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On the Road to Nerrigundah:

An historical anthropology of Indigenous-settler relations in the Eurobodalla region of New South Wales

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University.

John M. White
2010
Declaration

Except where cited in the text, this work is the result of original research carried out by the author and represents the views of the author alone.
Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude must be extended to the Eurobodalla Cultural Heritage advisory committee for their support in the genesis of this project, and to the countless south coast Aboriginal people who shared their lives, laughs and memories. Aboriginal cultural knowledge is owned by Aboriginal people and great care has been taken to respect protocols relating to restricted and unreleased information in this thesis.

I am extremely grateful to my wife Madeleine for her enduring patience, love and intellectual support. I’d also like to acknowledge a special intellectual debt to my supervisor Ian Keen who was extremely generous with his time and expertise throughout my candidature. This research and the production of this thesis is also due in no small measure to the helpful comments and suggestions of Nic Peterson and Tony Redmond. I would also like to thank the other members of the ARC linkage project ‘Indigenous participation in the Australian colonial economy: an anthropological and historical investigation’ team: Chris Lloyd, Mike Pickering, Fiona Skyring and Natasha Fijn. The School of Archaeology and Anthropology at the Australian National University, the Australian Research Council and the National Museum of Australia provided essential funds for this research and for that I am tremendously grateful. I’d also like to thank the support and encouragement of the faculty staff: Liz Walters, Sue Fraser, Christine Dwyer, Christine Huber and David McGregor.

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Abstract

Aside from notable exceptions, the nature and variety of Indigenous participation in Australian settler economies has been largely neglected in the anthropological and historical literature. In the Eurobodalla region of the New South Wales south coast, there has been a significant disjuncture in the regional literature between anglocentric local histories, and research that acknowledges Aboriginal people through historical investigations or through the collection of oral histories. There is also a significant gap in the anthropological literature between the early ethnographies, specific studies on Aboriginal labour and social conditions that were biased by ideological presuppositions, and recent work undertaken in relation to judicial processes. This thesis combines theorising of intercultural domains with a utilisation of notions of economic hybridity to examine the history of settler-Indigenous relations in the Eurobodalla and the character of emergent complexes of transactions that entailed a highly plural range of intercultural interactions, which transformed both Indigenous and settler subjectivities. The thesis is grounded in historical and local specificity while it places 'the local' within a broader geopolitical context. Drawing on both anthropological and historical approaches, the thesis argues that present socio-economic conditions in south coast Aboriginal communities can only be understood through the broader historical context.

The thesis examines the highly localised character of the changes brought about by European colonisation and the gradual expansion of the settler economy in the Eurobodalla during the early-mid 19th century. Aboriginal people were drawn into the emerging settler economy through reciprocal relationships of labour, while the presence of settlers was also incorporated into pre-existing, dynamic patterns of economy and sociality. The evidence suggests that semi-nomadic patterns of mobility persisted well into the 20th century, despite the efforts of the Aborigines Protection Board to curtail this movement. The period between the 1940s and 1970s is remembered as a relatively bounded era in which Aboriginal families were both on the run from 'the welfare', and following patterns of seasonal movement (or 'beats'). Aboriginal people were broadly employed in forestry work and seasonal vegetable picking until both industries collapsed in the late 1970s. Through a range of factors, including industry decline, increases in Indigenous political agency, the provision of town housing, welfare and citizenship entitlements and generational change, Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla have experienced a fraught transition to the era of so-called 'self determination'.

The thesis also seeks to 'muddy the waters' of some widespread, but erroneous, generalisations about settler-Indigenous relations and the manifestation of government policies. It identifies several historical moments (or processes) that are comparable to trajectories of settler-Indigenous relations elsewhere in Australia. In doing so, this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge by providing a localised and historically-situated case study of settler-Indigenous relations. Research of this type has the potential to mediate the extreme positions generated by the 'history wars'.

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<tr>
<td>AAPA</td>
<td>Australian Aborigines Progressive Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APA</td>
<td>Aboriginal Progressive Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIATSIS</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labour Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APB</td>
<td>Aborigines Protection Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWB</td>
<td>Aborigines Welfare Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDEP</td>
<td>Community Development Employment Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HREOC</td>
<td>Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LALC</td>
<td>Local Aboriginal Land Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPWS</td>
<td>National Parks and Wildlife Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSWPP</td>
<td>New South Wales Parliamentary Papers</td>
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<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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Map 1: The Eurobodalla Shire
1 Introduction

I was driving into town one morning in December 2007 when I stopped to pick up a hitchhiker on the side of the road. He was on his way home from an all-night party to celebrate his friend’s birthday and was heading into town to watch his cousins play rugby. We sped up the long straight stretch towards town. Life for this youth, it seemed, was hardly straightforward. Years of unemployment and six months in a juvenile detention centre followed by a fraught experience at TAFE will do that to you I guessed. I checked my speed as we approached the local copper performing his Saturday morning service to the public. A string of expletives exploded from the passenger seat of the car, interspersed with tales of recent run-ins with the law. I dropped my newly found friend off on the corner and wished his cousins good luck in the big game. My preliminary research had uncovered a local story that made the hitchhiker’s experience seem intriguing. The story was of an Indigenous people who had not only survived the European invasion, but had made significant contributions to the expansion of the settler economy in what is now known as the Eurobodalla Shire. New skills had emerged with new sources of self-esteem, blended with older ways of living and deep pools of knowledge rooted to the trees, mountains and estuarine environs of the New South Wales south coast. The story itself was remarkable, given the prominence of histories that tell us that, throughout Australia, Aboriginal people were marginalised from the settler economy and by the constant bombardment by populist discourses that plead for Aboriginal people to be drawn into the regime of ‘work’.

This is an attempt to tell that story and to place the hitchhiker’s experience within the broader context and lived experiences of his ancestors. It is also of a story about roads: roads that were once paths linking networks of relatedness and relationships with country; roads that remember seasonal Koori labourers walking to work in the autumn; roads that transported seasonal vegetable pickers on the backs of trucks and their children to school on the mail bus; roads that helped families ‘run from the Welfare’ and roads that took children away from their parents. These roads tell a story of mobility and resilience, ambiguities and change. These roads tell a story of a unique Aboriginal experience of colonialism, the changing racialised
policies of a casually interested state, and a unique experience of being pushed out of socially significant forms of employment. To come to terms with exploring this story, my anthropological lens needed to borrow from a discipline that is also concerned with people and narratives. As Inga Clendinnen writes, whilst a ‘historian’s main occupational hazard is being culture-insensitive, anthropologists’ is insensitivity to temporal change. Both can be insensitive to the reciprocating dynamic between action and context. Together, however, they are formidable’ (Clendinnen 2005:3).

It is a truisim that anthropology’s scholarly tradition has revolved around long-term, emplaced fieldwork in remote communities. The trope of the ‘village’ is ubiquitous in the study of anthropology, from Malinowski’s Trobriand Island participant observations to studies of camps and outstations in Australia’s north. The idea of studying a ‘community’, as such, conjures up images of relatively bounded and isolated settlements of people. The kind of community this thesis involves is not a group of people living in a bounded and isolated settlement - a fact that deserves some introspection on the notion of the trope ‘community’ itself. This community is made up of individuals connected together by webs of relatedness stretching over a large (but unbounded) geographic area. The community live in peri-urban towns separated by long stretches of road in what Rowley (1970) has termed ‘settled’ Australia.

This thesis is primarily an historical anthropology (or anthropological history, depending on which side of the fence you sit on) of socio-economic change for Aboriginal people living in the Eurobodalla Shire as a product of their interactions with settler-society and the state. It deals with a broad expanse of history, beginning with a reconstruction of pre-contact patterns of economy and sociality, to provide a basis to chart that change. It ends with the hitchhiker’s generation that is faced with the extraordinary challenges of being Koori in a rapidly changing modernity. As an introduction, this chapter begins with a brief background to my research in the Eurobodalla region of the NSW south coast. It also outlines the methodologies used during the course of my ethnographic and archival research. The chapter includes a focussed literature review in order to develop an analytical frame for the thesis. The final section of this chapter provides an outline of the thesis as a whole.
1.1 Background and methodology

This research forms part of an Australian Research Council linkage project entitled ‘Indigenous participation in the Australian colonial economy: an anthropological and historical investigation’. The linkage project represents a partnership between the Australian National University and the National Museum of Australia. As part of the broader project, this research is a localised case study, exploring the nature and variety of Aboriginal participation in the economy of the New South Wales south coast through time. Geographically, the research has concentrated on the experiences of Aboriginal people living within the Eurobodalla shire – bounded by the coast north from Wallaga Lake to Durras and stretching inland to the escarpments rising through the forest to the Monaro plains. The Yuin people are acknowledged as the traditional owners of this region, and studies on cultural association suggest that Yuin country stretches more broadly - north from Cape Howe to the Shoalhaven (Egloff et al. 2005). Through my research, I have noted that networks of connection and association to the region are not bounded. As such, my fieldwork was necessarily open to examine the experiences of people living outside of the Eurobodalla and has sought to understand the nature of those connections.

There were two compelling reasons for choosing the Eurobodalla as a locus for this research. The first is that there has been a significant disjuncture in the regional literature between anglocentric local histories (Anon 1996; Gibbney 1989; James 2001; Johnson 1980; Pacey 1990, 2001a, 2001b; Pacey & Hoyer 1995; Prior 1991; Reynolds 1986; Stiskin 1983) and research that acknowledges Aboriginal people through historical investigations (Bickford 1981; Byrne 1984; Cameron 1987; Cruze et al. 2005; Goulding & Waters 2005; McKenna 2002; Organ 1990; Turner 1996; Wesson 2000, 2002) or through the collection of oral histories (Chittick 1992-1993; Chittick & Fox 1997; Dale Donaldson 2006, 2008; Ellis 1996; Mathews 1965a, 1967-1968). The second reason for focusing this research on the experiences of Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla is a significant gap in the anthropological literature between the early ethnographies (Howitt 1904; Mathews 1896a, 1904; Mathews & Everitt 1900; Warner n.d.), specific studies on Aboriginal labour and social conditions that were biased by ideological presuppositions (Bell 1955; Castle &
Hagan 1978), and recent work undertaken in relation to judicial processes (Cane 1992, 1998; Egloff 1979, 2000; Egloff et al. 2005; Ritter 1996; Rose 1990).1

Recently, there has been increasing interest in documenting and giving due recognition to Aboriginal people’s cultural heritage and their role in shaping the social and economic character of the NSW south coast. The Eurobodalla Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study represented a linkage between the Eurobodalla Shire Council, the Department of Environment and Conservation and the local Aboriginal Land Councils with the aim of bringing together a ‘holistic assessment of Aboriginal heritage values within the Eurobodalla Shire that can be built into local land use planning and Environmental Impact Assessment frameworks’ (Goulding & Waters 2005:11). The lack of documentation and recognition of Aboriginal people’s contribution to the regional economy was highlighted by Goulding and Waters (2005) in their ‘Stage One’ report for the Heritage Study. Goulding and Waters’ report recommended that further research was required into the contribution of Aboriginal labour and stressed that the important role Aboriginal people played in the horticultural, forestry and fishing industries has been under-recognised and largely undocumented. Dale Donaldson’s (2006) ‘Stage Two’ report for the Heritage Study involved the collection of a significant body of oral histories relating to sites of cultural heritage significance in the Eurobodalla. My research emerged through an agreement with the Eurobodalla Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Steering Committee. The Heritage Study publications provided a valuable starting point and this thesis draws upon many of the oral histories in Dale Donaldson’s (2006) collection.2 The annotated bibliography in Goulding and Waters (2005) report was also a valuable point of departure for my archival research.

In November 2007 I began the fieldwork phase of my research and moved into a unit at Moruya Heads. During the ensuing twelve months, I became increasingly

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1 Michael Bennett’s (2003) examination of early Aboriginal participation in the economy of the Shoalhaven and Illawarra districts provides a useful regional analysis and point of comparison.
2 The heritage study publications incorporate oral histories that have been released as public knowledge. In order to respect local protocols relating to public and private knowledge, I have used fragments of previously released oral histories in this thesis that are congruent with the details and tone conveyed to me during conversations with a range of people. Previously recorded oral histories that are used in this thesis are duly referenced to the original publications. Several quotations from various informants are also used in this thesis and those individuals shall remain anonymous.
interested in the history of the region and of intergenerational differences in the experiences of both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people in the Eurobodalla. As a consequence of a long and disruptive history following the initial European settlement of the region in the early 1830s, the local Yuin dialects are rarely spoken and therefore all of my field research was conducted in English as the lingua franca.\(^3\)

As mentioned in the introduction, I met my main informant while he was hitchhiking during the first month of my time in the field. Over the course of the ensuing eleven months we developed a lasting friendship and I was fortunate to have been introduced to his social network of friends and family who became my principal informants. I was able to check information obtained from this network with a range of others who I met during my stay on the coast. Participant observation was my primary fieldwork methodology, although I also conducted a number of structured and unstructured interviews. The majority of my time in the field was spent informally ‘hanging out’ at fishing and surfing locations, around the towns and pubs, and at social gatherings.

The geographic range of informants necessitated a highly mobile approach to participant observation and some of the most productive informal interviews were conducted while I was driving. A medical condition during 2007 and 2008 significantly affected my hearing and I was forced to record almost all interviews and conversations on a digital voice recorder. I transcribed these recordings daily using sound amplification and headphones. Throughout the research period I kept a daily journal, which was invaluable for adding texture and detail to the transcriptions.

At the 2006 census, the total population of the Eurobodalla local government area was 35,000 residents with an Indigenous population of just over 1,500. One of the more striking official statistics is that the median age for Indigenous households was 21, compared to non-Indigenous households where the median age was 48. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate this trend and give the proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations that fall within the census’ age ranges.

\(^3\) While Dhurga is currently undergoing a process of language revitalisation, in practice it is rarely spoken. When words from Yuin dialects are spoken, they are generally used only in the context of English sentences.
Clearly, the Indigenous population in the Eurobodalla is younger than the non-Indigenous population, and Aboriginal people are far less likely to reach the age of 65 (3.9 percent compared to 23.8 percent). There are a number of reasons for these figures. The first is that Eurobodalla has become an increasingly attractive location for people to retire. Secondly, Aboriginal people experience poorer health outcomes than non-Indigenous residents due to a range of factors (see SCRGSP 2007). In terms of education, the census reported that 26 percent of Indigenous people living in the Eurobodalla who were over the age of 15 had completed Year 10, while 14.3 percent
had completed Year 12. However, only 6.6 percent of Indigenous people aged between 15 and 19 years were in full-time education. The census described a labour force of 458 Indigenous people, of which 71.6 percent were employed. The official Indigenous unemployment rate of 28.4 percent in the Eurobodalla local government region is remarkable, given that the overall unemployment rate in the region was 9.1 percent of the total labour force. Compared to the Australian unemployment rate in 2006 of 5.2 percent, it is apparent that employment prospects in the Eurobodalla were relatively poor overall, while employment prospects for Indigenous people were much worse.

During the course of my fieldwork, the disparities between living conditions and overall wellbeing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the Eurobodalla became quite clear. Holiday home-owners, retirees and middle to upper-class non-Indigenous people had little social contact with Kooris. Working class non-Indigenous people, however, competed for similar employment positions and scarce rental accommodation with their Indigenous counterparts. Aboriginal family groups were greatly dispersed throughout the Eurobodalla, with clusters at Bateman’s Bay, Mogo, Moruya, Bodalla and Narooma. The greatest cluster was at the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Community located 24 kilometres south of Narooma, which had a fluctuating population of around 200 people in 2007. Wallaga Lake remains a closely gated community, more or less shut off from any social contact with the surrounding non-Indigenous towns and hamlets.

Generally, Indigenous households consist of immediate family members and extended kin that tend to circulate between households, as relatives visit from along the coast, staying for variable lengths of time. The economic unit is much the same as in non-Indigenous households (comprising immediate kin), although families have a propensity to be far more mobile and also have greater demands placed on their hospitality due to the shifting fortunes of extended family members. Many households had female heads, and women were likely to be more successful in securing permanent (or better paid) employment. A number of Indigenous-focussed employment training programs continue to operate with various levels of success.
A key understanding emerged during the middle of 2008 through the course of my fieldwork: that a significant shift had occurred in patterns of employment and mobility in the late 1960s and early 1970s that translated to a marked generational difference. By late 2008 it had become clear that I needed to conduct extensive archival research in order to provide context, texture and depth to my own ethnographic understandings and previously recorded oral histories. Upon moving back to Canberra I embarked upon a further six months of archival research at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the National Library of Australia, the Mitchell Library and State Records NSW in Sydney and the State Library of Victoria. Online resources such as the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages also proved invaluable and have been complemented by newspaper articles, school records and blanket distribution lists. Overall, this research has relied heavily on archival research and the analysis of documents and oral histories. Participant observation during the fieldwork phase of this research provided a general sense of how the ethnographic present was related to, and interconnected with past processes.

Combining the methodologies of anthropology and history is not without its challenges and one of the foremost issues is that of a non-Indigenous researcher writing about Indigenous people. Heather Goodall remarked on her own misgivings about writing Aboriginal history in NSW:

The most obvious limitation to this work is that it is a history of Aboriginal communities written from the outside, by a white Australian with a limited and continuously reassessed understanding of the internal values and dynamics of Aboriginal communities (Goodall 1982:1).

Similarly, this research has been a continuous process of re-evaluating the sensitivities of those for whom the story is about, with a conscious attempt to balance those considerations with an empirical eye on the available evidence. As one informant constantly reiterated to me ‘you have to be careful what you write. Once a white man has written something down it takes on a life of its own. It’s like that piece of paper becomes the truth, whether or not it is true to our understandings of the truth’. Gillian Cowlishaw (1999) wrestled with the same methodological and epistemological
questions in *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*. Cowlishaw’s reflexive interrogation of the role of the ethnographer and the historian serves as a powerful reminder of the dangers in speaking for others. Following Cowlishaw, the author of this thesis is the ‘egghead’, so to speak, and has attempted to tread cautiously through shifting community sensitivities and sensibilities.4

The final issue relating to combining the methodologies of ethnography, oral history and archival research relates to reconciling different kinds of information. I was fortunate to have been able to discuss the main ideas and themes that emerged during my archival research with a number of my informants. I have attempted to cross-check and cross reference archival and oral accounts where possible, and have given equal evidential weight to literate and oral traditions. Oral histories (as the lived memory of older informants) are limited to providing recollections relating to the 20th century. I have been forced to rely on written documents to examine the more distant past, in conjunction with oral histories passed down from generation to generation. Yet written records, as texts, must be examined in their proper context. As Greg Dening remarked, past experiences (as represented in written sources) are always a representation of the past that is ‘already transformed’ and ‘already interpreted’. ‘No sooner is the present gone in the blink of an eye or on a breath than we make sense of what has happened. We transform our experience’ into narrative. Dening emphasised that ‘the past is made into texts’ and the imperative for ethnohistorians is to ‘make a reading of readings’; we ‘must read the systems (of human culture) and the poetics (of their readings) in the sources’ (Dening 1988:117).

Following Austin-Broos, I have ‘strived for Weber’s *verstehen*’ as a ‘form of interpretive understanding’ that seeks ‘to grasp an experience from the other side’ (Austin-Broos 2009:13). This ‘other side’ relates both to the experience of Aboriginal people and settlers in an experiential and temporal sense, and to the epistemological foundations of the texts themselves. My ethnography and Yuin people’s reflections on the past have enabled this thesis to apply what Austin-Broos calls ‘evident idioms’ to the interpretation of historical events (ibid). Listening to stories, opinions and mundane conversations has allowed this research to grasp these idioms in order to better understand the available texts and the voices behind those texts. As Michael

4 That the author’s surname is ‘White’ is an unsubtle indicator of the issues at hand.
Taussig reflects, ‘surely it is in the coils of rumor, gossip, story, and chit-chat where ideology and ideas become emotionally powerful and enter into active social circulation and meaningful existence’ (Taussig 2002:494).

1.2 Literature review

While much has been said about (and furiously debated within) the ‘history wars’, a parallel ‘Australian silence’ was entrenched in the writing of Australian economic history. While this narrow representation might have lacked the kind of urgency that Professor Stanner sought to redress, it was nonetheless a hidden history; an untold story of Indigenous Australians. Aside from the many excellent anthropological and historical accounts of the lives of Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industries (for example, Doohan 1992; Jebb 2002; Kelly 1966; Levitus 1982; McGrath 1987; Makin 1972; May 1994; Robinson 2006) and examinations of Aboriginal economic participation in a variety of other Australian contexts (for example, Anderson 1983; Attwood 1986; Beckett 1982, 1987; Fink 1960; Fletcher 2010; Haebich 1998; Kidd 1997; Merlan 1998; Povinelli 1993; Rowse 1998; Trigger 1992), prominent narratives of Australian economic development have disregarded Aboriginal participation in the economy (Abbott 1969; Fitzpatrick 1969; Griffen 1967; Shaw 1946). For example, in discussing the 19th Century, Sinclair (1976) argues:

it cannot be said that the Aborigines were deriving any obvious material benefit from the continuing economic development of Australia... as a result, economic development did not involve, as was commonly the case elsewhere, the transformation of an existing society. It was a matter of sweeping aside the social institutions that were already there and transferring a new set to replace them (Sinclair 1976:19).

This vignette is symptomatic of a broadly held belief that settler-Aboriginal relations were characterised by an unproblematised displacement of pre-existing institutions to facilitate the imposition of new ones. For example, Loos examined Indigenous labour in the pastoral, mining, rainforest and maritime frontiers, describing each specific
sector in terms of ‘racial contact’ (Loos 1982:28). In each sector, the relations between colonists and Aboriginal people are modeled in terms of the assertion of control on the frontier where the ‘primary aim was to dispossess the Aborigines of their land to exploit its resources’ (Loos 1982:160).

Patrick Wolfe argues that the main difference between Australia and other colonial formations (with particular reference to the Americas) is that the British were not reliant on Aboriginal labour. As a settler colony, it was ‘premised on displacing indigenes from (or replacing them on) the land’ rather than aiming to extract surplus value from Indigenous labour (Wolfe 1999:1). Several writers have attempted to describe the particular style of relations that emerged in the colonial economy between settlers and Aboriginal workers. For example, Bolton (1969) argues that the history of Aboriginal-White relations in northern Australia followed a consistent pattern. Cycles of frontier violence eventually gave way to the establishment of a feudal-style relationship, where groups would set up permanent camp on the pastoral runs and, in exchange for food, clothing and some medical care, provide labour in the form of male pastoral work and female domestic work (Bolton 1969:128).

Conversely, Evans (1984) describes early relations in terms of slave-labour, arguing that the incorporation of Indigenous labour was a hegemonic relationship analogous to slavery.

C.D. Rowley (1970) was influential in shifting the emphasis towards a broader recognition of Indigenous involvement in the colonial economy and differentiated the experience of Aboriginal people living in ‘settled’ Australia from what he termed a ‘colonial’ north. Rowley’s work foreshadowed the Marxist theory of internal colonialism that was developed in various Australian contexts by Jeremy Beckett (1977, 1982), Mervyn Hartwig (1978) and Dawn May (1983).

By the late 1960s the term ‘internal colonialism’ was on high rotation within discourses of the subaltern in disparate settings ranging from Central and North America to Western Europe (Bee & Ginderich 1977; Gonzalez Casonova 1965; Hechter 1974; Stavenhagen 1965). As Beckett quite rightly notes, the term was not used consistently or with scholarly rigour particularly when it was applied to the racial marginalisation of scattered minorities (Beckett 1982:132). In 1975 Harold Wolpe
contributed the first main theoretical elaboration of the term in the context of the apartheid regime in South Africa, arguing that previous studies had not adequately addressed the concept’s historical specificity (Wolpe 1975). In 1978 Mervyn Hartwig argued that Wolpe’s model could help ‘to explain the specific terms in which ideological and political domination over Aborigines have been expressed, by relating them to specific modes of exploitation of Aboriginal societies’ (Hartwig 1978:119). Hartwig also argued that the theory had not been explicitly applied to Aboriginal-white relations in Australia, although he notes that Rowley’s view was essentially the same.5

With reference to Wolpe’s application of the model, Beckett argued that the predilection to destroy other modes of production can sometimes go hand in hand with a tendency to conserve them. The character of internal colonialism in the Torres Strait is described by Beckett in the following terms:

The subsistence cultivator must have his land to return to, but not be so tied to it that he cannot be persuaded to leave it for periods of wage labour. In the same way he must have a need for money, but not so great that he will be unwilling to do without it when industry has no need for his labour. The regulation of this balance is one of the key functions of colonial administration (Beckett 1982:133).

This argument was taken up in 1983 by May who examined Aboriginal participation in the pastoral industry of Northern Queensland. May argued that the capitalist mode of production both transformed the Aboriginal mode, through the expropriation of land, and also exploited elements of the traditional system through the utilisation of labour (May 1983).

5 Unfortunately, Hartwig published in an edited volume that came out the year after Beckett’s paper first appeared in Aboriginal History. His oversight of Beckett’s work can probably be attributed to the lag between submitting the manuscript to the edited volume and its eventual publication – although it is likely that both authors were working on their individual applications of the theory at roughly the same time.
For the purposes of this discussion, I will briefly highlight two differences between Beckett’s and Hartwig’s applications of the model. The first is evident in the spatial differentiation between ‘internal’ and ‘normal’ colonialism. In Harwig’s definition, the coloniser occupied the same space as the colonised. In Beckett’s, the relatively enclosed region defined as the ‘internal colony’ was maintained from a spatially detached colonial administration in the form of the Queensland government. The second difference lies in the specificity of the subject matter. Hartwig’s modification of Wolpe’s application explored the conditions of racial discrimination across Australia using secondary sources. In the authors’ own words, ‘the essay offers no new data but seeks rather to commence the task of re-interpreting existing data within a more adequate theoretical framework’ (Hartwig 1978: 120). In contrast, Beckett’s application drew on his own extensive fieldwork and confined his analysis to a specific local setting. Beckett also provided an elaborated historical context for the development of the relations of internal colonialism and positioned the specific moment of exploitation within subsequent changes brought about (in part) by shifts in the administrative role of the state towards the greater provision of welfare benefits. Internal colonialism, for Beckett, ‘exists only as a dead shell in the Strait and as a memory for those Islanders’ (Beckett 1982: 154). Hartwig’s application lacked both this sense of historical specificity and grounding in a particular socio-economic and geopolitical setting.

If we shift the discussion to contemporary debates regarding the relationship between Aboriginal people and the economy, one of the more strongly advocated counterpoints to policy discourse has been Jon Altman’s (2001) use of the term ‘hybrid economy’. Within the discipline of anthropology in Australia more generally, substantivist conceptualisations of Aboriginal economies have provided greater analytical utility than formalist approaches (Altman 1987; Keen 2004, 2010). This thesis similarly employs the term ‘economy’ to refer to ‘the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of the material means of life, the ways in which they articulate with other valued items, particularly through exchange, and the organization

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6 It is important to clarify that the internal colony maintained by the Queensland government was nonetheless within the Australian nation state.

7 As Keen notes, ‘in societies or sectors in which the economy is not defined by the market but is “embedded” in other institutions, a formalist definition in terms of choice’ (in the allocation of scarce resources to desired ends) ‘takes in too much and a substantivist approach is more useful’ (Keen 2004:4).
of these processes', which are are interdependent with institutional forms and processes (Keen 2010:4). But what can we say of the relationship between accounts of regional economic hybridities in Australia and applications of the theory of internal colonialism? The resounding similarity is that both account for intersections between customary socio-economic practices, capitalist modes of production and administrative institutions. Furthermore, both models view Indigenous economies as dynamic and not simply transitional. In Beckett’s application of the theory of internal colonialism, the state acts to sustain and regulate the unstable relationship between Indigenous and capitalist modes of production. The shift to ‘welfare colonialism’ in the ‘self determination’ era thus changes the role of the state (Beckett 1987:17).

However, there are three points of difference between the internal colonialism model as presented by Beckett and the conceptual model of the hybrid economy. The first difference is semantic in relation to the different terms used to describe the market/capitalist mode of production, the customary/non capitalist mode and the state/colonial administration. The second relates to the development of the two theories. Internal colonialism is a neoclassical theory of political economy that takes up Marx’s argument that the transition to a capitalist mode of production involves the creation of a proletariat class that works without duress and moves without restraint in the labour market. In Beckett’s application, the ‘colonial order...must inhibit the realisation of these tendencies without suppressing them completely’ (Beckett 1982: 133). In contrast, the hybrid economy model could be seen to have its roots in Polly Hill’s (1966) criticism of conventional economics and plea for a new conceptualisation of subsistence economies. Internationally, the notion of a hybrid economy has been used to describe a variety of contexts ranging from complex interactions between capitalism, state socialism and localised economies in China (Kime 1998; Muldavin 1997; Yang 2000) and Vietnam (Fahey 1997), to the changing landscape of intellectual property in the digital age (Lessig 2008). In Australia, it has been used as a call for more appropriate policy frameworks addressing Indigenous disadvantage, and for more research to be conducted in harvest studies to understand the economic benefits of customary economic activity.

The final and most important difference is that Beckett’s use of the theory of internal colonialism describes historically and locally specific modes of exploitation
and takes the conservation of the Indigenous mode of production by the state as a conscious effort to sustain low wages paid to Indigenous people in the market economy. In Altman's writing on the hybrid economy (2001), the argument hinges on the customary sector being under-recognised or invisible. In this sense, the onus is on the state to recognise both the existence of the customary sector and the important interlinkages and interdependencies between its role, the market and the customary sectors. Rather than maintaining relations of exploitation, the state is called to incorporate the customary sector into its policies of economic development in remote communities.

If we are to refer to hybrid economies in histories of Indigenous-settler relations we need to understand what the role and character of 'the state' is in particular historical and local settings. Governance in Indigenous affairs in Australia has historically been inconsistent and fraught with contradictions for Indigenous Australians and I suggest that the present era of self-determination or 'post self-determination' remains similarly ambiguous. For example, underneath the political rhetoric of the Northern Territory Emergency Response is a move to centralise Aboriginal communities into regional 'hubs'. This phenomenon is strikingly reminiscent of NSW government policies in the late 19th and early 20th century in which the Aborigines Protection Board (APB) attempted to centralise Aboriginal people on government-run stations and missions in an effort to inculcate civil and domestic 'responsibility' in more easily-managed sedentary (rather than highly mobile) Aboriginal communities.

Applications of the hybrid economy model to past-focused studies, particularly those dealing with exploitative relations of labour that existed under various state and territory legislative regimes, also need to question both the role of the ubiquitous 'state' and the character of the 'market'. As Chris Lloyd notes,

'Hybrid' is a term referring to a synthetic or accommodative economic formation in which there are elements of traditional as well as settler/market socio-economic relations, technologies, and economic power. Hybridity, then, while always the consequence of colonialism in certain contexts, has many forms with varying degrees of coercion (Lloyd 2010:29).
Historically, the ‘market’ has been characterised by different modes of production in the expanding settler economy and analyses of settler-Indigenous relations cannot take a ‘one size fits all’ approach. Similarly, as Keen (2004) has shown, the ‘customary’ or non-capitalist mode of production, and social and institutional fields have varied greatly across Indigenous systems both spatially and temporally. The articulation between Indigenous-settler modes of production and social domains therefore consists of a multitude of interrelated variables.

As we have seen, Altman’s model of the hybrid economy includes overlaps and logical relationships between customary, market and state sectors of economic activity. It follows that these intersecting and overlapping fields of economic activity correspond to intercultural relationships that develop as Indigenous people, state and non-state actors go about their daily business of living. However, both Francesca Merlan (2009:276) and David Martin (2003:3) have questioned whether such sectors can exist autonomously, while Diane Austin-Broos (2003) and Ben Smith (2003) have argued for more intricate recognitions of interdependency in highly localised forms. Studies that focus on the economic aspects of social life are therefore intrinsically linked to broader arguments about whether or not Aboriginal cultures can be considered to exist independently from non-Indigenous Australia and if such categories are useful at all. As Michael Jackson argues,

just as any person is as manifold and several as the relationships in which he or she plays a part, so human reality is far more relational, various, and interconnected than bounded, atomistic concepts like ‘nation,’ ‘society,’ and ‘culture’ imply (Jackson 1998:35).

Merlan (1998, 2005, 2006) has provided a significant contribution to this debate by arguing that Aboriginal forms of sociality have been transformed through interpersonal interactions within ‘intertcultural’ milieus.\(^\text{8}\) The intercultural character of

\(^8\) As any anthropologist returning from fieldwork would attest, this is clearly a two-way dynamic.
these relationships and transactions, Merlan argues, arise from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous subjectivities and predispositions.9

A significant body of literature in Australian anthropology incorporates analyses of historical processes to provide texture and depth to ethnographic engagements in the present context. Recently, Diane Austin Broos (2009) has produced an important work of ethnohistory that contextualises present conditions in Indigenous central Australian communities in a broader history of socio-cultural change. Austin-Broos develops the notion of ‘ontological shift’ to provide an analysis of the way in which the world and being of the Western Arrernte has changed since the arrival of explorers and pastoralists in the 1860s. While Austin-Broos’ theoretical lens (a ‘phenomenology of the subject’) provides a deeply sensitive analysis of the complexities of social change for the Western Arrernte, an orientation towards historical contextualisation is not entirely new. A strand of Australianist anthropology emerged in the 1980s that explored the various forms of Indigenous accommodation and resistance to the effects of colonial and post colonial interventions by state and non-state actors. In particular, studies by Beckett (1987), Cowlishaw (1988), Morris (1989) and Lattas (1993) brought new theoretical perspectives to bear on unequal power relationships in the historical and contemporary context and explored the various ‘forms of accommodation and resistance through which Indigenous Australians responded to such interventions in their lives’ (Hinkson & Smith 2005:159).10

As Merlan (1989) and Morton (1989) have pointed out, these studies focus on the Indigenous side of relationships at the coalface between Indigenous and settler cultures. Furthermore, as Hinkson and Smith suggest, they typically present non-Indigenous culture through ‘broad sketches of government and the macro processes of capitalism’ (Hinkson & Smith 2005:159).11 Barry Morris’ utilisation of Foucauldian

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9 Merlan’s discussion has been further developed by several authors. In particular, see Hinkson and Smith (2005) and Holcombe (2005).
10 Merlan (1998), Povinelli (1993), Rowse (1998) and Trigger (1992) have examined similar themes in intercultural relations, albeit with different analytical emphases.
11 Tim Rowse’s (1998) examination of the ideology and praxis of the assimilation project (through the institutionalised practice of rationing) in Central Australia also brought Foucauldian concepts to bear on unequal power relations between the colonists and the colonised. However, Rowse focussed on the non-Indigenous side of social relations in a ‘critical history of the culture of the colonisers’ (Rowse 1998:4).
concepts in his history of domination and resistance in the Macleay Valley provides a useful point of comparison to this thesis because the Dhan Gadi peoples' lives were regulated by similar administrative and bureaucratic structures as the Yuin people of the Eurobodalla. However, his depiction of almost complete domination and social control does not fit with the available evidence relating to the Eurobodalla, and I have been cautious not to develop this thesis along those lines. The present material, as we will see, provides numerous examples of individuals who were able to resist claims on their subjectivities by what scholars of Foucault would call the dominant discourses in each era. Michael Jackson urged for a similar epistemological caution when he argued that:

anthropology has always tended to drift into the kind of abstractions and reifications that might define and justify its identity as a social science. Terms such as society, habitus, and culture can all too easily obscure the lifeworlds they are supposed to cover; and we must continually remind ourselves that social life is lived at the interface of self and other despite the fact that anonymous conceptual and material objects are sedimented there (Jackson 1998:35).

Prevailing orthodoxies (or 'received wisdoms') in the Australian literature about the relationship between historical processes and lived realities are obfuscatory in a similar way to these kinds of abstractions and reifications.

Through the course of my research, several threads of evidence emerged that muddied the waters of what we might call prevailing stereotypes (or 'myths') in relation to Indigenous or non-Indigenous subjectivities, interactions within intercultural domains and the manifestation of government policies. One example is a generalisation that the segregation of Aboriginal people onto missions or government-run stations necessarily involved the creation of sedentary populations, cut-off from the outside world (Koepping 1976; Long 1970; Rowley 1970, 1971). This thesis seeks to interrogate some of these myths through an analysis of different periods in the history of Indigenous-settler relations that are comparable to moments in the history of Indigenous-settler relations in other parts of Australia: colonialism, land alienation in relation to the dominant mode of production in the settler economy, the
incorporation of Indigenous labour into the settler economy, institutionalisation, and the effects of government policies under the various rubrics of ‘protection’ or ‘assimilation’, and ‘self determination’. This thesis combines theorising of intercultural domains with a cautious utilisation of notions of economic hybridity to examine the history of Indigenous-settler relations in the Eurobodalla and the character of new complexes of interactions and transactions. Beckett’s use of the theory of internal colonialism (as with Austin-Brooks and Smith’s calls for more complex recognitions of interdependency in localised forms) provides a reminder that historical analyses must be grounded in historical and local specificity while placing ‘the local’ within a broader geopolitical context.

1.3 Chapter outline

As previously stated, this thesis deals with a broad swathe of history and I have attempted to present that history thematically as well as loosely chronologically. Chapter Two begins with the question ‘how was Aboriginal economy and society in the Eurobodalla organised prior to the European invasion?’ The chapter attempts to provide a sketch of Yuin economy and society based upon a range of evidence including ethnographic, linguistic and archaeological sources. The chapter draws on Keen’s (2004) framework that breaks down the observable (or reconstructable) aspects of Aboriginal economy and society into relatively comparable categories. There are two reasons for undertaking this exercise. First, it is a method to provide a detailed literature review of the relevant regional sources. Second, the sketch provided of Aboriginal economy and society at the ‘threshold of colonisation’ provides a range of predispositions from which we can better understand intercultural relations in the colonial and postcolonial milieu. Keen’s approach is outlined in the first section of this chapter, illustrating that ‘ecological’ factors influence, and are influenced by, the range of ‘institutional fields’ that characterise Indigenous social life. These institutional fields also influence, and are influenced by, economic practices and the locally specific organisation of production, consumption and distribution (Keen

12 I use the term predisposition in this thesis to refer to what Bourdieu called the habitus. For Bourdieu, ‘the practices produced by the habitus [are] the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations’ (Bourdieu 1977:72).
The chapter also reviews and problematises the range of ethnographic, linguistic and archaeological sources that are drawn upon.

The second section provides an overview of the Eurobodalla ecology, outlining the character of its environments and resources and the various technologies Yuin people used to sustainably exploit those resources. The section also includes a sketch of Yuin settlement patterns and mobility based on the available evidence. The third section of this chapter examines what Keen terms institutional fields, drawing on the problematic and sometimes contradictory observations of A.W. Howitt and R.H. Mathews. The section outlines the available evidence relating to Yuin marriage, totemic classifications and ceremonies of initiation. The final section examines economic forms and processes, and includes a discussion of the control of the means of production, the organisation of production, distribution, consumption, and trade. Overall, the chapter argues that at the threshold of colonisation, Yuin (as an identity) existed as a conglomerate of intermarrying country groups sharing a coastal/escarpment orientation, mutually intelligible language and who participated in common ceremonial activities. In the Eurobodalla, these country groups had their own range, and rights to country were determined by a variety of claims.

Chapter Three examines the highly localised character of the changes brought about by European colonisation and the gradual expansion of the settler economy in the Eurobodalla during the early-mid 19th century. The chapter argues that not only is this trajectory different from the specific moments of change experienced in 'remote' or northern parts of Australia, but it is also different from the experiences of Aboriginal people on the pastoral frontier in NSW. I argue that the key differences lie both in the structural processes of pastoral expansion and land expropriation and in the particular micro-processes of intercultural interaction. The first section of this chapter locates the European colonisation of the Eurobodalla within the broader geopolitical context. The section argues that from its settlement in the 1830s to the turn of the century, the region remained at the periphery of colonial expansion yet it was also inexorably linked with processes occurring throughout NSW and in Sydney. The section suggests that the character of European relations with Aboriginal people during this period was also shaped by the Eurobodalla’s place in the colonial project.
The second section examines the character of the first Indigenous-settler encounters in the Eurobodalla, arguing that the significant lag between initial exploration and settlement can best be understood in terms of the development of a ‘culture of terror’ on the southern maritime frontier (Taussig 2002). Once the region was eventually settled, violence (as a cycle of theft and reprisals) was rapidly ameliorated through mediation and non-hostile interaction between Aboriginal people and the settlers. The third and fourth sections of this chapter argue that Aboriginal people were quickly drawn into the emerging settler economy through reciprocal relationships of labour, while the presence of settlers also became incorporated into seasonal patterns of mobility. Overall, the chapter argues that Yuin people incorporated the presence of settlers into pre-existing, dynamic patterns of economy and sociality that were manifested in new complexes of interactions and transactions.

Chapter Four focuses on the issue of land in the late 19th and early 20th century, beginning with an examination of Aboriginal responses to land alienation as a result of government policies to ‘unlock the land’ for small-scale settlement. The first section argues that the relationships of reciprocity that were formed with local settlers and Aboriginal people in the early to mid 19th century ameliorated some of these pressures. The second section examines the relationship between Aboriginal people and several settlers that eventually led to the establishment of a school and the provision of rations to Aboriginal people at the camp at Wallaga Lake. The chapter then turns to trace the rise and local manifestations of paternalistic governmentality, as administrative control was brought to bear over the residents of the newly-formed mission station in the early 1900s. The chapter also examines shifts in the administrative concerns of the state that led to policies designed to segregate Aboriginal people into sedentary lifestyles on managed stations and reserves. However, as the third section of this chapter argues, the character of station management in the formative years was very different to the official policies being devised in Sydney. The final section of this chapter interrogates the idea that institutionalisation created a sedentary way of life for Aboriginal people living at the Wallaga Lake station. The evidence suggests that modified customary patterns of mobility persisted well into the 20th century, despite the efforts of the APB to curtail this movement.
By 1940, an estimated 50 percent of Aboriginal people were living in, or close to regional centres, and pressure was mounting on the NSW government to reform its approach to Indigenous affairs. Chapter Five shifts the emphasis to examine the experiences of Aboriginal people living in or near the coastal townships of the Eurobodalla during the early to mid 20th century. The chapter begins with an examination of government policies that impacted directly upon children, via the removal of Aboriginal children from their families and the exclusion of Aboriginal children from public schools, linking school exclusions to competition over land for town expansion. The chapter argues that a derivative of these actions was a strong local resistance by Aboriginal people that was integrated with broader campaigns throughout NSW. The chapter also examines some of the contradictions that faced Aboriginal people in towns that developed as a result of racialised government policies. Racialised policies that were designed to segregate, or separate the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous social spheres did filter through to racialised discourses and practices in the Eurobodalla townships. What emerges, however, is a far more complicated (or individuated) picture of social relations than Morris' (1989) application of Foucauldian concepts in the historical context suggest. The chapter argues that despite the development of government policies to dominate and control Aboriginal people, certain individuals, business owners and factions in the non-Indigenous community were able to resist claims on their subjectivities by racialised policies and discourses and created spaces where Kooris could move between two interlinked and interdependent social worlds.

Following on from an examination of town life for Aboriginal people during the early and mid 20th century, Chapter Six shifts to examine the experiences of Aboriginal people living and working in the heavily wooded forests of the Eurobodalla and the rich river flats of the Tuross Valley. The chapter argues that the period between the 1940s and 1970s is remembered as a relatively bounded era in which Aboriginal families were both on the run from 'the welfare', and following patterns of seasonal movement (or 'beats'). The chapter begins with an examination of the participation of Aboriginal men in the forestry sector. While employment prospects for Aboriginal men were mainly restricted to tasks involving heavy manual labour, involvement in the forestry sector enabled the development of high-level skills that became a source of pride. Positive memories of work in the timber mills are also
associated with a degree of flexibility and autonomy for men who could pick and choose where they worked based on whether a mill paid fairly. The second section of this chapter traces the rise of bean and pea production in the Tuross valley in the 1930s through to the constriction of the industry in the 1970s. During this period, the vast majority of pickers were Aboriginal people, with south coast families being joined in the picking fields by itinerant workers at the height of the season due to the large labour force needed to ensure crops were picked in the best condition. Seasonal horticulture in the Eurobodalla became a source of employment for local Aboriginal women, children and men.

Just as levels of harassment provided a determinant on which spaces and businesses Kooris frequented in town, so the attitudes of mill owners and farmers in the Tuross Valley contribute greatly to the ways in which the timber-milling and picking days are remembered. These spaces, I argue, are mapped onto the Eurobodalla landscape as sites of deep social significance. The third section of this chapter examines the social life of seasonal vegetable pickers, arguing that seasonal picking was a richly social and communal pattern of employment that enabled Aboriginal people to reassert a sense of collective identity (or ‘unity’). The chapter concludes with a critique of the notion of dependence used by previous studies to describe Aboriginal seasonal picking on the south coast. It argues that the term obfuscates both the important contribution Aboriginal people have made to the economy of the Eurobodalla, and the socially meaningful aspects of seasonal employment.

Chapter Seven begins with the end of the ‘picking era’, tracing the impacts of the demise of seasonal horticulture and broad-scale forestry as socially significant forms of employment for Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla. The chapter analyses an informant’s notion that the ‘era is now closed’ as a monumental shift in the life-worlds of Aboriginal people in south-eastern NSW. Through the discussion of a range of factors, including increases in the political agency of Aboriginal people, the provision of town housing, welfare and citizenship entitlements and generational change, the chapter argues that significant ruptures have occurred. While these ruptures arose at the same time (and through many of the same processes) as those attributed to problems associated with the outstations movement in Australia’s north, it will become clear that the localised experience of, and reactions to, these processes
can only be understood in terms of the history of Indigenous-settler relations in the Eurobodalla. The chapter also returns to the experiences of the hitchhiker, analysing how young Aboriginal men in the post-picking era of ‘self determination’ are experiencing being Koori in an accelerating modernity. The chapter argues that Aboriginal youths’ consumption of the culture of hip hop is a subversive reassertion of identity during a period in which working class Kooris and non-Indigenous people are in direct competition for scarce employment and affordable housing.
2 The Yuin nation: from a fishing tradition

How was Aboriginal economy and society in the Eurobodalla organised prior to the European invasion? This chapter attempts to provide some answers to this question based upon a range of evidence including ethnographic and archaeological sources. This endeavour is, of course, not without its problems. As Ian Keen notes:

the much used category of “traditional” culture or society is problematic. Contrasted with “modern” it places contemporary ways of life in the past, and it implies there was a period before European colonisation when people lived unchanging “traditional” lives – aspects of which continue in the present – and were somehow outside history (Keen 2004:1-2).

In view of the rich archaeological record in the Eurobodalla, any notion of a pre-colonial stasis in Aboriginal economic and social organisation – as something pristine, unchanging and ‘traditional’ – is challenged by the evidence. Rather, prior to the European invasion, Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla (as elsewhere throughout Australia) had a long and dynamic history that involved trading and ceremonial networks, cross-cutting dreaming tracks and networks of social relations spanning the south-eastern corner of the continent.

As outlined in the introduction, this thesis takes as its point of departure the substantive notion that economic relations are primarily social relations and therefore we cannot talk of one category in isolation from the other. Several authors have attempted to provide reconstructions of Aboriginal economies (Butlin 1993; Dingle 1988; Lawrence 1968). One of the main problems in these studies is that their analytical frames are often too general and miss the highly localised and idiosyncratic nature of Aboriginal economies and societies. Several other studies have documented community economies in articulation with capitalist modes of production and the state (Altman 1987; Anderson 1984). These studies provide a more adequate comparative framework for reconstructions of Aboriginal economies, and contributed to the development of the categories used in Keen’s (2004) book *Aboriginal Economy and Society: Australia at the Threshold of Colonisation*. This chapter draws on Keen’s
model primarily because it breaks down the observable (or reconstructable) aspects of economy and society into relatively comparable categories.

Keen’s approach is outlined briefly in section 2.1, illustrating that ‘ecological’ factors influence, and are influenced by, the range of ‘institutional fields’ that characterise Indigenous social life. These institutional fields also influence, and are influenced by, economic practices and the locally specific organisation of production, consumption and distribution. Section 2.1 then shifts to examine, review and problematise the range of ethnographic, linguistic and archaeological sources that are drawn upon in the remaining sections of this chapter. Section 2.2 provides an overview of the Eurobodalla ecology, outlining the character of its environments and resources and the various technologies Yuin people used to sustainably exploit those resources. The section concludes with a sketch of Yuin settlement patterns and mobility. Section 2.3 examines institutional fields, drawing on the problematic and sometimes contradictory observations of A.W. Howitt and R.H. Mathews. It outlines the available evidence relating to marriage, totemic classifications and ceremonies of initiation for Yuin people living in the Eurobodalla region. The final section (2.4) is an examination of economic forms and processes, including a discussion of the control of the means of production (through use rights to country), the organisation of production (with a focus on gender), distribution and consumption, and trade.

There are two reasons for undertaking this exercise. First, it is a method to provide a detailed literature review of the relevant regional sources. Second, the sketch provided of Aboriginal economy and society at the ‘threshold of colonisation’ provides a range of predispositions from which we can better understand intercultural relations in the colonial and postcolonial milieu. Furthermore, a detailed examination of relations between people and connections to country adds a deeper dimension to our understandings of the effects of, and trauma associated with invasion, land alienation and the various government policies of segregation, separation and assimilation in the 19th and 20th centuries.
2.1 Overview of sources

Keen sketches a ‘possibilist’ model of ‘the relationship between environment and society, according to which the environment imposes limiting conditions or boundaries on human action and social relations rather than causing them’ (Keen 2004:21). Furthermore, relationships between human practices and environments and resources are viewed as ‘mutual, interactive’ ones (ibid). Keen argues that ecological factors must be taken into account because ‘the location and seasonality of resources greatly affected the organisation of production, for people had to move to the locations of food resources’ (Keen 2004:23). Technologies (defined as the material instruments Aboriginal people used and the knowledge of their appropriate use) were also tailored to locally-specific needs that were shaped by ecological constraints. These ecological factors also placed constraining conditions or boundaries on ‘the ways in which Aboriginal people moved around the country, the degree of mobility, the range of movement, the size and dynamics of residence groups’ and population densities (Keen, 2004:103).

Keen takes the middle road between what Anthony Giddens refers to as institutions (the more ‘enduring’ aspects of social life which ‘are deeply sedimented in space-time’) and Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of a ‘social field’ to provide a category for analysis he terms ‘institutional fields’ (Giddens 1979:80; Keen 2004:3). Keen acknowledges that ‘the categories of institutional field’ he uses (for example, ‘cosmology’) ‘probably overlap only partially with Aboriginal ones’ but that, ‘nevertheless, similarities between ethnographic descriptions such as kin relations...are sufficient to make the domains proposed here workable’ (Keen, 2004:3-4). The categories I borrow from Keen to examine Yuin institutional fields include identities (including ‘country groups’, language varieties, marriage rules, totemic identities and naming systems) and kinship and marriage. While Keen also provides a detailed analysis of cosmology, quasi-technology and ancestral law in the case studies, much of the information relating to these categories has been left out of this discussion because it is considered to be culturally sensitive (or ‘restricted’) knowledge for Yuin people. A brief description from previously-released, published
knowledges of the relationship between creation beings and totemic identifications will suffice for section 2.3.

Keen's perspective on 'economy' borrows from Sahlin's (1974) substantivist approach and discussions of gift exchange by Marcel Mauss (1954), Chris Gregory (1982), Annette Weiner (1992) and Maurice Godelier (1999) to outline a range of categories for analysis under more general topics including control of the means of production, organisation of production, distribution and consumption and, exchange and trade. Control over the means of production includes use rights to land, waters and resources, and the knowledges required to appropriately utilise a particular country. Section 2.4 analyses the various use rights to country that individuals enjoyed based on the location of their parents' country, their place of birth, and totemic classification. The organisation of production will be discussed in terms of highly gendered modes of production and technologies for collecting shellfish and scale fish. The section will also make some comments relating to work teams and the nature of residence groups.

In the absence of evidence in the ethnographic record relating to Aboriginal modes of distribution and consumption in the Eurobodalla, we are forced to turn to the archaeological record for some clues. Through her archaeological research on the NSW south coast, Sandra Bowdler (1976) argued that coastal residence groups shared food unequally along gendered lines to the point that women had entirely different diets to men. Conversely, Keen's model draws on discussions of gift exchange and reciprocity more generally to describe distribution and consumption. Citing the work of Nicolas Peterson (1993) on 'demand sharing', Keen argues that distribution is based on the specific relationships between people. In view of Bowdler's rather simple model of distribution, I can only make some suggestions relating to how food was distributed and consumed within residence groups according to kinship relations, totemic classifications and taboos relating to male initiates as observed by Howitt. The final categories that Keen describes under the general rubric of 'economy' are exchange and trade. Section 2.4 briefly examines Howitt's account of trading networks based around the Bunan male initiation ceremony in terms of alienable possessions (movable 'property') and inalienable gifts (auspicious items and lavish gifts to headmen). This section will now examine the sources of the evidence
available for this reconstruction of Aboriginal economy and society in the Eurobodalla at the ‘threshold of colonisation’.

Four main ethnographic sources provide important, but also limited, information for a reconstruction of Yuin economy and society when Europeans first reached south-eastern Australian shores: George Augustus Robinson, Harry Warner, Alfred William Howitt and Robert Hamilton Matthews. G.A. Robinson was the Chief Protector of Aborigines for Port Phillip and travelled widely during his tenure. Robinson travelled through the Monaro and parts of the south coast during 1844 and his field journals contain valuable information relating to customary journeys and intermarriage between Aboriginal people at Twofold Bay and far-east Gippsland. Robinson’s journals illustrate that the majority of marriages occurred between people living within the broad south coast geographic region, although several marriages were with people from Gippsland and also the Monaro plateau. Unfortunately Robinson never ventured north beyond the Bega River and therefore his journals provide little information relating to Yuin people living within what is now known as the Eurobodalla. Harry Warner was the son of a wattle-bark buyer who travelled through the Eurobodalla region between 1916 and 1940 and recorded extensive information on the Brinja Yuin. Although Warner’s observations occurred long after European invasion and settlement, his undated notes provide useful information on the location of different countries and economic practices.

Like Warner, both Howitt and Mathews conducted their research after more than five decades of European intrusion into the region. As Chapter Three will illustrate, these decades were characterised by the increasing alienation of Aboriginal people from their country and therefore the destabilising effects these processes had on located identity must be examined. A.W. Howitt worked as a geologist, mining warden and magistrate during the 1870s and as a result of his work (and interests in surveying and ethnography) also travelled broadly throughout eastern Victoria and south-eastern NSW. Howitt’s major work, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, was published in 1904 and provides useful information relating to Yuin social organisation, identities, marriage networks and totemic classifications. Howitt was also involved in sponsoring a Bunyan male initiation ceremony on Mumbulla Mountain in 1883 (see Egloff 1979, 1981). While prudence should be given to interpreting
Howitt’s writing on this, he provides a nonetheless useful sketch of ceremonial networks in south-eastern NSW.

R.H. Mathews also observed a Bunun ceremony in the Shoalhaven region in the late 1800s and his rich description of the ceremony is a far more valuable record than that provided by Howitt (see Howitt 1904:516-62; Mathews 1896a). A general picture emerges from the archival record of Mathews as a good and devout man who involved himself honestly in the social life of Aboriginal people. He himself was initiated in the vicinity of St George’s River and is remembered by the descendents of those involved with the greatest respect as a human being (Wesson, pers. comms.). Unfortunately a detailed analysis of Mathews’ notes on the ceremony is beyond the scope of this thesis and a brief examination of Howitt’s account will serve to illustrate the distribution of ceremonial networks. Mathews was similar to Howitt insofar as he was a surveyor who had served as a magistrate and coroner while pursuing his interests as an amateur linguist and ethnographer. However, Mathews and Howitt were two very different men with different preconceptions and predilections that produced very different insights.\(^\text{13}\)

Through observations collected while he was working as Government surveyor, Mathews wrote a number of journal articles and a large body of unpublished papers relating to his research, yet never produced a major work in the style of Howitt. Arnold Van Gennep wrote to Mathews from Paris in 1909, despairing that Mathews had not synthesised his material into a magnum opus in the manner of Howitt (1904) and Baldwin Spencer (1899).\(^\text{14}\) Van Gennep implored:

> Really, it is a pity that you are not taking all your publications in one systematical work, as Howitt’s or Spencer’s, as it is truly impossible to have them all with their actual dispersion. With that, in polemics, it is impossible to get at your definitive ideas about this or that tribe and about the relations of the whole of your inquiries, etc (Van Gennep 1909).

\(^{13}\)For an examination of Howitt’s work, see Keen (2000). For an examination of Mathew’s contributions to anthropology, see Elkin (1975a, 1975b, 1976) and Thomas (2004, 2006).

\(^{14}\)It appears that Van Gennep was acting as an academic broker for Mathews in Europe. See Van Gennep (1907a, 1907b, 1909).
Mathews clearly felt that he was a rival of Howitt’s and his work on the Bunun ceremony suggests that he both sought to establish whether it was the same ceremony as Howitt observed, and if it was, to provide a more detailed account of it.\(^\text{15}\)

Interestingly, there is no evidence that the two shared notes and the only letters from Howitt in the R.H. Mathews collection were from Howitt to H.E. Hockey requesting information about Aboriginal people at Brewarrina (Howitt 1907a, 1907b).\(^\text{16}\) This is consistent with Martin Thomas’ appraisal that Howitt and Spencer ‘formed a compact between themselves that Mathews’ numerous publications should never be cited or even acknowledged’ (Thomas 2004:2). Thomas further notes that ‘the usual policy (apparently also shared by Roth) was to treat Mathews as a non-person’ (ibid).

While Howitt might be credited as the key ethnographer in terms of understanding Yuin institutional fields, his account of social organisation is contradictory and frustrating because of its lack of complexity. Howitt believed that the Yuin ‘had only traces of a class organisation’, with two vaguely-defined intermarrying classes and exogamous patrilineal totems (Howitt 1904:261).

Mathews’ understanding of Yuin social organisation is as difficult to ascertain today as it was for Van Gennep in 1907, however many clues remain that present a far more complex perspective than Howitt’s model. Elkin’s (1975a, 1975b, 1976) examination of Mathews’ legacy and extensive study of Mathew’s papers provide a montage of observations and understandings that make for a compelling case. In the discussion of institutional fields in 2.3, I give more weight to Mathews’ observations than those of Howitt’s ‘anomalous’ system of relatedness and differentiation.

The linguistic record is similarly patchy, with the main source of linguistic evidence of Yuin dialects being collected by Mathews during his period of research on the south coast (circa 1890-1900), Robinson (circa 1844), Larmer (circa 1853) and McKenzie (circa 1872). Drawing on Mathews’ work, their own original research and a range of other sources, Tindale (1974) and Eades (1976) mapped the distribution of south coast languages. As Sue Wesson notes, Eades’ study differed from Tindale in

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\(^{15}\) Mathews wrote to Spencer in 1876 and expressed his misgivings about the work of Howitt and Fison: ‘These gentlemen have done good work, but there are many mistakes in their papers due to their not having gone out among the blacks themselves in all cases. It will be for others to say whether their investigations or mine are the most reliable’ (Mathews 1876b:2).

\(^{16}\) Presumably Hockey had handed the letters over to his good friend Mathews.
that she made a distinction between language groups and ‘named groups’ (Wesson 2000:155). Wesson herself has made a significant contribution to our understanding of Aboriginal history in south-eastern Australia and both her historical atlas (2000) and thesis (2002) contain a wealth of information on the distribution of languages, named groups, place names, families and individuals in the 19th century.

The south coast region encompasses a rich array of sites of archaeological significance. Accordingly, a large body of archaeological research has been conducted in the Eurobodalla that offer time-depth to the early ethnographies. Attenbrow (1999) provides a detailed review of archaeological research in the study region and argues that significant knowledge has been gained about changes over time through numerous excavations of coastal middens, rock shelter deposits and open camp sites. It is important for the purposes of this chapter that much of the body of archaeological research in the region relates to details of, and changes in, Indigenous resource use and technologies. The overall picture is that at the time of colonisation, Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla were mainly fisher people who roamed inland when resources were scarce on the coast. Furthermore, coastal groupings were generally associated with drainage basins that had a relatively narrow ‘beach frontages’ and stretched inland to the top of the escarpments. The archaeological record makes it clear that Aboriginal people experienced a long and dynamic pre-colonial history and that Aboriginal economy and society was, by no means, static. Drawing on the ethnographic, linguistic and archaeological evidence, the following section examines the ecology of the Eurobodalla and how that might have affected locally-specific technologies, knowledges and settlement patterns.

2.2 Ecology

What is now referred to as the Eurobodalla Shire lies in south-eastern NSW, to the east of the Great Dividing Range, between 35° 40’ and 36° 2’ south and 149° 5’ and 150° 2’ east. The region is bordered by the Pacific Ocean and the escarpments rising to the Monaro plateau in the west and consists of three major drainage basins (from north to south) of the Clyde, Deua and Tuross river systems, and smaller drainages feeding the Wagonga inlet and Wallaga lake estuarine systems. The broad,
shallow valleys are subject to flooding at times of heavy rainfall and the worst flooding occurs when the river mouths have been closed by sand deposition. The escarpments rise gradually out of these drainage basins to the Monaro plateau. The highest mountains in the escarpments are now known as Pidgeon House Mountain, Mt. Dromedary/Gulaga (956 metres above sea level), Mumbulla Mountain and Mt. Imlay from north to south. While these mountains (with the exception of Mt Dromedary) lie outside of the Eurobodalla shire, they have been described as providing important ‘spiritual reference points to Aboriginal people’ (Wesson 2000:129).

Table 1: Temperature variability for Moruya Heads and Braidwood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Hottest month: Mean daily max. (°C)</th>
<th>Hottest month: Mean daily min. (°C)</th>
<th>Coolest month: Mean daily max. (°C)</th>
<th>Coolest month: Mean daily min. (°C)</th>
<th>Highest max. temp. (°C)</th>
<th>Lowest min. temp. (°C)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moruya Heads</td>
<td>31.0 (Jan)</td>
<td>21.7 (Jan)</td>
<td>14.0 (Aug)</td>
<td>2.7 (Jul)</td>
<td>43.3 (Feb)</td>
<td>0.0 (July)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braidwood</td>
<td>31.2 (Jan)</td>
<td>15.6 (Jan)</td>
<td>6.8 (Aug)</td>
<td>-3.8 (July)</td>
<td>41.1 (Feb)</td>
<td>-9.2 (July)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Yuin people lived, and continue to live, in an environment with a temperate climate and high rainfall characterised by long, warm (and occasionally hot) summers and cool winters. The average annual rainfall for Moruya Heads is 953.7 mm. with the heaviest rainfalls occurring in the summer months. While the Eurobodalla climate enjoys relatively high rainfall all year round, the winter months coincide with the lowest monthly averages. In comparison to nearby Braidwood (located on the Monaro plateau at an elevation of 643 metres), the Eurobodalla coast is considerably wetter and the relative proximity to the ocean produces a far less variable range in seasonal temperatures. On the plateau, Braidwood’s average annual rainfall is 718.2
mm, and its climate is characterised by colder nights and considerably colder winters with severe frosts common from June to September.

The Eurobodalla environment consists of diverse terrestrial ecosystems ranging from various kinds of dry eucalypt forests and rainforests in the escarpments, to grasslands, wetlands, coastal sand scrub, dune complexes and rocky outcrops. A study commissioned by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services has identified 65 discrete terrestrial ecosystem types in the Eurobodalla region, including 35 dominated by eucalypts, 8 different rainforest ecosystems and 20 non-forest ecosystems (NPWS 2000:13). These ecosystems were (and are) home to a diverse range of edible species, including plants, mammals, reptiles, birds, fresh and saltwater fish, crustaceans and molluscs. The main river systems are fed by numerous small

Figure 3: Mean monthly rainfall for Moruya Heads (average for the years 1875-2010).

streams and, combined with relatively high annual rainfall and occasional flooding, produce an abundance of potable water.

The ethnographic and archaeological accounts provide little information on the contribution of plant foods to Yuin people’s diets. The oral histories recorded in Dale Donaldson’s (2006) collection identify a range of edible fruits included devil’s twine (Cassytha species), appleberry (Billardiera scandens), native sarsaparilla (Smilax glycyphylla), prickly pear (Opuntia stricta), native raspberry (Rubus rosifolius) and native cherry (Exocarpos cupressiformis). It is likely that various edible roots, rhizomes and tubers provided year-round staples, although only the fringe lily (Thysaotus species) is mentioned in the oral histories. Other plant food sources were derived from bloodwood (Corymbia gummifera), green wattle (Acacia mearnsii), Japanese honeysuckle (Lonicera japonica) and pigface (Carpobrotus glaucescens). The native bee (Apidae Trigona) provided a source of sugar in the form of honey or honeycomb produced from various flowers and blossoms. Several other plants are identified for their medicinal properties, including pinkwood (Eucryphia moorei), bloodwood, native sarsaparilla, rib grass (Plantago species) and inkweed (Phytolacca octandra), while water sourced from Gulaga and Bendethra was also thought to have curative and restorative properties. A variety of plants were used to produce technologies, including the versatile grass tree (Xanthorrhoea resinosa) that provided long stems for making spears and gum for use as glue.

A variety of terrestrial mammals found mainly in the grasslands and eucalypt forests also contributed to Yuin people’s diet, including the eastern grey kangaroo (Macropus giganteus), the eastern brush wallaby (Macropus rufogriseus), brush-tail possum (Trichosurus vulpecula) and the short-beaked echidna (Tachyglossus aculeatu). Goannas (Aranaus gouldii) also provided a valuable source of protein. Other food sources were birds, including the white-headed pigeon (Columba leucomela), the turquoise parrot (Neophema pulchella) and the mutton-bird (Puffinus tenuirostris) (Dale Donaldson 2006:163-166). The remaining sources of protein available to Yuin people were derived from the various freshwater, estuarine and marine ecological zones.
According to Howitt, the functional name ‘Katungal Yuin’ referred to a people whose lifestyle was oriented towards gaining subsistence from the sea. Howitt’s observations are supported by archaeological data and oral histories. For example, Lampert argues that the archaeological evidence supports the theory that there was an ‘almost complete dependence by coastal groups on seafoods for the protein portion of their diet. Only a few items, mainly vegetable foods, were derived from the bush’ (Lampert 1971:118). Similarly Harry Warner observed that:

their subsistence economy was the gathering of shellfish (mussels, oysters, scallops and whelks) and small land fauna – on these they had probably about 76-85 percent dependence for their survival. Gathering of supporting plant foods was of minor importance and ‘seasonal’ activities, for berries and wild fruits (Warner n.d.:2).

However, Poiner asserts that coastal groups did not exclusively live in camps close to the coast. Through an examination of the availability of potential dietary contributions of fish, shellfish and plant categories, Poiner argued that the cold winter months yielded the least in coastal and estuarine food resources. Poiner suggests that these months of relative scarcity reduced community size and resulted in smaller, ‘more nomadic’ coastal groups roaming inland as part of the food quest (Poiner 1976:193; c.f. Lampert 1971:121). Based on the freezing conditions in the escarpments and on the plateau during winter, I suggest that this inland movement would have been limited and mobility was relatively aseasonal for coastal groups.

The oral histories recorded in Dale Donaldson’s (2006) collection identify a number of readily-obtainable shellfish ‘staples’ in the intertidal zone, including Sydney cockles (Anadara trapezia), pipis (Donax del toides), oysters (Ostrea angasi), blue mussels (Mytilus edulis) and periwinkles (Bembicium species), as well as sea urchins (Heliocidaris erythrogramma) and cunjevoi (Pyura stolonifera). Black-lipped abalone (Haliotis ruber), may have taken considerably more effort to procure but was nonetheless a prized delicacy. Abalone feed on algae and seagrass in rocky crevices and underwater reefs to a depth of 25 metres and needed to be prized off the rocks using digging sticks (Cruze et al. 2005:4). Once the available Abalone was depleted from the intertidal zone, it is likely that capable divers would have also explored the
underwater ledges that provided refuge for Abalone and crayfish (*Cherax* species). A large number of fish species have been identified as common food sources, including sea mullet (*Mugil cephalus*), blackfish (*Girella elevata*), black bream (*Acanthopagrus butcheri*), flathead (*Platycephalus* species), sting ray (*Myliobatis australis*), leather jacket (*Nelusetta ayraudi*), king fish (*Seriola* species) and snapper (*Pagrus auratus*). Octopus (*Cephalopod* species) could also be caught using a hook and line or speared in the intertidal zone. Similarly, Green eels (*Alabes dorsalis*) and mud crabs (*Scylla serrata*) could be caught or trapped in the estuarine ecosystems (Dale Donaldson 2006:163-166).

This section now turns to examine the various technologies that Aboriginal people utilised, including the ‘material instruments (‘hardware’) and the techniques for employing them’ (Keen 2004:83). With an orientation towards coastal and estuarine environs, coastal Yuin people utilised a range of technologies to catch fish or to collect shellfish. The most significant material instruments of this type prior to colonisation were fishing lines, hooks and spears, flat water canoes and flat water and ocean-going rafts. Aboriginal people also utilised a range of tools, weapons and facilities (including fish traps). It is likely that Yuin people also used what Hotchin (1990) described as a general east-coast tool kit consisting of cloaks and rugs of possum skin, various types of fighting clubs, and hunting and fighting spears (Keen 2004:96). Warner observed that, amongst the Brinja-Yuin of the northern Tuross Lakes area, certain movable technologies (spears, canoes and axes) were more or less ‘owned’ by the individuals who produced them, although they were shared (or ‘loaned’) for mutual economic benefit. Warner differentiated between ‘movable’ and ‘real’ property and argued that the latter category (including wurleys, wurley bark slabs, windbreaks, fresh-water storages, bark canoes, hearths and hearth-stones and support forks) were ‘freely appropriated for use by other Aborigines’ once the camp was vacated (Warner n.d.:5).

Audio recordings held at the Recorded Sound Archive at AIATSIS provide valuable information relating to canoes, rafts and fishing technologies (see Chittick 1992-1993 and Mathews 1965, 1967-1968). Two types of canoes were used by Aboriginal people to traverse the Eurobodalla estuaries and river systems, bark canoes and dugout canoes. Canoes were either paddled in a kneeling position using paddles.
fashioned from stringy bark, or propelled along using a stick in shallow water. Bark canoes were generally made from stringy bark, although the oral history records suggest that ti-tree was a passable and lighter alternative. Canoe-makers identified suitable stringy bark by the outside grain of the tree with a usual diameter of around two and a half feet. If the grain ran continuously around the tree the stringy bark was unsuitable for use. The canoe makers were required to climb the tree using water vines tied around the waist for support while they cut the bark into the desired shape. The bark was then lifted off with a wooden lever that was flattened at both ends. Artisans would then remove the roughness from the bark and use the discarded bark for kindling to make a fire. The bark was then tied into a cylindrical shape, held in place with a strip of stringy bark or a vine, and then placed vertically over the fire. This process allowed an even heat to flow over the surface of the bark. The stringy bark was heated to dry the sap and to make the bark supple and less likely to crack. While the bark was still soft, two holes would be made at either end with a small spear and vines were threaded through and tied off. Cracks were sealed with the yellow gum from the grass tree and in some cases support struts were fashioned to add rigidity to the structure. Little remains in the oral history record that describes the production technique for dug-out canoes, except for the fact that they were made from cabbage-tree palms. Rafts were also a popular means of transportation, both for crossing rivers and lakes and for ocean-going journeys to the various offshore islands that offered rich habitats for seafood and mutton bird eggs. Rafts were made by lashing logs together with vines and offered greater stability in rough water than the narrow canoe design.

Fishing spears were fashioned from a long lengths of wood or grass-tree stem tipped with a barb. Wooden spears were heated in the ashes of a fire and then rubbed with stringy bark or abrasive stones, or passed back and forth through the fork of a stick to remove any imperfections. The wood was then smeared with fat. The tips of the spears were fashioned variously from shaped wooden barbs, sharpened bone fragments (from macropods), sharpened stone fragments or sting-ray barbs. The barbs would be fixed to the end of the spear with an adhesive gum, vine or animal sinew. The oral history records report that it was most common, and indeed most effective, for men to hunt for fish at night. Working in pairs, one with fire sticks or torches and the other carrying the spears, Aboriginal men attracted or dazzled the fish.
with the light before spearing them. Fishing lines were manufactured from the fibrous threads of a wattle tree. The bark was cut from the tree and heated over a fire to separate the fibres from the dry bark. The heating process also softened the fibres to enable them to be plaited together to the required length. The lines were finished with bees wax to preserve their pliability. Fish hooks were made using either bone fragments from macropods or shell fragments.

Through a discussion of the climatic conditions and various ecological zones, the Eurobodalla region appears to have been an environment favourable to human habitation (in terms of high rainfall and a temperate climate) and of relative abundance in a wide variety of available food sources. It is therefore curious that contemporary estimates suggest a relatively small population of around 1,000 people living between Twofold Bay and Narrawallee at the time of European settlement (1822-23) (Wesson 2000:130). It is possible that Yuin people were affected by smallpox epidemics that spread southwards from the north of the continent prior to European colonisation (Butlin 1985; Campbell 2007). Regardless of the overall population size prior to colonisation (and the obvious problems associated with estimation), the evidence suggests that relatively large groups of people congregated when resources were plentiful along the Eurobodalla coast during summer, and at larger inland gatherings including those associated with the beaching of whales and the Bogong moth feasts in the highlands (see Flood 1990; Mathews 1904:252-3). During the months of relative scarcity (June-September), group size would have been lower, both on the coast and in the escarpments.

Poiner asserts that 'changes in strategy in response to dwindling supplies would have resulted directly or indirectly in movement to another area. Hence a diminution of resources in both quantity and range in winter months suggests more frequent movement of groups as a response to more distant daily excursions' (Poiner 1976:191-192). While relative scarcity is certainly one factor that influenced movement, networks of social relations and the particularities of those networks also influenced settlement patterns and mobility. A combination of the ethnographic, archaeological and oral history sources suggest that a number of smaller 'socio-

17 It has been suggested that the Maccassan visitors introduced smallpox to the northern coast of the continent.
territorial political ensembles’ held areas of land and water in the Eurobodalla (Correy et al. 2008:7-8). Yet the evidence also suggests that individuals within those groups had rights to use the country of several groups based on various kinds of connections. Rather than moving around in large numbers, these smaller socio-territorial political ensembles (or ‘country groups’) probably also consisted of smaller familial groups that moved from one residence group to another (Keen 2004:107). In this manner, Yuin mobility appears similar to that of the Kūnai where ‘individuals and families travelling to the country of other groups could visit relatives and gain access to particular resources in particular seasons’ (Keen 2004:108). The following section examines the particularities of these networks of relatedness, including a discussion of Yuin identities, kinship and marriage, ceremonies and governance.

2.3 Institutions

Howitt observed that the Yuin ‘tribes’ claimed the country along the coast from the Shoalhaven River in the north to Cape Howe in the south, bounded by escarpments rising to the Monaro plateau in the west. As Wesson noted, ‘the term *yuin/yoo-in/yuin/youeen* has been translated as man although it may have meant both person and man’ (Wesson 2000:129). Howitt’s records show that, in the ‘Turka’ (Dhurga) language of the people of Moruya, the word for ‘man’ is *murrin* or *yuin* (Howitt n.d. 1050/2a). In contrast, the word for ‘man’ recorded by Robinson at Twofold Bay was *mow-o* or *mow*, with people referring to themselves as *Mobullergunde* (translated by Robinson as ‘all about blacks’) (Robinson 1844b). By contrast again, Howitt recorded that in the ‘Jeringal’ (Jeringan) language, ‘man’ is *PAIUl* (Howitt n.d. 1050/2a). Mathews records the collective noun for people as *yoo-in burra-ga* in Thoorga (Mathews 1902:67), and *yuinbuloala* in Tharrawal (Tharawal) (Mathews 1902). Similarly, Larmer records the word *you-een* for people at Batemans Bay (Larmer 1899:147).

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18 It is important to make the distinction between land-owning groups and residence groups. Following Keen, I use ‘country groups’ to refer to groups that ‘held’ or ‘owned’ one or more defined countries and the associated myths, ceremonies, and sacred objects’ (Keen 2004:421).
According to Howitt, the Yuin were constituted by two sub-divisions: the Kurial in the north and the Guyangal in the south (Howitt 1904:81). Howitt described the local organization in terms of these two 'sub-tribes', which were further divided into six smaller 'clans'. Besides the north/south differentiation of Yuin identities, Howitt thought that the Yuin were also divided by way of their proximity to the ocean, with Katungal used to describe people living on the coast, and Paiendra for people living further inland (Howitt 1904:82). Wesson (2000) describes these east/west differentiations as 'functional names' that were influenced by the distinctive ecological zones associated with the livelihoods of the respective groups (Wesson 2000:151).

Figure 4: Yuin divisions based on Howitt’s observations

However, the notion that the east/west differentiation (Katungal/Paiendra) is only a functional difference in livelihoods is problematised by Howitt’s observations of marriage rules relating to the marriage of distant (rather than close) relatives.

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19 According to Howitt, the names originated from the words guya, meaning ‘south,’ and kuru, meaning ‘north’. The word gal was the possessive postfix (ibid).

20 The origin of these names were the words Katung (meaning ‘the sea’), and Paien (‘a tomahawk’). The groups were known to the colonists as ‘fishermen’ and ‘waddymen’ respectively. The word ‘waddy’ was an Aboriginal word for tree and was used in reference to Paiendra people’s proclivity to climb trees as part of the food quest (Howitt. 1904:82).
This man, being of Braidwood, went to Moruya, and he had to give a sister to the brother of his wife. The old men, when at the initiation ceremonies, told me that the rule was that the ‘waddy men’, that is, those who get their living by climbing trees for game, must go down to the sea-coast and obtain wives from the people who get their living by fishing. Thus these people, by their reciprocating local divisions, and the rules relating to them, supply each other with wives (Howitt 1904:262).

More recent work by Tindale (1974) similarly differentiated between Yuin people living on the coast as opposed to those living in the escarpments and on the plateau and divided the north/south territory of the Katungal Yuin into smaller territorial units including (from Burrill Lake in the north to the Wallaga Lake region in the south) the Wandandian, Walbanga and Djiringanj. While conducting research on the south coast at roughly the same time, Warner thought that the territory of the Walbanga subgroup was further divided into different country groups including that of the Brinja-Yuin (see Warner n.d.:73, 194).

Drawing on the work of Tindale, Flood argued that the archaeological evidence suggests that Katungal Yuin ‘occupied a series of tribal territories along the coast. In general their country stretches up onto the top of the coastal escarpment, and has the shape of a rectangle or wedge, the shorter side being along the coast. It seems that in the past, as in the present, beach frontage was at a premium’ (Flood 1982:29). If we return to Howitt’s observations, Flood’s association of these different subgroups to topographic features and drainage basins has some resonance. Howitt observed that ‘when a child was born among the Yuin, its father pointed out some hills, lakes or rivers to the men and women there present as being the bounds of his child’s country’ (Howitt 1904:83). Figure 5 is a suggested approximation of Yuin country group boundaries in the Eurobodalla region and is a compilation of information obtained from informants and secondary sources (Eades 1976; Tindale 1974; Warner n.d.; Wesson 2000).
In terms of linguistic differences between Yuin country groups, Eades (1976) and Wesson (2000) have presented somewhat different maps of language distribution. Tindale (1974) also provided a map of tribal and linguistic diversity, though his work makes no distinction between language groups and groups with proper names. Eades’ study included the languages Dharawal (Tharawal), Dhurga (Thoorga), Dyirringan (Jeringan) and Thawa (Thauaira) (Eades 1976:6). Wesson’s study differs in the geographical range of these languages and used a comparison of vocabulary lists to determine the relative commonality between the languages:

21 Map is for illustrative purposes only.
Thauaira is a different language from Jeringan but Jeringan and Thoorga are closely related and are variants of a single language. There is a region between Bateman’s Bay and Conjola Creek in which a language named Thurumba was spoken sharing aspects of both Tharawal and Thoorga (Wesson 2000:156).

According to this analysis, Yuin people who lived south of the Bega River (including those from Twofold Bay) spoke Thauaira which, while sharing common words, was a different language to that spoken further north. Wesson proposes that Thauaira ‘ceased to be a functioning language before Jeringan or Thoorga’ due to increased migration from non-Thauaira speaking Aboriginal people seeking work in the Twofold Bay whaling industry through to mid 1800s (Wesson 2000:157). In the Eurobodalla, it appears that the dialects of Jeringan and Thoorga comprised a common language for the Yuin ranging from Wallaga Lake to Batemans Bay, with the Thurumba dialect being spoken north to Conjola Creek. Tharawal, a distinct language, appears to be common from Ulladulla to as far north as Sydney. To the west, the languages of the highlands and plateau were Ngarigo and Ngunawal.

Howitt provides details about Yuin marriage practices and observed that marriage was exogamous both through totemic classification and locality. One of Howitt’s informants stated that the rules of marriage were that no-one ‘should marry so as to mix the same blood, but he must take a woman from a different name (Mura, totem) than his own; and besides this, he must go for a wife to a place as far as possible from his own place’ (Howitt 1904:262). Howitt describes the geographical limits within which suitable wives were obtained through sister exchange as indicated by the round which the boy’s tooth, which is knocked out at the initiation ceremonies, is carried, the tooth being passed on from one headman to another. In the old times the limits were – Ben Lake, Delegate, Tumut, Braidwood, and so on to Shoalhaven, and thence following the sea-coast to Bem Lake (ibid).
The intermarriage with Künnai people from Bern Lake is consistent with Robinson’s observations at Twofold Bay, whereby several husbands were married to women who were born in the north-eastern Gippsland region (Robinson 1844a; Robinson 1844b). This is also consistent with Keen’s material on the Krautîngolung Künnai, which describes some people referring to the Yuin as Krautîngolung rather than as brajerak (strangers) (Keen 2004:142). Clearly there was some overlapping of Yuin and Künnai regional identities across the contemporary state borders of NSW and Victoria in the south-eastern corner.

Howitt also describes the arrangement of marriages by respective fathers at the conclusion of the male initiation ceremony, the style of punishment meted out for elopement, and mother-in-law avoidance. Howitt further observed that

many of the old men among the Yuin, especially the principal Gommeras, had more than one wife, and there was one man who had ten, but not at the same time. He was in the habit of giving a wife to some poor fellow who had not any, and thus securing his adherence, and at the same time reducing the number he had to hunt for (Howitt 1904:266).

This level of polygyny amongst senior and powerful men reflects Keen’s observation that ‘since marriage was an exchange, highly polygynous men occupied a key place in exchange networks’ (Keen 2004:179). However, there is little to support Howitt’s observations in the census lists, which leads me to believe that high levels of polygyny was anomalous in the 19th century and was restricted to the principle Gommeras and, perhaps, a handful of senior men.

As previously stated, the combination of observations and understandings that can be drawn from Mathews’ scattered papers and Elkin’s analysis describes betrothal based upon relationships. Mathews learnt that the first step was for elders to identify a possible wife’s mother who would then give birth to the wife of the male child. As Elkin stated, ‘the selection of mother-in-law, rather than of wife, was widespread in Australia, though possibly RHM was the first to say so in specific words’ (Elkin 1976:210). Mathews reported
that the elders looked for one or more female cross-cousins of the boy’s father, each of whom they designated nanarree, wife’s mother to the boy, while he was henceforth daughter’s husband, nanarree, to her. Consequently, they avoided each other and this precluded ‘any improper intimacy’ between them. The men who took part in this were well acquainted with the genealogy of the persons who might be involved, and so could prevent betrothals which they regarded as too close (Elkin 1976:211).

This is consistent with Howitt’s observations of the practice of mother-in-law avoidance amongst Yuin people (Howitt, 1904:266).

As Elkin noted, Mathews changed his views on Aboriginal social organisation in 1900. Mathews had previously thought that:

all Australian tribes are divided into two exogamous inter-marrying classes, with subdivisions into smaller segments, each having a distinctive title. In cases where these divisions have been believed to be absent, it has probably been rather from their having escaped the notice of investigators than from their non-existence. These class divisions have been called organisations or systems (Mathews 1894:18).

Similarly, Howitt observed that ‘the class system is in a decadent condition’ for the ‘Yuin tribes’ because ‘there are no class names or even traces of them, but very numerous totems scattered over the country, as in the case in the tribes with descent in the female line’ (Howitt 1904:133). According to Mathews’ reasoning at the time, any absence of (or unclear delineations between) class divisions could be explained either by poor research or ‘that they had formerly existed, but had dropped out of use, leaving traces which the diligent searcher might find’ (Elkin 1976:209). Following

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22 Elkin notes that all the ‘big names’ of the era (Howitt, Fison and Spencer) were influenced by ‘Lewis Morgan’s theory of the development of marriage from primitive promiscuity, through a phase of group marriage and eventually to individual marriage’ which associated class divisions ‘with a form of group marriage’ (Elkin, 1976:234). Mathews’ diversion from this school of thought led to widespread criticism of his work. Elkin clearly believed that Mathews’ theories were groundbreaking and that his own analysis of Mathews’ material provided vindication.

23 I take this to be a thinly-veiled criticism of Howitt.
extensive fieldwork at a number of locations during the late 1890s, Mathews found that there was no evidence on the south coast of discrete exogamous intermarrying classes.

Considering himself to be a diligent researcher, Mathews came to the conclusion that it was possible that these class divisions did not exist. Rather, ‘marriages were regulated by a system of betrothals, based primarily on relationship’ (Elkin 1976:210). Mathews realised that appropriate marriages were between a man and the daughter of his father’s cross-cousin – either the daughter of his father’s father’s sister’s daughter or the daughter of his father’s mother’s brother’s daughter.

What Howitt thought was simply ‘sister exchange’ between two exogamous (but barely recognisable ‘classes’) was the exchange of the man’s sister to the wife’s brother; that is the marriage of the latter with the daughter of his mother’s male cross-cousin (see Figure 6). Therefore $A$ (Ego) should marry $d'$ (FFZDD) in exchange for $D'$ (FFZDS) marrying $a$ (Z). Alternatively, $A$ (Ego) should marry $d''$ (FMBDD) in exchange for $D''$ marrying $a$ (Z).\(^4\)

There is insufficient information in the sources to provide a model of Yuin kinship based on the classification of relatives. Mathews’ and Howitt’s observations are concordant that Yuin society was not organised around a moiety or section system. The available evidence also suggests that Yuin systems of kin classification do not fit with Kariera-like terminology, which Keen found to ‘have been very adaptable, occurring in a range of environments’ (Keen 2004:396). Based on the evidence in hand, we can generalise that Yuin kinship involved extensive networks of relatedness within and between exogamous intermarrying country groups.

\(^4\) Elkin argues that ‘such marriages could not be correlated with exogamous classes and sub-classes (moieties and sections), and if they occurred after the introduction of such divisions, they would be regarded as irregular’ (Elkin 1976:211).
Figure 6: Mathews’ schema of south coast marriage rules.

Note: Capitals denote male; lower case, female. \(=\) denotes marriage. B-C\(^1\) and B-C\(^2\) are cross cousins, first degree. A and a are second degree cross-cousins to \(d^2\) and \(D^2\), and also to \(d^1\) and \(D^1\). Nanarree (mother-in-law) relationships are: C\(^1\)-A; C\(^2\)-A; e-D\(^4\) and e-D\(^5\) (Elkin 1976:210).

Figure 7: Appropriate marriages with exogamous patrifilial totems

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\(^{25}\) This kinship diagram is skewed towards patriliny.
If we return to the discussion of patrilineal totems, these marriage rules are consistent with Howitt’s observation that totemic classifications were exogamous. Mathews also observed that ‘each tribe is made up of a number of families or groups, each of which has a local position in some part of the tribal country...In tribes with agnatic descent...the totems are perpetuated through the man’ (Mathews 1894:21). Patrifilial *budjan* totems were associated with different places and different country groups or patri-clans that probably reflected some proliferation of the totemic species in that location. Therefore, in a similar manner to what Keen describes in Gippsland, ‘totemic affiliations both distinguished localities and created connections’ (Keen 2004:279). If we put the system of exogamous marriage by locality and totemic identity together with Mathew’s observations of appropriate marriages, then it follows that *FFZDD* and *FMBDD* should have different patrifilial totems (inherited from *FFZDH* and *FMBDH* respectively) and have come from a different country to Ego (see Figure 7).

Through recent ethnographic research, Deborah Rose is highly critical of Howitt’s approach, and argues that ‘his work generally does not take women’s knowledge or practice into account’ (Rose et al. 2003:40). Rose found evidence that totemic classifications were (and are) bestowed upon children by both men and women (ibid). While Rose is correct that there is a significant bias towards male knowledge and practice in Howitt’s work, the presence of matrilineal totems in the 19th century is problematic for Mathews’ schema of appropriate marriages. This can be explained in two ways: either matrilineal totems (which were observed neither by Howitt nor Mathews) might have been a separate category that did not affect marriage practices, or the significant disruptions to Yuin social worlds in the late 19th and 20th centuries meant that it was impossible to maintain the conferral of patrifilial totems.

Totemic identities were (and are) also incorporated into Yuin cosmology or a general worldview including:

non-totemic male and female creator beings, and other non-ordinary beings...the creator beings made the other beings and the totems...The spirits

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26 Mathews believed that this system of social organisation was characteristic of all the ‘tribes’ of the ‘south-eastern coastal district’ of NSW (see Mathews & Everitt, 1904:262-3).
of creators such as Tunku and Ngardi have been metamorphosed in the features of sacred sites in the area, just as Umbarra, the black duck, has become the form of the island in the middle of the Lake.

Yuin people’s cosmology of creation starts with Darumala (Daruma, or Darumalan), and his mother, Ngalalbal, along with two other creator beings, Tunku and Ngardi (Rose et al. 2003:40-41).

The activities of these creator beings are mapped onto the landscape as dreaming stories and tracks. As Rose notes, ‘the term ‘Dreaming’ covers a range of interconnected concepts including Dreaming ancestors and their creative journeys, religious laws, sacred designs and songs, and codes of social order (Rose et al. 2003:21-22). These knowledges were (and remain) secret and sacred.

Similarly, Howitt asserted that patrilineal budjan totems were said to be more like:

Joia, or magic, than a name; and it was in one sense a secret name, for with it an enemy might cause injury to its bearer by magic. Thus very few people knew the totem names of others, the name being told to a youth by his father at his initiation (Howitt 1904:133).

This secrecy regarding totemic identity is contradicted by Mathews’ observations in which he states explicitly that exogamous patrilineal totems were ‘of great help when making betrothals – the affinity of any given individuals being by this means traced with greater facility’ (Mathews & Everitt 1900:264). A possible source of the discrepancy can be explained by the fact that only the headmen were responsible for arranging the marriages and that they were acting both as ‘genealogical repositories’ (marriage facilitators), and as protectors of budjan secrecy.27

The nature of Yuin male initiation is the only reference Howitt gives to ceremonial practices in the study region. Yuin youths were given cicatrices after the

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27 While the evidence is not available in the sources, I suspect that older women may have also been central to the process of organising appropriate marriages.
initiation ceremonies and, as Howitt observed, ‘scars are cut on both boys and girls’ (Howitt 1904:746). There is no evidence that Yuin people practiced circumcision or subincision, however tooth avulsion was part of the male initiation ceremony. The ceremonies were coordinated by the principle Gommera of the officiating ‘tribe’. According to Howitt, Gommera’s were the headmen of the local divisions and ‘must be a medicine-man, must be aged, able to speak several languages (dialects), be skilful as a fighting-man, and be, above all, able to perform those feats of magic which the Gommeras exhibit at the initiation ceremonies’ (Howitt 1904:314). While governance within these local divisions largely rested on the will of the powerful Gommeras, Howitt also observed what he called ‘tribal councils’ that included all the initiated men to discuss particular problems. Howitt was ‘struck by the restrained manner of the younger men at these meetings’ (Howitt 1904:325). This ‘restraint’ reflected the norms of respect and ancestral laws that were impressed upon initiates during the ceremony.

Howitt was fortunate to observe a Kuringal ceremony at Mumbulla mountain in 1883 and provides valuable observations regarding the distribution of ceremonial networks in south-eastern NSW. The Kuringal gatherings included two somewhat different forms of the initiation ceremony. The Bunun ceremony was distinguished from the Kadjawallung because ceremonial activities took place within a circular ring of earth with a path extending from the Bunun ring to another small sacred enclosure (Howitt 1904:518-519). Howitt observed that:

The Bunun was to be attended by the clans from Moruya, Bega and Twofold Bay, that is, by both the Kurial and Guyangal, and that meeting was to be near Bega...The people from Braidwood, Ulladulla, and Shoalhaven would accompany those from Moruya. With them, people from Broulee would occasionally come. Next would arrive those from Queanbeyan, then the Gurungatta from beyond Shoalhaven, with whom there might be even some from Jervis Bay; and all these people are true Kurial (Howitt 1904:519-20).

Interestingly, the numerous camps surrounding the Talmaru (or central campfire) at the base of the mountain upon which the ceremony was held were divided up into the cardinal points corresponding to the location of the various groups’ country in
relation to the site of the ceremony. Howitt observed that ‘on the north side of the
Talmaru was the Moruya camp, on the south side that of the men from the coast,
south of Bega, while on the western side were the Bemeringal’ (or those living on the
Monaro tablelands and in the high country). Once again the significant distinction
emerges between people living on the coast, and those of the escarpments and plateau.
While many people attended the ceremony from outside of Yuin country, including
‘two or three Biduellii’ men and one Krautun.golung Kūnai man (who were excluded
from the ceremony because they had not been ‘made men’), clearly the majority of
people attending the ceremony came from within the broadly defined Yuin territory
(Howitt 1904:530).

2.4 Economy

The previous section has attempted to outline institutional fields that organised
the social life of Aboriginal people living in the Eurobodalla prior to colonisation. It
argued that Yuin, as an identity, existed as an ensemble of smaller intermarrying
‘country groups’ that shared a similar orientation towards living in the
coastal/escarpment environs, participated in shared ceremonial activities and spoke
mutually intelligible languages. This section now turns to examine the way in which
country groups accessed resources and controlled the means of production through
use rights. The section will then examine the organisation of production through
gendered divisions in labour and the organisation of distribution and consumption.
The section will finish by examining exchange and trade, and will illustrate that Yuin
people participated in trading relationships that spanned a large region in south­
eastern Australia.

Howitt observed that male children were given rights to their father’s country
and to the country of their birth. However, Howitt also observed that

it was just the same with a girl, who had her mother’s country, and also that in
which she was born. Besides this the father took the country where his (male)

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28 This is consistent with Mathews’ (1896a) map of the ceremonial campsite.
child was born, if away from his own locality, and the mother took that where her daughter was born under similar circumstances (Howitt 1904:83).

Therefore, Howitt describes a range of bases for use rights including:

- a man’s place of birth
- a man’s father’s place of birth
- a father’s sons’ place of birth
- a woman’s place of birth
- a woman’s mother’s place of birth
- a mother’s daughters’ place of birth

In addition to use rights associated with the place of one’s birth or parents’ place of birth, use rights were also governed by totemic classifications.

Howitt observed that, in addition to personal names that were bestowed at initiation,

there are also what may be termed family names, such as that of Umbara, before mentioned, namely, Wattin (Point of land). Such names are inherited by children of both sexes from their fathers. For instance, Umbarra was Wattin from his father, and individually Jubbuk, which was given to him at the Kuringal ceremony, thus replacing his child’s name (Howitt 1904:739).

Umbarra’s (elsewhere known as Merriman or King Merriman) association with Wallaga Lake leads to the conclusion that Wattin (a point of land) referred to Merriman’s island or the site of the camp on the shores of the lake. Furthermore, the word Umbarra itself refers to Merriman’s totem of the Black Duck.

The stage two report of the Eurobodalla Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study documented ‘the restrictive Aboriginal lores governing access to traditional ecological knowledge, including that relating to the location, distribution, collection and preparation method of flora used for food and medicines’ (Dale Donaldson 2006:13). Prior to colonization, these restricted knowledges would have governed use rights for
particular resources. Not only did totemic classifications denote use rights for individuals and groups, but they also entailed responsibility for ‘holding’ that country by protecting and nurturing it. In the contemporary context, Rose explains that

Yuin people grow up with the knowledge that if you are connected with a certain species through your nation, tribe, family or as an individual, your duty is to protect it and its habitat, and in no way harm or kill it. In return, that bird or plant or animal will help you survive and will bring knowledge or information to help you (Rose et al. 2003:49).

It is likely that this form of connection and responsibility was similarly characteristic of totemic connections prior to European colonisation.

In sum, while the information is not complete enough to give an unambiguous indication of the composition of country groups, clearly the identity of countries was defined by focal places and topography. Totemic connection between countries is, again, difficult to account for, given the few links to budjan totemic classifications in the record. However use rights appear to have been defined by the place of one’s birth and by patrifiliation (for men) and matrifiliation (for women). This is consistent with Harry Warner’s observations that the Brinja-Yuin of the ‘lagoon coast’ did not have specific control of ‘strategic areas’ but rather areas of country ‘were known to each family’ and were exploited for ‘daily subsistence’ (Warner n.d.:88). Therefore, Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla benefited from a mix of rights in a number of different countries.29

Through an extensive review of aspects of the coastal economy of the Sydney to South Coast region in the archaeological record, Lawrence argued that the division of labour:

appears to have differed significantly from the pattern commonly encountered in inland areas and also from that in some other coastal districts. While the collection of vegetable foods and shell fish was still probably the main

29 This is consistent with Keen’s (2004) comparison of seven different regions.
responsibility of the women and fishing and hunting that of the men, the women did spend a considerable part of their time fishing (Bowdler 1976:253).

Bowdler supports this premise but argues that the division of labour was ‘according to technique. Men invariably used the four-pronged bone-barbed spear; women fished with a hook and line, using a shell hook and a vegetable fibre line’ (Bowdler 1976:254). Bowdler further remarks that:

Woman doubtless spent a good deal of their time gathering shellfish; and this was probably done in a thorough and systematic fashion, with due regard to the schedules imposed by the tides...While spears were sacrosanct to men, the new implement, the shell hook which appeared some 600 years ago, had no such status adhering to it (Bowdler 1976:256).

Lampert’s research supports this view and argues that Yuin people were organised around a ‘strict sexual division of labour in using this equipment: women always fished with hook and line, men with spears’ (Lampert 1971:118).

Unfortunately Howitt did not provide information on the composition of residence groups and patterns of distribution and consumption on the south coast. Harry Warner’s papers provide more helpful (if limited) details relating to the Brinja-Yuin, for whom the economic unit was observed to be a family group living at one wurley (Warner n.d.:73). Warner thought that the Brinja-Yuin were organised around a ‘semi-nomadic’ lifestyle centred on ‘semi-permanent’ campsites that provided a base for food gathering expeditions (Warner n.d.:94). Presumably during times of abundance, resident groups would have been considerably larger and gendered ‘work teams’ exploited coastal resources collectively. The information provided in section 2.2 leads me to believe that women and men generally worked and hunted separately, with women collecting shellfish and fishing with hooks and line during the day. It appears that much of the fishing men did was during the evening when fish could be

30 Keen’s comparative study shows that, in many cases, work teams were mixed and involved cooperation between the sexes (Keen 2004:321-2). While this is likely to have been the case for the Yuin, the available evidence only refers to gendered divisions of labour.
startled using a torch and then speared. Presumably men would sometimes hunt for terrestrial game (including macropods) during the day.

Drawing on archaeological and ethnographic evidence and comparative material, Sandra Bowdler argues that ‘fish – like other meat – was monopolised by men, despite the contribution of female effort in making the catch’ (Bowdler 1976:256). Bowdler postulates that Aboriginal men and women had different diets, with men consuming the lion’s share of scale fish and any mammals that were caught, while women subsisted mainly on shellfish. This argument hinges on evidence that shellfish remnants are broadly spread over a number of sites, leading Bowdler to believe that as much of an Aboriginal woman’s ‘food is consumed while gathering away from the camp’ (Bowdler 1976:252). From a comparative perspective, this picture of distribution and consumption is overly simplistic. As Keen notes for Aboriginal economies in general, ‘certain kinds of relationships required particular kinds of gifts’ (Keen 2004:337). While the evidence doesn’t exist in the record, it is likely that the produce from both men’s and women’s labour were distributed according to particular kinds of kin obligations. Furthermore, distribution amongst south coast Aboriginal people would have also followed patterns of what Peterson calls ‘inertial generosity’ in which people simply ‘respond to demands as they are made’ (Peterson 1993:864). However, as Keen further suggests, ‘degrees of familiarity and constraint entailed by different kin relationships also affected the ability to make demands’ (Keen 2004:337).

Howitt’s observations illustrate that a range of restrictions were placed on male initiates relating to consumption prohibitions during the seclusion phase of their initiation. Following the removal of the tooth, the Gumbang-ira (‘raw-tooth novice’) was prohibited from eating:

- emu
- any animal which burrows in the ground (e.g. wombat)
- creatures that have prominent teeth (e.g. kangaroo)
- any animal that climbs to the tree-tops (e.g. koala)
- any bird that swims

31 Peterson’s model of ‘demand sharing’ addresses the problem of negative reciprocity (or ‘freeloading’). See Peterson (1993:860).
- echidna, possum, lace-lizard, snakes, eels and perch
- the Budjan (totem) of the novice

'Thus the young man during his probation is placed in an artificial state of scarcity as to food, although perhaps surrounded by plenty' (Howitt 1904:560). Howitt thought that these restrictions were removed when the Gommeras had deemed the novices fit to return to their groups. However, Mathews suggests that food prohibitions were incrementally lifted when men had attended a certain number of initiation ceremonies, although he doesn't state explicitly how many (Mathews 1896). Most of these food prohibitions related to cosmology and processes undertaken during the ceremony. For example, the emu was prohibited because it was Ngala! (the mother of Darumalan), while kangaroos (and other animals with prominent teeth) were thought to remind the Gumbang-ira of the missing tooth.

While various consumable items were distributed within Yuin residence groups, durable objects were exchanged with other groups based on regional specialisations. It appears that the Kuringal gathering also served as an opportunity for trade. Howitt writes, 'at the termination of the initiation ceremonies, at which the whole intermarrying community were present, a meeting was held near the camp at which things were bartered' (Howitt 1904:263). Howitt provides a valuable level of detail regarding these exchange practices and it is worth quoting him at length:

There was held a kind of market...at some clear place near the camp, and a man would say 'I have brought such and such things', and some other man would bargain for them. A complete set of articles is one Ngulia belt of opossum-fur string, four Burrain or men's kilts, one Gumbrum or bone nose-peg, and a complete set of corroberee ornaments. It was a rule that a complete set went together. Weapons might be given in exchange, and a complete set of these is 'two hands', that is, ten fighting boomerangs (Warangun) being the straight-going ones; the same number of grass-tree spears (Gumma); one of each kind of shield, namely the Bemata, used for stopping spears, and the Millidu, used for club fighting; one club (Gujerung or Bundi), and one spear thrower (Meara).

The women also engaged in this trade, exchanging opossum rugs, baskets,
bags, digging sticks (Tuali), etc.

Not only were these things bartered, but presents were made to friends and to the Headmen by the other men. The women also gave things to the wives of the Headmen. A Headman who was held in great esteem might have as many things given to him as he could well carry away.

Not only were articles which the people made themselves bartered, but also things which had some special value, and had perhaps been brought from some distant place. Such an instance I heard of at one of these meetings many years ago. An ancient shield had been brought originally from the upper waters of the Murrumbidgee River, and was greatly valued because, as my informant said, it had 'won many fights.' Yet it was exchanged and carried away on its farther travels (Howitt 1904:718-720).32

According to Howitt, durable goods (alienable possessions) were exchanged during the Kuringai gathering and relationships were reaffirmed through gifts to important or powerful leaders (inalienable gifts). Similarly, ceremonial and auspicious items were exchanged along what appears to be a much broader trading network.

Conclusion

In view of the ethnographic, archaeological and linguistic evidence, Yuin (as an identity) existed as a conglomerate of intermarrying country groups sharing a coastal/escarpment orientation, mutually intelligible language and who participated in common ceremonial activities. In the Eurobodalla, these country groups had their own range, and individual rights to country were determined by a variety of claims. The conclusions for this chapter are presented in the following table, borrowing from Keen’s comparable categories within Aboriginal economies and societies.

32 McCarthy describes a range of different trading networks in NSW, including the exchange of songs between people from Kangaroo Ground, Bong Bong and the Shoalhaven in the south-east with those living at Cowpastures (near Sydney). See McCarthy (1938:409).
### Table 2: Key features of Yuin economy and society in the Eurobodalla in the late 18th century.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Estuarine systems, intertidal zones, marine habitats, drainage basins, plains, temperate forests.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Mainly coastal and riverine resources, food plants (fruits, roots, rhizomes and tubers), birds, reptiles and mammals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>Keen’s estimates for the Kurnai seem to be a reasonable comparison based on similar environments and resources. Population densities may have been as high as one person per square kilometre around the estuaries. In the foothills population densities may have been medium to high (one person per 6-12 square kilometres) and considerably lower in the upper escarpment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies</td>
<td>Canoes and rafts, fishing spears with variable tips, torches for startling fish at night, bone or shell fishing hooks, fishing lines, fish traps, possum cloaks/rugs, wurleys, an assortment of clubs, axes, spears and boomerangs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal patterns</td>
<td>Generally aseasonal but some movement inland during winter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and regional identities</td>
<td>Three dialects and possibly four regional identities within the Eurobodalla (Kurial/north, Guyangal/south, Katungal/east, Paiendra/west)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local identities</td>
<td>Based on countries with totemic significance. Countries associated with geographical features and/or drainage basins. Coastal ‘estates’ with narrow beach frontages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totemic identities and naming systems</td>
<td>Patrilineal <em>budjan</em> totems, country-groups identified by locality. Strong correlation between patrilineal totems and totemic significance of country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinship terminology</td>
<td>Insufficient information in sources. Evidence suggests an extensive network of relatedness with no moiety system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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33 See Keen (2004:107).
Level of polygyny | Possibly high. The evidence suggests that some senior or powerful men were highly polygamous.\(^{34}\)
---|---
Governance | *Gommeras* (headmen) acted as local bosses, magicians, ritual leaders and healers.
Use rights | Country of birth, father’s country, mother’s country, country of child’s birth, country associated with totemic identity.
Organisation of production | Highly gendered by resource and technologies associated with those resources.
Distribution and consumption | Insufficient information in sources. Comparative material suggests generalised reciprocity, demand sharing and kin obligations shaped distribution. Totemic and ceremonial restrictions on consumption.
Exchange and trade | Exchange and trade of alienable possessions and inalienable gifts during ceremonial gatherings.

The following chapter turns to examine the invasion of Yuin country by Europeans, the development of the local settler economy and the transformation of intercultural relations in the 18th and 19th century. As the chapter will demonstrate, Yuin people were rapidly incorporated into the settler economy, while Europeans were incorporated into Aboriginal exchange systems. It is likely that the patterns of economic and social organisation explored in this chapter entailed a range of predispositions that shaped early interactions in the colonial context and may have contributed to the character of settler-Indigenous relations in the ensuing decades of European intrusion into this area. While this is speculative, it is possible to suggest that Yuin economy and society helped to shape the course of Indigenous-settler relations on, and beyond, the frontier.

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\(^{34}\) For a discussion of Keen’s assessments of ‘levels’ of polygyny, see Keen (2004:178-9). See also Keen (2004:206-7) for a comparative discussion of polygyny across the seven regions.
3 Invasion, the development of settler capitalism and intercultural relations: 18th and 19th centuries.

I remember driving along the Eurobodalla Road towards Nerrigundah and being startled by the contrast between the glossy green pastures of the riverside farms and the thick bushland of the hinterlands rising from the Tuross Valley. The river, a muddy brown from the recent rain and runoff from the paddocks treated with fertiliser and pesticides, snaked its way beside the road to its distant source. ‘Dad said there used to be plenty of fish up this way. But there’s nothing but mullet now. Wouldn’t eat them though - they taste like mud and there’s too much crap in the water nowadays. Mind if I have a rollie?’ Even though I’d quit I said I didn’t mind. ‘All these paddocks were cleared by blackfellas way back. Same down at Central Tilba - right down to near the old mission station. They say they were given rations and tobacco and stuff for grubbing stumps and pulling out suckers. Musta took ‘em years’. Most of the smoke drifted out the window as the car bounced over the pot-holes. I glanced out the side window at a section of barbed wire fencing contoured by the erosive effects of European style agriculture on the geologically ancient Australian soil.

Yuin people first came into contact with Europeans in the late 1790s and, for the next three decades had sporadic encounters with explorers, sailors, sealers and missionaries. Eventually settled in the late 1820s, the Eurobodalla region was gradually encroached upon until changes in land policy effectively locked out Aboriginal people from most of their country in the late 19th century. The impact of European settlement on the lives of Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla was also coextensive with Aboriginal emigration as a consequence of pastoralism on the southern tablelands. Sue Wesson found that the Indigenous populations at Araluen and Braidwood had declined by 83 percent between 1826 and 1835 and that many of the families had moved down to the south coast (Wesson 2000:100). Further, it appears that south coast groups also were under threat from territorial invasion from

35 Gibney wrote that ‘wandering cattlemen had penetrated south of the Bay by about 1826’ but doesn’t provide any sources for the claim (Gibney 1989:18). Presumably these cattlemen originated from the expansion of pastoralism on the Monaro plain during this period and had come down to the coast via the Araluen Valley.
the Monaro and Omeo regions in the early 1800s (see Cameron 1987:41; Robinson 1846). Wesson compiled two sets of figures giving population numbers in the south coast region in the 1800s. For the region between Twofold Bay and the south bank of the Moruya River, Wesson showed that the Aboriginal population had declined from 542 in 1841 to 43 in 1889. Based on these figures, Wesson provides a linear projection back to 1823 and gives an estimated population of 627 around the time of first contact. For the region between the northern bank of the Moruya River and Narrawallee (just north of Ulladulla), Wesson showed that the population had declined from 300 in 1832 to 192 in 1842. By 1889 the population had again declined to 94. Based on these figures, Wesson provides a linear projection back to 1822 and gives an estimated population of 408 around the time of first contact. Combining the two sets of figures, Wesson noted that the total of 728 Aboriginal people living in the coastal region between Twofold Bay and Narrawallee in 1842 had declined by 80 percent by 1889. Wesson gives a range of explanations for this decline including the migration of a number of families to Kempsey and reports of influenza epidemics and raids by Aboriginal groups from the Yass region (Wesson 2000:130). Regardless of the reasons for this massive population decline, it is clear that Aboriginal people of the Eurobodalla region suffered immense trauma during the initial century of European invasion.

This chapter aims to illustrate the regional character of the changes brought about by European settlement and the expansion of the settler economy in the Eurobodalla. It will become clear that not only is this trajectory different from the specific moments of change experienced in ‘remote’ or northern parts of Australia, but it is also different from the experiences of Aboriginal people on the pastoral frontier in NSW (see Austin-Broos 2009; Morris 1989). The key differences, I will argue, lie both in the structural processes of pastoral expansion and land expropriation (section 3.1) and in the particular micro-processes of intercultural interaction. For

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36 Based on the carrying capacity of the environments and resources, this figure seems far too low. I suggest that the censuses did not account for all Aboriginal people in the region at the time they were taken, and probably reflect only the number of individuals and groups who had ‘come in’ to live close to European settlements.
37 This figure omits records giving populations at Mallacoota and Jervis Bay.
38 It is possible that undocumented violent conflicts between early settlers and Aboriginal people were a significant factor contributing to this decline. However, the evidence in the available documentary record does not support this assertion.
example, Morris reported that the Macleay valley region of NSW experienced a prolonged cycle of frontier violence that lasted well into the 1870s (Morris 1989). In the Eurobodalla, violence was characteristic of several early encounters on the maritime frontier (section 3.2). However, violence (as a cycle of theft and reprisals) was rapidly ameliorated through mediation and non-hostile interaction between Aboriginal people and the settlers. 39 While the topography of the 200 km separating the Eurobodalla from the colony in Sydney made it extremely difficult for overland explorers and squatters to systematically invade Yuin country, I argue that the significant lag between initial exploration and settlement can best be understood in terms of the development of a ‘culture of terror’ (Taussig 2002). Further, in the post-conflict period of the Eurobodalla the involvement of settlers in reciprocal relations of exchange established a degree of relatedness that is not present in Morris’ account. Rather, Morris argues that ‘in the post-conflict period, the Dhan-gadi lived in two worlds, one Aboriginal and the other European. Social distance remained a distinctive feature of Aboriginal/European relations’ (Morris 1989:31).

Section 3.3 of this chapter will problematise this ‘caught between two worlds’ approach by inverting the question of incorporation. For the experience of colonisation in the Eurobodalla in the 19th century, I am more concerned with the processes by which Yuin people incorporated the presence of settlers into pre-existing, dynamic patterns of economy and sociality that were manifested in new complexes of interactions and transactions. Social distance was diminished by individual relationships between settlers and Aboriginal people in the mid 19th century. However, as a product of racial attitudes in towns and state interventions designed to segregate, disassemble and then assimilate Aboriginal communities, social distance was broadly characteristic of the ensuing decades. This process will be examined in Chapters Four and Five. Section 3.4 will examine the incorporation of Aboriginal labour into the settler economy in the 19th century. It must be stressed that this is not an attempt to provide a comprehensive history of the region’s early economic development. Rather, this chapter aims to sketch the conditions under which Aboriginal people first encountered Europeans and the character of those

39 I am conscious that the treatment of the history of the Eurobodalla during this period could be taken as a denial of the atrocities committed in Australia’s murky past. I want to state from the outset that I do acknowledge the terrible injustices that were inflicted on Yuin people from direct violence and dispossession and the indirect consequences of introduced diseases and psychological trauma.
encounters, and will describe how the presence of settlers became incorporated into seasonal modes of economy and sociality.

3.1 The Eurobodalla in colonial expansion.

Following his arrival in Sydney, Arthur Phillip’s optimistic appraisal ‘that the country will hereafter prove a most valuable acquisition to Great Britain (and) time will remove all difficulties’ would soon be challenged by a range of factors, none more pressing than the need to regulate the expansion of the colony and the question of labour (Mackaness 1937:165). In contrast to colonialism in Africa and the Americas, the British Empire did not initially seek to expropriate Aboriginal labour, although several studies drawing on the theory of internal colonialism have shown that regional labour relations of exploitation did develop (Beckett 1977, 1982; Hartwig 1978; May 1983). Further, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that any systematic, formal administrative control was exercised over the colonised population (Morris 1989). In response to John Batman’s purchase of land from Aboriginal people in Victoria under the rubric of a treaty, Governor Burke of NSW issued a Proclamation in 1835 that any ‘such treaty, bargain, and contract with the Aboriginal natives...for the possession, title, or claim to any lands...is void and of no effect against the rights of the Crown’ (Burke 1835). However, this was not the only change in the legal framework of land tenure that impacted heavily on Aboriginal people in New South Wales. Between the end of the 18th century and the late 19th century, three significant shifts in land policy occurred. Until 1827, the take-up of land outside of the immediate Sydney region was haphazard and largely unregulated. From 1827 to 1861, the colonial administration sought to restrict the spread of settlement in the hope of enabling greater control over the process of economic development. After 1861, the administration shifted its policy to open up the land to small selectors in the hope of increasing agricultural production and breaking the emergent squatter-pastoralist monopoly over land-holdings.

In 1827, nineteen counties were declared in NSW within which would-be purchasers could select portions of land. As Shaw noted, ‘the government was trying
to concentrate settlement by restricting land grants’ (Shaw 1946:43). Within the Eurobodalla region, a number of grants of land had been given before 1829 but there is no evidence that they had been taken up (Gibbney 1989:21). As Perry remarks however, ‘these were few and widely scattered’ and ‘they were not there in sufficient numbers to suggest that settlement was about to pass outside the limits’ of location (Perry 1963:120). The pioneering settlers in the Deua valley were Francis Flanagan at Broulee, John Hawdon at Moruya and later Captain Oldrey who took up land in the hills above Broulee (see Figure 8). As an Irishman, Flanagan had difficulty in staking his claim for a land grant because, in the words of Governor Darling, ‘it was not the practice to give land to people of his class’ (Gibbney 1989:22). Flanagan’s requests were finally granted in 1829 following the death of his wife. Hawdon had similar difficulties in dealing with the colonial bureaucracy, despite being the son of a ‘small Durham squire’ (Gibbney 1989:24). Initially selecting a portion of land on the southern banks of the Moruya (Deua) River, Hawdon was told in 1831 that the land was beyond the limits of settlement and could therefore not be granted to him. Despite this setback, Hawdon persisted and was finally granted land on the northern side of the river later that year (Gibbney 1989:25). Further north, William Morris settled at Murramarang while Walter Thompson settled near Bateman’s Bay. However by 1835, it was becoming increasingly clear to the colonial administrators that squatters had successfully populated much of NSW and that constraining expansion was an exercise in futility. As Governor Gipps wrote: ‘as well it might be attempted to confine the Arabs of the deserts within a circle drawn on the sands, as to confine the graziers or woolgrowers of New South Wales within any bounds that can possibly be assigned to them’ (Shaw 1946:44). Outside of the limits of settlement, Jauncey took up land at Tilba Tilba while Captain Raine settled near Mt Dromedary (Gulaga). Further south, the Imlay brothers and Abercrombie and co. had established large squatting runs.

40 Figure 6 is an approximation of initial large-scale settlements in the region. Imlay’s and Abercrombie & co.’s landholdings to the south fall outside of the present study’s geographical focus on the Eurobodalla.

41 The northern bank of the Moruya River was the southern boundary of the County of St Vincent. The county incorporated Braidwood and Jervis Bay and was bordered to the west and north by the Shoalhaven River.
In 1843, the failed entrepreneur William Willmington wrote to Lord Stanley complaining about the lack of development in the Broulee region on behalf of his friend Francis Flanagan. Willmington was concerned that 'the land in the Moruya district was being monopolised by three individuals: Abercrombie & Co., J. Hawdon and G.I. Imlay', whose landholdings combined, covered over 120,000 acres (Stiskin 1983:14). However, as Gibbney notes, Flanagan and Willmington’s protests produced no significant changes in land tenure (Gibbney 1989:35). The County of Dampier was declared in 1848, comprising land south of the Moruya River (Stiskin 1983:16).
Until then, the land had only been taken up by a few squatters who ‘were illegally occupying land beyond the formal control of the authorities’ (Perry 1963:19). As Goulding and Waters remark, ‘the differing land laws for the two sections of Eurobodalla had little impact on the actual process of European settlement in the region’ (Goulding & Waters 2005:31).

The rapid expansion of the wool industry during the 1830s had a significant effect on the broader economic development of the Australian economy (Sinclair 1976:44). The new colonial economy was heavily dependent on Britain for the provision of labour and capital and was therefore susceptible to external influences and constraints on growth. As Fitzpatrick argues, ‘whether in boom (1835-40) or at crisis (1841), the paramount factor was an external one to which each colonial development must be referred’ (Fitzpatrick 1969:71). For the main growth sector, Sinclair remarks that the limitations on the inflow of labour have conventionally been singled out as the crucial brake on the increase in output’ (Sinclair 1976:49).

However, Sinclair argues that, in the wool sector at least, capital constraints provided the true ceiling for economic development. The importance of the wool-producing pastoral sector to the colonial administration (as the key driver of the expansion of the colonial economy in its early stages), is evident in Sinclair’s observation that the government ‘took steps which ensured that the wool industry’s share of the available convicts was implicitly maintained’ (ibid). In the case of the Eurobodalla, the variable quality of available land, combined with the significant capital input associated with extensive land clearing, led to diverse stock and crop production and land use practices. Sinclair is probably correct that the combination of an implicit funnelling of convict labour into wool production, combined with capital constraints led to the question of labour in the wool sector being less of a primary concern.

However, in the non-wool producing sectors and districts like the Eurobodalla, the availability of labour remained a fundamental constraint on the upper limits of output until the lure of ‘gold fever’ subsided in the 1860s, freeing up the labour supply. As Gibbney remarks on the Broulee and Moruya districts in the 1840s, ‘although there were some extensive holdings in the district there was little extensive farming because of the shortage of suitable labour’ (Gibbney 1989:84).
Reflecting Wells' (1989) argument that the economic history of Australia during the 19th century was characterised by a series of incremental shifts towards a modern, liberal, capitalist economy, Gibbney notes that the Eurobodalla had ‘no real class of employed persons’ until the 1880s. Rather,

a few men who were nominally independent farmers probably spent a good deal of their time working for others and any shortage could be made up when needed from Aboriginals, the surplus sons of neighbouring farmers, the women and children or, in extreme cases the co-operative efforts of neighbours (Gibbney 1989:45).

By 1838, demand for convict labour had clearly outstripped supply (Fitzpatrick 1969:59). The limitations on the supply of convict labour had a deleterious effect on the economic development of the Eurobodalla region. As Gibbney identifies, Broulee ‘had its roots in convict society, but those roots were soon torn up. The assignment of convict labour was abolished in 1840 and transportation ceased in 1841’ (Gibbney 1989:45). The economic transformation of the region was also constrained by problems with transport infrastructure. Broulee was the hub of economic activity in the Eurobodalla region until the 1840s and provided the main sea port. Hawdon began agitating for a village to be established to help service the exchange of goods. Permission was granted for a village survey to be conducted in 1837 and the Surveyor General concluded that it was an unsuitable site for a port town. However this seemingly insurmountable obstacle for development was eventually overcome and the plan was finally realised by 1840 (Gibbney 1989:28). Yet goods still needed to be unloaded and then transported over large distances to and from the riverside farms in the Deua valley. In 1841 floods scoured out the sand bar at Moruya Heads allowing ships ‘of a reasonable size right into the river’, allowing the transfer of ‘produce directly from the river bank farms’ (Gibbney 1989:44). In the ensuing years Moruya quickly established itself as the principle regional centre.

‘Gold fever’ came to the Eurobodalla in the 1850s, when news of the wealth of the Araluen Valley spread and drew a large influx of settlers. Gold was later found in the Mogo, Nerrigundah and Mt Dromedary (Gulaga) regions. The population of the County of St Vincent grew from 1,762 settlers in 1841 to 5,462 in 1856. By 1861, the
settler population had more than doubled to 11,519. During this period the rapid diversification of secondary and tertiary industries to meet the consumer demands of prospectors and miners led to the establishment of towns at Mogo, Nerrigundah, Narooma and Tilba Tilba. As Goulding and Water’s point out, the ‘development of towns and roads to service gold miners provided the infrastructure to support the extension of small scale settlement in the region’ (Goulding & Waters 2005:49). Yet, for many, the lure of gold was unproductive and the initial squatters and pastoralists still held a monopoly over available land in the Eurobodalla. There was a strong movement throughout NSW towards ‘unlocking the land’ for small scale settlement and to weaken the political power of the emergent, landed ‘squattocracy’ (Rosecrance 1960:117). In his history of Australian economic development, Shann asked: ‘why should this unprofitable scouting for gold continue over land of evident fertility and abundant rainfall? Why did not the mother colony follow South Australia’s lead and unlock the land for wheat and dairy farming’? (Shann 1948:196) It seems that these questions were also foremost in the mind of John Robertson who, in 1861, forced two acts through parliament that later became known as the ‘Free Selection Acts’. These acts were designed to facilitate access to land for poorer selectors and to increase the agricultural productivity of the colony. In reality, the acts opened up Aboriginal land ‘to all in the colony who wished to take it – residence and a deposit of ten pounds being the only qualifications for entry into the scramble’ (Shann 1948:198). While ‘unlocking the land’ for small scale settlement, these acts also served to ‘lock out’, or further alienate Aboriginal people from their country.

Prior to land being rapidly taken up in smaller allotments in the Clyde, Deua and Tuross valleys (and vast networks of post and wire fencing were being laid to delineate boundaries of title), there was still scope for the purchase of large estates. In 1860, Thomas Mort purchased over 13,000 acres at Bodalla and shortly after added another 4,000 acres for the Comerang farm. Mort’s vision was to create an integrated, privately-owned estate and included the construction of a general store, bakery, butchery, hotel and blacksmiths workshop (Whiteford 1985:14). Following Mort’s example, there was a significant shift from the grazing of beef cattle to dairying in the

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42 These figures are remarkable considering that the population of the non-gold producing towns of Moruya and Nelligen were 250 and 98 respectively in 1861 (see http://hccda.anu.edu.au/ for an online searchable archive of Australian Colonial census publications and reports).
In the rush to secure land tenure following the ‘free selection acts’, the majority of suitable land for dairying had been purchased by the late 1870s (Pacey & Hoyer 1995:3). The shift to dairying also gave rise to the development of cheese and butter production. However, the poor quality of these value-added commodities drastically reduced the industry’s profitability. As a journalist remarked in 1888, the production of milk and dairy products had ‘assumed large proportions, but it must be confessed that the quality has sank very low indeed, the consequence being the article is unsaleable’ (Wolbar 1888:4). While improvements were made in refining production techniques, the industry was susceptible to market volatility. 1899 was a disastrous year for the Bodalla Company in which a severe drought was compounded by a large importation of cheese from New Zealand (Anon 1899). It seems that the risks associated with dairying (and agriculture more generally) was too much for many farmers. The lack of productivity of the land translated to a loss of productivity in the towns. The years of growth on the back of ‘gold fever’ had subsided and regional centers were reliant on agricultural profits. Gibbney describes the period from 1890 to 1910 as a ‘time of decay’ for Moruya that resulted in a mass exodus of the region’s population to northern NSW and Queensland (Gibbney 1989:137-138). Many local Aboriginal families joined the migration north in a process described by Wesson (2002) as ‘the Kempsey Phenomenon’. Wesson argues that the shift north was caused by a combination of factors including concerns about disease epidemics, shifts in governmental policies and practices and the lure of better employment prospects and living conditions (Wesson 2002:299-330). From its settlement in the 1830s to the ‘time of decay’ at the turn of the century, the Eurobodalla remained both at the periphery of colonial expansion and inexorably linked with processes occurring throughout NSW and in Sydney. The character of European relations with Aboriginal people during this period was also shaped by the Eurobodalla’s place in the colonial project. Yet a key question remains to be answered: given the relative proximity of the Eurobodalla to Sydney, why did it take more than three decades for Europeans to settle the region?

43 This period also was characterised by the rapid expansion of the timber industry. Section 3.4 will elaborate on this phenomenon in more detail. Chapters Six will examine Aboriginal participation in the timber industry in the 20th century.

44 The Bodalla Company was formed in 1886 following Mort’s death in 1878.
3.2 A ‘culture of terror’ on the maritime frontier

Sergeant William Drew’s reflections on the early days of the European colony at Sydney, ‘the first seeds of which were sown amid the sighs and groans and tears of the wicked and worthless, and the swish of the dreadful cat and the clank of iron gyves’, provide an important insight into the shaping of colonial subjectivities through violence and suffering (Becke & Jeffery 1896:140). Referring to the lashing of several convicts, Drew describes the ‘spectacle’ as ‘a very dreadful one’ and remarked that he would ‘never forget the feeling of horror’ that he ‘experienced in witnessing their punishment’ (Becke & Jeffery 1896:70). Following the arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney, Drew observed several encounters between Aboriginal people and Europeans and concluded: ‘there is no doubt in my mind the savages of this country are a treacherous race’ of ‘murderous inclinations’ (Becke & Jeffery 1896:128). This is perhaps what Taussig refers to as ‘the reciprocating yet distorted mimesis’ of the ‘colonial mirror which reflects back onto the colonists the barbarity of their own social relations, but as imputed to the savage or evil figures they wish to colonise’ (Taussig 2002:9). The fear of Aboriginal people precipitated certain kinds of interactions in the dialectic described by Taussig (2002) as a ‘culture of terror’. Taussig urges that

we would be most unwise to overlook or under-estimate the role of terror. And by this I mean us to think through terror, which as well as being a physiological state is also a social fact and a cultural construction whose baroque dimensions allow it to serve as the mediator par excellence of colonial hegemony (Taussig 2002:1).

It is these ‘baroque dimensions’ of terror that are explicit in the late 18th and early 19th century rumours that Aboriginal people south of Botany Bay were ‘hostile savages’ and ‘were generally believed to be cannibals’ (Bowden 1952:37). This image was distributed in Maclehose’s (1838) Picture of Sydney and Stranger’s Guide in New South Wales for 1838, which sought to inform new arrivals to the colony of the

45 This is also reminiscent of the kind of dichotomous order posited by postcolonial theorists such as Franz Fanon (1970) and Homi Bhabha (1994), in which the colonised (to borrow the phrase from Biber) become the ‘dark doppelgänger of their new imperial masters’ (Biber 2005:623).
barbarous practices of Aboriginal people including the widespread phenomenon of cannibalistic infanticide amongst Aboriginal men. The *Sydney Herald* was also complicit in promulgating the image of savagery and cannibalism during the late 1830s (see Reece 1974:93). In her discussion of cannibalism in Australian colonial discourse, Biber (2005) draws on the 1826 case of a shepherd, Henry Preston who became lost near Wollondilly (on the southern outskirts of the colony at Sydney). Allegations of cannibalism were laid against several Aboriginal people in the district and were reported to Governor Darling. A few days later, ‘Preston walked out of the bush unharmed’ (Biber 2005:622).

Pickering’s research into the available archival sources on cannibalism in Australia led him to the conclusion that ‘there is no reliable evidence to support the claim that Australian Aboriginal societies practiced institutionalised cannibalism’ (Pickering 1999:51). In retrospect however, Pickering’s findings would have provided cold comfort to the European settlers at Wollondilly. In the case of Henry Preston, the allegation of cannibalism was a product of a historical moment of mythologised characterisation. As Biber remarks, this kind of ‘cannibal discourse is the product of colonial anxiety’, the origins of which ‘lay in childhood fantasies of cannibalistic savages roaming the darkest corners of the Empire’ (Biber 2005:629). In one respect, these characterisations may have been rendered elaborate and grotesque to strike fear into those convicts who were considering absconding south. Indeed, escaped convicts were the first Europeans to venture into the Illawarra district.

Flinders’ 1796 journal of his voyage south with Bass in *Tom Thumb* reported that Europeans were living with Aboriginal people in the region and had began cultivating potatoes (McDonald 1979). This relationship of ‘living with’ bears little resemblance to the rumours of terror in the south. On a more fundamental level, terror as a social fact existed in a dialectic that created, and was created by, mediated narratives of violence beyond Sydney and the Cumberland plain that served to fashion a phantasmic image of south coast Aboriginal people in the ‘space of death’. By projecting the image of terror onto Aboriginal people (Taussig’s ‘victims’), Europeans could rationalise their own acts of violence. Further, in the ‘epistemic murk’ of these mediated narratives documenting atrocities committed by Aboriginal people, the

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46 For a more general analysis of these types of discourses, see Lindenbaum (2004).
actions of soldiers, sealers, sailors and settlers were motivated, retold and reconstituted.

European maritime exploration provides the initial documentary record of sightings of Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla region of NSW. On the 22nd of April 1770, the logbooks of the Endeavour provide the first textual account of Aboriginal people in the vicinity of Murramarang. James Cook recorded in his private log only that they, ‘saw several people upon the beach’ (Cook 1893). The master’s mate, Richard Pickersgill, also stated that ‘as we stood along shore we saw four or five of the Indians sitting near the fire; they appeared to be naked and very black, which was all we could discern at that distance’ (Pickersgill 1893). In 1797, George Bass left Sydney on a voyage of expedition south and entered Batemans Bay on Dec 14. Encountering a strong southerly change the next day, Bass was forced to take refuge under the northern lee of a point in the vicinity of Tuross Heads. Bass and his party embarked on an expedition to examine the surrounds while waiting for ocean conditions to improve and located ‘a number of native huts deserted, the cause of which appeared when we traced down their paths to the dried up water holes they had dug in the very heart of the largest of the swamps’ (Bass 1797:15-16). On the boat’s northward return it landed on a small island seven or eight miles north of Bateman’s Bay that was described as ‘too near to the main, and too much frequented

47 A journalist provided the following second-hand account of the story of the first sighting of a European ship near the Tuross Heads by Aboriginal people:

There was a general stampede inland; mothers picked up their little ones - young and old fled for dear life for who could tell how soon the monster with great white wings might not rise out of the water and pitch own in their midst, for though they had not given themselves time to scarcely look twice there was but one feeling that was that the visitor was a monster bird of some unearthly kind (Wolbar 1888).

In respect to other early voyages being undertaken in small whaleboats or sealer’s vessels, the story possibly refers to The Endeavour.

48 After comparing Bass’s account of the journey with contemporary maps, it is likely that Bass’ coordinates were in error by +2’. Bass noted his latitude as 35°43’ with a view of ‘two or three small islands lying close under the shore’. The coordinates place the whaleboat in the southern lee of Batemans Bay’s North Head, however the physical description fits the Tollgate Islands at 35°45’. Bass noted that the latitude of the deserted huts was 36°00’ which would locate his mooring south of Mullinburra Point on open beach in heavy weather. I suggest that the geographical description provided in Bass’ account places the point of landing at Blackfellows Point, roughly one mile south of the present mouth of Tuross Lake and should have provided adequate shelter for the whaleboat from the southerly wind and swell. This location is consistent with a +2’ error.
by natives for any shipwrecked persons to have remained long upon it’ (Bass 1797:45).49 This last comment is a curious one coming from Bass, who had developed a close relationship with Bennalong on his voyage to Australia and had shared friendly relationships with a number of other Indigenous people along the course of his previous travels (see Bowden 1952). Bass’s implicit anxieties regarding Aboriginal people in the Bateman’s Bay area can perhaps be understood as a reflection of the rumours circulating in the colony of the savagery and cannibalism of Aboriginal people living south of Botany Bay.

Based on the documentary record, it was not until April 1797 that Europeans and Aboriginal people came into physical contact in the Eurobodalla region of NSW. A ship, the *Sydney Cove*, founded on a beach at Gippsland and the crew began the long journey by foot up the coast to the colony at Sydney. Of the seventeen men that survived the wreck, only four made it back to Sydney (Goulding & Waters 2005:24). One of the survivors, W. Clarke, provided the following recollection of a meeting with Aboriginal people in the vicinity of the Tuross:

Met fourteen natives who conducted us to their miserable abodes in the wood adjoining to a large lagoon and kindly treated us with mussels, for which unexpected civility, we made them some presents. These people seem better acquainted with the laws of hospitality than any of their countrymen… for to their benevolent treat was added an invitation to remain with them for the night… As far as we could understand these natives were of a different tribe from those we had seen and were then at war with them. They possessed a liberality to which the others were strangers and freely gave us a part of the little they had (Gibbney 1989:14).

Following Clarke’s encounter, there is no documentary evidence of interactions between Europeans and Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla region until 1806. According to Wesson, a woman of mixed descent was reported to be living in the

49 While it is unclear which island Bass refers to in this account, the islands to the north of Bateman’s bay (including Wasp and Brush Islands) are referred to as rich habitats for seafood by Aboriginal people on the south coast (Dale Donaldson 2006:34; Cruse et al 2005:21).
Bodalla area in 1842 and approximates the year of her birth as 1804. This date, Wesson notes, predated both the arrival of the first pastoralists and the advent of on-shore whaling at Twofold Bay (Wesson 2002:18).  

Sealers were clearly travelling along the south coast by the end of the 18th century, although there is little documentary evidence of their activities. As Wesson suggests, sealers were probably illiterate and would have otherwise had compelling reasons not to document their activities (ibid). As Amery and Muhlhausler further note, ‘many of the sealers were runaway convicts and sailors who had left their ships in Sydney’ (Amery & Muhlhausler 1996:48). The first account of contact between sealers and Aboriginal people on the south coast was Governor King’s report of violence at Twofold Bay. In March 1806, King reported that a number of Aboriginal people had been killed by members of the crew of the George. As the following account suggests, King suspected that the sealers were morally at fault:

However much the white men may be justified on the principle of self defence, yet I have cause to think the natives have suffered some wrong from the worthless characters who are passing and repassing the different places on the coast, nor would they escape the punishment such conduct deserves if it could be proved (Organ 1990:30).

A month later, the Sydney Gazette reported that nine Aboriginal people had been shot by a gang of sealers, again members of the crew of the George, at Twofold Bay, and their bodies had been hung from trees (Organ 1990:31).  

Two later articles appeared in the Sydney Gazette referring to the terror experienced by European seamen encountering Aboriginal people at Bateman’s Bay. In the first account, a small vessel carrying five men sought shelter in the Bay from a storm. Three of the five seamen were killed (Anon 1808). The Sydney Gazette gave

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50 The practice of abducting Aboriginal women was common among sealers. Captain Kelly wrote in 1815 that is ‘customary’ for sealers based in Bass Strait to ‘have from two to five of those native women for their own use and benefit (Henley & Plomley 1990).

51 It is uncertain whether the two reports are referring to the same sequence of events or a second massacre.
the following account thirteen years later, in which another small vessel met rough open ocean conditions and entered the bay:

The next morning (Easter Sunday) at daylight, they were suddenly attacked by about twelve natives, with a discharge of 50 or 60 spears, followed up by a continued volley of stones. James Brock was thrice speared; one entered a thigh, another slightly grazed his breast, and the third perforated the chest; which produced instantaneous death...The unfortunate men were now in a truly pitiable and forlorn condition; Block was lying in the boat a corpse; Whittaker was sorely wounded; and Thorn beheld nothing but a horrid and cruel death, at the hands of the savages, ready to meet him, or else the dread expectancy of being entombed in the ocean’s vast abyss (Anon 1821).

By way of the prominence of the two articles in Australia’s first newspaper, the reputation of the ferocity of Aboriginal people at Bateman’s Bay was broadly circulated in Sydney, reinforcing rumours of terror and cannibalism in the south.

The 1821 voyage of the Snapper reported a different kind of encounter with Aboriginal people as it entered Batemans Bay and explored the Clyde River. The leader of the exploratory party, Lieutenant Robert Johnson, reported to the Sydney Gazette that ‘At one Place I landed, taking with me the two Natives who accompanied me from Sydney, upon which we were met by a Tribe of them, who shewed (sic) no Symptoms of Hostility towards us, but entered freely into Conversation’ (Johnson 1821). Johnson was able to gain information about the loss of another ship further south in which Captain Stewart’s group of survivors were ‘cut off by the Natives of Two-fold Bay’ and of an escaped convict who had, it was asserted, capsised his boat in the middle of Batemans Bay and had not made it to shore (ibid). Johnson concluded that the convict, Briggs, and his companions had ‘suffered the same fate’ as the ship-wrecked party at Twofold Bay. While Johnson had personally experienced no hostility from Aboriginal people at Bateman’s Bay, his report still emphasised the perils of southward journeys, and it was assumed that the attack was motivated by cannibalism (Reece 1974:102). Once again, the image of terror on the southern maritime frontier was circulated in Sydney by the Gazette. The following year in
1822, a member of Charles Throsby's overland exploration party ventured towards Bateman's Bay but lost his nerve 'because of the reputed hostility of the natives in this area' (Perry 1963:100).

Four years later a Wesleyan missionary led an expedition to the south coast in the hope of finding a suitable location to base a mission. In October 1826, John Harper arrived at Bateman's Bay and for the next two weeks encountered, without hostility, a number of Aboriginal people in the area who, in his words, had not been 'contaminated by the whites' (Harper 1826). Harper clearly believed that friendly relationships could be forged with Aboriginal people as long as Europeans acted with integrity:

No man of pure motives need be afraid of travelling with the blacks, even in the most obscure place. Alltho' (sic) this assertion is not credited in the Colony by some people, yet I know from experience more than thousands who would object to it... Let the whites reform their conduct and they need never be afraid (ibid).

The Wesleyan Missionary Society, of which Harper was a leading figure in the new colony, held the view that their ministries (their 'saving plan of redemption') needed to be separate from European settlement, at the 'uttermost bounds of their scattered, uncivilised, unsociable and cannibal tribes' (Walker n.d.). The 'contamination' that Harper refers to in his journal reflected his view that the colony was a place of 'vile infamous and libidinous conduct' (Harper 1827). Harper's contemporary and mentor, Reverend Walker, also believed that missions would have most success 'at a proper distance from the theatre of temptation' (Walker 1821). While Harper intended to return to Bateman's Bay to establish the mission, his request was denied by Governor Darling who concluded that allowing the selection of land by the Wesleyan Missionary Society 'would have been prejudicial to the interests of the settlers' (Darling 1827). In the same year, the government surveyor, Thomas Florance, was given the task of providing a detailed survey of the coastal region between Jervis Bay and Moruya in 1828. Florance compiled a report on possible regions for settlement, based on the proximity of sheltered ports or potential harbours to land suitable for agricultural production (Dowd 1972). Harper's desire to Christianise Aboriginal
people at Bateman's Bay, at a distance from the contaminating influence of settler society, paradoxically led to the widespread settlement of the region. His genuine effort to create a mission coupled with his reports of friendly, rather than hostile 'savages' inspired a new confidence in the possibility of settlement in the south. The Eurobodalla region was settled within three years following Harper's unsuccessful application to Governor Darling.

Morris' account of the prolonged period of violence in the Macleay Valley is, in some respects, consistent with the 'culture of terror' on the maritime frontier. Characterisations of the Dhan-Gadi by settlers as 'a primordial form of terror and cruelty, unrestrained and irredeemable to civilising virtues' served to define the source of the pastoralists' fears (Morris 1989:27). The perceived 'isolated vulnerability of the pastoralists themselves' generated its own form of terror, reinforced by sporadic raids by the Dhan-Gadi. In the Eurobodalla case, the frontier 'culture of terror' does not easily translate to similar experiences once the region was settled by Europeans. Documentary evidence of conflicts between Indigenous people and settlers in the Eurobodalla region are sparse. Goulding and Waters suggest that it is difficult to ascertain whether this can be attributed to low levels of conflict, or to a lack of documentary evidence. Nevertheless, in view of the available archival material, I agree with their contention that intercultural conflict was 'essentially confined to the first decade of European intrusion in this area' (Goulding & Waters 2005:33).

The most fully documented sequence of events relating to conflict in the Eurobodalla region during this period reflects more general themes of livestock theft and reprisals on the pastoral frontier. The first settler at Murramarang, William Morris, wrote a number of letters to the Governor reporting the spearing of cattle and threatening of settlers by Aboriginal people and requested for permission to be given to shoot those responsible:

...If permission was given to those aggrieved to shoot such Blacks as are known to be ringleaders in these atrocities it would make an Example to the other Blacks and be in my opinion a means of preventing further loss of property & perhaps life (James 2001:5).
Four days later, in a second letter, Morris repeated his plea for permission to be given to severely punish the people he deemed responsible and for soldiers to be sent to ensure the settler's safety (James 2001).^{52}

In response, Lieutenant Macalister was sent to the Bateman's Bay area and concluded that Aboriginal people from the mountains (rather than the coastal Yuin) were responsible for the violence. Macalister proposed that the conflict was a result of mountain groups missing out on blankets that were distributed by Morris on behalf of the colonial administration. In response, blankets were distributed to both the mountain people and the coastal Yuin. Macalister's report in 1831 concluded that the incidents were anomalous and that his mediations had settled the matter once and for all:

A perfectly good understanding has invariably existed between the Settlers and the Coast Natives, therefore to station military at the farms of Messrs. Morris & Flanagan (on the coast) cannot in my opinion effect any desirable result (Organ 1990:170).

Gibbney's account gives credit to Macalister as an 'unusually intelligent officer' for seeking 'pacification not punishment' and that his efforts were so successful that 'even Morris ceased to complain and the Aboriginal people never again attempted resistance' (Gibbney 1989:22). However Organ rightly noted that Gibbney's 'account glosses over the more unsavoury aspects of this affair - it does not describe the European atrocities' (Organ 1990:164).

A year after Macalister's report, a shooting party led by Joseph Berrymen killed two men, a pregnant woman and an older woman at Murramaran. Organ provides a documentary record of the massacre that offers conflicting accounts of the events, ranging from the complainant Mr Thompson and the accused Joseph

Berryman. In the end, Berryman escaped without charge. While there is no direct evidence implicating Mr Morris of Murramarang with recruiting the shooting party, Morris was clearly dissatisfied with Macalister’s approach to resolving the matter. In both of his letters, Morris calls for permission to be given to shoot the ringleaders as his desired form of reprisal. However it is unclear whether or not Morris decided to take the matter into his own hands. By 1845 it appears that, in general, the hostilities had ceased and the prevalence of livestock theft had been ameliorated to some degree by Macalister’s mediations (Gibbney 1989:21-8; James 2001:7). In the absence of further documented conflicts, it appears that the initial era of intercultural relations had come to an end.53

3.3 Transitions in intercultural relations: exchange and relatedness.

The original settlement at Broulee was heavily reliant on provisions being delivered from Sydney. In between shipments, the small community of settlers was saved from starvation on several occasions during the 1830s by local Aboriginal people who provided them with seafood. As Ms Celia Rose recalled of her childhood spent at the emerging settlement:

There was only one sailing vessel... that called at Broulee about once a month, bringing provisions from Sydney, and the shortage was at times acute. Aboriginals saved the settlement several times from starvation by supplying fish and oysters (Rose 1923:375).

53 Memories of frontier violence remain in the oral history of Aboriginal people on the south coast today. A prominent narrative implicates one of the first settlers to arrive in the region in the 1840s, Alexander Weatherhead. In various accounts, Weatherhead has been described as deliberately poisoning Aboriginal people through the use of flour or cream laced with strychnine. In other oral testimonies, Weatherhead is also remembered as forcing Aboriginal people to work as slaves when he was serving as manager at Nugatta Station. An unrelated account refers to atrocities being committed in the vicinity of Coila Creek. It is likely that many further incidences of violence occurred but were not documented.
Later, in 1841, a heroic story emerges of local Aboriginal people saving the survivors of a shipwreck at Broulee in a daring rescue operation. With the settlers being unable to swim out through the surf, several Aboriginal people risked their own lives to rescue the seamen. Two accounts of the rescue provide conflicting details as to the number of Aboriginal people involved and the mode of rescue. Robinson's second-hand account of the saga refers to two men:

... I was happy to find that the other Aborigines along the Coast were equally well spoken of several persons by their instrumentality had been saved. The most striking instance (brought under notice) was the Wreck of a Steamer in a Storm at Broole when all hopes of saving the white persons were given up, and when no Individual would venture, two Aboriginal natives at the imminent risk of their own lives boldly plunged into the Breakers and rescued the sufferers who but for them must have perished (Mackaness 1941:23).

In contrast, an account from 1849 increases the number of rescuers to 15 and details a highly coordinated rescue effort:

Some of the tribe... greatly distinguished themselves, three or four years since, by saving the crew of a schooner which was wrecked in the surf. The white by-standers stood aghas (sic), and could not contrive means to render any assistance; but fifteen of the aborigines formed a line, hand in hand, and went into the surf and saved all on board (Cleary 1993:39).

Regardless of the conflicting details, the actions of the heroes at Broulee are remarkable. But is it enough to view these events, and the earlier provisioning of Clarke's party in 1797, as evidence that Yuin people were, as Gibbney suggests, 'clearly a kindly folk who welcomed travelers' (Gibbney 1989:14)? The hostility towards seamen at Batemans Bay contradicts that assumption, despite the actions probably being in retaliation to earlier atrocities committed by the marauding sealers. I argue that a more productive lens with which to view these events is to examine them in terms of the relationship between exchange and relatedness. Therefore, rather than examining the incorporation of Aboriginal labour into the settler economy as the
initial level of analysis, this section aims to invert the question of incorporation to examine how Aboriginal people came to incorporate the settlers into their own systems of mutual obligation and reciprocity.

Several writers have discussed emergent relationships with Australian patrols in Papua New Guinea (Strathern 1992; Bonnemère & Lemonnier 2009). Marilyn Strathern describes the exchange of shells in the Mt. Hagen region as part of a revelatory moment in which the distinction between Hageners and the Australian strangers was collapsed. Strathern argues that 'above all, they were recognisable as human because they contained within them the capacity to transact' (Strathern, 1992:251). In approaching the concepts of exchange and relatedness, I am following Strathern's example of the Mt Hagen encounter insofar as the human/non-human binary was collapsed by the Anglo-Australian's ability to exchange culturally-meaningful shells. As Strathern notes, 'this gave them a dimension in time. Or to put it another way, this made relationship possible' (Strathern, 1992:249). I suggest that it is precisely the breakdown of these us/them binaries that is required if we are to approach the inverted question of socio-economic incorporation. I am using the notion of relatedness as a flexible category rather than as the quality of a bounded polity defined by kin-relations. Myers' (1986:434) conceptualisation of relatedness (as opposed to autonomy, or 'differentiation') is instructive in this respect. In a structural-functionalist 'bubble' notion of culture (described by Redmond as the 'culture gardens' approach), relatedness is in a rigid dialectical relationship with differentiation and tends to obfuscate the range of interactions and identifications in an intercultural context (Redmond 2005:234). I argue here that Yuin relations with non-kin co-residents (settlers) cannot be viewed in terms of 'either/or', but must be seen as being incorporated by a relatively open sociality not necessarily defined in terms of kin relations. Following Strathern, I argue that exchange between individuals gave Europeans a tangible, temporal dimension for the Yuin.
In his analysis of provisioning in Aboriginal systems, Keen asserts that 'people invested in the productivity of others through their own generosity, and expected recipients to be generous in return. Indeed, continuing relatedness required constant affirmation through giving' (Keen 2004:354). Therefore, underlying systems of reciprocal giving are a fundamental premise of the existence of relatedness. As Chapter Two has shown, Howitt (1904) provided a key early ethnography of the south coast region, detailing forms of sociality and exchange practices in the late 1800s. Howitt observed that Yuin people were intermarrying and trading with groups from the Shoalhaven in the north, the Braidwood district in the west, and with groups from Twofold Bay and the coastal range in the south. These transactions included sister exchange in marriage and the trade of weapons, food and other goods (see Figure 9). Reciprocal giving occurred within a network of relatedness reinforced by cycles of transactions. This framework is useful in examining the provisioning of settlers at Broulee in the 1830s because relationships had already been formed between the first settlers and Aboriginal people. The earliest written record identifying individual Aboriginal workers was provided by John Hawdon who, along with Francis Flanagan, had taken up land in the Moruya area by 1830. Presumably Hawdon was exchanging rations for labour and it is clear that he was highly regarded by Aboriginal people in the region, as the following passage suggests: ‘They always regarded Mr. Hawdon’s word as law, and he was called upon to settle many a dispute’ (Buck, n.d.).

Broulee was also a hub for the distribution of blankets during a period in which the Aboriginal population was in rapid decline – most likely due to an influenza epidemic (Wesson 2000:130). Both Francis Flanagan and Captain Oldrey were responsible for distributing blankets and providing a census of the number of Aboriginal people in the district. As Wesson shows, Oldrey’s 1842 census was unusual because it included ‘family groups and the names and ages of all members of a family’ (Wesson 2000:131). Oldrey also detailed the country in which each family...

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54 Robinson’s journals push this southern boundary further to describe customary journeys to far-east Gippsland (Robinson 1844a).
usually camped, with the greatest number of families clustered around the settlement at Broulee (Oldrey 1842). The comprehensive detail in Oldrey’s blanket returns entails an intimate knowledge of the individual family groups that could only have been achieved through close relationships extending over a number of years. In contrast, Morris’ census provided only the number of people to which blankets were distributed and the names of the adult male family members (Wesson 2000:131). Through the provisioning of blankets and establishing close relationships with Aboriginal people in the area, Oldrey (along with Hawdon), can be credited with narrowing the social and spatial distance between Aboriginal people and the broader community of settlers at Broulee. However, in the absence of kin terms being used for individual settlers it is impossible to argue that this relatedness was extended to kin relations in the manner in which Redmond describes the relationship between Ngarinyin workers and white stock owners in the Kimberley - where ‘relative strangers’ became ‘strange relatives’ (Redmond 2005:234). Understanding the rescue of the survivors of the Rover in terms of relations of obligation based on relatedness is also instructive in this respect. The rescue was a projection of relations of obligation onto the strangers in the boat, who were perhaps thought to be part of the local settler community.

Oldrey petitioned the colonial administration to provide a reward for the heroes involved but his requests were refused. Taking the matter into his own hands, Oldrey had several brass gorgets fabricated for the rescuers. Oldrey is also credited as ‘pleading the cause’ of an Aboriginal man held in captivity at the police office (Cleary 1993:39). Once again, Oldrey was involved in maintaining relatedness through exchange. In ‘sticking up’ for the man in captivity, the object of exchange exists as much in the material form of gorgets as it does in providing a service of the type that Keen describes as creating a more ‘diffuse obligation’. Keen adds that ‘the effects of a service on a relationship could be enduring, depending on the perceived value of the action’ (Keen 2004:354). These ‘gifts of service’ are also reminiscent of Basil Sansom’s four orders of ‘signal service’ in which ‘bailing out’, or acts of rescue, ‘transforms the relationship between heroic rescuer and saved victim for as long as they both shall live’ (Sansom 1988:169).
Sansom’s schema is problematic if we return to the provisioning of Clarke’s party in 1797, keeping in mind they were probably the very first Europeans whom any of the people at the Tuross camp had ever met. Stumbling out of the bush, starved and disheveled, their skin must have been curiously white. Did they resemble a Tulpungul, the spirit or ghost of a dead relative described by Howitt (1904:463)? Why would gift giving be triggered with absolute strangers? This is a puzzle for which I have no definitive answer. I suspect that the provisioning of Clarke’s party either had something to do with a belief that Clarke and his men were physical manifestations of supra-natural beings; or it is evidence that information about the colony in Sydney had spread to the south coast via the ‘bush telegraph’; or that the incident arose from a more generalised, (or perhaps even locally defined) tendency towards generosity as Les Hiatt’s ‘highest secular value’ in Aboriginal Australia (Hiatt 1982:14).

The first rationale (based on misunderstanding) is certainly not without its problems. Sahlins’ (1995) view that Captain Cook was perceived by Hawaiians as a physical manifestation of the god Lono has been greatly disputed. However William Buckley’s experience in Victoria lends some credibility to this premise. In Morgan’s account collected in 1852, Buckley stated that the Wautharong people thought he was the returned spirit of a dead relative and gave him the name Murrangurk, ‘meaning literally, returned from the dead’ (Flannery & Morgan 2002:45). In Buckley’s words:

They called me Murrangurk, which I afterwards learnt, was the name of a man formerly belonging to their tribe, who had been buried at the spot where I had found the piece of spear I still carried with me. They have a belief, that when they die, they go to some place or other, and are there made white men, and that they then return to this world again for another existence. They think all the white people previous to death were belonging to their own tribes, thus returned to life in a different colour (Flannery & Morgan 2002:38-39).

55 See Borofsky (1997) for a review of the debate.
56 In a similar account, Brian Attwood describes the experience of an Aboriginal man in Gippsland who, upon seeing Europeans for the first time, ran off in fear believing that they were ghosts (Attwood 1986).
Based on this section of Buckley’s account, it seems that the incorporation of Buckley into the Wautharong ‘tribe’ was more of a case of ‘reincorporation’ based on reincarnation beliefs. However, prior to being given the name Murrangurk, Buckley had previously been provided with seafood on his initial encounter with Wautharong men in which he feared that he was going to be cannibalised: ‘At length my suspense ended, by their taking the fish, fairly dividing them, and handing to me the first and best portion’ (Flannery & Morgan 2002:31). In view of the available evidence, it appears that provisioning preceded the reincorporation of the dead relatives’ spirit (manifested in the white skin of William Buckley) into the Wautharong network of kin-relations.

The second rationale assumes that information about the presence and activities of Europeans had spread south from Sydney in the nine years between 1788 and 1797. It is possible that the ‘bush telegraph’ had conveyed news about both the wealth of new and desirable goods at the colony, and reports of violence and terrifying new technologies. In the Townsville region of northern Queensland, James Morrill’s account gives precedence to this rationale, as information was systematically spread about the presence of the white people who had come from the sea:

When they had done, they came and fetched us into their midst as on the previous evening, to show us to them. This was continued evening after evening for about six or eight evenings successively, as representatives from the more distant tribes came in to see the wonderful people, til the most distant known to them had seen us (Morrill 2006:33).

Later, Morrill’s party was again exhibited to a much larger gathering involving up to 1000 representatives of ten ‘tribes’. In the case of the NSW south coast, the existence and efficacy of a ‘bush telegraph’ hinges on questions of communicability:

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57 The evidence suggests that this gathering was a male initiation ceremony.
whether Yuin networks of relatedness extended north towards Sydney and if there was some overlap between the language groups in these regions.

Howitt’s observations of the Bunum male initiation ceremonies involved groups from as far north as the Shoalhaven and west to the Braidwood district and it is likely that these gatherings involved the exchange of information about the settlers (Howitt 1904:519-20). This question also relies on shared languages or bilingualism in the regions between the Eurobodalla and Tharawal-speaking groups near Botany Bay. In her analysis of language ranges in south-eastern NSW, Wesson suggests that people in the Ulladulla region were either ‘bilingual, that both Thoorga and Tharawal were typically spoken in the region, or that an indeterminate form of the two languages was in use in the area’ (Wesson 2000:157). Based on the evidence of communicability, it is therefore possible that information about the Europeans had been circulated between groups as far south as the Tuross by 1797. Yet two questions remain that are impossible to answer with any degree of certainty: did reports of violent new technologies outweigh the allure of desirable goods? And, should encounters with Europeans be feared or welcomed with the anticipation of reciprocity?

Expanding on the third rationale, it seems that the idea of relatedness being prior to exchange could be inverted so that exchange itself facilitates relatedness. In any case, it is the predisposition towards exchange that was characteristic of the non-violent interactions between Aboriginal people and the first wave of settlers on the NSW south coast. It is this predisposition that also led to the amelioration of conflict, as a cycle of theft and reprisals, and the rapid incorporation of Indigenous labour to fill the critical labour shortage in the primary-sector industries. However I do not want to overstate relatedness in terms of the social incorporation of Aboriginal people into settler society. Indeed, increases in the scale of settlement were concomitant with the increasing marginalisation of Aboriginal people from town life. Racial attitudes were reinforced by government policies and rhetoric designed to segregate and exclude Aboriginal people from interacting with settler society. Nevertheless, several non-Indigenous informants’ accounts of the subsequent years bemoan Aboriginal

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58 It is also likely that people used local interpreters.
people ‘begging’ around the coastal towns during periods when work was scant and the fish were off the bite. I suggest that a more accurate reflection on this period would view these actions as evidence that the settlers had become incorporated into the Indigenous social and economic world of mutual obligation, and demand sharing expectations had been extended, through relatedness, onto relative strangers (Peterson 1993). 59

3.4 The incorporation of Indigenous labour

Cameron’s examination of the documentary record relating to south coast Aboriginal people in the nineteenth century is accurate in arguing that both customary and newly acquired skills enabled Aboriginal people to carve an important, though undervalued, place in the regional economy (Cameron 1987). As section 3.1 has demonstrated, a key inhibiting factor for the development and diversification of the Eurobodalla economy during this period was the supply of labour. This section examines the documentary evidence relating to the incorporation of Indigenous labour into the settler economy of the Eurobodalla in the 19th century. The key theme that emerges from these sources is that Aboriginal engagements in labour relations were highly seasonal and that the character of those relations changed rapidly over the course of seven decades. Section 3.3 developed the notion that the presence of settlers had been incorporated into pre-existing Aboriginal patterns of economy and sociality. Following Cane, I argue that the exchange of services and material goods in return for labour also led to the transformation of these dynamic patterns in a manner that is consistent with Indigenous norms of reciprocity (Cane 1992:8).

Aside from early records documenting the involvement of Aboriginal people in the whaling industry at Twofold Bay, several sources provide evidence of Indigenous people working for the initial European settlers in the Eurobodalla region

59 Both Reynolds (1981) and Broome (1982) briefly allude to the notion that begging (as an emergent practice) was related to Indigenous domestic moral and economic systems, although neither author provides a theoretical elaboration of that relationship. While I also suggest here the possibility of a link in certain contexts, a detailed discussion of evidentiary and theoretical perspectives is necessary and is beyond the scope of this thesis.
Several of the natives became servants about the place, one, Campbell, being the coachman for many years. The writer can recall being driven in the carriage with Campbell, ‘got up regardless’ in black livery, on the box, while Benson, a faithful servant for many years, always hovered round to see that everything was in good order before a start was made. Both Campbell and Walker, another aborigine, were called ‘Mr.’ Campbell and ‘Mr.’ Walker by the tribe, after the gentlemen for whom they were named. Evidently ‘Mister’ was regarded as a sort of Christian name (Buck, n.d.).

Given that Hawdon had taken up land by 1831 it is likely that this document is referring to the mid-1800s. Further, on the advice of Aboriginal people who showed him the location of ‘good grass and water’, Hawdon later expanded his landholdings to include parcels in the Bodalla area (Buck n.d.). At Broulee, Flanagan observed:

Those who choose to work can obtain plenty of food and clothing, and they seldom have of necessity to depend upon fishing or hunting for subsistence… Both males and females are employed by the settlers in gathering the maize and potato crop, and some of them in reaping. They have commonly been remunerated in provisions, clothes, tea, sugar, tobacco, &c., but many of them now insist upon being paid in money. They are always employed for stripping bark… They will only work when the fancy seizes them, and always go off without warning (Flanagan 1845).

After less than a decade of contact with the first settlers, Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla region were already engaged in reciprocal relationships of labour and in-kind or cash payment.

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Goulding and Waters also place this article in the mid-1800s (Goulding and Waters 2005: 39)
The Commissioner for Crown Lands John Lambie recorded European farmers in 1845 as being assisted by Aboriginal labourers in a range of activities, with labour being rewarded with food and clothing:

In their disposition and conduct, they continue quite harmless, and live on friendly terms with the settlers. A few of the Blacks accompanied some Graziers, who removed their stock into Gipps Land, and indeed great numbers now pass the greater part of the year in that District...The Blacks continue as heretofore to assist the Settlers in Hay making, reaping, sheep washing, and other kinds of work; but they cannot be depended on as the means of supplying labour, the deficiency of which is beginning now to be so severely felt (Lambie 1845).

In his 1851 report, Lambie again lamented that the Aboriginal workers could not be depended upon, but were ‘well treated, and well paid by those who employ them’ (Lambie 1851). Lambie’s replacement, Commissioner Manning, contradicted Lambie’s observation, stating that ‘quiet and orderly in their deportment, when not ill used, they are willing to labor for wages so small that their services are in general demand’ (Manning 1852). While it is unclear as to the reason for this discrepancy, Manning’s observation resonates with the historical record of the use of Aboriginal labour throughout the 19th Century. Importantly, as Goulding and Waters point out, Manning realised that Aboriginal people were motivated to work for the settlers on a seasonal basis, preferring to wander off in warmer months when resources were plentiful along the coast (Goulding and Waters 2005:41).

The inveterate habit of rambling (original emphasis) in small parties during all the warmer months of the year makes it difficult to arrive at a correct estimate of the number of the Aboriginal natives or to become properly acquainted with their actual condition. It is only during the severer portion of the winter that they congregate in any numbers in the neighbourhood of towns or large

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61 For a regional comparison, see Bennett (2003).
Squatting establishments; and at that time they are seen under the greatest possible disadvantage. Without clothing to protect them from the inclemency of the Season, and unable to subsist by hunting, fishing, or their other usual modes of gaining food, they swarm to the settlements in the expectation of procuring both, and are generally willing to give such labor as they are capable of in return for what food or portions of raiment they may receive. Cutting wood for the winter supply of the settlers seems to be the general use to which they are put;—both males and females (Manning 1852).

Clearly Aboriginal people had been able to successfully modify their pre-existing patterns to changing economic circumstances and incorporate the presence of Europeans into their seasonal movements (Cameron 1987; Organ 1990; Rose 1990).

It is unclear at what point in-kind payments were replaced with monetary transactions, although it is likely that both forms of remuneration were coextensive for a long period. We saw that Flanagan’s 1845 account states that payment in rations was commonplace ‘but many of them now insist upon being paid in money’ (Flanagan 1845). Similarly, Commissioner Manning’s Report in 1853 described the payment of money and spending practices. However it is unclear if the procurement of clothing, ‘other comforts’ and liquor was bartered for with rations, or paid for with monetary ‘earnings’:

Their earnings are very generally expended in procuring clothing and other comforts which they begin to regard as necessaries. Though in some instances the fruit of their labour is wasted in the purchase of intoxicating liquors, I think the evil is on the decrease — certainly not extending (original emphasis) (Manning 1853).

Manning’s observations suggest that an element of consumerism was being developed, although it is likely that the settlers’ attitudes towards clothing were being strongly imposed in a process of normalisation. Clothing was a marker of modesty for Christian Europeans and the absence of ‘appropriate’ standards of dress would
have been unsettling and the cause for derision. As Brock noted in Central Australia, ‘clothing also came to symbolise access to European goods’ as well as providing a marker of both generational change and of those who lived on, or in close proximity to settlements (Brock 2007:47).

It appears that transactions were also taking place on a negotiated, contract basis as a journalist’s account of a journey along the south coast in 1871 implies:

About five miles from Moruya we met a blackfellow carrying a long straight stick. He recognised Mr Flanagan with a grin, and pointed to the notches – about forty in number – quite triumphantly. On enquiry I discovered that the blackfellow is employed bark-stripping, and gets so much per sheet, for all he strips. The notched stick was his account of the number of sheets (Anon 1871).

Aboriginal peoples’ extensive knowledge of the coastal hinterlands and the correct timing for stripping bark made them valuable to the tanning industry. Wattle Bark was the first legume cash crop in Australia and provided an extract used for tanning throughout the colonies (Davidson and Davidson 1993:215). The emergence of a booming timber industry in the mid-19th century incorporated Aboriginal labour in a similar manner: initially through a variety of activities loosely-termed ‘bush work’; and later to the wider employment of Aboriginal men in all aspects of the timber industry. ‘Bush work’ included timber-getting, but was also linked to pastoral expansion that required extensive, labour-intensive land clearing. European-style farming was not only premised on the expropriation of Aboriginal land, but also on the transformation or ‘improvement’ of that land. In the Eurobodalla region, the arable valleys were both the locus of settlement and of land-clearing activities that involved tree-felling, stump grubbing, brush burning and the introduction of exotic grasses.62 Throughout the Eurobodalla, these valleys were separated by heavily

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62 Following a period of extensive land improvement work, Thomas Mort was the first farmer to introduce exotic grasses (including rye grass, cocksfoot, clover and prairie grass) at Bodalla in the 1860’s. See ‘Select Committee on the Conditions and Prospects of the Agricultural Industry and Methods of Improving the Same’ (1921).
forested terrain rich in timber. The development and diversification of agriculture in the region was thus co-extensive with the rise of the timber industry.

By 1880 at least 13 timber mills had been established in the Clyde River region alone (James 2001:16). In 1888, the Moruya Examiner published an article referring to the economic development of the region, illustrating the importance of timber to the emergence of Bateman’s Bay and Tomakin as regional centers.

Nelligen also became a busy little town, as large quantities of wool found its way from the Braidwood district to the steamer at that place, en route for the metropolis. Bateman’s Bay, too, sprang into note, by reason if its saw mills; and Mogo kept a small, but steady body of diggers at work, and there are yet very strong indications of a good gold-field being found within its limits. Tomakin, on the shores of Broulee harbour, has supplied Sydney and other ports with a vast quantity of timber, and is still able to do so, if prices would only improve...The productions of the district have so far been grain (maize, wheat, oats, and barley), potatoes, hardwood timbers (both sawn and wrought, ironbark girders and sleepers), wattle bark, and dairy produce (Wolbar 1888:4).

Goulding and Waters point out that while the archival record provides little evidence of Aboriginal people working in the mills during this period, it is clear that they had been incorporated into the sector (Goulding & Waters 2005:50). Oral history proves to be more instructive in this respect and describes timber work developing as a ‘right sort’ job in the late 19th century. For example, one informant followed his father and grandfather into working in the mills. His grandfather was born in 1835, so it is likely he was working in the mills by the 1880s. Similarly, another informant’s father worked at the same mill for his entire career and appears to have followed his father (born 1869) into the trade. In her discussion of the ‘Kempsey phenomenon’ of the late 1890s and early 1900s, Wesson noted that ‘the men were said to have “followed the timber” north in their quest for better living conditions. Work in the timber mills and logging industries was familiar and offered reasonable pay, fair conditions, accommodation and few bills’ (Wesson 2002:330)
It is clear that the shortage of available labour in the economic development of the Eurobodalla during the 19th century was alleviated to some degree by the incorporation of Indigenous workers. However the character of those working relationships remained highly seasonal and therefore it is impossible to suggest that an Indigenous working class (in the classical sense) developed during this period.\(^{63}\) For Marx, the proletariat’s principle means of securing subsistence is through the exchange of labour power (Marx 1967). Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla utilised a range of strategies to survive the effects of the initial period of European invasion. Labouring for Europeans and the continuance of customary subsistence activities were intertwined in the regional hybrid economy. Aboriginal people had incorporated the presence of settlers into their own socio-economic world and in doing so had become incorporated into the settler economy. The character of the hybrid economy of the Eurobodalla by the end of the 19th century was a highly regional phenomenon produced through a specific historical trajectory.

This regionality was also enmeshed in broader socio-economic processes occurring throughout NSW and Australia. The rise of small-holdings following the diminution of the power of the emergent squattocracy was part of a general shift towards Australia becoming a modern, liberal capitalist economy. On a global level, significant changes in the colonial consciousness were also emerging. Faith in the epistemology of science was soon to give rise to modernism (as a political and economic reformation). In Europe, earlier notions of a ‘great chain of being’ had given way, via the biological ideas of Charles Lyell, to a reluctant acceptance of Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory in the 1860s. Interpretations of Darwin’s work (via Spencer) to encompass socio-cultural evolution had clearly spread to the colonies by the end of the century in the form of scientific racialism (see Broome 1982; Mulvaney & Calaby 1985; Reynolds 1987; Spencer 1889).\(^{64}\) It is the culmination of

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\(^{63}\) Richard Broome argues that Aboriginal people in late-19th century south-eastern Australia were rarely given opportunities for sustained employment with fair rewards. Broome suggests that this was both a cause and an effect of a self-fulfilling cycle in which white employers regarded Aboriginal workers as ‘lazy’, while Aboriginal people ‘saw work-oriented whites as crazy’ (Broome 1994:220). Broome cites Gerard Krefft’s observation that ‘there are only two beings which appear great fools in their eyes, namely the white man and a working bullock’ to support this view (ibid).

\(^{64}\) In his critique of the application of social Darwinism in Australia, Mark Francis raises some interesting issues:
these shifts in the colonial consciousness that led to the development of systematic policies designed to control Australia’s Indigenous population.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the early history of contact between Aboriginal people and Europeans in the Eurobodalla. It has argued that settlement was delayed due to the development of a ‘culture of terror’ on the maritime frontier. Early contact with Europeans was characterised by violence, although this was ameliorated over the subsequent decades. This chapter has also argued that Aboriginal people came to incorporate the presence of settlers into pre-existing systems of reciprocity and mutual obligation: it was primarily the settler’s ability to transact that rendered them relational within a Yuin social world. By the turn of the 20th century, Aboriginal people were also incorporated into an expanding, yet unpredictable, settler economy. With ongoing labour shortages providing a brake on economic development, Indigenous labour became critical to the success of the forestry industries and to the emergence of a seasonal horticultural industry. These patterns of seasonal employment, with shortfalls in income being supplemented by subsistence or entrepreneurial fishing, were characteristic of the hybrid economy of the Eurobodalla until the 1970s.

Forced off their country by the expansion of small-scale landholdings, Aboriginal people moved variously between estuarine camps close to sources of employment, and the government-administered station at Wallaga Lake. As section 3.1 demonstrated, the process of ‘unlocking’ the land from the squattocracy also served to ‘lock out’ Aboriginal people from their country. This period of rapid dispossession and displacement of Aboriginal communities on the south coast gave

It may be that to call racialism ‘social Darwinism’ is an attempt to remove it from Australia, and to assign it to necessity or to Charles Darwin, a distant European scientific personality... This might be preferable to seeing racialism practiced by protectors and other officials as a home-grown, well-meaning tragic absurdity (Francis 1996:102).

While his argument is well made, I am not convinced that Australia developed its own brand of institutionalised racialism in parallel to the ideas emanating out of Europe.
rise to a range of initial responses on the part of Aboriginal people. Some travelled hundreds of kilometers to Sydney to petition for land, boats and fishing rights while camping at Port Jackson (Goodall 1996:75). Others fought for land to be reserved through correspondence with the Board. Close to Bodalla, ‘Permissive Occupancies’ that had been granted to three Aboriginal men in 1872 were gazetted as Aboriginal reserves in 1878 (Goodall 1996:79). Others continued to live in camp in the vicinity of Wallaga Lake until the station was established in 1891 (Anon. 1879). The location of these camps and reserves were important in enabling the continuation of connections to the estuarine and marine environments and the maintenance and transformation of customary fishing practices (see Cane 1992; Goodall 1982; Cruze et al. 2005).
4 From reserves to formal administrative control

This chapter aims to extend the discussion of the issue of land in the late 19th and early 20th century before tracing the rise and local manifestations of paternalistic governmentality. It begins with an examination of Aboriginal responses to land alienation as a result of increases in small-scale settlement. Section 4.1 will argue that the working relationships formed with local settlers in the mid-1800s proved to be increasingly beneficial in ameliorating these pressures through the action of several individual settlers to obtain land tenure for Aboriginal people. This process eventually led to the establishment of a school and reliable provisions to be made available to people living at Wallaga Lake (section 4.2). Later, shifts in the administrative concerns of the state led to policies designed to segregate Aboriginal people into a sedentary lifestyle at the newly-established mission station. However, as section 4.3 will illustrate, the character of station management in the formative years was very different to the official policies being devised in Sydney. The final section of this chapter interrogates the idea that institutionalisation created a sedentary way of life for Aboriginal people living at the Wallaga Lake station. The evidence suggests that modified customary patterns of mobility persisted well into the 20th century, despite the efforts of the APB to curtail this movement.

4.1 William Benson and Richard Dansey: a tale of two men

By the end of 1878, a significant number of destitute Aboriginal people from the south coast had moved to Sydney in search of government assistance as a consequence of the worsening crises of selection and small scale settlement. The largest camps were on undeveloped land at Botany Bay and La Perouse, and in the Government Boatsheds at Circular Quay (Curthoys 1982:49). In his report for 1882, the newly appointed Protector of Aborigines George Thornton stated that the group who had settled at La Perouse ‘were anxious to remain there’ and had asked for an ocean-going fishing boat (Report of the Protector of the Aborigines 1882:895-6). Thornton granted their request on the basis that it would encourage them to settle ‘back into their own districts’ (ibid). Sub-Inspector Johnston reported that the group
at Circular Quay have ‘been a perfect nuisance...in consequence of their drunken and filthy habits’ and that rations were being supplied to them ‘daily since their arrival in Sydney’ (Report of the Protector of the Aborigines 1882:897). Johnston added that ‘they have no property with them, with the exception of an old boat which has nearly gone to pieces, and state that they have left their boats, fishing-lines, and seines at Kiama’ (ibid). Thornton argued that the problem at the boatsheds was a consequence of previous mishandling of Aboriginal affairs: as evidence of ‘the disgusting state of things among the aborigines maintained by this misplaced charity at the Government boat-sheds at Circular Quay and at Botany’ (ibid).

Aboriginal responses to land alienation were therefore entwined with ongoing debates about how the administration should handle the emerging crisis and the presence of the groups in Sydney was a catalyst for subsequent changes in policy. As Heather Goodall has shown, there was also a range of strategies available to Aboriginal people who remained on-country, from buying, leasing or squatting on land, to direct approaches to government officials, through to the recruitment of ‘a local white figure’ to act on their behalf (Goodall 1996:76). Throughout NSW, there appears to have been a cumulative effort by disparate Aboriginal groups to secure tenure, beginning with the successful application for reserved land by John Ambrose on the Murray River in 1874 (Curthoys 1982:36). Goodall suggests that, while these decisions to request land were made individually according to the needs of different communities, the ‘bush telegraph’ may have played a role in the rapid increase in numbers of applications:

Aboriginal people eagerly followed the decisions and outcomes in other areas and referred to them in their own demands for land. These years saw the first demonstration of a sense of common Aboriginal interest wider than the language group, on issues which were both traditionally based, in land, and were an engagement with the very new conditions of colonialism (Goodall 1996:76).

The government responded to these requests (that were ‘so in tune with the...political discourse of selection’) by ‘falling back on the power to reserve Crown land for the use of Aborigines’ (Goodall 1996:84).
The records of the APB identify 15 reserves that were gazetted in the Eurobodalla between 1861 and 1913. As Goulding and Waters noted 'there is limited information available in the documentary record regarding these reserves. Some reserves appear not to have been occupied, many appear to have been occupied by individual families, many were short lived' (Goulding & Waters 2005). However, there is evidence that several estuarine leases had also been established some time between 1868 and 1876. In 1876, *The Sydney Morning Herald* included the following account detailing the cancellation of these leases:

His Excellency the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council, has been pleased to approve of the cancellation of the leases, under the Oyster Beds Acts of 1868, of the beds in the Walluga, Gooradgee, Mimmangee or Moomage, and Curran or Coorenna Lakes, which were granted to Messrs. Richard Dansey and C. S. Caswell, P.M., in trust, for the use of the aborigines (Anon 1876).

Following the 1876 cancellation of the oyster bed leases obtained for Aboriginal people by Dansey and Caswell, 'permissive occupancies' that were granted for the use of Merriman, Yarboro and Bolway in the Tuross Valley were finally gazetted as Aboriginal reserves in 1877. A fourth reserve was gazetted for a man named as Neddy in 1880. In the same year Dansey (a local landowner) wrote to the Governor requesting that fencing, seed and tools be provided to the families on the reserves. Dansey argued that, despite their best efforts to cultivate the land, trespassing cattle had destroyed their crops and in one instance, a man was 'persecuted and harassed by a vagabond neighbour, and had to abandon the attempt' (Dansey 1880). Dansey clearly believed that if the requisite capital was available, the families on the reserves could 'prove good and creditable farmers, as most of them know the simple routine of farming generally pursued in the bush' (Dansey 1880). The Merriman, Yarboro, Bolway, Neddy (and Benson) reserves were also gazetted before the Aborigines Protection Board was formed in 1883. As Goulding and Waters noted, 'following its formation the Board largely took control of the existing reserves in addition to being

65 See Aborigines Protection Board, Register of Reserves. Sydney: State Records of New South Wales.
instrumental in the creation of new reserves' (Goulding & Waters 2005:59-60).

Representatives of the APB visited the reserves in 1883 and 1890 and reported that there was no evidence that Yarboro, Bolway or Neddy were residing upon the land. Further, with reference to the Merriman reserve the Board noted in 1883 that it had not been resided upon for 'the past 3 years, Merriman always residing at Wallaga Lake, generally working for the settlers in and around Tilba Tilba' (APB Register of Reserves:1). However, in 1890 it appears that portions of both the Bolway and Neddy reserves had been cleared (ibid). It seems that a combination of available work in other districts, the maintenance of seasonal patterns of mobility and harassment by wandering cattlemen (and/or unsympathetic nearby landowners) led to the reserves being only sporadically used.

The archival record also documents Dansey's further efforts to secure land tenure for a fifth individual, William Benson. William Wyneo Benson was one of the initial Aboriginal men identified as working for John Hawdon in the mid-1800s and was described as being 'a faithful servant for many years' (Buck, n.d.). In a petition to the governor in 1877, further details emerge about Benson's life in the subsequent years. It appears that Benson had continued to work as a labourer for Hawdon and his family and had been 'legally married at the District Registry Office, Moruya' (Benson 1877). Benson had also 'adopted two deserted aboriginal children' who were 'regularly attending the newly opened Public School at Turlinjah' (Benson 1877).

Benson's petition for land provides a valuable insight into local Aboriginal realities of land expropriation in the late 19th century in the Eurobodalla:

That your Petitioner is desirous of making a permanent home for himself, and of obtaining a portion of land for that purpose, as several other aboriginals have done in this neighbourhood; but that there is no suitable land available near to his work and to the Public School except the piece set forth in the rough sketch annexed hereto; and that portion having been offered for sale and being under Forty acres, cannot be applied for in the usual manner. That as a new Oyster Fisheries Act is almost inevitable, and our Petitioner could make an excellent livelihood by Oyster-gathering, a small boat or dinghy would be necessary to that purpose; and as your Petitioner has always kept himself aloof
from the other aboriginals, who have a fine sea-going boat, unfit for oyster-gathering, he would humbly prefer a small boat of his own (Benson 1877).

Benson’s petition was for a portion of land on the northern bank of the Tuross estuary, adjoining Ernest Hawdon’s Kyla Park property at Turlinjah.66

Ernest Hawdon, the son of John Hawdon who had first employed William Benson at Moruya, shared his father’s empathy towards Aboriginal people. In 1880, Hawdon wrote to Dansey about Benson’s application for the reserve:

I have not the slightest objection to your endeavouring to obtain the reservation of the piece of land enclosed between my purchased selection of forty acres... & my two hundred acres... for the aboriginal William Benson as I think he is equally entitled to land with other aboriginals for whom you have obtained reserves and much better qualified to make a good use of it – as I know him to be an honest sober and hardworking man (Hawdon 1880).

With the support of Dansey and Hawdon, the reserve was granted by the end of 1880 ‘for the use of the Aboriginal William Benson during his lifetime...’ (Applications for land and reservation of land 1877-1880). Ernest Hawdon’s letter gives a clear indication of Dansey’s involvement in the successful applications of Merriman, Yarboro and Bolway, although the specific details are unclear (Hawdon 1880). Three years later, it was reported that Benson’s reserve was ‘occupied by 5 males, 3 females, and 6 children some of whom go to the Turlinjah Public School. Fairly grassed, no cultivation. Not cleared. Good fishing station’ (APB Register of Reserves:1). By 1890 it appears that Dansey’s earlier requests for assistance were realised and the APB reported the following after visiting Benson’s reserve:

About a quarter of an acre is fenced in for a garden, and 2 acres have been cleared. A quantity of seed potatoes were supplied by the Board, and they have been planted by the aborigines. Galvanised-iron has also

66 I suggest that the letter, undersigned by William Benson, was most likely written by Richard Dansey.
been furnished for them for roofing, and making them more habitable. They have a fishing boat, which is kept on the Tuross Lake. It is fairly well cared for by the aborigines, but they do nothing with it in the way of earning a living (Report of the Board for Protection of the Aborigines 1890).

In 1890 it was also reported that Benson’s reserve was a popular camping location for ‘all the Aborigines in the Moruya district’ (APB Register of Reserves:1). Benson’s reserve was finally revoked in 1917 (ibid). As Goulding and Waters note, this revocation ‘was possibly as a result of the death of William Benson under the terms of the original reservation’ (Goulding & Waters 2005:59).

It must be emphasised that the land tenure that existed under the relevant clauses of the 1861 Act for Regulating the Alienation of Crown Lands was extremely limited and insecure, reflected by the incremental revocations of the Bolway (1914), Benson (1917) and Yarboro (1922) reserves. Further, as Goodall rightly notes, ‘the tenure by which the lands were secured related only to white concepts of desirable uses and meanings for land’ (Goodall 1996:84). Goodall also argues that the distribution of reserved land in NSW correlates most closely to those regions ‘most affected by the gold rushes and the 1861 Land Acts, where intensification had gone furthest in stripping Aboriginal landowners from land and resources’ (Goodall 1996:86). As a clear example of one of those regions, the processes of intensification and successful applications for reserve land in the Eurobodalla created a double-bind for Aboriginal people. On one hand, being alienated from land and resources provided the impetus for Aboriginal claims to limited land tenure. On the other, intense settlement on increasingly desirable coastal properties led to competing claims for Crown land and the successive revocation of the reserves.

While movements in the Eurobodalla towards securing land tenure were consistent with the emerging phenomena of Aboriginal land demands that were occurring throughout the state, a significant local difference was the level and character of Dansey’s involvement. As Goodall suggests, one of the strategies available to Aboriginal people during this period was the recruitment of a ‘white figure’ to act on their behalf during negotiations over reserved land (Goodall
The white figures that Goodall refers to were persons of public office (policemen, missionaries etc) who, it is assumed, would have held some leverage with administrative officials. The example that Goodall gives is the involvement of a Braidwood police officer, Martin Brennan, in lobbying for land to be reserved for Jack Bawn and his people on the Shoalhaven River. At the conclusion of a large ceremonial gathering on the Braidwood goldfields in 1872 (involving both south coast and highlands people), Jack Bawn approached Brennan and is reported to have said:

We have come to you to intercede for us in getting the Government to do something for us. Araluen Billy, our king, is old, and cannot live long; my wife Kitty and self are old, too. I have assisted the police for many years, and we want to get some land which we can call our own in reality, where we can settle down, and which the old people can call their home. Everyone objects to our hunting on his land, and we think the blacks are entitled to live in their own country (Goodall 1996:79).

In response, Brennan repeatedly petitioned for land to be reserved for Jack Bawn, although his initial attempts appear to have been to no avail due to the ‘hostility of the surrounding farmers’ (ibid). Jack Bawn and Kitty finally succeeded in their request for land to be reserved in 1878 (Goodall 1996:80).

In contrast, Richard Dansey was a local landowner who repeatedly acted on the behalf of William Benson (and presumably Yarboro, Neddy, Merriman and Bolway). While it is almost certain that Dansey was asked for his intercession in the reservations of land in the Tuross valley, the level of his involvement gives a strong indication of his relationship to Aboriginal people in the district. Dansey’s actions reflect Hoyer’s idea that ‘settler families are proud of their tradition of harmonious and mutually beneficial working relationships with local Aborigines’ in the southern Eurobodalla region (Wesson 2002:281). As for the motivations of administrators for granting these requests for land, Curthoys suggests that the ‘reserves were seen mainly as a way of providing refuge and a means of survival in a manner which was inexpensive to the state and which might also serve to maintain the Aborigines as a casual labour supply’ (Curthoys 1982:37). The following section shifts the focus to examine moves to formalise land tenure and assistance for people living in camp at
Wallaga Lake. It charts the transitions that lead to the establishment of the
government managed station and the development of a highly mobile lifestyle in
which the station became an important ‘drop in’ centre for Aboriginal people on the
south coast of NSW.

4.2 Umbarra and the camp at Wallaga Lake

Aboriginal people of the Eurobodalla have a strong connection with Wallaga
Lake, as a place of special spiritual and historical significance. Merriman (Umbarra)
was a senior elder at the camp at Wallaga Lake during the latter parts of the 19th
century until his death in 1904 and was one of Howitt’s key informants during his
ethnographic research of the region (see Howitt n.d.). Merriman’s life spanned three
important and interlinked periods in the history of the Eurobodalla: the development
of working relationships between settlers and Aboriginal people in the mid-1800s; the
crisis years of land alienation; and, the rise of local administrative control beginning
with the gazettal of the Wallaga Lake station in 1891. Merriman’s father, Ugaridgera,
was the Biambun (headman) of the people of Wallaga until he was murdered by
raiders from a sub-group of the Wiradjuri in the 1830s (Wesson 2000:147). While it
is unclear if Merriman was later recognised as Biambun on the basis of patriliney, he
was clearly a leader of vast esteem. Oral traditions on the south coast refer to
Umbarra as a great warrior, healer, and knowledge holder. Using Merriman’s
relationship with local settlers as a starting point, this section will open out into a
broader examination of the transitions that resulted in formal administrative control
being placed over Aboriginal people at the camp at Wallaga Lake.

The previous section showed that Merriman had obtained a reserve at Tarouga
Lake in 1877 but was living at Wallaga Lake close to sources of employment at Tilba
Tilba. In 1879, a journalist from the Bega Standard visited the Wallaga Lake camp
and provided the following description:

One of the tribe, Merriman, settled down on a pretty point, cleared a bit of
garden ground and built himself a hut. He had no tenure of the land
where he could remember his people the sole owners of the soil, and
knowing that the land could be selected by anyone with £10 in his pocket, Merriman became disheartened and went back to the waters of the lake to supply himself with sustenance. The only thing the Government ever did for these people was to give them a couple of boats... By the help of their boats they manage to earn money punting goods across the lake, and if their operations were properly directed, and they were encouraged to cultivate the soil and had some certainty of tenure to encourage them, a mission station could be made self supporting, or nearly so. Here is work for the philanthropic. The Government will do nothing until they are shamed into action (Anon 1879:2).

It is clear from this passage that the administrative ideology of selection was placing severe pressure on those living in camps on land that had no formally recognised tenure. Merriman, it seems, saw little point of cultivating the land when selectors could so easily acquire it. As a result, he returned to the old methods of gaining subsistence from the lake to supplement his income from the local farms. Dansey had successfully obtained a lease under the Oyster Beds Act (1868) to be held in trust for Aboriginal people at ‘Walluga’ (Anon 1876). However this lease was cancelled in 1876 and consequently, Merriman and his people were living a precarious existence on untenured land at the time of the journalist’s visit. The author also noted that the population was around 22 at the settlement in 1879 (Anon 1879:2). In 1883 Howitt named 20 residents, which suggests that patterns of settlement had changed very little during the early 1880s (Howitt 1883).

During the same period, it seems that the local settler community was placing increasing pressure on government administrators to provide schooling for the Aboriginal children in the region. In 1887 an Aboriginal school was finally established and soon after the first school inspector visited. The inspector reported that a number of families were still living on the properties of nearby employers (Cameron 1987:87). It appears that the inspector promised food and clothing to those who attended the school and reported that ‘the blacks camped on the reserve say that all the aboriginal children about will be brought to that place to go to school and get the good things promised’ (Cameron 1987:61). By 1890, it was recorded that the population had increased to 94 (Report of the Board for Protection of the Aborigines,
Following Cameron, it is reasonable to suggest that the ‘attraction of schooling and the school rations’ was a significant factor contributing to the initial influx of people to the settlement (Cameron 1987:62). In addition to the pressure placed on the government to provide schooling and school rations, the local settler community was also lobbying for more secure land tenure on behalf of the people living at Wallaga Lake. The first reserve was granted in 1891, followed by subsequent reserves on Snake Island (1906) and Merriman Island (1909) (APB Register of Reserves:1). Several oral histories refer to some kind of a deed of land presented to the Aboriginal community by Henry Bates (a local landowner), although it is uncertain whether these refer to the granting of the reserve by the government, or a separate portion under private agreement with Bates (Tobin n.d.:10).

The 1892 obituary of Henry Bates provides some details of his involvement in the gazetted of the reserve:

... He interested himself greatly in the aborigines of Tilba, and was after continued and untiring exertions, enabled to obtain for them the reserve on Wallaga Lake that they now occupy, together with the daily ration for the old and infirm and young children. By his death they have indeed lost a good friend (Anon 1892).

Earlier in the obituary, the author reflected on Merriman’s grief at having lost his old friend:

Never shall I forget that poor old fellow’s grief as I saw him just before the mournful procession started; he clasped his hands over his bowed head and the tears streamed from his eyes while in broken accents, he cried, “Oh, my poor old master, you’ve gone away; you’ve left me, my good old master” (Anon 1892).

Merriman had worked for many years for Henry Bates and the two men had clearly formed a close relationship. On the local level, lobbying for the provision of schooling, rations and some certainty of tenure was a result of philanthropic action. However, on a broader ideological level, the gazetted of reserve land (that was, from
the outset, a managed institution) was part of a more general move throughout NSW towards segregating the Aboriginal population.

As Chapter Three demonstrated, the development of relations of obligation via the incorporation of settlers into Aboriginal patterns of economy and sociality gave rise to expectations being projected onto non-kin co-residents. Following the crisis period of land alienation these expectations were further projected onto new benefactors. *A picnic with Australian Aborigines at Wallaga Lake* by the German ethnologist Arthur Baessler gives an excellent insight into the character of these relationships in the late 1800s. At the time of Baessler's visit, the superintendent of the new station was J.D. Reece who, with the assistance of his wife, was responsible for distributing rations (Reece 1892). Baessler observed that:

Every Friday all the women and children, together with those of the men who were too old or weak to work and all those who were sick, received rations of flour, sugar and tea sufficient for the next week. The men who were capable of working were expected to do so in return for their keep... anyone who still failed to get anything took a share of what his wife and children had got from the manager, even if he could not beg or steal anything more (Baessler 1895:7).

Later, after a picnic had been held by Reece for his guest and the Aboriginal community, Baessler observed that demands were being placed on the manager (as benefactor) to distribute the remaining provisions:

As the afternoon came to an end... one after another... took the manager aside, indicated that he had something very important to tell him, and asked to see him privately in the schoolhouse. That happened to be where we had taken the remains of our provisions, which would have been more than sufficient to feed a gathering three times the size. Once inside, the confidential interview at once assumed the form of a plea for charity, each trying to gain as much of the supplies as he could... the manager, who had anticipated this, gave a share to everyone (Baessler 1895:17).
It is apparent from Baessler's account that Mr Reece was genuinely concerned with the overall welfare of the people. As the first station manager this disposition is more reflective of local settlers' attitudes towards philanthropy than it is of an extension of government control and authority. During the short period of acting as the superintendent, Mr Reece had quickly become accustomed to demand sharing expectations and, rather than attempting to affect change, he both accepted and anticipated requests for assistance.

Further, as the following passage shows, Reece made no effort to change (by coercion or reward) pre-existing patterns of sociality:

A curious story lay behind the wedding ceremony. For as long as the manager had been in charge of the station, the blacks had lived peacefully alongside one another, and men and women had lived together for as long as they cared for each other’s company. If any coolness entered into their relationship, the husband simply threw the wife out and took another partner, while the woman for her part sought out another man; or alternatively, the wife went off with a lover, leaving her husband with the trouble of looking around for another better half. This idyllic situation lasted until the day when a young clergyman moved to the nearest town and flew into a rage at the Godless ways of the blacks. Having been told by the manager that he had no intention of interfering in the personal lives of his charges, the Reverend gentleman decided to try for himself, but got no responses from the blacks. This changed, however, when he showed them his gold wedding-ring and explained that everyone who got married would get one like it. 27 couples immediately declared themselves ready to enter into wedlock...Unfortunately in his cagerness to carry out the sacrament, he had forgotten about the rings. So the blacks, who are still waiting for them to this day, continue to curse the deceitful priest, and have lost all interest in the Christian religion and gone back to their former ways, swapping their lawful wedded wives just as readily as those they had previously taken for love (Baessler 1895:13. My emphasis).

This highly detailed (and somewhat humorous) story is also instructive about the degree to which desirable goods influenced the decisions of Aboriginal people at
Wallaga Lake. The 27 couples were more interested in the provision of material goods (gold wedding-rings), than converting to the ‘true faith’ for intangible benefits. Further, as Morris noted, these kinds of ‘sporadic interventions’ (designed to ‘inculcate the community with European norms’) did ‘little more than satisfy European sensibilities’ (Morris 1989:102).

The desire for consumables shaped the emergent relations at the newly managed station and was, along with the provision of schooling, a significant cause for a further influx of people in the final years of the 19th century. In 1895 Baessler noted that the population was 101 (Baessler 1895:5). By 1899 the population had grown to 116 (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1899). The sedentary lifestyle that Baessler describes however was both transitory and partial. Wesson found that only two of the 11 families identified in the 1891 census at Wallaga Lake were named in the 1901 census (Wesson 2002:281-2). Wesson argues that these figures support the assertion that ‘staffed reserves were initially used as stopovers of variable duration for journeys which perpetuated pre-contact traditions’ and were preferable to camping reserves because ‘rations were more reliably distributed and facilities were superior’ (Wesson 2002:282). However, these pre-contact patterns of movement were also modified by economic opportunities in the settler economy. As Wesson noted, following the establishment of the staffed reserve in 1891, several families ‘developed a particular seasonal round which involved spending the whaling season between June-July and October-November at Twofold Bay and the off season at Wallaga Lake’ (Wesson 2002:284).

4.3 Formalised administrative control at the mission station

The formalisation of administrative control over Aboriginal people in New South Wales can be traced to the concerns of missionaries regarding the vulnerability and penury of Aboriginal people who had survived the initial invasion. Prominent missionary figures argued that renewed effort should be given to the ‘task of civilisation’ or, in the words of Reverend J.B. Gribble, ‘to wipe out that long-standing disgrace, viz. the unjustifiable neglect of the heathen in our midst’ (Long 1970:26). The successful petitioning of the Church led to the establishment of missions at
Maloga on the Murray River in 1874 and Warangesda on the Murrumbidgee in 1880. Linked to Gribble’s concerns was a second, secular rationale, described by Morris as a desire to render the Indigenous population governable by reducing Aboriginal people ‘to the status of colonial wards’ (Morris 1989:90). The aspiration of missionaries to protect (and indoctrinate) Aboriginal people was translated into legalistic custodianship upon the creation of the office of Protector of Aborigines in 1880 (ibid). In 1881, the colonial administration appointed George Thornton as Protector of the Aborigines, whose initial charge was to commission a comprehensive enumeration and survey of the condition of Aboriginal people throughout the state.

Thornton’s preliminary conclusion was that assistance should only be given to Aboriginal people living on-country, and argued that all efforts should be made to prevent their presence ‘about the metropolis’ (Long 1970:27). As Morris notes, the rationale behind this move was twofold. First, it was hoped that communities would be largely self-sufficient with the provision of opportunities for collective agricultural cultivation. Secondly, according to the ‘commonsense’ view that Aboriginal people were going to disappear entirely, the creation of reserves as segregated havens away from the rigours and confusions of settler society was hoped to ‘smooth the pillow of a dying race’. In an assessment that must have frustrated Gribble and his contemporaries, Thornton also concluded that secular administration would be far more effective than religious instruction, and urged that young Aboriginal people should be taught manual skills appropriate for entry into the colonial workforce (Long 1970:27). Soon after in 1883, a Board for the Protection of the Aborigines was appointed under the direction of Thornton, though it lacked the legislative muscle needed to control the movement of Aboriginal people. In 1909, the Aborigines Protection Act was passed granting the Board the powers it needed to segregate the Aboriginal population. The location of the Wallaga Lake station, 16 km away from Bermagui, 24 km from Narooma, 40km from Bodalla and 64 km from Bega was ideally placed to suit the Board’s wishes (Long 1970:62). The Act was, as Morris argues, ‘the pivotal point...which prefigured a change in the nature of control over Aboriginal communities in the latter decades’ (Morris 1989:90).

67 Baessler wrote that ‘it is common knowledge that the Australian natives are in the process of dying out...the few surviving remnants...have been given back a small part of the land...until such time as the last black dies’ (Baessler 1895:1).
As the previous section has shown, the establishment of the Wallaga Lake School in 1887 was a significant enticement for families wanting to educate their children to move to the settlement (see Byrne 1984:19). As Goulding and Waters note, ‘while technically Aboriginal children were eligible to attend the Public Schools created in the 1880s, in practice the opposition of European parents frequently led to their exclusion’ (Goulding & Waters 2005:66). The Wallaga Lake School remained the only designated Aboriginal school on the south coast until it was closed in 1964 (Department of Education and Training 2003:134). Following the committee of enquiry’s recommendations that the station manager should be ‘a public officer acting in the capacity of schoolmaster, storekeeper, and overseer, with an assistant if necessary’, the role of the teacher and manager were combined (Long 1970:27). The roles of station manager and schoolmaster were separated in 1911, although this appears to only have been a temporary change in the general combination of the two roles that lasted into the 1950s (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1911:1). Between 1891 and 1965, the population on the station fluctuated between 62 and 159 residents (Long 1970: 62).

In keeping with the rationale for the creation of reserves and stations throughout NSW, the management plan was to make the Wallaga Lake station self-sustainable through the development of collective agricultural production, although this appears to have been initially hamstrung by the availability of work for Aboriginal people off the station (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1891:10). By the second year however, a small quantity of vegetables were grown and it was reported that several families were engaged in fishing (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1892:15). In 1899 a Local Board was established to oversee the operation of the station by the resident manager, and greater effort was made in improving agricultural productivity. The following decade was a period of rapid activity in accordance with the initial management plan. The report for 1899 details that 40 acres of timber was felled and that pastoral-clearing work had been undertaken by the residents in exchange for rations (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1899b:3). As one informant recalled in Chittick and Fox’s collection:
they cut all the trees down around here for a big pot of stew and a slice of bread and a hunk of meat put in it. That’s how they cleaned all the farm from here right up to Central Tilba, what they call the Saddle. They just did it for tucker and that’s all they gave them (Chittick & Fox 1997:41).

**Figure 10: A portion of cleared land at the Wallaga Lake Station, c.1900.**

(Image courtesy of the W.H. Corkhill Tilba Tilba Collection, National Library of Australia)

Additional infrastructure including cow bails, a small dam and a stockyard had also been added for a small-scale dairying operation. In the same year a manager’s residence and extra housing for Aboriginal people were built (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1899:3). Under the supervision of the Local Board, Mr Hockey (Reece’s replacement), had also formed a cricket club and had initiated adult education classes while Mrs Hockey ran weekly sewing meetings. It is evident that the Local Board shared a close and friendly relationship with the new husband and wife team, reporting that ‘the relations between the local Board and the Manager have
been most cordial, and the Manager and Mrs. Hockey deserve much credit for the earnestness displayed in their work' (ibid).  

Figure 11: The Wallaga Lake cricket team with Mr Hockey, c.1900.

(Image courtesy of the W.H. Corkhill Tilba Tilba Collection, National Library of Australia)

The Annual report for 1902 continued with the themes of satisfactory management and activity on the station, with the Local Board stating that:

There are now 22 dwelling-houses on the Wallaga Lake Station, all covered with galvanised-iron roofs, the greater part of the timber used having been purchased by aborigines out of their earnings. A storeroom was constructed on the station, which facilitates the issue of rations to the aborigines, besides providing suitable accommodation for medicines and other stores. Additional iron tanks have been provided for water required for domestic purposes, and a

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68 Hockey's letters to Mathews give a rare insight into his nature. Both were thoroughly distraught when their 'old friend Jack' (Biamanga) was killed and it seems that he involved himself honestly in the social world of people at Wallaga Lake during his tenure and developed close relationships with the senior people. See Hockey (1904a, 1904b, 1904c).
new dam constructed, which is capable of holding at least a six months' supply for the cattle and horses. The land being poor, it has not been possible to cultivate anything beyond a few small vegetable gardens, but a large area of bush land has been cleared and suckered, and the grass land freed from briars. The Local Board consider that the work carried out was very satisfactory (Report of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines 1902).

It was reiterated in the 1907 report that the land surrounding the station was unsuitable for anything more than small-scale dairying and horticulture and the initial plan for self-sustainable collective agricultural production had become increasingly difficult to realise (Report of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines 1907). Two years later, the Aborigines Protection Act was passed by the NSW Legislative Assembly, over 350 kilometres north in Sydney.

The Act resulted in the publication of twelve regulations governing the duties of station managers throughout NSW. The principal role of the Manager was to maintain general control over all residents and capital on the station and to ‘devote their energies’ to provide sound moral guidance. The second duty of the Manager was to provide a monthly report of the condition of the Station to the Local Board or Guardian, including a detailed census of the Aboriginal residents. The manager was also required to keep a diary of all occurrences at the station to be produced on request by the Local Board or Guardian. The Manager’s role also included detailed record-keeping of distributed rations and clothing and accounts of all transactions. In accordance with the emphasis on segregation contained in the new Act, the Manager was required to discourage the residence of mixed-blood Aboriginal people on the station and, where possible, to restrain Aboriginal people from leaving the Station. The manager was also required to submit applications to the Board from residents wishing to occupy portions of land within the station for the purpose of self-sufficient cultivation (NSW Government Gazette, 8 June 1910:3061). Omitted from the twelve-point regulations for station management was the further, presumably time-consuming role as schoolmaster. By 1910, there were 39 children on the Wallaga Lake School role, with an average daily attendance of 12.6 (Report of the Board for the Protection
of the Aborigines 1910b). As Rowley later noted, ‘underpaid manager-teachers were, if conscientious, hopelessly overworked’ (Rowley 1971:67).

The favourable reports to the Board about Mr Hockey’s activities were replaced by negative appraisals of a new Manager, Mr Hollingsworth in relation to the broader and more detailed mandate for station management. In 1911 two members of the APB were sent to evaluate the living conditions on and management of the station in response to concerns by the Local Board about Mr Hollingsworth’s management style. One of the APB’s members, H.M. Trenchard reported:

I regret having to confirm the opinion of the Board that it is impossible to retain the services of Mr. Hollingsworth. Not only has he neglected his returns and the forwarding of amounts collected monthly as per regulations, but he does not appear to have exercised any control whatever over the Station or people (Trenchard 1911).

In her analysis of the detailed report, Wesson found that:

Many of the working men were absent at the time of the visit but all had houses which were, or had been, assigned to them. Many of these men and their wives were of mixed descent but the report made no suggestion that there had been any attempt by management to oust the families entirely, and perhaps this was cause for concern by the APB officials. The attitude of the station management seemed to be that as long as working men of mixed descent were not dependent on Government support they were welcome to have their families housed at Wallaga Lake station and to visit their families occasionally (Wesson 2002: 345).

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69 While the regulations were officially handed down in 1909, the evidence suggests that Hockey was expected to carry out these extra duties from as early as 1904. In a letter to Mathews (responding to a request for information), Hockey despaired at his new workload:

you will think it very unkind of me not writing to you before this, but such is not the case for since my extra duties have been imposed upon me, it is often nine o’clock at night before I get finished, and I am in very little humour for writing then’ (Hockey 1904c).

70 Hockey had been sent to manage the station at Brewarrina by 1907.
In 1912, the Local Board was abolished and replaced by a single local Guardian, Mr W.S. Bates (one of Henry Bates' sons) who was charged with supervising Mr Hollingsworth's replacement. In his initial year Mr Bates oversaw the construction of boatsheds and the supply of fishing nets. In the same year, work was carried out to repair or replace several buildings and horticultural acreage was ploughed and prepared for cultivation (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1912:11). However, by the end of 1916, the office of the Guardian was abolished and the responsibilities were transferred to two Inspectors who were responsible for overseeing the management of all stations and reserves throughout NSW (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1915:1).

Under the limited direction of the Inspectors (who were infrequent visitors), the system of management oversight had been significantly eroded leading to the enhanced autonomy of station Managers. When the Inspectors did visit, it appears that much of their time was spent dealing with problems with infrastructure. As the Public Service Board reported:

the time of male inspectors is largely devoted to and has been very fully occupied on technical or mechanical matters...and that many matters which should be constantly under close administrative supervision and which should be brought under the notice of the Board, have been neglected (NSWPP 1938-40: 748).

Dislocated from the centre of institutional authority in Sydney, the practical, day-to-day management of stations was open to what has been described as a 'benevolent tyranny' in which station managers throughout NSW were able to operate largely at their own discretion (Bell 1982). Further, as what Rowley termed a 'broken-backed administration', the central Board was 'out of touch with the local managers, and instructions were so vague that some stations did not even have copies of the regulations under which they had to operate' (Rowley 1971: 69). The arbitrary administration of official policies was characteristic of institutional authority at Wallaga Lake in the ensuing decades.
4.4 Segregation, institutionalisation and mobility

One of the more prominent myths regarding Aboriginal communities in Australia is that conditions in institutions produced a sedentary way of life for Aboriginal people across all states and territories living under either religious or secular administration. The broad historical narrative relevant to this myth is summarised by Bell and Taylor:

Surviving populations were mostly displaced, and under the direction of protection policies formerly dispersed groups were relocated into concentrated pockets on mission stations, government settlements and reserves, often far removed from ancestral lands. Thus, people accustomed to living in small groups with freedom to move became confined in large sedentary groups, and their experience of settlement and urban life began. Much of the history of this early centralisation has emphasised the effect of coercion over spontaneous integration (Bell & Taylor 2004:29).

In certain regions these changes did result in the transformation from a nomadic or semi-nomadic mode to sedentary modes of living (see Austin-Broos 2009). However this notion is problematic in view of the history of settler-Aboriginal relations in the Eurobodalla. The Wallaga Lake station was established after nearly a century of intercultural relations in which Aboriginal people had incorporated the presence of settlers into their seasonal movements and had developed new and innovative ways to achieve subsistence. Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla had also become extensively incorporated into the rural settler economy. By the turn of the century, Wallaga Lake had become one of many ‘drop-in’ centres along the south coast as families followed seasonal opportunities for employment and maintained connections with kin and country. The disruptive effects of small-scale settlement increased the range in which Aboriginal people travelled and intermarried. Increases in governmental intrusion into the lives of Aboriginal people (following the passing of the Aborigines Protection Act in 1909) provided further impetus for families to be on the move. The APB’s attempts to segregate Aboriginal people in gated institutional communities were problematised by the reality of a persistently mobile subject.
population. Writers such as Long (1970), Rowley (1970, 1971), Koepping (1976) and Lattas and Morris (2010) have drawn on Goffman’s (1987) conceptual model of a ‘total institution’ to describe conditions in Aboriginal institutional communities in a range of contexts. This section complicates the use of Goffman’s model to argue against the notion that institutionalisation produced a sedentary way of life for Aboriginal people in the initial decades of the Wallaga Lake station and, in doing so, to illustrate the limitations of the aforementioned myth.

In Goffman’s original definition in *Asylums*, a total institution is ‘a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time together lead an enclosed formally administered round of life’ (Goffman 1987:11). Institutionalisation, in Goffman’s sense, is an extreme form of segregation that involves coercively restructuring modes of living to a formally administered, sedentary way of life. Similarly, segregation and the transition from semi-nomadism to a sedentary mode of life was a defining element of the APB’s policies between the end of the 19th century and the initial decades of the 20th century. Following Goffman, Long argued that institutional settlements in both remote and ‘settled’ areas of Australia can be characterised as total institutions because, in each case ‘there is a basic split between a large managed group, conveniently called inmates, and a small supervisory staff’ (Long 1970:6 citing Goffman 1987:7). Long argued that:

This justifies one calling them “institutional communities” and distinguishes them from “normal” communities of a similar size. This characteristic, with the tendencies it can breed for both staff and inmates to adopt stereotyped, often antagonistic, attitudes to each other and to maintain social distance, tends to diminish their effectiveness as places where people are prepared for life in the general community (Long 1970:6).

Yet, Long was also conscious of the limitations of applying Goffman’s model, admitting that settlements in NSW are ‘rather less than “total institutions” because many people make their livelihood outside’ (Long 1970:6). It is clear that the APB desired to settle ‘wandering groups’ of Aboriginal people onto managed stations away from towns, but it was not until the Aborigines Protection Act was rolled out in 1910.
that it had sufficient power to do so. Although, as Long identified, ‘the Board still recognised the impossibility of thoroughgoing segregation’ (Long 1970:29).

Morris argues that institutionalisation contained an inherent paradox: policies aimed at disassembling and then reconfiguring family life through segregation and surveillance had ‘preserved transfamilial ties and community solidarities’ amongst the Dhan Gadi ‘because in this case institutionalisation allowed them to preserve forms of social interaction and social control that pre-dated the total institution’ (Morris 1989:174). Goffman’s idea is, as Morris points out, contingent on subjecting individuals to solitary life in institutions by separating them from family life. In the experience of the Dhan-gadi, Morris argues that this separation:

was never comprehensively applied. As a result, institutionalisation effectively provided the Dhan-gadi with a continuity of social experience which was separate from that of the wider society and was reinforced by their isolation as a bounded territorial unit (Morris 1989:175).

Similarly, the centralisation of Aboriginal people at Wallaga Lake both preserved intra- and transfamilial ties. However, as Wesson noted, ‘the personalities of the manager and other staff had the potential to impact on many aspects of the quality of life of mission dwellers including the freedom to express oneself in culturally meaningful ways’ (Wesson 2002:282). In the absence of consistent management oversight by the APB, arbitrary decisions were decided upon by individual station managers. As one informant in Chittick and Fox’s collection commented, ‘some of them managers were terrible, some was all right. They were like tin gods’ (Chittick & Fox 1997:113).

Several authors also assert that applying Goffman’s model in the context of Aboriginal institutional communities overstates the role of settlement management. For example Lydon argued that, in the case of the Victorian mission at Coranderrk, the form of institutional authority was not recognisable in the same sense (Lydon 2000:29). Similarly, Trigger (1985, 1992) and Rowse (1993) both argue that the management of Aboriginal settlements was less restrictive than Goffman’s description.
of supervisory staff in total institutions. As section 4.2 has shown, the first superintendant at Wallaga Lake, Mr Reece, did not attempt to change or disrupt pre-existing social and economic orders and was more concerned with preserving existing patterns of employment and mobility, and facilitating local philanthropic desires.

While the 1909 Act increased the power of the APB to regulate the lives of Aboriginal people on stations, these policies were not comprehensively applied at Wallaga Lake. Further, the previous section has showed that the early record of administration at the Wallaga Lake station suggests a disjuncture between polices designed to segregate Aboriginal people in closed communities and local realities.

The intended plan of concentrating and segregating ‘full blooded’ Aboriginal people on reserves and stations in NSW had the complementary aim of excluding people of mixed descent, who it was presumed would be gradually assimilated (or ‘made white’). While this policy may have been more dutifully enforced by station management in other parts of NSW, evidence in the archival record demonstrates that Wallaga Lake was anomalous in this respect. As Wesson demonstrated by compiling information contained in the APB reports between 1905 and 1912, the proportion of Aboriginal people of mixed descent living at Wallaga Lake increased from 61 percent to 80 percent during the period (Wesson 2002:341). Importantly, this period of management by Mr Hockey (and his successor Mr Hollingsworth) was supervised by the local Board. It is difficult to ascertain whether the members of the local Board felt that the policy of excluding people of mixed descent from residing on the station was flawed (contra to the 1909 Act) or simply too difficult to enforce.

With management falling under the supervision of the Guardian until 1916, the proportion of people of mixed descent at Wallaga Lake had again increased to 89 percent (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1916:7). Wesson also compiled information on the proportion of people of mixed descent living away from the station and found that the numbers were slightly higher, ‘but not significantly so’ and were ‘representative of the trend both on and off stations and reserves’ (Wesson 2002:342). Regardless of this general trend, the management at Wallaga Lake had not

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71 Tim Rowse’s more general criticism of applications of Goffman’s model to Aboriginal institutions is that the distinction between ‘inmates’ and supervisory staff is premised on the existence of civil equality outside of the institution. According to Rowse, the record of repressive Aboriginal policies in Australia thus denies this fundamental premise (Rowse 1993).
responded to the Board’s insistence that people of mixed descent ‘have really no right on a reserve set apart for the use of aborigines, and will, it is hoped, be gradually weeded out’ (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1912:2). Rather, the emphasis of station management was on preserving patterns of Aboriginal employment that had, as the previous chapter has argued, developed prior to the gazettal of the station. As Wesson commented:

At Wallaga Lake station the managers did not appear to have discriminated at all between those of mixed descent and full bloods but rather between those who were prepared to work and those who were not. Nor was there discrimination between those who worked on the station and those who worked away (Wesson 2002:345).

As a consequence of the loose bureaucratic ties between official APB policy and on-the-ground implementation, the Wallaga Lake station continued to function much as it did when it was first established in 1891.

Wesson’s (2002) examination of records of attendance at the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal School between 1926 and 1949 shows that, despite the Board’s efforts to segregate and ‘domesticate’ Aboriginal people into a sedentary mode of life, modified semi-nomadic patterns of movement remained a key characteristic of life at the station. As Figure 12 demonstrates, the greatest proportion of students attending the school (34 percent) stayed for less than a year and 33 percent stayed between one and three years. While 30 percent of school stays were between four and nine years, only three percent of children received ten to eleven years of education at this location.

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72 Wesson’s analysis of the duration of school stays at Turlingah Public School by Aboriginal children between 1883 and 1910 illustrate that 57 percent of students remained at the school for less than a year, indicating that a decrease in the mobility of families did occur once the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal School was established. However, Wesson notes that ‘while it is true that mission life resulted in reduced movement (or increased settlement) by certain families, the school records for the mid-twentieth century show that semi-nomadism was still a way of life for many’ (Wesson 2002:282-283).
The school records also provide a valuable insight into the range of these movements, based upon the administrator (presumably the station manager or matron) ascertaining where the children had lived previously and where the children had gone after leaving the school. Interestingly a large proportion of students had left the school for ‘domestic duties’ or had become employed as farm labourers. This pattern is consistent with the Board’s emphasis on training Aboriginal children in domestic and manual skills for entry into the workforce. The records also indicate that there was a significant movement of families between Wallaga Lake and Orbost and that some families were travelling from as far away as Lake Tyers in Victoria. The greatest proportion of arrivals and departures were, however, within the south coast region from Bega and Cobargo in the south-west, north to Moruya, Batemans Bay,
Jervis Bay and Nowra. These patterns of movement are consistent with the range of movement among south coast groups described by Howitt (analysed in Chapter One). These patterns also suggest that policies of segregation did not result in the restructuring the lives of Aboriginal people into a sedentary mode of living. It is this localised character of segregation, institutionalisation and mobility that demonstrates the limitations of the notion that ‘mission time’ necessarily resulted in sedentary Aboriginal communities.

Figure 13: Previous residence and destination (or occupation) of students at the Wallaga Lake School 1926-1949
Conclusion

This chapter has argued that, by the late 19th century, Aboriginal people were increasingly alienated from their country due to the rapid increase in small scale settlement as a product of the policies of selection. These pressures were somewhat ameliorated through the development of mutually beneficial working relationships with local settlers, yet the question of land remained. Several individual settlers in the Eurobodalla (most notably Richard Dansey and Henry Bates) were instrumental in aiding Aboriginal people to gain some security of land tenure. Local philanthropists eventually succeeded in their requests for schooling and rations to be provided to Aboriginal people at Wallaga Lake. In Sydney, the colonial administration was coming under increasing pressure to solve the 'Aboriginal problem' and took steps (through the formation of the APB) to segregate Aboriginal people into managed stations and reserves. However due to the disjuncture between APB policy and the actual running of the station at Wallaga Lake, patterns of seasonal movement were maintained. In concluding, it is appropriate to draw a brief comparison with the history of the Cherbourg (Barambah) settlement in south-eastern Queensland. In his history of Cherbourg, Thom Blake argues that the settlement became 'a labour depot' for Aboriginal workers despite changes in government policies relating to outside employment and isolating Aboriginal people in closed communities. As Blake comments: 'regardless of government policy, whenever capital had need for labour, the settlement administration was only too willing to supply it' (Blake 2001:126). In a strikingly similar manner to Wallaga Lake, this rural workforce could be turned on and off like a tap depending on the needs of the regional economy. Yet a key difference between the two settlements was the nature of institutional authority. In the case of Cherbourg, Blake argues that 'from the outset, a primary purpose of the settlement regime was to reform, subjugate and dominate the inmates' using a 'variety of techniques, the most prominent being schooling and the dormitory system' (Blake 2001:57). This complete domination over inmate's lives extended to 'every facet of the inmate’s labour', which was 'rigidly controlled' including the total control over Aboriginal people’s earnings (Blake 2001:156). While Blake does not directly draw
on Goffman’s ideas, the style of institutional authority was distinctly more like that of a total institution than the evidence suggests existed at Wallaga Lake. This chapter has argued that attempts to segregate Aboriginal people at the Wallaga Lake station did not result in the creation of a sedentary population, utterly shut off from the outside world. The following chapter will illustrate that the formalisation of institutional authority under the 1909 Act produced a range of oppressive restrictions for Aboriginal people living throughout NSW. Most importantly, the ‘dog Act’ ushered in an era of institutional racialism and separation; an era for which Aboriginal people are still recovering from today.
5 The separation era: ideology, policy and resistance.

The previous two chapters have focussed on the relationship between local landholders and Aboriginal people, arguing that these connections were mutually beneficial throughout much of the 19th century. Chapter Four concluded that the rise of institutional authority at Wallaga Lake did result in some centralisation of south coast Aboriginal people, although the population continued to follow patterns of mobility that pre-dated the establishment of the station. This chapter moves to analyse the situation of Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla towns of Batemans Bay and Moruya during what Wesson (2002) has described as the separation era. The chapter begins with an examination of policies that impacted directly on children (5.1), most traumatically represented by the widespread removal of children from their families. Following Goodall (1996), the section also links the exclusion of Aboriginal children from public schools to competition over land for town expansion. A consequence of these policies and processes was a strong resistance by Aboriginal people, linked to a broader resistance movement in NSW. This resistance was both overt, in the form of activism and campaigning against the exclusion of Aboriginal children from the Bateman’s Bay public school (5.2), and subversive on the level of everyday interaction. Section 5.3 examines some of the contradictions and ambiguities facing Aboriginal people in towns. While racialised policies that were designed to segregate or separate the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous social spheres did filter through to racialised discourses and practices in the Eurobodalla townships, what emerges is a far more complicated (or individuated) picture of social relations than the Manichaean universe that Morris (1989) describes as being all-encompassing in the Macleay valley. The Dhan-Gadi, Morris argues, experienced their Manichaean universe in terms of a ‘clear cut racial dichotomy of social worlds enforced by laws and the political practices of exclusion’ (Morris 1989:212). The chapter argues that certain individuals, business owners and factions in the non-Indigenous community were able to resist claims on their subjectivities by racialised policies and discourses.

73 According to Wesson, the beginning of the separation era in NSW was marked by the passing of the 1909 Act, and subsequent legislation that increased the state’s power to remove children from their families. The abolition of the AWB in 1969 marked the end of this era.
and created spaces where Kooris could move between two interconnected social worlds.

By 1940, an estimated 50 percent of Aboriginal people were living in, or close to regional centres and pressure was mounting on the NSW government to reform its approach to Indigenous affairs. The following excerpt from the parliamentary debates leading up to the Aborigines Protection Amendment Act (1940) gives a valuable insight into both the attitudes and perceived difficulties in the discourse of the era:

The problem that the Government has to meet and the community has to face in regard to the Aborigines can be estimated by realising the fact that there are some 10,000 people of full or mixed aboriginal blood … About 50% of the aborigines are camped on stations and reserves which are controlled by the Government. The remainder are living independently of the board … It has no effective control under the present law. They are quite independent and free to live according to their own wishes. In many cases, they are living in close proximity to towns, in much the same way as the unemployed lived during the worst years of the depression, and in that regard they are a great annoyance to the community (HREOC 1997:39).

In 1940 the APB was dissolved and replaced by the Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB). The new administrative body reflected the shift in NSW government policy from ‘protection’ to assimilation and welfare. The official rhetoric was that the Board was moving towards a progressive, egalitarian policy framework of ‘uplifting’ Aboriginal people, when in practice, very little changed. The boundaries between policies of ‘protection’ and ‘assimilation’ were not neatly defined and the original Protection Act contained elements of legislation that clearly fitted with the rhetoric of assimilation in the 1940 amendment. Aside from the more cosmetic change in the Board’s title, the Amendment Act built on the pre-existing legislature in order to establish what it considered to be more systematic forms of control. As will be argued in section 5.4, the 1940 amendment was largely a move to formalise the pre-existing logic of assimilationism.
5.1 Transitions in town life

As a consequence of what Rowley termed 'a sporadically and casually interested government', the ideal of thoroughgoing segregation of Aboriginal communities was never fully realised in NSW (Rowley 1971:12). In the Eurobodalla region, many families were deriving their income from work in the local sawmills, while the children attended nearby schools. While school records in the late 19th and early 20th century show that the majority of Aboriginal children in the region were educated at the Aboriginal school at Wallaga Lake, many Aboriginal children attended local 'mixed' schools. John Hawdon began petitioning the Council of Education for a school to be funded at Turlinjah and listed on his appeal a total of 93 children, including those of Henry Chapman, an Aboriginal labourer. A later petition by George Goodin, a local landowner, pleaded that 'this is a poor neighbourhood and child after child is being sent to work or hired out, thus forever losing the chance of receiving even the simplest elements of education' (Townsend n.d.). Following these appeals, the Turlinjah 'one teacher' school was established in 1879 and from its inception to 1932 educated 39 Aboriginal children over durations ranging from one month to seven years. The school records illustrate that most of the students were the children of local labourers who were employed on the farms and in the timber mills of the Tuross Valley.

In 1902, the NSW Minister for Education made a decision that would further entrench an emerging racial divide in NSW communities. Minister John Perry ordered state schools throughout NSW to remove Aboriginal children from tuition if complaints were made by non-Indigenous parents. As Fletcher noted:

"Non-Aboriginal parents frequently claimed diseases were rampant among Aboriginal students, and that they were unhygienic. These claims were rarely substantiated. Some non-Aboriginal parents claimed in their appeals to the Education Department that their children's moral welfare was at stake (Fletcher 1989b:88)."
This decision by the minister sparked a wave of school exclusions throughout NSW, initially on the north coast at Breeza, and at Collarenebri, Walgett and Mogil Mogil schools in the north and north-west (Fletcher 1989a:76-80). On one level, campaigns by non-Indigenous community members was a reflection of emerging discourses of pollution in which ‘Aboriginal illness was identified with the natural proclivity of Aborigines to engage in unhygienic, unsanitary practices and social vices’ (Morris 1989:114). On another level, the exclusion of Aboriginal children was linked to competition over land following legislative moves in NSW to encourage closer settlement. As Goodall notes, the segregation of Aboriginal schoolchildren from public schools became ‘a well-tried tactic in the hands of white townspeople trying to force the removal of whole communities of Aboriginal people’ (Goodall 1996:147).

The APB was under pressure to revoke reserved land from 1905, but it was not until the Returned Servicemen’s Settlement Scheme was enacted in 1917 that the demand to relinquish reserved land accelerated. As Goodall argues ‘the goal of closer settlement had been forceful enough, but when this was entwined with the call to compensate returning soldiers, it was irresistible’ (Goodall 1996:124). At the same time, the Board had also recognised that the population of mixed-descent Aboriginal people in the state was growing rapidly and was stretching the Board’s resources. In the words of the acting Premier of the time,

... quadroons and octroons will be merged in the white population, and the camps will merely contain the full-blooded aborigines and their descendants ... By this means, considerable savings will be effected in the expenditure of the Aborigines Protection Board ... There is hope ... in years to come, the expenditure in respect of Aborigines will reach vanishing point (HREOC 1997:36).

In response, the 1909 Aborigines Protection Act was amended in 1918 to narrow the scope of the term ‘Aborigine’. 74

74 Under the 1909 Act, the category ‘Aborigine’ was defined as any ‘full blooded aboriginal native of Australia, and any person apparently having an admixture of aboriginal blood who applies for or is in receipt of rations or aid from the Board or is living on a reserve’. The scope of this definition was changed to a descent-based one in 1918 to include ‘any full-blooded or half-caste aboriginal who is a native of New South Wales’. 129
The 1909 Act had profound impacts on the stability of family life for Aboriginal people throughout NSW. The Act provided the Board legal sanction to remove Aboriginal children from their families – a situation exacerbated by increasing powers being granted by way of the 1915 amendment. As Goodall notes, the amendment was granted by way of a campaign to give the Board absolute power, *in loco parentis* over Aboriginal children:

To gain the powers it wanted, the Board embarked on a campaign to convince the public and parliament that, by definition, Aboriginal parenting was negligent. Relying on prevailing negative stereotypes of Aboriginal communities, the Board gained wide press coverage for statements describing Aboriginal camps, and its own managed stations, as places of vice and immorality from which it had to rescue Aboriginal children. The Board succeeded in gaining its greater powers in 1915, having in the process savagely reinforced contemporary racism (Goodall 1990).

By 1910, the Board was responsible for administering an increasing number of managed stations and was becoming overstretched. The Board had also acquired the Cootamundra Hospital for the purposes of setting up a training home for Aboriginal girls and ‘was faced with the urgent need to increase its funds or abandon its goals’ of removing Aboriginal children from their families (Goodall 1996:121). In 1911 the Board made what Goodall describes as a ‘momentous’ (but unpublicised) decision to lease reserved land to make up shortfalls in its revenue (Goodall 1996:122).

The legislation also served to enhance the resentment and fear of the Board felt by Aboriginal families. The following examples illustrate common experiences that provided the impetus for many families to ‘run from the Welfare’. A Yuin woman from Wallaga Lake recalled in an Aboriginal Women’s Heritage study at Nowra:

We knew about the Welfare when we were living out there at Wooraggee. All the kids that went to school at Terara, they all knew about the Welfare. The Welfare fellas would come around looking. They’d pick kids up when they were walking to school (NPWS 2004:12).
The Cootamundra Training Home for girls, opening in 1911, was the principal location for the placement of removed female children. As one informant recalled in Dale Donaldson’s collection:

In 1921, government officials took my mother away from Wreck Bay where she was living with her family at the time. She was taken to Cootamundra Girls Home. You know, they cut off her hair so she looked like a boy. She lived in the home until she was 14, then the government had her do domestic work for white families. Eventually she made her way home, back down the coast (Dale Donaldson 2008:71).

In a similar example, the daughters of a police tracker were removed to Cootamundra after the death of their mother. At the age of 8 and 10, the girls were trained in domestic service and were then released under the apprenticing scheme to work for a wealthy family in Sydney.

The process of ‘apprenticing’, as Goodall argues, ‘sought systematically to remove as many Aboriginal children as possible and never to allow them to return to their communities’ (Goodall 1990:1). However, the removal of Aboriginal children from their families in NSW was not confined to the ‘separation era’. The first Aboriginal school established in NSW in 1814, the Native Institution at Parramatta, was remarkably similar in its approach to the 20th century institutions at Bombala, Cootamundra and Kinchela. The aim of the school was twofold: to distance children from their families and to teach subservience and skills for entry into the working class (HREOC 1997:33). The rationale of removing children from their families and placing them in the reformatory-style institutions in the 20th century was also double-edged. On one level, the policy was aimed at training Aboriginal children in manual and domestic tasks for entry into the workforce. On another, the policy aimed at removing children with light-coloured skin as part of a broader effort of ‘breeding out’ an anomalous Aboriginality.

In 1916 the NSW Education Department devised a curriculum for Aboriginal schools that emphasised manual work with the presumption that Aboriginal students
did not have the intellectual capacity to handle the same course of studies as non-Indigenous children. The syllabus was consistent with the policy being enacted in the reformatory institutions: boys were given skills appropriate to a future of working as station labourers while girls were trained to be domestic servants. The Sydney Morning Herald reported the Education Department’s Review and announced that a new syllabus would be established for all schools in NSW:

...in addition to the primary, superior, and secondary school syllabuses, the Department is about to issue a special syllabus for aboriginal schools – the only one of its kind in Australia....Hitherto the aboriginal schools have attempted to carry out the course of instruction set down for ordinary primary schools, without regard to the difference in either the mentality or the future needs of aboriginal children. The new syllabus has been carefully compiled with these facts in view (Anon 1916).

The separate syllabus served to entrench educational disadvantage in Aboriginal communities – a situation compounded by the exclusion of Aboriginal students from public schools. At Wallaga Lake this situation was further exacerbated by the on-the-ground administration of the separate Aboriginal curriculum. As Chapter Four noted, the person charged with teaching the new curriculum was the station Manager who was generally untrained and over stretched in their capacity to act in the duel role as school teacher. As Eileen Morgan recounts of her days at Wallaga Lake under the instruction of Mr Sampey:

We never learned too much because Mr Sampey was always being called out...The older girls or boys would take the tiny ones down the front...and read a story to them or ask them to spell. That was done mostly every day because he was always away. Later I discovered that managers like Mr Sampey were not trained teachers (Morgan 1994:54).

A second wave of school exclusions came after the end of the First World War when, in 1921 and 1922, complaints were made to the Education Department by members of the Huskisson Progress Association and the local Parents & Citizens committee. Mr Campbell, an Aboriginal man from Huskisson wrote to the Education
Department in protest of the action and also complained that local policemen had tried to force him to settle at the Wreck Bay Aboriginal community:

As I have been reared here... it comes very hard to think that our children are turned away from school. My father who cleared the timber... so as the school could be erected in 1883... had six of us attend the same school... he was paying weekly for our education. As we are some of the oldest inhabitants of Huskisson I do not see why our children should be turned away... (Fletcher 1989b:123-124).

A similar situation arose six years later at Bateman’s Bay that galvanised Aboriginal community opposition to school exclusions and pressure to leave town by non-Indigenous community members. The ‘battle of Bateman’s Bay’ also sowed the seeds of Aboriginal resistance, linking local activism with broader movements throughout NSW.

5.2 Jane Duren and the battle of Bateman’s Bay.

In his history of the Eden-Monaro region of NSW, Mark McKenna argues that ‘the politics of Aboriginal resistance on the south coast did not transcend the “local” until after the 1960s’ when Aboriginal people first engaged in a coordinated struggle for land rights (McKenna 2002:171-2). Further north however, the history of the Bateman’s Bay region tells a much different story. Under the various guises of ‘protection’ or ‘assimilation’, institutional racialism fuelled Aboriginal resistance to policies of child removal in the early decades of the 20th century. Aboriginal communities in the Eurobodalla responded through political activism, initially through local resistance and later in association with members of the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association (AAPA). In 1928, the Association called for an immediate end to the policies of removal in which ‘girls of tender age and years are torn away from their parents … and put to service in an environment as near to slavery as it is possible to find’ (Markus 1990:177). Fred Maynard, then president of the AAPA, had also written to the Premier in 1927 demanding ‘that the family life of
Aboriginal people shall be held sacred and free from invasion and interference and that the children shall be left in the control of their parents’ (Maynard 1927).

On Monday the 14th of June 1926, Jane Duren wrote a letter to the King of England after months of unsuccessful protests to the Education Department regarding the exclusion of her grandchildren from the Bateman’s Bay school. Duren appealed to the King’s notion of ‘fair play’:

The Quadroon and half-caste people of Batemans Bay have been writing to different places namely the Minister for Education, the Child Welfare Department, the Aborigines Protection Board, and also our members of parliament but we cannot get fair play. Even the reserve where the coloured race were bred and born, the white race are trying to have them turned off on to another piece of land. It is unfair and I hope you will see that fair play be given; let them stay on the land that was granted to them, also compel the children to be sent to the Public School at Bateman’s Bay (Fletcher 1989b:125).

Heather Goodall provides an excellent background to the issue:

As early as 1918… the Bateman’s Bay Progress Association had informed the Protection Board that the reserve near that town was standing in the way of white residential development and requested its revocation and the removal of its inhabitants. The Board procrastinated until 1922, when it agreed to ‘encourage’ the reserve residents to move to a newly created reserve some miles out of town. The Koories of the town refused to move from the site where they had built their own houses and from which their children could easily attend the public school. After further pressure from townspeople, the Board in 1924 agreed to revocation of the town reserve. This did not occur immediately because the Koori residents’ total refusal to leave threw some doubt on the proposed development. The Lands Department now put pressure on the Board not simply to formalise the revocation but to remove the Koori community. The Board again capitulated, and issued removal orders in
June 1925. The townspeople had by this time decided to take matters into their own hands: the local Parents’ and Citizens’ Association voted to segregate the school in order to force Koories to leave the town. School segregation’s had become a well-tried tactic in the hands of white townspeople trying to force the removal of whole communities of Aboriginal people.... The Bateman’s Bay school segregation left fifteen to twenty Koori children with no schooling at all. Rather than leave the town, however, their families mounted a sustained and well coordinated campaign to have the segregation rescinded.

Numbers of white supporters, who all stressed their ALP affiliation in writing to a Labor ministry, appealed to the government on the issues of the injustice of the segregation and the exploitation of Aboriginal school age children’s labour in sawmills owned by some of the P & C members who had voted for the segregation. It was the Koori protesters, however, who put the school segregation in its context, linking it with the attempt to revoke the reserve as a means of forcing them out of town. Prominent in this protest was Jane Duren, whose grandchildren were among those excluded from the school... As it did often when a situation became too difficult, the Education Department called in the Child Welfare Department, but in this instance its inspector declined to remove any children from their families and in fact supported Koori demands for readmission to the school. An assurance was given by this inspector to white parents that ‘an influx’ of Aboriginal children from other areas would not occur and with State Departmental backing withdrawn, the two-year segregation collapsed’ (Goodall 1996:147-8).

Goodall’s account (based on an examination of APB and Departments of Lands and Education files) concludes that, along with ending the school segregation, the protests at Bateman’s Bay had been successful in preventing the revocation of the residential reserve.
Figure 14: Location of the Bateman’s Bay Aboriginal reserve

(Source: Department of Lands (NSW). Extract from Township of Bateman’s Bay, 1884 edition 3)

Figure 15: Portion R34759 was designated Aboriginal reserve 34759

(Source: Department of Lands (NSW). Extract from Township of Bateman’s Bay, 1884 edition 3)
Goulding and Waters' examination of the documentary record provides contradictory evidence based on a comparison of parish maps that illustrate that the reserve had indeed been revoked by 1932. Figure 14 shows the location of Aboriginal Reserve #34759 in the central residential sector of the Bateman's Bay township. Figure 15 increases the scale of the image and shows that portion R34759 was designated as Aboriginal reserve #34759. It is clear in the updated parish map of 1932 (Figure 16) that portion R34759 had been subdivided into at least 19 small residential allotments. The evidence provided by the parish maps is supported by a close reading of Jane Duren's comments in a meeting in Sydney on November 15, 1927.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* published an article detailing Jane Duren and Fred Maynard's petitioning of influential church figures in Sydney entitled 'Aborigines Want Racial Equality. Appeal to churchmen. Letter to the King':

Figure 16: Parish Map updated 1932 indicates the reserve was revoked

(Source: Goulding & Waters 2005:64)
There was a strange mixture of humour and pathos at a meeting at the Chapter House last night between the Bishop Coadjutor of Sydney (Rev. D'Arcy Irving), the chairman of the Australian Board of Missions (the Rev. J.S. Needham) and seven aborigines, members of the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association. The natives sought the opportunity of stating their claims to racial equality with the whites and certain other concessions for the less educated brethren. Two of the natives were women, and one these, Mrs. Duren, astonished Bishop D'Arcy Irvine by saying that she had written to the King.

"To the King?" he asked.
"Yes," replied Mrs Duren. "I addressed it to King George V., England."
Certain land, she complained, which had been reserved to the blacks for years, had suddenly been alienated for other purposes, and that had raised her ire. Hence the letter to the Head of the Empire.
"Do you think the King received it?" asked Bishop D'Arcy Irvine.
"Well," replied Mrs. Duren, "I registered it, so he must have."
She admitted, however, that she had received no reply; but the land had not been sold. For the most part, the president of the Natives' Progressive Association (Mr. F. G. Maynard), a "self-educated aboriginal," acted as spokesman, although his associates punctuated his remarks with interjections. They intelligently pleaded their claims for the repeal of the existing Aborigines Act, and its substitution by another that would be more agreeable to them, and that would make less distinction between them and the whites...

...Mrs. Duren said she had complained to the Minister for Education of the exclusion of black children from the State school at Bateman's Bay. The Aborigines Protection Board was a nice name, she had told officials of that office, but when this kind of thing occurred where did the protection come in? Influence was everything. If one did not have it one got nowhere (Anon 1927:11).

Duren's further protestations at the meeting regarding the school exclusions indicate that the land had been 'alienated', which is consistent with the Board's records of the
reserve being revoked a month earlier on September 16 1927 (McGuigan 1984:14). The evidence suggests that at the time of Duren’s meeting in Sydney the reserve had been revoked but the subdivided allotments had not yet been sold.

Despite the efforts of members of the Bateman’s Bay Parents and Citizen’s Association and the Bateman’s Bay Progress Association to force Aboriginal people to leave the town, it appears that the local Aboriginal community shifted camp to nearby crown land in the vicinity of Hanging Rock. Through the course of her research, Dale Donaldson noted that ‘closely linked to Hanging Rock Creek are the nearby Joe’s Creek, Corrigans Beach and Observation Point’. Together, these locations formed ‘the basis of social and economic life for Aboriginal families living in the area throughout the 1900s’ (Dale Donaldson 2006:46). With the availability of work in the nearby timber mills, coupled with the readmission of children to the Bateman’s Bay school, the town camps remained both an important residential base and a centre for local Aboriginal resistance to racial inequality.

January 26, 1938 marked the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet. In a conference entitled ‘Our Historic Day of Mourning and Protest’ held on the same day, over 100 Aboriginal people congregated at Australian Hall, Sydney to voice their outrage over the Board’s policies. The conference was organised by a parallel organisation to the AAPA, the Aboriginal Progressive Association (APA). In the report of proceedings published in the APA’s newspaper the Australian Abo Call, south coast Aboriginal voices were strongly represented by the following account:

Themes of dispossession and oppressive government policies were expressed by Mr Connelly from the south coast:

In 150 years the white men have taken away the hunting grounds and camping grounds of our people, and left us with nothing. We must have unity among ourselves or we will not succeed in the uplifting of our race. Under present laws Aborigines of good character are ordered off certain Reserves, and are hounded from place to place. How can the Board honestly call itself a Protection Board (Anon 1938:2)?
Mrs Ardler from Nowra also voiced her concern over the lack of educational opportunities for Aboriginal children on the south coast:

Ever since we have been children we have had to listen to white people saying what is good for us and what is enough for us, and with no education how could we find things out for ourselves? We can do nothing for progress until we get education for our children. I am sure that all Aborigines in Australia are behind us in this great movement (ibid).

Further, the Vice-President of the APA, Mr Johnson of Bateman’s Bay called for a campaign to be made to convince non-Indigenous Australians of the need for progressive, egalitarian policies:

As a Vice-President of the Aborigines Progressive Association, I want to say that we must work full hearted to win our objective. Nothing done half hearted is a success. We should all work together to arouse the mind of the white men and women of Australia to our awful conditions (ibid).

Despite these protests, the Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act was passed two years later, reconstituting the role of the Protection Board under the auspices of the AWB.

5.3 Life under the rule: contradictions and ambiguities

The emerging political consciousness among Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla during the 1920s and 1930s was clearly linked to a more general response to racialised policies by Aboriginal people in NSW via the AAPA and the APA. Initially, these policies were designed to exclude Aboriginal people from non-Indigenous social life in NSW. In his examination of the history of intercultural relations in the Macleay valley, Morris draws on Fanon’s (1976) conceptualisation of the colonial world as a Manichaean universe to describe relations between Europeans and Dhan-Gadi people during most of the 20th century. This section explores this notion in terms of the manifestation of laws designed to exclude Aboriginal people...
from social life and localised practices of exclusion. It will become clear that Aboriginal people living under the rule of the APB and the AWB were beset by a period of contradictions and inconsistencies.

The ideal of segregation was made legally possible in Section 14 of the 1909 Act, which gave the Board the power to remove Aboriginal people camped in the vicinity of townships. Yet, as the local responses to the Bateman's Bay reserve revocation suggests, local authorities did not always use these powers to force Aboriginal people to leave town. As Goodall's research shows, when the Education Department called in the Child Welfare Department to deal with the situation, 'in this instance its inspector declined to remove any children from their families and in fact supported Koori demands for readmission to the school' (Goodall 1996:148). The Bateman's Bay camps remained in the vicinity of the township for the next three decades, showing that no concerted attempt was again made to remove the local Aboriginal community. Furthermore, the support of members of the local white community in the 'battle of Bateman's Bay' (presumably unionised timber workers sticking up for their Aboriginal colleagues) also suggests that delineations between social worlds in the Eurobodalla were less clear-cut and far more complicated than the experience that Morris describes.

One aspect of the racialised policies of exclusion that was stringently observed relates to the service of alcohol at licensed premises. The 1943 Amendment Act created provisions for 'mixed blood' Aboriginal people to apply for Certificates of Exemption (known colloquially as 'dog tags') that released them from the provisions set out in the Act. Aboriginal returned servicemen were intended to be exempt from the prohibition of service of alcohol stipulation of the Act, but this provision was largely overlooked. In one case, a south coast Aboriginal man who had fought in the Second World War was jailed for entering the Bayview Hotel at Batemans Bay. As his nephew recalled, 'he was meant to be exempt from that law because he was a

75 Section 14 (Aborigines Protection Act, 1909):

The board may cause any aborigines, or any persons apparently having an admixture of aboriginal blood in their veins, who are camped or are about to camp within or near any reserve, town, or township to remove to such distance from the reserve, town, or township as they may direct.
soldier, but they jailed him anyway’ (Dale Donaldson 2006:42). The significance of an Aboriginal person’s service in the armed forces was displaced by a paper certificate deemed legally-binding by white publicans. As one informant recalled in Susan Donaldson’s collection:

I knocked around with white people. They’d say, ‘Come for a beer…’, and I’d say ‘oh, I don’t feel like one today’, but really I knew I would not get served. It was awkward. In order for an Aboriginal person to be served in a pub, you needed license papers, a ‘dog tag’ they called it, to be exempt from the law. You gave up rights under the Aboriginal Protection Board. So, when picking was on, Moruya was a ‘blackout’ and all the workers went to Prices Café. Those with dog tags could get a beer from the Adelaide Hotel and those that did not would have a beer on the banks of the Moruya River, in the park there, across the road from the Adelaide (Dale Donaldson 2008:25).

Recipients of Certificates of Exemption were not only exempt from the provisions of the Act; they were (in legal terms) rendered non-Indigenous. The main consequence of the exemption was that recipients were unable to legally visit or stay with their families on reserves (under Section 8.1),76 or to travel with family under the provisions of Section 10 (Aborigines Protection Act 1909).77

It was not unusual for a person to apply multiple times for an exemption certificate. In one example, a man was granted exemption at Jervis Bay in 1947, only to be granted a second certificate nearby at Berry in 1948. As one informant commented:

76 Section 8.1(Aborigines Protection Act, 1909):

All reserves shall be vested in the board, and it shall not be lawful for any person other than an Aborigine, or an officer under the board, or a person acting under the board’s direction, or under the authority of the regulations, to enter or remain upon or be within the limits of a reserve upon which aborigines are residing, for any purpose whatsoever.

77 Section 10 (Aborigines Protection Act, 1909):

Whosoever, not being an aborigine, or the child of an aborigine, lodges or wanders in company with any aborigine, and does not, on being required by a justice, give to his satisfaction a good account that he has a lawful fixed place of residence in New South Wales and lawful means of support, and that he so lodged or wandered for some temporary and lawful occasion only, and did not continue so to do beyond such occasion, shall be guilty of an offence against this Act.
Some old fellas used to say that if you applied for exemption it was a dog act: “You was givin’ up your family, givin’ up your Aboriginality”. But the dog act was done by the Board and ‘times you didn’t have a choice. If you wanted to work up in Port Kembla, or Sydney, or wherever, you had to be exempt. They wouldn’t give you a job ‘less you had your papers, your dog tag. It was just a bit of paper. If it got lost, then you’d have to front up somewhere else and apply for another one. That was what we had to deal with under the dog act.

In a similar example, another informant commented:

It was a dog act by the Board. Like licensing a dog. That’s the way we were treated. It had nothing to do with how dark you were. You had to have a clean record and have done what the Board had told you to. They could say you have to live here, or you have to live there. May as well put a collar ‘round our necks and be done with it.

In general, the 1909 legislation was collectively referred to as the ‘dog Act’ throughout NSW (see Goodall 1996).

For an exemption certificate to be approved, an Aboriginal person was required to have acted according to the rule of law and subject to the Board’s intent. In an excerpt from an exemption certificate granted in 1958, the applicant was required to declare the following:

(a) I have not at any time during the past two years been convicted of drunkenness.
(b) I have not during the past two years committed and offence against the Aborigines Protection Act, Police Offences Act, or the Crimes Act, or the Regulations pertaining to these Acts.
(c) I understand that in the event of my being issued with a Certificate of Exemption I shall not be eligible to receive any benefit, assistance or relief.
from the Aborigines Welfare Board, and, furthermore, I undertake to provide a proper home for myself and my family.

(d) I understand that in the event of the Aborigines Welfare Board issuing the Certificate of Exemption herein applied for, such Certificate may be cancelled at any time by the Board if considered necessary, and in that event I undertake to return the Certificate to the Board for cancellation immediately upon notification of such cancellation.

(e) I agree to accept the final decision of the Aborigines Welfare Board in relation to the grant or refusal of a Certificate of Exemption. (Dale Donaldson 2008:21).

The man was aged 31 at the time the certificate was granted and was described as being ‘quarter caste’. In the subsequent absence of assistance from the Board following the granting of exemption, the applicant provided for eight children through employment in a range of occupations, including working as a saw miller, cedar cutter, mechanic and fisherman.

Barry Morris notes that Aboriginal people in the Macleay Valley mapped out towns ‘in terms of levels of harassment’ (Morris 1988:112). In a similar way, Aboriginal people remember Bodalla fondly from the initial years when the Tuross was becoming a regional centre for seasonal picking. In oral testimonies recorded in Dale Donaldson’s collection, the Bodalla School is remembered as being a good school for both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous children. One informant commented that ‘we all got on with the white people, we were not much trouble’ (Dale Donaldson 2006:85). The Bodalla School bus collected the children of local Aboriginal workers from as far away as the Nerrigundah sawmill and the Tuross Valley bean and pea farms each day. In the townships of Bateman’s Bay and Moruya, levels of harassment varied according to the individual attitudes of business-owners. During the 1960s, the Bateman’s Bay Picture theatre was not segregated, while the Moruya cinema was. Aboriginal women were employed at several shops in Batemans Bay, and Price’s Café was the most popular eatery and meeting place in Moruya during the 1950s and 1960s because the owners were welcoming.
The final section of this chapter turns to the relationship between ideology, policy and praxis operating within discourses of assimilation. Throughout the course of the section (focused once again on the Wallaga Lake station), it will become clear that the ideology of assimilationism was itself beset by contradictions and tensions relating to the separation and merging of two social worlds that were not always neatly defined.

5.4 The scientistic logic of assimilationism

Assimilation itself is an inexact label. Historically it means a rejection of the old idea of protection and caring for the aborigines as a special class... The new idea of assimilation was a recognition that they were like us or could become like us and that in fact they were moving more and more towards our community... (and) we should work to help them to become like us and live like us, in the same community...

...There is need for them to escape shame over their racial origin but this does not necessarily mean that they have to retain their distinctiveness as aborigines (Hasluck 1952, cited in Dawn Magazine, January 1959:11).

Paul Hasluck’s presidential address to the 1952 Science Congress in Sydney appeared in Dawn magazine’s January 1959 edition, following an article devoted to ‘helping the camper who may desire to augment his rations with a little fresh fish’. Hasluck was the Federal Minister for Territories between 1951 and 1963 and was responsible for developing and implementing policies of assimilation in cooperation with state governments. In relation to the previous section’s discussion of the expansion of state intervention in NSW, the quote from Hasluck reveals the shift in policy emphasis from protection to assimilation in which the two terms were presented as oppositional in public debates. This section will discuss both the historical specificity and scientistic logic of assimilationism.\footnote{This thesis has chosen to use ‘scientistic’ rather than ‘scientific’ to describe this ideology to avoid confusing contemporary understandings of race as a cultural construct with early understandings of biological determinism.} Tim Rowse remarks that it is difficult to concretise when ‘assimilation’ began and ended; whether it was a
discrete historical moment characterised by particular legislature, or an enduring process of colonisation reflected in the collective experience of Indigenous people (Rowse 2005:1). This thesis will take the latter approach, following McConaghy’s distinction between ‘assimilation’ that refers to ‘a particular policy of the colonial state’ and ‘assimilationism’, which is an ‘ideology’ that ‘has persisted in many guises since the time of the early invasions’ (McConaghy 2000:151).

An aspect of the ideology of assimilationism that was characteristic of both the 19th and early 20th century is the manner in which the colonial ‘self’ differentiated itself from the Indigenous ‘other’. Central to this process of ontological differentiation was the constitution of the self in terms of a taken-for-granted notion of ‘whiteness’. As Anderson has argued:

The white race’ and the ‘white organism’ were figures of speech that implied a wide range of physical and cultural signs of European difference. During much of the nineteenth century, being ‘white’ in the Australian colonies usually meant claiming British ancestry (Anderson 2002:2).

In his speech on Federation in 1901, Prime Minister Edmund Barton reflected on the perception of biological uniqueness by describing white Australia as ‘wholly or almost wholly British in blood...she is the purest example of the parent stock to be found outside those isles’ (Barton 1901). The fantasy of a biologically homogenous Australian order with ‘organic integrity and stability’ drove the idea of ‘being white’ as the principle ontology against which the other could be compared (Anderson 2002:247). The notion of ‘whiteness’ not only informed policies relating to Aboriginal people, it was also reflected by policies of selective immigration. Barton clearly reflected this fantasy by expressing the government’s resolve to ‘make a legislative declaration of our racial identity which was always ours’ through the White Australia Policy (Barton 1901). As Lake and Reynolds commented, Australians thus ‘drew the colour line around their continent and declared whiteness to be at the very heart of their national identity’ (Lake & Reynolds 2008:138).

79 It could be suggested that ontological differentiation based on the notion of ‘whiteness’ has had a longer legacy. Anderson traced the use of ‘whiteness’ as a flexible category in scientific and public discourse through to the 1930s, although it is clear that the notion was still implicit in Neville’s 1947 schema (see Figure 17).
Figure 17: From Neville’s *Australia’s Coloured Minority* (1947). The notion of mathematically divisible Aboriginality.

The genetic arithmetic of the notion of ‘merging’ (the antecedent of the term ‘assimilation’), was perhaps most infamously outlined in Neville’s 1947 publication *Australia’s coloured minority: Its place in the community* (see Figure 17). Neville’s stark presentation of the three generations of elimination (or, of ‘whitening’) argued
that the anomalous ‘other’ had been effectively ‘bred white’ by the third generation of sexual congress with white men. Importantly, as Wolfe notes, this spectrum of mathematically divisible Aboriginality had ‘no tolerance of a ‘three-quarter’ category, which would have involved a ‘half caste’ ‘going back to the black’” (Wolfe 1999:185). This reflects Rowley’s observation that ‘assimilation could be equated with the process of genetic change in the proper direction’ (Rowley 1971:9).

The ideology of assimilationism was also coextensive with the rise of modernism in early 20th century government administrations that sought to scientise and systematise the rapid expansion of the state apparatus. As Morgan writes, modernism was:

characterised by a faith in the ability of human kind to triumph over nature, and of experts, planners and technicians to wipe away the encumbrances of traditions, to dispel social conflict, and to construct an orderly and harmonious society (Morgan 2006:16).

In terms of the development of assimilation policy, experts were called on to devise strategies of ‘uplifting’ Aboriginal people to take their place amongst an envisaged modern, culturally homogenous Australian order. One of the key specialists enlisted during this period was A.P. Elkin, whose anthropological understandings of Indigenous socio-cultural change informed much of the AWB’s policy during his years as the Board’s Vice-Chairman (see Elkin 1951). Part of the legacy of Professor Elkin’s views on assimilation as acculturation will be discussed in the next chapter in the context of the notion of dependency used to describe Aboriginal workers in seasonal employment. However, as McGregor (2005) has pointed out, Elkin’s view of assimilation as ‘cultural blending’ did not involve the complete loss of Aboriginal cultural forms and practices. Nor did Elkin believe that assimilation meant ‘that the Aborigines are to be lost in the general community’ (McGregor 2005:169). Elkin was confident that gradual, group-based assimilation would result in achieving an egalitarian future for Aboriginal people who would ‘develop pride in their own cultural background and distinctiveness while at the same time being loyal and useful citizens’ (McGregor 2005:172). However, Elkin’s notion of assimilation was overlooked in the development of a federal framework (Welfare Ordinance) in 1953.
under the direction of Paul Hasluck, which ‘gave no credence to “cultural blending”’. Hasluck simply presumed the ‘rapid and comprehensive decay of Indigenous tradition’ (ibid). The modernist project of ‘uplifting’ thus cast aside the enlisted expert in favour of policy directed towards cultural homogeneity.

Critical to the perceived ‘success’ of assimilationism was the operation of discourse. As Wolfe argues:

the assimilation policy was not held out as a strategy for eliminating the Aboriginal population. On the contrary, it was almost invariably couched in a rhetoric of improvement that recapitulated the missionary project of uplifting and civilising (Wolfe 1999:176).

An element of the process of convincing Aboriginal people of the benefits of ‘civilisation’ was the production of representations and the dissemination of propaganda designed to reinforce institutional praxis. *Dawn* magazine was produced by the AWB from 1952 to 1975 and was distributed to all Aboriginal stations and reserves. The ‘Letter from the Board’ in the first edition of *Dawn* introduced the magazine to its intended readership in a manner that made little effort to hide its purpose:

We extend to you all the right-hand of fellowship and brotherly love. We look forward to the day when the aborigines will be regarded equally with all other members of the community and the need for a Welfare Board will no longer exist. We want you to be good citizens, independent and reliable. The Board hopes that this newspaper will be the means of disseminating knowledge and understanding (Dawn Magazine, January 1952:1).

*Dawn’s* 1952 masthead (see Figure 18) included the image of a Warlpiri man, Tjungurrayi, juxtaposed against the image of a modern city and separated by the sunlit title. As Morgan argues, ‘this signifies both a transition from primitiveness to modernity and from ignorance to enlightenment’ (Morgan 2006:22). Amongst articles devoted to ‘home hints’ (designed to inculcate ‘domestic respectability’) were carefully selected representations of the ‘success’ of the Board’s social engineering
project. As Morgan suggests, the magazine’s primary purpose was to convince the broader community ‘that all was well in Aboriginal affairs, (and) that the Board was exercising benign paternalistic guidance ensuring a bright future for the first inhabitants’ (Morgan 2006:27). 80

**Figure 18: ** *Dawn* magazine’s 1952 masthead cover.

![Dawn magazine's 1952 masthead cover](Image courtesy of AIATSIS, Dawn and New Dawn 1952-1975)

In discussing the significance of *Dawn* magazine during this period, one informant who lived at Wallaga Lake during the 1950s commented with derision:

They couldn’t have expected that we swallowed that rubbish. The young ones would sometimes flick through to see if they got their picture taken, but after that we’d use it to light the pot-belly (stove)!

The operation of discourse in this instance delimits an examination of the dissemination of knowledge or ‘truth’ along the lines of Morris’ Foucauldian analysis. In articulating his approach to asymmetrical relations of power in the Macleay Valley, Morris writes:

The subject group is turned into an object of knowledge over which others, as the dispensers of truth about the needs and requirements of the subject group,

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80 Several informants I spoke to remembered eagerly awaiting issues of *Dawn* magazine for photographs and stories about friends and family dispersed throughout NSW. While *Dawn* was clearly a form of propaganda, it also served a positive social role in some circumstances.
gain control. Correspondingly, there is a loss of control over communal identity as the group is called upon to fulfill the constructions of its identity created by those in authority (Morris 1989:3).

The dissemination of knowledge in the form of *Dawn* makes explicit claims about the perceived end-point of the assimilatory project in terms of a bright, egalitarian future for Aboriginal people. However, the propagandist action of these truth-claims is negated when the magazine is poignantly given to the fire. To this extent, at least, the operation of discourse did not directly result in a loss of control over identity, but rather an emphatic counter-discourse of resistance and a reassertion of communal alterity in opposition to the construction of an identity created by the AWB. The intention of the Board in convincing Aboriginal people of the benefits of assimilation premised on egalitarianism was brushed aside as sheer naivety.

In 1954 the manager of Wallaga Lake Station, Mr A. Morton, contributed an article to *Dawn* entitled ‘On the road to assimilation: Wallaga Lake is proud’. Morton wrote:

"The policy of the Aborigines Welfare Board, as it has been reiterated on several occasions, is ‘Assimilation’. But the question is often asked as to what is being done towards assimilating the Australian aborigine…"

"…From this station, three years ago, two families were chosen for assimilation with the white community, and now two more families are ready for assimilation. Two modern fibro cottages were built for Rex Morgan and Percy Thomas at Cobargo, a progressive town about 14 miles from the settlement. Both men are permanently employed by the Department of Main Roads; and are not only popular with their working mates, but have been wholeheartedly accepted by the local residents of the district. Mrs Morgan and Mrs Thomas are members of the local tennis and golf clubs, and have participated in the Cobargo golf tournaments, and have won several prizes…"

"…The acceptance of the aboriginal people by the white community has greatly helped the assimilation policy, and, therefore, one can quite confidently say
that with more co-operation and understanding from the white Australian, the aborigine will continue to be well on the road to assimilation (Dawn magazine, November 1954:3).

Morton’s article provides a valuable insight into how station managers at Wallaga Lake perceived the goals of the assimilation project. First, Morton places primary emphasis on the permanent employment of Mr Morgan and Mr Thomas in being ‘ready for assimilation’. Secondly, it is important to note that no mention is made of the two couples’ identity in terms of biological categories. Finally, despite the emphasis on breaking up family groups in the policies of the AWB, the two couples chosen for assimilation into the broader community at the ‘progressive’ town of Cobargo were related by marriage. These three elements again illustrate the flexible manner in which official policy was realised in station management.

Morton’s article also reflects the broader tone of Dawn’s propaganda, insofar as the assimilation project was presented as a successful process of ‘uplifting’. A similar example was contributed by Mr George Ord who was the Manager of Wallaga Lake station in 1963. In his report to Dawn, Mr Ord commented that ‘the Board has done and is doing great things for the welfare and comfort of the people of the station’ (Dawn Magazine, January 1963:9). Reflecting what Morgan described as the Board exercising ‘benign paternalistic guidance’, Mr Ord also emphasised the positive aspects of station management practices (Morgan 2006:27). In his comments on previous management at the station, Mr Ord stated:

No story of the station would be complete without mention of former manager and matron, Mr. and Mrs. Sampey, who were in charge here for many years and dedicated their lives to the welfare and happiness of the people and were loved and respected by all (Dawn Magazine, January 1963:9).

Regardless of whether this statement reflected the experience of Aboriginal people living under the ‘much loved and respected’ regime of Mr and Mrs Sampey, the manifestation of the Board’s policy in on-the-ground management practice was vouchsafed in the consistent rhetoric of success.
Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with a broad swathe of history beginning with the implications of the 1909 Aborigines Protection Act for the stability of family life in Aboriginal communities. The chapter has focused on the experiences of Aboriginal people living in and around the Eurobodalla townships during a period of shifting administrative priorities and political rhetoric. I have argued that boundaries between policies of ‘protection’ and ‘assimilation’ were not clearly delineated, and transitions in governance from the APB to the AWB was, in reality, about building on existing legislation to establish more systematic and effective forms of control over Aboriginal people’s lives. Policies focused on children were also linked to contestations over land and gave rise to Aboriginal resistance to racial inequality with some support from sympathetic factions in the broader community. Through an examination of the ‘battle of Bateman’s Bay’ and the association of Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla with broader resistance movements in NSW, the chapter has demonstrated that an Indigenous political consciousness was emerging during the early decades of the 20th century that transcended ‘the local’.

This chapter has also identified a range of contradictions that Aboriginal people experienced under racialised discourses of exclusion and assimilation, and variable levels of harassment by both government officials and non-state individuals in the Eurobodalla towns. Racialised policies and discourses in the Eurobodalla were local manifestations of broader geopolitical processes, in which colonial administrations sought to ‘tidy up’ the presumed mess of colonisation. The modernist project (including the rapid expansion and bureaucratisation of the state) devised strategies to reconfigure the Australian social order. Among the collection of experts assembled to create a modern, homogenous and egalitarian Australia, were anthropologists who believed that the encumbrances of ‘tradition’ could be swept away through acculturation and assimilation. As Lattas and Morris note, ‘concerns with social pathologies and cultural dysfunctions that featured in functionalist approaches in the 1940s were a form of anthropology suited to colonial concerns with the scientific
Assimilationism, as an ideology, was expressed through anthropological literature, policy advice, government policy, government propaganda (most notably *Dawn* magazine) and the everyday utterances of both non-Indigenous and subjugated Aboriginal populations.

Following an examination of the discourses of assimilation, the next chapter argues that the use of the notion of ‘dependence’ (as unsuccessful assimilation) in previous studies in the south coast region obfuscates the innovative and socially meaningful ways in which Aboriginal people interacted with the economy. The chapter traces the rise of bean and pea production in the Tuross valley in the 1930s through to the constriction of the industry in the 1970s. During this period, the vast majority of pickers were Aboriginal people, with south coast families being joined in the picking fields by itinerant workers at the height of the season due to the large labour force needed to ensure crops were picked in the best condition. The chapter will also show that seasonal horticulture was both economically and socially interconnected with the timber industry in the Eurobodalla with clear divisions of socially-appropriate work by gender and age. In a similar manner that levels of harassment provided a determinant on which spaces and businesses Kooris frequented, the attitudes of mill owners and farmers in the Tuross Valley contribute greatly to the ways in which the timber and picking days are remembered. These spaces, I argue, are mapped onto the Eurobodalla landscape as places deep social significance.

81 Lattas and Morris argue that anthropology is similarly implicated in neoliberal forms of racialised governance today. While I am not convinced by their argument, a detailed analysis of the issues that relate to this topic is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis. See Altman and Hinkson (2010) for a range of different perspectives.
6 Peas, beans and timber mills

The Lavis brothers owned these couple of farms. They were good to the Aboriginal people. Down there near the bend in the river was the big camp on old Roley’s farm. We used to go swimming in the blue pool near there when we were kids. All the big families camped here. The waterhole was crystal clean back then.

As the Eurobodalla road narrowed into the River road and followed the course of the Tuross towards Cadgee and our destination at Nerrigundah, the memories continued (interrupted by the melee that had broken out in the back seat between our two dogs).

So on the right there next to the mountain road is Tyrone and over there on the left is Waincourt. Up at Cadgee was Dudley Murphy’s farm. We used to pick there too. Dudley used to drive the mail bus and give all the kids a lift to school at Bodalla. There was the Bodalla Company as well, back down the road near the Lavis’s. The Stanfords had Tyrone. They used to have an old shed up the back of the property where the pickers stayed...And that one there’s Tally Ho. Eddie Lavis owned that. There was another camp down there near the river.

We crossed the river and headed north. After hearing so many stories, arriving at Nerrigundah for the first time was a shock. It was a ghost town. Following the proclamation of The Gulph Goldfield in 1861, Nerrigundah grew slowly in comparison to Araluen, which ‘boomed lustily throughout the 60s’ (Gibbney 1989:67). The brief allure of gold was soon replaced by timber. By the end of the century the town was gradually in decline and the miner’s cottages became the homes of mill workers.

Up there was the old mill and the mill house. Both whitefellas and blackfellas used to live in the mill house. The old church was over there. All the buildings were knocked down or burnt to the ground I think. The men all worked in the mill. Some pushing logs, others were benchmen working the
timber. The women would head down the road to pick beans and peas and the kids would help too on the school holidays. Good days back then. Hard work, but good days.

It was becoming clear to me that these were not just paddocks, properties and remnants of destroyed buildings but places of memory imprinted onto the social landscape and history of a people.

Following on from an examination of town life for Aboriginal people during the early and mid 20\textsuperscript{th} century, this chapter shifts its focus to the heavily wooded forests of the Eurobodalla and the rich river flats of the Tuross Valley. Section 6.1 examines the participation of Aboriginal men in the forestry sector. While employment prospects for Aboriginal men were mainly restricted to tasks involving heavy manual labour, involvement in the forestry sector enabled the development of high-level skills that became a source of pride. Positive memories of work in the timber mills are also associated with a degree of flexibility and autonomy for men who could pick and choose where they worked based on whether a mill paid fairly. The fond memories Aboriginal men have of working as benchmen, sawyers and mill hands are also a reflection of the inherent sociality of working with one’s mates. Section 6.2 traces the rise of seasonal horticulture in the Eurobodalla that became a source of employment for local Aboriginal women, children and men. The labour-intensive harvesting of beans and peas also drew hundreds of itinerant Aboriginal workers to the region at the height of the season (generally coinciding with the summer school holidays). Section 6.3 begins with the reminiscences of a woman who grew up during the ‘picking era’. It argues that the period between the 1940s and 1970s is remembered as a relatively bounded era in which Aboriginal families were both on the run from ‘the welfare’, and following patterns of seasonal movement (or ‘beats’). Several writers have described similar patterns of mobility variously as ‘beats’, ‘runs’ or ‘lines’ (Austin-Broos 2009:107; Beckett 1988; Birdsall 1988; Sansom 1982; Taylor & Bell 2004:21). The section cites some similarities between this period and what Attwood (1986) has termed the ‘halcyon days’ for Aboriginal hop-pickers in Gippsland in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. It argues that seasonal picking was a richly social and communal pattern of employment that enabled Aboriginal people to reassert a sense of collective identity (or ‘unity’). The chapter concludes with a
critique of the notion of dependence used by previous studies to describe Aboriginal seasonal picking on the south coast. It argues that the term obscures both the important contribution Aboriginal people have made to the economy of the Eurobodalla, and the socially meaningful aspects of seasonal employment.

6.1 From bush work to benchmen

The tree came down, slowly at first and then with a crackling roar as it wrenched branches from neighbouring trees before hurling itself with a deafening crash, onto the ground, gouging the earth with its jagged, broken limbs. A large gap appeared in the canopy above. The birds fell silent for a moment, as if in tribute to the fallen giant, and then resumed their chorus. The men emerged from their refuges and set about the next phase of the operation: cutting up the trunk into the required lengths ready for the “sniggers” who would haul it out of the forest to be loaded onto a wagon for delivery to the mill (Hudson & Henningham 1986:289-290).

Through an examination of the expansion of settler capitalism in the Eurobodalla, Chapter Three showed that Aboriginal people were predominantly drawn into employment as seasonal labourers. The tasks involved in these early years involved the labour-intensive work of land clearing, general farm labouring, and contract work stripping bark in the bush. The transformation of the economy towards a true capitalist mode of production in the Eurobodalla occurred via the development of two interlinked industries: diversified agriculture and forestry. The emergence of the timber industry in the mid-19th century incorporated Aboriginal labour initially through a range of activities under the general category of ‘bush work’, and later in the employment of Aboriginal men in all aspects of the timber industry. While the timber industry throughout Australia developed rapidly as a second ‘gold rush’ - this time concerned with ‘red gold’ (Australian Cedar) – forestry in the Eurobodalla was a more gradual process intertwined with notions of transforming, or ‘improving’, the land for European-style farming. The dense stands of south coast hardwood forests stretching from Milton to the Victorian border became a valuable source of quality timber (Hudson & Henningham 1986:133). Chapter Three has shown that by 1880 at least 13 timber mills had been established in the Clyde River region alone (James 2001-16). Dale Donaldson’s (2006) collection of oral histories identifies at least 21 named mills in the Eurobodalla region in lived memory although it is likely that the
number was significantly higher (see Figure 19). Aboriginal memories of participation in the timber industry are proud ones, reflecting positive experiences of fair pay and mastery of the skills required for milling timber.

The most well-paid and respected role in the timber industry available to Aboriginal men was to work as sawmill benchmen. A benchman was responsible for measuring and sorting the timber and required a fastidious attention to detail. While it is true that in any industry the quality of a product is the sum of its composite processes, a skilled benchman was a significant contributor to high quality milled timber. An informant in Dale Donaldson’s collection describes the hierarchy of roles in the timber industry:

...there was the Manager who, in those days, was never an Aboriginal person. Below the manager were the benchman, then the sawyer, the docker, the tailor and the contractor who loaded the logs onto the trucks and delivered them. There was also the feller and the snigger out in the bush as well as the team of a few men at remote spot mills. There were never any women in the mills either; we were usually doing seasonal picking work at farms nearby the sawmills. The men worked on the farms on the weekends, but the women never worked in the mills (Dale Donaldson 2006:63-64).

Recalling his father’s work in the mills, another informant commented that ‘benchmen were hard to come by, so he always had work’ (Dale Donaldson 2006:30). The informant’s father worked in sawmills at East Lynne, Batemans Bay, Moruya, Nerrigundah, Stony Creek and Narooma. This pattern is consistent with other oral histories that show Aboriginal benchmen moving from sawmill to sawmill, depending on which sawmill manager ‘paid proper wages’ (Dale Donaldson 2006:96). Figure 19 shows the approximate location of named sawmills in the Eurobodalla. Interestingly, a significant number of the mills are known to Aboriginal people in relation to the names of the mill owner/managers.

82 Several ‘spot mills’ have been mentioned in the oral histories but there are few details regarding their number and location.
83 It is worth clarifying that Stony Creek (near Brou Lake) is an entirely different location to the much maligned Stony Creek campsite near Bega. The latter camp received broad publicity in the 1960s about the poor living conditions of its Aboriginal residents, four miles from the township of Bega. For a selection of the press coverage, see Blanchard (1964) and Sanders (1967a, 1967b).
While sawmill technologies changed from the water and steam-driven 'frame saw' types of the mid-late 19th century to the improved 'plant, machinery and material-handling methods' of the 1960s, the sawmill benchman remained a valuable...
employee to a sawmill manager (Hudson & Henningham 1986:12-17). As Sue Feary notes, it is significant

that at a time when protests were occurring over payment of equal wages in the pastoral industry, leading to the landmark walk-off from Wave Hill Station by the Gurindji people in 1966, Aboriginal men on the south coast were picking and choosing which sawmills they worked in, based on the wages that were being offered (Feary 2007:74).

At the very least, the Eurobodalla sawmills were paying award wages by the 1960s. Despite being generally critical of the social and living conditions of Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla (in which it described racial discrimination ‘on a similar scale to South Africa’), the Aborigine Advancement League’s 1961 report stated that mill workers at Nerrigundah were receiving award wages (Anon 1961:4-5).

The survey was sponsored by the trade union movement that was, along with the Australian Labour Party and the Communist Party, agitating for civil liberties for Aboriginal people and the abolition of the Aborigines Protection Act throughout the 1960s. The timber industry in NSW has a rich history of unionism dating back to the establishment of the Timber Workers Union in 1898 (Hudson & Henningham 1986:175). As Chapter Five has shown, the union movement and ALP affiliates provided support to the Aboriginal community at Batemans Bay during the mid-1920s school exclusion and reserve revocation. In that instance, the white supporters stressed their ALP affiliation while citing the ‘exploitation of Aboriginal school age children’s labour in sawmills owned by some of the P & C members who had voted for the segregation’ (Goodall 1996:147-8).

It is evident from the oral histories that Aboriginal men are proud of their timber-working skills and memories of working in the industry are a source of high esteem. An informant in Chittick and Fox’s collection articulates this point well:

My father worked in the sawmills and I went into the same game. It was the only thing at the time that we could get into apart from bean pickin’. The only job! As much as I loved the bush, I knew then that it was the only way to get some money...Yeah my sawmill days were hard work. It was mainly
blackfellas that always worked on the benches, you know. We never made it a chore and that was the beauty of workin’ there. The Kooris that worked in the sawmill, they always sang, they were happy, you know. You could always hear the cooeeein’ out and the singin’ out over the buzz of the saws...There used to be a lot of Kooris working in the mills once, but what happened was automation – and I think the dole had a lot to do with it. Everything happened because of the white man that thinks with the head and not the heart. Because of the speed of production, quantity was comin’ into the sawmills and not quality. That was goin’ out! Some of the timber I see comin’ out of some of these sawmills now, I wouldn’t build a shithouse with, you know. Fair dinkum! (Chittick & Fox 1997:128-129).

Two key points emerge from this recollection. The first is the degree to which the availability of work was restricted for Aboriginal men. The second is the social aspect of work – ‘working alongside your mates’ gives a positive association with sawmill work but Koori timber workers also held great pride for the quality of the product they produced.

Expanding on the first point, the previous chapter has argued that educational disadvantage served to stratify the work available to Aboriginal men. The record of Education policies in NSW suggests that curricula were designed to inculcate Aboriginal boys with skills appropriate to manual labour, thus providing a ceiling on employment-ladder aspirations. As one informant in Dale Donaldson’s collection recalled, ‘mainly the Blackfellows worked at the mills, on the sanitary run, and on the roads because they had no education’ (Dale Donaldson 2006:31). Other work available to Aboriginal men during the 1920s was working in the Moruya quarry, which supplied granite for the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Several Aboriginal men also worked in the construction of the Moruya Heads break walls using granite from the Moruya quarry (Dale Donaldson 2006:59). Throughout the 20th century, Aboriginal men continued a long association with fishing, both on a subsistence basis and for the market. In general, the archival records and oral histories suggest that employment in heavy manual labour was characteristic of Aboriginal men’s engagement with the settler economy of the Eurobodalla throughout most of the 19th and 20th centuries. Work in the timber industry emerged from early involvement in ‘bush work’ and
generations of Aboriginal men in the Eurobodalla have had at least some association
with the forestry sector. While some men maintained continuous work in the timber
mills, others used their skills to compliment income derived from other employment.
Several men were skilled sleeper-cutters who worked relatively independently in the
bush. One Aboriginal sleeper-cutter, for example, would walk from Dalmeny into the
bush near Coopers Island with his sleeper tools to cut timber into eight foot lengths.
‘The sleepers would be left where they were found and collected later using a horse
drawn chain’ (Dale Donaldson 2006:15). The price per sleeper in 1956 ranged from
£10 to £14 depending on the quality of the timber. Work in the forestry sector thus
enabled Aboriginal men some degree of flexibility and autonomy.

To return to the second point, Aboriginal people have a positive association
with work in the forestry sector through the payment of fair wages, the development
or maintenance of social relations with fellow mill-workers, and through the mastery
of skills required to produce quality timber products. The payment of fair wages is a
critical element of this association when placed into the broader Australian context of
low (and unpaid) Aboriginal wages (see Kidd 2006; May 1994; Rowley 1971). Tim
Rowse has suggested that Aboriginal workers in northern Australia valued relations
with their employer more than they did cash wages (Rowse 1988). While I do
acknowledge that relations with employers was an important aspect of Koori timber-
workers’ involvement (as reflected by mills being remembered in association with the
owner/manager’s names), I think the value of fair wages probably outstripped the
value of maintaining relations with employers in this context. The fact that Koori
benchmen worked at several different mills over the course of their careers does not
give weight to an argument about employee loyalty based on relatedness in this case.
Yet, it is clear that a relational component within the Aboriginal workforce (the
‘cooeein’ out and the singin’ out over the buzz of the saws’) was a strong factor in the
positive association Koori workers have for the timber industry.

In her research into Aboriginal engagements with the pastoral industry of the
Northern Territory, Ann McGrath argues that people were ‘initially compelled to
work on stations, but later when they started to excel at the work, it took on positive
meanings’ and became a source of individual and collective pride (McGrath 1987:44).
Dawn May’s later study downplays this positive association, arguing that those living
in remote centres were inclined to give a highly interpretive account of their lives in
the cattle industry. May proposes that the informants, ‘confronted with mounting
social problems, showed a tendency to remember fondly their life as pastoral workers’
(May 1994:9). In the context of south coast managed stations, Aboriginal men (in
particular) were compelled to work in manual tasks both on and off the station.
Indeed, station managers at Wallaga Lake mainly discriminated between those who
worked and those who didn’t. By developing high-level skills in the timber industry
and excelling in their careers, the experience of Koori mill-workers reflects
McGrath’s argument that it genuinely became a source of pride, both individually and
collectively. There is certainly a risk that retired workers remember their ‘glory days’
in the kind of distorted positive association described by May, yet the oral histories of
the Eurobodalla are overwhelmingly consistent in describing timber work as good,
hard work that paid fairly.

6.2 The political economy of the picking era

While work in the forestry sector remained strictly in the male domain,
seasonal picking provided employment for Aboriginal women, men and children in
the Eurobodalla from the 1930s through to the decline of the industry in the 1970s. In
their study of south coast seasonal picking, Castle and Hagen found that ‘by 1950
almost all bean pickers were Aborigines, white seasonal labourers having found more
pleasant jobs elsewhere in a full employment economy’ (Castle & Hagen 1978:162).
This era is extraordinary when placed into the context of the level of governmentnal
intrusion into the lives of Aboriginal people throughout NSW and the pervasiveness
of the discourses of assimilationism. Little effort was made by government agencies
to regulate patterns of work and living conditions during this era. There are two
interlinked reasons for this. The first is that it was beneficial for the APB and AWB
to have Aboriginal people seasonally employed in order to reduce budgetary demands
for rations. Secondly, it was also in the interests of the non-Indigenous farming
community to maintain conditions whereby they could profit from paying low wages
to Aboriginal pickers. Through their reliance on a workforce that could be turned on
and off like a tap, farmers in the Eurobodalla had powerful reasons not to ‘call in the
welfare’. The South Coast Labour Council reported that south coast pickers were
receiving a flat piece rate in 1961 ‘irrespective as to the market price of the beans’ whereas ‘in other parts of NSW the pickers receive a flat rate as a base and then receive a sliding scale of payment according to the fluctuation of the market price’ (Anon 1961:2).84

The rise of the manufacturing industry following the application of the protective tariff of 1908 came into direct competition for labour with primary producers. The tariff stipulated that the manufacturing industry was required to pay ‘fair and reasonable wages’. In the words of the Bodalla Company’s director in 1912, the protective tariff had ‘drawn a large proportion of the labour required in the country into the towns’ (Whiteford 1985:17). The labour shortage, which had hamstrung the expansion of the primary sector, was alleviated to some degree by the ‘work test’ stipulations of the Aborigines Protection Act, even though the legislative aim (in terms of revenue) was reducing the cost of government rations. While there were Aboriginal milkmen working at Wallaga Lake, there is no evidence to suggest that Aboriginal people were employed in milking in the Tuross Valley, reflecting what Morris describes as segmented employment patterns based on an ‘ideology of pollution’ (Morris 1985:99). Aside from labour devoted to ‘improving the land’, Aboriginal people were not widely employed by dairying producers in the region. School records for Milton, Wreck Bay, Bateman’s Bay, Turlinjah and Wallaga Lake between 1883 and 1949 illustrate clearly the range of employment options available to Aboriginal men and women. Under the listing of the parent or guardian’s occupation, men were predominantly identified with forestry-based work as timber cutters, forestry gangers, mill hands, mill workers and sawyers. Another common occupation was labouring, while other men were identified as fishermen, handy men or road workers. Women were primarily employed as domestics and several had listed ‘home duties’ as their occupation, although this may have been unpaid household work. It is significant that none of the listed occupations related to seasonal picking. This reveals the seasonal character of the work, in which the main picking season fell in the school holidays.

84 With few other employment options available to them, Aboriginal pickers were hardly in a position to dispute exploitative pay rates.
Racial attitudes and educational disadvantage were not only manifested in stratifying the type of work available to Aboriginal people, they were also manifested in competition for lower-paying jobs and through contestations over land. The end of the First World War resulted in pressure being placed on the Protection Board to revoke reserved land for the use of returned servicemen. As Cane notes, by 1926, 75 percent of reserved land in the state had been revoked, including the revocation of two reserves at Bodalla in 1920 (Cane 1992:11). However, as Chapter Five has shown, the major pressure on Aboriginal communities living on reserves was from town expansion. Contestations over reserved land were followed by the Great Depression of the 1930s, which impacted heavily on the lives of Aboriginal people. This is reflected by a 200 percent increase in the number of people living at the Wallaga Lake station between 1921 and 1939 (Long 1970:62). After hitting rock-bottom in 1932, the employment situation slowly improved. Long notes that the Second World War created a labour shortage, rapidly reducing the unemployment rate of Aboriginal people in reserves from 36 percent in 1940 to 3.8 percent by 1944 (Long 1970:31). The unemployment rate for Australia then stabilised and between 1945 and 1974 it fluctuated around an average of two percent (ABS, 2005). The return of servicemen after the war, combined with the economic recovery to create a highly competitive
labour market in which Aboriginal people were consistently relegated to lower-paying jobs.

**Figure 21:** Location of named farms along the Eurobodalla and River roads.

The Second World War caused a rise in the production of beans and peas, which nearly doubled to meet the demands of the armed forces (Davidson and Davidson 1993:351). In the Tuross River Valley, over 15 farms diversified to include the production of legume cash crops. The farms are located along the Eurobodalla/River road that follows the meandering path of the Tuross River upstream to Eurobodalla, before branching off and following Gulph Creek towards Cadgee and Nerrigundah (see Figure 21). The farm on Cooper’s Island, downstream from Bodalla, also capitalised on the availability of well-irrigated, fertile soil to include horticultural acreage. In the Deua valley, several farms around Moruya were similarly transformed into paddocks consisting of long rows of poles and struts to support the sprawling vines. The farms at the ‘back of Bodalla’ were mostly family-
owned operations with exception of the Bodalla company (formed after Mort’s death in 1879), which had also included horticultural acreage. The Bodalla Company kept fastidious records of payments made to individual bean and pea pickers between July 1959 and June 1962, corresponding to three financial years or growing seasons. During that period, the farm employed 183 individual pickers with the highest number of individual pay claims per month peaking at 219 in March 1962. Taking into consideration the fact that the Bodalla Company farm was only one of the farms in the Tuross Valley that employed pickers and that the company itself was predominantly geared towards dairying, it is likely that the number of pickers employed at ‘the back of Bodalla’ was well over 500 at the height of the season. This number is consistent with Castle and Hagen’s observation that ‘pickers came from Wallaga Lake station in the growers’ trucks, but at the height of the picking season local labour could not meet the demand. By Christmas, there were sometimes another 400 Aborigines on the Far South Coast’ (Castle & Hagan 1978:162).

The picking season began in the Tuross Valley in October and ran until March and farmers would want to get two picks off the crop during each season. The following reminiscence of a local farmer gives a good indication of the nature of the industry:

After planting the beans or peas on the rich river flats in Eurobodalla or Cadgee...there was a lot of labour involved later in picking the fresh crop, usually only a first or second pick...A number of Aboriginal people were always employed during the picking season. A good strong back was needed and a fast picker would pick up to 8 bags of beans in a day (80lbs per bag)...It was important to work the long hours otherwise the crop would spoil with beans becoming too old and stringy (O'Toole 1997:30).

Importantly, the Bodalla Company wage cards show that picking work was not always continuous but rather, it was characterised by targeted increases in labour in order to harvest the crops in the best condition. Further, as Figure 22 illustrates, the availability of work was not consistent for each growing season. Depending largely upon climatic conditions, the variability in crop production was erratic and workers employed in picking therefore needed to be highly flexible about when and where
their labour would be required. While the oral record suggests that other farms paid regularly on Saturdays, there is no evidence suggesting that this was regularly the case on the Bodalla Company farm.

Figure 22: Number of pay claims per month for bean and pea picking, The Bodalla Company 1959-1960.

During their 1961 survey, the South Coast Labour Council visited a property near Eurobodalla and noted that pickers were allowed to stay on the farm permanently and ‘the people are quite pleased with relations with their employer’ (Anon 1961). This pattern is consistent with oral accounts of picking life, where Aboriginal families were welcome to live in farm sheds or to set up camps on the properties so that they could work when required. In many cases, men were holding down continuous employment in the nearby sawmills while women and children would work together in the picking fields. Many families from Wallaga Lake moved over to the Tuross Valley temporarily during the picking season. Others who continued to live on the station were rounded up by farmers who needed labour and ferried to and from the Tuross Valley on the back of trucks. The Bodalla Company wage cards show clustering around family names and illustrate that whole families were working together when their labour was needed. As Dale Donaldson remarks, ‘picking work
was hard work, but paid off because a lot of time was spent amongst one’s family’ (Dale Donaldson 2006:84). The condition of mainstream ‘full employment’ that existed throughout this period also drew hundreds of itinerant Aboriginal workers to the Tuross Valley looking for work during the picking season. The banks of the Tuross River were the sites of itinerant camps for travelling seasonal pickers and local families alike. While most itinerant workers moved on at the end of the main season, some stayed and made strong connections to the Eurobodalla region that last through to the present day.

6.3 All one mob: the social life of seasonal pickers

While we were fishing for bream one evening on dusk, my companion at the jetty reminisced about her childhood years spent on the Tuross Valley farms.

They were the best days then. Mum made us work, but that’s just the way things was. We all had to pick for us to make a livin’. For the family to make a livin’. We was always on the move – runnin’ from the welfare – so we followed the work up and down the coast. Mum used to scare the daylights out of us when we played up. She’d say that she’d get the welfare fellas onto us if we didn’t stop acting up. Scared us half to death! It’s funny, we all had a laugh about it later, but at the time it really scared us.

The memories were interrupted by a burst of laughter. ‘Hey, are you going to get that line in the water or are you just gunna sit there and play with that knot all night?’ My mangled attempts at a clinch knot had not gone unnoticed and my fishing companion offered to lend a hand. In the half-light, the line was whipped through the eye of the hook, guided through four or five swift arcs, then back through a loop. The coil was deftly slid into place with the comment ‘silly bloody gubbah’.

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85 The Dhurga word Gubbah is commonly used interchangeably with ‘whitefella’.
The conversation picked up where it had left off:

We just travelled about with the other pickers. We'd go down to Bega for a couple of days and camp along the bank of the river there. Then we'd all head back up and camp out at Bingi Bingi and just live off the sea for a week. Mutton fish and lobsters, stuff like that. We used to walk everywhere back then. We'd walk from Bingi to Lavis' farm to go pickin' again – for the second pick – and stay out there for a couple of weeks working the other farms. Sometimes we'd get a lift, but we'd do a lot of walking. It was hard livin' back then. The people, the Aboriginal people, they didn't have houses much then. Not like nowadays. We'd mostly camp on the riverbanks, but some of them farmers would have an old house or a shed for the bean pickers to stay in. Old Roley Lavis would go into town and get food for us. Most of them farmers were good to us, the Aboriginal people. It was better to stay outta the towns in the '50s and '60s - that was when you got into trouble. They'd say, 'piss off back to your mission', or 'where's your dog tag'? Or whatever. In the winter we'd stay at Wallaga Lake for a while and I'd go to school. Life was simple then. We didn't really have any possessions or much money, but we'd all pitch in and help each other out. If we walked past someone's camp late after pickin' they'd call us over for tucker. We had a support system but we had to work. If we didn't have any money for food, someone would always help out. That was the law for the Aboriginal people. That was the unity of the people, the Aboriginal people. We are all one mob.

While positive memories of picking work in the bean and pea fields of the Tuross and Deua valleys are complicated by the experience of poor pay rates and working conditions, it is apparent that the picking era is a clearly delineated period in the memories of south coast Aboriginal people. In his examination of Aboriginal itinerant workers in Gippsland in the mid-late 19th century, Bain Attwood has portrayed the period as the 'halcyon days' in the history of European colonisation (Attwood 1986:150). 86 Attwood describes a period of seasonal work in which

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86 Dictionary definitions regard this usage of the word 'halcyon' as denoting a time (generally in the past) of idyllic tranquillity or peace. My reading of Attwood's usage is that this period can only be regarded as 'halcyon days' in relation to earlier violent encounters with Europeans, the patriarchal rule
Aboriginal people enjoyed a degree of autonomy away from the paternalistic control of the missionaries at Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers. Aboriginal hop-pickers in Gippsland, Attwood argues, were a proficient and reliable workforce who treated the seasonal work as a communal and highly sociable working holiday. Aboriginal hop-pickers were also ‘not necessarily compliant workers’ and would ‘not tolerate any imperious behaviour’ on the behalf of their employers because it ‘smacked of the missionary control they endured the rest of the year’ (Attwood 1986:147). Hop-picking was ‘a spell from the strict regime of the mission stations, a time to reassert a sense of themselves unfettered by missionary perceptions, an opportunity to reaffirm links with the traditional world, and a period of unrestrained enjoyment and companionship’ (Attwood 1986:148). While Aboriginal seasonal picking began in the Eurobodalla more than four decades later than the Gippsland ‘halcyon’ era, there are several aspects of Attwood’s account that are worth analysing in relation to the story at the jetty. The first is that Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla did enjoy a degree of relative autonomy in their movements while they were engaged in seasonal picking, juxtaposed against the fear of ‘the welfare fellas’. Secondly, Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla have fond memories of picking as communal and richly sociable periodical employment. Finally, engagement in picking work enabled the reassertion of identity through notions of the unity of south coast Aboriginal people.

One of the main consequences of the ‘separation era’ was the widespread and ever-present fear that ‘the welfare’ would remove Aboriginal children from their families. For people who value kinship relations above all other concerns, the removal of children from their parents would have been an inconceivable, inhuman act of cruelty. It is therefore peculiar that a parent’s threat to ‘get the welfare fellas onto us’ was seen as a humorous strategy to stop children ‘acting up’. Rather than trivialising the policy of child removal, the ‘joke’ emphasises the perceived horror of the reality they faced: foregrounding the unspeakable in a humorous exchange. Musharbash (2008) and Redmond (2008) have both drawn on Freud’s theory of humour to analyse fraught intercultural relations in northern Australia. Musharbash argues that, along with weakness and laughter, fear and laughter are ‘often co-present

experienced on the missions, and the later period in which Aboriginal people in Gippsland were cast adrift in ‘the desperately hard struggle to survive in the European economy and community’ (Attwood 1986:150). It is clear from Attwood’s material that seasonal work in Gippsland was hardly idyllic or tranquil.
in Warlpiri discourse’ and suggests that ‘we need to theorise laughter not as “either”, but as “both”: dispelling and creating the monstrous’ (Musarbash 2008:273, 276). Similarly, Redmond argues that laughter and humour have the ‘tendency to short-circuit the taken-for-granted rationalisations that underpin the social world’ (Redmond 2008:254). The threat of the unspeakable (actually committing one’s children to a reformatory institution) thus both dispels and creates the monstrous. The humour of the unspeakable threat is made possible by short-circuiting taken-for-granted rationalisations about the sanctity of familial relations.

The ever-present fear of ‘the welfare’ was, however, just one factor influencing mobility patterns during the picking era. As Chapter Four has argued, institutionalisation did not result in the creation of a sedentary population utterly segregated from the outside world at Wallaga Lake. Rather, the arbitrary manner in which government policy was delivered in station management facilitated the maintenance of customary patterns of mobility, or ‘beats’, within a broad geographical area that was marked by nodes and webs of familial, social, cultural and economic significance. According to Jeremy Beckett, ‘all Aboriginal people have “beats”’, which he suggests are ‘defined by the situation of kin who will give them hospitality, within which they can travel as much or as little as they please, and where they are most likely to find spouses’. Beckett further notes that ‘proximity is only a minor factor’ (Beckett 1988:131). Through the course of his research in northern NSW, Beckett found that a range of external forces (including government policies and shifting employment prospects) resulted in family and friends being scattered across a broad geographical area (Beckett 1988:122-3). Since people from one region were likely to intermarry within a relatively small range of communities, the beats of many people within the broad geographical area were also likely to coincide. On the south coast, government policies (including the fear of ‘the welfare’) and shifting employment prospects played a significant role in dispersing friends and family along, and beyond the coastal and hinterland regions of the Eurobodalla. The story at the jetty shows that, during her childhood years, the informant’s family followed a seasonal range in movement that included moving between the horticultural farms ‘at the back of Bodalla’ and Bega, the coastal rock platforms and beaches of the south coast, and the Wallaga Lake station. This relatively autonomous movement along
‘beats’ linked families and friends together at various times of the year, reaffirming relatedness through exchange (or as the informant termed it ‘the support system’). 87

The story at the jetty makes it clear that engagement in picking was valued as richly sociable and communal periodical employment. Other oral histories of the south coast are consistent with this account. One informant in Dale Donaldson’s collection provided the following recollection:

When I was in primary school we camped at Lavis’ farm, Bodalla in the school holidays and picked peas and beans, and caught up with family. It was a working holiday: there were 10 of us, our mother and father could only afford to have a holiday this way. They would let us keep the money and we would spend it at the Red Rose Café in Moruya. Before that, we visited, I must have been carried, I recall being amidst the peas and being left at Bodalla at Nana Bella’s, in old timber mill hut (Dale Donaldson 2006:88-89).

Similarly, an informant in Chittick and Fox’s collection recalled:

When we was only young kids, we used to go bean and pea picking to Bodalla with our parents for the Christmas holidays. And the thing that was good about it was that you’d meet all your old mates down there, all the other kids from the other places. It was a big get-together. Everyone camped and lived together. It was really peaceful down there. Travelling around, that’s what we used to do. Used to go down every weekend, too, when school went back. Every Friday night we’d pack up our stuff and Dad would finish work and we’d travel to Bodalla. Sunday afternoon, we’d finish up pickin’, get our pay, pack the car up and come back home to Bomaderry. And we’d do that until the bean season was finished (Chittick & Fox 1997:99).

A common theme that emerges through the oral histories of the picking era is that the social aspects of bean and pea picking (meeting up with old mates or camping

87 I use the term autonomous purely to denote the relatively unregulated movement of Aboriginal families that were engaged in seasonal employment during a period when official policy dictated high levels of surveillance and control.
together) is generally emphasised over the physical rigours, poor working conditions and pay rates.

A final similarity with Attwood’s account of the ‘halcyon days’ in Gippsland is that bean and pea pickers in the Eurobodalla were also able to reassert a sense of collective identity through their involvement in seasonal work. Sue Wesson suggests that from as early as the 1870s Aboriginal people on the Monaro tablelands and the south coast had come to regard themselves as one people (Wesson 2002:199, 254-6). Through processes of dispersal, south coast Aboriginal people were scattered across the region, yet through the availability of picking work, their ‘beats’ were seasonally coincidental. The following oral history from Chittick and Fox’s collection reinforces this point:

People might have thought it was demeaning to be picking but it made for the unity in the Koori people down the south coast and over into Victoria. It was the unity of the Koori people through the movements of the picking seasons and seasonal work. The sad thing is that this generation of kids growing up will never experience a unity that was back then…It was about unity and caring and sharing and respect and what have you. It’s not a unity thing anymore. That’s lost! (Chittick & Fox 1997:137).

The communal and richly social nature of seasonal picking therefore had the effect of maintaining and reinforcing intra- and inter-familial affiliations. Or, to put in the words of the informant at the jetty, ‘if we didn’t have any money for food, someone would always help out. That was the law for the Aboriginal people. That was the unity of the people, the Aboriginal people. We are all one mob.’

6.4 A critique of the notion of dependence

Studies by Bell, and Castle and Hagen have documented the relationship between Aboriginal people and the economy of the south coast during the mid to late 20th Century (Bell 1955; Castle and Hagan 1978). Both studies conclude that Aboriginal people were dependent either on the employment offered by settler
society, or on handouts and rations provided by the state. At first glance, the use of the word ‘dependent’ appears to mean a state of reliance by Aboriginal people on settler society for the means of survival. However, the notion sits within a more pervasive trope that questions the viability of heterogeneous social and economic forms in Aboriginal communities. In 1951 A.P. Elkin outlined what he considered to be culturally-determined stages relating to the response of Aboriginal people to white settlement along a continuum ranging from a pre-colonial stasis to full assimilation (Elkin 1951). Elkin’s notion of ‘successful’ assimilation was based on the total adoption of white culture by Aboriginal people and was influential in shaping the terms of reference used in both anthropological and broader public discourse during the debates of the time. As part of a longer legacy, this paradigm heavily informed Bell’s study into the economic conditions of ‘mixed blood’ Aboriginal people between Port Kembla and the Victorian border along the south coast of NSW. Bell identified the importance of seasonal picking to the livelihood of Aboriginal people in the Bodalla and Bega districts and described the level of their involvement in the horticultural industry as being a ‘monopoly’ (Bell 1955:186). Interestingly, Bell concluded that this pattern of employment suggests ‘the lack of any successful economic assimilation...into the general Australian economic system, and, hence, their economic dependence upon the white community’ (Bell 1955:198). Aboriginal involvement in seasonal work (as opposed to continuous employment) was seen as lacking the kind of syncretism espoused by Elkin and, therein, impeding the process of assimilation.

In a later study, Castle and Hagen also trace the rise of Aboriginal involvement in the picking industry of the Bega Valley and conclude that engagement in the sector situated Aboriginal people in a position of structural dependence that, through processes of industry decline and increasing involvement in the political sphere, presaged a transition to ‘independence’ in the mid-1970s (Castle and Hagan 1978). This cycle, they argue, was constituted by an annual oscillation between seasonal picking and what Elkin classed ‘intelligent parasitism’ (Elkin 1951). While stating that the resident Aboriginal families were descendents of a dispossessed and

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2 For an examination of the assimilation policy debates between Elkin, Streloow and Hasluck see McGregor (2002).
displaced people whose ‘former way of life had since then become impossible’, and whose ‘customs and law had broken down’, the idea that assimilation had failed is not explicated (Castle and Hagan 1978: 159). Castle and Hagen argue that by the 1920s only a very small proportion of Aboriginal people were engaged in the workforce and even less had consistent contact with the cash economy. This pattern is presented as being continuous through to the 1960s and was, in part, caused by the policies of the APB and the AWB. Castle and Hagen’s understandings of this period are clearly presented in the following passage:

In all aspects of life they were subject to white authority. They were socially segregated and dependent for their welfare on white charity and benevolence. They accepted these relationships. There was among them no movement to change or alter the world in which they found themselves. If they had a consciousness of themselves as Aborigines, then it was a fatalistic one which held that what had occurred was inevitable, and that the future could bring no change. Those of them who were Christians knew of the Ten Tribes of Noah. For them, salvation came in the next world. For the unregenerate, there was no hope (Castle and Hagan 1978: 164).

According to this reasoning, regardless of whether Aboriginal people were engaged in wage-labour relationships or not, the failure of assimilation through the perceived inability of Aboriginal people to blend into the broader social and economic milieu established a mire of hopelessness and dependence. The transition to ‘independence’ in the 1970s, brought about through processes of industry decline, increasing political agency for Aboriginal people, greater provision of town housing and broadening employment opportunities, could then be rationalised as successful cultural syncretism (and hence, successful assimilation).

While converging on the same conclusion of dependence, neither Bell nor Castle and Hagen pay attention to the non-monetised value of resource use for Aboriginal people working in seasonal employment. The continuation and reconstitution of a fishing tradition amongst south coast Aboriginal people is still a
defining aspect of Yuin people's lives today, and (in terms of providing an independent avenue for economic activity) should be addressed in a re-examination of 20th century seasonal picking. Moreover, neither study acknowledges the long record of engagement between Aboriginal people and the expanding settler economy. Finally, I argue that the use of the notion of 'dependence' (as unsuccessful assimilation) obfuscates the innovative and socially meaningful ways in which Aboriginal people interact with the economy.

Through an examination of the historical record, it is clear that the expansion of the settler economy was concurrent with governmental intervention into the lives of Aboriginal people. Early engagement with the settler economy was characterised by the transformation of existing social and economic practices and an independent and viable economy primarily based on fishing. Contra to Castle and Hagen's argument that 'Aboriginal people neither sought nor were given the opportunity to adapt to or participate in the white economy' (Castle and Hagan 1998:25), the archival record on the NSW south coast points to the active participation of Aboriginal people in the settler economy, accompanied by the rapid incorporation of the settler economy into pre-existing practices and seasonal movements. Through the post-frontier period, this engagement was characterised by seasonality, and constrained by government policy prescribing where and how Aboriginal people should live. The policies of assimilation, while initially aimed at breaking up Aboriginal intra- and transfamilial groups, also sought to create a racially stratified underclass that preserved the status quo. These policies were accompanied by extremely low mainstream unemployment after the Second World War in which Aboriginal people filled a structural niche in low-paying jobs. Bean and pea production involved heavy manual labour with poor working conditions, but was a desirable alternative for people because it enabled families to work together.

In light of the historical record, this section discusses some aspects of the use of the term 'dependent' in previous studies to describe Aboriginal bean and pea pickers. It does so in terms of a seasonal rhythm of economic opportunity and mobility (rather than a seasonal work cycle involving Elkin's 'intelligent parasitism')
and of the interdependence between farmers and pickers. The studies by Bell (1955) and Castle and Hagen (1978) both neglect the importance of economic activities occurring outside of the paradigmatic ‘real’ economy, thus placing the emphasis upon the role of ‘patron’ employers and the welfare state. Michael Bennett’s study of Aboriginal responses to the colonial economy in the Shoalhaven and Illawarra regions of NSW between 1770 and 1900 concludes that Aboriginal people maintained ‘a viable and independent economy in articulation with an expanding capitalist economy’ (Bennett 2003:270). Throughout the post-frontier period, Aboriginal people lived what Scott Cane describes as a ‘difficult and precarious socio-economic existence’ and consistently turned to fishing as an avenue for self-sufficiency (Cane 1992:12). The success of Aboriginal fishers also drew them into conflict with white fishermen, reaffirming conservative racial delineations. As Goodall notes:

While employment opportunities for Guris [Kooris] were remarkably more limited on the south coast than in the other regions, Guris [Kooris] self-sufficiency was enhanced not only by subsistence fishing but by fishing for the market, at which they were successful enough to cause local fishermen to protest to the Protection Board through the Fisheries Department in 1914 and 1918 (Goodall 1982:115).

As an opportunity for self-sufficiency, fishing also provided an avenue for a certain kind of autonomy – one which has been eroded by the successive revocations of reserves and increasing restrictions placed on Aboriginal fishers through the regulation of commercial and recreational fishing. The oral history record also describes fishing activities as being an important aspect of seasonal work, with families setting up temporary camp at nearby beaches and estuaries when they were not needed in the picking fields. Fishing also provided a vital means for subsistence for Aboriginal people who were camped on the banks of the Tuross River when picking was on. Rather than describing the involvement of Aboriginal people in the horticultural industry in terms of a seasonal work cycle sustained by ‘intelligent parasitism’, it would be more appropriate to see picking work and fishing as seasonal responses to changing economic circumstances. As such, the record suggests that past
engagements between Aboriginal people and the settler economy have been mutually constituted as a result of complex historical processes.

Reflecting a broader trend in Aboriginal Studies throughout much of the 20th century, the term 'dependency' has been used ubiquitously to describe the economic status of Aboriginal people living on the south coast to the extent that it has obscured the importance of Indigenous contributions to the region's economic development. Bell's study concludes that south coast Aboriginal people were dependant either upon the employment offered by the white population or on the financial assistance provided by the government (Bell 1955). This conclusion was supported in Castle and Hagen's study in the Bega Valley, where bean and pea picking were rendered as dependent activities (Castle and Hagan 1978). The conflation of seasonal employment to a state of dependence is significant considering that the horticultural industry was largely dependent on Aboriginal labour. In Bell's words:

Seasonal work (crop picking) claims the largest number of Aborigines engaged in primary production, with casual work on dairy farms and in grazing, forestry and fishing completing the picture. Accustomed down through the years to performing seasonal work, the South Coast Aborigines now consider it their chief occupation. Indeed, they have a monopoly. Whites do not offer for it, partly because it is identified with the Aborigines, and partly because it is temporary (Bell 1955:186).

The reasons for the decline of seasonal horticulture on the south coast in the 1970s are also pertinent here. Some people cite increasing mechanisation and competition in bean and pea production from farmers in Queensland and New Zealand driving down prices and making manual, cool-climate horticulture simply unsustainable. The recollections of an informant in Chittick and Fox's collection give some weight to this premise:

It was hard work but it was good. Some of the rows would go from here to buggery. You wouldn’t see the end of the rows, some of the bean paddocks we picked in. The rows would be a million mile and a half long. That was
from the ‘50s up to the ‘70s. Then I give it away. Well, to us, it’s like an era that’s closed because, once they started bringing in those big machines, it sort of just ended. We never bothered going back no more (Chittick & Fox 1997:100).

Others point to changes in the Aboriginal workforce (Castle and Hagan 1978:167). Increases in the political agency of Aboriginal people throughout NSW resulted in more and more strikes and walk-offs due to poor pay rates and labour conditions. Also, increasing opportunities for regular employment accompanied by the greater provision of both town housing and welfare benefits meant that Aboriginal people had a broader range of options available to them. In the case of the south coast, the interdependence that existed between Tuross Valley farmers and seasonal pickers is subsumed by a racially-motivated delineation between the structural position of Aboriginal workers and their non-Indigenous counterparts. An Aboriginal worker’s employer was a patron; a whitefella’s employer was simply their boss.

Conclusion

The drive out to Nerrigundah made it clear to me that the farms and mills of the Eurobodalla have been imprinted onto the social landscape of Aboriginal people; people who remember running from the welfare, labouring and laughing in the timber mills and picking fields, while following the seasonal rhythm of employment and sociality along their beats. In her investigation into the association of Aboriginal people with named locations of significance in the Eurobodalla, Dale Donaldson found that, aside from places associated with resource collection, the second most dominant theme (25 percent) related to locations of employment. The study also found that these locations were closely linked to significant campsites and sites associated with resource collection, recreation and travelling routes (Dale Donaldson 2006:120).

This chapter began with an examination of Aboriginal engagement with the forestry industry that developed as an extension of early engagement in ‘bush work’.
During the postwar period, Aboriginal people were consistently relegated to low-paying, manual labour employment under conditions of low mainstream unemployment. This pattern was reinforced by educational disadvantage and government policies that were designed to racially stratify employment-ladder opportunities for Aboriginal people throughout NSW. The structural niche in the region’s employment market caused by the rapid diversification towards seasonal horticulture was filled by low-paid Aboriginal bean and pea pickers.

This chapter has also shown that Aboriginal men were receiving fair wages in the forestry sector, reflecting a mastery of the skills required to produce high quality milled timber. These skills enabled Aboriginal people, both individually and collectively, to develop new sources of pride as self-motivated workers who were prepared to start at the bottom and work their way up. These skills also allowed for a certain degree of independence and flexibility, while the work itself was richly sociable. Aboriginal involvement in seasonal picking offered a similar degree of autonomy and sociality despite the ever-present fear of ‘the welfare’. Seasonal picking allowed whole families to work together and to live, often for weeks and months at a time, communally with other pickers. This coincidence between dispersed families’ ‘beats’ also enabled Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla to reassert a sense of themselves as being ‘all one mob’, while relatedness was reinforced through exchange within intra- and inter-familial relationships.

This chapter has also provided a critique of previous studies’ use of the term ‘dependence’ to describe Aboriginal seasonal employment on the south coast. It has argued that the studies by Bell, and Castle and Hagen related seasonal employment to what was perceived to be unsuccessful assimilation and disregarded both the continuance of a modified subsistence economy and the complex historical processes that shaped the picking era. By describing seasonal employment as ‘dependent’, these studies obscure the important contributions Aboriginal people have made to the economy of the Eurobodalla. The following chapter begins with the end of this era, tracing the impacts of the demise of seasonal horticulture and broad-scale forestry. It analyses the notion that the ‘era is now closed’ in a monumental shift in the life-worlds of Aboriginal people in south-eastern NSW. Through the discussion of a range of factors, including increases in the political agency of Aboriginal people, the
provision of town housing, welfare and citizenship entitlements and generational change, the chapter will argue that significant ruptures have occurred. While these ruptures arose at the same time (and through many of the same processes) as those attributed to problems associated with the outstations movement in Australia's north, it will become clear that the unusual localised experience of, and reactions to, these processes can only be understood in terms of the particular history of intercultural relations in the Eurobodalla.
On a mild day in May 2006, a large group of people gathered at the Tilba Tilba sports ground to hear a speech from the Honourable R.J. Debus M.P. The politician began by acknowledging the traditional owners of Yuin lands, the long history of Aboriginal connection with those lands and the relatively short history of dispossession by European colonists. Debus continued:

And then in the 1970s, the logging began. It was the protests over this by the Yuin people – by men like Gubbo Ted Thomas, Jack Campbell and Percy Mumbler – that heightened white awareness to the significance of these lands to the first human possessors of them.

The pressure for the protection of Aboriginal heritage on Mumbulla Mountain continued. Mervyn Penrith wrote to Neville Wran, the then Premier. His letter was accompanied by a petition signed by a large number of south coast Aboriginal people. Wran listened, and he acted.

And so in the 1980s, Biamanga was forever protected as an Aboriginal Place. In 1994, it became a National Park and in 1997 a larger National Park. And finally, in 2001, I was pleased to enlarge it once again to reach its present size. There was a similar campaign to save Gulaga, where we meet today. On 23 June 1988, Ann Thomas addressed a meeting of 140 local people at Central Tilba and spoke about the significance of Gulaga to the Aboriginal people. The meeting offered its unanimous support for the protection of the whole mountain.

The campaign to stop logging on Gulaga gained momentum and received widespread support. The campaign was successful, and logging was halted in December 1988. Today’s generation of Aboriginal people have honoured their forebears by persevering with their campaign to have Biamanga and Gulaga protected for all time.
Now it is part of the conservation estate of NSW and a declared place of great cultural significance to Aboriginal people. But the words 'cultural significance' are only one way of saying – I think a poor way of saying – a much more enormous thing.

To stand where one's ancestors stood, to drink where they drank, and fished, and hunted, and feasted, and to see again with new eyes the views they saw in days far back, to partake again of memory in this way, to know your home again, and Gulaga, your mother, is an experience beyond words and beyond all modes of telling, and singing, and recalling to people like myself, the strangers who do not know.

It is that experience, however, we invoke today, in these lands we now commemorate and give back to the people with whom they belong. We are well met in this honoured place, to which we now wish, in the meagre English words we have, a good bright morning of renewal, and homecoming, and repossession.

Let me close by quoting the words of Guboo Ted Thomas, whose involvement in the long campaign I mentioned earlier. While addressing a Parliamentary Committee inquiring into the future of these lands, he said:

"Why we are interested in this land ... is that they are sacred sites, they are part of us. You have your cathedrals in Sydney where you worship. It is the same for Aboriginal people ... We do not want to lose our culture. We are trying to restore all our sacred sites. We want to retain where we worship. This is what we are looking at."

Well, here in Tilba Tilba on this day, I say on behalf of the NSW Government that the Yuin people will retain the lands where they worship. The historic injustice is now corrected (Debus 2006).
The speech ended with the handback of Aboriginal land in the Biamanga and Gulaga National Parks— an enormous victory for Aboriginal people after a long and bitter struggle.

While one ‘historic injustice’ has been corrected, Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla have experienced a fraught transition to the era of so-called Indigenous self-determination. As a response to Aboriginal campaigns for civil and land rights in the 1960s, Indigenous policy was restyled after the 1967 referendum in an expansion of the welfare state. The referendum approved two amendments to the Australian constitution to allow for Aboriginal people to be granted full citizenship rights and to be included in the census. As one informant commented, this was a period in which Aboriginal people ‘got our rights and we had to fight hard to get ‘em’. Austin-Broos notes that ‘this extension of citizens’ rights involved a broad and significant policy shift from assimilation to self-determination for indigenous people’ (Austin-Broos 2009:4). However, the state did not, in fact, relinquish control over Indigenous affairs. Cowlishaw argues that the shift to the political rhetoric of self-determination ‘was an attempt to do away with the racial hierarchy which the colonial state had established and protected’ (Cowlishaw 1998:147). In doing so, ‘the state repositioned itself as the liberator from past oppression’ while ‘the past remains present in a complex social milieu where social relations and identities have been constructed around racial categories and differentiations’ (ibid). The former assimilation policy’s overt emphasis on normalisation was rebadged as policy that ‘depended on Aborigines wanting the ends determined by the state’ (Cowlishaw 1998:165). Normalisation (dressed as self-determination) required Aboriginal people to determine their futures within relatively narrowly-defined boundaries imposed upon them. Self-determination policies produced new bureaucratic structures and processes but, more importantly, they produced profound social effects.

This chapter examines three themes that have emerged in the Eurobodalla in the context of ‘self-determination’. The first is the nature of Aboriginal campaigns for civil and land rights and the character of bureaucratic frameworks that were

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89 One of Rowse’s key conclusions in White Flour: White Power is that self-determination “was not a fresh start. Rather it inherited and built upon many of the practices of ‘assimilation’” (Rowse 1998:221).
developed in response. Rather than providing a means for a harmonious, broad-scale transfer of rights to country, the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act (1983) provided limited scope for Aboriginal claims to land and gave rise to increasingly bitter internal politics within NSW Aboriginal communities. Section 7.1 begins with an analysis of the processes by which Aboriginal people ‘got their rights’. It argues that social relations in south coast Aboriginal communities are characterised by layers of identification along a continuum ranging from immediacy to detachment. The section suggests that these continuous layers of identification are incommensurable with the native title process as it currently stands and is therefore the source of both friction and factionalism in social relations, and a strategic disadvantage for south coast land claims. Section 7.2 examines the bureaucratic frameworks that were developed to replace the assimilation-era style of management at the Wallaga Lakes station. It examines the rhetoric of self-determination in the context of continuing poor policy outcomes that have led to a situation in which Aboriginal people experience what has been described as ‘third world conditions’ at a location less than four hours drive from the locus of the Commonwealth bureaucracy in Canberra.

The second theme that emerges in the context of ‘self-determination’ in the Eurobodalla is that a shift has occurred that is comparable to, yet entirely distinct from, ruptures that have occurred elsewhere in remote and northern Australia. For the Western Arrernte, Austin-Broos describes this moment of change as a second monumental ‘ontological shift’ following the withdrawal of the missionaries, and the incorporation of Aboriginal people into the Australian welfare state. Austin-Broos argues that this incorporation ‘has been a stop-go and involuted process of innovations, misfires and discrimination’ that resulted in the Western Arrernte being marginalised and on ‘the social and spatial periphery of market society and the state’ (Austin-Broos 2009:7). In the context of the Eurobodalla, this thesis has shown that Aboriginal people have long been incorporated into the market economy. The fundamental shift that occurred under ‘self determination’ has been the demise of seasonal horticulture and forestry as both a source of employment and as a mode of living.

Section 7.3 begins with the memories of an informant who grew up during the picking era. A deep sense of nostalgia emerges that is contrasted with the limited
employment options for Aboriginal people today. The informant’s notion that ‘the era is now closed’ also implies a strong sense of generational demarcation between generations as one era is closed off, while a new one has opened. The final section of this chapter (7.4) interrogates the notion of generational change by returning to the experiences of the hitchhiker. It analyses Aboriginal youths’ consumption of the culture of hip hop as a subversive reassertion of identity during a period in which working class Kooris and non-Indigenous people are in direct competition for scarce employment and affordable housing.

7.1 ‘We got our rights’: relatedness and difference in a changing political context

The emerging Indigenous political consciousness in the 1900s has received considerable coverage in the literature. Henry Reynolds (1981) was influential in changing conventional beliefs that Aboriginal people were passive victims of colonialism through his examination of the range of Indigenous responses and reactions to colonialism. Bain Attwood (2003) traces a history of Aboriginal struggle amidst ever-changing, historicised perceptions of race. Attwood explores the ways in which ‘European ideas and ideals about the course of historical change...exerted a powerful influence upon conceptions of Aboriginality and in turn determined the rights of those defined as Aborigines’ (Attwood 2003:xii). Attwood also examines how that same history influenced the nature of the campaigns for Indigenous civil rights in a complex interplay between ‘historical experience, memory and historical narrative’ (Attwood 2003:xii). Heather Goodall’s (1996) study is similar in historical scope but focuses on the long record of Aboriginal resistance and activism in NSW with a particular emphasis on contestations over land. Both Attwood and Goodall chart the early struggles against land alienation and the various state policies of the separation era, through to increasing political mobilisation during the 1960s culminating in the Freedom Ride of 1964 and 1965, the 1967 Referendum and radical activism that led to the establishment of the Aboriginal tent embassy in 1972. More recently, Jennifer Clarke (2008) has recast Aboriginal activism within broader international struggles and the anti-establishment movements of the 1960s.
In this thesis, Chapter Five has examined Aboriginal responses to historicised perceptions of race, contestations over the school exclusions and revocation of the reserve at Bateman’s Bay, illustrating that from as early as the late 1920s an Indigenous political consciousness had transcended the ‘local’ through links with the AAPA. The chapter also demonstrated that local participation in state-wide political organisation was continuous through the 1930s in association with the APA. This section is concerned with the period immediately leading up to the successful granting of Aboriginal civil rights and subsequent struggles for land rights in the Eurobodalla. It examines the emergence of a unified black identity as both a pan-Aboriginal and transnational movement before returning to the formation of six local Aboriginal land councils in the relatively short geographical span of the Eurobodalla shire. Through an analysis of these processes, the section will argue that layers of identification with others (along a continuum from immediacy to detachment) have been an important aspect of Aboriginal identity formation and production. The notion of ‘neo-tribalism’ that has been used to describe the reiteration of located identity through the native title process, I will argue, is a shallow (and, dare I say, cynical) interpretation of this recent history.

The term ‘pan-Aboriginal’ has been used to describe the sense of common purpose and unity that emerged in the discourses of Aboriginal activists in their quest for civil equality and land rights (Martinez 1997; Tonkinson 1990). This sense of common purpose and unity was not new to the 1960s however. Both the APA and the AAPA stressed that Aboriginal people needed to unite for their voices to be heard in the 1920s and 1930s. As Chapter Six has shown, the communal nature of seasonal picking also gave rise to the notion that seasonal pickers and, more generally, Aboriginal people in south-eastern Australia, came to consider themselves as being ‘all one mob’. Julie Martinez argues that the pan-Aboriginal movement should be thought of in terms of ‘Aboriginal nationalism’ that emphasises ‘loyalty to clan, to family and this reflects the many Aboriginal nations’ (Martinez 1997:146).90 Rather than diminishing located identity, Martinez argues that it enriches it and provides a ‘stronger base on which to found a national “imagined community”’ (ibid). Ravi de

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90 Martinez describes this as postmodernist nationalism, as opposed to modernist nationalism that stresses homogeneity and conformity.
Costa (2006) has recently provided a refreshing and unconventional analysis regarding the relationship between Aboriginal people and the international flow of ideas between colonised, indigenous and black minorities. The notion of Indigenous transnationalism is developed by de Costa to aid in understanding the history of Aboriginal activism in Australia. In view of these two concepts, pan-Aboriginality and Indigenous transnationalism, I argue that the layers of identification range from familial, clan and corporate, to the regional and national, to more detached minorities who have suffered similar experiences.\(^91\)

While acknowledging that the 1967 Referendum was a significant victory for Indigenous civil equality, de Costa notes that:

Soon after the referendum, many saw that its promise might not be fulfilled; there was a lack of immediate and substantive change to match the assumptions of the campaign’s supporters. One problem was that the referendum campaign created an illusion of consensus. On the one hand, it seemed to many indigenous peoples a major act of recognition; yet, for most whites it was in fact the high-water mark of the assimilation project (de Costa 2006:92-93).

The sense that little had changed was a major driving force for a shift in Aboriginal activism towards more radical means and ends.

Increased mobility, de Costa argues, was another significant factor in a shift towards a radical transnationalism. ‘The numbers of indigenous peoples who travelled outside the country increased dramatically during the 1960s. In addition, other indigenous and minority peoples started visiting Australia more regularly’ (de Costa 2006:99). The referendum also drew attention to the plight of Aboriginal people from empathetic international observers through an increasingly globalised mass media. In Sydney, radical African American literature was being circulated that helped Aboriginal people to make sense of their social situation in a transnational context.

\(^91\) When discussing why the hitchhiker thought that the African-American rapper ‘50 Cent’ was ‘deadly’ (an expression of deep admiration), he explained that it was because he was a rich and successful black man who was ‘takin’ it to the white man’. However, the hitchhiker stressed that 50 Cent (‘Fifty Cent’) was ‘not a blackfella, but a black man’.

Foley identified two benefits that Aboriginal people could gain by looking to the experiences of people outside Australia. First, he understood that much could be learnt from the ways in which other people in similar circumstances were ‘making the world aware of their problem’ (de Costa 2006:102-103). Second, Foley acknowledged that ‘the greatest vulnerability and susceptibility of the Australian government was its self-consciousness about its own image in the eyes of the world’ (ibid). Yet, Aboriginal activists were well aware of the dangers of blindly following the African American model and the militant vernacular of the Black Power movement. After the brief formation of a Black Panther political party in 1972, Aboriginal activists in Sydney became conscious that if they were to realise the promise of the 1969 referendum, then further activism needed to be cast in purely Aboriginal terms. Those terms produced a novel and powerful political outcome: the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the manicured lawns of Parliament House.

While much was gained from understanding the Indigenous social situation in a transnational context, national support from the unions, the ALP and the communist party was also instrumental in aiding Aboriginal people to gain civil and land rights, although the levels of their support should not be overstated. As the Aboriginal activist and author Kevin Gilbert explains:

> The Aboriginal Embassy was a totally Aboriginal thing. Besides treating us with ordinary courtesy at its inception and providing the car and funds to kick it off, the Communists had no influence over it nor did they exercise any control. Thank Christ for the Commos! They know that Aborigines don’t give a damn for their dogma, any more than they do for the dogmas of the bible bashers, but they are nevertheless willing to give practical aid to blacks more often, more reliably and unconditionally than any other groups. If that is ‘manipulation’, more power to it (Gilbert 1973:28).

The Aboriginal tent embassy emerged as a symbol of a national, pan-Aboriginal identity and solidarity. As the Aboriginal author James Miller argues: ‘By calling this
little canvas structure an embassy, Kooris were able to use the tent as a symbol of their feelings of alienation from the mainstream of Australian life' (Miller 1985:195). The late south coast activist Chicka Dixon further explained:

These were the things that we were trying to pick up, the grassroots discrimination that we were trying to draw attention to with the embassy. You’ve got to link up all the things together – bad housing, land rights, infant mortality, bad education facilities, all the things we’ve bashed at for years while nothing was done. Yet, when blacks stood up on their feet, then things started moving. And I believe we’ve only scratched the surface’ (Gilbert 1973:32).

The tent embassy shifted the political consciousness of Aboriginal people back towards questions of land. As Goodall argues, ‘land had been the underlying current for so long in Aboriginal politics, but it had not until then reached the wider public debate’ (Goodall 1996:351).

With Gough Whitlam’s honouring of his commitment to Aboriginal land rights when the ALP won office in December 1972, the initial legislative steps towards a national native title framework had been taken. The NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act was passed in 1983, formally constituting the NSW Aboriginal Land Council as the state’s peak representative body in Aboriginal affairs, and enabled Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALC’s) to claim unused crown land for freehold title. Under the administration of the central body, nine Regional Land Councils were set up to oversee the operation of 121 LALC’s across the state. As part of the South Coast Aboriginal Land Council region, the Eurobodalla was carved up into thin slices of coastline and hinterland that fell under the auspices of six LALC’s. These LALC’s are, from north to south, Bateman’s Bay, Mogo, Cobowra (Moruya), Bodalla, Wagonga (Narooma) and Merrimans (Wallaga Lake). However, the LALC boundaries extend well beyond the Eurobodalla shire boundaries. The Bateman’s Bay LALC region encompasses land as far north as Lake Tabourie and inland to the

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92 The Land Council was previously a non-statutory organisation that had been agitating for Aboriginal rights since 1977.
93 The South Coast region also includes the Illawarra, Nowra, Ulladulla, Jerringa, Ngambri, Bega and Eden LALC’s.
pasturelands between Braidwood and Bungendore. Similarly, the Mogo LALC region reaches westwards to the border of the ACT, while the Wagonga and Merriman’s LALC regions extend as far back as the border with the Wiradjuri Land Council region.94

While acknowledging that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the formation of LALC’s has given Aboriginal people increasing recognition of rights to country, several informants have lamented the fragmentary and factionalised internal politics that have arisen out of the land rights process. The same informants also lamented that the land claims process was significantly geared against south coast Aboriginal people because of the limited number of named ‘apical’ (or foundational) ancestors from which they could provide evidence of cognatic descent. I suggest that both of these issues result from the incommensurability between the land rights framework and the layers of identifications, or ‘continuous gradations of difference’ that exist in south coast Indigenous social relations (Correy et al. 2008:8).

Correy et al. draw on the Freudian notion of the ‘narcissism of minor differences’ to provide an explanatory device for the social effects of the native title process. The authors suggest that among Aboriginal communities there are often ‘conflicting desires for total identification/fusion/relatedness and autonomy/separation’ (Correy et al. 2008:2). Similarly, they argue that the native title process also rests on a ‘series of oppositions negotiated along inter- and intra-claimant group dimensions of sameness and difference’ (ibid). With reference to the southeastern region of Australia, the authors argue that:

Language group names have emerged as overt symbols of Aboriginal distinctiveness within both Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts. However, with the recent focus on ‘properly constituted claimant groups’ the epistemic centrality of ‘traditional ownership’ on a range of articulations of identity and group membership bases has been displaced by the criterion of demonstrated

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94 While I acknowledge that the Native Title Act 2003 (Commonwealth) is a second regime of land rights recognition, it provides very little scope for successful claims in the NSW south coast region for a range of reasons (which are unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis). Determinations of claims at Eden (2008, 2010), Ulladulla (2006) and the Illawarra (2007) have each found that native title does not exist.
descent from named apical, or foundation, ancestors. While language group names retain currency, their membership is largely coincidental with, and constituted through, what is effectively the reduction of kinship to descent.

In the pre-native title era South-Eastern Australian Aboriginal social worlds included a variety of group-like socio-territorial political ensembles which emanated out in all directions and were integrated into other social ensembles lacking specific local identities. A unit of kinsmen defined by descent from named ancestors operating as a group constituted for social action was not a self-evident structure of the lived social reality of the pre-native title era (Correy et al. 2008:7-8).95

In the Eurobodalla, these ‘group-like socio-territorial political ensembles’ were integrated into broader, semi-territorial social ensembles through processes of dispersal and land alienation. These semi-territorial identifications were constituted socially by the notion that ‘we are all one mob’ in an era in which Aboriginal people moved along cross-cutting beats that followed the rhythm of seasonal employment. Aboriginal people achieved civil equality and limited land rights through a process that required a broad set of identifications, both through the pan-Aboriginal movement and, to a lesser extent, Indigenous transnationalism. Upon achieving limited land rights under the NSW Aboriginal Land Council framework, the set of identifications was required to shrink back to kinship networks of cognatic descent that cross-cut boundaries delineated as LALC regions. In keeping with the criteria set out in the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act of 1983, Aboriginal people were required to be able to demonstrate that they were directly descended from the original inhabitants of a ‘cultural area’. Schismogenesis (Bateson 1935) was both symmetrical (between intra- and inter-familial factions and LALC’s), and complementary (in regard to logging companies and developers, and the dominant politico-legal framework and instruments of native title).

The handback of Aboriginal land in the Biamanga and Gulaga National Parks has been the most significant victory for south coast Aboriginal people in the land

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95 This seems to be an excessively broad generalisation. Perhaps in some cases cognatic descent groups might have operated as groups constituted for social action, while in other circumstances they did not.
rights era. It provided the recognition of Aboriginal ownership through a co-management agreement with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The report that was commissioned to support the claim to the Registrar concluded that the Yuin cultural area generally conformed to the area described by Howitt (the region bordered by the drainages of the Shoalhaven in the north to Towamba River in the south). Through extensive genealogical research, the report identified 25 named apical ancestors from whom traditional owners could provide evidence of direct cognatic descent (Egloff et al. 2005). This is consistent with the ‘epistemic centrality’ of cognatic descent in the current land rights framework that is predicated upon the notion that the long history of disruption following colonisation radically transformed Aboriginal social organisation (Sutton 1995:67). 96

In my experience, an Aboriginal person is unlikely to refer to cognatic descent as the principle identification of relatedness in everyday life. Relatedness is usually associated with broader familial categorisations referred to as ‘families’, ‘clans’ or ‘mobs’. Layers of identifications then reach more broadly to location-based ensembles (including, for example, the Kurial, Brinja and Guyangal Yuin), to larger socio-political ensembles (the ‘Yuin nation’) and to pan-Aboriginal categorisations of ‘Koori’, ‘Blackfella’, ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Black’. The ‘heavily accented discontinuous world of distinction and opposition which the native title process elicits’ thus sits uncomfortably with pre-existing social relations that are defined by ‘continuous gradations of difference’ and contributes to bitter factionalism in contemporary social relations (Correy et al. 2008:8).

Issues relating to questions of land, descent and judicial process have been further complicated by the new institutional order, established to oversee the transition in governance to the era of so-called ‘self determination’. This chapter now turns to examine some of the bureaucratic changes brought about by demands for civil rights, with a particular focus on the station at Wallaga Lake. I argue that the

96 The issue of tracing cognatic descent from a limited number of apical ancestors is compounded by a broader problem of recognition of Aboriginal identity and cultural heritage in south-eastern Australia. Weiner and Glaskin argue that the problem of recognition is embedded in the native title framework’s insistence on ‘culture’ being demonstrable. They are concerned that ‘the epistemological dimensions of change, creativity and sociocultural transformation...affect the legal recognition of the vitality of indigenous “traditions”’ (Weiner & Glaskin 2006:7). For an extensive discussion of the variety of forms the legal recognition of Indigenous title can take, see Glaskin (2003).
government neither relinquished control over Aboriginal affairs, nor did the new streamlined, centralised bureaucracy result in significant benefits for Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla. Governance over the lives of Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla continued to be haphazard and contradictory, and remains a source of ambivalence and suspicion.

7.2 The new institutional order

At the Wallaga Lake station, the system of poorly supervised, undertrained and often greatly overworked management was characteristic of on-the-ground institutional authority from 1916 to 1969. Prior to the large influx of Aboriginal people at the height of the Great Depression in 1939 (where the number of residents nearly doubled in one year), the station staff consisted of the Manager-teacher, a matron (presumably the manager’s wife), an Aboriginal handyman, sanitary man and mail boy (Aborigines Protection: report to the Public Service Board 16 August 1938:44). The 1939 visit by the Inspectors, reported to the Board that:

The majority of the buildings are old and many need renewing or alterations. A considerable influx of Aborigines has occurred during the last twelve months, making the accommodation position rather acute (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1939:3).

No response was made to the accommodation shortage until 1950, however, when the construction of 15 new houses, a recreation hall and general store, an upgraded school and roads commenced (AWB Report for the year ended 30 June 1950:10).

Three years later the Manager’s residence and the adjoining administrative buildings were destroyed in the 1953 bushfires (AWB Report for the year ended 30 June 1953:13). More buildings would have been destroyed if it had not been for the customary knowledge of the station residents, as shown by the following article published in the Canberra Times:
The Chief Secretary, Mr. Clive Evatt, said tonight reports showed that 29 aboriginal homes at Wallaga Lake, on the South Coast, were not destroyed by bushfires, as previously stated. It was reported last Friday that the entire aboriginal settlement of 29 homes was wiped out by bushfires. Mr. Evatt said the administrative buildings and manager's residence at the settlement had been burnt, but this was because the authorities had not built fire breaks to protect their homes. "The aboriginals, however, had burned fire breaks," he said. "In so doing they had saved property valued at £50,000. Some of the homes saved were worth £1800 each. This is one of the best examples of the protection fire-breaks can give. The aboriginals can teach many white Australians a lesson (Anon 1952:1).

In contrast to the ten year lag in response to the Aboriginal housing shortage on the station, the buildings were immediately rebuilt and by June 1954, the remaining administrative buildings (including the recreation hall and ration store) were painted to match the colour of the new buildings (AWB Report for the year ended 30 June 1954:11).

In December 1964 the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal School was closed and the children were transferred to the nearby school at Bermagui (Long 1970:63). In the same year, the Wallaga Lake station was reclassified as part of the Nowra Welfare District (AWB Report for the year ended 30 June 1964:7). In accordance with the general shift in policy in NSW towards an emphasis on 'welfare', the station manager was reclassified as a Welfare Officer in 1967 and was responsible for all Aboriginal people in the surrounding district in addition to the station residents (AWB Report for the year ended 30 June 1966:4). After more than seven decades, the system of institutional authority that had existed on the station to a greater or lesser extent was dismantled. So too, it seems, that the provision of assistance to residents at the settlement (under the general category of 'welfare') continued to be inadequate. In a submission to the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in 1976, the settlement had a population of 150 permanent residents with the number fluctuating due to the 'constant flow of short term visitors' (Anon 1976:3). The buildings that had been erected in 1950 were described as being in 'varying stages of dilapidation and grossly
overcrowded’ with ‘few services or fittings’ and it was reported that the remainder of residents were living in sheds, car bodies, caravans and shanties (ibid).

The success of the self-determination policy was, following Cowlishaw, dependent on Aboriginal people ‘wanting the ends determined by the state, and indeed in a sense they did. They had to “go and get funded”’ (Cowlishaw 1998:165). To fit in with the new policies of the 1970s, that would allow ‘Aboriginal communities to be incorporated for their own social and economic purposes’, a submission was developed by the community in consultation with a range of organizations with the aim of boosting infrastructure and employment opportunities (ALP Policy 1971-2 cited in Lippmann 1994:57). The ultimate goal of the submission was to enable Wallaga Lake to be a self-sustainable, autonomous community. The submission noted that the skills of the residents mainly related to fishing, forestry and farm work and that only two people were educated to Leaving Certificate standard. The plan’s objectives were to provide the existing community with adequate housing, taking into account the future growth of the population. It also aimed to utilise the available land and resources in a way that achieved maximum economic benefit while conserving ‘the natural attributes of the site’ (Anon 1976:11).

The plan included the development of improved community services, infrastructure for oyster farming, a community-run caravan park and camping area, expansion of the existing market garden enterprise and improvements in community service infrastructure (water, sewage and electricity). The plan included the provision of employment for 15 workers during the three year construction period as well as 24 full-time/permanent positions once it was up and running (with the majority employed in the oyster and market garden enterprises). The submission noted that the oyster industry had a ready market, stating that ‘the present state of the oyster industry in NSW is that demand is outstripping supply’ (Anon 1976:15). The plan to develop the oyster enterprise included the provision of a motorised punt, shed and wharf as well as for trays, nets and incidental costs with an estimated outlay of $60 000. It estimated that labour costs for six workers would be $132 000 over three years with an estimated return of $94 500 per annum once the enterprise was operational. The other income-generating plan was to develop a caravan park overlooking the picturesque lake and estuary. The submission estimated that the initial outlay would be $55,000
for caravan park infrastructure with labour and running costs estimated at $14,000 per annum. The one hundred site enterprise was estimated to return $22,000 per annum. The total request for funding of the submission was $1,483,660 over three years (1977-1980).

Despite the generous detail and shrewd appraisal of market needs, the submission was unsuccessful. Based on the estimated costs and annual returns, the $1.4 million of funding would have achieved an investment return within fifteen years. After eight decades of government administrators urging the community at Wallaga Lake to be self-sustainable (compounded by the political rhetoric of self-determination), the denial of funding for the proposal reinforced the deeply-held resentment Aboriginal people held for the various government departments that were still charged with making decisions about their future. As Cowlishaw remarked, ‘while the state ostensibly tried to hand Aborigines control over their own domain, it did not in fact relinquish anything’ (Cowlishaw 1998:165).

Through to the present day, the community at Wallaga Lake has remained on the periphery of mainstream society in the Eurobodalla. It is located in a region with few employment opportunities and government assistance has continued to be casual. The Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) reported that:

Federal Government funding for the health service was withdrawn two years ago, forcing it to operate a clinic from an old house which it recently left due to mould, electrical and structural issues. With no permanent address, the service recently bought a second-hand caravan to operate a mobile clinic, consisting of a doctor, an Aboriginal health worker and a registered nurse to treat about 250 people a week (Anon 2009).

In April 2009, the local Katungal health service’s Damien Matcham pleaded with the federal government for more resources and likened the community’s health to the lowest living standards in remote outback communities. Matcham observed that ‘it’s very sad because it’s actually third-world conditions’ that the community experience and that people were dying from preventable diseases in what he describes as an ‘embarrassing situation’ (ibid).
Compounding issues related to inadequate service provision are ongoing concerns to isolate and remove contaminated building materials on land adjacent to the community and under the land council office. In both the late 1980s and mid 1990s several members of the community were paid under ‘work for the dole’ and CDEP programs to demolish houses containing asbestos but were neither warned of the dangers, nor given protective clothing and breathing apparatuses to do so. The issue came to a head in 2009 when it was brought to the attention of state and federal health authorities that contaminated material from the demolished houses had not been removed from the site. The Department of Health’s initial response was to distribute pamphlets warning community members of the dangers of asbestos while the community still waited for a government department to take responsibility for the situation.

Various arguments were put forward, including assertions that because the material was on land owned by the local land council, it was their responsibility to clean up the site at their own cost, despite the buildings being erected by the AWB. The land council was forced to apply for funding from various government departments to help offset the costs while the deadly fibres remain exposed to the elements. In her visit in May 2009, ABC journalist Emily Laurence reported that:

The community is littered with asbestos sheeting, or pieces of it, either pushing up through the ground from where it was buried and forgotten years ago, or scattered about the bush around an old tip site. The tip is at the entrance to the community but the asbestos is scattered across kilometres of land, where children play in it (Laurence 2009).

In September 2009, a government inquiry was launched to conduct investigations into claims that government agencies had known about the asbestos problem for some time and had not acted to protect the community. Nearly 12 months later, at the time of writing, a cleanup of the site is finally underway.

Wallaga Lake continues to be a repository for Yuin cultural knowledge and an important node in the webs of relatedness that comprise south coast beats. The record of administrative attempts, both on state and federal levels, to solve a perceived
'Aboriginal problem' does not inspire confidence that the living conditions for people at Wallaga Lake are likely to improve any time soon.

As we have seen, the 1967 Referendum ushered in a new era in Aboriginal affairs discourse; the flow-on effects of which eventually granted Aboriginal people citizenship rights and entitlements and centralised Indigenous policy-making in the Commonwealth government. Two streams of rhetoric followed this process, the first being that the government had turned the page on abhorrent, discriminating policies towards a new era of 'self-determination'. The second was that, by stripping the states of their individual responsibilities for Indigenous policy-making and by centralising Indigenous governance in Canberra, the government was streamlining and systematising the bureaucratic process for the benefit of Aboriginal people. At an ideological level, there was also increasing recognition of Aboriginal people as being the original inhabitants with their own voices and their own history, rather than as simply the problematic wreckage of colonial conquest.

The new institutional order has also been described as 'welfare colonialism'. For example, Jeremy Beckett argues that:

Welfare colonialism ... is the state's attempt to manage the political problem posed by the presence of a depressed and disenfranchised indigenous population in an affluent, liberal democratic society. At the practical level it meets the problem by economic expenditure well in excess of what the minority produces. At the ideological level the 'native', who once stood in opposition to the 'settler' and outside the pale of society, undergoes an apotheosis to emerge as its original citizen (Beckett 1987:17).

Beckett observes that the term was originally coined by Robert Paine to describe indigenous-settler relations in northern Canada. Paine argues that:

Any decision taken by the colonisers has a basic flaw: a decision made for the material benefit of the colonised at the same time can be construed as disadvantaging them; a 'generous' or 'sensible' decision can be at the same time, morally 'wrong'. This is so because it is the colonisers who make the
decisions that control the future of the colonised; because the decisions are made (ambiguously) on behalf of the colonised, and yet in the name of the colonisers’ culture (and of their political, administrative and economic priorities) (Beckett 1987:16).

Following Paine’s argument, true self-determination for Aboriginal people is fundamentally flawed by the simple fact that decisions about the future of Aboriginal communities are made by non-Indigenous politicians and bureaucrats. For Paine, the reticence of the state to relinquish control over Indigenous affairs is anathema to the notion of ‘self-determination’.

The notion that the centralisation of Indigenous governance in the Commonwealth bureaucracy had led to significant improvements in the living standards of Aboriginal people is also contestable and the evidence relating to the settlement at Wallaga Lake is at odds with the rhetoric. Elsewhere in the Eurobodalla, it would not be an unfair generalisation to say that Aboriginal people only began to be provided with commission housing on a broad scale in 1980, although Julie Carter observed that the South Coast Aboriginal Housing Company finished building its first homes at Mogo in 1976 (Carter 1984:43). Rampant discrimination in the rental market made it difficult for Aboriginal families to obtain leases and the lack of a sufficient capital base left little opportunity for private home-ownership. In the present context, Aboriginal people living in the Eurobodalla townships have greater access to education, employment and services, yet a deep ambivalence is shared about the usefulness, or applicability of the notion of self-determination.

7.3 ‘The era is closed’

Sitting on the jetty, my fishing companion reeled in her line. The shredded pippie hung limp from the hook. ‘Little buggers keep stealing the bait!’ Large schools of the small fry were illuminated by the jetty lights. Her son was sitting in the camp chair next to her with a young child on his lap. ‘You wait, that tide’s just turning now’ he offered, ‘Yeah, give it half a and we’ll get a few bigger fellas coming up’, she
replied. While re-baiting the hook, my informant returned to her memories of the picking era:

You see, it’s like the era is closed. There’s no going back to that life we had. You know, movin’ around and pickin’ beans. I liked pickin’. It was good, you see, everybody just enjoyed life and working together, havin’ a laugh and sharing a yarn. But they just don’t grow many beans nowadays, and the farmers that still do have those big machines to pick them ‘coz it’s cheaper than paying Kooris to do it. So all the old pickers are retired and have creaky joints and arthritis, or whatever, or they’re kind of dyin’ out. Yeah, the era is closed. What also happened was the welfare, the dole, you see. Aboriginal people started getting houses in town and the young people weren’t interested in picking. They’re movin’ to a different beat [laughs]. But we got our rights and we had to fight hard to get ‘em. Some say we’ve got a better standard of livin’ these days, but I can’t help but think we were happier back when we was pickin’ and travelling ‘round.

And the fellas can’t get work in the mills no more neither. They started layin’ people off back in the ‘70s and it just got worse as the time went on. Yeah, the era has closed. There’s no going back to that. That was the right sort of job for Aboriginal men – that and fishing. I thought fishing was better for the fellas, but the mills paid well. And now there’s no work. Well, there is work here and there. Labouring and on the roads and whatever. Some of the young ones are working as rangers up in the park there. That’s good work, you know, being out in the bush. Who wants to be cooped up in an office somewhere? We had CDEP running up at Bateman’s and down at Wallaga but that got scrapped because we’re not remote enough.97 It’s ‘coz they think we’re not Aboriginal enough – not black enough! Yeah, see, that’s why they

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97 The importance of CDEP was downplayed by many of my informants and it seems that the scheme was not a significant aspect of people’s economic lives in this region as it has been in other parts of Australia. In 2006 Cobowra CDEP employed about seventy Aboriginal people, while a number of people were also employed at Wallaga Lake. Two of my informants worked at the Cobowra CDEP’s Green Waste Recycle Centre but lost interest after a short period of time. Another informant had a CDEP placement on a building site but left because he found better paying work labouring for ‘cash in hand’. The CDEP programme in south-eastern NSW was phased out in July 2007 on the premise that the region had an established economy.
scraped the CDEP! We never needed CDEP back in the pickin’ days – we worked and we had that support system. We still do. We look after each other, the Aboriginal people. We never get sick of each other, no matter how much we’re around each other. Aboriginal people are much kinder than white people. Yeah, that’s it – kindness – and we’re happier to share. We respect our elders and each other. We respect our country. That’s our law.

This section reflects upon several key themes emerge from the informants’ memories and comments about issues facing Aboriginal people in the contemporary Eurobodalla context. It will begin by examining the notion that the ‘era is now closed’ in terms of the social significance of the decline of seasonal horticulture and forestry, arguing that the limited employment options for Aboriginal people today are compounded by a ceiling on aspirations projected in social relations. The section compares this social situation to Julie Carter’s observations at Mogo in 1980 to illustrate that the monumental shift described as ‘there’s no going back to that life we had’ occurred at precisely the same time as town housing and civil entitlements were being made available to Aboriginal people.

While seasonal picking was richly social, Aboriginal people were well aware that they were being exploited in terms of poor pay and working conditions, but took on the work each season both through economic necessity, and because it facilitated the maintenance of relational ties with friends and family. Chapter Six has argued that Aboriginal men’s employment in the forestry sector of the Eurobodalla paid fairly, entailed high level skills and became a source of pride. In her research on the relationship between Aboriginal people and the forestry sector, Sue Feary was surprised that Aboriginal people were not involved in the passionate protests over logging by conservationists in the eucalypt forests near Eden during the 1970s, considering the ‘scale of protests by local Aboriginal elders in response to the Forestry Commission’s logging of the sacred Mumbulla Mountain (Biamanga) in the late 1970s’ (Feary 2008:269). Feary found that Aboriginal men would not publically criticise ‘the forestry’ because of their long history of employment in the industry and that foresters were ‘friends of the Kooris’ (ibid). As the conservationist movement pressed ahead and became more successful with their protests, the quotas that mills received were gradually cut, leading the decline of the Eurobodalla timber industry;
an industry that had employed Aboriginal men since the early days of ‘bush work’ in the 19th century. Forestry employment was a ‘right sort of job’ for Aboriginal men precisely because it was intergenerational.

In a recent study of Aboriginal attitudes to work and employment in Wilcannia, Lorraine Gibson (2010) argues that maintaining relatedness with family imposes a far greater moral obligation than commitments to employment. Gibson’s overall point is that ‘for most Aboriginal people in Wilcannia, you are who you are, not by virtue of what you have “become” in any economic, professional or educational sense. In a particular sense “who you are” is not a becoming, it is established at birth’ (Gibson 2010:132). Gibson further argues that ‘even though jobs in the pastoral industry were a source of pride, the extent to which a sense of self-cultural identity proper - was, and is, currently linked to being in employment or particular occupation remains limited’ (ibid). Similarly, in her writing on the Wiradjuri, Gaynor MacDonald argues that Aboriginal people in central NSW share ‘a relational ontology [that] sees people defined through relationships rather than roles’ (MacDonald 2004:15).

In view of these comparative examples, forestry work (as a ‘right sort of job’) brings up two important questions. First, to what extent did the commitment of Aboriginal timber workers to their employers override commitments to family? And second, how has this positive association with work in an era that has now closed affected current attitudes to employment? With reference to the first question, the evidence in Chapter Six suggests that the commitment of Aboriginal timber workers to both their employers and their families was not mutually exclusive. By this, I refer back to the informant’s comments at the jetty in Chapter Six that ‘we had a support system, but we had to work’. In the absence of welfare entitlements, the Indigenous distributive networks of ‘caring and sharing’ required cash income during the picking era. Therefore, commitments to family necessarily entailed some commitment to employment in order to fulfil familial obligations. This is not to say that Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla did not, or do not share a relational ontology. On the contrary, ‘who you are’ is far more important in determining where an individual is located in the sphere of contemporary south coast Indigenous social relations than ‘what you do’.
With regard to the second question, during a period of high rural and regional unemployment, it remains to be seen how positive associations with generations of forestry work are playing out in the contemporary context. In the context of Wilcannia, Gibson notes:

If one feels that the only jobs available to you are the ‘shit jobs’ that Aboriginal people say whitefellas would not take, the tendency to ‘knock them back’ is understandable. Why strive for the shitty jobs of the white working class? High unemployment and the offer of what are perceived to be lesser valued, lesser paid, often short-term government-funded jobs, and work programmes which do not lead to employment, neither encourage a strong work ethic nor any sense of personal worth in relation to mainstream regular ‘work’. Good jobs are seen to be the domain of the whites, or those who are like whites (Gibson 2010:133).

In the Eurobodalla, employment opportunities for Aboriginal men are generally limited to lower-paid ‘shitty jobs’ or manual tasks. Yet, in returning to the notion of forestry work being the ‘right sort of job’, it appears that a similar ceiling on Aboriginal people’s aspirations has also developed.99 With opportunities for employment drying up in forestry, south coast Aboriginal men didn’t have the skill set to move readily into employment in the secondary and tertiary industries and this trend has been compounded by educational disadvantage. Women have moved more readily into tertiary, clerical and public-sector employment, and there is a greater

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98 Gibson refers to this ceiling on aspirations in terms of the phenomenon of ‘the coconut’:

Here we enter the territory of the coconut – those Aboriginal people who are said to be black on the outside and white on the inside: people who are charged with, keeping ‘a white house’; people who, ‘don’t sit down with us’, ‘who don’t share’, who ‘big note’ themselves and whose patterns of work, consumption and communication leave them open to the charge that they are not Aboriginal enough’ (Gibson 2010:133).

99 Interestingly, a ceiling on socially acceptable employment is also characteristic of the working class, non-Indigenous communities of the Eurobodalla. In peri-urban towns like Moruya, the employment-ladder aspirations of many working-class, non-Indigenous young men are to be skilled ‘tradies’ (tradespeople) in order to ‘fit in’. In my experience this is a common phenomenon in most coastal towns that have a permanent labour base to service a holiday or retiree housing market. Several people I spoke to referred to this phenomenon as the ‘south coast tall poppy syndrome’.
degree of flexibility in socially acceptable jobs for female Aboriginal workers. Through her research conducted at Mogo in 1984, Julie Carter suggested that ‘opportunities to establish economic security with long-term employment could be turned down if it meant permanent absence from the coast. Being amongst one’s own people was a crucial element of the attachment, but so too was the coastal environment with the love of the sea and seafood’ (Carter 1984:63). The decline of local sources of employment similarly limits participation rates in the contemporary context. Opportunities to move for work do not outweigh familial considerations and connections to country.

The ‘self determination’ era has produced a unique set of outcomes for Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla. The combination and historical confluence of the decline of intergenerational employment opportunities that were socially meaningful, the increasing provision of town housing, civil equality that entails the right to receive welfare payments and continuing educational disadvantage have resulted in an underemployed and relatively sedentary Aboriginal population. Paradoxically, ‘self determination’ has produced a similar outcome to what processes of institutionalisation produced in other regional and historical contexts. Rather than needing to be drawn into regimes of ‘work’, the historical and ethnographic evidence suggests that Aboriginal people have had a long engagement with the local settler economy. Instead of the issue being one of ‘inclusion’ in the market economy, it has become one of ‘exclusion’.

In his remarks on passive welfare as being a false economy Noel Pearson writes:

Our traditional economy was a real economy and demanded responsibility (you don’t work, you starve). The white fella market economy is real (you don’t work, you don’t get paid).

After we became citizens with equal rights and equal pay, we lost our place in the real economy. What is the exception among white fellas – almost complete dependence on cash handouts from the government – is the rule for us. There is no responsibility and reciprocity built into our present artificial
economy... Passive welfare has undermined Aboriginal Law – our traditional values and relationships (cited in Austin-Broos 2009:251).

While Pearson’s comments are primarily directed to the situation of Aboriginal people in Cape York in which underemployment and passive welfare is perhaps a more significant issue, it has some resonance with the experiences of Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla. This section has illustrated the commitment of Aboriginal people both to their employers and to their families; it was not mutually exclusive in the picking era and, in the absence of welfare entitlements, commitments to family necessarily entailed some commitment to employment in order to fulfill familial obligations. The monumental shift that occurred when the picking era ‘closed’ has placed tension on social relationships that are based upon normative systems of reciprocity and respect.

One of the final points to emerge from the informant’s comments on issues facing Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla is that the notion that ‘the era is now closed’ also implies a strong sense of generational demarcation. The final section of this chapter explores the experiences of some young Aboriginal men, who have not experienced the seasonal lifestyle of picking or forestry work, who are, in the words of my fishing companion, ‘movin’ to a different beat’.

7.4 Movin’ to a different beat

The subwoofer was so loud that each time the bass kicked in it felt like I was being punched in the chest. The hitchhiker’s housemates were settled in around the coffee table in the lounge room listening to hip hop and having a cuppa and a smoke. All wore baseball caps, baggy jeans and hooded jumpers. The Wu Tang Clan was turned down as a debate briefly heated up about an old wound between two families. The hitchhiker continued with our conversation in the adjoining kitchen.

Yeah it’s hard to get a job ‘round here - on the south coast. Unemployment’s real bad. We’ve got to compete with whitefellas for the same shit jobs. And without a job, without all the bits of paper, you can’t get a place to live. We
was lucky, me and the bruthas here, to pick this place up. Some of them real estate places are just racist. They won’t rent a white person’s house out to a dark person. Especially young blackfellas. They think we’re all fuck-ups. Like we’re all going to trash our houses.

The house itself was a typical fibro beach shack, fitted out with linoleum and peeling wallpaper. The lounge room was crammed full of old couches surrounding an aging audio-visual set connected to a Playstation. On the wall above the obligatory old big brown couch was a poster of N.W.A. (an African American hip hop group that achieved considerable acclaim for its lyric ‘fuck the police’). On the coffee table was an ashtray, a pack of fat coloured textas and an A3 pad of white paper adorned with prototypes of different ‘tags’.

Dripping board shorts and towels hung over the veranda railing. Nearby, the dogs stretched out in the afternoon sun.

Back when I was a kid the housing commission put Kooris in houses all in the same street over near the golf course there and all the white people started sellin’ up they reckon. Me uncle said that a bunch of racist white people took the street sign down and put ‘nother one up that said ‘coon avenue’. Wish me and the bruthas were there when they pulled that shit. We’d fix ‘em right up! Same goes with the cops too. Just last week we were sitting in the carpark over at Broulee checkin’ the surf and the cops came and harassed us and shit. Said we was loiterin’. What a load of shit! They feel threatened by us, you know, young Aboriginal people. That’s why there’s so many of us have been to juvie. It’s got nothing’ to do with what we have done, they just target us because we’re a threat to them, the white people.’

The bass kicked in over the lyrics of ‘Raekwon’ and ‘Ghostface Killah’, sending audible vibrations up the old beach shack’s walls.

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100 The acronym NWA was the commercial name for the group’s full title ‘Niggaz Wit Attitudes’.
101 ‘Tags’ are personal signatures that are the lowest level of complexity in the range of formats associated with graffiti.
102 This is not an isolated incident. A similar sign is believed to have been erected at Moruya Heads some years ago. Another sign was erected at Bega that caused considerable controversy in the late 1960’s.
103 The term ‘juvie’ refers to Juvenile Detention Centres that are administered by the Juvenile Justice arm of the NSW Department of Human Services.
Clearly the experience of the hitchhiker and his ‘bruthas’ differs greatly from those who grew up in the bean and pea fields of the Tuross Valley. In this chapter I have suggested that the localised expression of the self determination era is, for want of a better term, a ‘post-picking’ era in the lives of Aboriginal people in the peri-urban townships of the Eurobodalla. Gone are the days when young men were expected to follow their father’s and grandfather’s footsteps ‘into the timber’ or onto the fishing boats while their families were constantly on the run from ‘the welfare’ and following the seasonal cycle of rural employment. For many young Aboriginal men today, life consists of leaving school early, looking for work and somewhere to live, finding none, dealing with a complicated, frustrating and occasionally hostile bureaucracy in order to go to TAFE, pay the bills, deal with the police, or find an employment training placement. This section is concerned with some of the issues facing young Aboriginal men today and one conspicuous cultural response. However, I intend to proceed with due caution. As Cowlishaw writes, phrases such as ‘urban Aboriginal identity’ and ‘what it means to be an Aboriginal person’ are presumptuous and ‘refer to labile, dynamic entities, matters of contestation and assertion, rather than things that are out there, self-defined and waiting to be observed and described by an objective, uninvolved researcher’ (Cowlishaw 2009:3).

In this section I intend to describe some ‘things that are out there’ in a small fragment of the present, that are destined to change almost as soon as they have come into being, or by more gradual processes of generational change. The first, and perhaps most slippery concept we should first examine, is what is meant by ‘generational change’.

Generational change is a difficult analytical concept to pin down and it is, of course, implausible that a cohort of similarly-aged people will all share exactly the same set of characteristics. Despite this, there is a certain shared subjectivity that undeniably exists between individuals who are born into particular social situations and who also have particular social histories (Ortner 1998:420). I suggest that it could be observed as the variety of markers that define an age group and the age groups’ perception of themselves and the world in comparison to others. The term

104 In reference to ‘Generation X’ in the US, Ortner argues that ‘there is enough in both the public culture and in my ethnographic data to suggest that it is really out there in some part(s) of social space, and the question is one of locating it correctly rather than denying its existence (ibid).
'generation' itself doesn't offer much as an analytical concept when we try to examine generational change. We might view a generation as a group of people born at roughly the same time, or as a group of individuals sharing the same status at the same time. In technology, we often hear the term used to describe a type of object developed from a previous type (for example, a 'next generation laptop' that is based on a previous model).

When discussing generational change, the latter usage oddly seems most appropriate in the context of the difference in embodied subjectivity between two groups. As new layers of technology are added to the previous type, generations of people continually add further layers to a core of understandings about themselves and the world. Cowlishaw (1999) has used the metaphor of the palimpsest to describe the process of fusing and remoulding social relations and symbols as Aboriginal people make sense of their experience of colonialism, post colonialism and modernity. The palimpsest itself is a text that is constantly being written and erased, while carrying the mark of the text that has been written before.

Generations, in the sense that I am using the term, are much like these texts. New pages are constantly being written, but they always carry the mark of the generations that have passed before them. Generational change in the Eurobodalla context (as the difference in the variety of markers that define an age group and the age groups' perception of themselves and the world) can be understood in terms of the fusing and remoulding of social relations and symbols as young Aboriginal people make sense of their people’s experience of colonialism and post colonialism, and their own experience of modernity. The section examines the notion of a ‘hip hop culture’ that consists of a discrete (yet locally constituted) set of characteristics and styles. It then examines the reasons why hip hop is such an appealing cultural form to appropriate for young Aboriginal people in view of the struggles they face in the contemporary intercultural milieu. Rather than viewing the hitchhiker and his ‘bruthas’ consumption of African American cultural forms as evidence of media-driven, American cultural imperialism, this section locates the phenomenon within broader struggles in contemporary intercultural relations in the Eurobodalla, set against the backdrop of colonial and post colonial relations.
In his analysis of Aboriginal hip hop and youth identity, George Stavrias argues against notions of cultural imperialism, and attributes hip hop's popularity amongst young Aboriginal people to what he terms its 'internal logic' of 'sampling, representin' and flow' (Stavrias 2005:44).\(^{105}\) However Stavrias' analytical lens is firmly situated on the production side of hip hop in Aboriginal communities. While many young Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla were developing skills in beat-boxing and rapping, there was little evidence that a local 'scene' had fully developed to enable the production of local hip hop on a significant scale. It is for this reason that the analysis in this section focuses purely on the consumption of elements of hip hop culture including speech acts, clothing, bodily expressions and graffiti.

Tony Mitchell noted that 'recent manifestations in global rap music suggest it has gone well beyond the boundaries defined by “blackness”' because it 'has been increasingly appropriated, indigenised and re-territorialised all over the world' and 'is a form that can be adopted or adapted to express the concerns of ethnic minorities everywhere' (Mitchell 1999:85-6, 87). Mitchell argues that hip hop took hold in Aboriginal, ethnic, underprivileged and working class Australian communities because young people were 'attracted by the racially oppositional features of African American hip hop and adopted its signs and forms as markers of their own otherness' (Mitchell 1999:88). Similarly, Kurt Iveson argues that hip hop provides young Aboriginal people with the means 'to fight back against the experiences of racism, and other elements of the culture like graffiti and hip hop style' provides 'the means to make space in segregated Australian cities for cultural production' (Iveson 1997:41). Stavrias adds that while other musical forms (including reggae and country and western) have been appropriated by Aboriginal people, 'hip hop's strength lies in it being as much a cultural practice as a music form' (Stavrias 2005:54 n.12). Stavrias notes that hip hop culture, consisting of various elements including 'deejaying', break dancing, 'emceeing', 'beatboxing' and graffiti, was 'organically spawned' in the Bronx in New York by way of a 'combination of social vectors including poverty and

\(^{105}\) 'Sampling' refers to the genre's 'artistic appropriation' in which many sounds are combined to create a new soundtrack. 'Representin' is the locally-defined characteristic that provides hip hop with its' measure of authenticity. Stavrias defines 'flow' as the exhibition of hip hop artist's 'understanding of the values and styles of the local hip hop community' and 'extends to a range of attitudes and styles that comprise hip hop culture' (Stavrias, 2005:46-47).
ra c is m ' (S tavrias, 2005:45). Unfortunately Stravrias does not push his description and analysis further to include what Ives refers to as ‘hip hop style’ (Iveson 1997:41).

Visually, ‘hip hop style’ is what one encounters most days on the streets of Australian cities and towns. On the most superficial level, it is a genre of youth-oriented fashion that reflects the style worn by icons of a particular pop culture, disseminated by the market-oriented machineries of modernity. To this extent, the hitchhiker’s housemates’ and friends’ de rigueur outfits of baseball caps, baggy jeans and hooded tops were strikingly similar to the image of N.W.A.’s members above the big brown couch. Hip hop style is also evident in a range of speech acts and bodily movements. During the debate in the lounge room, two of the youths succeeded in winning the argument about which family was to blame for the long-running feud. In victory, they flashed each other hand signals consisting of the thumb, index and middle fingers pointing upwards while the ring and little fingers were curled towards their palms. One of the victors then fashioned his hand to resemble a pistol and symbolically shot one of the others in the head. This is a archetypal example of ‘hip hop style’ that can be traced back to when the first African American rappers used hand gestures to motivate, or ‘pump up’, an audience. Hip hop style is also rearticulated through speech acts, including terms and phrases such as ‘keepin’ it real’ and referring to one’s Aboriginal friends as ‘bruthas’.106

Hip hop style is also an attitude of non-compliance with society’s rules and regulations, known colloquially as ‘havin’ an att.’ or ‘-tude’. This aspect of hip hop style is represented by body posturing signifying indifference or ambivalence and the complex symbols associated with ‘tagging’ (graffiti).107 On its most innocuous level, tagging is a simple expression of a person’s identity and attitude of non-compliance with authority. At its most pernicious, tags can often symbolise a gangs’ territorial boundary, or ‘turf’. In her study of gangs and graffiti in Los Angeles, Susan Phillips argues that graffiti is intimately tied to the notion of ‘representing’ in which graffiti is the symbolic production of located identity. In Phillips’ words, ‘graffiti is an

106 This may be a practice that has pre-dated the adoption of elements of hip hop vernacular. Carter identified that similarly-aged kin and affines were referred to as brothers and sisters at Mogo in the 1980s (Carter, 1984:100).
107 For the purposes of this discussion, it must be clarified that writing on surfaces using plainly-written letters are a distinctly different form of expression to ‘tagging’ and artistic graffiti.
abstraction in writing, fibrous and hard; it is apart from the people at the same time as it is the people. It is the activity and product that people use to make culture’ (Phillips 1999:7). Yet plainly-written graffiti (as opposed to the warped letters used in symbolic tagging) also has a darker side when it is combined with a racially charged social environment. In the townships of the Eurobodalla, large tags or ‘pieces’ rarely cover building walls and industrial complexes as they do in most street and cityscapes. But graffiti is present at smaller and more intimate levels.

Several of the public toilet blocks in the Eurobodalla contained highly racially charged exchanges between ‘whitefellas’ and Kooris, generally beginning with a derogatory phrase about Aboriginal people. In several cases, the text on the walls was accompanied with symbols of racial superiority and violence. In two cubicles, large swastikas accompanied the derogatory phrases while in another the letters KKK were written using a thick permanent marker. The plainly-written responses were generally mild in comparison, in which the respondents’ point of recourse was to simply point out the racist nature of the original graffiti. The surrounding walls were always covered in tags which, I suggest, were more powerful symbolic counter-discourses than the respondent’s simple text on the wall.108 Tags are often ‘armoured’ in their form to provide symbolic strength to the identity being embodied on a surface. In this case, the ‘armoured’ tags are a subversive strategy to ‘represent’ the identity of a racially victimised minority.

What then, is the appeal of hip hop and hip hop style for young Aboriginal men? Sydney-based Indigenous hip-hop artist MC Wire reflected on his initial exposure to African American hip hop in a 2006 interview with Tony Mitchell:

Man! What really grabbed my attention was N.W.A saying ‘Fuck the police!’; you know that was something, when that song came out, when hip-hop was starting to be heard – even though people didn’t want to listen to it – groups like N.W.A were saying things that we wanted to say but were afraid to say because of the past history between our people and police. We were stolen by the policeman, we were taken away by the policeman, we were rounded up

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108 I have been able to identify the authors of these tags who will (of course) remain nameless. It is sufficient to say that the authors are young Aboriginal men.
and impounded by the policeman. So we were sort of conditioned to not rebel against that in such a public way, like screaming out ‘Fuck the police!’ So that attracted me to it because they were saying things that we couldn’t say, but we wanted to say (Mitchell 2006).

In another interview, Wire (a member of the self-described ‘conscious’ hip hop scene in Sydney) explained to George Stavrias what he saw as being the strong appeal of the lyrics of American ‘gangsta rap’ for Aboriginal youth:

Maybe because we haven’t had a chance to be young, black and loud without being oppressed all the time and here are young black loud men making a lot of money. Of course it’s going to attract a young, impressionable black man. You take that into consideration you know. Why is he attracted? Because he wants to be like that cat, he wants to be able to express himself and make some money while doing it, so that’s why he relates to that in that sense (Stavrias 2005:50).

The appeal of hip hop, as a musical, lyrical and cultural form, therefore lies in its ability to provide a space of opposition to racialised representations of young Indigenous men. Yet it is also the emphasis on a locality-based identity that provides a strong appeal. The notion of ‘representin’ in hip hop culture is defined by Stavrias as remaining ‘true to one’s community and to the ideals of the hip hop culture one belongs to’ (Stavrias 2005:46). Further, Stavrias argues that ‘being part of the hip hop culture implies not only being rooted in the local, but also standing up for it by representin’ it’ (ibid). I argue that this is appealing to the hitchhiker and his friends because it reflects the normative law of ‘respect’ that is learnt through socialisation and is rooted to a particular locality or country. The notion of representin’ that local culture and locality provides a sense of belonging and empowerment at a time in which working class whitefellas and blackfellas are competing for the same scarce jobs and the same houses in a rental market plagued by a lack of long term leases.

Heather Goodall argues that the rural recession that began in the early 1970s has increasingly placed the ‘white population at economic risk and generating increased anxiety about growing, youthful Aboriginal populations’. Throughout peri-
urban and rural NSW, Goodall argues that Kooris ‘are characterised as an economic and social threat and law and order campaigns have emerged which focus on towns’ that have large Indigenous populations. Goodall asserts that ‘these campaigns invariably target Aboriginal male adolescents as a group threatening white citizens’ persons and (mainly) property and so requiring punishment and restraint, to the point of a curfew’ (Goodall 1990:1).

The assertion of Koori identity through hip hop culture is therefore deeply subversive of regimes of policing in the context of a growing, youthful Aboriginal population in the Eurobodalla. Yet it is also rooted in a history of Indigenous struggle for civil and land rights in which more distant identifications with Indigenous transnationalist movements gave rise to the notion of a shared suffering with African American people at the hands of white oppressors. While the styles of opposition to oppression have changed for the hitchhiker and his friends, the markers of the generations that have come before them remain as indelible imprints on their understandings of themselves and the world.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to problematise the trope of ‘self determination’ that has been used in political rhetoric to describe a shift in Indigenous policy in Australia towards civil equality by examining three themes: the nature of Aboriginal campaigns for civil and land rights and the character of bureaucratic frameworks that were developed in response (sections 7.1 and 7.2); a shift that has occurred during this period that demarcates relatively defined historical eras (7.3); and, the translation of this shift to generational change as one era is closed, while a new one has opened (7.4).

The chapter began with the speech delivered to mark the correction of one ‘historic injustice’ and the most significant recognition of Aboriginal land rights in the Eurobodalla. However there remains a powerful gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous living conditions and overall wellbeing in the Eurobodalla (particularly in the context of the settlement at Wallaga Lake). Pat Dodson sums up this gap in terms
of social justice that ‘must always be considered from the perspective which is
grounded in the daily lives of Indigenous Australians’ (Dodson 1999:22). For
Dodson, social justice is:

what faces you in the morning. It is awakening in a house with an adequate
water supply, cooking facilities and sanitation. It is the ability to nourish your
children and send them to school where their education not only equips them
for employment but reinforces their knowledge and appreciation of their
cultural inheritance. It is the prospect of genuine employment and good health:
a life of choices and opportunity, free from discrimination (ibid).

In view of the notion of social justice, it is worth reviewing some of the issues that
have emerged in this chapter. Section 7.1 has demonstrated that the epistemic
centrality of cognatic descent from named apical ancestors in the current native title
framework has resulted in south coast people being in a position of strategic
disadvantage to make successful claims and has been the source of factionalism in
social relations. Section 7.2 traced transitions in Indigenous governance and showed
that the effects of poor policy and poor policy implementation are still having
dramatic consequences in the present-day context at Wallaga Lake. Section 7.3
argued that through a range of factors, people who have had intergenerational
connections to regimes of ‘work’ have been effectively ‘pushed out’ of local
employment. By examining the hitchhiker’s generations’ appropriation of the cultural
forms of hip hop, section 7.4 has shown that racial discrimination is still active, due in
part by the competition between working-class Indigenous and non-Indigenous people
for scarce employment and affordable housing.

This chapter, as a whole, has argued that a shift has occurred through the
transition from seasonal patterns of employment to the ‘self determination’ (or ‘post-
picking’) era. However several continuities remain. One of the more prominent topics
of this chapter has been the notion that social relations for Aboriginal people in the
Eurobodalla consist of layers of identification with others along a continuum ranging
from immediacy to detachment. Furthermore, despite having a ‘relational ontology’,
section 7.3 argued that Aboriginal people’s attitudes to employment are not
necessarily mutually exclusive with commitments to family and that some
commitment to employment is required to fulfil familial obligations. Another theme that has emerged is the similarities in experiences and responses to fraught intercultural circumstances across generations of people. Section 7.1 has demonstrated that Aboriginal people identified with, and learnt from the experiences of indigenous, minority and black groups overseas and, for a short while at least, incorporated part of the vernacular of the African American Black Power movement into their struggle for civil rights. The hitchhiker and his 'bruthas' similarly identify with African American hip hop both through the identification with black men who have experienced racial oppression, and as a new space to be created for cultural production and the assertion of identity. In drawing on Cowlishaw's (1999) metaphor of the palimpsest to describe generational change, I have argued that Aboriginal people are constantly in the process of fusing and remoulding social relations and symbols as new generations make sense of their experience of colonialism, post colonialism and modernity.
8 Conclusion

In 1965, Jimmy Little Senior from Wallaga Lake (the father of the famous Australian singer) recorded a song for Janet Mathews that had been passed down through several generations. The song was an invocation of a mixture of irresistible humour, irony and sadness. The recording went something like this:

Jacky Jacky was a smart young fellow
Full of fun and energy.
He was thinkin’ of gettin’ married
But the lubra run away you see.

(Chorus) Cricketah boobelah will-de-mah
Billa na ja jingeree wah.

Jacky used to chase the emu
With his spears and his waddy too.
He’s the only man that can tell you
What the emu told the kangaroo.

(Chorus)

Hunting food was Jacky’s business
’Til the white man come along.
Put his fences across the country
Now the hunting days are gone.

(Chorus)

Whitefella he now pays all taxes
Keep Jacky Jacky in clothes and food.
He don’t care what become of the country
Whitefella tucker him very good.

(Chorus)
Now Australia’s short of money
Jacky Jacky sit he laugh all day.
Whitefella want to give it back to Jacky
No fear Jacky won’t have it that way.

*Cricketah boobelah will-de-mah*
*Billa na ja jingeree wah*

(Mathews 1965b).

This wonderful example of post-contact political incorrectness pokes fun at what Martin Thomas termed ‘that old caricature of Aboriginal people; ‘Jacky Jacky - an appropriation’ (Thomas 2002). The song also represents something that obviously existed in the late 19th and early 20th century, which the early ethnographers (such as Janet Mathew’s grandfather-in-law, R.H. Mathews) did not seek to collect. As Thomas comments, ‘the reality is that’, in the period in which Mathews, Howitt, Spencer and Fison were conducting their research, ‘an anthropological object could never be presented as an historical subject’ (ibid).

This thesis has sought to reposition an ‘anthropological object’ as a ‘historical subject’, arguing that historically-specific localised expressions of settler-Indigenous relations in the Eurobodalla must be placed in their historical context. ‘Jacky Jacky’ laughs at the ‘other’s’ perception of the ‘self’, while mourning that perception and the history of invasion and land alienation. The song is a powerful reminder that people are constantly reconfiguring their understandings of the world as circumstances change. Yet ‘Jacky Jacky’ is more than a caricature or an appropriation: it is an artefact of cultural production, produced at the interface of Indigenous-settler subjectivities. This chapter seeks to bring the thesis to a close by providing an analysis of historical continuities and changes in Yuin economy and society (8.1), identifying key historical processes and moments in settler-Indigenous relations in the Eurobodalla (8.2), and making some comments about how these processes might relate to histories of intercultural relations in other parts of Australia (8.3). The thesis concludes by suggesting a possible direction for future research.
8.1 Yuin economy and society: a historical perspective

The history of settler-Indigenous relations in the Eurobodalla is one of gradual processes of change in Aboriginal economy and sociality. This section reflects back upon the reconstruction of Yuin economy and society in Chapter Two to draw some conclusions about how the ecology, institutions and economy have changed since the initial European invasion. Chapter Two argued that, in view of the ethnographic, archaeological and linguistic evidence, Yuin (as an identity) existed as a conglomerate of intermarrying country groups sharing a coastal/escarpment orientation and mutually intelligible language, and who participated in common ceremonial activities. In the Eurobodalla, these country groups had their own range, and rights to country were determined by a variety of claims. The hybrid economy that emerged through relations between Aboriginal people and settlers involved the appropriation of new sources of food, new technologies and new modalities for exchange and trade through Aboriginal people’s incorporation into a monetarised economy. The state sector emerged via the formation of the APB and also transformed through time, from the early provision of government rations, to the expansion of the Australian welfare state in the late 20th century.

In the Eurobodalla, as elsewhere, European colonisation has dramatically altered the environments and resources available to Aboriginal people. Extensive land clearing and forestry, the erosive effects of European style farming, the decrease in water quality in rivers, and overfishing, have altered the available food sources since the first wave of settlers arrived in the 1830s. Control over access to resources, through fences and freehold title and fisheries regulations have also influenced the transformation of subsistence practices. European consumables, including early rations and later, farmed or store-bought items replaced many customary staples in Yuin people’s diets. Seafood has remained a popular protein staple, while fishing continues to provide a source of food and income in the present context. Introduced species have been both the cause for environmental concern, and have provided new sources for subsistence. Rabbits, in particular, were an important source of protein and a possible source of income, while blackberries provided a new wild fruit source.
Numerous references in the oral history record refer to the importance of rabbits to the diet of Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla during the 20th century. One informant in Dale Donaldson’s collection commented that during the early to mid 1900s, ‘the base diet during this period was peas, corn, beans, rabbit; kangaroo tail soup and Kangaroo steak, along with government rations’ (Dale Donaldson 2006:15). Rabbits were also caught and sold under an eradication program for the CSIRO (Dale Donaldson 2006:38). Rabbits were hunted using a variety of new technologies that including using rifles, traps, ferrets or hunting dogs. Older techniques were also utilised, including targeted burning of grassland to attract rabbits to new growth (Dale Donaldson 2006:23). New technologies were also appropriated for fishing, with metal hooks and synthetic line, diving gear and European-style boats replacing their handcrafted counterparts.

The most significant upheaval in the lives of Aboriginal people occurred between during the early and middle decades of the 19th century, with population figures indicating an 80 percent decline in the number of Aboriginal people living in the approximate study region between 1822 and 1889. This massive decline in population entails a commensurate drop in population densities, although the early censuses also indicate that Aboriginal families were clustered around the European farms and settlements by the 1830s. Despite administrative attempts to separate the social lives of Aboriginal people and settlers through policies of segregation and ‘protection’, the number of Aboriginal people of mixed descent had increased sharply by the early decades of the 20th century. As the Indigenous population recovered (in terms of numbers), population densities fluctuated with periods of seasonal employment. During the Great Depression, for example, the Wallaga Lake station experienced a significant influx of newcomers seeking assistance during a time of immense hardship. Conversely, during the height of the picking season, population densities in the Tuross valley were extremely high. When picking was not ‘on’, population densities on the coastal fringe increased as seafood once again assumed a primary role in meeting subsistence needs. This movement (from government rations, to paid employment, to ‘customary’ modes of production) demonstrates the intersecting and overlapping fields of activity that comprised the hybrid economy in the Eurobodalla during what is remembered as the ‘picking days’.
As a product of processes of dispersal (and the ever-present fear of police and government officials), the range of mobility patterns was extended far beyond what the early ethnographers described. Indeed parts of Sydney (particularly La Perouse and Redfern), and Kempsey became new and important nodes in the webs of connections between Aboriginal people on the south coast, and those living in other parts of NSW and Victoria. Furthermore, the arbitrary manner in which government policy was delivered in the management of the Wallaga Lake station, facilitated the maintenance of customary patterns of mobility, or ‘beats’, within a broad geographical area that was marked by nodes and webs of familial, social, cultural and economic significance. Webs of relatedness reflected those evidenced in the early ethnographies and included a range of identifications with others ranging from immediacy to detachment. I suggest that these identifications were significantly expanded through: intermarriage or sexual relations with settlers (particularly in the mid 1800s); an increase in (or less restrictions placed on) the range of suitable marriage partners through necessity; and political processes that entailed a sense of solidarity with those outside of the immediate sphere of social relations.

The shift from the use of local dialects to using English as the lingua franca in the Eurobodalla could be interpreted either as a product of necessity (Aboriginal people had to be able to converse with settlers in order to transact) or as an example of colonial hegemony (where the use of Indigenous dialects was discouraged at Wallaga Lake and English was the predominant language taught in schools). The linguistic evidence suggests that a localised, hybridised language form transformed gradually towards the colloquial form of English used in the contemporary context. Several older informants regularly interspersed variations of Dhurga words within general speech (see also Chittick & Fox 1997, passim). The Dhurga dialect has recently been the focus of a language revitalisation project and language programs have been incorporated into the curriculums at both Broulee Primary School and Vincentia High School.

Yuin, as an identity, emerged relatively recently as Aboriginal people on the south coast of NSW came to think of themselves as being ‘all one mob’ in the last thirty years. The notion of a Yuin ‘nation’ or ‘tribe’ was part of the activist vernacular during the bitter struggle to save Mumbulla Mountain from logging in the
late 1970s. However Yuin people also refer to identifications with clans or country groups that are linked to totemic identities. These layers of identifications, linking people to place, are congruent with the early ethnographic evidence and the description of Yuin country, more generally, falls within the geographic range observed by Howitt. As Chapter Two showed, in the 19th century (and probably earlier), patrilateral budjan totems were associated with different places and different country groups or patri-clans that may have reflected some proliferation of the totemic species in that location. Totemic conferral in the contemporary context is similarly linked to different places and species that entail specific knowledges, rights and responsibilities. In research conducted in 2003, Deborah Rose found evidence that totemic classifications are bestowed upon children by both men and women (Rose et al. 2003:40). This is congruent with my research, where several informants spoke of the bestowal of totemic classifications by both their mothers and fathers. It is possible that the significant disruptions to Yuin social worlds since the European invasion meant that it was impossible to maintain the conferral of patrilateral totems and had, instead, become a more flexible system in which totemic identities were conferred by either men or women.

In terms of governance, the role of Gommeras (headmen) appears to have been replaced by traditional owners, elders groups and land councils in the contemporary context. What Howitt observed as the considerable ‘restraint’ by younger men at ‘tribal councils’ (Howitt 1904:325), translates to norms of respect and ancestral law that are passed down to new generations today. Wallaga Lake, seen by many as the nucleus of the Yuin nation, remained a repository for cultural knowledge under the various legislative and management regimes. The Umbarra cultural centre at Wallaga Lake remains a keeping place for cultural artefacts and runs cultural tours to educate visitors about respecting the cultural significance of the surrounding country. Knowledge of the land and sea, skills for handcrafting customary technologies, and customary methods of meeting subsistence are taught to young Aboriginal people by their parents and senior knowledge-holders. Bush tucker expeditions, and camping and fishing trips are viewed by many Aboriginal people as important activities for socialising, teaching and learning. As the informant on the jetty remarked about the estuary:
This is why I bring my son and the little one here to fish. This is a traditional place to fish. Way back before white people dug in these pylons, the old people used to fish here. Generations and generations of our people have camped around here and looked after the river. Now we bring the kids here to teach them how to live off the land and the water and to tell them stories about our old people. That’s the sort of education they can’t get in schools, or at your university! We bring ‘em to places like this to teach them about respecting their elders, and the land and the water – not to leave rubbish and muck up the environment. If we look after this river, see, our children’s children can sit right here and fish like we’ve been doing for generations and generations.

In the post-invasion context, use rights to country have been largely determined by settler society. As Chapter Three demonstrated, government policies that were designed to ‘unlock the land’ for closer settlement rapidly alienated Aboriginal people from their country in the 19th century. The regulation of fishing, particularly the licenses that were brought in to protect the NSW abalone fisheries, has also restricted use rights to customary resources and has been the source of many bitter disputes. Aboriginal people’s perspectives on a range of issues relating to restrictions on use rights were articulated in Percy Mumbler’s evidence in the first public hearing before the Select Committee of the NSW Legislative Assembly in 1979:

We know there is plenty of tucker here for us and we know what to eat and what to cook. We do not have to starve, because our mothers and fathers taught us... We do not want someone coming along and telling us that we cannot fish here because we do not have a licence... We do not want anyone coming here to say that we cannot do that because we are trespassing (Chittick & Fox 1997:18).

In the self-determination/land rights era, use rights to country have been complicated by legal processes, and various concessions and co-management agreements over crown land. Use rights relating to totemic identity remain an important determinant on Aboriginal people’s rights and responsibilities to their country.
As previously stated, the hybrid economy of the Eurobodalla has gradually been transformed through the history of Indigenous-settler relations. The organisation of production, distribution and consumption, and trade, has changed according to the variety of economic strategies that have enabled a marginalised people to survive. Gendered divisions of labour have been modified through necessity. In the 19th and early 20th century, Aboriginal men found employment on farms and in the bush, while women worked as domestic servants or as more general ‘helpers’ on farms. In the 20th century, employment in the forestry sector remained in the male domain, while seasonal picking provided a source of employment for women, children and men. In the ‘post-picking’ and contemporary context, women tend to find more stable and better-paid employment, while many men are forced to compete with working-class non-Indigenous people for blue-collar jobs. For this reason, men are likely to be more mobile than women, and households often have female heads. Throughout the post-invasion period, both Aboriginal women and men have engaged in modified customary forms of production.

Today, the economic unit in Aboriginal households is much the same as in non-Indigenous households (comprising immediate kin). However, families have a tendency to be more mobile and also have greater demands placed on their hospitality due to the shifting fortunes of extended family members. Demand sharing and reciprocity based on kinship relationships (‘caring and sharing’) remains an important element of distribution, while totemic classifications place restrictions on the consumption of particular species. In the Eurobodalla, Aboriginal people were incorporated into the cash economy at a relatively early stage in the British colonisation of Australia. Chapter Three showed that by 1845, Aboriginal labour was being reciprocally exchanged for food and clothing, yet Aboriginal workers were beginning to insist on cash payment. During the ensuing decades, exchange and trade came to be conducted in increasingly capitalistic terms and included early entrepreneurial activities such as selling fish to settlers and abalone to Chinese merchants (see Cruze et al. 2005:29). In the present context of the hybrid economy of the Eurobodalla, Indigenous production, consumption, distribution and trade are characterised by elements of customary and market (cash) activities, and government transfers. This chapter now turns to examine the historical processes in Indigenous-
settler relations in the Eurobodalla by reviewing some key elements and themes. Section 8.2 will rearticulate my argument that current intercultural relations in the Eurobodalla can only be understood through an examination of the entire history of Indigenous-settler relations.

8.2 Historical processes in settler-Indigenous relations

Chapters Three to Seven of this thesis explored the history of settler-Indigenous relations in the Eurobodalla both chronologically and thematically. This section identifies and analyses the key historical processes and moments in settler-Indigenous relations in the Eurobodalla. The first historical process relates to the character of early colonial relations as a product of the dominant mode of production in the local settler economy. Chapter Three examined the early history of contact between Aboriginal people and Europeans in the Eurobodalla. It argued that settlement was delayed due to the development of a 'culture of terror' on the maritime frontier. By projecting the image of terror onto Aboriginal people, Europeans could rationalise their own acts of violence. In the 'epistemic murk' of these mediated narratives documenting atrocities committed by Aboriginal people, acts of violence on the part of Europeans were motivated, retold and reconstituted. Early contact with Europeans was characterised by violence, although this was ameliorated over the subsequent decades through mediation and the development of working relationships. Both customary and newly acquired skills enabled Aboriginal people to carve an important, though undervalued, place in the regional economy.

Chapter Three also showed that a key inhibiting factor for the development and diversification of the Eurobodalla economy during this period was the supply of labour and associated problems with transportation. From its settlement in the 1830s to the 'time of decay' at the turn of the century, the Eurobodalla remained both at the periphery of colonial expansion and inexorably linked with processes occurring throughout NSW and in Sydney. The character of European relations with Aboriginal people during this period was also shaped by the Eurobodalla's place in the colonial project. The presence of settlers had also been incorporated into pre-existing systems of reciprocity and mutual obligation: it was primarily the settler's ability to transact
that rendered them relational within a Yuin social world. The exchange of services and material goods in return for labour also led to the transformation of these dynamic patterns in a manner that is consistent with Indigenous norms of reciprocity. The character of settler-Indigenous relations during this period was a product of the localised and marginalised settler economy that had developed in the relatively encapsulated Eurobodalla region, which subsequently resulted in the incorporation of Aboriginal labour to fill a structural niche.

The expansion of small-scale landholdings in the 1860s forced Aboriginal people off their country to move variously between estuarine camps close to sources of employment, and the government-administered station at Wallaga Lake. While the Aboriginal population was in rapid decline during this period, pressures associated with land alienation were somewhat ameliorated through the development of mutually beneficial working relationships with local settlers. Chapter Four showed that several individual settlers in the Eurobodalla (most notably Richard Dansey and Henry Bates) were instrumental in aiding Aboriginal people to gain some security of land tenure. Local philanthropists eventually succeeded in their requests for schooling and rations to be provided to Aboriginal people at Wallaga Lake.

A second key historical process relates to policies in which the colonial administration took steps (through the formation of the APB) to segregate Aboriginal people into managed stations and reserves. However, due to the disjuncture between APB policy and the actual running of the station at Wallaga Lake, patterns of seasonal movement were maintained. Institutionalisation did not result in the creation of a sedentary population utterly segregated from the outside world. The Wallaga Lake station was established after nearly a century of intercultural relations in which Aboriginal people had incorporated the presence of settlers into their seasonal movements and had developed new and innovative ways to achieve subsistence. Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla had also become extensively incorporated into the rural settler economy. By the turn of the century, Wallaga Lake had become one of many ‘drop-in’ centres along the south coast as families followed seasonal opportunities for employment and maintained connections with kin and country. While the 1909 Aborigines Protection Act increased the power of the APB to regulate the lives of Aboriginal people on stations, these policies were not comprehensively...
applied at Wallaga Lake. Rather than discriminating between people based on skin colour as the APB had intended, the emphasis of station management at Wallaga Lake was on preserving patterns of Aboriginal employment that had developed prior to the gazettal of the station.

Chapter Five noted that the formalisation of institutional authority under the 1909 Act produced a range of oppressive restrictions for Aboriginal people living throughout NSW. Most importantly, the ‘dog Act’ ushered in an era of institutional racialism and separation; an era that Aboriginal people are still recovering from today. The chapter examined the implications of the 1909 Aborigines Protection Act for the stability of family life in Aboriginal communities. Through an examination of the ‘battle of Bateman’s Bay’ and the association of Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla with broader resistance movements in NSW, the chapter argued that an Indigenous political consciousness was emerging during the early decades of the 20th century that transcended the ‘local’. The chapter also identified a range of contradictions that Aboriginal people experienced between racialised policies of exclusion and assimilation and variable levels of harassment in the Eurobodalla towns. This ‘separation era’ in the experience of Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla is the third key historical process in the history of settler-Indigenous relations.

Chapter Six began with an examination of Aboriginal engagement with the forestry industry that developed as an extension of early engagement in ‘bush work’. During the postwar period, Aboriginal people were consistently relegated to low-paying, manual labour employment under conditions of low mainstream unemployment. This pattern was reinforced by educational disadvantage and government policies that were designed to racially stratify employment-ladder opportunities for Aboriginal people throughout NSW. The structural niche in the region’s employment market caused by the rapid diversification towards seasonal horticulture was filled by low-paid Aboriginal bean and pea pickers. Aboriginal men were receiving fair wages in the forestry sector, reflecting a mastery of the skills required to produce high quality milled timber. These skills enabled Aboriginal people, both individually and collectively, to develop new sources of pride as self-motivated workers who were prepared to start at the bottom and work their way up. These skills also allowed for a certain degree of independence and flexibility, while
the work itself was richly sociable. Aboriginal involvement in seasonal picking offered a similar degree of autonomy and sociality despite the ever-present fear of 'the welfare'. Seasonal picking allowed whole families to work together and to live, often for weeks and months at a time, communally with other pickers. This coincidence between dispersed families’ ‘beats’ also enabled Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla to reassert a sense of themselves as being ‘all one mob’, while relatedness was reinforced through exchange within intra- and inter-familial relationships.

Chapter Six also provided a critique of previous studies’ use of the term ‘dependence’ to describe Aboriginal seasonal employment on the south coast. It argued that the studies by Bell, and Castle and Hagen related seasonal employment to what was perceived to be unsuccessful assimilation and disregarded both the continuance of a modified subsistence economy and the complex historical processes that shaped the picking era. By describing seasonal employment as ‘dependent’, these studies obscure the important contributions Aboriginal people have made to the economy of the Eurobodalla.

The fourth historical process in the history of settler-Indigenous relations in the Eurobodalla relates to the shift that occurred through the transition from seasonal patterns of employment to the ‘self determination’ (or the ‘post-picking’) era. Chapter Seven sought to problematise the trope of ‘self determination’ that has been used in political rhetoric to describe a shift in Indigenous policy in Australia towards civil equality by examining three themes: the nature of Aboriginal campaigns for civil and land rights and the character of bureaucratic frameworks that were developed in response; the shift that occurred during this period that demarcates relatively defined historical eras; and, the translation of this shift to generational change, as one era is closed, while a new one has opened. I argued that the epistemic centrality of cognatic descent from named apical ancestors in the current native title framework has resulted in south coast people being disadvantaged in the arena of land rights, and that it has been a source of factionalism in social relations. The chapter also traced transitions in Indigenous governance and showed that the effects of poor policy and poor policy implementation are still having dramatic consequences in the present-day context at Wallaga Lake. The chapter also argued that through a range of factors, people who have had intergenerational connections to regimes of ‘work’ have been effectively
‘pushed out’ of local employment. By examining the hitchhiker’s generations’ appropriation of the cultural forms of hip hop, the chapter demonstrated that racial discrimination is still a factor in intercultural social relations, due in part by the competition between working-class Indigenous and non-Indigenous people for scarce employment and affordable housing.

As the song ‘Jacky Jacky’ is an artefact of cultural production, so too is the hitchhiker’s generation’s experience of modernity a product of historical processes that have occurred at the interface of Indigenous-settler subjectivities. Processes of colonisation, land alienation, economic incorporation, institutionalisation, shifting political priorities and policies relating to Indigenous people, and the experience of a people being pushed out of intergenerational, socially meaningful forms of employment have each left a mark on the south coast Koori palimpsest. Aboriginal people are constantly in the process of fusing and remoulding social relations and symbols as new generations make sense of their experience of colonialism, post colonialism and modernity. This chapter draws to a close by suggesting that the historical processes that have occurred in settler-Indigenous relations in the Eurobodalla are comparable to similar processes that have occurred elsewhere in Australia. Section 8.3 suggests a direction in which new research might be directed as a contribution to mediating the extreme positions generated within debates in Australia’s ‘history wars’, and those relating to colonialism more generally.

8.3 Towards a comparative analysis of settler-Indigenous histories

This thesis has contributed to a broader effort to correct the lack of accounts of Aboriginal participation in Australian settler economies. It has emphasised the localised and historically-specific forms of economic incorporation as Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla were drawn into working relationships with settlers and the cash economy, while the presence of settlers was incorporated into pre-existing patterns of economy and sociality. The emergence of hybrid economic forms in the Eurobodalla entailed new complexes of transactions between settlers and Aboriginal
people. Moreover, these transactions entailed a highly plural range of intercultural interactions that transformed both Indigenous and settler subjectivities. Settlers were not always open to Indigenous difference, but as a collective they were not always closed off from interacting with Aboriginal people. While several individual settlers sought to assist Aboriginal people and were able (partially at least) to decouple themselves from hegemonic discourses that framed the ‘self’ in relation to a perceived inferior ‘other’, settler society (as represented by shifting political, administrative and bureaucratic forms) sought, through a range of measures, to eliminate a perceived ‘Aboriginal problem’. Segregation (‘smoothing the dying pillow’) gave way to the modernist project of assimilating Aboriginal people into the wider population to serve a structural niche at the bottom of the south coast labour market. Assimilation shifted to ‘normalisation’ under the political rhetoric of self determination: Aboriginal people were entitled to envisage their own futures, but only within narrowly-defined boundaries constructed by, and considered to be normal for settler society.

Clearly we need to engage with the complex and often contradictory social exchanges existing within the politics of the communities in which both Aboriginal people and settlers live. As Nicholas Thomas notes, ‘it is widely assumed that colonialism was pervasively efficacious: natives were extirpated, the impact was fatal, the colonised were dominated and assimilated’ (Thomas 1994:15). Thomas argues that these assumptions ‘frequently exaggerate colonial power, diminishing the extent to which colonial histories were shaped by indigenous resistance and accommodation’ and that, in many cases, ‘the appropriation of introduced institutions, material objects or discourses’ was strategic ‘on the part of colonised peoples, or particular groups within them’ (Thomas 1994:15). However, as Gupta and Ferguson caution, we must also avoid:

the temptation to use scattered examples of the cultural flows dribbling from the ‘periphery’...as a way of dismissing the ‘grand narrative’ of capitalism (especially the ‘totalizing’ narrative of late capitalism), and thus of evading the powerful political issues associated with Western global hegemony (Gupta & Ferguson 1992:19).
It follows that it is also impossible not to make some broad generalisations about colonial processes, the macro structures of capitalism and pervasive ideologies of race in examinations of settler-indigenous histories. Thus, the issue of accurately representing colonial and post-colonial experiences is one of distortion, associated with the various extremes of homogenisation (neglecting historical or localised specificity), and excessive specificity (neglecting commonalities).

In the Australian context, another set of tensions has played out in contestations over the content of Australian historical accounts and the representation of Australian historiography following Stanner’s coining of the term ‘the great Australian silence’ in his 1968 Boyer Lectures ‘After the Dreaming’. The ‘history wars’ split those who view the repositioning of ‘Aboriginal history’ in the Australian narrative as a moral challenge, with those who view it as an encumbrance on the nation. Both camps have called for greater attention to be paid to the details of localised histories of settler-Indigenous relations, while arguing that the other’s use those details to depict broader narratives have produced distorted representations. Indeed, as Cowlishaw has pointed out, ‘Keith Windschuttle’s vigorous attacks on other historians are made in the name of objectivist principles, but his own particular perspective and purpose is vividly apparent’ (Cowlishaw 2006:184 n12).

Arguments over the nature and degree of violence on the Australian frontier, coupled with the widespread, yet incorrect view that economic relations between settlers and Aboriginal people resulted only in rapidly developing relations of dependency, imply more research needs to be conducted to mediate the extreme positions generated by the ‘history wars’.

Not only have I sought to provide new research about the nature and variety of Aboriginal participation in an Australian settler economy, but this thesis has also examined the available evidence relating to settler-Indigenous relations through time. It has sought to ‘muddy the waters’ of some widespread, but erroneous, generalisations about settler-Indigenous relations and the manifestation of government policies. Different periods in the history of Indigenous-settler relations in the

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109 Tim Rowse’s (2003) review of Windschuttle’s The Fabrication of Aboriginal History: Volume One. Van Diemen’s Land 1803-1847 questions these ‘objectivist principles’. Rowse highlights discrepancies in Windschuttle’s use of death rates, but his main concern is that Windschuttle’s emergence ‘as an eager controversialist’ has recast ‘the moral topography of the public sphere’ (Rowse 2003:11).
Eurobodalla are comparable to moments in the history of Indigenous-settler relations in other parts of Australia. Identifying these different periods could provide the framework for further grand narratives, but the lessons of the ‘history wars’ urge due caution. An alternative approach should be to balance historical representation between the distortive extremes of grand narrative homogenisation and excessive specificity that neglects macro processes.

Perhaps a method of doing this is to systematically compare and contrast various settler-Indigenous histories across a range of shared categories or periods; to attempt to divorce epistemological distortions (particularly meta-theory) from the evidence in the relevant historical or anthropological texts; to provide a sketch of the variety of new complexes of transactions and interactions; and, to draw some conclusions about how historical trajectories might inform our understanding of present conditions in Indigenous communities. This approach, while historical, draws heavily on the comparative analysis developed as a keystone to anthropology by various scholars including Boas, Lévi-Strauss, Marshall Sahlins, and more recently, Ian Keen in the Australian context. I suggest that all Aboriginal communities have experienced a dynamic pre-contact period that shaped their existing pre-colonial patterns of economy and sociality. Also, these same communities experienced varying degrees of violence in contact relations with Europeans (that moved across spaces and time), different modes of production in the settler economy (affecting levels of violence in relation to the amount of land settlers required and the alienation that implied for Aboriginal people), different experiences of institutionalisation (under the various religious and secular guises), different experiences of relations with ‘non-state’, non-Indigenous individuals (supporters, transactors and ‘rednecks’), different responses and experiences of ‘self determination’ and different experiences of ‘modernity’.

This type of project is a logical extension of Keen’s (2004) systematic comparison and synthesis of the available knowledge relating to seven Aboriginal groups across Australia at the ‘threshold of colonisation’. Indeed, Keen concludes by stating:
It is possible that the particular character of Aboriginal economy and society in a given region helped to shape the course of relations on the frontier and beyond. Perhaps certain forms of social organisation and leadership made stronger resistance possible in some areas, or made it possible for Europeans and others to become incorporated into Aboriginal exchange systems (Keen 2004:398).

A general comparison of various local Aboriginal social and economic systems should be the starting point in a comparative project because all Aboriginal groups experienced a dynamic pre-contact history prior to 1788. However, we must also be mindful that ‘the frontier’ moved both across time and space. As Keen notes,

> the British colonisation of Australia, as well as the later internal colonisation of the continent, effectively occurred at different times in different places, and with varying degrees and kinds of impact; so the ‘threshold of colonisation’ is not a specific period, but is relative to place (Keen 2004:2).

The second comparable category or period relates to the character of the initial invasion of Aboriginal country by the first explorers and settlers. In 1981, Henry Reynolds published ‘the first book to systematically explore the other side of the frontier’ (Reynolds 1981:198). As Reynolds remarked in The Other Side of the Frontier, ‘frontier conflict was apparent in almost every part of Australia though it varied in duration and intensity’ (Reynolds 1981:2). However, Reynolds also argued that ‘the Aboriginal response to invasion was much more positive, creative and complex than generations of white Australians have been taught to believe’ (Reynolds 1981:198). A comparative study of the character of a range of experiences on the frontier would not only expand upon Reynolds’ work, but integrate it with broader geopolitical processes and the macro structures of capitalism. The dominant modes of production in the emerging settler economies had significant impacts on the rate and degree of land alienation for Aboriginal people and levels of violence that implied. Perhaps examples for comparison could be drawn based on a range of localised aspects of capitalist production: interactions on the pastoral frontier might be vastly different to those in the relatively diversified and marginalised settler economy in the
encapsulated valleys of the Eurobodalla, and probably different again to those in the tropical north and the arid centre.

The third category for comparison could be the degree to which Aboriginal labour came to be incorporated into local settler economies, and the degree to which the presence of settlers came to be incorporated into Indigenous systems of economy and sociality. This category relates both to the particular style of transactions and the character of relationships that developed through the incorporation of Aboriginal labour into localised social and economic formations. The dominant mode of production in local settler economies possibly determined the character of incorporation and levels of Aboriginal employment. Furthermore, the problem of labour shortages varied across different regions, affecting the need to incorporate Indigenous labour to fill structural niches in local settler economies. Different forms of remuneration may have also arisen in different regions, from labour initially being rewarded with food and clothing, to reciprocal relations of labour in exchange for both in-kind or cash payment, to contract work and the payment of regular wages. The appropriation of new material objects, as well as language and cultural forms by Aboriginal people may have also ranged from the imposition of European cultural norms (such as clothing) versus strategic appropriation. Variation may have also occurred between individual labourers, groups of similarly-skilled workers and the movement of whole family groups to farms or settlements in search of rations or work. Working relationships (or relations of domination/dependency) may also have entailed a variety in the degree of relatedness extended to non-Indigenous individuals: from open hostility, ambivalence or detachment, to the adoption of what Redmond terms ‘strange relatives’ (Redmond 2005).

A fourth category for comparison might relate to the character of institutionalisation in the form of missions or secular, government-run settlements. Throughout Australia, the trope of ‘smoothing the dying pillow’ gave rise to mostly isolated settlements that sought to remove Aboriginal people from their country (to free up the land and resources for exploitation) and to indoctrinate or reconfigure Indigenous social relations under a variety of regimes ranging from benign religious paternalism to complete domination and control. Different styles of settlement management or the proximity of settlements to sources of employment may have
affected levels of indoctrination, types of social and economic reconfiguration and changes in mobility patterns. Regulations governing settlement management might also have had profound or minor impacts over the lives of Aboriginal people under various state and territory administrations.

This brings us to the fifth category: the legislative, administrative and bureaucratic solutions devised by Australian governments to solve what they considered to be an Aboriginal problem, and the on-the-ground effects of racialised policies. This category would need to recognise the ideological shifts that occurred during the 20th century towards the notion that Aboriginal people were assimilable, and the centralisation of governance over Indigenous affairs in the 1970’s.

The final category for comparison could be the character of transitions in various communities in the era of self-determination. In remote and northern Australia, this period has been associated with land rights and the outstations movement, while in the southern and eastern parts of the country, LALC’s have emerged. For example, in parts of central Australia, Austin Broos argues that ‘dire consequences and extraordinary innovations flowed from these moments’ that ‘frame the Western Arrernte’s circumstances today’ (Austin-Broos 2009:4). In the Eurobodalla, changes have been markedly different: increases in the provision of town housing, citizen entitlements and also the demise of socially significant sources of employment. The relatively recent restyling of Indigenous policy has produced very different outcomes in Indigenous communities across Australia and contributes to how Aboriginal people are experiencing so-called modernity. However, it is the overall historical trajectory, I argue, that has moulded present circumstances. In years to come, we might include a further category for comparative analysis in light of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, or future shifts in the political priorities of the state that impact directly on Aboriginal livelihoods and subjectivities. To illustrate the utility of this general comparative framework, I will provide a brief comparison of the periods described in this thesis with the history of the Western Arrernte presented by Austin-Broos (2009).
Based on the archival and ethnographic evidence, Austin-Broos suggests that the Western Arrernte experienced a discontinuous and prolonged invasion and dispossession of their country by explorers, pastoralists, missionaries and workers from the 1860s and eventually ‘fell back to the Hermannsburg mission’ by the end of the 19th century (Austin-Broos 2009:3). Those who survived the disease epidemics (that followed the loss of land) risked being hunted and shot by ‘mounted police in the service of pastoralists’ (Austin-Broos 2009:8). The Western Arrernte’s way of life (that largely depended on access to land that was deemed suitable for pastoralism) was undermined by the usurpation of their country, and ‘the power of settlement goods and safe haven drew them in’ to a ‘local economy centered on the mission’ (Austin-Broos 2009:2-3). As Austin-Broos describes the process:

It involved a transition from regional band society based on a system of locatedness and kin and ritual relations to one in which the missionaries and the Arrernte between them sought to invent a new local order supported by the state. This order was built on Christian conversion, the exchange of rations for service, and the mission’s authority. The mission secured and developed itself through the greater part of the twentieth century (Austin-Broos 2009:3).

In the Eurobodalla, early encounters were also sporadic until land was taken up by settlers in the 1830s. However, Yuin people were able to maintain a viable and independent subsistence economy and rapidly incorporated the presence of settlers into their seasonal movements. Hostilities were mediated and ameliorated through relatedness born out of working relationships. The success of diversified local forms of capitalist production in the Eurobodalla depended on the utilisation of Aboriginal labour.

Yuin people were also rapidly incorporated into the settler economy through in-kind and (later) cash payments for their seasonal labour. Based on Austin-Broos’ account, the Western Arrernte had little opportunity (or willingness) to work for the usurpers and instead laboured for the missionaries in return for rations. As a product of the missionary regime (‘a small domestic economy lodged on the periphery of Australia’s market economy’), the Western Arrernte were largely excluded from the cash economy until the 1960s and 1970s (Austin-Broos 2009:4). In the Eurobodalla,
institutionalisation came in the form of a government-run institution that was mainly concerned with minimising the cost of rations. The Wallaga Lake station preserved seasonal patterns of employment and served as an important node in the webs of relatedness that comprise south coast beats.

While the relatively all-encompassing missionary regime at Hermannsburg continued to develop in the early-mid 20th century, changes in policies relating to Aboriginal people in NSW had more dramatic consequences, due in part to the number of people living outside of institutional communities. For the Western Arrernte, to live ‘off the mission’ was a less viable option to the ‘precarious settlement life based on pastoralism, craftwork, and gardening’ (Austin-Broos 2009:8). For the Yuin, policies of protection and assimilation (‘the Welfare’) provided powerful reasons for families to be on the move, following the seasonal rhythm of rural employment.

For the Western Arrernte, the second period of change was associated with land rights, welfarism and the outstation movement in which the Western Arrernte came to be included in the cash economy, while remaining peripheral and marginalised in Australian society. Factionalism arose from the outstations movement in which the shift from life on the mission to self-determination produced new forms of intra-community loyalties along factional lines that were further entrenched by white politics. Austin-Broos argues that contemporary Western Arrernte social suffering must be understood and placed into the historical context of ‘invasion, mission rule, and poorly conceived policies for a transition to modernity’ as processes of structural violence (Austin-Broos 2009:10). In the post-mission context, Austin-Broos notes that there has been a substantial Arrernte engagement with ‘work’ either through waged labour or through CDEP, however she suggests that many people ‘maintained social imaginaries that grafted work onto networks of relatedness stretched across a region’ (Austin-Broos 2009:236). It is these emplaced sets of social relations and identities that the state seeks to separate out from the economy for remote communities to be viable in a market-driven modernity.

Transitions to the era of ‘self determination’ in the Eurobodalla have been far less abrupt, due in no small part to the long incorporation of Yuin people into the cash
economy. Rather than needing to be ‘drawn into’ regimes of employment, Yuin people have been ‘pushed out’ of socially significant patterns of work in the ‘post-picking’ context. In both cases, government policies developed in the 1960s and 1970s have been a source of factionalism in social relations. In both cases, the shifting political priorities of the state, poorly-conceived policies and policy implementation have not led to significant improvements in the living standards of Aboriginal people.

Comparative analysis could, perhaps, be pushed further to compare and contrast colonial relations and processes in other contexts. A significant body of literature exists on settler-indigenous trade in North America (for example, see Blaser et al. 2004; Innis 1956; Morrison & Wilson 1994; Tough 1990, 1996, 2002). For example, Frank Tough uses the concept of ‘frontier capitalism’ to describe the engagement of indigenous Canadians with the emerging economy in the region around Lake Winnipeg in the post-Treaty period (Tough 2002:1). Elsewhere, various authors have presented different styles of European colonisation that produced radically different ‘frontier economies’, relations of domination and forms of resistance. Taussig’s (1987) nightmarish account of the rubber trade in the Putumayo river area of Colombia in the late 19th and early 20th century illustrates the violent attempt by British rubber barons to impose a capitalist mode of production upon the local population. James Gump (1997) has compared the resistance to colonial domination by the Lakota Sioux of South Dakota, the Xhosa of the Eastern Cape of South Africa and the Maori of New Zealand. Gump argues that, ‘faced with “the imperialism of cultural assimilation” as well as military subjugation, the Lakota, Xhosa, and Maori were compelled to redefine themselves in the aftermath of colonial conquest’ and many ‘remained incurably hostile to one-way assimilation’ (Gump 1997:22). While comparative studies of settler-indigenous relations of the type I have described would be a significant contribution to the corpus of knowledge about colonial and postcolonial processes, future research could be directed towards localised case studies of the type presented in this thesis.
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