delegation is a highlight of the book. It is also the experience of a lifetime for Lesley and gives her an opportunity to reflect on how her childhood shaped the adult she became. These experiences are interwoven with Lesley's ongoing determination and her eventually successful campaign to receive workers' wages stolen by the government.

Early in the book, I was unsure whether this story was a 'conversation', as the title suggests, but it does become more of a dialogue as the book progresses. It certainly gives an intergenerational perspective of two strong Aboriginal women and their experiences growing up in Queensland. Both Lesley and Tammy convey a sense of strength and resilience, succeeding in their careers and family life despite persistent racism and the pressures and limits it placed on them. *Not Just Black and White* will be of interest to those keen to know more about Queensland's oppressive policies and its impact on Aboriginal people's lives. It is a compelling and highly personal story that might be used in Indigenous studies, Australian studies or other literature courses.

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doi [10.1017/qre.2017.44](https://doi.org/10.1017/qre.2017.44)

Matthew J. Colloff, *Flooded Forest and Desert Creek: Ecology and History of the River Red Gum*, Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 2014, 325 pp., ISBN 9 7806 4310 9193, A\$69.95.

The river red gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) has the most widespread natural distribution of any *Eucalyptus* species, and is our most famous silvicultural export. In this book, ecologist Matthew J. Colloff argues that the river red gum is a quintessentially Australian tree — enduring and stoic.

Flooded Forest and Desert Creek is divided into three main parts and eleven substantive chapters. Part I deals with the river red gum itself, its landscape and its evolution. Colloff explains that the spread and current distribution of river red gums is a consequence of the cycles of wet and dry governing Australia's environmental history. These environmental changes help explain the evolution of seven different subspecies of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. This section also contains an excellent description of the life history of the gum, and casual readers will not be lost thanks to Colloff's patient explanations, excellent use of pictorial aids and a sprinkling of personal anecdotes. Colloff describes the vital role river red gums play as 'ecosystem engineers' which both alter their local environment to suit their own interest and which support other life — over 450 species of insect were found in just two tree canopies in the Murray-Darling Basin alone.

Part II follows a loosely chronological structure to explore the recent history of the river red gum, from the cessation of Aboriginal fire management to the impacts of grazing, from timber harvesting to the regulation of river flow — all factors that have significantly driven change in forests and woodlands. Colloff explores the highly contested nature of fire in land management, but ultimately judges that too little is known about its effects to settle questions of policy. He suggests a number

of questions for future research which may resolve some of the controversy. He also examines the historical effect of introduced feral and domestic livestock on forest ecosystems and river red gums. Cattle, sheep and rabbits had deleterious effects in southern NSW and northern Victoria, along with camels and rabbits in arid Australia. Colloff proceeds to survey the changing political, social and economic aspects of timber harvesting, and concludes Part II with an analysis of the effect of irrigation and flow regulation upon both the physical and political environments of the Murray-Darling Basin.

In Part III, Colloff explores the changing relationship between Australians and the gum, drawing on the watercolours of Hans Heysen, contemporary Kaytetye art and even the ABC series *Two Men in a Tinnie* (2006). He also uses his personal experiences of political debates over water management in the Riverina to supplement reflections on the links between cultural landscapes, conservationism and what he calls 'river red gum consciousness' — an intriguing concept that future environmental writers will find very useful. The book concludes with a summary of the sparse state of knowledge and research on river red gums, and calls for detailed local historical ecologies and adaptive management for a future where climate change will greatly affect this child of Australia's cycles of wet and dry.

While Colloff considers that *Flooded Forest and Desert Creek* forms part of the historical ecology genre rather than environmental history, I'm not entirely convinced such a distinction is clear or productive. Given that Colloff has attempted to focus upon the effects of people on the river red gum, he cannot help but engage with attendant cultural and political debates. Indeed, it is testimony to the politically charged atmosphere surrounding some river red gum issues that Colloff feels the need to justify his claims at a deep level of detail, even if these explanations are generally handled with grace.

Given the sources, Colloff focuses largely on the Murray-Darling Basin, with substantial sections on *Eucalyptus arida* in Central Australia. Queensland readers will be best served by regarding this book as a launching point for further study on local conditions and patterns. *Flooded Forest and Desert Creek* is written for specialists and lay readers alike, and it generally succeeds in appealing to both audiences. Colloff convincingly argues for the river red gum as both a national and continental icon — one that connects desert to forest, land to water and people to place.

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doi [10.1017/qre.2017.45](https://doi.org/10.1017/qre.2017.45)

Ray Whitrod, *Before I Sleep: My Life Fighting Crime and Corruption*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2015, 240 pp., ISBN 9 7807 0225 3409, A\$32.94.

This is an encompassing and evocative memoir by former Queensland Police Force (QPF) Commissioner Ray Whitrod, who wore many hats in his lifetime. However, heading Queensland's police force between 1970 and 1976 had the most impact on