partly, like Griffith, through the influx of Aborigines from
elsewhere and partly through the resistance of some of the
residents. A further explanation was the diversification of the
activities of the Assimilation Committee, whose twenty members
had voted, not only to promote assimilation, but to work for
better conditions and to provide personal assistance to
individuals. In the early 1960s the Committee helped
construct sixteen new homes on the reserve. In town, the
twenty-eight houses had enabled a sub-culture to provide not
only an untraumatic area for learning to cope with the dominant
system, but an opportunity for the development of an Aboriginal
world-view containing many elements of reserve life.

The Board's records contain no reference to the dispersal of
Aborigines from Wattle Hill, near Leeton. Several residents,
such as Mary Lyons of Narrandera, returned to their home towns
in the mid-1950s. Iris Clayton, sent to the Cootamundra

1. See K. Gilbert, Living black, 1977, pp.196-7; Rowley
op.cit., 1972, pp.216-7; according to Welfare Officer
Seymour, the last people left the Murie in August
1968; General Correspondence, box 8/3017

2. Objectives of Condobolin Progress Association,
6 January 1961, General Correspondence, box 8/2972

3. Iredale, op.cit., p.66

4. Conversation Mary Lyons
girls' home in 1957, stated that none of her brothers or sisters returned to Leeton for any length of time. Most now live in Sydney. Many of the former residents, she stated, now live in Leeton itself. 1 Lindsay Grant believed that the council began to clear the area for a new and prestigious housing development in about 1957. The area had been bulldozed, but he believed that nobody minded very much: most of the people who wanted to live in town already did so in Housing Commission houses. 2

Ironically, the one area where most Aborigines voluntarily moved to town without strong pressure from the three agencies of assimilation, was Narrandera. By the early 1950s, the last of the Sandhills residents had moved to a new area, also known as the Sandhills, on the western edge of town. Because most had regular employment, many Aborigines were able to buy their own blocks without assistance from the Board. By 1955, there was a small Aboriginal village of a dozen houses at the new Sandhills, mainly occupied by former residents of the old Sandhills, who were in turn descended from Warangesda residents. They lived in well-constructed houses built of scrap and cheap mill timber. 3

Despite the reputation on Narrandera as a 'safe' town, the municipal council did not altogether welcome the Aborigines'

1. Recorded conversation Iris Clayton
2. Conversation Lindsay Grant
3. Pers. comm. Ossie Ingram, Narrandera, 22 May 1982
above, European-style houses, Wattle Hill, 1980

below, Mrs Winifred Marlowe, Tumut, 1980
shift to the edge of town. In about 1957 it demolished the house of Robert Carroll, who was absent, after posting a demolition notice for only a week. His son remarked that 'they just wanted to get rid of it'.\(^1\) In 1965 there were 80 people living in eleven houses which the Area Welfare Officer described as 'substantial' and 'well-furnished'.\(^2\) Rate payments were in arrears. The council appealed to the Board for financial assistance to the rate-payers, but was refused.\(^3\) It then used the arrears as an excuse to begin demolishing the buildings. In August 1965 it demolished four and announced that it would demolish the rest as each became vacant.\(^4\) Most families remained living on the new Sandhills, until in 1968 Ossie Ingram, on the advice of a Housing Commission official, applied for a loan to buy a house in town.\(^5\) Not all the home-owners followed him and in 1980 there were still five families living on or near the original blocks. As at Leeton, it was the Housing Commission, rather than the Board, which had made the transition comparatively peaceful. Many of the younger Aborigines by 1970 lived in town, including seven of Ingram's eight children.\(^6\) Mary and Effie Lyons (nee Bamblett), who were born at Warangesda, still lived at the new Sandhills, but

\(^1\) Conversation Bob Carroll
\(^2\) A.W.O., Report, 23 August 1965, General Correspondence, box 8/2998
\(^3\) File note, 22 September 1965, ibid.
\(^4\) A.W.O., Report, 23 August 1965, ibid.
\(^5\) Recorded conversation Ossie Ingram, 19 October 1980
\(^6\) Pers. comm. Ossie Ingram, 22 May 1982
most of their children and grandchildren lived in Narrandera proper. In 1980 several people stated that they were content with town life, though Ingram remarked that many people were waiting for him to return to the old Sandhills - then they would follow. In 1980 Narrandera was a more harmonious town than others which had a significant Wiradjuri population. The transition to town life had been achieved with no interference from the Board, no persuasion from an assimilation committee and rather less force from the municipal council than in most other towns.

By 1969 there was a large number of Wiradjuri families living in town houses provided by the Board, including 28 at Condobolin, six at Yass, five at Griffith, four at Cowra, a few in Wagga, Tumut and Barellan. The settlements at the Murie, Wattle Hill and Hollywood were destroyed and the old Narrandera Sandhills voluntarily abandoned. The reserves at Griffith, Brungle and Condobolin were considerably smaller. Only Erambie remained as strong, or stronger, than before. The casualties were many. At both Leeton and Condobolin, it was said, old people shifted against their will had 'just died'. If Alec and Alice Russell were penalised because they did not try hard enough to become assimilated, some

1. Pers. comm. Ossie Ingram, 22 May 1982
2. Field Officer, Report, 7 July 1968, General Correspondence, box 8/3031
3. Recorded conversation Iris Clayton, Tilly Carberry
suffered because they tried too hard. At Griffith High School in 1963 a 'light-caste' girl of 'dull, lifeless appearance' became hostile when white children called her 'blackie'. The Senior Welfare Officer judged her to be suffering from an excessive inferiority complex, although she had established a good relationship with two white teachers who 'treated her like a white girl'.

Her uncle, with whom she lived, was described by the same officer as 'very insecure' as he endeavoured to leave his own cultural group and be accepted into the normal white community. This man, continued the report, was called 'the dago' by other Aborigines, yet although he was fairly well regarded in the community, he was recognised as Aboriginal and 'consequently' rejected by whites. In his endeavour to gain acceptance, he had become abnormal in his outlook towards dress. When working round the house he wore white shirts as well as a collar and tie.

The Russells and this Griffith family were victims of different aspects of the dispersal policy. The choices of both families were limited by peer pressure, the influence of welfare officers, economic circumstance and the prejudices of white people. These limiting factors, especially the last, were seldom conceded by the Board. Although the Annual report of 1957-8 allowed that there was a little opposition in the towns to the housing program, the blame for its shortcomings was

1. Senior Welfare Officer, Report, 18 August 1963, General Correspondence, box 8/2974

2. ibid.
generally put down to the inadequacies of Aborigines. The Board believed that if 'the Aborigine' would, by adopting acceptable standards of behaviour, show that he could take his place as the peer of his fellows, there would be little doubt of his acceptance. The Annual report of 1961-2 commented disparagingly on those who made no attempt or even evinced the slightest desire to break from their poor but sheltered existence.

The evidence indicates that many Aborigines faced discrimination in country towns even when they tried to become assimilated. Nevertheless the findings of Kamien concerning the town housing project at Bourke cannot be generalised to describe the Wiradjuri towns. Kamien found that 74% of Aboriginal women with an anxiety and/or depressive state lived in houses with two white neighbours, which, while not implying causality, demonstrated a statistical association. In his opinion, fewer than ten families in 1977 could be described as white-oriented and none had been further assimilated as a result of living in town. In Wiradjuri country a large proportion of Aborigines, perhaps half, had wished to move to town, though for a considerable variety of motive. Enumerations of people unhappy living in town would, in a survey, have been qualified by

1. Annual report, 1957-8, p.6
2. Annual report, 1952-3, p.1; see also Dawn, 9/9 (September 1960), p.6, 'A round table conference'
3. Annual report, 1961-2, p.6
the number of people, especially those transferred from other areas, who previously were unhappy on the reserves. A thorough investigation would consider to what extent a town sub-culture had replaced the social life of the reserves, and to what measure had conceptions of Aboriginality, such as its association with poverty, altered as a result of town housing.

Unlike its earlier attempt at dispersal, the Board cannot be said in this period to have failed. The results, however, were rather more complex than had been envisaged. The Aboriginal population in each Wiradjuri town was different, from the entrenched solidarity at Erambie, the reduced and often unhappy population of Yass, to the large Aboriginal bloc at Condobolin. In 1969 more whites were sympathetic to the survival of reserves, some of the councils had compromised and it was officially admitted that there would always be a few Aborigines who would draw together in groups. Greater success had been achieved by the Board through the more sophisticated techniques of propaganda and reward. Yet the task of assimilating Aborigines, either by encouraging or forcing them to live with white people, seemed an insuperable one. Events in the 1920s had shown that reserves could not be destroyed without providing alternative living areas; yet the policy of providing only four or six houses in each town for reserve residents failed because too many people either stayed on the reserves, or were transferred to other reserves, which became in turn more difficult to reduce. The policy of housing practically all Aboriginal people in town, tried only once in Wiradjuri country, produced residents pleased to remain, but uninterested in
associating with white people. To that extent, the assimilation policy had for the Board become a matter of logistics inaccessible to both force and persuasion.1

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1. For a discussion on the relative importance of the shortage of funds available to the Board for housing purposes in this period, see Appendix IV, pp.1-2
Chapter Eight
Dispersal resumed - 1945-1969
The children

The Child Welfare Act of 1939 set new terms under which a child might be removed from its parents or guardians. To the ten provisions of the Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act of 1905 defining 'neglect' were added four new categories, including children who, in the opinion of the court, were living under incompetent or improper guardianship, or who, without lawful excuse, failed to attend school regularly.\(^1\) To the fourteen provisions defining 'neglect' was added a new Section under which children could be charged, the very loosely defined 'uncontrollability'.\(^2\) The scope of the new Act was sufficiently wide to allow the special provisions of the Aborigines Protection Amendment (1915) Act to fall into disuse.

Almost all the Wiradjuri children charged after 1945 under the 1939 Child Welfare Act were found to be under 'improper or incompetent guardianship'. The relative ease with which Aboriginal children could be, and were, removed from their parents under the provisions of the 1939 Act represents another aspect of the same attitude which closed reserves and established town housing for Aborigines. This chapter examines the policy and its consequences and estimates the number of

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1. Child Welfare Act (N.S.W.), No.17 of 1939, Part XIV, s.72(j)(o). Under the terms of this, and other Acts, it was the children themselves who were charged with 'neglect', i.e., being neglected

2. 'Uncontrollable' was defined in ibid., s.I,4 as 'not being or cannot be controlled by his parent or by any person having his care'
children removed. By looking at the life of children in institutional and private care, it assesses the extent to which children were physically and psychologically dissociated from their families and culture. Through a discussion of the case-history of five children, the success of the policy on several classes of children is compared.

The records of committed children held in the State Archives, though individually much more detailed in this period than in earlier periods, concern fewer children. There are only twenty-seven files concerning Wiradjuri children. It is difficult to estimate what proportion of the total number of removed children is represented by this figure, but it is certainly less than half, for twenty-eight additional instances of child committal or removal were ascertained during field-work. This total of fifty-five children is by no means complete, and may represent no more than about two-thirds of the total. For instance, files on children committed to the Child Welfare Department by the Board because they were too fair to be considered Aborigines, or because they were sent to corrective institutions, probably were transferred to the appropriate Department where they are now inaccessible. There are not many files on children sent directly to a foster-parent from their own homes. Some children were removed at the suggestion of an official or private citizen, rather than by committal, and of these children no records seem to have been kept at all. There were in addition numbers of children committed to the
Board, within and without Wiradjuri territory, whose files for no apparent reason are not contained in the Archives. For these reasons, it appears that the total number of Wiradjuri children removed during the period was about eighty. This figure corresponds roughly with an estimate of one Aboriginal child in seven removed in New South Wales this century.

The official view of child removal was presented in Dawn in 1953. The Board claimed to recognise the generally accepted principle that a child's natural heritage was to be brought up in its own home, under the care of its natural parents. Unfortunately, it was argued, some parents proved themselves incapable or unsuitable to be entrusted with this duty, despite all efforts to help them. The best substitute for the natural parents was a foster home, but since the Board found difficulty in securing an adequate number of suitable foster homes, it was forced to maintain two Homes for wards.

There were suggestions in the statement of the influence of current theories of the effect of maternal deprivation on children, that is, the belief that the unbroken care of one mother was vital to the present and subsequent welfare of every

1. For instance, of four children removed from Tingha in 1950, all of whom were sent to Cootamundra or Kinchela, files exist in the State Archives on only two

2. P. Read, 'The stolen generations', p.18

3. Dawn, 2/12, (December 1953), p.13
child. Yet the actions of the Board in the following years indicated that it sought to justify the practice of fostering or adopting because the official Homes were overcrowded. The same regulations which had, in the 1910s and 1920s, prevented children from returning home during the holidays, discouraged parents from visiting the homes and placed adolescents in 'apprenticeships' separated from other Aborigines remained in force. In addition, many more children were removed from the Board's 'problem' areas than elsewhere: in the period, nineteen children were removed from Erambie but none from Narrandera. Thus the continuing intention of dispersal was expressed in action rather than public policy. It was supported by white people less critically than the town housing schemes, for many concerned with the children's welfare did not comprehend that Aboriginal child-raising methods, unorthodox as they may have seemed, were perfectly capable of educating children to be responsible adults:

Ignorance of the dynamics of the extended family system, where a child may have a large number of relatives who are counted as close, responsible family members, where children themselves can take supportive roles, and where kinship loyalties are paramount, will lead to distorted interpretations of the child's home situation, behaviour and expectations. Likewise, a

1. Cf. J. Bowlbee, Child care and the growth of love, 1953; for a brief account of ideologies of childhood in earlier periods, see J. Kociumbas, 'As the twig is bent, childhood history as ideology', paper presented to Australian Historical Association, University of N.S.W., 1982, pp.1-15

2. Some of the regulations existed only by word of mouth. For instance, Matron Hiscocks at Cootamundra, was merely told not to allow parents who visited their children to remain overnight; recorded conversation, Ella Hiscocks, Cootamundra, 7 June 1980
failure to understand Aboriginal styles of child discipline, which can emphasise non-coercive controls...will produce inaccurate assessments, and, by contrast with white middle-class styles, label the child delinquent and uncontrollable. 1

Unfortunately for the Aboriginal children, the concepts of delinquency and uncontrollability were at the heart of the 1939 Child Welfare Act.

The Board's officers maintained a variety of opinion on the morality and effectiveness of the policy which they were to enforce. For instance, Area Welfare Officer Felton, who in 1951 had pondered the implications of assimilation, in 1953 stated that he believed Aboriginal wards should be placed with Aboriginal foster parents. He argued that, in any case, Aborigines had great love for their children, and their own homes were the best places for them. 2 In 1955 the manager of Taree Station stated that it might be better to keep children amongst Aborigines, since a child could keep 'that little bit of companionship when a feeling of inferiority assailed him'. He believed that no child of seven would be better off with a white family unless of very superior intelligence and that under no circumstances should a child below normal intelligence be so placed. 3 In 1958 even Superintendent Green stated that he


2. Conference of Welfare Officers, 12-13 October 1953, p.25, A.W.B., Minutes of meetings

3. Reply by manager Briggs to questionnaire, December 1955, General Correspondence, box 8/3003
was worried by what happened when foster children reached adolescence. Would they be rejected by whites and return to their own people?¹

The diverging estimates of the necessity for, and the likely results of the policy were reflected in the actions of individual officers. The doubts of some officers probably found expression in the numbers of children removed by them compared to those who felt no such doubts. Certainly this occurred in Wiradjuri country. For example, Pickering committed children at Erambie 'only after much effort and thought', and on one occasion refused to commit the children of Wilma Perry because he did not believe them to be neglected,² (the following year the children were removed in sensational circumstances by a manager who, it was claimed, had a personal vendetta with the children's guardian).³ In contrast, Heaney committed the children of three families, and used the threat of removal upon recalcitrant adults.⁴ The Area Welfare Officer Lambert, who appears to have felt no misgivings about the morality or results of the policy, encouraged or was responsible for the removal of at least twenty Wiradjuri children in the 1950s. Underpinning

2. Pickering, Report, 22 December 1952, General Correspondence, box 8/2841
3. Recorded conversation Mavis Bamblett, Erambie, 15 September 1979; see also Read, ms., 1980, pp.207-8
4. Cf. above, Ch.6, pp.248-9
the view of whether or not individual children should be charged was each officer's view of the value of reserve life. Frequently this told against the families. For instance, when Ethel Wedge of Erambie appealed in 1964 to the Board for the return of her son James, on the grounds that she had a room ready for him and 'missed him very much', her appeal was not recommended by Lambert because, in his opinion, the boy would 'quickly deteriorate if returned to his mother's environment'. In 1943, Louisa Ingram committed her youngest daughter to the care of the Board because she had not food for her. When in 1947 she appealed to the Board for the return of the child, the manager reasoned that her return was 'not necessary'. After numerous impassioned appeals, the child was finally returned in 1954. In 1946 an Aboriginal, Mrs Jones, applied for the care of four committed Brungle children. Her application was rejected by the Area Welfare Officer because her house was, in his opinion, 'too small'.

In the 1950s, removed boys were sent to Kinchela and girls to Cootamundra or, more commonly in the 1960s, to foster care. As in other periods, the children remained at the Homes until they were fifteen or sixteen. From the mid 1950s, children were

1. A.W.O., Report, 7 June 1964, General Correspondence, box 8/2984
2. Ingram's letter, and report of manager Fuller, 12 August 1947; the girl returned to Erambie 8 November 1954; ibid., box 8/2853
3. File on George Connolly, report of probationary constable confirmed by A.W.O., 4 April 1946; ibid., box 8/2828
allowed to attend High School. Promising students were allowed to sit for the Intermediate Certificate, which at Cootamundra only about six girls managed, or were allowed, to achieve. Many of the promising students, after the second or third year of secondary schooling, sat for the Public Service examination to become telephonists or were employed as shop assistants.¹ Those considered less promising continued their 'training' in the Home until a place was found for them in domestic service. Placement often was unpredictable. The Cootamundra matron, in choosing a location, had to take into account the general character of the proposed guardian, the locality, neighbours, furnishings, accommodation and the reasons for wanting a ward. The interests and recreations of the guardian were also to be considered.² In reality, Matron Hiscocks, in charge of the home between 1947 and 1967, was too busy to do more than visit the proposed home with the ward. If it seemed satisfactory, the girl was left there.³ Hiscocks took her duties seriously, despite the lack of time, and watched especially for the potential of physical or sexual abuse. Nevertheless, it is clear that many of the placements were far from ideal.⁴ Boys who were not able, or not permitted, to sit for the Intermediate Certificate, worked on the Kinchela farm as vegetable or dairy hands. In the 1950s,

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1. Recorded conversation Ella Hiscocks; see also evidence of Hiscocks in Report from the Joint Committee... II, pp.509-15
2. 'Method of selection of a home', Circular to officers re placement, October 1949; General Correspondence, box 8/2754
3. Ella Hiscocks, recorded conversation
4. For instance, sexual harrassment was a common feature of placement; pers. comm. Coral Edwards, July 1982
the most common placement for boys leaving the homes was still on farms, but in the 1960s Kincella principals arranged placements also in unskilled factory work, the merchant navy, or the armed services. At the age of 18 the committal period for boys and girls expired. The former wards were free to collect the apprenticeship wages held for them by the Board and, if they desired, return to their communities.

The influence of the staff at the Homes upon the children was profound, since they were the principal adult agents of socialisation with whom they came in contact. Because of her strong personality and length of stay, Matron Hiscocks of the Cootamundra Home probably had the greatest influence of all the staff who guided the lives of the committed children.

Ella Hiscocks was a qualified teacher who, in the 1920s and 1930s, worked at several Aboriginal schools including those at Coraki and Hollywood. Soon after the end of the Second World War she was asked to take control of the Cootamundra Home. In conversation in 1980 she stated that her experiences in the pre-war period had taught her what reserve life was like. She believed that reserves and stations should be closed or 'cleared up in the correct way', which to her included the provision of proper nutrition and education. Aboriginal children, she believed, were too often deprived of the necessaries of life. Sometimes this occurred because the parents had made 'no provision for the morrow'; it also occurred because the official ration was too small and because many people were ineligible for it. To Hiscocks, the causes of deprivation were less important
than its existence; at all costs a child deprived must be supported. Thus although she believed that careless child removal, such as the sending of girls to stations where no provision was made for their safety was 'shocking', she approved of child removal if the circumstances warranted. Some children, she argued, would have died if not removed from the reserves.

In her beliefs and personality, Matron Hiscocks represented an important strain among the Board's officials in the 1950s. Like Pickering at Erambie, she was of a strong and active character. Like him, she was sympathetic to the 'better class' of Aborigines. She believed that living conditions had to be ameliorated before abstract issues could be discussed. To her, there was nothing especially valuable or noteworthy about Aboriginal lifeways or attitudes in the 1960s, if, indeed, Aboriginality existed at all apart from unfortunate social and economic deprivations. When asked if her staff understood Aborigines, she replied, 'Well, there wasn't much understanding to do. I mean, there wasn't much difference between Aboriginal children and white children'.

Such a philosophy, which stressed a common humanity at the expense of Aboriginality and a concern for the individual at the expense of the community, was echoed in the aims of the assimilation associations of the 1950s. So too was her conviction that, in part, Aborigines were the victims of circumstances. She believed that Cootamundra wards should

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1. Cf. discussion of Pickering, see above, Ch.6, pp.247-8

2. Recorded conversation Ella Hiscocks by C. Edwards, Cootamundra, 9 February 1980
become like white people, because the principal difference between blacks and whites in the community were those of behaviour and economic need. Her ambition was that the wards would become working-class, black-skinned white women, who would marry white men and raise their children as white people. In 1980 she found the concern to regain a lost Aboriginality by some of the former Cootamundra wards disturbing and almost incomprehensible.

The quality of staff at Kinchela is more difficult to assess because of the more frequent changes. There appears to have been a general ignorance of the home life of the wards - one manager in 1937 believed that most of his charges were orphans. It is probable that the Kinchela managers, like Hiscocks, received no information whatsoever about the previous history of the wards. Comments on the files of the Kinchela boys indicate that the managers held views similar to Hiscocks. For instance, the manager White thought that the pride of workmanship amongst the boys was low because of their low standard of intelligence. In 1966 the manager Henricksen admitted that only a smattering of farm management was taught. Unlike Hiscocks, he did not know what happened to the children after they left the Home, and thought of the institution basically as a holding station until the wards found

1. *Proceedings of the Select Committee..., evidence J. Danvers, 1938*, p.76

2. Comment by J. White, 8 May 1962, during a Board enquiry into alleged sexual perversion by boys at Kinchela, General Correspondence, box 8/2995
employment. Yet the managers, as at Cootamundra, were able to command the respect, affection or love of some of the wards. David Perry, born at Yass, was most unhappy in employment after he left Kinchela, and expressed a very strong desire to return. Norman Perry, born at Cowra, wrote an enthusiastic letter to the manager's wife telling of his first placement, which began, 'Dear mum...'

Most of the children appear to have left the Homes believing in the inferiority of Aboriginal culture and themselves. Recent sociological writings have not, however, indicated clearly the source of the inferiority feelings. Morgan, with other critics of the theory of maternal deprivation, believed that adult instability among institutionalised children owed more to general family inadequacy, or lack of stimulus. Studies in the growth of self-esteem among children have indicated that failure to achieve certain goals frequently are attributed to personal failure, whatever the real cause, and that, subsequently, task performance and expectation of success

1. Evidence H. Henricksen, in Report from the joint committee..., 1967, II, pp.404-411

2. File on David Perry, general discussion on request to return to Kinchela, September - October 1952, General Correspondence, box 8/2807

3. File on Norman Perry, letter n.d., about March 1954; ibid., box 8/2802

deteriorate following repeated failures. Such studies of the effects of institutionalisation have not considered racial identification, while studies in the growth of self-identification among Aboriginal children have not considered the effects of institutionalisation. For instance, Eckermann argued that Aboriginal children in south-eastern Queensland learned social roles partly through the reiteration of numerous examples delineating role or status. In repeated phrases like 'We don't like dirty blacks in our house' were inculcated negative social attitudes and acceptance of the status quo. Yet there were positive aspects of socialisation too: children learned the value aspects of Aboriginal life, such as sharing, and the kin-network.

A model for the socialisation of institutionalised Aboriginal children may be drawn from the various viewpoints. Low self-esteem which might be expected among institutionalised children was compounded with a purely negative depiction of Aboriginality by the staff at the Homes. The children left the homes holding the views and opinions of the staff who themselves reflected the understandings and attitudes of a certain section of white society. By the constant reiteration of example,


phrase and action, the children learned that Aborigines were inferior, but that their own Aboriginality would be of no consequence in the wider world. While no ex-ward interviewed during field-work was able to think of instances of specifically anti-Aboriginal instruction, there is little doubt that the views of the staff were, consciously or unconsciously, transmitted to the children. Hiscocks, although she conceded that to some extent Aborigines were the victims of circumstance, believed that the Home girls were intellectually inferior to white children.\(^1\) White at Kinchela held similar views, which were shared by many white people in the country towns.\(^2\) The children, whose self-esteem was already low through the effects of institutionalisation itself, suffered serious problems of self-negation through the acquisition of such views. In defence, Cootamundra girls thought themselves different from other Aborigines, but in the country towns or in service the children, while dissociating themselves mentally and physically from their race, found themselves maltreated or discriminated against like other Aborigines.\(^3\) An Aboriginal writer recently found this factor one of the most difficult which children raised by whites had to face when they left foster or institutional care:

1. Report from the joint committee... 1967, II, evidence E. Hiscocks, pp.509-512

2. For example, evidence Mayor of Cootamundra, Headmaster of Cootamundra Primary School, \textit{ibid.}, pp.516, 518

3. Evidence of a sense of difference, recorded conversation Coral Edwards, Canberra, 5 April 1980
The Aboriginal Girls Home, Cootamundra, 1980
Many white foster parents have been confronted with the problem of finding their children employment, many Aboriginal children have become totally despairing when they're continually refused employment regardless of their qualifications or capabilities... Most Aboriginal families are equipped to cope with continual rejection, they have been raised to know prejudice, or rather smell it a mile off, but an Aboriginal child reared by white foster parents would have no idea of the real problem, either would the foster parents for that matter... As you become older and complexities of adult life arise you find some of your white friends tend to try not to show signs of a past close relationship, especially in front of other white people.

Internalised in many children were the conflicting learned emotions of general inferiority and individual equality, especially in those too young to possess what Goffman called a 'presenting culture'. Distancing themselves literally and figuratively from other Aborigines, they were often abruptly confronted by their own rejection by white people.

In some ways, therefore, the children (especially the girls) were not unlike the reserve dwellers who chose to live in a new house in a country town in the 1950s. To the central question of how one could cope with life in a white environment was added a new series of problems concerning one's acceptability, whatever one's behaviour, to the whites encountered. Yet all the children, deprived of parental caring, started at a disadvantage. The de-individualised routine of the Homes caused a longing for security or freedom:

1. A. Mongta, Perspective of the Aboriginal child in substitute care, Principal Report, II, 1982, pp.43-4

2. E. Goffman, Asylums, 1961, pp.12-13. By 'presenting culture', Goffman meant the pre-conceptions and attitudes which children of above the age of 3 or 4 normally possess
I spent many hours sitting on the fence looking down into the town, trying to imagine what it was like to live in one of the homes with a family, or having the freedom to be able to walk down to the shops, or ride a bicycle around.

Animosity towards parents, who, it was often supposed, had placed the children in the homes, frequently made it impossible to regain a sense of belonging to a particular family. Many ex-wards, because of their own self-negations, found it difficult to maintain a secure family life for their own children.

Iris Clayton was born at Wattle Hill, Leeton, in 1946. She spent much of her early life at Darlington Point, where she received a good deal of traditional Aboriginal education from her grandmother. When she was seven or eight she returned to Wattle Hill where she attended a local primary school where she felt rejected by whites calling her 'blackie'. In 1957 her parents separated and, according to Clayton, her mother asked that her six children be cared for by the Board, since she had

1. C. Edwards, draft soundtrack to film Its a long road back, 1980, A.I.A.S.; oral evidence and Superintendents' reports (for example in Station Managers' reports, box 3K/96507) indicate that daily life was attended by a rigorous routine of inspection and ritual. Clothes and blankets, made in prisons, were coarse and ill-fitting; girls menstruating were provided with rags which had to be soaked and re-used; at Kinchela all the children had to wear jumpers on or off at the same time. Picnics and parties, pretty cakes and lollies, became the subject of almost mystical fascination

2. The information in this section is drawn unless otherwise stated from recorded conversation, Iris Clayton
neither food nor money. There was considerable discussion of the proposal; her two grandmothers were opposed, and after the decision was taken to commit the children, they refused to wave the children goodbye. The records of Clayton's committal make no mention of such an application by her mother.¹

Clayton entered the Cootamundra Home when she was twelve. She did not do well at High School, although she was recognised to 'have ability', and in 1959 topped her art class.² Her English and Maths were said to need 'more attention' and she was sent to domestic service in the year in which she otherwise would have sat for the Intermediate Certificate. The position was with people named Anderson, in Canberra. Clayton stated that, like other girls, she did not know where she was going until on the train from Cootamundra. She was met at Yass by the Andersons, who asked her to call them 'mum' and 'dad', which Clayton could not. In 1961 Hiscocks visited Clayton and reported her to be 'very happy' and 'one of the family'.³ This opinion seems to have been shared by Clayton herself at the time, who in 1961 wrote to Superintendent Green,

As you probably know I have been invited to Victor Anderson's wedding. Last night we went to the shower tea that Mr Anderson's youngest daughter held for Helen and Vic. I had a wonderful time and had quite a few dances. Mr and Mrs Anderson had been wonderful to

¹. File on Iris Clayton, General Correspondence, box 8/2947


me. They have taken me to Sydney twice and gone to Woy Woy for the long weekend, and up to Taree for the Australia Day weekend, on a dairy farm and I did enjoy myself. We often go to the Drive-In of a Saturday night.'

Clayton's account in 1981 of her stay with the Andersons was much less enthusiastic, a fact which again points to the potential of changing circumstances to alter fundamental perceptions. She stated that she had to do the housework for nine people, had few holidays, and worked seven days a week in shifts up to 12 hours. She slept in a room not much bigger than a cupboard. Her duties, apart from cleaning and cooking, included talking to Mrs Anderson when she was ill. She was given no actual training in home management; for instance, at the supermarket, she chose what was required, but Mr Anderson paid. She sat at, but also waited on, the family table. She had to go to church. She related with heavy irony a visit by Area Welfare Officer Lambert, who answered his own question as to her welfare,

'Are they treating you well? You're a lucky girl, aren't you?'

In the light of this evidence, Clayton's letter to Green suggests that in 1961, having unconsciously rejected Aboriginal society, she was seeking an acceptance in European.

After four years with the Andersons, Clayton related that she had no desire to return home. Then, when she was about seventeen, one of her grandmothers suddenly died, and at her own expense, Clayton returned to Wattle Hill for the first time

1. Clayton to Green, 16 March 1961, General Correspondence box 8/2947
since her committal. After the funeral she was subjected to a
great deal of pressure to remain, but the Andersons had stressed
that she should return. She was aware that with her different
accent and new clothes she was making an impression on some of
the younger girls. But, she said, she was used to regular meals
and independence and there was no work at Wattle Hill. Her
remaining grandmother was less impressed and told her, 'You're
sounding very white, girl'. She returned to Canberra.

In May 1962 she expressed a desire to see her mother, who since
the breaking up of the Wattle Hill camp lived at Wollongong.
There was a half-hearted attempt to dissuade her, but her
wardship was soon to expire. According to the Board's account,
the visit was not a success. Green wrote, 'She has been to see
her mother and was disgusted with her and was never going to see
her again.'

In 1981 Clayton lived with a white man in Canberra. Five of her
six children lived with their father, a white man, far away.
She had little contact with Canberra Aborigines, but kept
contact with her family and other Aborigines by periodic visits
to Sydney. She resumed painting, her talent at which had been
recognised at High School, and received a grant from the
Aboriginal Arts Board. Her subjects were traditional Wiradjuri
and northern landscapes and figures. In conversation Clayton
was ambiguous in her attitude to her past life. She thought she
and her siblings would have suffered physically by remaining at

1. File note, Green, 8 January 1963, General
Correspondence box 8/2947
Wattle Hill. She believed herself to have been particularly deprived of her mother's affection because she was the eldest child. Yet she was critical of Hiscocks, who she believed encouraged the wards not to think. On balance she believed her committal to have been for the better.

The case history of Beryl Johnson is that of a woman who did not return to her community unaided. She was removed from Condobolin, with two siblings, in 1959 at the age of nine. It was claimed by Lambert that the children suffered from gastro-pneumonia and diarrhoea, and lived on bread and butter and tea. Johnson's memories of this period of her life are vague. She recalled her father as a shadowy figure who drank. The family generally was short of food; only her grandmother gave Christmas presents. Her last memory of Condobolin was leaving on the train. Her mother was not there to see the children off, though in 1981 Johnson stated that she understood why.

She arrived at Cootamundra with her sister Lorraine in April 1959. Although she was at first lonely, she soon began to enjoy herself there: 'it seemed like one big family'. She did not

1. The information contained in the following discussion is drawn unless otherwise stated from recorded conversation Beryl Johnson, Grabben Gullen, 10 November 1981

2. A.W.O. Lambert, Report, in file on Beryl Johnson, 12 January 1959, General Correspondence, box 8/2824
believe that government policy intended to separate her mentally and physically from her family; to the contrary, she argued that her mother once rang her, and that she got a couple of letters.

In January 1960 Johnson and her sister were sent to the foster care of Mrs McClenaghan in Temora. The Board's officers reported favourably on her progress in 1960 and 1961. In February 1962 McClenaghan advised that she wished to have Johnson returned to the Home. She alleged that she had stolen money, cut up her bedclothes and

[s]he will not come home from the baths when asked, but when it suits her, usually between 8 and 9 p.m. I know she has left the baths at a given time, 6.30 p.m., because when I have rung for her to come home for her tea she has already left, but either plays in the park with the boys, and roams the streets... She is so deceitful that I don't know where I stand... When I told Beryl I couldn't afford to keep her, she said, 'All right, I want another home with a car to ride in, not just a bike'. So it is time to make the break.

In 1981 Johnson was shocked and distressed when she learned of these allegations. She described them as fabrications, and claimed, instead, that McClenaghan's eldest daughter used to strip and beat her. McClenaghan's desire nevertheless was met by the Board and Johnson was returned to Cootamundra. In May 1962 she absconded from the Home with several other girls. In 1966 she was judged to be incapable of passing the Intermediate Certificate and was sent to service at Arncliffe,

1. For instance, 13 January 1960, General Correspondence box 8/2930
Sydney. In 1981 she stated that she had to look after two young boys for 12 hours, beginning at 6 a.m. She was alone in the house, had no friends and was very lonely. A file note recorded that she was too 'irresponsible' to remain and that she was returning to Cootamundra in September 1966. Nine months later she was sent to a Mrs Ross, near Holbrook. Johnson stated that she loved it there. While she had been 'just a maid' at Arncliffe, at Holbrook she was 'one of the family'. In 1967 she told Welfare Officer Brown, 'I never want to leave this home'. Brown reported that Mrs Ross took Beryl wherever she went, that she had been loaned a horse and was treated like a daughter.

On leaving Ross in 1968, Johnson began training as a nurse's aide. Though she did 'quite well', she did not believe she had the capacity to finish the course and withdrew. Her sister Lorraine was, at about this time, sent to a new position some distance away. Johnson felt that she had no family at all. She had many white girl friends and with them she used to follow the footballers to Wagga Wagga, where she met her future husband. In 1981 she reflected that she knew she was Aboriginal, but since she had been living with whites for so long, she felt like a white person. Occasionally, while playing hockey at Grenfell,

1. School report, July 1965, file note 17 September 1966, General Correspondence box 8/2930
2. File note, 1 November 1966, ibid.
she had been recognised by Condobolin Aborigines, but she had not wanted to make any further contact with her family.

In April 1981, still without having returned to her community, she lived in comparative isolation with her family at Grabben Gullen, near Crookwell. Through the agency Link-Up, she learned of her father's desire to see her, and of her mother's death several years previously. When assured of a welcome, and after much thought, she decided to return to Condobolin. She described the experience as 'born all over again'. Nevertheless it was a difficult time, through some lingering childhood memories, through confronting 'so many black faces', through ignorance of Aboriginal etiquette, and perhaps most important, through negative attitudes towards Aborigines which she had learned at Cootamundra.

On her return to Grabben Gullen, Johnson stated that the nightmares and crying which had disturbed her sleep for years had ceased. She was delighted that her father was now teetotal, and (as a result of the Condobolin town housing project) now lived in town. Yet, like Clayton, she was firm in the conviction that her removal from Condobolin had been for the better. She believed that at Cootamundra she had been well looked after; if she had remained at Condobolin she would have been badly educated, become a larrikin, would not have met her husband nor borne her children. She was determined that her own children would not be institutionalised and admitted that she gave them too many presents in compensation for her own deprivations. She stated that she would not like to live in
Condobolin now, but would prefer to visit the town when she wanted to.\(^1\)

Two of the three Wiradjuri boys whose case histories are presented here returned independently to their communities. At the age of one, in 1953, Richard Murray was removed from Erambie with several brothers and sisters.\(^2\) For a short time he remained in the care of his eldest sister at Wallaga Lake Station, then at about three years of age he was transferred to Cootamundra, where Hiscocks described him as 'of low mentality' in 1956, and 'a lazy little boy' in 1960.\(^3\) For an unexplained reason, the file on Murray ends at that point and the history of the remainder of his period of committal is drawn from his own testimony.

At Kinchela where he was transferred in about 1961, he received little training:

> We weren't trained for anything. Just go to school, and when you leave school, you go to what they call a workman, dairy boy, sort of thing. See we had a big dairy there. Used to get up early in the morning, with the cows, and do whatever's got to be done over there, vegetable gardens, feed the cows and all that. It was a training school, but as far as getting any training, I couldn't see it, 'cause no one was skilled in anything, no trades.

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1. Pers. comm. C. Edwards (Co-Ordinator, Link-Up), April, 1981; recorded conversation

2. The information in the following discussion is drawn unless otherwise stated from recorded conversation Richard Murray, Erambie, 5 April 1979; additional information also supplied in recorded conversation Jane Murray, Erambie, 17 May 1979

3. E. Hiscocks, Report, file on Richard Murray, 31 December 1956, 30 April 1960, General Correspondence, box 8/2969
The low opinion of Murray's abilities evidently held by the staff was confirmed by the first employment arranged for him, when he left Kinchela at about sixteen years of age. It was process-work, of which he remarked, 'only doing the bloody automatic stop and re-start buttons, just making them, reaming them out. They didn't arrange apprenticeships for anyone, of course'.

Though accommodation had been arranged for him at Alexandria, in Sydney, Murray was most unhappy. He had few friends and did not know 'where the bloody hell you were going or what to do. All you could do was sit home at the time'. Soon afterwards he quit both his accommodation and employment:

I chucked it in. I suppose it was the same thing over and over. You wasn't taught anything different. What you were doing, you were doing bloody full-time, you got sick of it. The same thing, day in, day out. There wasn't any future in it'.

Then followed a significant event in Murray's life, and one which probably occurred at a similar period in the lives of many former Kinchela boys. In loneliness and boredom it was a short step to make that contact with other Aborigines, which he had not, in any case, lost as completely as some of the girls. A higher mobility and greater independence enabled him to break free of his surroundings. He explained that, since Alexandria was near Redfern, where many Aborigines lived, he quickly met acceptance:

See its only just around the corner, and as soon as you mix in with the other blacks, well it's the only solitude [i.e., solace] you could find there, I suppose, mix in with your own people. Start drinking and lay about.
Murray went to Moree, returned to Sydney, and at length returned to Erambie where he lived in 1979. He had been absent for nearly twenty-five years, yet he had not felt the same fear of returning experienced by Beryl Johnson. He had not become isolated from 'black faces', nor had he the stumbling block of belief in the Cootamundra ethics of respectability, order and 'decent' living. Thus the Board's purpose in removing Murray from reserve surroundings, insofar as it was intended that he become separated from other Aborigines, failed. Amongst Aborigines he found a relief from loneliness and a positive comfort which he had not found amongst white people. Dawn maintained that Aborigines who behaved like whites could expect to be treated like whites. Murray's experience at Wee Waa in 1976 gave the lie to this assertion: with 25 dollars in his pocket and a job, he was arrested and jailed for vagrancy.

Yet though the Board had failed to assimilate Murray, he bore the scars of institutionalisation which were the concomitants of Kinchela and Cootamundra. Murray was unable to discover a satisfactory relationship with his parents. He became close to his father only just before he died. His attitude to his mother was ambiguous:

Apparently he [Murray's father] was working that day. He came home, and she was well into it [i.e., drink]. That's why we got sent away. So I blame her for that. 'Cause she's got another family, so I've got other brothers and sisters, living down on the coast with her. We talk, but not the way one expects to talk to his mother and father, you know? I can't bring myself to get emotional. The first time I had nothing to do with her, and it's only been in the last few years that I've started talking, getting to know her.

1. Editorial comment on 'A round table conference', Dawn, 9/9, (September 1960), p.6
The career of Eddie Smith is an example of those children who were removed because of their light skin colouring, separated from other Aboriginal children, and yet who returned to their communities. Smith was born at Cowra in about 1942. His grandmother was Aboriginal, his father was Scottish. Smith did not speculate on the causes of his removal: "Three sisters got put in the nunnery, I went to a boys' home." It is probable that the Erambie manager persuaded the Child Welfare Board to commit the children as European. Certainly, Smith's fair skin and European features probably explain both his removal to Yarra Bay, an institution for boys near Botany, and the lack of any record of his existence in the Aborigines Welfare Board archives.

Smith's career from about 1954 was a progression into institutions of ever greater severity. He absconded from Yarra Bay, then from Mittagong, and spent three years at the Mount Penang corrective institution near Gosford. He hinted that loneliness may have been the cause of his continual absconding:

"Stupid, I think, I dunno, something to do. The other blokes used to get visitors and all that. I'd get a bit sick of it, no visitors, and take off...Never attempted to get clean away. I'd just go out and do silly things. I had nowhere to go, anyway, unless I come up here [to Erambie]."

At the conclusion of his committal, Smith joined the Army, in which his enlistment was terminated, after a stealing incident,

1. The information in the following discussion is drawn from recorded conversation. Eddie Smith, unless otherwise stated.
by a dishonourable discharge and a prison sentence. After another encounter with the police in Redfern, he went to Adelaide. After a period in which he tried to stay out of trouble, he received another prison sentence for 'only a stupid thing':

I was trying to get a bit of gear for the house. I went and got the truck first, hire truck you know, and he wasn't at home, the bloke. And I took a bit of gear with me when I left, a swing for the kids [i.e., of his de facto wife], big canopy over it, and all that.

Smith then worked on a sailing ketch, then, 'sick of that', he served on a whale chaser to Antarctica. In about 1974 he returned again to Erambie. In 1979 he was unable to analyse his drift into crime except in terms of being 'sick' of different activities, and a propensity to do 'stupid' things.

Many of the events in Smith's life, including his criminal career, seemed to have happened by chance. Most of his illegal acts had been committed as sudden impulses or when under the influence of liquor. Of all the former inmates of institutions, Smith seemed to have been the least attracted towards either an escape from, or a search for, an Aboriginal identity. He had associated with people of both cultures freely. Whatever hurts or soul-searching he had endured, his casual manner and apparent lack of introspection concealed. In the homes, surrounded by white boys, Smith may have received no particular impression about Aborigines, rather than the negative ones inculcated at the Aboriginal Homes. He was more independent than Murray and appeared to be more self-confident. To what extent these
qualities were a result of being raised as European rather than Aboriginal cannot be assessed; yet of all the removed Wiradjuri boys he seemed to have functioned most easily in either culture. Smith's career gives weight to Morgan's conclusion that institutionalisation did not necessarily prevent children from developing into adequate, acceptable adults, provided, we must add, that they did not carry an extra burden of perceived racial or personal inferiority.

In 1955 the Sydney newspaper, the *Sun-Herald*, published an article entitled 'Foster parents wanted for 150 Aboriginal children'. Hundreds of people applied to the Board for the care of a foster child. At the end of 1958, there were 116 children boarded-out with foster parents, ninety of them with white couples. In 1969 out of some 308 children in the care of the Board, there were at least 200 foster children. The history of such children after committal is difficult to ascertain, for it was in this area that the Board was most


3. The applications from, and reports on, hundreds of applicants are contained in a number of boxes of General Correspondence, 1955-1960

4. H. Green, *op.cit.*, 1959, pp.33-4

5. A. Mongta, *op.cit.*, Table C, p.3
successful in persuading children to remain and associate with white people. Adults who for a variety of reasons have not re-associated with Aborigines cannot be traced by visiting stations or following relatives' information. There is, therefore, less information about foster children than other kinds of children removed by the Board. There are few files concerning foster children, although other evidence indicates that large numbers of children were assimilated into the white community in this way. For instance, there is no information in the official records on any of the three cases of fostering investigated by Link-Up in 1980-2. All three children had been removed after private arrangements had been made by citizens in country towns. Oral evidence also indicates that unethical or illegal means were sometimes used to remove, foster or adopt children. For instance, the son of Aileen Wedge, a former inmate of Cootamundra, was committed as a state ward and fostered to a white person. When the boy was about eight, his mother was informed that she might see him, once, if she gave her permission that he be adopted. This she agreed to do. Oral evidence also indicates that unethical or illegal means were sometimes used to remove, foster or adopt children. For instance, the son of Aileen Wedge, a former inmate of Cootamundra, was committed as a state ward and fostered to a white person. When the boy was about eight, his mother was informed that she might see him, once, if she gave her permission that he be adopted. This she agreed to do. 

Newspapers carried allegations that Aboriginal children were taken away on holidays by whites, and were not seen again.

This allegation has been confirmed in the case of one Wiradjuri person known to have been removed from his community and

1. Records of Link-Up, re M. Read (Peak Hill) N. Johnson (Condobolin), B. Young (Gulargambone)

2. File on Colin Wedge, General Correspondence, box 8/3001; recorded conversation Aileen Wedge

3. For example, Sydney Morning Herald, 27 June 1968
fostered. The removal, fostering and return of Noel Johnson illustrates some of the pressures which such children suffered, and which acted to prevent a return to their communities.

Johnson was born in 1955.¹ Both parents drank heavily in 1956 and the boy, suffering from malnutrition and disease, was placed in the Condobolin hospital. His father visited him regularly.² On his release from hospital, Johnson was cared for at the Aboriginal Inland Mission headquarters on the reserve. In 1957, Area Welfare Officer Lambert asked the missionary Mathews to arrange that Johnson be fostered. Mathews gave the boy to a man Jones, who took him to the Baptist church at Wentworthville, Sydney, where the congregation was asked if anyone could provide for him. Meanwhile Lambert told the father that his son had been taken on a holiday to Sydney. Eventually Johnson was placed in the foster care of a family named Batson. Johnson's father, who subsequently became teetotal, continued to make enquiries about his son. In about 1964 he was requested to allow his son to be adopted, which he refused. He then heard no more of his son.³

Details of Johnson's life between 1966 and 1978 are not precise, though it appears that the Batsons, out of a misplaced belief in

¹ Information in the following discussion has been drawn from a number of sources, including Noel Johnson's father, Johno Johnson, Condobolin, and conversations with Noel Johnson, April 1982; birth notice in Registrar's office, Condobolin

² Pers. visit, Stan and Hazel Mathews, Brisbane, 5 January 1982

³ Pers. comm. Johno Johnson, Stan Mathews, and parishioners of Wentworthville Baptist Church
his acceptability to white people, taught him to discount or ignore his Aboriginality. Mr Batson related that his foster son, when about seven, had come home from school crying because he had been told he was Aboriginal. The Batsons appear to have shared the equivocal attitudes of some of the Board's child welfare officers: that Aborigines were the victims of discrimination, but were also liable to 'go walkabout', act unpredictably, and were of lesser intellectual capacity. The inter-relations between family members were complex and involved the Batsons' love for, yet resentment, of Johnson, and Johnson's feelings of inferiority, isolation and rejection. According to the Batsons, when the boy was about eleven he became moody and introspective. In almost all the family photographs taken between 1961 and 1971, Johnson was on the edge, slightly apart from the natural members of the family, defensive and unsmiling. When interviewed in January 1982, the Batsons stated that they had not seen Johnson for several years. After a stormy career at school, they related that Johnson had had several encounters with the police. In 1978, after angry scenes with his foster family, he left a note informing them that he had gone to Adelaide. There was no further communication.

At the request of his father, Johnson was located by Link-Up in Adelaide in April 1982. At his own request, he was taken to meet his father and family at Condobolin. He identified as

1. Pers. visit with C. Edwards to Mr and Mrs Batson, Mt. Druitt, Sydney, February 1982

2. Family photos in possession of Mr and Mrs Batson
Mr Noel Johnson;
above, with the Batson family, Sydney 1971
below left, in the care of a foster family who acted
on appeal from the Wentworthville Baptist Church, 1957;
below right, Adelaide 1975
Aboriginal, but appeared to have few Aboriginal friends. He spoke little of his life in previous years, but intimated that it had involved prison sentences in South Australia and Queensland. He showed little interest in his foster parents. He knew only a little of his natural family and did not know that his father had refused his adoption. He had passed close to Condobolin, which he knew to be his birthplace, on several occasions, but had been afraid to visit the town. Unable to visit his birthplace, rejecting and rejected by his foster family, Johnson had been unhappy for many years. Yet meeting his natural family for the first time was not easy. The distance between himself and Condobolin Aborigines, like that encountered by his first cousin Beryl Johnson, was great, for his problems were those of a white man living with an Aboriginal family for the first time. Nevertheless, he stated that he had returned to Condobolin 'for good' and six months later he still lived in the town. It appeared that part of his motivation was that there was nothing he particularly valued in white society which prevented his remaining.

While Wiradjuri children were formally fostered or institutionalised by the Board, local officials in the name of assimilation were also attempting to remove children from the influence of family and reserve. In 1952 the Erambie school was closed, to promote 'general assimilation' and the projected town housing program. At Condobolin, forty-three children

1. Decision to close school, 12 October 1951, Erambie school file, General Correspondence, box 8/2821.
attended the school on the reserve, including twenty-three from the Murie, in 1958, but the following year the school was closed and the children sent to a town school. As in the town housing programs, the aims of the Board and the concerned local whites frequently meshed. Three examples drawn from the Board's archives illustrate how actions intended, for the supposed good of the children, to remove them from their communities, continued some time after the assimilation organisations had seen the weaknesses in the housing projects. At Hillston in 1960, Patricia Williams passed the Intermediate Certificate. Her teacher, Alan Duncan, suggested that she attend a Sydney boarding school to prepare for the Leaving Certificate. Her relations agreed, and contributed £150. The same pressures brought upon Noel Johnson to persuade him that cultural differences were merely cosmetic were placed upon Williams. When Dawn commented on her gaining a place at the Presbyterian Ladies College, Croydon, Duncan protested vigorously. He argued that drawing attention to the girl's Aboriginality was 'not appreciated', and was undoing the good work done to assure her that she was no different from thousands of other school-children of her age.

1. A.W.O. Lambert, Report re school numbers, 22 October 1958; school closed about May 1959, file on Condobolin school, General Correspondence box 8/2994.

Williams attended the Sydney school in 1962. Her first year, according to the principal, was fair.¹ During the second year, Williams abruptly left and her whereabouts were unknown to her family. The Board's child welfare officer, Miss Fleming, reported that 'as the girl grew and matured, the restrictions of boarding school life became too irksome, and she wanted to be free...No other explanation can be offered'.² A more probable explanation than the supposed desire for freedom may be inferred from the case studies. It is likely that Williams suffered from acute shyness, self-consciousness and feelings of inferiority. Perhaps her emotions of loneliness and rejection were heightened when she realised that she was isolated from her family. Her Aboriginality, whether or not it was acknowledged by officials to be a factor of some consequence, was almost certainly the cause of Williams' withdrawal from school.

Another attempt at the unofficial removal of a child from its family occurred at Griffith in 1964. In July Mrs H. Linacre believed it to be in the best interests of the eldest child of Jackie and Mary Charles that he be sent away to school. She reported that the mother was not convinced of the necessity, but spoke instead of the injustice of her childhood years when children were 'taken away to be apprenticed and never paid'. Linacre reported the mother's feelings to be so strong as to 'colour her whole attitude towards official interference' and

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1. School reports, June, December 1962, General Correspondence box 8/2969
that she would accept no financial help to have her son educated elsewhere. Linacre believed on the contrary that the child needed a boarding education so that he could 'learn a trade'. At length Linacre 'got around her objection that he was being taken away to a home' with the promise that he could return for the summer holidays. At Linacre's request, the Board made an anonymous donation, and late in July 1964, an application was made to send the boy to the Burnside Homes in Sydney.¹

At Cowra the actions of several officials demonstrated their conviction that the removal of reserves and the removal of children were directed to the same ends. In 1959 two brothers living at Erambie were committed to Mount Penang for stealing two abandoned soft drink bottles. The manager Heaney recommended that the boys be discharged to their parents on condition that they left the reserve and went to Sydney. On appeal, the judge also believed it not to be desirable that the boys return to reserve life, although he admitted surprise at the severity of the sentence. The policeman responsible for the arrest was described as displaying 'a blatant antipathy towards Cowra Aborigines'. The boys were discharged on condition that the younger stay at school and the elder in employment.²

¹. H. Linacre to Board, 13 July 1964; application by A.W.O. Humphreys to Burnside Home, 27 July 1964, General Correspondence box 8/2975

². Boys charged 2 June 1959; appeal judgment 1 July 1959, box 8/2905, ibid.
These incidents, which represent only a part of the removals or attempted removal of Wiradjuri children from their communities, illustrate the negative attitudes held towards reserve life by the professional white community. A teacher, a member of the Griffith Aborigines Advancement Organisation, a policeman, a magistrate and a judge had each regarded a child's association with other Aborigines either as a restraint upon progress towards a useful personality, or as a positive contribution towards criminality. The Board's officers whose judgements affected Wiradjuri children - Hiscocks, White, Lambert, Fleming and Brown - found support in the beliefs and actions of the white town communities. While total support for the town housing projects was for the most part withdrawn in Wiradjuri country in the 1960s, the policy of child removal was not challenged. Out of ignorance of what really was happening or a belief in the justification of ends, out of a failure to see an alternative in differing child-rearing practices or antipathy towards Aborigines, the Board's policy commanded enduring and widespread support. In 1924 The Sydney Morning Herald had questioned the concept and consequences of the dispersal of Aboriginal children.1 For forty-five years there appears to have been no further such questioning of the policy until the Board was abolished in 1969.

The evidence indicates that the segment of Wiradjuri children assimilated least successfully were the institutionalised males.

1. See above, Ch.4, pp.169-70
Most, if not all, of the Kinchela boys, continued to associate with other Aborigines. None are known not to have returned at least once to their communities. Many nevertheless were psychologically disturbed, the effect of Kinchela life on boys was less a dissociation from their culture than from their families. Ironically, the effects of institutionalisation led many to violence, crime, mental instability or alcoholism, which precluded some from the voluntary association with whites they might otherwise have sought. Area Welfare Officer McBean reported in 1952 that he was disappointed to see a number of youths reared at Kinchela return to live under the 'sub-standard conditions of encampments'. When he remonstrated, he reported that the youths did nothing to improve their condition.1

Fewer institutionalised girls than boys returned to their communities. They were more isolated in service in country houses and, perhaps because they worked indoors, often formed closer association with their employers than did the boys. There was less opportunity for the girls to meet other Aborigines who knew something of their communities and might have encouraged them to return. Probably, too, girls like Beryl Johnson found readier acceptance in the society of white males than did black males in the society of white females. The result was that a number of Wiradjuri was reared at

1. A.W.O. North Coast Region, Report, A.W.B., Annual report, 1951-2, p.10; see also Dawn, 2/7, (July 1953) p.2
Cootamundra now live with white people, or in association with other Cootamundra ex-wards.¹

In the fostering and adoption of Wiradjuri children by whites, the Board achieved its most significant success. It is probable, however, that very many foster children found it difficult to function in the white society, for the evidence suggests that almost all suffered discrimination. Noel Johnson's frustration and resentment at his failure to secure a fulfilling role is paralleled by several cases in the records. For instance, the eldest of seven committed children was placed at a foster home at Raymond Terrace, near Newcastle, in 1956. She completed an apparently happy education at the local High School as Vice Captain. She left home to begin nursing training, then abruptly refused to communicate with her foster mother. She told the official sent to investigate her unresponsiveness, 'Why should I? She's got nothing to do with me now, and does she expect me to get down on my knees to her?' Later she 'unleashed her evidently pent-up hatred of the Board, the unwarranted harsh discipline [of her foster mother]... and the interfering and hounding of welfare officers'. She argued that the natural family had been living like normal white people until the Board interfered. Yet her rejection of white people in her life was unaccompanied by a desire to be reunited with her natural family. She told the official that she did not want

¹ Most of these women today take the view that their removal from the negative influence of reserve life was for the better; for analogous views of the traditional life by a woman of a very different background, see M. McIntosh and E. Rothwell, 'Maddie', Aboriginal history, 3/1, (1979), p.19
to see her mother again, although when a child her fixed idea had been to find her as soon as she turned eighteen.¹

Resentment towards the natural family, the Board and the white people who raised them were features common, in differing degrees, in the case of every Wiradjuri person encountered who was removed from his or her community. The personal tragedy of each individual was that the resentment might be mitigated, but not expunged, by a re-association with Aborigines. The feeling of isolation from both Aboriginal and European cultures appeared often to be permanent.

The first thought [when the committal period expired] probably was to go home to your family, and getting there and finding that there was nothing there, there was no feeling. It was like talking to a stranger. There was no bond at all. You weren't accepted, because you spoke in a different way, and dressed in a different way, you acted in a different way. If that was the aim of the Board to assimilate children, if they couldn't do it with the parents, it certainly succeeded with children, in a sense. All those families that were split up, the children growing up with feelings of resentment and hate, against their families, against themselves, against white society in general.²

The ultimate legacy of the policy of child dispersal was not the dissociation of individuals from a culture or race, but from their fellow human beings.

¹ A.W.O. Briggs, Report, 1 July 1963, General Correspondence, box 8/2954
² C. Edwards, soundtrack, op.cit.
This study of the Wiradjuri people ends with the abolition of the Aborigines Welfare Board in 1969. This concluding chapter reviews the close of the period and argues that, despite promises to the contrary, the policies affecting Wiradjuri people after 1969 did not at first change very much. Some of the differing self-perceptions of the Wiradjuri are then examined, less to indicate what happened (which is beyond the scope of this study), than to indicate that the themes of the 1970s were as much prefigured in previous decades as they were wrought by outside influences. Divisions were widest at Cowra, and as the earlier chapters concentrated on Warangesda and Brungle as the focus of change in the 1890s, this chapter centres on Erambie, the last of the managed Wiradjuri reserves.

In the 1880s the world-views of Wiradjuri men and women were conditioned by circumstance and place, whether they lived at Warangesda, on the edge of a country town, in a pastoral station camp, or wandered in the back country. In the decades after 1900, white society imposed a much tighter homogeneity upon the Wiradjuri. The Board's dispersal policy was at its height, the town councils at their most antagonistic. The narrowing of choice in living conditions and lifeways caused a corresponding

1. For reasons why the Board was abolished, see Appendix I, pp.3-4
contraction of expectation. Self-perceptions amongst the Wiradjuri were much more uniform than they had been in 1890.

In the last two decades of the Board's existence, some of the enforced homogeneity began to crumble. If, as has been argued, the beliefs and actions of men and women spring in part from a world-view conditioned by prevailing circumstances and attitudes, it follows that the diversity of opportunity and potential which opened progressively to the Wiradjuri in the 1950s and 1960s allowed broadening expectations in the 1970s when the children of those earlier decades matured. The differing beliefs, attitudes, concerns and actions of the Wiradjuri in the 1970s were predicated in the solidarity of life at Condobolin town, the isolated independence of Narrandera, the militancy of Erambie, the despair of Hollywood, the uncertainties of life in a Sydney suburb or an assimilation association house in town. From the differing environments emerged at least three separate answers to the central problem of living in a land dominated by whites: isolationism, the view that Aborigines were as good as whites and should live in the same community, and the view that Aborigines were owed special consideration by whites and should live apart from them. These divisions amongst the Wiradjuri, though partly to be explained by such factors as personality, enduring cultural emphases and outside influence, are also logical outcomes of a fairly homogeneous Aboriginal culture in reaction to a century of white oppression which took different forms in different areas. In
the 1970s these differing self-perceptions, and the actions consequent to them, became increasingly distinct, but all were prefigured in the past.

After 1965 the policy of the Board was increasingly that of *laissez-faire*. The last manager at Erambie was withdrawn in 1965, and the police became responsible for local administration.¹ The residents were left to cope for themselves and although strangers were supposed to report to police before they entered the reserve, many residents felt that they were without police protection.² Internal disputes were considered to be no longer the concern of Board officers. Thus, when an Erambie woman appealed to the Board to expel her husband, the Area Welfare Officer was told by Head Office that expulsion from reserves was no longer part of official policy.³ One reason for the withdrawal of the Board from everyday administration was that State governments desired to lift some of the restrictive legislation relating to Aborigines. Certain changes had already been made through the 1963 amendment to the *Aborigines Protection Act*, which among other reforms, removed the prohibition against the purchase and consumption of alcohol. In 1966 the Joint Parliamentary Enquiry into Aborigines Welfare was established, whose report

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¹ Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Overview of Aboriginal Communities, II, 'Erambie, Cowra, N.S.W.', draft for comment, 1978, p.A1, ms. in possession of author

² For instance, recorded conversation Mavis Bamblett

³ A.W.B. to A.W.O., 15 November 1968, General Correspondence, box 8/3032
was expected to recommend major changes in administration. The Enquiry's report the following year recommended the abolition of the Board.¹ In November 1968 the parliament debated the proposal to replace it with an advisory body of nine Aborigines assisting the minister. Chief Secretary Willis, introducing the legislation, told the parliament that public conscience in Aborigines had awakened throughout the Commonwealth, seeking ways to help Aborigines become accepted and responsible members of the Australian community. The shift now was from assistance to self-government. The opposition supported the proposed Act, which empowered the Minister, as Corporation sole, to buy or sell land to Aborigines and grant moneys or loans for the purchase of homes. The spokesman, Earl, hoped the new Act would arouse in Aborigines a new attitude which would make them happy and productive, rather than apathetic and over-dependent.²

The second reason for the lack of direction in policy during the late 1960s was a philosophical disinclination to accept proposals made, not in the name of humanity, or the repeal of unjust laws, but on the premise that something special was owed to Aborigines. For instance, in 1962 Superintendent Green believed that the 'alleged desire' to own reserves was simply an expression of dislike of what appeared to Aborigines to be the

¹ Report from the joint committee, I, p.16
² N.S.W.P.D., L.A., 3/76, 1968-69, pp.2338ff; 3/78 pp.372ff; 3/78, 1968-69, pp.4098ff; Willis, pp.2338-40; Earl p.2340. The Bill was passed as Aborigines Act, No.7 of 1969; under s.2 the term 'Aborigine' was defined as a descendant of an Aboriginal native of Australia
control of the Board. During the Enquiry the view was put on many occasions that Aborigines did not wish to leave reserves, or did not wish to be assimilated. The committee members were uneasy at the proposals, and rarely allowed such assertions to go untested. For instance, W.R. Geddes, professor of anthropology at Sydney University, stated in evidence that the Aborigines of Bourke should be allowed to live by themselves where they chose. The point was pursued by several members of the committee and after quite severe cross-examination, Geddes admitted that it might be legitimate to persuade such people who lived in bad housing on Social Security to move to town housing. The committee's recommendations showed that the protestations had been in vain; the members remained distrustful either of the truth of the testimony, or of the consequences of allowing Aborigines to choose for themselves. The entire history of the Wiradjuri's experience of the dispersal policy seemed to be embodied in the recommendation:

The Committee is convinced that no future houses should be built on reserves. Future housing should be of at least Housing Commission standard and should be scattered throughout the town and not concentrated in any one street or town.

The distrust of the implications of a pluralist society was shared among many influential figures. For instance,

1. J.H. Green, memo on letter from Australian Aboriginal Fellowship, 8 October 1962, General Correspondence, box 8/2994

2. For example, cf. E.S. Charles at Griffith, see above, Ch.7, p.301

3. Report from the joint committee, II, evidence W. Geddes, pp.560-561

4. I, IV, 4, p.12, ibid.
W.C. Wentworth, the Federal Minister in charge of Aboriginal Affairs, stated in 1971 that he believed Aborigines could cherish within the bounds of citizenship their own language, beliefs and values, yet he feared that 'unscrupulous people' might use the feelings for the old ways to organise Aborigines against other Australians, sometimes by the 'fallacious parallel' with Black Power movements, which he thought to be 'quite alien in content and circumstance'.

Despite official caution, the new Act was hailed in some quarters as a long-awaited breakthrough. The Department of Child Welfare and Social Welfare, which now controlled many of the Board's former functions, launched a new journal called New Dawn. In 1970 it informed its readers that Aborigines now had a say in their own affairs. The elected representatives would be able to say exactly what Aborigines wanted. They would help to decide the rate and extent of change from their old ways of living. A list of six 'benefits' conferred by the Act followed. The history of the journal itself demonstrated that the benefits were more hope than reality. The first editor of New Dawn, Cora Walther, stated that after a few issues, material was very heavily censored by the Minister. After a few months, there were so many inserts of the 'eat more


2. New Dawn 1/1, (April 1970) p.4
breakfast' variety that the editorship was no longer a full-time position.¹

Despite a lifting of restrictions, the administration of the Department came close to a return to the policies of the early 1960s, a phenomenon encouraged by the fact that many of the former Board employees simply transferred to the new Department and continued as before. There were numerous examples of reactionary policy and administration in the 1970s. For example, a draft report of 1979 from the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs concluded that at Cowra the same policies as those of previous decades were being pursued under different names and by different departments. It was claimed that the Housing Commission, which had assumed the accommodation function of the Board, discouraged people from living at Erambie. People were not allowed to move into vacant houses and several buildings were destroyed, including the single men's quarters. The Report noted further, that although Erambie housing was transferred to the Aboriginal Lands Trust's control in 1975 and that through it was established the Cowra-based Koori Housing Association, there was still scarcely any improvement. The directors were said to have no real power nor even knowledge of the available funds.² Meanwhile agencies such as the police and the magistracy, which had not been consulted during the period of policy change, continued to function as if consultation with Aborigines was not a policy aim. In 1975, for

¹ Recorded conversation Cora Walther, Canberra, 25 July 1980

² Overview of Aboriginal Communities, pp.A3, A4, B9
instance, the N.S.W. Police Association asked for higher salaries on the grounds that its members had to enforce standards on Aborigines which were acceptable to the whole community.\(^1\) The Central-West solicitor of the Aboriginal Legal Service stated that in the late 1970s magistrates often refused in their judgements to accept mitigating circumstances such as extended family responsibilities.\(^2\)

There appeared also to have been little change in the administration of the law concerning neglected and uncontrollable children. In 1967 the Chairman of the Unesco International Committee on Adult Education told the Joint Parliamentary Enquiry that the Canadian policy of special schools which removed children from their communities had been a mistake, because the children had ceased to be Indians. Their removal was a trapdoor by which the leadership of the Indians was removed.\(^3\) Despite his caution, in the 1970s a very high proportion of Aboriginal children continued to be removed from their families. Of 123 Aboriginal children contacted by the Aboriginal Children's Research Project in 1980-1, sixty-two had no contact with their families, thirty-three had no knowledge of their family's whereabouts, sixty were 'mixed or confused' at the prospect of returning home, and twenty-four did not know

1. The point was noted by P. Coe, 'Aboriginals and the criminal law', address to, the Institute of Criminology, 2 July 1980, p.3-4, xerox
2. Recorded conversation Neil Andrews, Cowra, 16 May 1979
that they were of Aboriginal descent.\textsuperscript{1} In 1980, 14\% of
children in state institutions were Aboriginal, while Aborigines
themselves made up less than 1\% of the state's population.\textsuperscript{2}

There was an echo of the Hillston teacher's protestation that a
child's Aboriginality was of no consequence in the Agency's
findings concerning psychologists' reports on fifteen Aboriginal
children. Only two of the reports referred to the subjects'
Aboriginal descent, yet the investigation totalled fifty-three
negative comments about the children compared to eleven positive
comments. Many of the former, in the researcher's opinion,
should have been cited as the dynamics of the extended family
system, rather than as evidence of abnormality or family
malfunction.\textsuperscript{3}

In Wiradjuri country the policy was often administered with the
same cruel or careless impersonality which marked previous
decades. For example, in 1970 the seven children of Robert and
Mavis Reid were removed from Griffith on the grounds of neglect.
In 1980, Mavis Reid, who had not been allowed to speak in her
own defence at the hearing, denied the charge. Ten years after
their committal, only one child had returned home, and although
several were in the care of a grandmother at Condobolin, the
parents had heard nothing of the two youngest children since the

\textsuperscript{1} Family and Children's Service Agency, Discussion
paper 5, 'Identifying Aboriginal children in substitute care', 1982, p.1.1

\textsuperscript{2} A. Mongta, \textit{op.cit.}, p.1

\textsuperscript{3} Family and Children's Service Agency, Discussion
paper 1, 'Who is unresponsive, - negative assessments
of Aboriginal children', 1981, pp.4-12
day of the court hearing. It was as if the policy continued of its own momentum independent of the desires or wishes of administrators. 138 years had passed since Gunther had seen Wiradjuri children 'running into the bushes, or into the bed of the River with the utmost speed', so frightened were they of removal to the mission station at Wellington Valley.

Kevin Gilbert, born at Condobolin, argued in 1973 that Aborigines were members of one of four groups: first were the problem people, who lived on reserves because the outside world was too threatening, and turned off TV programs about Aborigines; second were the assimilated, about whom little was heard; third were the radicals, principally ex-reserve people, interested in restoring black culture; fourth were the active conservatives, comprising politically and socially conscious people, who had the greatest influence on contemporary affairs.

Gilbert's divisions, though perceptive, are a little misleading unless account is taken of the very wide spectrum of attitude which existed within and beyond each category. I have argued that the differences amongst the Wiradjuri of the 1970s were, in

1. Recorded conversation Mavis Read


3. K. Gilbert, Because a white man'll never do it, 1973, pp.128-130
part, the outcome of different sets of potentialities formed in different Wiradjuri areas. Thus a combination of factors, the most important of which was the continuation of the managerial system, produced at Cowra not only a more aggressive self-identity, but also a wider range of potential for further political or social expression. This potential was broadened through Cowra's relative proximity to Sydney and the tradition which was established in the 1950s of travel there for employment or adventure. In turn, residence in Sydney activated or catalyzed, in some people, a further potential for increasing expectations and actions. On reserves more remote from Sydney, other circumstances and different results generally prevailed. At Brungle, managerial rule ended earlier. The reserve was further from Sydney, the residents were expelled more brutally and more effectively, and once expelled, people went to Tumut rather than Sydney. The Griffith fruit-picking industry offered alternatives in time of slack employment to residents along the Murrumbidgee, and to those at Condobolin. In western Wiradjuri country a more common pattern than residence in Sydney was that people visited other cities or towns for shorter periods, then returned more or less permanently to their birthplaces. For instance, in 1980 all eight of Ossie Ingram's children lived at Narrandera, and seven of the eight children of Effie Lyons. Only one of the six siblings of the National Aboriginal Conference member Val Mackay lived in Sydney in 1981. Mackay lived at Narrandera, and the others lived at their birthplace, Ganmain.¹ For people outside the Cowra district in the

1970s, the potential for political action was limited to the extent that there was less of a tradition of abstracting the differences between Aborigines and whites, and less opportunity to travel to Sydney.

The first of the distinctions which we are to draw, then, which overlie Gilbert's categories, is that between Sydney and country residents. Though individuals from all Wiradjuri regions went to Sydney, it was only from Cowra that sufficient journeys established a pattern of chain-migration similar to the way in which Three Ways was established at Griffith in the 1940s.

There were several causes for the initial migrations. In the late 1930s, the parents of Mrs Shirley Smith left Cowra to seek employment in Sydney. In the 1960s Mrs Louisa Ingram and Mrs Merritt, while they did not cut their ties with Erambie, left for Sydney partly to rid themselves of managerial rule.

Migration independent of the initial causes soon was established. For instance, in about 1975 Leonie Simpson, on the day she left school, caught the first train to Sydney. At first she stayed with relatives, and in the next three years worked in various employments and went to college. In 1978 she returned to Cowra, but in 1979 planned to leave again.

A sense of Wiradjuri local identification can be recognised in Simpson not dissimilar to the Northern Territory Aborigine of Stanner's acquaintance, who dreamed frequently of his homeland, but did

1. Mum Shirl and Bobbi Sykes, *op.cit.*, p.17
2. Pers. comm, Pam Ingram, July 1981
3. Recorded conversation Leonie Simpson, Cowra, 15 August 1979
not often return to it. For many Sydney Wiradjuri, a home-town or birth-place was recognised as a spiritual homeland to which return was not necessarily often made. Another reason for residence in Sydney, with different implications, was its attraction to many former wards. Many people were sent to apprenticeships or domestic situations in Sydney in the 1950s and 1960s, and for those whose home links were weakest, Sydney frequently became a base. For instance, all of Richard Murray's brothers lived in Sydney for periods during the 1970s, and in 1981, all of Iris Clayton's surviving siblings (who could not, in any case, return to Wattle Hill), lived in Sydney.

Mayer, in his study of the Xhosa of South Africa, distinguished between 'structural urbanisation', which he defined as the striking of permanent roots, and 'cultural urbanisation', which involved a preference for urban ways. Many of the culturally urbanised Xhosa had not, despite long residence, moved closer to the whites; some had joined a black urban elite. His findings have some relevance to urban Aborigines. Barwick's conclusions about Melbourne Aborigines is consistent with the continuation of strong local and family identifications in the urban community. In Sydney, too,

2. Recorded conversations Richard Murray, Iris Clayton
3. P. Mayer, _Townsmen or tribesmen_, 1971, p.283
4. p.3, _ibid._
some of the ex-wards may have become 'structurally urbanised', but most of the city Wiradjuri, like the Xhosa, while probably preferring urban ways, retained strong local ties. Mayer's distinction between an elite and other urban residents also is useful, because members of the Erambie families Ingram and Coe dominated some of the Aboriginal power bases in Sydney in the 1970s, such as the Aboriginal Legal Service and Murrawina Aboriginal School.

A study of the leadership structure of the urban Wiradjuri is beyond the scope of this investigation. However, since the present purpose is to trace the origins of the philosophies underpinning Wiradjuri attitudes and actions in the 1970s, some different conceptions may be compared. The differences are indicated in the ideas of what was owed by whites to Aborigines. An unidentified woman, quoted by Gilbert, believed in 1972 that a projected Aboriginal housing scheme in Redfern was preferential treatment, for she had 'fought all her life to be a lady'. By contrast, Paul Coe, born at Erambie and Chairman of Directors of the Aboriginal Legal Service, believed that the express policy of the whites' administration over eighty years was the destruction of Aboriginal culture, particularly its association with the land. Urban life clearly did not radicalise all Sydney Aborigines, but it commonly radicalised


2. p.69, ibid.; see also P. Coe, address to teacher college students, in C. Tatzand K. McConnochie (eds.), Aboriginal viewpoints..., 1975, 103-113, pp.103-4
those whose personality and past history allowed such a potential.

This potential was greatest in those who had been reared in a self-assertive or aggressive community. If the Wiradjuri 'elite' presented the most radical thinking of the 1970s, so had the Erambie people in the 1950s and 1960s represented the most radical thinking of their own day. Les Coe, for instance, the father of Paul, had been one of the most vehement opponents of managerial and police oppression. Similarly, the conceptions of Aboriginality of the three women who defied the manager Orley in 1953 were not clearly articulated, but they suggested the forms in which the abstractions of the 1970s solidified. The following succinct statement of the conceptual base of Aboriginality in the 1970s was made by the Co-Ordinator of Murrawina School, Mildred Butt. She was a daughter of Louisa Ingram, who in the 1960s had left Erambie to avoid paying rent on what she regarded as Aboriginal land:

Whenever I see discrimination against my people, well I'll fight them, whether I offend my neighbours or offend the local MP or the local constabulary, I'll get up there and fight, because I am black and I am proud of it. There's no way they'll assimilate me into any white community. I believe in integration, and we should integrate with white people, but we accept them because we are Aborigines, we are the original ones. We are a different culture, we are an equal culture to the white race, ours is more beautiful, just as beautiful as any white Australian's. But we have to build up the status within the white community, and we'll do that with dignity and pride.

1. See above, Ch.6, pp.263-4

2. Recorded conversation Mildred Butt
Both the Wiradjuri 'elite' and the other urban dwellers drew strength from a common base of family, kin and rural community. Less articulate younger people, as well as the leaders, looked to their own areas for inspiration, rather than to pan-Aboriginalism. Projects attempted or completed amongst the Wiradjuri in the 1970s included a revival of the Wiradjuri language, the tracing of ancestry to pre-invasion times and making films on incidents in Wiradjuri history. Butt's position was based on a wider concept of Aboriginality than that held by some northern Aborigines, but, though she had lived in Sydney for years, her roots were at Erambie.¹

The local ties of most Wiradjuri (and probably other) Aborigines may help to explain the comparative lack of interest in international socialism as a political force. In the 1950s and 1960s many overseas activists either agonised over or discounted indigenous cultures. For instance Fanon, while acknowledging that a pan-Negro culture was capable of positive force, disparaged tribal culture as oppressed by sterile traditions, comprising merely the cast-offs, the shells and corpses of thought.² Neither the rhetoric, nor, presumably, the thinking of most Aboriginal spokespeople of the 1970s was much

¹ Cf. Maurice Luther Jupurrula, recorded conversation by Ludo Kuipers, Lajamanu (N.T.), July 1978, in P. and J. Read (eds.), 'A view of the past, Aboriginal accounts of Northern Territory history', ms., 1980, pp.233-4: 'Your true life is that you are blackfellow, you're proud of it. You talk Warlpiri, you stay that way'

² F. Fanon, The wretched of the earth, 1961/7, pp.170, 181; see also A. Memmi, The colonizer and the colonized, 1957/65, p.28
influenced by post-colonial socialist abstractions, at least partly because Aboriginal activism was firmly rooted in community and family. The effect of city residence was not to draw the Wiradjuri from their traditional orientation, but to allow the further broadening of the conceptual bases of those capable and willing to accept the changes which the interactions of urban life implied.

The second important distinction we are to draw between the Wiradjuri of the 1970s was foreshadowed by the town housing program. Outside Cowra, the pressures to move from the camps was so strong that most Aborigines remained sympathetic both to those who had to leave and to those who remained. For instance, Neil Ingram, an officer in 1980 of the Department of Youth and Community Services at Condobolin, was born on the reserve. His parents moved to town in about 1962. Since Ingram was only six at the time the family moved, he was too young to have retained any clear memories of, or allegiance to the reserve. In 1980, although he did not wish to live on the reserve, he felt no animosity towards those who wished to do so. He believed that the nature of the reserve system was discriminatory and was not in favour of spending the estimated $100,000 necessary to repair and maintain it. Yet he believed that in any case the Condobolin reserve would survive. ¹

At Cowra the distinction between town and reserve was less muted. Most residents in the 1960s and 1970s who had moved to

¹ Conversation Neil Ingram, Condobolin, 7 November 1980
the town had done so voluntarily and their decision to leave was often interpreted, not as a matter of convenience, but as a statement of attitude towards Aboriginal culture. The criticism may have been unjust, for there were sound physical reasons to leave Erambie. For instance, May Collett, born at Erambie, complained of the puddles, dirt, scabies, measles, chicken pox, swearing and fighting on the reserve. Her children were cut by broken glass 'from drunks chucking their flagons on the road'. She stated that she did not want her daughters falling pregnant at an early age, as she herself had done. By contrast in town she felt that she had found acceptance in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and she had friendly neighbours.¹ Mrs Olive Williams, who had arrived from Brungle, complained of reserve life on more personal grounds. She had found the Erambie residents unfriendly. In 1979 she stated that she had more white friends in town than Aboriginal friends on the reserve and in 1981 she moved to a house in town.² The most pointed criticism of Erambie in 1979 was made by a young woman whose parents had left Erambie at about the time she was born. She felt that she was disliked by Erambie people who thought of her as an 'uptown nigger' and was convinced that she had lost her job as healthworker because of the feelings against her on this score. She did not believe

1. Recorded conversation May Collett
2. Recorded conversation Olive Simpson
that Erambie people deserved land rights, but should instead look after the reserve better.¹

The defence of reserve life ranged from the practical through the aggressive to the mystical, and indicated that Gilbert's 'problem people' of the reserves occupied a very wide spectrum of attitude and belief. A son of May Collett, the woman who had left the reserve because of the disease and dirt, stated:

I just can't leave the mission, because this is my home, where I was originally from. How can you leave something when you've had it. I like to look after my grandmother. It's one of the Aboriginal traditions, really, the younger ones stop here and look after the older ones... We all help each other and we need each other... Some who lived on this mission a long time ago, before I was born, I think they moved off because they drank a lot, done everything wrong, made a lot of enemies in town with the whites. They got ashamed. They're what we call up here, on the mission, 'down town niggers'. I think its something you ought to be proud of, you know.²

Others lived at Erambie with rather less romantic conceptions of daily life. Colin Glass, who believed that 'Kooris would rob their own mother - that's my opinion of them' - did not appear to have considered any other alternative.³ Neville Williams, a roof-tiler, stayed at Erambie when he returned to Cowra, and believed that he would 'feel funny' if he left the reserve.⁴

His sister Matilda, who lived in Canberra, believed that town life caused 'problems galore':

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1. Recorded conversation Leonie Simpson
2. Recorded conversation Kevin Collett, Erambie, 4 August 1979
3. Recorded conversation Colin Glass
4. Recorded conversation Neville Williams
A lot of kids are fronting up for courts because of the cultural breakdown, from leaving the mission [reserve] and going to live in town. They find they're getting into strife.¹

Some of the controversy clearly lay in the power to make decisions which the Wiradjuri had previously been denied. Yet not all the town residents were defensive: some maintained that, while one's Aboriginality was in no way compromised, residence in town taught financial and other sophistication:

If all the people moved [off Erambie], it'd return to Crown land, and the government would take it back then. I'd like to see some Aboriginals stay there. Those that want to leave, I think I'd be very pleased with the idea, because this is the only way they're going to get any idea of, you know, integration, or trying to keep up with modern society. A lot of my compatriots, again I say, are not into that idea - 'Why should we integrate, we're a people in our own right, out on our own'. But the majority of the world population, they've got to move along with modern technology... It seems to me that most Europeans say, 'Why worry about them, they're contented in their ways, they've been living that way for thousands of years before the white man got here'. But that's the point. Civilization is catching up to then, it's there. They've definitely got to change their ways. What's the good of this welfare program and the housing program if you don't have an education to go with it?... If we don't move with the times, we'll still be chasing round in a horse and buggy or old jalopies that the used car-dealers can't sell to anybody else.²

The speaker had hit upon a truth already apparent to some of the Condobolin town-dwellers, that there was no necessary connection between Aboriginality and poverty or ignorance of white material values. The perception argued the converse of the Board's proposition of 1939, that the raising of living standards must precede 'mergence' into the white community.³ In 1980 the

1. Recorded conversation Matilda House
2. Recorded conversation Gordon Simpson
3. A.W.B., Annual report, 1938-9, p.5
above left, Mr Colin Glass, Erambie, 1979
above right, Mrs May Collett, Cowra, 1975
below left, Mrs Olive Williams, Erambie, 1979
below right, Mr Gordon Simpson, Cowra, 1979
construction of new centrally-heated houses at Erandie demonstrated that reserve life might, indeed, be materially superior to rented accommodation in town. What emerged at Cowra in the 1960s and 1970s, therefore, and to a lesser extent at Griffith and Condobolin, were several newly articulated concepts of Aboriginality which stood between the arbitrary touchstones of reserve-as-degradation and reserve-as-touchstone-to-Aboriginal-culture. People at Cowra had to make the same decisions as the city residents as to whether they were to associate with other Aborigines, or whites, or both. All three possibilities now were open, and could be justified in terms of different concepts of Aboriginality. Perhaps the single most important outcome of the town housing programs of the 1950s and 1960s was not, ultimately, the shifting of people from one place to another, nor their 'assimilation', but the new intellectual abstractions on the nature of Aboriginality which the justification of one's friends and choice of residence demanded.

Perhaps the greatest difference between the Wiradjuri in the 1970s, though one closely related to the two already described, was that between generations. In the 1970s it appeared to be as wide as it had been in the 1880s, when Gribble offered to young people what appeared to be a real and attractive alternative. Gribble's promise had turned out to be a false dream, but the expectations that changes might occur through Aboriginal endeavour were the same. Partly because of the changing circumstances, children born in the 1950s and 1960s, believing that they could achieve a great deal, sometimes judged the past
as if this had always been the case. Although changing attitudes had been formed in the milieu which their parents had largely created, the children sometimes wondered why older generations, particularly that of their grandparents, had not achieved more, while their grandparents, who had matured in the straitened decades before the Second World War, were fearful of the consequences of overt militancy. The essential difference was one of expectation. James Baldwin noted the same 'generation gap' in the United States in the 1950s, though he placed the division between father and son, rather than, in the present case, grandparent and grandchild:

I am trying to suggest that you [Angela Davis] - for example - do not appear to be your father's daughter in the same way that I am my father's son. At bottom, my father's expectations and mine were the same, the expectations of his generation and mine were the same; and... neither the immense difference in our ages nor the move from the South to the North could alter these expectations, and make our lives more viable. For, in part, to use the brutal language of the hour, the interior language of that despair, he was just a nigger - a nigger labourer preacher - and so was I.

Brody found in 1975 that a similar gulf existed among Eskimo generations. The children spoke English, yet the more sophisticated also looked forward to going hunting in the older style which some of their parents and grandparents already had abandoned. Older generations rarely knew of their children's activities and exaggerated their Europeanisation. Their respect

1. J. Baldwin, 'Open letter to Angela Davis', in A. Davis, If they come in the morning, 1971, p.19. For an example of the fears of older Negroes of the consequences of black militancy, see J. Griffin, Black like me, 1962, pp.43, 117
for the young Brody believed to be an extension of respect for white Canadians.¹

In Wiradjuri country the distinction in expectation could be best observed between the generation which endured the worst of the oppression in the 1930s, and that of their children and grandchildren. I have argued elsewhere that in the country towns in recent decades, freedom widened the horizons of young people, but carried a price unperceived by older people, who were not asked to pay it.² For although discrimination against Aborigines had long been part of daily life, there is evidence that police harassment increased in Wiradjuri towns in proportion to the freedom from restrictive legislation which Aborigines gained in the period. In these towns, the whites perceived such freedoms in the greater number of Aborigines in the streets, on corners, in cars and hotel bars. Accordingly, jobs became harder to find, pretexts were used to ban Aborigines from certain hotels.³ The older people did not drink in the 'flash' hotels, they were not interested in obtaining work and the police for the most part left them alone. One of them condemned the young for becoming too arrogant, another left the Aboriginal Legal Service because he believed that it protected

2. P. Read, 'Fathers and sons'... (Appendix III) pp.110-114
3. For instance, Leonie Simpson was banned from entering a Cowra hotel for fighting with a white woman, but the latter was not banned; the D.A.A.'s 'Overview of Aboriginal communities', p.83, stated that, of 15 vacancies advertised in Cowra between June 1957 and June 1958, none was given to an Aborigine.
too many Aborigines who deserved to be punished. Meanwhile a twenty-one year old Erambie resident described a man of his grandfather's generation as 'the white blackfeller - never been to jail in his life'. A cyclic pattern was established in which younger Aborigines, reared in an atmosphere of change, expected more and were prepared to take initiatives. Fears of reprisal were roused in the old people, who well understood what the police were capable of; the reprisals, when they came, were directed at the young, and as the young people became more militant, they became more impatient with the cautions of the old.

There are obvious links in this discussion to the radicalising effect on young people who went to Sydney, and a certain antipathy existed between the 'stirrers' of Sydney and those who remained in the country. Richard Murray, thirty years old in 1979, distrusted some of the 'black power mad' Aborigines of Sydney. Ultimately, of course, the divisions were not only between people, but within each individual. Gordon Simpson, Co-ordinator of the Koori Housing Company, stated that he now realised some of the problems which the managers used to face. The conflicting pressures on people to follow one avenue of thought or another could be seen in the company

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1. Recorded conversations Paul Coe Snr; conversation Roy Carroll
2. Pers. comm., Michael Williams, Cowra, 26 July 1979
3. Recorded conversation Richard Murray
4. Recorded conversation Gordon Simpson
itself: one objective called on the company to 'build up and contribute to the identity, sense of purpose and culture of persons of Aboriginal and Island descent', another empowered it to 'establish half-way houses' to assist such persons in the 'smooth and secure entry into independent life'.<sup>1</sup> That the two objectives were not seen to be antagonistic indicates that the currents of change swept very strongly through Wiradjuri country in the 1960s and 1970s, and that at the close of our period, few Aborigines had had time to think through the implications of their positions.

Internal movement throughout Wiradjuri country disseminated the ferment of the east. The possibilities, and the freedom to choose the possibilities, expanded constantly. By the end of the 1970s it was possible, in most Wiradjuri towns, to be a tradesman, an alcoholic, a prisoner, an authority figure on a reserve, or an employee of the Department of Youth and Community Services and still retain the respect of part of the local Aboriginal community. One could encourage one's children to marry 'white', or as an Aboriginal teacher aide, teach solely Aboriginal children in schools. One could follow the Mormon faith, or renounce Christianity as the religion of the invader. One could live in town, on a reserve, in a fringe-camp, or a caravan. There were some who were not aware of, or chose not to acknowledge, their Aboriginal descent.<sup>2</sup> All save the last

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1. Memorandum and Articles of Association of Koori Housing Company Limited, April 1975, objectives (a) and (c)

2. Ossie Ingram, pers. comm. October 1981, stated that 'half the town' of Narrandera was of acknowledged or unacknowledged Aboriginal descent
cut across Gilbert's categories. Each of the several positions could be justified within the widening concepts of Aboriginality which, as I have argued, existed because of the changes of the previous thirty years.

In 1979, seventy years after the proclamation of the Aborigines Protection Act, the Wiradjuri had survived its dispersive intent. The cost had been enormous. The self-perceptions within the community, though not necessarily mutually exclusive, were not always mutually acceptable. The term 'coconut' (black without, white within) was coined to describe people who did not act according to the criteria of the critic. Wiradjuri people, like other Aborigines, caused considerable hurt to one another in applying the epithet to those who, for instance, embraced the Jewish faith, lived in a town, attended University, refused to drink alcohol or would not 'sleep around'.

The cost of survival was sometimes also the cost of a birthplace. Only Erambie was as strong, or stronger, than before, for what the Board had begun, the municipal councils had finished. At dozens of towns like Temora, Eucowra, Canowindra, Gooloogong, Junee, Parkes and Forbes, the traces of separate Aboriginal habitation had been obliterated by the bush or the bulldozer. At Brungle, where Knocker Williams had watched the punishment of a wife-stealer seventy years before, nothing remained but four dilapidated cottages. At Warangesda, a few collapsed and ruined buildings spoke of Gribble's invitation to join the promised land. Wattle Hill, where Iris Clayton was
told by her grandmother that she was sounding very white, girl, had vanished beneath brick houses and a concrete water tank. At Hillston, where Hetty Charles showed her family that they were as good as any whites, the bush was reclaiming the scrap iron. At Euabalong, where Ossie Ingram's mother had introduced strangers to the wa'wi in the Marngi Waterhole, only the wa'wi remained. Frog's Hollow was a memory. At the Sandhills, not a trace remained of the human beings who had sought to rid themselves, by isolation, from the persecution of the invader. At Hollywood, broken bedheads, toys, shoes and car-bodies marked the site of the Board's last attempt at forced isolation. At the Murie, where Kevin Gilbert listened to Grandfather Koori at nightfall, only a few domestic roses growing wild amidst the gravel heaps and wheel tracks marked the site of the last attempt of the Wiradjuri at voluntary isolation. At Cootamundra, where the first stages of the mental destruction of Mary Williams were enacted in 1923, the building remained intact. On the brickwork were still inscribed the names of some of the children who survived to maturity, and some who did not. The experience of the Wiradjuri had been that of Robert Bropho, who surveying the land near Perth where once his parents' home had stood, remarked 'it is just another green lawn where they can play their sports, but the grassroots underneath that lawn is the grassroots of the fringedwellers'.

above, the site of the Murie, Condobolin, 1980

below, The Margie waterhole, Euabalong, 1980
Some common purposes had emerged. When the New South Wales government released details of the proposed Aboriginal Land Rights Act, it appeared that only Erambie, Brungle, Condobolin and the Three Ways Reserves would be eligible for claim as Freehold title. The newly formed Wiradjuri Land Council, comprising twelve separate communities, declared in January 1983 that the Bill was 'totally unacceptable'.

In another less positive sense, the Wiradjuri also were united. Wiradjuri artists painted the old people; the poets and playwrights, the film-makers and the political radicals confined their efforts almost exclusively to Aboriginal, and commonly Wiradjuri, themes. Such creative, intellectual and administrative forces had far greater room for expression than they had two decades earlier, but they were directed almost entirely towards the issues of identity and self-determination. In the 1970s the Wiradjuri had not reached the security of allowing those who chose to function outside the cultural traditions to do so without criticism. The few who achieved fame outside an Aboriginal environment were castigated for abandoning the cause:

Remember, Evonne, the song of the swan,
I sang you in Griffith's heat haze;
Wheeling your pram thru the dust past the dam
To the tin shanties we lived in so long.
Remember my aunt; your grandmother, 'Doll',

2. Motion passed by Wiradjuri Land Council, Darlington Point, 22 January 1983
Our cousins, our blood kept in chains? 
Remember the hate, the mortality rate, 
The tumble-down shacks, the rains? 

The constraints bound almost as tightly as ever. The greatest efforts were expended, as they had been for two centuries, on survival. The battle to achieve the basic human rights, to live to maturity where and with whom one chose, to teach one's children according to conviction, and to fulfil one's potential within the terms of one's culture and inheritance, had not yet been won. The cost of survival had been a loss of the unguessed potential of human intellect and spirit which had not been allowed to flower. In the 1970s, the finest Wiradjuri minds were, of necessity, still intent on the survival of family, community and culture. So much effort, so much suffering, had been wasted in preserving what should have been the inalienable right of the Wiradjuri to live as they wished:

    I would have poured my spirit without stint, 
    But not through wounds, not on the cess of war.

In the 1970s the struggle of survival had not been lost by the Wiradjuri, but had not yet been won.

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Erambie residents, 1979
Appendix I

The Aborigines Protection and Welfare Boards

This appendix has been compiled from information contained in the Annual reports of the Aborigines Protection and Welfare Boards, 1883-1968, from the Aborigines Protection Act, 1909-63 and from the Report from the joint committee..., 1968.

The Aborigines Protection Board was established in 1883. There were six members, comprising three members of the state Parliament, and three appointees representing official interests. The Chairman was Edmund Fosbery, Inspector-General of Police. All positions were non-remunerative. The Secretaryship was executed on a part-time basis. In 1888 Fosbery 'found it convenient' to fill this post from the Police Department, an arrangement which continued until 1915. Until then, the Board was administratively under the control of that Department, and the Chairmanship of the Board continued to be filled by the Inspector-General. The association with the police was confirmed in the Aborigines Protection Act, 1909, and only abolished in the 1940 amendment.

The Aborigines Protection Association, established in 1880, continued for a decade in uneasy alliance with the Board, while it relied increasingly on the government for financial support. In 1889 the Board complained of the high cost of its subsidy to the Association. In 1892 financial support was withdrawn, although for three more years the Association remained in nominal control of its stations Cumeroogunga, Warangesda and
Brewarrina. In 1896 it resolved that it no longer wished to be held responsible for the secular control of its stations. Partly to take the place of the Association in local administration, a system of Local Boards was established in 1895. The local superintendent of police was to be an ex-officio member of each Local Board.

The Aborigines Protection Act of 1909 confirmed the status of the Local Boards, although the Aborigines Protection Board was given the power to abolish them. Although not strictly specified, the composition of the Board remained as it had been earlier - half the membership were members of parliament and the others represented government interests such as the Department of Lands and the Department of Public Instruction.

In 1915 the domination of the Police Department gave way, through the appointment of A.C. Pettitt from the staff of the Chief Secretary's office to the position of full-time Secretary. This position, the only salaried position on the Board, in Pettitt's hands became one of considerable power in the formulating and executing of policy. The Local Boards, which numbered twenty-seven in 1915, probably owed something of their rapid decline after this point to Pettitt. Their decline also was due to the centralisation of bureaucratic power to cope with the administration of the 1915 amendment. Two inspectors were appointed in 1916, including R.T. Donaldson, who had been a member of the Board since 1904, and their activities quickly made redundant the work of the Local Boards. The Inspectors'
Reports were the first item, for instance, in the Annual report of 1920-1, while the Local Boards were not mentioned at all.

There were few changes in administration until the Report of the Public Service Board in 1939. The Recommendations were incorporated in the amendment of 1940. The Under-Secretary of the Chief Secretary's Department became ex-officio Chairman, and the name of the Board was changed to the Aborigines Welfare Board. Further amendments to the Act in 1943 set the Board structure as: Chairman, executive member/Superintendent (which position replaced that of Inspector), an officer from the Department of Public Health, another from the Department of Education, an expert in agriculture, an expert in sociology and/or anthropology, two Ministerial nominees, two Aborigines, and a senior police officer. The Board was given the status of body corporate, with perpetual succession. The first Superintendent, A.W.G. Lipscombe, was appointed in 1939 and the first Aboriginal member was William Ferguson. In 1949 C.J. Buttsworth became Chairman of the Board and in the same year, Area Welfare Officers were appointed for the first time to co-ordinate the activities of managers, matrons and child welfare officers. M.H. Saxby became Superintendent in 1953 and H.J. Green succeeded him in 1959. A.G. Kingsmill became Chairman in 1958.

The Joint Parliamentary Enquiry into Aborigines Welfare, 1967, recommended the abolition of the Board. Although it found that the Board had carried out its duties and responsibilities in a 'reasonable manner' it criticised the lack of time available to members, because of duties elsewhere, to devote to Board
matters. The qualifications and training of welfare officers also was described as deficient. The most telling argument against the continuation of the Board came indirectly from some of its officials. H.J. Green argued that it was a mistake to mix the policing functions of the Board, such as rent collection, with its welfare functions. From this and similar arguments the Enquiry reasoned that if the policing functions were removed from the Board, there would be little left for it to do. Accordingly it recommended that its functions be taken over by the government bodies already functioning for the different purposes.

The government accepted this recommendation. Housing policy was taken over by the Housing Commission, the remaining schools by the Education Department, and welfare functions by the Department of Child Welfare and Community Welfare. The last Annual report of the Board was 1968, though it was not formally abolished until 1969.
Appendix II
Wiradjuri reserves 1861-1899

This listing has been compiled from entries in the Register of Aboriginal Reserves, c.1861-1899, State Archives 2/8439

RAR: Register of Aboriginal Reserves

Belabula River, 40 acres, 6 miles from Cargo, 5 miles from junction of Kenangle Creek and Belabula River; resident 'Jas Murray', 1879, RAR 110

Brungle, 3 notifications, 77 acres in 1889, 3 acres in 1890, 65 in 1900; RAR 45-47

Condobolin, 16 acres on Lachlan River, 1900; RAR 169

Cowra, 32 acres, 1890, RAR 85

Eugowra, 80 acres, 8 miles from Eugowra, 20 miles from Forbes, occupied by John Sloane, RAR 111

Grong Grong, 1280 acres on Murrumbidgee River, occupied by Ned Tindale, 1884; RAR 130

Hillston, 49 acres on Lachlan River, 1904; RAR 19

Hillston, Willanthry, 100 acres on Lachlan River, near Booligal-Hillston Rd., 1895; RAR 215
Ilford, 9 acres near Crudine Creek, 3 houses, 'Aborigines lived there for a considerable number of years'
1899; RAR 104

Parkes, 85 acres on Coobang Creek near Billabong Goldfield,
1893; RAR 112

Sofala, 6 acres, 14 miles from Sofala, occupied by 'Tommy Again',
1878; RAR 100

Sofala, 2 acres, adjoining above, occupied by Kitty Roberts,
1882; RAR 101

Warangesda, 4 grants totalling 1981 acres, 1880-83;
2½ miles from Darlington Point; RAR 150

Yass, 89½ acres at Brickey's Creek, occupied by 'ex Aboriginal tracker Sheehan'. 1900; RAR 7

Yass, 80 acres near Blakney Creek, occupied by Amos Lewis and Mrs James Lewis, 1875; RAR 141

Yass, 2 reserves to Harry Wedge, 40 acres, 1881, and 120 acres 1883, 2 miles from Blakney Creek, formerly occupied by 'Mr McKenzie'; RAR 141

Yass, Brickey’s Creek, 100 acres, 1895; RAR 6
Yass, Flakeney Creek, 129 acres, occupied by Harry Wedge, 1893; RAR 143

Blakney Creek, 100 acres, 12 miles from Dalton, 18 miles from Yass, 16 miles from Rye Park, occupied by John Bell, 1889; RAR 160

Yass township, 2 acres at Coles Creek, 1883; RAR 141

Yass township, 29 acres near P & A association ground, Yass Rd., occupied by 40 people, 1888; RAR 140

Yass township, 2 acres, Howell St and Reddall St, occupied by 38 people, 1890; RAR 142

Other Wiradjuri reserves not listed in the Register of Aboriginal reserves, compiled from P. Read, 'Family and Community in New South Wales', ms. prepared for Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, N.S.W., 1983, part B (Reserves)

Darlington Point, c.18 acres, 1936;
Gooloogong, 18 acres, 1911;
Griffith, 3 Ways, c.15 acres in c.1949 (special lease because of Water Board tenure of general area)

Yass, Edgerton, 1100 acres in 1911

Note: The Murie, at Condobolin, and Wattle Hill, at Leeton, were not official Aboriginal reserves.
This paper is concerned with the lives of five men who had a close connection with Erambie Aboriginal Station, West Cowra, New South Wales. In the course of recorded conversations during 1979 they told me of their lives, attitudes and opinions. Their names are Frank Broughton (born at Brungle Aboriginal Station, near Tumut, in 1895), Paul Coe (Senior) (born in Cowra in 1900), Locky Ingram (born at Narrandera in 1903), Sam Kennedy (born at Junee in 1905) and Frank Simpson (born at Narrandera in 1903).

Several interweaving strands in their lives are examined. The first is their part in the industrial or rural workforce. All able-bodied Aborigines living on reserves or stations were required to seek work. At Cowra, since the Erambie reserve was too small for serious cultivation, the men sought employment in the white community. This paper is an attempt to assess the effect of several decades of working in this environment and the extent to which these men, as children, received education in the traditional language and culture of the Wiradjuri people. Since the men spent considerable periods of their lives living on or near managed reserves like Erambie, the effect of institutionalised life on residents is also discussed. A comparison is made between the views and attitudes of the five men and some of the younger people living at Erambie. It is argued that the circumstances and environment into which these men were born and grew to maturity were different to those experienced by other Aboriginal generations, and that these circumstances created attitudes and opinions peculiar to their generation.

Beckett has described a period of respite for north-western Aborigines in the 1880s. For a decade or two there was a period of calm between the violence of the first conquest and the more intensive
European settlement of the twentieth century. In the south-eastern portion of Wiradjuri country, an area roughly encircled by Narrandera, Tumut, Yass and Cowra, this period had already ended by 1880. The first pastoral settlement along the Lachlan occurred in the early 1830s; a decade later there were probably Aborigines living around the larger stations. No reliable population estimates are available for the Cowra area, but a comparison may be made with the 1845 Report of the Land Commissioner for the Wellington Valley, some one hundred kilometres north of Cowra. He estimated that half the Aborigines lived on settlers’ stations, and the rest visited them occasionally. Nearly all the Aborigines gathered about the stations in winter.

The passing of the Robertson Land Acts in 1861 brought intensive land settlement much earlier to the Lachlan valley than it did to the north-west. The increasing number of small-scale free selectors in the decades following the Land Acts must have intensified the process of forcing those Aborigines living occasionally in the bush away from their traditional hunting and gathering grounds. A selector typically occupied less than six hundred acres and employed few, if any, hired labourers. It is probable that during the 1860s and 1870s the free selectors not only came to occupy land formerly held as leasehold by large estates, but also land which had hitherto been regarded as the preserve of Aborigines.

By 1900 the process of breaking up the large estates in the Lachlan region was far advanced. This contrasts with the north-west, where Beckett traces the dissolution of the old holdings to the period after the First World War. In the Cowra district some of the large holdings which had survived the incursions of the free selectors succumbed to the financiers. Many came under the control of banks or agricultural companies which probably found permanent Aboriginal station communities less acceptable than many paternalist squatter families had done. The pressure to move Aborigines from the stations probably intensified during the depression of the middle 1880s and the drought of the late 1890s and Aboriginal station people were encouraged to leave. Within a couple of decades the process was complete. For instance at one of the oldest stations, North Logan, it is recalled that the last of the Aboriginal community had moved to Cowra by 1910.

Circumstantial evidence also points to a considerable population shift by the Lachlan Aborigines towards towns like Cowra in the 1890s. The 1891 Annual Report of the newly formed Aborigines

1 Beckett 1978.
5 Recorded conversation Mrs Elizabeth Bennett, Cowra, 5 April 1979. Read Tape T103.
FATHERS AND SONS

Protection Board noted that the Aborigines near Cowra were employed only occasionally by selectors and station owners. The local Member of Parliament stated in 1897 that they had no home to go to or work to do. Complaints by the European residents of Cowra about Aborigines around the town, first mentioned in the Board Report of 1894, may be taken as evidence of a fairly sudden and recent influx of Aborigines from the stations.

A further attempt was made by some of the residents of Cowra to have the Aborigines removed from the vicinity of the township, but in the absence of any other suitable site, and in view of the fact that there is a school for Aborigines at Erambie which the children attend regularly, the Board decided not to interfere in the matter.

Further complaints were noted in the Board's reports for 1903 and 1904. Finally in 1924 the Erambie Reserve became a supervised Aboriginal station:

As a result of complaints by the townspeople of Cowra regarding the necessity of resident supervision of Aborigines residing on and visiting the local Reserve, the Board decided to establish a regular Station at that place, and a substantial residence was, as a consequence, erected, and a Teacher-Manager appointed.

The economic and social forces which drove station Aborigines into towns were not confined to the Cowra district. A European resident recalled the last of the Aborigines leaving Ironbong station near Cootamundra in about 1910. In the same year a manager was appointed to the reserve at Yass to deal with people whom the Board characterized as 'a source of annoyance' to the townspeople.

No first-hand memories of the depopulation of the stations survive. Yet it is probable that the period 1890-1910 was one of disorientation and confusion for the Aborigines. They left pastoral stations which

7 New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, Series I, Vol. 90:4543, 10 November 1897. See also 1/96:8131, 8 December 1898.
8 Aborigines Protection Board. Report 1894:8. The population of Erambie, as recorded in the Board's Reports based on the annual police census was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>1895</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>not recorded</td>
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<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>58</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

After 1915 the populations of individual reserves and stations were not included in the Reports.

11 Personal communication, Mrs Jennifer Baldry, Cootamundra, 12 February 1980.

99
had been their home for many years and children born after 1900 in the Cowra district were the first generation to know only the government reserve as a home.

To the disorientation which must have accompanied the drift to the towns was added the confusing and at times contradictory legislation concerning Aborigines. As the five men reached maturity the inconsistencies must have become fully apparent. Although the section of the 1924 Report referring to the installation of a manager at Cowra implied that Aborigines were unwelcome about the towns, the policy regarding employment remained unchanged.

No one is allowed to remain in idleness on a Reserve, there to get into trouble and raise another generation of illegitimate children who would also become a burden on the State.13

Persons who ought to be working, according to the 1909 Aborigines Act, were not allowed to remain on a reserve. Regulation 28 required managers to withhold rations from anyone who refused work. These contradictory attempts to fill the stations with Aborigines and simultaneously empty them of able-bodied males may be seen as a legislative response both to white residents in country towns and to financial policies intended to keep station costs as low as possible.

Broughton certainly remembered the punitive effect of regulation 28 at Erambie: 'We could have stayed on the mission — and starved!'

Unlike the reserves at Warangesda, on the Murrumbidgee, and Brungle, Erambie was too small a reserve to support itself. Only some five hectares were available for cultivation though this appears to have been rarely used. Thus the five men, in company with most of the other able bodied men at Erambie, were forced by the manager to seek work in the white community.

Simpson as a boy lived near Brungle, occasionally travelling with his white father, an itinerant musician. When he moved to Cowra in the 1920s he became a general farm labourer. Coe and several of his brothers were taken from an unsupervised life at Canowinda to the Mittagong Welfare Home in accordance with a provision of the Act.14

His father was a drover and therefore away for long periods. Coe recalled that a woman was supposed to look after them, but she was seldom there. He went to Mittagong when he was about ten and two years later was 'apprenticed' as a dairy hand before he returned to his father. In the early 1930s he returned to Erambie which became his base for employment as a drover. Kennedy's father, a white man, was a bootmaker living in Sydney until the 1919 influenza epidemic led

14 The Aborigines Protection Act of 1909 provided in 11(1) that any child of an Aboriginal, or the neglected child of any person 'apparently having an admixture of Aboriginal blood in his veins' might be bound by indenture to a master. The Kincela Home for Aboriginal boys opened in 1924.
him to set up his business at Woodstock, near Cowra. A relative of his Aboriginal mother, who lived at Erambie, came to visit. Shortly before or after this visit the family split up; Kennedy's father moved away, and Sam saw him only once more. The rest of the family, including Sam, eventually settled on the edge of Erambie. Ingram, like many men whose families had once lived at Warangesda Mission Station near Darlington Point, learned to shear at Kooba Station nearby. Broughton also worked at Kooba. He was permanently employed as a woolshed hand and later, based at Erambie, followed a career in general labouring.

One of the most significant aspects of employment for these Aborigines was that their work-mates were mostly Europeans. All of them stated that at times they were the only Aborigines in their immediate group. The pressure to conform to the predominant white ethos — a pressure not felt so strongly by those working with other Aborigines on the larger reserves — must have been very strong. Beckett noted that '[s]ome Aborigines, particularly half castes, were able to enter the ranks of the drovers and shearsers and become “smart men”. Nor did this require a drastic change in their identity, for in the fluid conditions of the frontier, work was the primary mode of identification, and the society made few other demands.' Away from the frontier, this generalisation lacks force. Aboriginal identity was required to be suppressed if success or acceptance was to be gained. This seems to have taken the form of an apparent disinterest in the Aboriginal past, which I shall discuss below, and a positive acceptance of certain European values.

The European ethic of diligent work-as-its-own-reward was one aspect of European values which emerged strongly in conversations with the men. Each of them described aspects of their work in detail. Broughton claimed that he could always find work whenever he wanted it; Coe that he had never been sacked in his life; Ingram that he had ‘rung’ Wanaaring shed, on the Paroo, in 1926. Kennedy summarised his career thus:

I was a linesman, leading hand linesman, on the Central West County Council, electricity. I was there for 37½ years, I think. It was all right, it was a pretty good job. I used to boss the rural crew, all these farmers and all that, and I built all them rural lines out, you know, ninety per cent of them anyway, for thirty miles round the town here.

Q: So you started off as a labourer and then got into the technical side after that?

Yeah, got into the technical side. Yeah, and I was troubleshooter for about thirty odd, thirty-three years I think. Used to do a lot of night work, you know, chasing troubles all over the countryside.

15 Beckett 1978:27.
Only Simpson was less than proud of his work record: he seemed to have spent his life in casual rural work along the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee rivers. He preferred to talk of his travels and adventures rather than his work. As will be seen below, his knowledge of, and interest in traditional matters was greater than that of the other four. It is possible that a relationship exists between his lack of success in the white world and his Aboriginal interests. Nevertheless the impression gained with the other four men is that they willingly joined the white labour force at a time when skilled labour was highly valued. Their Aboriginality was held to be of less consequence than their competence, not only by their employers, but perhaps by themselves as well. Ingram gave food, but not money, to the Aboriginal community at Wanaaring Station and he lived in the shearers' quarters. Coe once distributed a box of biscuits to Aborigines camped alongside the railway on the Nullarbor. Apparently as they went from job to job, or rose in seniority, they acquired a degree of self-reliance lacking among the permanent residents of Erambie. In conversations they were proud, sometimes fiercely proud, of their work records. Ingram summarised succinctly his estimation of the work ethic: 'I had respect. So long as I did my work I was right.'

Also noticeable in conversations was a lack of knowledge about, and an apparent disinterest in, the traditional Aboriginal past. None of the men knew the Wiradjuri language well. Simpson and Ingram had a vocabulary of about thirty words each, and to the latter such knowledge was only a curiosity. None of them could recall suppression of the language by teachers or managers. Yet neither could they recall any instruction by a grandmother or other relative who might have passed on traditional knowledge. Only Simpson could indicate that he had derived his information from a particular person: his mother. The shift from the stations, the increasing number of 'part-Aboriginal' people compared to those of full descent, the absence of relatives working far away, all seem to have changed Aboriginal family life. By 1900 it appears to have been common for children to grow up separated from relatives who might have been expected to take an interest in their 'education'. Coe and Kennedy spent their youth without direct contact with any older Aboriginal besides a single parent. All the consultants seem to have grown up exposed neither to traditional languages nor to ritual customs. It is likely, in fact, that although the

16 The journal of the Australian Inland Mission, Our Aim, contains records of missionary activity at Brungle, Wangaratta and occasionally Erambie in the first decades of this century. For instance, the issue of March 1910 (5:7:3) noted that the manager had allowed Alick Russell, A.I.M. Native Helper at Brungle, to hold services in the homes of certain people, and to hold Sunday School for about twenty children.
five men regarded language and ritual as a single entity of 'Aboriginal matters', the performance of traditional rituals had ceased a generation before the Wiradjuri language fell into disuse.

In the absence of evidence that the use of the language was suppressed by whites, two other explanations must be considered: that the knowledge of the language was withheld from the children of 1900 by their parents, or that the children were not interested in learning it. Reay, in the 1940s, noted the reluctance of some of the old people in the rural west of New South Wales to speak their language, and their confusion and shame if one of their number spoke it in front of unsympathetic Europeans.17

The five men were unable to provide much information as to why their knowledge of the language was slight. Broughton remarked that he picked up a few words while at Brungle, but that he never used them away from the community: 'I wouldn't have been too flash to use my own language'. One fifty-year-old Cowra woman suggested that the language was deliberately withheld from her mother's generation.

Q: Could your parents speak Wiradjuri?
   Not my mum and dad, but my nanna could. She came over at Brungle... You weren't allowed to sit down and listen to them talk. Wouldn't talk in front of you.

Q: Why not?
   I don't know, that's the thing that's got us puzzled. I mean, that's why none of us know the language... They were old when I was young, that's in the thirties, before '37. They were old women, so they'd be born... two generations back. See they wouldn't even talk it in front of my mother, and that, very rarely. They were very funny people, the older ones. They had to get in that little group, all that one age group, then they'd talk among themselves. But if you walked up, say you were an Aborigine, you walked up, they'd just close up like a clam.18

She did not know whether the old people in question, who comprised the generation of the parents of the five consultants, concealed the language for its own sake, or because they were talking about secret matters. A fifty year old Tumut man told me that the Wiradjuri language disappeared because it involved secret rituals no longer practised.19 There is certainly evidence of the same pressures being

17 Reay 1949:91.
18 Recorded conversation Mrs Valerie Simpson, Cowra, 14 April 1979, T100. One of the few recordings of the Wiradjuri language was made by Louise Hercus of Fred Freeman, Brungle, 23 December 1963. The original is in the possession of Dr Hercus.
19 Recorded conversation Mr Vince Bolger, Tumut, 8 March 1980, T137.
applied to both ritual and language elsewhere in Australia. Tamsin Donaldson noted a reluctance among some old people at Murrin Bridge to speak of ritual matters in front of younger Aborigines. Strehlow's evidence suggests that some old Aranda men wanted to keep information secret, and also that young men were not always prepared to listen to their elders. The present writer has found some evidence of concealment of ritual knowledge from young boys in the Northern Territory.

The old people may have tried to cling to a last scrap of prestige or they may have thought their children were so dominated by foreign 'civilisation' that they did not deserve to be taught the language. While their children attended the government school at Erambie or at other stations there were fewer opportunities for learning to take place. As the five consultants reached maturity and joined the workforce, often in the company of Europeans, there were even fewer opportunities to speak the language.

It is probable that while many of the older generation were still fluent speakers of Wiradjuri in 1900, a decline in ritual practice had already occurred. R.H. Mathews, writing in the 1890s, had to rely on hearsay accounts twenty-five years old to describe a full initiation ceremony among the southern Wiradjuri. He noted that tooth evulsion, a stage of young men's initiation rituals, had fallen into disuse by 1896 owing to the occupation of the country by Europeans. Not unexpectedly, the five consultants were able to tell me little of the ritual traditions. Only Simpson could contribute any information. In this sketchy account he describes an occurrence at Goolagong, forty kilometres west of Cowra:

Me and a mate, a cobber of mine, were camped in one place, and there was an initiation going on. In the middle of the night, Jack wakes me up. He said, "We'd better get out of this." I said, "Why"? He said, "Look at the fire." [We] just walked away about two hundred yards.

Q: Could you hear anything, that time?
Nothing.
Q: How did you know the ceremony was going on then, if you couldn't hear anything?
Oh, tell with the gum trees, all marked. You couldn't read it, I couldn't. All chopped in, in a box tree. But it was dry. All this writing was there. Well there was initiation going on, where we were camped.

Simpson also remembered some advice from his mother:

21 Mathews 1896; 1897:115. See also Howitt 1904:584-5.
She said, “and when you’re coming into a strange camp, my son, always pluck a gum leaf, a gum leaf, carry it in your hand, walk in,” she said. “One fellow,” she said, “walked straight in the camp and he never had no gum leaf.” She said, “do you know where they found his head? On a stump facing back from where he came. Killed him. Killed him stone dead.”

Q: Why?

Didn’t belong to the tribe. In them days they were very strict. You couldn’t do that, you were breaking the laws, and the laws was their main statutes and judgments. Death was the penalty. Death was the penalty.

On another occasion Simpson told me that plans were made to initiate him. An old man at Moree had suggested it because, Simpson speculated, his friendship with a local girl might have caused trouble. The old man went away and Simpson never saw him again. Like Beckett’s consultant, Newton, Simpson was ‘never about when the ceremonies were on’ even though he recalled in 1979 that he had no objection to undergoing what was required.\textsuperscript{22} Ingram remembered that the boys were initiated by tooth evulsion and were taken out to be ‘shown the country’. The other three consultants remembered, or appeared to remember, nothing. Commenting on Simpson’s ‘initiation ceremony’ Broughton remarked pointedly, ‘I never saw any initiations, and I reckon Simpson didn’t either’. Both were reared in the same general area. From the evidence of the five men it appears that in the southern and eastern portions of Wiradjuri country most of the ritual culture had been abandoned shortly after they were born.

Simpson’s accounts of ritual life appear to be all that have survived in the memories of the five men. What remained of the old ways and the language may have been concealed from them, though fear of ridicule may have discouraged them from speaking about what they really knew. It may be that such knowledge, suppressed for so long, is now difficult for them to recover. It is also possible that knowledge has been concealed from the present writer. Yet there was nothing to suggest the conscious or unconscious dissembling experienced by Hausfeld at Woodenbong.\textsuperscript{23} In the course of some fifty conversations with older people along the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee rivers I have met no one who could remember more than thirty or forty Wiradjuri words, or knew more than Simpson about the traditional culture. One seventy year old man born at Brungle, Fred Collins, actually asked me why the Aborigines of the North Coast knew so much about their traditional culture, and his own people so little. He too had spent a good deal of his life away from other Aborigines. No suggestions

\textsuperscript{22} Beckett 1968:104.
\textsuperscript{23} Hausfeld 1963.
survive either in the Aborigines Protection Board records or in other sources, such as newspapers, that ritual was practised in the region after about 1900. The men seemed so willing to talk about themselves, and I can think of no good reason why all of them should conceal information at a time when a considerable kudos would attach to the recounting of traditional stories to younger people. Yet no one at Erambie was able to tell me stories which they had learned from the older people. Their knowledge about traditional matters, they said, had come from books.

While it seems apparent that among the survivors of this generation little knowledge of the language or the traditional culture has survived, we should also consider whether the survivors are in fact typical of their generation. The five men were subjected to government assimilation policies which demanded acceptance of certain working- and middle-class ethics of European culture. Yet there were the alternatives of alcohol, life on the river bank, and the violence typified by Jimmy Governor. Several of the consultants’ relatives died many years ago from cirrhosis of the liver, exposure or violence. Yet the diligent, the fearful, the humble and the pragmatic perhaps form the majority in any repressed society. Most institutionalised Aborigines accepted the rules (and a good part of the beliefs, folklore and prejudice) of European supervisors and workmates. It may be that some of those Aborigines who died younger were more at odds with the system: they risked death by exposure or alcoholism on the river bank rather than live on a reserve and be forced into the European workforce. It is possible that they knew more of the language and traditional culture. Yet all the evidence, both written and oral, points to the conclusion that by 1920 the ritual traditions were abandoned and the language was in decline in the Cowra and Brungle regions of Wiradjuri territory. Whatever knowledge the five men possessed they were under pressure to repress it as they worked in the European community.

A picture emerges of the kind of life these men lived in the first three decades of this century. They had been reared on or close to European institutions. They had not been exposed to much of the traditional culture. They worked at employment which they had to find themselves, and upon which they were expected to support themselves and their families. Away from the reserves their life was comparatively free of repressive legislation. For instance, they were for the most part left alone by the police. Coe stated that out bush he could drink in any hotel he pleased. Broughton, working at Parkes, was granted an exemption certificate in 1951 which enabled him to drink legally in a hotel. A shearer like Ingram was treated (he stated) much the same as a white man. From the outline I have drawn one might have expected the self-confidence of these men to have been the equal of any European of the same age. Yet in all our conversations I was
aware of an underlying insecurity. There were cracks in their apparent self-confidence. It was as if a desire to show whites that Aborigines were as good as anyone had been an important motivation in their lives. In unsolicited remarks like 'I never had the sack in my life' there was a plea for recognition. An awareness that in the end Europeans did not accept them as social equals, despite their best efforts in a free enterprise market, was never far away in our conversations.

Practically all Aborigines in New South Wales stood in the shadow of the Aborigines Act, the managed institution, the police. The end of seasonal work, the closing down of projects and the desire of the men to rejoin their families ensured a period of at least several months' residence on Erambie every year. After the depression the Aborigines Act was amended (8A(2), No. 32 of 1936) so that any Aboriginal 'living in insanitary or undesirable conditions' might be removed to a reserve on the order of a magistrate. Work was never so easy to find again. The drover Coe and the shearer Ingram, because of their skills, continued to be employed; Broughton and Kennedy (they stated) because they were hard workers. Yet all of them after the depression were periodically unemployed and in those periods lived on or near Erambie.24 As residents of the town or station they were now subject to the repressive legislation embodied in the Aborigines Act.

Life on a station like Erambie was governed by restrictions. Permission had to be sought to enter a station or reserve; the brother or spouse of a station resident might be denied permission to visit. Gambling, unseemly words, violence and the consumption of alcohol were prohibited. Houses were inspected regularly for cleanliness. Numerous Erambie residents have stated that it was commonplace for the police to enter houses without a search warrant and to arrest an occupant.25 Humiliations, at least in European terms, were common. Simpson was dragged by the heels by a manager at Brungle for being an illegal entrant. Ingram spent several periods in jail for consuming alcohol on the station. In addition to the often arbitrary exercise of the manager's very wide powers, many people told me of personal grievances over illegal actions by managers. Coe, for instance, though in his thirties, was given a thrashing by the manager without explanation. Broughton was told to move to Yass to collect his old age pension, though he was legally entitled to receive it at Erambie. Some of the resentment at these incidents can be traced to the fact that the managers treated the men as though they were of little account; as though they had not made their way in the world independently. Another former Erambie resident, born in 1920, expressed the same feeling:

24 As a boy Kennedy spent some time at Erambie school, and lived near the Station. Since then he has lived in Cowra and has had little to do with Erambie.

25 Much of the evidence in this paragraph is drawn from Read 1980: ch. 5.
One of my best mates, he wanted to come in. This is only in recent years. The manager wanted to know, "Where'd you get permission from to come onto here?" "Oh, just come in to see me mate. I've known him for years."

"Well didn't you know you had to come over here first to the manager's residence and report first?"

And I thought I was pretty much up in the world and above that sort of thing! 26

Yet the speaker then went on to defend the entry-permit system for keeping out undesirable visitors. He shared the ambiguous attitude towards some of the injustices of the past which was noticeable amongst the five principal consultants. Perhaps as a consequence of the periods spent under managerial control, this generation apparently has a basic respect for lawful authority, even when it acted unlawfully. This is not to deny that there may have been periods of benevolent rule by certain managers, yet it was obvious that younger people at Erambie are far less tolerant at the injustices of the past than the five principal consultants. The self-reliance learned in bush-work did not necessarily imply a disrespect for authority. For instance, Simpson related how he had once found some dead sheep carcasses in a pad-dock after a bushfire. Unlike the bushman of the Australian legend he did not help himself; he asked permission to take one. (He was refused, though he was offered some other food.) Early education about the place of an Aboriginal in the European world and the authoritarian rule prevailing on government reserves, created attitudes rather different from white men of the same generation. Amongst them, Gammage suggests that self-reliance and a contempt for constituted authority went hand in hand. 27

Aborigines on Erambie lived under an imposed authority and on the periphery of European social and economic life. On pastoral stations or in industrial workplaces they were men of more consequence. Skilled workers like Kennedy, Ingram and Coe must have been of considerable value to their employers. Younger people at Erambie today find it hard to understand the attitudes and values of these five men. They were assimilated more successfully into the dominant culture than any other generation, including that which grew to maturity in the 1950s and 1960s when the official assimilation policy was at its height. In the terms of this dominant culture one might have expected a wide gap to have existed between the parents of these men, who held the last of the secrets, and the men themselves, who were told nothing. Yet a wider gap appears to exist today between this generation and their grandchildren. The young people declaim against

26 Recorded conversation Mr Gordon Simpson, Cowra, 14 August 1979, T125.
managers whom they scarcely remember, while the old people, admitting they suffered under the Act, recall the past with affection.

Current attitudes are framed by group pressures and by personal experience. We cannot be sure that the comparative disharmony between the five consultants and their parents actually existed in the way it was described in 1979. Fifty years may have sharpened — or blunted — the animosity between generations. Old people may seek refuge in memories of the past in the face of hostility or lack of understanding by the young. Similarly the experiences of the consultants and their own young people have been different. Conversations with people under thirty at Erambie suggest that police harassment of Aborigines at Cowra and elsewhere worsened in the mid-1950s, reached a peak in the mid-1960s, and is now in decline. This story by a twenty-nine year old man is typical of such incidents.

I know when I worked at Wee Waa, in the cotton up there, first day I walked into town, I had a place to stay, and money in my pocket, and I got vagged. I got ten days for it... See I'd come from Moree and Wee Waa, and I was going down. I'd seen the cotton manager... and I was ready to start the next morning. They lived down at the cotton gin, see, all the blacks. Some lived in bloody caravans, the others in tents, you know, and I was staying with them, see. With people down there. And I was walking down toward the cotton gin, I got lumbered. Copper pulled up and asked me my name, and where I was going. I told him how much I had [about twenty-five dollars] and I was to start the next day. Took me to the cop shop and I got ten days out of it for vag... [I worked round] the cop shop, washed their cars and mowed the lawn and that, and after I come out of there I was told to piss off out of town.28

Both the substance and tone of this account are in sharp contrast to the work memories of the old men. Harsh, unjust or illegal acts by authorities may have been less frequent up to 1930 because most Aboriginal males were in the workforce, and were not seen as a threat to order, as they were in the 1960s. Therefore they did not experience directly the change in police and local European attitudes. The relaxation of restrictions regarding citizenship, voting and drinking rights created the atmosphere of the freedom rides, the radical black movement and the Tent Embassy. In Cowra events were quieter, yet several young people have told me that their awareness of an Aboriginal identity of which they could be proud began by hearing about more radical events in other towns.29 With this awareness has come a

28 Recorded conversation Mr Richard Murray, Erambie, 5 April 1979, T95.
29 For example, recorded conversation Mr Michael Williams, Erambie, 15 April 1979, T104.
loss of sympathy for older Aborigines who are unenthusiastic about the radical black movement. One of my consultants was referred to derisively by a man in his twenties as ‘The white blackfeller. He’d never been to jail in his life!’

In country towns like Cowra, freedom had a price unperceived by older Aborigines because they were not asked to pay it. Black militancy, even a black presence in town, stirred the old fears of European residents. One Aboriginal witness stated that it was not unknown in the 1960s for an arrest to be made as a man stepped over the Erambie boundary.30 Freedom within the law coupled with repressive actions by Europeans have caused a resentment and a hostility in the young which the old men cannot understand:

Paul Coe Sr.:

Well they want anything, they can go there [to the Aboriginal Legal Service] and get it. Now what are they doing if there’s a court case, any Aborigine to be tried. Get a lawyer, take a lawyer, get a special lawyer. Put the file in on him I suppose and all that sort of business. Years and years ago they had to battle for themselves. No help like that. There’s two or three young fellers been working in this legal service. They’ve had cars and all to run around in, run round for pubs and one thing and another. They’ve got them in the country, they’ve got them all over the place. Years ago Aborigines wasn’t treated like that. And they were better off. And respected better. Some of the young generation now, they’re not worth two bob. They’re ... they’re ... I don’t know.

Q: It certainly sounds as though you’ve been respected all your life.

My word I was. I lived up to it. I tried to do it. You know what I mean. I done my best for everybody. Lived with them and done the rights things.

Q: I suppose young people might say, ‘the coppers have got bad, so that’s why we need the legal service’.

They’ve made it that way themselves. The young generation have made it that way themselves.

A second reason for the widening gap between the old and the young lies in the sense of temps perdu common among many old people, and strongest among those who have lost a controlling authority. A similar phenomenon, though in a different context, was noted by Barwick among old people regarding their time at Coranderrk and Cumeroogunga. There the early farming period was looked back to as a ‘golden age of prosperity and security’.31 Life probably was never so

30 Recorded conversation Mr Neville Williams, Erambie, 16 May 1979, T106.
harmonious at Erambie. Concerts, games and religious revival meetings are remembered nostalgically and cited as evidence of a more stable past. Though numerous instances are recounted of a manager’s irrationality or violence, European control is conceded to have had some advantages. Parental control is recalled to have been more effective. The old people, it is said, were shown some respect. Alcohol, controlled, was much less disruptive a force than it is now, and Broughton and Coe could see some advantages in the old drinking restrictions.

Young people are aware of these reflections on the changing pattern of life, and they too look back to a more stable past. Their quest for identity and stability has arched back, not to the youth of their grandparents, but beyond them to the time of the high culture. Accounts by historians and anthropologists, artefacts and maps of tribal divisions are seized upon with the greatest interest. My five principal consultants, however, showed very little enthusiasm for earlier accounts, such as those by Howitt and Mathews. One lady of sixty-six years, tears on her cheeks, lamented the passing of the post-Second World War Christian revival meetings. In contrast her twenty-nine year old relative who related the story of his arrest at Wee Waa, sadly remarked towards the end of our conversation, 'I'd give anything to know my own language.'

If the young people have found a clue to consciousness-raising in a renewed interest in the old ways, it is more difficult to trace the world-view of the five consultants. Beckett suggested that people of the generation of George Dutton rejected the industry, thrift, regard for property and comfort of middle class Europeans, and emulated the model of the white nineteenth century pastoral worker. Yet at Cowra some of the men of 1900 did seem to have accepted the ethics of industry and diligence. Rowley though has suggested that the more closely Aboriginal culture in New South Wales is examined the more closely do Aboriginal cultures conform to those of rejected racial minorities in other Western countries. Later he notes that Aborigines, when denied a common identity with European Australians, have sought a distinctive ‘Aboriginal’ identity.

Doubtless there are many features common to the culture of the five men which may be identified as similar to other minority groups. A lack of interest in the pre-conquest past may be related to an apparent lack of interest in the facts of the European invasion which the writer has noted in the Northern Territory. For instance one man whose father was shot dead by a policeman at the time of the Coniston massacre in the Northern Territory described the murder (in the

32 Richard Murray, ibid., recorded conversation Mrs Ethel Wedge, Erambie, 8 April 1979, T95.
33 Beckett 1965:8.
34 For example, Rowley 1971:163, 183.
same conversation) as when ‘my father met with an accident’, 35 Several times while in Wiradjuri country I was told by older Aborigines that the settlement of the country by Europeans occurred with little violence or bloodshed. Yet the scanty written records of this period suggest the contrary. We could account for this lack of knowledge by a breakdown in communications between several generations, but there is also the possibility that Aboriginal people who have desired to succeed in a European world have unconsciously repressed speculation about, or even knowledge of, the past as the price that must be paid for white acceptance.

It could be argued therefore, that at the time the five men reached maturity in the 1920s there were powerful pressures acting upon those who desired to succeed and to conform to the dominant ethos in thought as well as in action. And in their search for a stable identity the men perhaps fell victim to a widely held, and still prevalent, conviction in both black and white society that Aboriginal culture was dead in New South Wales. A popularised notion of culture involving ritual, dance, language and material artefacts has frequently been invoked to conclude that where these are absent, there can be no true Aboriginal culture. For example, consider this exchange during the 1967 Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Aboriginal Welfare:

981. (Chairman) When you refer to a race with culture, our information is that there are only 177 full-bloods living in New South Wales. As there are so few full-bloods left, how can you possibly have a culture?

Witness. Well, there is a carryover from the tribal days that you will find around La Perouse and at various other places. Many Aborigines are very skilled in their own particular cultural arts . . .

982. (Chairman) That is arts and crafts, but by “culture” we mean folklore, songs, or customs. Would that not be almost non-existent among the Aboriginal community? 36

That the Aboriginal witness did not challenge the Chairman’s definition of ‘culture’ indicates that he, perhaps like my five consultants, had come to believe that his culture was dead: yet the five men, though they did not always work with, or even associate with Aborigines, readily acknowledged their Aboriginal identity. Nor did they appear to be ashamed of this. Barwick concluded that only half a dozen elementary families in Victoria were so completely assimilated that their earlier identification or association with Aborigines was no longer meaningful to them. 37 In the same way the five consultants at Cowra have clung to the ties of kinship obligations and responsibilities.

35 Recorded conversation Mr Tim Japangardi, Yuendumu, 18 August 1977, T56.
While acknowledging their identity they have shown less interest than the young in the revival of black consciousness. The managerial system deprived them of the leadership which might ordinarily have been theirs, and there is no evidence that any of the five men were involved in leadership evolved in opposition to European rule. Perhaps as a consequence they partially came to believe that the management of stations like Erambil was executed better by Europeans than by their own people. In 1979 they had respect, but little authority. Rejected partly by their parents, the men of 1900 have found a modus vivendi within an ethical framework which found a partial favour by Europeans, yet was little understood by their own grandchildren.

A further clue to the continuing divisions between Aboriginal generations at Erambil lies in the constant shift in attitude towards them by European people. In the 1880s during the depression of the 1930s government authorities wanted Aborigines to live on stations and reserves. In the 1920s and 1950s they wanted them to assimilate into the general community. Since the 1960s the assimilation policy has been abandoned by some officials, and adhered to by others. In a country town like Condobolin integration may be encouraged by a teacher, while the town magistrate may proceed as if there were no alternative to the assimilation of the Aboriginal community. Visiting activists and welfare agencies may encourage Aborigines to help themselves, yet in certain towns like Moree white antipathy may be as intense as ever. The immense change in attitude by Europeans has helped to alter Aboriginal self-perceptions, and ensure that no generalisations can be made on the basis of Aboriginal — or white — testimony unless the age and circumstances of each consultant are taken into account. For the young people have suffered as much as the old from the peculiar behaviour of Europeans, but that behaviour has produced not acquiescence but resentment.

The following extracts from conversations indicate how wide the gulf has become:

**Locky Ingram (b. 1903):**

I was at Nowra, and a lot of dark people up there, see, and they used to be bean picking. And one chap, he had one of them [exemption] cards . . . I walked in the pub, and the barmaid said to me, “what do you want?” I said, “Give us a middy of beer.” “Have you got a card?” she said. I said, “What’s the card for?” “You’ve got to have your name on it, and picture on it, on the card.” I said, “Excuse me, I’m a Maori.” She said, “You’re a Maori, are you?” Called the boss. “Are you a Maori?” “Yes,” I said. “I was born in Willeroo in New Zealand.” So he passed me, see, he served me. So I

38 Recorded conversation Mr Neil Andrews, Cowra Aboriginal Legal Service, 16 May 1979, T110.


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Mr Michael Williams, Erambie, 6 April 1979, T104.
Mr Neville Williams, Erambie, 16 May 1979, T106.
Appendix IV
The post-war housing scheme

The information in this section is drawn from the A.W.B. Annual reports 1945-65.

The number of houses on reserves in the post-war period was about 700. Since the Board intended to build between 600 and 700 new houses in towns, it is plain that it intended ultimately to house all Aborigines off the reserves. As outlined by Under-Secretary Evatt, the plan was to purchase about four building blocks in each town upon which houses were to be built and rented to Aborigines. If rent was satisfactorily paid over two years, or if a person possessed £50 or owned a block of land, he or she might apply to buy the dwelling. Two special accounts, subsidised by the Commonwealth Government's General Loan Account, were set up to fund the projects. The plan failed dismally so that, by 1961, only thirty-nine houses in towns had been constructed, and another fifteen purchased. Many Aborigines had of course moved from the reserves voluntarily and made private accommodation arrangements, and others had had to find their own way after reserves were closed compulsorily. Nevertheless the lack of success of the plan demands explanation.

One cause was the shortage of labour and materials in the first five or six years after the war. Another major cause was shortage of funds. This factor was specifically mentioned in the
Annual reports of 1953, 1954, 1955 and 1957. The most serious shortage occurred in 1953 when the Commonwealth grant decreased by £68,143.

Shortage of funds, though crippling in some years, is not a sufficient explanation for the small number of town houses constructed. A close reading of the Annual reports indicates that, even when money became available, spending did not follow the planned pattern. After a substantial increase in funding in 1960, twenty-three new houses were planned - but all except four were on reserves. In 1961, forty tenders were let for house construction on reserves, but only for one town house. Twenty-two new houses were constructed on five reserves in the following year, and a new reserve actually was declared at Armidale. The Board blamed the change in policy on 'unsatisfactory conditions under which Aborigines are found to be residing and the fact that many are as yet unready for town housing'; local authorities also were castigated for not taking quick action against camps under Public Health and Local Government Acts.

The evidence presented in Chapter Seven concerning the town-housing scheme in Wiradjuri country indicates that Aboriginal intransigence and white opposition to the plan were significant factors also, and may have been of greater importance than the shortage of funding in explaining the failure of the scheme.
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