Woppaburra: Past and present

Hendrick Jan Van Issum

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Woppaburra: Past and Present

Submitted by
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Dip. Teach, B.Ed. Studies, M. Ed. Studies

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education
Faculty of Education and Arts
Australian Catholic University

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Keywords

Woppaburra, Woppa, Konomie, Aboriginal, Keppel Island, Central Queensland Aborigines, Rockhampton, Indigenous knowledges, Keppel Island history, Keppel Island culture, cultural mapping, Elders narratives, Elder stories.
Abstract

Foucault (1996) argued that modern Western history was an invention of nineteenth century Europe and based on linearity, teleology and historicity. Hence the written history and culture of Aboriginal people in Australia has largely been seen through a similar principle as detailed in Chakrabarty’s (2007) ‘provincialising Europe,’ which is through master narratives. My dissertation addresses the question of who the Woppaburra of the Central Queensland region were culturally and historically. The pre-existing Western narrative tells a story of a submissive people studied, described and analysed with a strong colonial discursive approach. In contrast, I have used the ‘counter-narrative’ that Freeman (2004) considered to be the “culturally rooted aspects of one’s history” that are yet to be uncovered (p.298). The lens through which I viewed the counter narrative was through Indigenous research methodology considered part of Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST).

The history and culture of the Woppaburra have been exhumed through the data collected as described in Yin’s (2009) case study method. I have used Yin’s (2009) multiple data sources as evidence for this study. These data are Western documentation and archival records alongside the voices of Elders in interviews, direct observation at ‘on-country’ meetings and festivals, and physical artefacts which show a cultural representation of totems. A significant artefact is a length of plaited Woppaburra hair which is a biological remnant of the people under study. The Woppaburra believe it holds the memories of ancestors, story lines and healing properties. These data sources have shown that the Western text does not indicate personal stories of traditional practices, attachment to country and the centrality of totems to the Woppaburra. These data have been collectively analysed and findings presented through photographs, artwork and text.

The findings from a plethora of documents demonstrate that in government archival records, public newspapers and anthropological photographs, the Woppaburra were used as items of interest, targets of punitive shooting parties, objects of slave labour and a people to be relocated at the whim of protectors. Interviews with Elders and limited anthropological papers give an alternate perspective of a people strongly connected to their natural homelands. The conclusions indicated that although the Woppaburra have been treated harshly, dispossessed of their homeland and denigrated culturally, they retained strong connections with their traditional
homeland. In one sense they continue caring for their homeland through partnerships with local, state and national agencies set up by the surrounding culture but in a deeper sense, today they maintain their dreamings and cycle of life through stories and cultural traditions. The connection to country across time for the Woppaburra is that, traditionally and today, they see their world through totems, ancestors and intergenerational narratives.
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<tr>
<td>AIATSIS</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCD</td>
<td>Community Cultural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRT</td>
<td>Critical Race Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATSIP</td>
<td>Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEHP</td>
<td>Department of Environment and Heritage Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERM</td>
<td>Department of Environment and Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBRMPA</td>
<td>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GKI</td>
<td>Great Keppel Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILAC</td>
<td>Keppel Island Lifestyle Aboriginal Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKIEEC</td>
<td>North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPWS</td>
<td>National Parks and Wildlife Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QSNTS</td>
<td>Queensland South Native Title Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUMRA</td>
<td>Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAC</td>
<td>Woppaburra Aboriginal Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WLT</td>
<td>Woppaburra Land Trust</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahri</td>
<td>Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baboot</td>
<td>Morning/dawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayaami</td>
<td>Creation spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bikanth</td>
<td>Totem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boo-ran</td>
<td>Quartz tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burum</td>
<td>Clouds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>Humid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darlutta</td>
<td>Story teller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do-lon</td>
<td>White current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugari</td>
<td>Pippy shells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganumi Bara</td>
<td>The Keppel Bay Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garimal</td>
<td>Heat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunda</td>
<td>Cabbage tree palm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gural</td>
<td>Sea Mullet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guriala</td>
<td>Sea-eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurinya</td>
<td>Become initiated with cuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-ya</td>
<td>Traditional Fish hook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadaitja</td>
<td>Medicine man/ spiritual doctor/ feather foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalulu</td>
<td>Bottlebrush from Banksia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konomie</td>
<td>North Keppel Island/ North Wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kum-ma</td>
<td>Traditional dolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mara</td>
<td>Brown Hawk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mook mook</td>
<td>Bad spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mugga</td>
<td>Humpback whale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mugga mugga</td>
<td>Humpback whales (plural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakiu</td>
<td>Pink water lily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nawul</td>
<td>Oyster shucking tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nol-lu</td>
<td>Fishing nets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuni</td>
<td>Sandpaper fig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombo ombi</td>
<td>Bush plum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oopal</td>
<td>Emu Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ra-an</td>
<td>Cuttlefish bone (internal shell)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ra-la</td>
<td>Grass tree shaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ran</td>
<td>Fibre from tea tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tang-o-I</td>
<td>Turtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waku</td>
<td>Oysters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walbara</td>
<td>Uninitiated young men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wan-di</td>
<td>Pandanus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wan-doon</td>
<td>Scrub honeysuckle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We-lun</td>
<td>Green turtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woo-ro</td>
<td>Traditional women’s stone throwing game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woppa</td>
<td>Great or South Keppel Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woppaburra</td>
<td>Keppel Islanders’ clan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wun-dur</td>
<td>Grasstree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yamal</td>
<td>Rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ya-win-yob</td>
<td>Wild cherry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yilum</td>
<td>Nautilus shell</td>
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Region of Study with Western Place Names

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Statement of Original Authorship

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics Committees.

Reference is specifically made to artistic and editorial assistance. The narratives of Elders were expressed largely through a piece of artwork. I was responsible for the conceptualisation, placement and organising of drawings. Aboriginal artist Glenn Barry and I collectively discussed colour schemes. While I directed the artwork, the artist was responsible for the application of the acrylic medium onto the canvass.

A professional editor has been engaged for the purpose of copy editing and proof reading however the assistance has been limited to editorial advice. I have made a considered decision to act upon or reject this advice in the writing of this thesis.

Signature: __________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________
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Chapter 1
Introduction and Overview

The consistent presence of the voice of the sufferers in any telling of this story would put the actions of the colonisers into their proper perspective. But this is the historical problem. There are hardly any such voices in the contemporary historical record (Attwood, 2005, p.159).

The history and culture of Australia’s Aboriginal people have been written by the colonisers. The plea or request behind Attwood’s (2005) exhortation is to awaken Aboriginal writers to take up the quest and voice Aboriginal writers’ perspective of history. The discipline of history is an invention of nineteenth-century Europe and as a corollary, all products are permeated with a tone of European superiority and imperialism. The discipline developed through a backdrop of racist paradigms which placed the colonised peoples in a position of the object or artefact to be studied. Similarly, the cultures of colonised peoples were relegated to anthropological analyses devoid of any genuine voice. Australian historians, as agents within a British colony, were participants in this production of the biased history and culture of its Aboriginal population. A careful and considered study of Aboriginal people by Aboriginal scholars has the potential, as Atwood (2005) conceded, to “put the actions of the colonisers into their proper perspective” (p.159). Aboriginal Australia consisted of over 250 language groups (Horton, 1994) with each of these having their own language, specific culture and interaction with colonisers. Any deep study requires a narrow focus on a specific language group or clan group. This study viewed the history and culture of the Woppaburra of Central Queensland through an Aboriginal lens and presented a counter-narrative to give voice to the traditional people of the Keppel Islands.

1.1 Background of the Problem

The written history of Australia’s Aboriginal population has been drawn from a discipline steeped in the tradition of Eurocentric historiography (Carter, 1987). In addition, the recording of Australia’s Aboriginal culture has been based in anthropology, of which past scholars have described Aboriginal culture as static, ancient and an object of study (Berndt & Berndt, 1983). The resultant literature paints a picture of Aboriginal Australians that is devoid of any genuine
perspective that would place Aboriginal people at the centre of the study as active participants, as part of included perspectives or as published writers. The dominant group of Western academics, as well as the very structure of Australian intellectual institutions place the position of Aboriginal researchers at the margins without the status or power to influence alternative perspectives (Smith, 1999; Rigney, 1997). This study seeks to partially correct this imbalance by challenging the Western interpretation of the Woppaburra’s culture and history.

The concept of ‘whiteness’ is useful to understand the suppression of Aboriginal knowledges. ‘Whiteness’ theory challenges the position of white domination and privilege in Australia (Moreton-Robinson, 2003; Leonardo, 2016). Although the theory is drawn from the feminist branch of research, the principle of patriarchal dominance can be applied to the field of historiography and anthropological research in Australia. Delgado and Stephanic (2012) believed that our ‘white’ academics refuse to see themselves in racial terms but instead have a perspective that the world has a universal truth and that truth is a common sense view of our past. Furthermore, ‘whites’ see themselves as the proprietors of knowledge that is unchallengeable and, on a conscious level, have the luxury of avoiding or rejecting unsavoury aspects of Australian history (Phillips, 2005). McIntosh (1988) believed this view continued because ‘whites’ refused to accept that they had an ‘invisible knapsack’ with the privileges of ‘white’ society that people from other cultures did not have. This would include the accepted or common sense version of history and the privileged position of Western academics who are authors of this history.

Historically, Said’s (1978) notion of ‘orientalism’ discussed the separation between the West and others. Said (1978) believed that the source of the separation was due to political and economic domination of colonised countries. Chakrabarty (2007) described the domination of Europe over colonised countries as a process of ‘provincialising’ Europe, effectively considering these nation states as a state or province of the mother country. This led to the exploitation of material and human resources and the positioning of resident populations as the ‘other’. Spivak (1988) referred to this population as the ‘subaltern’ who are oppressed, colonised people, disempowered and without the ability to speak on their own behalf. As a result, Spivak (1988) believed that the resident population have their political and discursive identities imposed upon them by the dominant group. This has been the position that the Woppaburra have occupied for
over a century. The imposed identity Spivak (1988) spoke of sits like a heavy veil on the Woppaburra, requiring an agent to liberate their story from within the colonial institutions.

Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008) challenged Western institutions to decolonise their practices by embedding Indigenous research methods into the academy. Aboriginal people, instead of being seen as the other, should be invited in to the core of the academy by the acceptance of Indigenous research methods and encouragement of Aboriginal scholars to uncover the traditional research practices of their people. Smith (1999) implored native scholars to take control of their research practices by using traditional research methods such as storytelling and yarning. Such narratives can uncover the experiences of Aboriginal people who have been largely excluded from the written record of Australian history. Nakata (1998) used the concept of a ‘cultural interface’ where black and white scholars can occupy a common space. Nakata (1998) believed that Indigenous scholars must develop an intellectual standpoint where they have a sound grasp of Western research methods. This process requires that Aboriginal scholars are well-versed in broader research methods and move to a hybrid position using Indigenous research methods which are intellectually rigorous and accepted by the academic community.

In this study the researcher has occupied the space between Western and Indigenous standpoints to gather a range of data to construct what Solórzano (2002) termed a ‘counter-narrative’. The key aspect of this counter-narrative is to gather stories from Woppaburra Aboriginal Elders. The process of gaining access to and eliciting information from Indigenous Elders as the keepers of such knowledge requires an understanding of Aboriginal research ethics and Aboriginal community protocols. Martin (2003) discussed the process of gathering data through what she described as Aboriginal ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing. Martin (2008) also discussed the internal research practices of Aboriginal communities and how they regulate the intrusion of researchers. This regulatory practice restricts access to communities for outsiders but gives insider’s privileged access. The author of this study, as a community member of the Woppaburra clan, can claim insider status and access to reliable and genuine narratives.

Narratives have been considered central to Aboriginal research methods due to the traditional practices of storytelling and yarning. Narrative expression is only one source of data
that was used in this study. A range of other sources were used such as: archival records, photographs, diary notes, documentation, direct observations and physical artefacts. The collection of a wide range of data to tell a unique study is the basis of Yin’s (2009) case study method. Yin (2009) insisted on the use of a wide range of data to tell a comprehensive account of a case. The Woppaburra have a veritable treasure trove of untapped stories, artefacts and photographs in private collections. In addition, several public libraries and museums also house a range of data. Furthermore, archival data and newspapers indicated substantial interactions between the Woppaburra and government officials and settlers. Collectively, these data will be considered in order to understand the largely unknown history and culture of the Woppaburra.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The written accounts of Australian history have for centuries excluded Aboriginal peoples’ experiences and the written account of Aboriginal culture has mostly been described in anthropological terms as a static and ancient object of study. Recent decades have seen an explosion in the number of publications describing the interaction between Aboriginal people and colonists however this has been dominated by non-Indigenous writers. The gap in the knowledge of the history and culture of Aboriginal Australians sits in the lack of accounts written by Aboriginal Australians. The continued closure of this gap is imperative and timely, as Aboriginal scholars have privileged access to Aboriginal communities and use Indigenous standpoints to gather data contained in Elders’ narratives. The gap is further pronounced due to the fact that Australia had over 250 different language groups or nations. The problem to be addressed is that the Australian accounts of culture and history lack a comprehensive account of the Woppaburra’s culture and history from their perspective. This will contribute to the wider body of knowledge concerning the Aboriginal people of Australia.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to construct a counter-narrative that gives justice to the Woppaburra’s culture and history. The current accounts of Woppaburra culture and history are either absent or tainted by colonial discourse, and drawn only from Western research methods and traditions. To address this problem, the research design was a case-study method described by Yin (2009) as one of the most rigorous methods to comprehensively understand a case. The method has been seen through the lens of an Indigenous standpoint theory. The data has been
drawn from various sources to construct a deep analysis of the Woppaburra’s culture and history. The use of Elders’ narratives ensured that the study was seen through their world view. The Woppaburra are native to the Keppel Islands just north of the mouth of the Fitzroy River near the city of Rockhampton in central Queensland. The Woppaburra are a clan of the wider Darambal Language Group of Central Queensland, Australia. The Woppaburra have five distinct family groups. The participants were purposively chosen to represent each family group. These family representatives interviewed in this study were located across Australia from the Eastern Kimberley in Western Australian to Cairns in Queensland.

1.4 Significance of Study

The ethnographic case-study of the Woppaburra is highly significant. The Woppaburra are unique and poorly understood by wider society, and the Woppaburra themselves have only fragments of knowledge that is slowly disappearing due to the passing of Elders. Historically, literature about Aboriginal people is devoid of Aboriginal voices and is permeated with a culture of colonial dominance through colonial knowledge systems. The counter-narrative allowing Aboriginal people to tell their own story is paramount (Reynolds, 2000). This study is significant due to both the process of the study and the unique content area of the Woppaburra of the Keppel Islands. Archaeologist Mike Rowland, who conducted the first archaeological diggings on the Keppel Islands and delivered a paper to the Anthropological Society of Queensland on 31 August 1979, proposed two key reasons for the Woppaburra’s uniqueness. Firstly, the “small size, restricted environments, distance from source areas and defined boundaries”, usually result in distinct local adaptations (Rowland, 1979, p.3). Secondly, substantial historical material attests to the fact that Keppel Island Aboriginal people were “culturally, linguistically and physically somewhat different” from the people on the mainland.

Historically, the Rockhampton Bulletin of 9 April 1867 stated that a “diminutive race of blacks inhabit the island. They subsist chiefly on fish and roots; they are quite wild, and their ‘yabbering’ is altogether unintelligible to the blacks of the mainland” (p.2). In addition, The Queenslander, 4 January 1903, stated that hooks found on the Keppel Islands were “apparently unknown to the neighbouring mainland and (lower) Fitzroy blacks” (p.2). The evidence reveals likely linguistic and physical differences and possible cultural differences. Such differences have been highlighted sporadically in archival documents, but to date, a comprehensive exploration
Rowland, an archaeologist and keen researcher about the Keppel Islanders recently stated, “while the Keppel Islanders were murdered, used, abused, manipulated, and finally removed from the islands, surprisingly little is learnt about them as individuals or as a group” (Rowland, 2002, p.64). Importantly, this study sought to fill this knowledge gap for the benefit of the Woppaburra themselves and the wider Australian population.

1.5 Primary Research Questions

There are two key questions that have been formulated to answer the issues detailed in the purpose of the study. The first research question is “Who were the Woppaburra culturally?” To answer this question, I based the focus of the data collection on people, place and social practices. I used artefacts, photographs, Elders’ interviews, limited archival documents and historical newspapers. The second research question was “Who were the Woppaburra historically?” The data which answered this question was drawn from substantial archival documents and historical newspapers. Further information to answer this question was drawn from personal interviews. The concluding chapter also summarises who the Woppaburra are today. The data used to understand how the Woppaburra see themselves historically and today were drawn from a range of government reports, personal diaries, meeting minutes, documentation and personal interviews. The range of sources is considered appropriate to answer the two key research questions and develop a comprehensive understanding of the Woppaburra (Yin, 2009, p. 102).

1.6 Research Design

In this study I used Yin’s (2009) single case-study method to construct a meaningful insight into the culture and history of the Woppaburra. The participants who took part in this qualitative study were the Woppaburra whose traditional homeland is the Keppel Islands in Central Queensland, Australia. In 1902 the last of the Woppaburra were taken from North Keppel Island to various church-run missions and government reserves. The current Woppaburra reside in various places across Australia. The descendants from these people identify as being five distinct family groups. The interview participants were a purposively selected sample and were identified by the family clan as Elders from each family group. A further group of knowledgeable participants was selected based on balance of both gender and as holders of
cultural knowledge or ‘knowledge keepers’. Approximately half of the interviews were conducted in the participants’ home environment and the balance on North Keppel Island.

The key data instrument used in this study was an interview protocol which contained approximately 21 possible items to prompt discussion listed collectively under the two research questions. The discussion questions were semi-structured and formed the basis of a guided face-to-face conversation with a duration of 45-60 minutes. The conversations were transcribed and key themes were drawn from the transcriptions to form the basis of Chapters 4 to 6. The remaining historical data was drawn primarily from the Queensland State Archives, State Library of Queensland, Rockhampton Municipal Library, Rockhampton Historical Society, Australian Museum and various online databases. The research design was guided by a number of principles listed in various Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (AIATSIS, 2012; NHMRC, 2003; Australia Council, 2007).

1.7 Indigenous Ontology and Epistemology

Indigenous people have been faced with the prospect of being defrocked of their identity and worldviews when entering the academic arena. However, the movement towards the acceptance of an Indigenous research paradigm containing Indigenous ontology and epistemology is becoming more accepted in recent decades (Smith, 1999). Ontology can be viewed as “the reverential connections between the spiritual realms of operations of the universe and the material operating platform or the physical earth” (West, 1998, p.2). Foley (2003) linked these two worlds with the human world as a kind of trinity. Cajete (2000) extended this connection between the spiritual and physical realm and believed that humans have a duty to perpetuate natural processes through ritual and ceremony. This ontological basis shapes the assumptions and parameters of this research. There is a close relationship between ontology and worldview and this research reaffirmed how the Woppaburra saw their world through spiritual, physical and human dimensions.

For the purpose of this research I was familiar with and accepting of this ontology but sought a lens through which to examine this concept. I drew on Indigenous epistemological ideas from Rigney (1997) and Martin (2003) to frame this approach. Rigney (2003) insisted upon resistance as an emancipatory imperative towards self-determination, political integrity to assist the broader Indigenous struggle, and the privileging of Indigenous voices in Indigenous research.
Martin’s (2003) concepts of ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing highlighted the concept of being true to Indigenous protocols such as using Indigenous people as primary sources, respecting relationships and taboos, and applying proper protocols when conducting business on country. In this study I have used Woppaburra Elders as the prime data source and adhered to broader accepted Indigenous research protocols.

A criticism of Indigenous research protocols is whether it is possible to remain objective while maintaining a traditional principle of reciprocal obligation to the community under study. While I am not shackled to the Western praxis, Nakata’s (1998) cultural interface reminds researchers to maintain a scientific basis to their research. In this study I have purposely chosen to distance myself metaphorically from my community for the purposes of the research to allow the data to tell its own story untainted by possible insider bias. In taking a position between two worlds I have endeavoured to remain true to Indigenous protocols but conduct the study with objectivity using guiding principles of Indigenous research.

1.8 Guiding Principles of Research about Aboriginal People and on Aboriginal Issues

Research practices concerning Aboriginal people and issues have been poorly or unethically applied in the recent past, so it is within the shadow of this period that I must explicitly state the principles that have applied to this research study. As a member of the community under study I am aware of our community and specific Elders’ rights to knowledge as well as our internal protocols for accessing, distributing, publishing or not publishing knowledge. Many of similar protocols are listed in various organisational guidelines for ethical research practices (AIATSIS, 2012; NHMRC, 2003; Australia Council, 2007). The fundamental principle espoused by such guidelines is respect for Aboriginal rights including “rights to full and fair participation in any processes, projects and activities that impact on them (us), and the right to control and maintain their (our) culture and heritage” (AIATSIS, 2012, p.3). For the purposes of this case study I will only list those protocols particularly pertinent for the ethical conduct of this study. The areas discussed will be directed towards research practice and those around production of visual arts which is a component of this study.

The various ethical protocols are broadly constructed around three areas. These being:- rights and respect, appropriate consultation, and benefits and outcomes for the community under
study. The broad category of rights and respect was applied in this case by adhering to the principle of self-determination, respect of tangible and intangible heritage, and the right of ownership of traditional knowledge and cultural expressions. Secondly, I adhered to the process of research practices by obtaining full and consensual permissions to conduct the study and to maintain ongoing consultations and participation in the study. The final area of ensuring appropriate access to the research and delivering a benefit for the community was also adhered to. The key aspect of the research was the completion of a piece of artwork drawn from the traditional knowledge and experiences of interview participants. This was completed by ensuring ongoing dialogue throughout the stages of completion of the artwork and the subsequent gifting of the final product back to the Elders of the Woppaburra clan.

The protocols for producing Indigenous Australian Visual Arts (2007) guided the artistic process. The protocols overlapped with the AIATSIS (2012) and NHMRC (2003) ethical guidelines, but gave other specific advice regarding visual arts. I ensured full and frank consultation from Elders with “specific authority for specific stories, geographic locations, styles and imagery” and “community-owned ritual knowledge” including creation being and images (Australia Council, 2007, pp.10-12). Importantly, the Australia Council (2007) guidelines also stated in terms of legal status that “although under Aboriginal laws the entire community may have an interest in their particular artwork and the designs and knowledge within the work, copyright does not recognise the group as the owners” (Australia Council, 2007, p.24). Having said this, the artist was financially compensated and has transferred any likely copyright ownership to the researcher as the primary designer and developer of the art design. The artwork has subsequently been turned over to the Woppaburra Elders as representatives of the community under the traditional Aboriginal principle of reciprocal obligation. The final product will be displayed publicly at the North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre (NKIEEC) for the benefit of the Woppaburra community and visiting school students. This also aligns with the ethical principle of access, benefits and outcomes for the community under study.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework which informed this study was through an epistemological lens of whiteness studies and critical race theory (CRT). Proponents of whiteness studies discuss how white individuals draw their ideology from a privileged perspective and but fail to accept
their advantaged position. They fail to accept that their position dominates that of non-whites.

More broadly, CRT proponents advocate that racism is ingrained in the social structures that are at the core of our society. This theoretical framework uses a critical lens to understand the development of the Woppaburra and how they see their culture as well as the underlying ideology which allowed colonists to mistreat the Woppaburra and record a biased and imperialist version of their history. The framework allowed me to understand that Western and other knowledge systems are more than simply a different perspective – they are different experiences and effects of the same historical events. In an effort to reinterpret Woppaburra culture and history I employed a counter-narrative through Indigenous standpoint theory (IST). This study used IST to move from a position of epistemological comfort to a place where stable ontologies were rejected and displaced the white centre. The result is the use of Indigenous research methods to create a third cultural space for the research study.

![Diagram of Indigenous Standpoint Theory and Western Research Practices](image)

*Figure 1.1. The Third Cultural Space created by using Indigenous standpoint theory, employing a counter-narrative in order to reinterpret Woppaburra culture and history.*

### 1.10 Assumptions, Limitations and Scope

In this case study, it was assumed that participants would answer the interview questions truthfully and accurately, based on their lived experience. It was also assumed that the participants would respond honestly and to the best of their knowledge.

The limitations of this case study were the inherent weaknesses of a case-study design. The case led to an in-depth knowledge about a unique population that is not readily generalisable.
to the wider population. In addition, researcher bias and possible perceptual misrepresentations were potential limitations. Conversely, the Woppaburra case study was a real-life example and the researcher was not limited to one methodological tool. The case study method also allowed for the use of a range of data sources including direct observations, meeting minutes and diary notes.

The scope of this case study was limited to 10 participants, participants within Australia and the availability of the participants. The absence of generalisability of the case study is a common issue as there is limited use of the data outside this specific case. The case was also conducted over three years and many influential Woppaburra Elders had recently passed away. Due to age, the collective memory of those remaining was limited.

1.11 Chapter Summaries

In Chapter 1, I have given an overview of the study detailing the background to the study. Essentially, Aboriginal people and specifically the Woppaburra have been mere footnotes in Australian history. The limited information that is available has been drawn from Western research traditions and is incapable of giving an unbiased account of the Woppaburra and their culture. A statement of the problem and two research questions were tendered to address this issue and case study method was selected as a research process to gather data to answer these questions.

In Chapter 2 I have drawn together the literature on whiteness studies and critical race theory which informed the direction of this study. In the literature I present a case of historical disempowerment and subjugation of colonised people across the world and this was narrowed to the case of Aboriginal people in Australia. This colonial dominance through institutions was applied to historiography over the last two centuries. The review of literature has shown that although several accounts of colonial interactions with Aboriginal people have been published over recent decades, very few are authored by Aboriginal Australians and very few have detailed the specific case of the Woppaburra. The research design which solved this problem is the subject of Chapter 3.

In Chapter 3 I have outlined a procedure to gather data to answer the research problem. By using Yin’s (2009) case study method I have gathered multiple data sources to construct a
coherent case of the Woppaburra’s culture and history. The prime data source was interviews with Elders who are the knowledge-keepers of the Woppaburra.

In addition, artefacts, photographs, documentation, archival data and direct observations were used to understand the Woppaburra case. The chapter also described the ethical considerations and cultural protocols that were observed to maintain the integrity of the study. The results of the data collections process are the basis of Chapters 4 and 5.

In Chapter 4, the interviews with Elders showed how they viewed their world through various media. Amongst these were: (a) snapshots of experience with parents and grandparents, (b) family and cultural events, (c) photographs, (d) artefacts and (e) stories. Interestingly, many cultural practices that were seen by Elders as commonplace, indicated some unique features of the Woppaburra’s history and culture. I have highlighted the direct cultural links to totems and ways of life of their ancestors. This has been represented visually through artwork and confirmed by Elders as a culturally acceptable method of representing their collective thoughts and ideas. These ideas have been interpreted, analysed and presented on canvas as a visual representation of the data obtained from Elders. It shows how Elders have embedded their knowledges from their collective memories through actions, sequences or items from the landscape and cultural artefacts.

In Chapter 5, the majority of the archival documents and other written data was interpreted based on the specific content and the discourse used. This gave a sense of the racist attitude of colonial government documents and newspapers of the period. I have shown how the historical data misrepresented the position of the Woppaburra, instead it highlights the economic and political advantages of exploiting the Keppel Islands and its people. It also shows how the recorded history is imperialist, selective and void of a meaningful voice from the Woppaburra.

The thesis concludes by viewing the contemporary position of the Woppaburra and their interaction with the Keppel Islands. This has been through various government initiatives and family driven events. In the next chapter I review the literature that is pertinent to the study, commencing with a Darambal dreaming story which serves as a metaphor to emphasise the gulf between Western and Indigenous research and knowledges.
Chapter 2

Literature in the Context of the Study

In the Dreamtime long ago, a boy and a girl from the tribe\(^1\) fell in love and wanted to marry. The old people were distraught, as it was against the tribal code to marry someone from the same totem. The couple took no notice, running away to hide in the flat scrub of what is now Mount Jim Crow. The rainbow serpent, or Moomdagytta, sitting up on Mount Wheeler (to the south-east) saw the dilemma and decided to intervene. He spun himself around between the girl and boy with such force, bringing up trees and dirt until a mountain appeared, separating the couple. His powers frightened the couple and from then on they abided by the tribal code. (Department of Environment & Resource Management, 2011)

The dreaming story above is drawn from the wider Darambal language group of the Woppaburra clan. It serves to guide the people on the appropriate or expected ‘tribal code’. The result was a physical separation between the two lovers who would never again meet. The knowledge and practices of the Woppaburra have been recorded in a myriad archival documents but without the voice of the Woppaburra being present. Like Moomdagytta, Western practices have placed a metaphorical barrier between the Western and the Woppaburra perspectives of their history and culture. My approach in this thesis was to study the Woppaburra’s views, and as a ‘counter-narrative’, make a researched contribution to the understanding of the Woppaburra. The genesis of this study evolved from a desire to understand the culture and history of the Woppaburra. In general, Aboriginal people have been the foci of study for many centuries, however, the resultant literature has been drawn from the perspectives of white middle-class males, who have presented a biased account of historical and cultural practices (Chakrabarty, 2007). This is essentially a problem based in the discipline of research due to the process and content of western historical and contemporary research practices.

My literature review served to provide a background and context for the study. The literature review evolved as Gay (1996) had suggested, as a “systematic identification, location

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\(^{1}\) The terms ‘Dreamtime’ and ‘tribe’ are not the preferred terms. The ‘Dreaming’ and ‘Language Group’ or ‘family clan’ are more appropriate.
and analysis of documents containing information related to the research problem” (p. 40). Gay (1996) suggested that the literature should be concerned with issues related to the research problem, not simply the research question or problem per se. Importantly, as the study developed I identified current research drawn from the perspective of Indigenous standpoints on research practice and selected appropriate material on the basis of its relevance to the process of undertaking the study. This was collected in tandem with the available literature based on the Woppaburra themselves. My initial work in reviewing the literature has helped me to develop a position on what has been done and what needs to be done to build on previous research (Mitchell & Jolley, 2001). Hence, I reviewed the literature concerning Western and Aboriginal research ideas as they applied to the Australian Aboriginal people generally, the development of Indigenous knowledges and also the writings which contain aspects of Woppaburra culture and history.

In the first part of this chapter I will discuss the theoretical literature which frames this study. I will draw on the epistemologies of whiteness studies and critical race theory (CRT) to understand how, in different knowledge systems, it is not simply a difference in perspectives but “different experiences and effects ensuing from the very same events” (Phillips, 2005, p.14). I will further extend the narrative literature review by placing the development of Indigenous literature and writers within an historical framework (Rhoades, 2011). I will discuss the development of Aboriginal historiography and finish by synthesising the limited literature on the Woppaburra who are the focus of this study.

2.1 The White Frontier

2.1.1 Whiteness Studies.

The concept of ‘whiteness’ is usually dismissed, ignored or rebuffed by ‘whites’ upon whom we cast our gaze and about whom we write, the dismissal and suppression of our knowledge about whiteness is tied to the maintenance of ‘white’ racial dominance and privilege in this country (Moreton-Robinson, 2003).
Moreton-Robinson (2003) is an Aboriginal woman who challenged the ‘white’ dominance of knowledge about Australia’s colonised or Fourth World’s peoples. Although her view is drawn from feminist critiques, the principles of dominant and oppressive relationships are applied to white patriarchy and the dominance of such perspectives in knowledge and research in Australia. Delgado and Stefanic (2012) as proponents of this view argued that ‘whites’ do not see themselves as being described in racial terms but believe their viewpoint is universally valid or is regarded as ‘the truth’ that everyone knows. Delgado and Stefanic (2012) believed ‘whites’ see themselves as part of a group with a broader understanding of Western history and as proprietors of knowledge that is largely unchallengeable and deemed ‘commonsense’. Phillips (2005) views this as a privilege of ‘whites’ on a conscious level who are themselves advantaged by being allowed to forget or avoid the unsavory parts of Australian history. So, Phillips (2005) sees that ‘whites’ are not so much in a position of ignorant ‘normalcy’ but a population who made a conscious choice to avoid engaging in alternative views of knowledge. This literature highlights the intersection between power and race where ‘whites’ have the luxury of choosing a perspective of culture and history that sits neatly within their world view and rejecting conflicting perspectives that do not show their ‘race’ or culture in a positive light.

In related studies concerning white race privilege, Peggy McIntosh (1988) discussed how ‘whites’ have an invisible knapsack that contains all the privileges of society which allow them to comfortably go about their daily life. After substantial introspection she asserted that these privileges are not earned and can be seen as advantage systems in society. The concept of whiteness also assumes universality, with others (non-whites) seen as exceptional and different, while maintaining the white self as ‘normal’ (Buchanan, 2010). Smith (1999) applied this concept to Western tertiary institutions and identified the privileged position of Western academics as the tools of institutions that maintain dominant and post-colonial boundaries. She maintained that the normality of dominant ways of knowing push Indigenous ways of scholarship to the margins. Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008) call for Western institutions to decolonise their practices and embed Indigenous research methods into the centre of the

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2 The term, ‘Fourth World’s peoples’ came to prominence in Chief George Manuel’s: The Fourth World: An Indian Reality. It refers to a country’s Aboriginal population who are deprived of the right to their territories and its riches.
academy. Bourdieu (1985) discussed a similar belief and, although writing about class and not race, argued that the principle of dominance is part of a symbolic order and power to dominate.

Bourdieu (1985) discussed how privileged sections of our society have the power to dictate perspectives and labelled this as the “symbolic struggle over the production of common sense” (p. 731). He discussed how those with power have the legitimate vision of the social world. In the context of this study, the power has lain with historians, government departments, the wider public and institutions such as universities. They have this power due to official nomination where behind their assertions there is the power of the collective, the delegated agent of the state and hence, an official common sense view (Bourdieu, 1985). The alternative view is the unofficial individual or cultural group whose stated views are seen as insults, slander and unauthorized, with no capacity or power to force recognition. Although Bourdieu refers to individuals and everyday workers in this classist power struggle, a similar principle applies to Aboriginal people in terms of a disempowered and marginal population, lacking the acceptance of the dominant group. In effect, a differentiation based on ‘othering’ of a cultural group.

The dominant group comprised of western academics have for decades viewed the position of Aboriginal people as an object of study rather than conducting research and being researchers in their own right (Smith, 1999; Martin, 2003; Nakata, 1998). This position places ‘whites’ at the centre of legitimate knowledge production and devalues other groups based on social categories such as culture, ethnicity or religion (Said, 1994). This is the position of the Woppaburra and Aboriginal people more broadly whose voices are denied due to their lack of power and void of official vehicles to state their position. Bourdieu (1985) saw this struggle as being located in a social space or as Erving Goffman (Goffman, 1959) called it, a ‘sense of one’s place’. The past position of the Woppaburra could be perceived as having tacitly accepted one’s place and the sense of limits which have been imposed socially. Bourdieu (1985) believed that this was “all the more strongly [observed] where conditions of existence are more rigorous” (p.728). In this case study, an example of the rigorous conditions he discussed is the place of Woppaburra knowledge in a knowledge system dominated by ‘whiteness’. Gramsci (1971) stated that the hegemonic or dominated classes have a similarly complex history (or voice) as the dominant group although the latter has the officially accepted version. Historically, the Woppaburra have been relegated to the margins and labelled as ‘the other’, unable to position their culture and history within the confines of the dominant Western paradigm.
2.1.2 The other.

In postmodern philosophy, the process of ‘Othering’ is based on imaginary representations and power, acting through inaccurate perceptions of the ‘Other’ to create divisions between the West and other colonised countries to realise a political agenda of dominance. Said (1978), in his notion of orientalism believed that the division between the West and others was initially borne out of the ‘otherness’ of the orient. Taking Great Britain as a centre point, Said (1978) believed that the far eastern countries, such as China or Japan, were seen as a “place of romance, [with] exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes” (p. 9). Orientalism represents a mode of discourse with supporting institutions and colonial bureaucracies and style. Said (1978) believed that European culture gained in strength and identity by using the orient as a surrogate self. Chakrabarty, (2007) writing about the sub-continental Indian experience, discussed a similar concept in Provincialising Europe, arguing that modern institutions and bureaucracies contain ‘genealogies’ that are steeped in the intellectual traditions of Europe. Chakrabarty (2007) argued that European thought had a contradictory relationship as it was both indispensable and inadequate in helping understand the Indian colonial position. It was indispensable because the full picture included the relationships between the two cultures but also inadequate because the British viewed the local population as being inferior. The colonial position of the Indian population as the ‘other’ has been identified by Spivak (1988) as being ‘subaltern’, which is a term Gramsci (1971) applied to oppressed subjects and is a position comparable to that of the Woppaburra in this study.

Spivak (1988), whilst outlining her theory of the subalternity, titled her essay with the rhetorical question of ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ alluding to the lack of power of oppressed and colonised people. She believed that “in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak” (Spivak, 1988, p. 287). Morton (2003) clarified this point and stated that the subaltern can certainly speak and have a history but others do not have the patience to listen. He makes the crucial point that disempowered people “receive their political and discursive identities within historically determinate systems of political and economic representation” (Morton, 2003, p. 67). Hence, an identity and social status have been imposed upon powerless minorities due to the political and economic systems, denying them the right to speak. Similarly, Australia as a British colony, inherited Western intellectualism and schools of thought. Like the subaltern, the Woppaburra’s ‘voice’ has been ignored due to the Western
dominance and control of knowledge and research systems. This system is inadequate in enabling understanding of the Woppaburra’s position in colonial and post-colonial Australia.

The European construction of the Australian Aboriginal people as a socio-cultural category was addressed by Attwood (1989; 1992). Attwood (1989, 1992) discussed how the British colonial powers constructed Aboriginal people into a dichotomy of them and us. Over time, this essentially drew the focus away from representations of the pre-colonial otherness of the ‘noble savage’ created by anthropologists, and towards a problematic position in post-colonial humanities (Hokari, 2011). Hokari (2011) believed that the difficulty still exists between ‘our representations of them’ and ‘them’ (p. 247). MacLennan and Mitropolous (2000, as cited in Sarra, 2011) believed that the divisive representations still exist due to the entrenched binary of ‘same versus other’. MacLennan and Mitropolous (2000 as cited in Sarra, 2011) differentiated the other as:- “exotic (fascinating/erotic), pitiable, comical, feared/despised and as a resource” (p. 27). The representation of Aboriginal people as the ‘other’ and more specifically, the Woppaburra as the ‘pitiable other,’ is one reason why a genuine study of the Woppaburra has not been conducted. By maintaining the position of the ‘other’, Western research traditions can remain oblivious to Aboriginal ways of knowing, as the very foundations of scientific research practice are drawn from Western intellectual traditions.

2.1.3 Critical race theory (CRT).

The presentation of truth in new forms provokes resistance, confounding those committed to accepted measures for determining the quality and validity of statements made and conclusions reached, and making it difficult for them to respond and adjudge what is acceptable (Bell, 1992, p. 143)

Proponents of critical race theory (CRT) advocated that racism is ingrained in social structures that are at the core of society. It was born out of legal traditions but has been applied to education, the arts and humanities. The analytical lens examined power and insisted that these powers are based in white supremacy and white privilege. CRT posited that racists take the “white nation for granted and try to treat Aboriginal and immigrant populations as their controllable objects through white authority/supremacy” (Hokari, 2011, p. 262). Bell (1992), in his book Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism, examines race and power as a force which permeates modern society in the United States and other western countries. It is
often applied to the study of narratives and counter-narratives which seek to uncover institutionalised power (Schwandt, 2007). The origins of CRT can be seen in the writings of Du Bois where he introduced the term ‘double-consciousness’ which referred to his position as an African American who saw the world from two perspectives.

The term double-consciousness was first coined by Du Bois in his 1903 article “Strivings of the Negro People” (Du Bois, 1994). Du Bois (1994) explains the concept as a sense of always looking at the world through two lenses. He stated:

…it is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p. XIV).

Although Du Bois wrote this over a century ago, he articulated the sense of seeing the world firstly through his own eyes, his own culture and perspective, based on the experience of the African American at the turn of the twentieth century. The second perspective was that of seeing his world through the eyes of the dominant culture. Du Bois (1994) discussed his introspection of how the dominant culture sought to ‘measure’ his social position. He saw his world as being a ‘twoness’ as a ‘Negro and an American’. He had no desire to assimilate to the American culture as he believed his ‘Negro’ self, had a story to tell but he also considered himself a patriot. The Australian context sees Aboriginal Australians in a similar position, being gazed upon as the ‘other’ but required to live in ‘two worlds’ (Yunupingu, 1997; Purdie, Milgate & Bell, 2011) or in what has recently been termed a ‘third cultural space’ (Bhabha, 2004).

Du Bois’ ideas have been applied to CRT and proponents look to decentral the ‘white’ subject. Bell (1995) stated that CRT is “experientially grounded and oppositionally expressed” and that it contained multi-layered narratives. Delgado and Stefanic (2012) go further by asserting that it must not simply narrate how society is divided down racial and hierarchical lines but also seek to transform it for the better. Solarzano and Yosso (2016) stated that the activism inherent in CRT can result in applying experiential knowledge to be expressed oppositionally through a counter-narrative. This has the potential to challenge dominant grand narratives of Aboriginal peoples’ position in Australian history. Solarzano and Yosso (2016) further
contended that such approaches support the position of experiential knowledge and are committed to social justice. A key strategy to develop counter-narratives is to use Woppaburra experiential knowledge and stories which challenge the dominant narratives (Solarzano & Yosso, 2002). Narratives as a data source can sometimes be construed as simple stories but Taylor (2016) insisted that it is a legitimate data source if it is guided by valid principles.

Taylor (2016) believed that there were four clear tenets of CRT. These are:- Racism is Normal, Interest Convergence, Historical Context and Narratives (Taylor, 2016, pp. 4-6). He expressed that ‘Racism is Normal’ and is contained in the foundational structures of society and also at the centre of research structures and practices. This can be seen in the challenge to dominant research methods in recent decades (Moreton-Robinson, 2003; Nakata, 2007; Rigby, 1997; Martin, 2003). The second tenet is ‘Interest Convergence’ which means that ‘whiteness’ is a self-perpetuating concept which seeks to support the interest of ‘whites’. The interests of Aboriginal people are accommodated only if they converge with dominant interests (Moreton-Robinson, 2003; McIntosh, 1988). The third tenet is ‘Historical Context’. Many scholars have stated that historically, racism is a social construct that has its origins in constitutional documents and historical practices in society (Cowlishaw & Morris, 1997; Hollingsworth, Pettman & McConnochie, 1996). For Aboriginal people, this has been observed in issues such as unequal wages structures and the recent state refusal to reimburse ‘stolen wages’ (Kidd, 1997). Taylor’s (2016) final tenet is ‘Narratives’. CRT offers counter-narratives as a strategy to balance or counteract the dominant narratives. Delgado and Stefanic (2012) called for construction of powerful narratives which seeks to highlight neglected evidence. While Taylor (2016) advocated forging ahead under the guidance of these tenets, Bell (1995) noted the calls from traditional researchers who challenge the validity of narratives as a form of evidence in CRT.

Whiteness and CRT are at the intersection of the white frontier. The literature has shown that there are theories about a dominant narrative that is based in the very DNA of wider Western societal institutions and is played out through our Western research institutions as well. CRT advocates for the centrality of ‘black voices’ which can be viewed as a counter-narrative. Delagado (1989) stated that black people do not necessarily represent one singular truth but rather, that the voice from the margins may give a unique insight and may take the form of story-telling, biographies or other counter-narratives. CRT supporters do not seek made-up stories but believe that “they are constructing narratives out of the historical, socio-cultural and political
realities of their lives and those of people of colour” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006, p. xi). Bell (1995), a major proponent of CRT, used story-telling to critically examine racial injustice. The Woppaburra were the victims of racial injustice in the Australian frontier but now have an opportunity to tell their story on their own terms. In the next section titled “The Other Side of the Frontier” I have articulated Indigenous peoples’ perspectives on how decolonised research methods and use of culturally aligned tools can be used to conduct research for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers at the margins.

2.2 The Other Side of the Frontier

2.2.1 Indigenous standpoint theory.

Tuhiwai-Smith (1999), a Maori scholar, insisted that Indigenous people take control of our own practices of research and exposition on our own terms. She believed that for too long Indigenous scholars have been dominated by Western forms of research that have been imposed upon Indigenous researchers to the exclusion of traditional methods. A number of Indigenous scholars (Rigney 1998; Smith 1999; Nakata 1998; Martin, 2003) in the last two decades have drawn research together under the banner of ‘Indigenous Standpoint Theory’. A key exponent, Nakata, theorised that Indigenous people must first ‘develop an intellectual standpoint from which Indigenous scholars can read and understand the Western system of research’ (Nakata, 1998, p. 4). The Western descriptions of the Woppaburra as part of the Keppel Group of Islands have been studied from a Western theoretical standpoint. This study required an understanding of Western systems of research but also a redesign of this system to accommodate perspectives from an Indigenous scholar and illuminate the Indigenous voice. This might be interpreted as an exhumation of traditional narratives or, as Hamilton (1994) stated, drawing out that which “lies behind the master narratives of pioneering history” (p. 23). Hamilton (1994) believed that current history has selectively forgotten the Aboriginal voice in a process of ‘organized amnesia’ or as Foley (2003) put it, “science has constructed a version of Indigenous reality with no Indigenous input” (p. 45).

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3 The Other Side of the Frontier is the title of the Henry Reynolds (1981) text about the colonial interactions between Western colonisers and Aboriginal people. It takes the ideological position of Aboriginal people. The analogy used here is the intersection of different knowledges.
Evidence of the Aboriginal culture and history can be built upon accepted rigorous forms of research, including traditional narratives, through what Martin (2003) termed Aboriginal ways of being, knowing and doing. This can be done by locating people in country, understanding local Aboriginal protocols and by respecting Aboriginal knowledge and its intended use. The position of Aboriginal researchers is often couched in Western perceptions of how Aboriginal people should be involved and the extent to which they fit within dominant research practices. Such perspectives discouraged Aboriginal voice and agency and has placed a ‘straight jacket’ on the research methods best suited to working with Indigenous people. Foley (2003) believed that there are four core principles of Indigenous research: the practitioner must be Indigenous, they must be well versed in social theory, research must benefit the researcher’s or wider Indigenous community and where possible it should include traditional language (p. 50). This study was guided by Indigenous standpoints which was appropriately guided by the first three of Foley’s (2003) assertions. The first principle advocated by Foley places the researcher in a fortunate position of being an ‘insider’ and assisted by the relatively open access to the community under study.

2.2.2 Insiders and outsiders.

Researchers who conduct research with Aboriginal people are often viewed in terms of being ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. Insiders are those who gain access to community people with co-generated knowledge, trust and respect, and outsiders are those who have gained their knowledge through reciprocal relationships with dominant institutions (Polanyi, 1967). Outsiders must tentatively gain access to the Aboriginal community. These concepts and terms are drawn from Merton (1972), who contended that insiders are members of certain social identities, groups or collectives formed on the basis of who you are rather than what you are. At the extreme end of insiderism as social epistemology “only black historians can truly understand black history, only black ethnologists can understand black culture, only black sociologists can understand the social life of blacks” (Merton, 1972, p. 13). The more moderate claim is that some insider groups have “privileged access with other groups also being able to acquire that knowledge for themselves but at greater risk and cost” (Merton, 1972, p. 11). This concept has been applied to the process of gaining access to the Woppaburra community for research purposes.
Outsiders are quite often staff of government departments or university researchers. The social position and perspective of these ‘outsiders’ have been shaped by a “complex set of social relations based on a largely institutionalized reciprocity of trust among scholars and scientists” (Merton, 1972, p. 10). Their world views are foreign to the Aboriginal community and the process of connecting must be by building a relationship over time and outlining what is sought and the resultant benefits for the community (AIATSIS, 2012). Borinski (1954) believed that building rapport took extended time, not simply because of temporal restriction but due to the cultural difference of the outsider. Two things can be said about the outsider/insider nexus as it relates to this study, namely, timeframes for completion must be flexible and the researchers must be open to other activities which will help the community. Martin (2008) stated that outsiders must be ‘regulated’ and a new conceptual interface created where knowledge and research meet for the benefit of the community. Outsiders with skills of teaching, writing or negotiation may be drawn on to ‘test’ their commitment prior to research being undertaken and complete some of these activities as part of the process of developing trust and maintaining an ongoing working relationship. Outsiders are required to use accepted Aboriginal research protocols described in the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC 2003) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (1999) research guidelines to mediate their access to the community.

Insiders on the other hand are usually defined as members of the community, relatives or researchers who have built up a strong relationship over several years of living with the community across several levels, socially and professionally. Merton (1972) showed how an insider is already nestled within a social structure along with a recognised knowledge, attitude, work ethic, expertise, personal relationships and other characteristics. He also referred to the concepts of monopolistic access for only those with access to secretive or unique knowledges and privileged access for those with moderate access to group knowledge (Merton, 1972). Close relatives of the Aboriginal people under study who interact frequently and have rights to such knowledges (West, 1998) would have monopolistic access whereas those relatives a step away from the ‘core’ group would be considered to have privileged access. As a corollary, the better ‘access’ a researcher has to legitimate information will impact upon the reliability of the study.

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4 Errol Japanangka West (2000) believed that only a limited number of individuals in the Aboriginal community had a ‘right’ to access particular knowledges based on status or gender.
As a part of the Woppaburra clan, I am assuming a position between privileged and monopolistic access. Integral to this access is the traditional Aboriginal concept of reciprocal obligation. For those undertaking research in Aboriginal communities this will strengthen the validity of the study data.

2.2.3 Reciprocal obligation.  

In 1935, eminent ethnographer Donald Thomson was accompanied in his work through Arnhem Land by an Aboriginal assistant in order to gain access to a number of communities under study (Morphy, 2002). It was understood that, upon reaching each community, there was an unstated obligation that would have to be paid by the assistant at a later date. Some way into the journey the assistant withdrew his support and stated that the obligation to repay these communities was becoming so great that he would not be able to repay them in his lifetime (Thomson & Peterson, 1983). As the assistant was not a traditional custodian of the country he entered, he was considered an outsider. In the context of this study of the Woppaburra, an outside researcher might develop rapport, access research participants and publish the outcomes but a debt would remain. Many Aboriginal people including the Woppaburra have long honoured a system of reciprocal obligation (Martin, 2003; Rigney, 1997; Arbon, 2008), where reciprocity is expected but not formally requested.

The process of reciprocal obligation allows for a free-flowing exchange of goods and effort between members of the Aboriginal community. Broome (2001) stated that “in traditional Aboriginal fashion they attempted to build up reciprocal relations and obligation with the Europeans by bringing them into their kinship system” (p. 57). The researcher must unite black and white participants in a transformative and intellectual process (Lowe, 2008). In a research relationship between Aboriginal people, the obligation might be repaid in other ways related to social status or respect (West, 1998). Whether researchers are ‘black’ or ‘white’, the system of reciprocal obligation is a kin system and, once engaged, members are drawn in and become part of the structure. It allows members to feel a strong sense of belonging, in a type of cultural safety net that envelops both participant and researcher (Blair, 2015). Outsiders will typically struggle to find initial acceptance but nurturing the system of reciprocity will hasten the acceptance of the non-Aboriginal researcher. Insiders, on the other hand, have a speedier acceptance but have a deeper cultural obligation in addition to their professional duties as a researcher.
2.3 British Colonial Dominance

2.3.1 The rise and fall of colonial dominance.

In 1411, the civilisations across the world such as those in the orient and the Ottomans were outwardly impressive and England by contrast “would have struck you as a miserable backwater…..recuperating from the ravages of the Black Death [the plague]…. bad sanitation and seemingly incessant war” (Ferguson, 2011, p. 4). This description of the England of the time would give little confidence that such a country, along with other western states, would come to dominate the majority of the world. Ferguson’s (2011) explanation for this dominance is the creation of what he described in an information technology metaphor, as six ‘killer applications’ that were absent in the majority of other nations. These were competition, science, democracy, medicine, consumerism and work ethic. Stuchtey (2011) believed that Europe used these concepts to colonise countries which included “capitalist striving for profit, the colonies as valves for overpopulation, the spirit of exploration, scientific interest, and religious and ideological impulses up to Social-Darwinistic and racist motives” (p. 1). The British, as part of the West, believed that they would “infallibly be the predominant force of future history and universal civilisation” (1895; in White, 1981, p. 71). However, the very process of colonisation meant that the West, over time, was exposing colonised people to new technologies and ideas which developed the country socially, economically and politically (Lawson, 2007).

Ferguson (2011) argued that those very aspects that have allowed the West to dominate have an inherent ability to be responsible also for its own downfall. During the colonial period, Australia could be perceived as a ‘province of Europe’ (Chakrabarty, 2007), but throughout this period it was a country importing the latest in technology, science, democracy and capitalism. Ferguson’s (2011) meta-analysis of the decline of the West was wide-ranging but he has omitted any real discussion on the plight of colonised peoples, preferring to compare the Second and Third World peoples. In Australia, on a national level, Behrendt (2003) among others has discussed the plight of Aboriginal people and believed that higher levels of participation in public and political affairs can result in substantial institutional change. The fight for civil and human rights by traditional peoples has resulted in movement towards social equality but Hamilton and Dennis (2005) believed that this movement may have been at a cost to traditional cultural values.
2.3.2 Aboriginal people and colonisation.

Due to the sustained influence of colonisation, Aboriginal people have used the tools of the West to make improvements in a range of social areas such as employment, health and education. But Aboriginal people must be cautious. Hamilton and Dennis (2005) believe that obsession with economic growth, competition and individualism are driving out values of mutual respect and generosity, common in the ‘first nations’ peoples. Traditional people living in affluent nations such as Australia are on a double-edged sword, seeking to use the tools of Western society for liberation, but needing to be careful to retain traditional Aboriginal values (Bourke & Bourke, 1995). The ‘application’ of science includes “a way of studying, understanding and ultimately changing the natural world” (Ferguson, 2011, p. 13). Ferguson’s (2011) analysis is that civilisations are not measured simply by economic growth, infrastructure and levels of democracy. “Manners are as important as palaces” and “it is as much about forms of land tenure as it is about landscapes” (pp. 2-3). Aboriginal peoples in general and the Woppaburra specifically have largely been discussed in political and economic terms void of the human point of view. A discussion on civilisations must include fundamental social needs such as shelter, food and belonging (Maslow, 1943). Aboriginal people in Australia have been deprived of many of these aspects for over two centuries due to colonial dominance.

The dominance of the West is drawing to a close and other minority cultures are increasingly using political and economic tools such as democracy, human and civil rights for political representation and inclusion in the labour force. Aboriginal people have also benefited from advances in sciences and medicine to improve lifestyles and health. Scientific research and education are a key part of the dominant colonial and Western practices that covered Australia but these too are becoming equalised with an increasing number of Indigenous scholars. The recording of Indigenous history and culture commenced with a tide of literature written by non-indigenous authors but the content and authenticity has recently been challenged by a new surge of Indigenous writers. This is the subject of the next section.

2.4 Historiography

"The work of an intellectual is not to mould the political will of others; it is, through the analyses that he does in his own field, to re-examine evidence and assumptions, to shake up
habitual ways of working and thinking, to dissipate conventional familiarities, to re-evaluate rules and institutions.” (Foucault, 1996, p. 462).

2.4.1 The Imperialist version.

Until the early 1970s, representations of Australian history were generally based on colonial dominance. Carter (1987) described how historians do not simply reproduce events; rather, they narrate them, clarify, order and focus them towards the one event, such as settlement. He stated how such history is a “fabric woven of self-reinforcing illusions” (Carter, 1987, p. xv). Australia has accepted and replicated the non-indigenous historian, not as the unbiased spectator presenting events, but as an active participant in the recording and galvanising of Australian history. Decades of historians have overlaid in detail the perceived unquestionable conventions of historical fact until they have been normalised and accepted as true fact in the psyche of the Australian population. Carter (2006) stated that it paints a picture of “one people, one history, one land couched in a rhetoric of inclusiveness” (p. 9). Such a comprehensive manipulation has occurred over two centuries. The purpose was not to understand but to legitimate imperialist history. This remained a consistent theme until the late 1960s where wide-ranging civil rights changes also included a space where historians could, as Foucault (1996) stated, “re-examine evidence and assumptions, to shake up habitual ways of working and thinking” (p. 462).

It has been often quoted that a turning point in the perception of Australian history is the Boyer public lecture of 1968 where W.E.H. Stanner (1968) challenged the ‘Great Australian Silence’ and accused historians of being ‘High Priests in a Cult of Forgetfulness’. More than forgetfulness, historical accounts of Australia’s colonial past were later described as a deliberate denial of Aboriginal peoples’ role and experiences (Reynolds, 1981). Day (1997) considered this period over the following two decades to be “the end of the great lie” with a more inclusive approach to Aboriginal experiences being developed (p. 453). The first major works to disrupt this lie was a trilogy by Charles Rowley in the early 1970s which took a social rather than the usual static anthropological view of Aboriginal people. In the first three of an eight volume set about ‘Aborigines in Australian Society’, Rowley scrutinized the social position of remote Aboriginal people (Rowley, 1971), the marginalised position of urban Aboriginal people (Rowley, 1971) and the supposed destruction of Aboriginal society generally (Rowley, 1970). Other influential writing at this time that discussed the position of Aboriginal people included
The volume of research associated with Aboriginal issues has come from a position where there was little engagement in the field by scholars for the first six decades of the twentieth century to a position where both the research and the number of scholarly publications have accelerated markedly over the last four decades. Three points are worthy of mention. First, the majority of scholars are non-indigenous with few, if any, collaborative publications with Indigenous people. Secondly, the research is primarily on a national or regional scale, making generalisations which often have little association with specific cases. Finally, recent critiques (Muecke, 1992; Huggins, 1994; Narogin, 1997; Wheatley, 1997; Moreton-Robinson, 2004) have called into question the validity or authenticity of non-indigenous writers, and question the extent to which outsiders can give an authentic voice for the Aboriginal people who are the focus of their study. The Woppaburra’s case can be applied to all three points listed above. This study has been conducted by an Aboriginal person, is focused on a localised case, contains the authentic voice of an Aboriginal scholar as a writer and uses Elders as a legitimate data source. A key part of the study is the use of oral history from Woppaburra Elders. Hokari (2011), when he reviewed recent historical literature on Aboriginal people, separated scholars into those who had an ‘oral history approach’ and those with a ‘representative approach’. This largely but not exclusively separated the ‘black’ and ‘white’ writers.

### 2.4.2 Oral historical approach.

One of the most powerful methods of learning the Aboriginal story has been through the collating of oral histories or social memory, usually published as biographies or personal testimonials. There is a range of sources that exemplifies this. The most common in recent decades have been biographies such as *Mum Shirl: An Autobiography* (Smith, 1981), *My Place* (Morgan, 1987), *Aunty Rita* (Huggins, 1994), *Maybe Tomorrow* (Pryor, 1998), *Is That You Ruthie?* (Hegarty, 1999), *Forcibly Removed* (Holt, 2001), and the landmark *Bringing Them Home Report* (HREOC, 1997) which was chaired by Michael Dodson and laden with personal testimonials. These biographies give accounts of personal experience of Aboriginal people but have not been considered academic in nature. Non-Indigenous writers, McGrath (1987) and Read (1988) are noted historians who were strong advocates for the oral historical approach, although
it has lacked credibility in academic circles until recently. Many current Indigenous researchers considered oral histories an essential data source to understand Aboriginal peoples’ experiences (Smith, 1999; Martin, 2003). This is an essential component to understand the position of the Woppaburra in this study. The oral data was used as a primary source and I sought to prioritise Aboriginal writers’ representations of Aboriginal history.

2.4.3 Representational theory.

Wagner (1996) viewed representation theory as social interactions in the construction of representations. However, literature which has represented Aboriginal people has been written by one party to represent the experiences of a socially disconnected other. The majority of literature which represented the position of Aboriginal people in Australia has been published by non-Indigenous people. Early publications (Rowley, 1971; Biskup, 1973; Evans, Saunders & Cronin, 1975) wrote about Aboriginal people in Australian history from a Western perspective but claimed to tell the Aboriginal story. During the early 1980s, it was generally considered that Reynolds’ (1981) text, The Other Side of the Frontier, was the closest to a true representation of the position of Aboriginal people during frontier conflict. Reynolds (1981) took the ‘side’ of the Aboriginal people and examined the resistance of Aboriginal people against European settlement and effectively dispelled the myth of a passive takeover. Some notable scholars that followed Reynolds’ text were Attwood (1989, 1992, 2005), Broome (2001), Carter (1987), Goodall (1996) and McGrath (1995). These historians have attempted to take an Aboriginal perspective and attempted to represent what Aboriginal people have experienced. If I return to Foucault (1996) and Said (1978), this attempt can still be considered “European representation of non-Europe’. This remains a problem that Western scholars cannot solve. The history and culture of Aboriginal people generally and the Woppaburra specifically, must be written by those closest to the Aboriginal past. A solution can be that a new generation of Aboriginal historians or at least collaborations of Aboriginal people with well-regarded non-Indigenous scholars must develop.

2.4.4 Literature collaborations.

For many Western researchers, writing in collaboration with Aboriginal scholars may generate some anxiety; however, as Foucault insists in his exhortation above, researchers recognising and confronting such anxiety must re-examine their assumptions, question their ways of thinking and challenge their familiarities. Some scholars (Langton, 1993; Wheatley,
1997) believed that accurate interpretations require intercultural dialogue between Indigenous and non-indigenous people, leading to a refined and balanced view. Considering the dominance of non-indigenous writing on Indigenous issues, some wholly Indigenous voices might better ‘square the ledger’. This will be addressed in a small way in the case of the Woppaburra whose views are clearly absent. But such ambitious aims might be difficult. Muecke (1988, p. 411), in his essay Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis, stated that ‘white’ institutions seem to say, ‘Tell us what you are like….sing your songs once more and tell your stories.’ He argued that in the face of this stance, perhaps Indigenous people might choose to maintain a judicious silence instead of being limited to a tokenistic presence (Muecke, 1988). It may be the case also that the Woppaburra have never told their stories formally or may not want to ‘sing their songs’. I will give the Woppaburra that opportunity, whether it be taken up or rejected. If the study is successful, we will be closer to seeing how such perspectives as declarative and procedural knowledge might dovetail with dominant Eurocentric approaches to history, or alternatively, create opposition due to the newly articulated knowledge.

2.4.5 Contested views on history.

Aboriginal perspectives of culture and history or those views that are strongly aligned with Aboriginal points of view challenge the accepted Western ‘common sense’ notion of culture and history. The most publicised debate has been between Henry Reynolds (1981, 1987) and to a lesser extent Lyndall Ryan (1981), and Keith Windschuttle’s (2002) interpretation of colonial interactions between Aboriginal people and settlers. Reynolds, a noted historian, has written widely on the treatment of Aboriginal people by ‘white’ invaders. *The Other Side of the Frontier* was published in 1981 during a time of social change and it documented the Aboriginal people’s resistance in the colonial era (Reynolds, 1981). Ryan (1981) discussed the subjugation and almost genocide of the Tasmanian Aboriginal population. The myth of Aboriginal passivity and acceptance of British settlement was summarily dismissed in two well-documented and thoughtfully analysed texts. On the back of civil rights movements of the 1960s and substantial social change for Aboriginal people in the 1970s, the public and intellectual orientation to history changed substantially in the 1980s. However, the publication, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* by the denialist Keith Windschuttle (2002) disputed many of these claims as being exaggerated and lacking sufficient evidentiary basis.
As part of an era now known as the ‘History Wars’, Windschuttle (2002) claimed that many historians fabricated stories of massacre and ongoing warfare. Robert Manne and several other noted historians emphatically responded, denouncing Windschuttle’s claims (Manne, 2003). *Blood on the Wattle* documented Australia’s shameful history of massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal people throughout the colonial era (Elder, 1998). Attwood (2005) also responded to Windschuttle and published a book entitled *The Truth about Aboriginal History*. Australian history is punctuated with acts of cruelty and indifference to an Aboriginal culture which was systematically subjugated and on a road to destruction. Many historians believe, however, that this ‘black armband’ view of history should be more balanced (Blainey, 1993). Today, there are very few extreme claimants who do not believe that the history of Aboriginal Australians is tragic, and the common view for the road forward is to firstly acknowledge past events in an objective manner.

In his well-known Redfern Park Speech in 1992, the then Prime Minister Paul Keating stated:

> It begins, I think, with the act of recognition, recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the disasters, the alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice.

Prime Minister Paul Keating (1992) also stated that, “ever so gradually we are learning how to see Australia through Aboriginal eyes.” Despite this assertion, different versions or perspectives of history have been met with criticism and intense debate. Instead of wholesale massacre of Aboriginal clans living on their country, it is the unfortunate killing that occurred as a result of settlers defending their leases. Instead of Aboriginal people being used as slave labour receiving little or no wages (Kidd, 1997), people were indentured as labourers with the Aboriginal Welfare fund caring for their needs. Instead of an invasion, it was a settlement. The 5Mabo decision in the High Court clearly identified this land as belonging to Aboriginal people prior to settlement but it remains difficult for many Australians to ‘see Australia through

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Aboriginal eyes’ and accept new definitions, interpretations and perspectives of history and culture.

I began this section by stating how history is a “fabric woven of self-reinforcing illusions” (Carter, 1987, p. xv). I have shown how colonial powers had effectively written Aboriginal people out of the history of Australia and reinforced a perspective that glamorised the settlement of Australia. The unsavoury aspects of this history were conveniently forgotten in what Stanner (1968) dubbed the great Australian silence. However, in the last four decades there has been a surge of Aboriginal biographies based on oral histories or social memory. These experiential stories have been criticised as being void of academic validity, while a tide of representational literature written by non-Indigenous writers about Aboriginal people, has been warmly embraced by the academic community. This has also not been without criticism due to the concerns about authenticity and the role of non-indigenous scholars purporting to speak for the ‘other’. It appears that a collaborative effort might solve some of these difficulties but even this has issues of tokenism or, in some cases, intellectual positions which are essentialist and hence far removed from each other. In this study a ‘hybrid’ perspective has been sought where facets of colonial history will be interpreted by an Aboriginal scholar and used with the social memory of Indigenous Elders. The direction of this work is not only to use cross-cultural agents but also history itself as a discipline (Hokuri, 2011). The next section will view the concept of place as an approach to understanding the history and culture of the Woppaburra.

2.5 Place Versus Time-based Research

2.5.1 Different views of place versus time.

In the previous section I viewed the historiography of Aboriginal Australia through a chronological list of known literature. This section will approach the understanding of Woppaburra culture and history based on location, or their linkage with country. Historically, Aboriginal Australians’ connection to country or place has been discussed and has attempted to be understood by numerous anthropological scholars (Berndt, 1947; Elkins, 1954; Stanner, 1979; Hiatt, 1962). More recently, Memmott (1998) discussed the Western views of Indigenous ‘place’ by referring to current cultural heritage legislation as a tool which restricts and excludes Indigenous world views and intellectual traditions. Memmott (1998), believed that there is an inherent bias in that the legislation refers only to “tangible things that can be objectively
identified” (p. 1). This would preclude Woppaburra Elders’ thoughts, memories and dreamings that might be associated with place. Furthermore, Memmott and Long (2002) applied cross-cultural theory to the concept of place in terms of classical, post-colonial and cultural views of country. They discussed the concept as an ongoing interaction involving mutual accommodation over time. Such a definition could accommodate the tangible and intangible relationship the Woppaburra have with place.

In contrast, Swain (1993) believed that these views were too linear and temporal and that Aboriginal people saw place as a primary ontological category. He went so far as to deny the existence of time in pre-colonial Aboriginal society. Swain (1993) saw these concepts as being based on Western conceptions of understanding country. Beckett (1996) criticised this concept of denial of time as being difficult to accept due to his conception of time and history being too narrowly defined. Regardless of these varying views, historically there is little value placed on cultural values of sites or landscapes which have associated cultural knowledge and emotional values. Rudder (1993, as cited in Ten-Houten, 2005) uses the term ‘temporal location’ to focus on specific sites. Rudder (1993, as cited in Ten-Houten, 2005) believed that “space is apt to be indicated not by reference to the measurement of time but rather to the location of the event under discussion” (p. 51). An investigation of the Woppaburra based on ‘place’ in addition to an analysis of the Western historical sources might well give alternative views of their reading of history and culture. In the current research there is no recorded evidence showing that personal knowledge of place, drawn from social memory and shared meanings, have been adequately explored for the Woppaburra.

Martin (2003) showed how Aboriginal modes of being are more grounded in spatial rather than temporal dimensions. This is in contrast to Heidegger’s (2002 [1927]) ontology which assumes time to be the function that represents European being, and which is fundamentally grounded in temporality. If we consider the spatial dimension as an important aspect of Aboriginal being, historical and cultural recollections can be about particular behaviours at a site (which might not include any specific structures) and collective experiences gained by the people interacting with the site. This may be passed on socially through storytelling, social interactions or even remnant artefacts that contain ‘memories’ from that site. The important aspect is the ongoing relationship between Aboriginal people both individually and collectively, and their country, and the ability of ‘place’ to maintain and develop identity for the
people involved. The site might not indicate structure or clear evidence of human inhabitation but carries the collective experiences of the traditional people. In this sense, history is subordinate to place (Morphy & Elliot, 1997). This is particularly true for Aboriginal spirituality and place.

2.5.2 Spirit and culture of place.

Aboriginal philosophy is based in the dreaming and creation which established societal rules that rarely separated people from country of origin (Berndt & Berndt, 1964). The dreaming as a moral code of ethics maintained connection between people and country on a physical, cultural and spiritual level. If we apply the concept of connection to the interaction of a researcher and the Woppaburra in this case study, we could unlock a deeper understanding of spirit and culture of place. Levinas (1969) believed that all ethics are derived from a confrontation with the other and that people may gain access to this spiritual world by opening themselves to the ‘otherness of the other’6. As Levinas (1969) depicted in his essay, Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority, there is a clear distinction between the material world of totality and the spiritual world of infinity. If this is true, face to face interactions with Woppaburra Elders would give thoughts and ideas outside the material world towards Levinas’ concept of ‘infinity’. Derrida (1978) critiqued Levinas and stated that this application was too narrow and he believed that the written word can be as sacred as speech. If I accept Derrida’s (1978) critique, the thoughts and ideas of the Woppaburra Elders may be appropriately converted to text or image- retaining their integrity without maintaining a duality and separation of the spirit and physical worlds.

Stanner (1979 [1956]), in his essay The Dreaming, described how Westerners may attempt to ‘think black’ by avoiding the categories of duality such as mind versus body, personality versus name and spirit versus physical place. In Aboriginal world views, land and country are embedded within a totality of person, spirit and country. This is a common theme across most Aboriginal communities where inanimate objects such as mountains, ridges and other rock formations take on human like qualities (Neidje, 1995; Craven, 1999). This is also true of flora and fauna where Aboriginal people quite often acknowledge this connection with

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6 Levinas is applying the concept of infinity to the spiritual world of the ‘other’ in terms of access to their thoughts by face-to-face seeing and listening. I understand there is no link to Aboriginal spirituality but the mere ‘access’ to Elders’ thoughts has the potential to understand spiritual dimensions of country.
the personification of totems associated with areas of country. Initial discussion with many of the Woppaburra in this case study has identified the notion of totems but this has not been adequately explored. The identification of dreaming and creation stories including totems related to the Woppaburra’s homeland are notably absent from any literature. Bird-Rose (2011) believed that this is a central identifying spiritual feature between Aboriginal people and country and something worthy of investigation in this case.

Bird –Rose (2011) identified and articulated the interconnection between spirit and country for the Mak Mak people in their homelands of north-western area of Northern Territory, Australia. As with many traditional peoples, the concept of a time-bound connection is foreign (Hokari, 2011). The Mak Mak people spoke of how “their stories interconnect, past connects with present, and creation is part of the contemporary life of the place and its people” (Bird-Rose, 2011, p. 16). Since the late twentieth century, the Mak Mak people’s land had a number of incursions from European settlers, feral plants and animals, pastoralism and tourism. These incursions excluded the Mak Mak who have only recently secured tenure of a portion of their homeland. The Mak Mak people stated that “knowledge is embedded in place” (Bird-Rose, 2011, p. 150). The Woppaburra have a similar history of incursion, dispossession and recent return. The Mak Mak people were able to reconnect with their country by drawing knowledge from ‘place’ and a similar strategy may yield results for the Woppaburra. Although the Woppaburra clan has been dispossessed of their physical land for many years, the knowledge drawn from sense of place, as Morphy and Elliot (1997) suggested, may supersede that drawn from temporal historiography. Hence, sense of place and physical connection to country may be important components to understand the case of the Woppaburra.

2.5.3 Physical connection to place.

The physical connection to country is a well-researched concept which has focused strongly on removals and dispossession (Reynolds, 1989; HREOC, 1997; Haebich, 2000; Attwood, 2005). Carter (2006), in Dispossession, Dreams and Diversity: Issues in Australian Studies, critiques the colonial depiction of land possession/ dispossession historically by viewing interactions between settlers and Aboriginal people. Amongst a range of perspectives, a common theme is displacement rather than destruction in terms of dispossession of country. The displacement perspective views the slow demise of Aboriginal people, while settlers
concurrently built the empire slowly claiming the country both physically and symbolically (Day, 1996). In symbolic terms, Carter (2006) discussed the idea of ‘belonging’ and how this is established through imagery.

Creation stories transform objects or spirits into parts of ‘country’ and it is common for Aboriginal land to have human-like or spiritual properties. The Batjala\(^7\) believed that Kgari is a beautiful young spirit and any desecration of the land through sand mining or clearing is seen as inflicting pain upon that spirit that the Batjala must care for (Reeves, 1964). This demonstrates how Aboriginal people consider themselves to be part of the ‘country’ or traditional lands. This relationship is not dominant but more subservient in that they have an obligation to nurture, sustain and maintain the ongoing health of their country (Broome, 2001). In contemporary scientific practices, this relates to sustainability, the ability to maintain healthy waterways and working in harmony with nature (Suzuki, 1997). Aboriginal people have obligation to the land and all flora and fauna within their traditional areas. Essentially, Aboriginal people do not own land but simply are custodians for future generations and use associations with country to perpetuate culture.

It makes sense then, that if each language group has its own creation story about how their land was formed, each will have different social obligations and lore associated with this land. It has been commonly believed that Australia had over 250 different language groups who would also have their own ‘dreamings’ and attachment to country (Horton, 1994). Aboriginal people have maintained this strong association between people and place. Given the varying language groups and individual dreamings and relationship to country, the pan-Aboriginal view common until recently cannot adequately explain the case of the Woppaburra. Necessarily, a case study approach is required to understand the depth of the relationship between people and country (Bird-Rose, 2011). It is anticipated that this research will determine if this still remains a strong association between the Woppaburra and their country, regardless of the intervention of pastoralists, settlers and the subsequent forced removal of the Woppaburra from their lands as a result of colonisation. Bourke (2003) believed that this relationship can be seen through symbols and images which represent events and aspects of place.

\(^7\) Batjala people are the traditional custodians of Fraser Island in Wide Bay, Queensland, also known as Kgari.
2.5.4 Images and symbols of place.

Carter (2006) believed images provide a sense of belonging and feelings of attachment to places. These may be a specific landscape, region or an entire nation. The images are often related to the pioneering settlers, the bush or outback and, more often, the struggling pastoralist. Carter (2006) linked these ideas with a strong sense of national identity and how they invoke a sense of belonging or feeling of ‘fit’ in a particular space. Marsden and Tan (2010, p. 6) in the children’s book, The Rabbits, written about Aboriginal people’s dispossession, stated “they only know their country” while the rabbits systematically take possession of the continent and proceed to signpost all claimed land. Signposts and memorials are a static reminder of a point in time and can be useful resources to understand the perspective of colonial society. Inglis (1998) speaks about the sacred place of war memorials in the Australian landscape which is devoid of any Aboriginal presence. Similarly, Reynolds (1981) states that possibly 10,000 Aboriginal people from the tropics were killed in conflicts with Europeans, which is double the number of ‘whites’ from that region who died in conflicts from the Boer War to the Vietnam War. Indigenous people are notably absent from memorials, save for a few local memorials in recent years such as the returned serviceman’s sculptures in Adelaide and Sydney. This idea lets us imagine how colonisers saw the country through the lens of their own country and overlaid their ideas, values and names.

Some find it inappropriate to apply the beliefs and values of contemporary Australia on historic monuments but it is more than just the written word in these memorials that make them significant. They consume any prior geography associated with that site, and leave a legacy of ‘white’ dominance (Kerwin, 2010). This might be the case as Kerwin (2010) highlighted, but colonial dominance did not totally wipe out the symbols of Aboriginal Australia. Bourke (2003) discussed how “museums house various artefacts depicting those early representations of the noble savage” (p. 2). Fortunately, many such artefacts have been preserved and have the ability to ‘speak’ for the Aboriginal people who once owned them and expose the nature of the connection with their traditional country. Connections may be found through several items that carry memory such as photographs, artefacts, poems, songs and similar items (Halbwachs, 1992).
Halbwachs’ (1992) primary thesis is that human beings’ memory can be considered an authentic representation only if drawn together as a collective. Halbwachs (1992) asserted that groups of people have collective memories around similar themes and draw on present day mental images to reconstruct the past. This study will seek out the Woppaburra’s artefacts that remain in the Australian National Museum (Sydney) and personal households as a memory aid to stimulate ideas about their culture and history. Halbwachs (1992) stated how specific populations have starkly different representations of their past. The assumption is that recorded Western views of Woppaburra culture and history will be starkly different from those discussed by the Woppaburra themselves. The use of mnemonic images or models is associated individually with Plato and Aristotle (Bower, 1970), but this study will seek to use memories drawn from artefacts in the collective context. This has the potential to uncover memories from Woppaburra Elders to contribute to a thorough understanding of their culture and history.

2.5.5 Remote versus urban.

Morris (1984) indicated how current researchers value “areas of Australia settled last by Europeans– the Northern Territory for example” (p. 379). This common view relegates the Aboriginal sites in more settled parts of Australia back to a space that is less important, of less value and of limited worth. The marginalisation of more urban areas results in little research activity and little interest to save what remains of many cultures often dominated by urbanisation (Behrendt, ND). Strehlow’s (1947) studies were based on the Aranda people of the central desert, Berndt and Berndt’s work (1996) is based primarily on Arnhem Land and Stanner’s (1934) work focused on Daley River and Port Keats where he could, in his words, examine ‘the wild and unspotted savage’ (Stanner, 2009). Considering that the colonisation of Australia moved from the fringes of the east coast to the central, west and northern aspects of the country, many studies have attempted to focus on the ‘real Aborigine’ not tainted by colonisation (Heiss, 2012). The studies listed above covered anthropological and archaeological perspectives but they had limited social and historical content. While they were not authored by Aboriginal people, they contain recollections and interpretations of space and spirituality, a useful footprint to understand these remote custodians. By contrast, the east coast Aboriginal people have had

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little attention, so it is timely to investigate the Woppaburra and their country, and to record the dreaming stories and traditional and contemporary beliefs through oral and visual means.

Connection of people and country in traditional Aboriginal cultures and caring for country are at the heart of Aboriginal culture, however, the Woppaburra have been given scant attention in the literature. The limited attention it has received is primarily archeological in nature, along with some limited historical studies on the social uses of the Keppel Islands. Rowland (1979, 1980 1981, 1982, 1984a, 1984b, 1985a, 1985b, 2002), completed extensive work on North Keppel Island, particularly at a digging site on Mazie Bay which showed a resident population of Keppel Islanders for approximately 5000 years. A further study was conducted on the Keppel Isles based on land tenure, development, and social uses (Ganter, 1985) however this contained only a small section on the Keppel Islanders themselves. More recently, during the ‘history wars’, Rowland (2004) published an historical account of the Keppel Islanders in response to Windschuttle’s (2002) denialist perspective of Aboriginal people’s history. This is one of the few accounts detailing interactions between settlers and the Woppaburra.

2.6 Concluding Comments

I have presented the literature in three general themes, the theoretical framework, historiography and place-based research. The first theme detailed the theoretical framework of whiteness, othering and critical race theory and how this is juxtaposed to ‘the other side’ of Indigenous standpoint theory, insiders versus outsiders and reciprocal obligation. The first section viewed how “Indigenous epistemologies, cosmologies, ontologies and axiologies are almost diametrically opposed in their essence to the values and neoliberal assumptions” that underpin research (Osbourne, 2014, p. 8). While this might appear oppositional, some writers (Bhabha, 1994; McCarthy, 1998; Spivak, 2003) argue for a middle ground or hybridity of research methods, which draws from both traditions and speaks to all. Nakata (2003) takes this position in what he termed the ‘cultural interface’. My intention is to adhere to scientific principles of research but use the popular but still contested Indigenous standpoints to gather data in a manner acceptable to the Woppaburra.

The second theme I explored was based on historiography and how there has been a broad dominance by the West over the remaining nations in the world during the last five
centuries. Ferguson’s (2011) analysis insisted that this dominance is coming to an end as other cultures ‘catch up’ using six key principles including competition and science. The decline of dominance has allowed Indigenous writers to stake a claim in the area of recording and publishing historical and cultural knowledge. The literature indicated a lack of publications concerning the plight of Indigenous people until after the middle of the twentieth century, then a rapid acceleration of material in the recent decades written by various non-indigenous writers. Recently, there has been a range of publications by Indigenous scholars; however, this was dominated by biographies with little academic literature. In addition, the available literature has been general in nature without the depth of study required for specific Aboriginal groups. This study seeks to add to this body of knowledge in the case of the Woppaburra.

In the final theme, I discussed the research approaches which explore alternate views of Indigenous peoples’ experiences and connection to country. Place-based research views the position of the Woppaburra from events, sites and connections which are not based on temporality. Considering the removal and return to traditional homelands almost 80 years later, the nature of this connection is best drawn from collective memory of Elders closest to those who were removed. Mnemonic devices such as photos, artefacts and historical documents will be a useful conduit to exhume a culture and history that many thought lost. Yin’s (2009) case study method has allowed a process for the data collection required in this sense. Yin (2009) stated that the outcome should be of significant interest to the public or be of national interest. The opportunity to fill the gap in the understanding of the Woppaburra demonstrates the applicability to the public and national interest.

There is a dearth of material concerning the specific case of the Woppaburra from the central Queensland area and a need for Indigenous people to take the lead role in researching and publishing Indigenous issues. The current literature on the Woppaburra is largely archeological with some limited historical papers in recent years. An extensive investigation has indicated some sporadic earlier evidence through government reports, newspapers and photographs. To date, no comprehensive examination has been undertaken to gather this evidence but more importantly, no substantial effort has been made to gather these experiences from the Woppaburra themselves. This study seeks to give an authentic representation of the Woppaburra and their experiences using ‘insider’ knowledge. The author is a Woppaburra person and will use family connections to gain access to cultural knowledge often ‘off limits’ to the outsider.
We might do well to consider Foucault’s suggestion that as intellectuals we should “re-examine evidence and assumptions” and “shake up conventional familiarities (Foucault, 1996, p. 462). We can no longer be constrained by biased representations of the past, no matter how uncomfortable this may be. Gadamer (1975), writing as a Westerner, insisted that there are indeed tensions between our being and theirs but “the hermeneutic task consists not in the covering up of this tension by attempting naïve assimilation but rather in developing it consciously” (p. 273). This conscious expression is a clear omission in the story of the Woppaburra.
Chapter 3
Method

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature in the context of the study about the Woppaburra of the Keppel Islands, in Central Queensland, Australia. The research question is “Who were the Woppaburra culturally and historically?” The literature revealed that there is a range of sources discussing Aboriginal people, their culture and history in general, and often a focus on the remote ‘untainted and real’ Aboriginal person. However, coastal Aboriginal people who are close to urbanised centres, like the Woppaburra, have been largely ignored. This selective and biased perspective can be explained by an understanding of Critical Race Theory (CRT). In Chapter 2, I outlined how CRT recognises that institutional racism has been pervasive in the dominant culture for over four centuries and institutions such as the government and tertiary institutions have been responsible for the recording of a Western version of history devoid of the experiences of Aboriginal people. A key tenet of Critical Race Theory is to allow the voices of ‘black’ people to construct narratives out of the historical, socio-cultural realities of their lives (Rollock, 2012), in essence, constructing what the Western historians have not documented. The construction of this thesis is in the form of a counter-narrative to balance the ledger leading to a construction of a shared history. DuBois’s (1994) notion of double consciousness placed the Woppaburra in a position where they have looked at themselves “through the eyes of others” but they also looked at themselves through their own eyes. This vision can produce two perspectives of events or, better still, one shared perspective incorporating multiple data sources of the same events. I gathered the missing data in a quest to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Woppaburra. This was guided by two research sub-questions. 1) Who are the Woppaburra culturally? and, 2) Who were the Woppaburra historically?

In this chapter, I will discuss the development of an integrated case study research method and how this was used to complete the study in a social science context. The approach to social science research depends on research questions which seek to determine the - ‘how’ or ‘why’ of a present circumstance. These are explanatory questions which require an in-depth description of social phenomena creating a meaningful insight into real life events, be they individual lifecycles, small group behaviour or community characteristics. The method of a study is bound by three conditions which are: the form of the research question; whether the researcher
needs control over events; and whether it focuses on contemporary or historical issues (Yin, 2009). In consideration of these components, this study must deal with multiple sources of evidence of a displaced community over a period of time. This requires careful collection and analysis of various data which must ultimately paint a clearer picture of the people and place under study. The Case Study method allowed me to do this in a valid way.

This study uses the single case study method which is considered useful in unique or extreme cases (Yin, 2009) and allows researchers to examine a case in detail (Thomas, 2011). Importantly, case study research is not just another type of qualitative research but is, rather, a method that can utilise a range of qualitative and quantitative techniques (Yin, 2009). The key is to draw “rich interconnected information from this singular focus and derive unique insights from the analysis that follows” (Thomas, 2011, p. 44). Appropriately, this explanation of method will also consider the protocols and principles of Indigenous Standpoint Theory within this case study. In this chapter, I examine how the case study method was utilised in this study, the process of data collection and the process for analysis. It will finish with the ethical considerations and it will include the crucial process of interacting and consulting with Indigenous communities. I will also discuss critical discourse analysis as a method for understanding and deconstructing the interview and archival data. In this chapter, I also examined the validity of data including the Indigenous protocols required to complete the study objectively with genuine data. Finally, the ethical considerations are discussed to ensure the study was completed in line with expected community protocols and within accepted Human Research Ethics protocols.

3.1 Case Study Method

Yin (2009, p. 8) reviewed five research methods in terms of their fit to a research study. These were experiment, survey, archival analysis, history and case study. The last three methods listed show some application to the current study. He advised that there are discrete differences but it is common that studies have large overlaps (Yin, 2009). Case study method is similar to historical method except for two further aspects, direct observation of events being studied and interviews of people involved in events. History and archival analysis are secondary methods of this study but are complementary as they add a further layer to the understanding of the case. A case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a “full variety of evidence- documents,
artefacts, interviews, and observations” (Yin, 2009, p. 11). A useful definition of case study is the empirical investigation of a phenomenon in a real life situation, where the boundaries between the phenomena and situation are not clearly identifiable, and secondly how a range of sources of data converge in a triangular fashion.

People and environment studies such as these have described a patterned environment, human behaviour and their relationship or interaction over time (Yin, 2009). The key research question in this study is “Who were the Woppaburra culturally and historically?” This required trawling of historical evidence and contemporary clan group interviews to uncover how the Woppaburra represented themselves and representations of connections with country, essentially viewing the research question as two distinct sub-questions: a) Who were the Woppaburra culturally? and, b) Who were the Woppaburra historically? The concluding aspect of the study viewed current connections, specifically sea-country association through various community groups, federal and state agencies. In a similar study on the Lardil people of Mornington Island, Memmott (1980) insisted that the theory is developed concurrently with the data collection in a case study and that the investigator is able to put these qualitative aspects of experience into a theory. It is a dualism of theorising and experience on parallel planes with one influencing the other. This position tentatively guided the data collection but was not applied rigidly to limit or predetermine outcomes. In terms of a case study, Yin (2009) clearly articulated a case study protocol. The protocol outlines the instrument, procedure, rules, direction required to “guide the investigator in carrying out the data collection from a single case (Yin, 2009, p. 79). In this sense, a case study protocol was applied to guide the case. This is outlined below.

3.2 Case Study Protocol

The Case study protocol was appropriate for this study as research on specific Indigenous urban coastal communities is underdeveloped and not well-theorised. The protocol is drawn from Yin’s (2009) suggested protocol. He proposed a structure which included an overview of the study which contains research questions, theoretical framework and relevant readings. Secondly, he identified field procedures which include data collection processes, access to the site and procedural reminders. Finally, he suggested maintaining a table of guiding questions and an appropriate format for the final report. This approach allowed me to construct a table with research questions, sources of data, specific evidence and how this would fit into a document
format. Such a protocol guided the study which systematically extracted rich data from the evidence collected. A useful datum was the archival evidence with colonial language and terms. A thorough understanding was obtained by deconstructing this discourse to understand the period and colonisers attitudes towards the Woppaburra.

![Figure 3.1. Case study protocol detailing research questions, data sources, specific evidence & notes.](image)

As Yin (2009, pp. 80-81) indicated, desirable case study protocol contains overview, field procedures, case study questions, and a guide for the study report. This protocol has been developed to guide the direction of the study and was used as a constant reference throughout the study.

### 3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a means of analysing collected data. Themes were located in the data collected through structured interviews, archival analysis as well as field and diary notes. The discourse underpinning the structured interview text was used to understand the Woppaburra Elders’ situation in relation to their family and their country. It allowed the researcher to have a unique perspective of how participants describe and frame the issues under
investigation. Critical discourse analysis, by definition, views language as a form of social practice and showed how language was used as a tool for reinforcing social or political domination. Its critical aspect is the awareness of how text reconciles and maintains power relationships. It also revealed how the analysis could not be neutral or value-free (Renkema, 2004, p. 282). For this reason, the remaining chapters will endeavour to utilise traditional Woppaburra names for country, artefacts and people. I will refrain from using the colonisers terms and revert to known traditional language terms.

While CDA emphasises discursive hegemonies, this study used the discourse as a way of understanding issues, specifically bringing about change through critical understanding. Renkema (2004) believed that an analysis is useful only within its context and its role is not only to “detect manipulation and discrimination but also to understand the essence of societal problems.” (p. 282). The archival data sources uncovered fertile text for analysis. The treatment of ‘blacks’ and interaction with the ‘civilised’ settlers allows substantial understanding of the colonial attitude towards the Woppaburra. Hence, this study used the critical dimension of CDA not only to look critically at the text but also to view wider implications of what this analysis might elicit about the issues surrounding the Woppaburra in the period from around the middle of the nineteenth century through to the present day.

Critical discourse analysis was developed by Norman Fairclough (1992) who reasoned that there are three interrelated dimensions of discourse. The three dimensions are socio-cultural practice, discourse practice and text (Locke, 2004, pp. 42-43). My crude analysis viewed socio-cultural practice as the domain of sociologists, text analysis that of the linguist and discourse practice a mixture of both. The socio-cultural practice exposed the situational or institutional practices; it included the conditions of production and interpretation by providing a wider contextual relevance. This is linked with the second dimension, discourse practice, which Locke (2004) described as the explanation or social analysis. This second dimension showed the processes of production and interpretation which interprets the text. This overlapped with the third dimension, text, which Locke (2004) described as a transcript where the textual analysis occurs. Therefore, the text is contained within the field of discursive practice which occurs in a broader societal context.

A sound critical analysis of discourse require[d] a theorization and description of both the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of a text, and of the
social structures and processes within which individuals or groups, as social historical subjects, create[d] meaning in their interaction with texts. (Fairclough & Kress, 1993, in Wodak & Myer, 2001, pp. 29-30).

Although the Woppaburra’s interview transcriptions also exhibit valuable discursive practices, Fairclough (2001) stated that to get to this broader understanding in social science research, a researcher must “go outside the text using academic and non-academic sources to get a sense of its social context” (p. 129). In this study, I uncovered a range of academic sources but also media outside text such as photographs and artefacts to build a complete picture of the Woppaburra. Two important aspects of the study were the development of rapport with the community under study and the access to sufficient authentic and relevant data. Neuman (2000) discussed member validation and competent insider performance as two types of validity. This perspective and its application to an Indigenous case is detailed below.

3.3.1 Validity and reliability.

The issues of validity and reliability are important because the objectivity of social research is at stake (Silverman, 1993). Validity is the confidence placed in the researcher’s ability to capture the social world accurately. “Replicability is not a criterion because field research is virtually impossible to replicate” as the social world of subjects, events and social contexts change and make studies difficult to duplicate or repeat (Neuman, 2000, p. 369). Case study method provides a snapshot of a case in a particular region, and hence is not directly applicable to other areas, however some of the principles within the findings may be useful in similar settings. In terms of research accuracy, Neuman (2000, p. 369) argues that there are four kinds of validity: ecological validity, natural history, member validation and competent insider performance. In this study, the researcher’s role was most closely aligned to ‘competent insider performance’, while ‘member validation’ was used as a further confirmation of findings. Competent insider performance is the ability of the researcher to be accepted, as best as possible, as an insider or member of the group being studied. A description of this role is explained below.

As a participant researcher, there were some difficulties but there was also immense satisfaction obtained while working within the Aboriginal community. Validity of the data was improved through the social position of the researcher in relation to the community as a
‘competent insider’, and this was critical in gaining favoured access to the community. The reliability of the data was discussed through the cultural principle of reciprocal obligation and the need to balance community versus research needs (AIATSIS, 2012; NHRMC, 2003) and the process of re-engaging in a known community. In terms of the recorded interviews, Perakyla (1997) stated that the practice of conversation analysis was sometimes viewed as being underdeveloped; however, in terms of the quality of the recorded interviews, the validity was strengthened by the reliability of digital recordings. In this study I retained digital recordings which allowed me to capture conversational cues such as tone, volume and pauses. This helped to capture and interpret data reliably.

In contrast to the interviewer’s category as an insider or member of the group, the interviewees were also part of membership categorisation. Baker (1997) described how speakers tend to “assemble a social world in which their categories have a central place” (p. 143). These categories are the speakers’ puppets where they can be dressed in various category-associated roles and activities. The Woppaburra as a cultural group speak from this category. There are important issues about “what could be the case and how the social order might be arranged” (Baker, 1997). Here, Baker (1997) cautioned members that they need to assemble a world that is recognisable, orderly and moral. This issue will be addressed by triangulating the research where multiple sources of data including participant interviews will converge. In this process, I will ensure that I identify common themes in the interview data and maintain an effective relationship with the community.

Specific to case study research Yin (2009) lists three principles of valid data collection. The first is the use of multiple sources of evidence, the second is creating a case-study data base and the third is maintaining a chain of evidence. The final principle increases the reliability of information in a case study by following the evidence from the study question through to the collected evidence to the final reporting. The original evidence was given appropriate attention and not lost through carelessness or bias, which Yin (2009) believed “addresses the methodological problem of construct validity” (p. 123). In this case the evidence drawn from the community participants was reconfirmed through member validation and as part of the principle of reciprocal obligation. In the following section I will describe how completion of work integral to the community was a type of co-requisite which blurred the boundaries between researcher
and community member. The final sections will discuss the research participants, data collection, data processing and ethical considerations.

3.3.2 Community engagement.

The current case study commenced with the researcher with ‘insider’ status. This concept was partially described in Chapter 2. As an insider, up-front time to develop rapport was unnecessary, but engagement in the community business and how it operates was a necessary co-requisite. The researcher’s extended family had been acquainted with the Indigenous community and has maintained strong cultural linkages to the Woppaburra homeland and surrounding sea-country. This allowed for insider status and privileged access to an otherwise difficult social space. A reasonably short re-engagement time was anticipated with access through cousins, aunts, uncles and other relatives. The study commenced in February, 2011, with a process of re-engagement with the Woppaburra Aboriginal community from various parts of the Australian continent. Initial discussions were held with the management committee of the Woppaburra Land Trust and the Traditional Use of Marine Resources Committee, where a co-operative approach was adopted by all parties. Over the following four years, visits to the Keppel Isles were made on a regular basis to observe and understand who the Woppaburra were and are today. It became readily apparent over the first year that, although co-operative research was decided upon, there were far more pressing community issues that would take precedence over the research activities. Community cultural obligations were a necessary requisite to address these issues and enable research to proceed. For the duration of the study, data was gathered concurrently with other community obligations.

3.3.3 Researcher as community member.

The interaction between myself as researcher and participants could have brought about a methodological dilemma in this case, as I have a direct link with participants. To the outsider, it might appear appropriate to separate the researcher from the study to give an objective view of the case. Any attempts to do this might have forced the researcher to choose between family relationships and categorising relatives as subjects under study. My initial thoughts on how to commence research with the Woppaburra were to make family contacts and proceed to interviews after a short time. Being family, I assumed an implicit understanding of how straightforward it would be to complete the data collection and the subsequent case study;
however, it became apparent after a short time that skills developed through formal education could be utilised not only to assist the research process, but to also work in other ways that would assist the community. Absence of the researcher from the social space over a number of years served to enable the observation of differences in literacy and skill levels which were essential for the administrative arm and organisational requirements of the Woppaburra community. After the first year, a range of tasks were completed to develop rapport but at the same time, I developed an understanding of the Woppaburra Land Trust, the family clan structure, the Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement and the associations with country. I completed minor tasks within family that were not demanding but doing so developed rapport and informal credit in terms of reciprocal obligation. This form of ‘giving back’ was not only a necessary part of doing research in an Aboriginal community but also an essential component of ‘keeping face’ and avoiding ‘shame’ in the Aboriginal sense.

The issue of ‘keeping face’ or being appreciated for your input is an essential part of being able to proceed with research goals. Researchers cannot expect a community of people to give up time and information without recompense and a commitment that this information will be used appropriately. This is clearly articulated in the several national research guidelines to do with Aboriginal people (NHMRC, 2003; AIATSIS, 2012). The capacity to be seen as trustworthy requires prior experience with the community. For example, approximately five years ago I assisted with the development and completion of a community-based project of combined Woppaburra/ Batjala people on Kgari (Fraser Island). The rapport from that project was essential in the relationship with many current community members and it was used as a springboard to develop conversations and deeper understandings of the current situation of Woppaburra. While trust is an essential component, I gradually came to understand it is only a part of the requirements to conduct research in our community. In past years it was the provision of skilled labour but currently it was writing and organisational skills that needed to be utilised for community benefit concurrently with the research. Research protocols (NHMRC, 2003; AIATSIS, 2012) insisted that both the researcher and the community must benefit from the process of research and not only be promised a perceived future benefit from research outcomes.

As an insider there are broad implications for returning to a community to conduct research. There is a sense that many family and community obligations were forgone while completing formal education. Many Indigenous researchers in this position are left with the
perception from the community that there is an unpaid debt and it is common knowledge in the Aboriginal community that at some point you must give back. The understanding is that even though there has been benefits of education financially and through social standing, time required to nurture and maintain communal relationships has been lost. This may be part of the reason why many people return to country, to re-establish relationships and use acquired skills where possible to engage in tasks such as developing submissions, assisting with land claims or developing communities socially and economically. Although, time in the field has brought these issues to the surface for me as researcher, I was not fully conscious of the implications. On a family level there are general social expectations upon returning to country, on a community level workplace skills are made use of for various facets of development, and on a personal level resources and expertise are utilised. These together make for a more complicated interface between completion of research, community expectations and personal obligations.

3.3.4 Research participants.

The participants involved in this study were invited to participate using established university research protocols. These included the use of signed informed consent forms including an outline of the purpose of the study (see Appendices C & D). This included the right to anonymity if desired and ability to withdraw at any time without consequence. Participants who could give a deep overall perspective of the key facets of the case were selected. The objective was to use a representative group who could validly speak for the Woppaburra as a case study, hence one Elder from each family clan was selected with a gender balance. In addition, knowledgeable people who could add to the data set were also interviewed to get a comprehensive view of case. The Woppaburra Land Trust is a key institution representing all families and through this body each subject was selected by their own family to take part in a future interview. This selection meant that key Elders had authority to choose who should participate in the discussions. It is also noted that some participants were self-selected due to their status in the family as senior Elders. Uncle Vince Singleton is considered a ‘man of high degree’, or senior Elder, with direct links to the spirit world. Interviews were conducted at a location suitable to the subjects which, in some cases, was the local home environment, the Woppaburra homelands on Konomie.
3.3.5 Data collection.

The period of data collection in many case studies proceeds with reviewing literature while at the same time taking field notes, making diary entries and conducting and analysing interviews as a constant reflective activity. After a substantial review of literature, the initial data gathering was guided by the research questions of who the Woppaburra were culturally and historically. This involved archival searches at the Queensland State Archives, the Queensland State Library, Rockhampton Municipal Library and the Rockhampton Historical Society. These searches furnished data up to September, 1902, when the Woppaburra were forcibly removed from the Islands. Similar data sources were used to track the movements of the Woppaburra in the first half of the twentieth century. The current links to country are strongly influenced by private, community and governmental bodies. The collection of current documents, reports, artefacts, photographs and other items from these parties details the complex interactions between the Woppaburra and their country. This data, which loosely resembles three phases, will be tied together with interview data from the Woppaburra traditional custodians. The yarning session questions or discussion topics were drawn from the key research questions and developed in layman’s terms. The composition of the questions were semi-structured and open-ended to allow respondents to tell their story. All yarning\(^9\) sessions were face-to-face with a number of points covered in the form of a guided conversation. In many cases, sufficient data were received without the need either to cover all specific topics or to prompt extensively. The yarning sessions were recorded using digital audio equipment with a duration of 45-60 minutes. This was converted into text and analysed as detailed in the next section.

3.3.6 Data sources.

Case study method incorporates various sources of data as evidence. The following sources were used:-

Documentation- films, photos, letters, diaries, reports, articles, news clippings, meeting minutes and emails.

Archival records- maps, reports, drawings, lists, birth/ death/ marriage certificates.

\(^9\) The term yarning is common in Australian Aboriginal communities. Rather than a formal interview or request for data through questions, yarning takes more of a conversational approach where information must be shared between participants.
Interviews - individual face to face. These were based on a guided conversation rather than a formal questioning approach.

Direct observation - on-country events (using field notes), being present at Woppaburra Land Trust meetings, Native Title Meetings and Traditional Use of Marine Resource meetings.

Participant observation – this was completed as part of Woppaburra Land Trust and member of the Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement Committee (TUMRA). Field notes were taken during these observations.

Physical artefacts – Museum and artefacts associated with country. The physical artefacts were located in the Queensland Museum, Australian Museum, Dreamtime Cultural Centre, North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre and private collections.

The intention is to use the accepted case-study principles of data collection. These include the use of multiple sources of evidence; the creation of a case study database which includes data and reports of the investigator; and also the maintenance of a “chain of evidence” from the study questions through to final reporting (Yin, 2009, p.23).

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was completed using four general strategies espoused by Yin (2009).

A. Reliance on theoretical propositions – this is a tentative guide to retain some data and to ignore other, based on the initial how and why questions.

B. Development of case descriptions – this concerned with the use of a descriptive framework for organising the case study with framework ideas came from initial literature review.

C. Use of both qualitative and quantitative data – although qualitative data is central to the entire case through interview conversation analysis, it was also useful to have embedded units drawn from quantitative data also. This was used for constant comparison to validate data.

D. Examination of rival explanations – this approach was used in the above strategies to examine the option that the outcome may possibly be the result of other influences.

Upon completion of the oral interviews, the individual recordings were transcribed and presented in the simple form detailed by Fairclough (1992). The transcriptions enabled the transmission of raw data into conceptual categories or themes through mechanical reduction and analytic categorisation. This was completed using Strauss’ (1988) three forms of data coding, namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Firstly, open coding was used to reduce the
broad raw data into initial codes or categories. At this point memos, field notes and diaries were also read thoroughly and included in the categories by identifying critical terms. A specific software program was not be used for this analysis as the diversity of data through maps, pictures and artefacts would not allow such a simple textual analysis. Instead, further techniques such as: pattern matching which concerned the comparing of an empirically based pattern with a predicted one, and explanation building which was the building a number of causal links. Because narratives cannot be exact, the more useful interviews are those where discussions have highlighted some significant theory-based propositions. The final technique was a time-series analysis— the ability to observe changes through time (Yin, 2009). Due to the varying sources of data, a more intense critical eye was used to draw out abstract concepts deep within the data.

Secondly, the data were subject to axial coding where existing themes were the main focus of the analysis. At this point, some concepts were extended and others reduced. The data were analysed in terms of what possible linkages, conditions or interactions were occurring. Some categories were strengthened through sufficient data attributions and were then divided into sub-categories whereas others were insufficient to be of much use. The final pass through the data is described as selective coding, taking a closer look at the cases that clearly illustrated themes. Through this process, the text was critically examined as were also the other data sources illustrating these themes. It was apparent that a particular discourse was evident in the data. Discourses and recurring themes of family relationships and culture practices were highlighted. These were analysed within the context of a wider socio-cultural environment.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was sought and granted by the University Human Research Ethics Committee prior to conducting research. Ethical behaviour helped protect individuals, communities and the environment and had the potential to improve aspects of the social world (Israel & Hay, 2006, p. 2). A key aspect of this approval was informed consent. This involved the two requisite aspects, firstly that the subject is able to fully comprehend and understand the purpose of the consent and secondly, the ability to agree voluntarily (see Information Sheet and Informed Consent in Appendices A & B). The formal university approval was secondary to the community cultural approvals.
The study commenced with the completion of other work within the same community. This included a necessary informal approval by community Elders and members. Without this approval, the University ethics committee approvals are essentially ‘useless’ in terms of my ability to complete the study. The approval involved the necessary reciprocal obligation but also a periodic discussion over a protracted period of time. The time factor was required for Elders to discuss the details of the study with other relevant community members. Specific meetings concerning this were not held nor organised but a brief discussions occurred as Elders conducted their daily business. While this extended the timeframes for approval, it allowed community members to think critically about the project over a period of time and decide if the benefits of the study outweighed the costs.

Upon completion of this process, the majority of the community were aware of the purpose of my study and what was to be accomplished. Importantly, I was personally accepted and given approval to conduct the research in their community. The participation of many individuals was based on both this acceptance by Elders and on the other voluntary work that has been completed over a period of time. Finally, confidentiality and anonymity were assured if Elders and other participants preferred this. In the transcription of interviews, the Woppaburra community consented that all names be used, as the future study material may prove useful for the community. Audio recordings will be kept and returned to the community upon completion of the final thesis.

3.5.1 Consent to participate.

The participants signed an ‘Informed Consent’ form demonstrating that they have a sound understanding of the research. Participants were verbally advised that their contribution was voluntary and that they were not being coerced in any way to participate in this research. The participants were made aware that they will be identified by name and position in any future publications. People who decided not to participate were not penalised in any way. Furthermore, if they decided not to continue at any point through the process, they were advised that they would not be disadvantaged and were not required to give any explanation.

3.5.2 Risk.

Participation in this program posed no known risks for participants’ well-being.
3.5.3 Confidentiality.

Interview data in written/oral or audio form will be kept in the possession of the researcher. Electronic records were kept on a university computer locked in the researcher’s office and password-protected. Any printed copies of transcriptions and/or portable data transfer equipment were locked in a filing cabinet inside the investigator’s office. Participants will be referred to by name and specific identifying data will be used in the research report. All data will be kept in a locked cabinet in the investigator’s office with restricted access for a minimum of five years. Similarly, electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the development of case study method as a framework for the study and critical discourse analysis for understanding and deconstructing the interviews and archival data. The reliability and validity were discussed primarily in terms of the Indigenous protocols required to complete the study with valid and genuine data and the process of completing digitally recorded yarning sessions. Finally, the ethical considerations were discussed to indicate how the study was completed in line with accepted University Human Research Ethics protocols. In Chapter 4 I will discuss the first research question of who the Woppaburra were as a cultural group. The collected data was analysed using the methods described above and presented in a format acceptable to the Woppaburra community members.
Chapter 4
Woppaburra Culture

4.1 Introduction

Yolgnu Elder Marika-Munungiritj and Christie (1995) provided a narrative about the skills of ‘dhin’thun’ to “understand the clouds and the tides, the animal tracks and the flowers, the clan totems and the sacred designs, and the signs that have come from creation”. This is a description of a process of research for Aboriginal Australians as a way to find out about their culture. It is a process which has provided an Aboriginal paradigm about Lundu Nhama, with Lundu meaning ‘a journey’ or footsteps and Nhama meaning ‘to see’ (Marika-Munungiritj & Christie, 1995). Lundu Nhama can also mean companion or someone as close to you that is almost your reflection. Research into Aboriginal peoples’ epistemology and ontology is more than a recount of events; it is a means of identification of the “pattern and style of the past” and also about ways of knowing and being. Marika-Munungiritj and Christie (1995) explained it in these terms:-

First we must recognise what has gone before and know exactly how it fits in with the whole web of meaning which makes Yolgnu life ‘dhin thun’. Then we must identify the pattern and style of how it was performed in the past (Lundu Nhama). Literally we must ‘see the journey’ taken by our ancestors, and this involves identifying the land, and the people they have interacted with through the years, their motivations, their loyalties, their ideas, and everything else that has made them great…even if we can’t see the creators and ancestors, we can still see their Lundu exactly where they have been, what they have left behind, their signs and reflections, their images, and their way of life. We can see all those things because we can read them in the land, and they have been passed down to us through their songs (pp. 60-61).

Marika-Munungiritj and Christie (1995) spoke about the Yolgnu and explored the ideology of how something special happens when we can reproduce the lives of our ancestors in the same way that knowledge has been preserved for thousands of years. Similarly, the Woppaburra hold on to fragments of knowledge and practices passed on for thousands of years and this has enabled us to draw together a picture of who the Woppaburra were culturally.
Unlike the Yolgnu, the Woppaburra have been more deeply impacted upon by colonisation which has fractured spiritual bonds, scattered traditional artefacts and dislocated people socially. The racial interaction between the ‘white’ settlers and the Woppaburra is littered with acts of social dislocation and cultural genocide. Dodson (1995) spoke generally about the impact of Aboriginal people being removed from their ‘country’ to other areas and believed that,

…in all these situations people must live in close quarters with other groups who have also been alienated from their country. Immediately this happens, the established pattern of social equilibrium, the delicate and finely woven web which connects everyone to everyone in particular ways, is fundamentally disrupted. The hand of non-indigenous intervention has punched through the web, tearing and breaking the strands that tie people to country. This has hurt us so deeply that we struggle to repair the damage, to spin new strands to mend the hole in our web.... (p. 130)

Fortunately, sufficient evidence remains to reconstruct a case of who the Woppaburra are traditionally and of their enduring cultural connections to country. Empirical data, also known as ‘sense experience’, has been gathered based on observations in interview situations and also through primary sources such as interviews themselves and secondary written sources. Although they are based on the sensory experience of those who came before, they remain as what Kant (1781) termed posteriori knowledge and valid to construct an understanding of the Woppaburra’s experiences. We may struggle to repair the damage but we can collect these data or spin new strands to repair the web and restore social equilibrium by connecting with ancestors in a myriad ways (Dodson, 1995). The Yolgnu concept of knowing country by tracing an ancestor’s ‘Lundu’ or footprints resonated with the Woppaburra. Even if ancestors are not visible, we can see where they have been by what has been left behind and passed on through various media. This may be through both tangible and intangible evidence of song, dance and beliefs. In addition, through a contemporary case study method, we can also include social memory, storytelling and a broad range of pictures, archival documents, material culture and other evidence to trace their journey and understand who the Woppaburra were, culturally and historically.

In this chapter I have reported regarding who the Woppaburra were culturally. Information was drawn from a wide range of data sources in accord with Yin’s (2009) position
on appropriateness for case study research by uncovering historical accounts collected from across museum artefacts, personal interviews, pictures, documents, newspapers and archival research papers. These sources established the family groups of the Woppaburra using their traditional names and listing their spiritual beliefs, ceremonies, totems and cultural practices. These data have revealed specific information confirming that the Woppaburra had a reasonably isolated existence which produced a unique and intimate relationship with the land, sea, flora and fauna.

In the first section of the chapter I have identified the family groups who resided on the main two islands of Woppa and Konomie with a view to establishing kinship relationships and understanding the use of traditional names related to country. I will show how the use of racial terms and changing of names are part of colonising the Woppaburra and dissipating their cultural beliefs. Secondly, I will list a number of unique cultural beliefs and practices, creation stories and spiritual beliefs passed down through family members. I will draw together personal interview data and some archival data, such as sections of ethnography and research reports by Dr. Walter Roth in the period from 1895 to 1906. A number of these documents as well as personal interviews with Woppaburra Elders will reconstruct aspects of ceremony and practices including body scarring, body painting, the use of artefacts and dreaming stories, which all reside still within Woppaburra culture today. The range of data sources will literally paint a picture of who the Woppaburra were culturally.

In the second section of the chapter I have discussed how contemporary connections to country through engagement in cultural activities is inextricably linked to traditional practices of the past. Practices such as hunting, fishing, observation of wildlife, dance, ceremony and knowledge of plants had been key aspects of traditional life and a central part of human survival on Woppa and Konomie prior to the arrival of ‘white’ man. More importantly, knowledge of the dreamings, totemic ancestors and spiritual dimensions of the Woppaburra lifestyle were integral to those practising them and to today’s understanding of these. These knowledges and skills have been passed on to today’s Woppaburra but they are rarely spoken about in the formal educative sense. Rather, they are exhibited through various activities and social events conducted throughout the social lives of the Woppaburra. The knowledge and skills are tangible in the sense of day-to-day practices such as fishing, attendance at significant events, festivals, sea-
management and social interactions. Conversely, substantial knowledge and understanding are intangible, in the sense of oral transmission of knowledge of practices and related totems, through observation or through direct formal and informal learning practices. I have presented this section as an artistic representation of Elders’ ideas drawn from the interview data and field observations. First I will detail as best as possible within the constraints of the collected data, the genealogical connections.

4.2 Socio-cultural Explanations

4.2.1 Family groups.

Similar to other Aboriginal people, the Woppaburra have a strong link to each other through family ties and kinship relationships. The relationships between the original inhabitants and the Woppaburra today are important cultural moments that allow us to understand who the Woppaburra were, where they resided, their genders, their traditional names and family obligations. This importance is marked in Indigenous standpoint theory in Marika-Munungiritj and Christie’s (1995) specification that “literally we must ‘see the journey’ taken by our ancestors, and this involves identifying the land, and the people they have interacted with through the years” (p. 60). In this section I will trace the footprints of the Woppaburra ancestors and the journey they have taken through the colonial period. Interview data from Elders who participated in this study has indicated that written details concerning the family groups of the original inhabitants of Ganumi Bara are difficult to obtain or, for some periods, may not exist. This is specifically the case for the colonial period during the early to mid-nineteenth century and also for the majority of the twentieth century. In Chapter 3 I indicated that from an Indigenous standpoint, narratives are a prime data source, and discussions with Elders and respected Woppaburra uncovered a moderate amount of data through social memory. Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, February 23, 2013) stated that, “a lot of things we shared were not allowed to be spoken of... if we spoke Aboriginal names we always got into trouble, our language was not allowed to be spoken in school. Socially, other relatives were very guarded about information they would share about our ancestry”. The guarded nature of past conversations limited the extent of evidence from elderly Woppaburra, however historical letters and government reports were key sources of data that also helped identify the original inhabitants of the islands of Woppa and Konomie.
There are four very different documents that give some details of the Woppaburra. These are:- A Police Report, Morrisett (1890), Police Report, Casey (1900), Protectors Report, Meston (1902) and correspondence from an Aboriginal Reserve, Durundur (1903). The first specific written report about the Woppaburra which indicated gender, location and number of island residents was initiated by a letter dated 18 September, 1890 from Mr Thomas Hughes (possibly a local Rockhampton resident) to Admiral Lord Charles Scott concerning the plight of Aboriginal people on Woppa and Konomie. The admiral’s ship, The Orlando, was anchored only minutes from the islands on a visit to Rockhampton. Hughes (1890) stated that he saw “nothing short of a most glaring act of slavery on the Queensland coast…those women are kept toiling on for years and to years end at their laborious work” and requested a “speedy release of these enslaved females” (Hughes, T., September 18, 1890). After Lord Charles Scott received this letter, it was forwarded onto the Queensland Commissioner of Police, David Thompson Seymour, for action. Subsequently a report completed by Inspector of Police, Aulaire S. Morisset, (4 November, 1890) detailed that there were eight people on each of the Woppa and Konomie respectively. The details are listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Notes in report</th>
<th>Possible identity based on ages in Meston’s 1902 report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Keppel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>male ‘adult’</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>James (Jimmy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>females ‘adult’</td>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>Judy (40) &amp; others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>3 or 4</td>
<td>‘half-caste’</td>
<td>Albert (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Keppel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>male ‘adult’</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>*Ulowa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>females ‘adult’</td>
<td>19-40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>‘youth’</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(likely male)</td>
<td>*Paddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>‘maid’</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(likely female)</td>
<td>Annie or Nellie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1  Estimated Woppaburra Population in 1890. *Ulowa & Paddy (father & son).

Note. Table developed from information provided by Aulaire S. Morisset, Police Magistrate and Inspector of Police in Morisset, A.S. (1890, November 4). [Report to Home Secretary]. Queensland State Archives (Inward Correspondence, Series ID 5253). Brisbane, Australia.
Further information contained in the letter indicated that there were 1100 sheep on North Island and 1300 sheep on the South Island and each island had a ‘European overseer’ (employed by Robert Ross) who ensured the local people were “kindly treated except in the matter of clothing (chiefly bagging)”. The report also indicated that most of the estimated 50-60 people on the islands some six or seven years ago (ca.1883), had been “deported by the settlers on the islands”. Inspector Morisset’s final lines were to recommend regular inspections to make sure these “poor creatures are properly treated”. Given the similar capacity of both islands to maintain human habitation, it is likely that if the 1883 estimation of 50-60 inhabitants were still present, the remaining adult Islanders possibly were split evenly between the two islands for labouring purposes.

There is no indication of family groups, relationships, traditional names or island of origin in this account. It is clear from Thomas Hughes’ description that if the Woppaburra were used as ‘slave labour’ and moved between islands depending on the requirements of pastoralist Robert Ross, as a result accurate records of each of the Woppaburra’s island of origin are

![Image of a page from a report with handwritten entries]  

*Figure 4.1. Report from Acting Sergeant Casey to the Home Secretary, 1900. Information in this Report shows listing of Keppel Island residents using their traditional names. Taken from Casey, D. (1900, February 7). Police Report to Home Secretary. [Report]. (Inward Correspondence Series ID 5253). Queensland State Archives, Brisbane, Australia*
unlikely to have been made. Therefore, it is not possible to ascertain the specific island of origin of each of the Woppaburra. There was a further police report by Acting Sergeant Casey filed ten years later in 1900 (to Home Secretary, February 7) and a subsequent report written by Archibald Meston in 1902 (to Home Secretary, September 11) which give further details of traditional names but also no indication of their island of origin.

Figure 4.2. Report from Archibald Meston, the Southern Protector, showing details of traditional names and English names of Keppel Island residents, and descriptions of them as full or half-caste. Meston, A. (1902, September 11). Report to Home Secretary. [Report]. (Inward Correspondence Series ID 5253). Queensland State
**Table 4.2**  
*Comparison of Estimated Keppel Islander Population in 1900-1903*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Known as</th>
<th>Woppaburra name</th>
<th>Category Full-blood/half caste</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Native name</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oyster Maggie</strong> (dec. 1901 Siph)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>Woo-oon-yi</td>
<td>Full-blood</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goobooroo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old woman</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Annar-mannam</td>
<td>Weerobilling (father of Paddy)</td>
<td>Full-blood</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Lourie</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goobooroo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitty (Locke Hospital)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Kitty</td>
<td>Ooroong-oorann</td>
<td>Full-blood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Taken from Locke Hospital and onto Fraser Is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ann</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Mary Ann</td>
<td>Yamal-Minyan</td>
<td>Full-blood</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Mary Ann</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bunburri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellie</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Nelly</td>
<td>Ooroong-oorann</td>
<td>Full-blood</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Nellie</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bunburri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy (Locke Hospital)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>Gac-Kiyar</td>
<td>Full-blood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Taken from Locke Hospital and onto Fraser Is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annie</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>Oc-cooran</td>
<td>Full-blood</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>Alkirran</td>
<td>Bunburri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillie (adult)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Sally</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-blood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canoma</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Conomie</td>
<td>Boombilwan</td>
<td>Half-caste girl</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Conomie</td>
<td>Conomie</td>
<td>Woongoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lulo</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rowley</td>
<td></td>
<td>Half-caste girl</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Lula</td>
<td>Lula</td>
<td>Woongoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert (Father Robert Ross)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Mumkwarran</td>
<td>Half caste boy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Monquarran</td>
<td>Goobooroo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 'Full-blood', 'half-caste' and 'native' are derogatory terms in contemporary Australia. This table states the specific terminology used in the documents of the period.

11 Letter from J.R. Lucas to Meston dated 3 September 1902 indicated Annie is the partner of Ulowa.
| Name                | Age | Gender | Location       | Age | Gender     | Location
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fred (father Andy Lucas?)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Okyabinnie</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Woongoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessie Ann</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Half caste</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Goobooroo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May (Pure blooded, father Paddy)</td>
<td>2 yr &amp; 9 mths</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Half-caste</td>
<td>2 ½</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Goobooroo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Half-caste baby</td>
<td>4 mths</td>
<td>Girl (father Andy Lucas)</td>
<td>Goobooroo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Full-blood</td>
<td>4 ½</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Text also indicates one ‘full-blooded’ girl 4 ½ years not in list. Information collated from Report By Acting Sergeant Casey February 7, 1900, Report from A. Meston to Home Secretary, September 11, 1902 & Durundur Reserve Correspondence, June 6, 1903.*
Newspaper reports and three other related documents of the day give further information of the people who were on Woppa just prior to the turn of the twentieth century. The *Morning Bulletin* (27 May 1896, p. 5) advised there were “seventeen aborigines on the South Island - three men, about a dozen women, and two or three children”. A further newspaper report in 1897 advised there were “nineteen in number” brought to Emu Park for Queen Victoria’s Jubilee celebration (*The Capricornian*, 31 July, 1897). Apart from newspapers, the remaining documents that give specific names are a list compiled by an Emu Park police officer, Acting Sergeant Casey dated 7 February 1900, secondly, the report of Archibald Meston, Protector of Aborigines to the Home Secretary 11 September 1902, and finally, correspondence dated 30 June 1903 advising removals to Durundur (near Woodford). The correspondence shows the names of the last surviving Woppaburra who were transferred to the Durundur police paddock near Woodford. The lists are reasonably consistent across the 3 ½ years. However, as they do not contain accurate personal information, the alignment of each person in terms of names, ages and family links is problematic. Ages and spelling of names varies between each account so the table is an estimate of the people who were living on Woppa from 1900 to 1902 and subsequently transferred to Durundur in 1903.

The right-hand column of the table includes a reference to ‘class’ which indicated a type of family, clan classification or moiety. The column highlights three terms - Goobooroo, Bunburri and Woongoo. The terms are not a ‘class’ by gender nor age nor immediate family association, however, given the British occupation of India since 1858 and influence on the ‘caste’ system, it may indicate a rigid social mechanism for control of Aboriginal people. The term ‘caste’ was used throughout the colonial period in Australia when referring to Aboriginal people, and the associated principles of this system in India did not allow economic or social advancement of the Indian people over many generations. It remains unclear if the significance of this classification is based on ‘race’ in these documents or whether it was a simple grouping mechanism of the Gubbi Gubbi Aboriginal people who resided in the Durundur area (Horton, 1994). However, interview data from Elders indicated that the classification system is not part of traditional family system of Ganumi Bara, or of the wider Darambal nation. Evidence
from archival data from W.H. Flowers (c. 1875) recorded the existence of moieties or kinship relationships. Flowers (c. 1875) explained that there were two male divisions - Youngeru and Witteru, with women being referred to as Youngeruan and Witteruan (the addition of ‘-an’ denoting the female gender). A Youngeru must take a Witteruan as a wife and a Witteru must take a Yongeruan. Flowers (c. 1875) also goes further to explain that these divisions are broken further into four subdivisions being Kurpal, Kuialla, Karilbura and Munal. The following table outlines these relationships.

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clan Classification or Moiety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurpal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karilbura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuialla</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These traditional classifications are for determining safe social relationships in areas with small gene pools.

Flowers (c. 1875), explained that the elaborate and complex relationships were designed to avoid closely related people from marrying. It appears that the Darambal nation and the Woppaburra clan of Ganumi Bara were acutely aware of the implications of close relationships in such a small gene pool. This information is absent from the three amalgamated reports above and is not repeated in subsequent documents. The traditional kinship relationships, in terms of concerns about small gene pools are no longer relevant because of the diaspora. Nevertheless, Woppaburra Elders considered the lineage of ancestors to be important culturally to determine family lines and responsibilities today. This is currently relevant to land responsibilities such as the ongoing Native Title claim by the Woppaburra.

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12 This information should be used with caution, as the original manuscripts are not available. Current copies located in the Rockhampton Historical Society have been typed from original manuscripts hence accuracy is not known.
The current family groups identified as Woppaburra for the purposes of the Native title claim have drawn their heritage from the list below (Minutes Native Title Meeting 27-28 July, 2013). The four family groups were listed as:

- Yulowa ‘Weerobilling’
- Nellie ‘Oorang-ooran’
- Oyster Maggie
- Franny Lohse (Fred Ross Family)

The first family group listed is that from Yulowa (Ulowa), aged 65 when taken from Woppa. Interview data from today’s Elders and archival evidence always considered Yulowa to be the senior Elder and most respected person of the Woppaburra clan. It is likely that he was married to the woman identified as ‘Old Woman’ in Table 4.2. The movement of the lady known as ‘Old Woman’ is not clear but there is a reference to an individual likely to be her in *The Brisbane Courier*. It noted that an old woman who was “removed about 12 years ago, with her husband and family from Keppel Island” has died (*The Brisbane Courier*, 18 September 1913, p.6).

‘Old Woman’ and her husband are also the parents of Paddy as noted in the table. Although listed as ‘full blood’, it is unclear if Kitty, Maryann, Nellie, Judy, Annie and Sally are other siblings or if their parents had passed away at this stage. Uncle Vince Singleton advised that Yulowa and Oyster Maggie were brother and sister (personal communication,
June 16, 2012). Members from this family line have recently been identified by Aunty Frances Gala (personal communication, April 30, 2016) as a fifth family group. This has been discussed in the Native Title Anthropological Report (QSNTS, 2013) and confirmed in a recent letter (QSNTS, 2016).

The second family group identified by Queensland South Native Title Services is ‘Nellie’. Aunty Gwen Muir (aka Aunty Nellie) stated that her mum “was a baby when they took them off the island” (personal communication, April 22, 2013). Annie is listed in the table as being four months old upon removal and hence the family group is identified by Annie’s mother Nellie, aged approximately 28 at this time. Aunty Gwen has detailed some of the life of her mother. After being removed from Woppa, Nellie grew up with the family name ‘Levelle’ and her marriage certificate lists Dick Moffat as her husband (personal communication, April 22, 2013). Annie, the young daughter born on the island grew up to marry a man with the surname Smith and Aunty Gwen Muir (nee Smith) was their youngest daughter. She stated that, “mum never spoke to me” and she saw little of her mother, as Annie Smith was confined to the Leprosarium on Peel Island until it closed in 1959 (personal communication, April 22, 2013). Aunty Gwen Muir stated how children were not allowed on the island and her mother would “ask the ambulance driver, can you drive past that street because my daughter will be standing there waiting, and I’d be waiting on the corner there to give her a hug and talk to her” (G. Muir, personal communication, April 22, 2013). This limited contact left Aunty Gwen with few details of her heritage and family background.

Aunty Gwen Muir stated, “she [her mother Annie] never talked about the island you know, Keppel”. In fact several statements indicate her limited knowledge of the islands such as:- “I don’t know…whether they painted themselves up”, “I’ve never noticed they had markings on them”, “I don’t know if they had ceremonies or gatherings” and “I thought I was from New Zealand” (personal communication, April 22, 2013). This is as a result of the limited contact she had with her mother in the early years. Her mother passed away in “1960-61” and she only found out in the 1970s from a young Alby (Albert) Ross that she was from Ganumi Bara (Aunty Gwen Muir, personal communication, April 22, 2013). Aunty Gwen married a man by the name of Muir and
has had several children who live today between Rockhampton and Brisbane. The path of each descendant, though varied and disjointed, is a part of a cohesive whole that lets us understand who the Woppaburra were and are culturally. The footprints or the journey add to the narrative of how the culture of the Woppaburra has developed over time.

The third apical ancestor is Oyster Maggie, named so due to her dexterity in shucking oysters. Aunty Christine Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) advised that Oyster Maggie’s brother was Uncle Jimmy (James). Given Uncle Vince Singleton’s (personal communication, June 16, 2012) assertion that Oyster Maggie and Ulowa were sister and brother, Uncle Jimmy may have been a third sibling or, more likely, Oyster Maggie and Ulowa were husband and wife. Furthermore, although James or Uncle Jimmy is not listed on the Removals Table, it is likely he had been removed previously or had passed away prior to the final removals of inhabitants in 1902. A visit to the Queensland Museum in 2012 uncovered a breast plate inscribed, ‘King Jimmy of Conomie’ which validated his presence on Konomie (L. Coghill, personal communication, February 12, 2012). Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) and Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, February 23, 2013) agree that Oyster Maggie was their apical ancestor. Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication February 23, 2013) and Uncle Vincent Singleton (personal communication, June 16, 2012) stated that Oyster Maggie had four children named Albert Ross, Conomie Ross (possibly fathered by Wyndham), Jessie ‘Keppel’ Ross and Judy. There is some inconsistency here, as Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) believed her grandfather’s (Albert’s) mother was Judy, listed as being aged 40 in 1902. The first three children above are listed as being removed from Woppa in 1902. Uncle Vince Singleton (personal communication, June 16, 2012) advised that a second person named Judy died when she was a baby and hence there is no written record available of her removal. Albert Ross-Peters (aka Munkwarran, Monquadum) was 14 when removed from his homeland and he was transferred to Durundur. Information in Table 4.2 indicates he was 12 years old 1900 and 14 years old in the Meston report of 1902.
In addition, Conomie Ross, the supposed second child of Oyster Maggie, was also removed to Woodford and onto Fraser Island and married a Batjala\(^{13}\) man Charles Richards and had several children. These were: - Charlie, Cyril, Ethel, Percy, Frank, Heather, Kenny and Susan (Aunty Chrissy Doherty, personal communication April 11, 2013). The family grew up primarily around Brisbane and coastal Queensland and Aunty Conomie Richards passed away in 1973 at the age of 88. The last sister in this family group was Jesse ‘Keppel’ Ross. Granny Jesse (aka Pearly) was taken with several Batjala people from Bogimbah Creek, probably on closure of the Fraser Island mission in 1904 (Roth, 1905, p.13), under promise of seeing movies at Hervey Bay but was instead transferred to Yarrabah Mission near Cairns (Uncle Vincent Singleton, personal communication, June 16, 2012). In 1910 Jesse married Luke Stanley, a ‘Bindal\(^{14}\)’ man from Townville and the family spent their formative years in Yarrabah. They had six children Muriel, Esme, Cornelius, Joan\(^{15}\), Charles and Luke (all deceased). In 1958 the family moved to Bessy Point and onto Cairns in 1966 where many of the family still live. In 1972, Jesse ‘Keppel’ Ross, saw her sister Conomie for the first time since her own removal from Fraser Island but unfortunately did not see her brother Albert who had passed away in 1963. Jesse ‘Keppel’ Ross, named due to her origin, passed away in 1980.

Franny Lohse- (mother of Fred Ross) was the final family to have their claim to Native Title recognised. It is unclear on Table 4.2 who the parents of Fred Ross may be but Aunty Frances Gala believes her grandfather Fred Ross’s father was Charles Ross and his mother may be Fanny Singh (personal communication, April 23, 2013) which is at odds with the Woppaburra Native Title Connection Report (2016). She believed Grandfather Fred Ross’ mother is a Woppaburra woman but his father may be of Pakistani or Indian heritage. A further inconsistency is the belief that Fred Ross was the younger brother of Albert Ross (Aunty Frances Gala, personal communication, April 23, 2013) whereas two other interviewees believed him to be a nephew of Albert Ross and was commonly referred to as ‘my little Darambal’ (Uncle Vince Singleton, personal communication, June 16, 2012; Aunty Vanessa Kirk, personal communication, February

\(^{13}\) Batjala’ is the Aboriginal language group around Hervey Bay and on Fraser Island.
\(^{14}\) ‘Bindal’ is the Aboriginal language group around Townsville.
\(^{15}\) Joan is mother of interview participant Uncle Vincent Singleton.
23, 2013). Given the lack of specific archival data and varied social memory it may not be possible to know conclusively the family relationships at that time. What is likely is that Fred Ross is a Woppaburra man taken to Fraser Island in September, 1902 and later to Hervey Bay when the Bogimbah Creek Mission on Fraser Island closed in 1904 (F. Gala, personal communication, April 23, 2013). The majority of the family lines of Albert and Fred Ross remained around Hervey Bay from the 1930s onwards (Aunty Linette Russ, personal communication, June 5, 2013).

4.2.2 Traditional names (people).

Naming protocols that exist in the Woppaburra culture were informed by relationships to geographic locations, flora and fauna, people and concepts of ownership both politically and economically. Many Western families name their children after the parents, reigning monarch or respected friends or relatives. The Woppaburra have a more cultural association and named their offspring after natural features or totemic ancestors. The picture below shows a historic photo of the Woppaburra in 1898 prior to final removal from Ganumi Bara. The back of the photo indicated the names of ‘Mugga’ an elderly gentleman and ‘Konomie’ a young girl. Mugga is the name of the humpback whale, while Konomie (meaning North Wind) is the name of Northern most Island. Uncle Mugga was seen to have the characteristics of the humpback - powerful, graceful and at home in the ocean. Aunty Konomie was named after the island where she was born as an association to where she belonged. Aunty Frances Gala (personal communication, April 23, 2013) pointed out that naming was not just allocating a simple relational term but recording a deeper spiritual connection which was maintained throughout their life.
In recent decades, the Woppaburra have returned to the cultural practice of using traditional names. Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) proudly takes the name, ‘Darlutta’, as a storyteller, and her sister Linda’s name, ‘Dulling’, means a type of nautilus shell. Aunty Christine Doherty stated that the oldest five of her grandmother Conomie’s children (her Uncles and aunts) had traditional names: - Aunty Ethel (Bittabung), Uncle Cyril (Baboot - morning/dawn), Uncle Charlie (Degulling) but could not recall the others at that point (personal communication, April 11, 2013). When asked about these names she explained how as Aboriginal people, we live in two worlds but “those traditional names place me and our connection to country in my heart. It connects us all the time and I think that’s just part of our culture. It keeps us linked” (Aunty Chrissy Doherty, personal communication, April 11, 2013). Aunty Christine Doherty goes on to say that after removal from Woppa in 1902, the “second genocide was loss of culture and language because they [the Woppaburra] weren’t allowed to use either”. The use of traditional names was ‘outlawed’ and waned over time but is now becoming widespread in the current generation of Woppaburra children. My grandmother’s name was Kalulu, meaning the bottle brush from the Banksia, and my nieces have the names Mara, brown hawk, Cooloola, bottle brush, and Ahri, sun. The protocol of naming people with traditional language names links the language with people and serves as a useful signpost of the cultural journey to understand who the Woppaburra were culturally.
The question of who the original inhabitants were as part of a cultural mosaic has been partially answered but it is difficult to be conclusive. Unfortunately, many documents have been destroyed by floods or remain incomplete due to the absence of Aboriginal names and dates which were considered to be less important at the turn of the twentieth century. Also, some areas in Queensland were not visited by the protectors to record the living situation or well-being of Aboriginal people under their care. The recording of such visits gives tangential evidence of how the Woppaburra lived and some traditional names and practices. For example the Report of the Northern Protector of Aboriginals for 1899 (Roth, 1900) indicated no visits to the Rockhampton region in that year (p. 12). In addition, islands are typically more remote and a lack of water transport exacerbated the difficulty of visits. The original family groups listed in archival documents and corroborated by family interviews give a reasonably complete picture of the family groups just prior to removals in September, 1902 and since then, the current locations of many descendants. The traditional names specifically give a connection to culture through language and as Marika-Munungiritj and Christie (1995) believed, if they followed the path of their ancestors they could find evidence from their travels which demonstrated who their ancestors were and who they are now in a cultural sense. The journey includes having time on traditional homelands and acquiring knowledge of the dreamings, body markings and totemic relationships, which are important cultural aspects. The following section details information on the uniqueness of the Woppaburra in these areas.

4.2.3 On country observations.

Participation in the Woppaburra Cultural Festival from 10-13 July, 2014 was an opportunity to observe the Woppaburra re-engage with cultural activities and ‘speak’ with ancestors. An indication of its significance as a data source is shown in Yin’s (2009) statement that it is useful to complete participant observation as it “covers events in real time [and] it covers the context of the case” (p. 102). The participant observations allowed for the witnessing and recording of some of the cultural connections spoken about in the interview data, but as yet never before observed in practice. Upon arrival, Uncle Vince Singleton proclaimed to an apparently empty beach on Konomie, “Old
people I’m back”. The greeting was not permission for entry or a request. Rather, it was a statement of respect and acknowledgement of the ancestral spirits of those who had lived on the islands across the generations, those who have borne the brunt of frontier conflict and died on their homeland. As the Elder stepped ashore, the sand filled the gaps between the toes and the water enveloped his being. On each visit to country, on several occasions during the stay and on leaving, reference was made to spiritual ancestors still present on the islands. The cultural connection to country and what that means for all Woppaburra is an elusive concept to grasp and to articulate to the layperson. Each individual among the Woppaburra has not dissimilar experiences to the others. My observations indicated that each member had quiet moments of reflection, and each person shared in lively discussions and laughter (observation, July 10, 2014).

Over the course of a few days, there were visits to two burial sites, meetings regarding cultural heritage and traditional use of resources, and family bonds were strengthened. Throughout the few days, cultural protocols dictated the activities that were to be carried out and the Elders and clan members who were responsible for them. Activities commenced with an acknowledgement to ancestors not unlike a church service paying homage to a respected deity, saints or angels. The divine nature of the meetings indicated a respect for past ancestors who also are considered present in some sense. It is a solemn procedure not observed away from traditional country. My observations were that the majority of decisions were made by consensus although senior Elders’ contributions were given more weighting than those of non-Elders (observation, July 10, 2014). The process of discussion was governed by cultural protocols passed down over generations. The process of conducting business on country is a complex social and cultural process rather than a detached formal process of knowledge acquisition alone in the Western educative sense. It did not mimic the Western process of education but it was observed to be important as a clan-based social learning process through observing the ways of the older people.

My observations noted that those of the younger generation were involved in a process of attending family gatherings as often as possible and were required to observe and acquire knowledge and understanding over time. The youth did not ask probing
questions or have the need to scrutinise practices; rather, there was an acceptance of what was. This Aboriginal ‘way of being’ (Martin, 2003b) has been observed in the history of the Woppaburra; however, to reflect upon and retain a written form of record of who the Woppaburra are requires some form of scientific enquiry. As a participant observer, researcher and Woppaburra man, I was bound by protocols which avoid direct questioning of this process as it would contravene protocols of respect and propriety to do so. The actions observed were Aboriginal ‘ways of knowing’ (Martin, 2003b) and are part of an Indigenous standpoint described in Chapter 3. Martin (2003b) stated that “no one person, or entity knows all, but each has sets of knowledges to fulfil particular roles” which occurs in certain contexts in certain times (p.9). Woppaburra Elders insisted that many issues do not require deep probing and I accepted there was avoidance of some knowledges. Understanding the process of knowledge acquisition was an integral part of the cultural processes of the Woppaburra clan.

4.2.4 Taboos and views on knowledge.

While seeking to explore who the Woppaburra were culturally, notions of identity and knowledge about the Woppaburra clan raised questions about how we might best understand the Woppaburra through scientific enquiry. Interviews as a data collection source proved inadequate in some areas. For example, the concept that the Woppaburra clan were just simple ‘hunter-gatherer’ people needed to be scrutinised from everyday tasks to the complex construction of material culture. But the notion about simply living your life without scrutiny of specific cultural aspects of daily life was present in participants’ responses. Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) stated,

…but you see we didn’t even think to ask, being who we are... we just didn’t think to ask those sorts of questions. It’s sort of like disrespect... you didn’t ever ask their age, I didn’t even know my grandfather’s age.

Observations at the Woppaburra cultural festival indicated that there was an acceptance of some knowledge (or knowledge avoidance) such as refraining from eating certain sea creatures, or having a feeling of irrelevance about other knowledges such as age (observations, July 10-13, 2014). To a younger Woppaburra male interviewer
exploring cultural knowledge, the responses were not that the current Woppaburra Elders
dare not be asked about certain issues or ideas but that such an issue had no relevance in
their cultural being. A Western man will not generally ask a lady’s age out of politeness,
but it appears that a Woppaburra person would not think to ask at all, even with full
knowledge of Western concepts of social behaviours. This presents a dilemma where
some cultural beliefs are discussed based on events of the past whereas others were never
questioned. Hence reasons behind many actions become difficult to describe because of
social agency. A few examples may suffice.

Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) explained:

Sometimes there was a reason like why they say the boogie man, we used to say
Mook Mook, there are other names as well... was because when the sun goes
down and it was getting late you should have been home anyhow. So if you stay
out too long and it gets dark someone will get you or grab you or something, you
know? So there was a reason behind these sorts of things. You just don’t do it...
like stepping over the legs you weren’t, I suppose to do it, it was bad luck. There
could be something behind it but I suppose you didn’t question it. Just don’t do
it... you just wouldn’t do it.

Aunty Frances Gala (personal communication, April 23, 2013) also explained
how “you were never allowed to never step over someone’s legs, it was a big no no …
[and] they never take a pregnant woman out in a boat, it was bad luck”. Aunty Chrissy
Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) also recounted a number of childhood
taboo. We were never allowed to drag a stick behind us in case we brought something
bad home. We were told “don’t leave hair laying around, don’t leave your brushes.”
Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) explained that hair was
important as it was used for medicine and healing but also as an item for the featherfoot
or kadaitja man.

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16 Kadaitja man and featherfoot are common Aboriginal terms which Western observers might refer to as a
medicine man or one who deals in ‘black magic’. Roth (1903) referred extensively to this concept in the
publication “Superstition, Magic and Medicine. Also Elkin (1994) discussed these concepts extensively in
Aboriginal Men of High Degree: Initiation and Sorcery in the World’s Oldest Tradition.
4.2.5 Cultural artefacts and spiritual association.

The use of physical artefacts as a data source gives “an insight to cultural features” (Yin, 2009, p. 102). Participant observations and interviews conducted at a visit to the Australian Museum in Sydney on 18 February, 2013 proved to be valuable in building the case. A group of Woppaburra were allowed to view and manipulate several artefacts collected by Dr. Walter Roth in the 1890s and later sold to the Museum. A number of physical artefacts were presented. These included grave dolls, a length of braided human hair, nets, harpoons, a canoe, jewellery, an oyster shucking tool and fish hooks. Two items in particular, the grave dolls and hair, invoked emotional responses when touched, as if a dormant spirit had been re-awakened. At this visit to the Australian Museum Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, February 18, 2013) spoke of a spiritual connection through artefacts:

… these are Kum-ma and they were made from the um... roots of the... the grass tree and they were painted with ochre, you can still see the traces of the red ochre. They’re our ceremonial colours, red and white ochre. Our young girls were given these as a birth rite, they are a women’s object and they carried 'em like babies and it was a charm to have a lot of babies and it also then became a burial doll because when Roth desecrated our burial caves these were everywhere and these went with their women when they passed away, so they're very spiritual to our women, very, very special, they were initiation, charm, fertility and burial. They are very sacred objects.

A second item was a length of plaited human hair measuring approximately 1cm in diameter and 2-3 metres long. Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) stated how the traditional use of hair was for healing and current taboos associated with hair show how this and other aspects of spirituality and deep beliefs have been perpetuated over time and remain an important part of Woppaburra cultural traditions.

There are deep beliefs and an acceptance of social practices that relate to spirituality, and in many cases an avoidance of questioning of such practices. In one sense it might be explained by the strict behaviour codes but the interview data indicated
that most Woppaburra believe it was an accepted part of life and it did not require explanation. Current questioning raised ideas that have not previously been raised. During interviewing, many participants would stop briefly to try to think about social practices and why they happened. Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) gave another example of a spiritual presence while walking with her grandfather as a child.

We used to walk down at nights to pick up my sister, … And that’s the time you saw things when you were walking along and he [grandfather] would be saying things or … talking to somebody… he would say, I know, its ok or something. Yeah okay, she’s alright, you’re alright, there is somebody here. You know, you weren’t scared or anything. Maybe that was a way of not being scared, you know a way of making you feel safe… you know?

The data showed that cultural and spiritual ideas permeated the Woppaburra’s being, traditionally as well as in contemporary times. Grandfather Albert Ross was taken from the Konomie in 1902 (Meston, 11 September 1902) but maintained a link to ancestors and the Woppaburra spiritual beliefs. The data showed how these were passed on to family members through actions, events, narratives and observations. Other cultures may refer to these ideas as myths however Woppaburra avoided this terminology and instead believed spiritual beliefs to be an integral part of who they were culturally. The Woppaburra referred to these as part of their dreaming.

4.2.6 Dreamings.

‘The dreaming’ was a term applied by the anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner in his 1956 essay, “The Dreaming” (2009) as the closest analogy he could make to Aboriginal concepts of creation and spirituality. As a fundamental aspect of culture, the concept of the dreaming adds to an understanding of who the Woppaburra were as a cultural group. Similar to other Aboriginal peoples, the Woppaburra believed that the creation beings in the dreaming created the foundation for the human socio-cultural experience. The spiritual beings were responsible for the creation of human beings, social protocols and all of the natural environment. This was a holistic view of the physical, social and spiritual worlds. The Woppaburra believe in a creation spirit named ‘Bayaami’ (Uncle
Vince Singleton, personal communication, June 15, 2012), however, this is not a traditional Woppaburra name as it has also been used throughout the east coast of Australia to refer to creation spirits.

A specific name for a creation spirit is not the most important factor but rather the belief in the concept of a higher power responsible for the formation of Woppaburra country and people. A central concept of the dreaming is the period of creation which is an interrelated event between higher beings, people and the land. Berndt and Berndt (1983) explain it this way, “It is associated with spirit beings who are eternal and enshrined in mythology. Such beings are shape-changing, either in human or some other natural form…” (p. 57). As these beings travelled they created the landscape, flora, fauna and human beings. They also set the cycle of seasons (Aunty Vanesa Kirk, personal communication, February 23, 2013), life and death cycles and passed on the precise rules by which a clan should function. This linkage between the spiritual, human and the natural world gives some sense of how, when describing a non-human feature, it can convey the concept of personifying or humanising of all natural environmental features.

The Woppaburra believed Bayaami and other creation beings were responsible for the creation of human and other species who populated the island environment (Uncle Vincent Singleton, personal communication, June 15, 2012). Some of these beings were transformed into sites where their spirits now remain or left sites that are now commemorated as part of their wanderings. Aunty Glenice Croft (personal communication, June 21, 2016) referred to the “need to map songlines and dreaming paths” for the Woppaburra. This suggests that there are myriad sites across Ganumi Bara that remain as evidence of this time. Berndt and Berndt (1996) stated that in these cases “a part of their spiritual substance remains there… and what they left is regarded as having a crucial significance for the present day” (p. 137). So the linkages between these ancestral sites and current people are as important today as they were thousands of years ago.

Marika-Munungiritj and Christie (1995) believed that if we follow these dreaming tracks we can find evidence of who the Woppaburra were culturally. For example, the spirit beings nominated birthing areas “which are important for … the birth of Granny
Conomie” (Uncle Vincent Singleton, personal communication, June 16, 2012). The sites are considered as alive spiritually today as they had been in the past and their influence is considered to be eternal, being ritually validated. While there is a series of connected sites, the areas in-between sites or water holes are also significant. The Woppaburra believe “there is so much on those islands, it’s so powerful” (Aunty Glenice Croft, personal communication, June 21, 2016). For the Woppaburra, songs and stories which gave information about travelling between sites were expressed through ‘song lines’ or ‘dreaming tracks’.

For many Aboriginal groups the ‘song lines’ follow valleys or ridges where there is an interconnected series of waterholes with spiritual resting places (Kerwin, 2010). The Woppaburra resided on a series of islands and travelled between islands and sometimes to the mainland during seasonal changes which made the site connections a series of land as well as water crossings. The narratives and songs connecting sites are based on seafaring activities and sea creatures that inhabit these waters. Aunty Nyoka Hatfield as an Elder of the Darambal nation spoke about one of these narratives recently. Aunty Nyoka Hatfield (2016) told of a dreaming story about several ‘painted up’ hunters, in two separate canoes, who speared a huge dugong in the waters between Corio Bay and Ganumi Bara. It was around a reef that was the resting place of a creation spirit and they were specifically told not to hunt there. The dugong dragged them to the reef and a shark pulled them down until they drowned, rolling them under the reef. Their colours were washed off and were dispersed over the white reefs to make them the colours they are today. The men were then turned into large shells and can be seen occasionally when they wash up on to the sea shore. Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) believed that underneath the surface narrative, the stories are about social taboos, following directions and staying away from important sites.

Many of these stories and songs have been lost, but historic documents list some unusual practices that give further insight into the Woppaburra’s dreamings as part of their cultural practices. Roth (1898) described how he observed the Woppaburra travelling between islands in an unusual swimming action with a log. There is evidence
of the use of canoes (Roth, 1898) from ‘scar trees’ still in existence on the islands today, so the log crossings are possibly part of a ritual dreaming path.

Ritual dreaming paths must be maintained even though traditional canoes had been confiscated\(^{17}\) or destroyed. Roth (1898, p. 13) recorded a description made by the then lessee, Mr. Lucas.

Having floated a Pandanus log, from 14-16 feet [5m] in length and about 6” [15cm] in diameter, the leader of the gang gets into the water and guiding the extremity of the timber with one hand (say, the left) swims along with the other, the right the next one, swimming behind, holds onto number ones [sic] loins with his right hand and propels himself with his left; number three holds onto number two with his left hand and swims with his right; and so on alternatively [sic]; the most skilful part of the manoeuvre would appear to lie in the handling of the log so as to prevent it impeding the progress of those behind: when the leader gets tired his place is taken by another, and if all require a few minutes rest, they have the log to hold on to.

Roth (1898) also stated how, “W.T. Wyndham remembers these Aboriginals [sic] paddling from island to island on these logs” (p. 10). Wyndham was purported to be Woppa’s first ‘white’ occupant in 1884.

As the first purported ‘white’ occupant he observed the use of canoes, travel by Pandanus (Pandanus solmslaubachii) logs and swimming between the islands. These archival data sources give some further support that such crossing, by various means, may possibly be simple travel for fresh water and resources or a section of an ancestral dreaming track. If this is the case, it is likely that there

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\(^{17}\) A Keppel Island canoe was part of the artefacts W.E.H. Roth sold to the National Museum in 1905.
were stories and songs associated with these crossings. Unfortunately, there is scant evidence to suggest they were recorded but interview data indicated that they were observed by descendants (Uncle Mackie Burns, personal communication, April 23, 2013). The dreaming stories and Elders’ recall of events through the interview data coupled with archival data give some understanding of the spiritual dimension of the Woppaburra culture through the dreaming.

The examples above give a rudimentary understanding of the Woppaburra’s spiritual culture. Dodson (1997), a traditional owner in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, believed that, “to understand our law, our culture and our relationship to the physical and spiritual world, you must begin with the land...everything about Aboriginal society is inextricably interwoven with and connected to the land” (p. 41). However, this is not enough to explain the position of the Woppaburra nation as they are people strongly dependent on the sea for survival. The late Uncle Vince Singleton (personal communication, June 16, 2012) and former Chair of the Woppaburra Traditional Use of Marine Resources Committee, described a strong association with the extensive Woppaburra sea country, the marine creatures and water features. Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, February 23, 2013) added to this by including the sky and aquifers holding water below the ground. So, while land has always been considered to be inextricably linked to Aboriginal culture, ‘country’ is a more accurate word and concept to use which includes air, land and sea country including all flora and fauna. The all-inclusive country concept demonstrates the lack of separation between these areas geographically and goes some way to explaining this holistic concept. However, the linkages to country through spiritual or non-tangible connections are sometimes difficult to explain but there are sufficient tangible cultural links to demonstrate how this might become clearer. Links to country can be seen through a number of different markers or identifiers that the Woppaburra used. These are through traditional ceremony, body paintings, body scarring and totems.

4.2.7 Body painting, body scarring and ceremony, adornments and totems.

Discussion around Aboriginal dreaming links the physical and spiritual worlds through intricate and complex relationships. Many traditional groups have passed down
knowledge and understanding through social memory or ongoing experiences through to the present day. With the removal of the Woppaburra from their homeland in the early part of the twentieth century, a continuous physical connection with the islands was severed. Various aspects of customs such as body paintings and their relationship to the dreaming have been almost lost or only partially recalled. The pieces remaining have been gathered and reassembled to reconstruct this facet of who the Woppaburra were culturally. Yin’s (2009) case study method allows the use of photographs as a data source to further explain who the Woppaburra were culturally. A close inspection of a photograph taken by the Protector of Aborigines W.E. Roth around 1898 (Figure 4.4.) shows some interesting aspects of Woppaburra culture. The men have a series of vertical lines moving up the torso and around their shoulders and down their arms to the wrists. This is also evident on the women and children in the photo. As it is a black and white photo without caption it is unclear if the painting was for ceremonial purposes or a constructed event but further archival evidence gives other details of this body painting design.

### 4.2.7.1 Body painting.

Protector Walter Roth (1898, p. 39) in his report to the Commissioner of Police in July 1898 elaborated on the body painting features. “The Keppel Islanders often paint the trunk and limbs in vertical bands of alternate red and white stripes (both colours found on the island) on front and back, with the head entirely raddled.” Roth also made an illustration which shows this pattern similar to the photograph described. The description likely refers to red ochre and gypsum found on the island which would be consistent with this colour scheme. The term ‘entirely raddled’ refers to the full reddish colouring over the hair, neck and face. It has often been described that the Woppaburra had ‘reddish-brown hair’ (Rowland, 1979) however it is likely that the hair was coloured by red ochre to give this appearance. The colouring is one feature, but the reason behind the vertical line design was unknown until my observations of the baleen, and more specifically, the throat grooves of the humpback whale. The painted lines observed by Roth (1898) mimic almost perfectly the whale throat. This suggests a direct connection of the Woppaburra
and their symbolic representation of the whale, given that Mugga (the humpback whale) is their group totem.

Figure 4.6. Malcolm Burns. Body painting at Land Handover celebration mimics those marks shown historically in the photograph Figure 4.5. H. Van Issum (Photographer). (2007, April 7).

Figure 4.7. Ruth Link. Facial painting at Land Handover celebration depicts the features of a sea-eagle, one of the Woppaburra totems. H. Van Issum (Photographer). (2007, April 7).

Uncle Bernie Singleton and Uncle Vince Singleton (personal communication, June 16, 2012) had the key responsibility of ensuring our people’s totem, Mugga mugga (humpback whales), were represented during the land transfer ceremony on 4 April 2007. The male dancers came predominantly from family in the Cairns and Hervey Bay regions and knowledge of gypsum and red ochre deposits on the islands was confirmed by Woppaburra man Bob Muir in his cultural heritage work (Coastcare, 1999). Although the specific colours used in this modern ceremony were ‘brown’ rather than ‘red’, the design closely resembled Roth’s 1898 photograph showing the traditional design. Participant observations at the time of the ceremony and photographs show the use of a sea eagle design on the women’s faces. Hence, the participation in ceremonies using traditional markings is a feature of who the Woppaburra were and still are culturally. In past
traditional ceremonies, body painting was often connected to other rituals of scarring, amputation or circumcision.

4.2.7.2 Scarring and ceremony.

The photograph of Ulowa shows extensive scarring which was a common ritual as evidenced by various historical photographs and archival data related to the Woppaburra. The pattern of scarring is short traverse nicks in vertical columns on various parts of the body. Roth (1898) indicated that on male and females he observed, “both in front, as low down as the umbilicus, and back, numerous small vertical rows of scars, each composed of short, horizontal ones in close apposition: furthermore, on the outer thighs, in females, a single composite vertical row of traverse ones, and on the upper arms (also on the males) a few traverse rows of short vertical ones” (p.32).

At the coming of age it is generally understood that young Aboriginal men must prove elements of manhood by sustained physical and mental trials (Elkin, 1994). The physical trials may include deprivation of food stuffs, physical body scarring with eugari (pipi) or waku (oyster) shells, circumcision and confinement to an external camp area. Roth (1898) indicated specifically that “Keppel Islanders have one of the upper front teeth knocked out … and the nasal septum is also pierced” (p. 28). The mental trials include isolation, mocking, abstinence from speech and meagre food provisions for approximately eight weeks (Roth, 1898, p. 28). W.H. Flowers (as cited in Roth, 1898), gives a description of edible foods at this time. After the ceremony for the next 2-3 months, newly initiated men may only eat sugarbag (honey), yams and opossum flesh but “not even gnaw the bones” (Roth, 1898, p. 29). Every few years, depending on the maturity and number of young males, a ceremony may take place.

Aboriginal man Gaiarbau, born in 1873, whose cultural knowledge was recorded by Winterbotham (1959) stated similar procedures for other clans in the vicinity of
Kilcoy and surrounding areas. He described how all bora ceremonies were held in the smaller ring 100-300 metres from the main ring and aligned in a north-south direction. The southern ring was aligned with astronomical ‘coal sacks’¹⁸, in particular the Southern Cross constellation¹⁹ and ceremony was timed for when this was clearly visible in the southern sky. Gaiarbau was living on the Durundur reserve when the Woppaburra were present and has admitted in his accounts that his cultural information was from the various clans with whom he interacted (Winterbotham, 1959). Bob Muir (personal communication, April 24, 2014), a respected Woppaburra man, indicated that he observed the remnants of a bora site on Konomie. It is unclear if this is a northern or southern bora ground but given his description of a fairly large circle, it is likely to be the northern celebratory ring for general corroborees (o-yi). A further reference from Morris (1989) indicated a bora ring on Woppa at Long Beach (p. 14). The bora ceremony was a part of the Woppaburra’s way of life, not dissimilar to modern day coming-of-age ceremonies. They involved challenges, hardship, survival techniques and other aspects to ensure that young men can survive as an adult in society. Such ceremonies were a necessary part of the culture for Woppaburra men. While many of these tended to be male activities the Woppaburra had specific women’s business as well.

4.2.7.3 Women’s business.

The interview data and archival evidence described how the Woppaburra women considered a clear separation existed between men’s and women’s business and this was a distinct aspect of Woppaburra culture. My male status precludes me from knowledge of any sacred women’s aspects but some generalisations can be made. Aunty Francis Gala (personal communication, April 23, 2013) stated, “men’s and women’s business was very strict. They’d kill ya!” The separation can be shown with two examples listed below.

Roth (1898) when he referred to Wyndham’s diaries from 1884, described how Woppaburra women would often carry ‘dolls’ (Kum-ma) made from the butt of a grass

¹⁸ ‘Coal sacks’ are also known as the dark spaces in the sky, sometimes called nebulae. It is the space located inside the constellation ‘crux’ or Southern Cross which is of importance to many Aboriginal people. Gaiarbau (as recorded by Winterbotham, 1959) believed it was the ‘heavenly’ southern bora ring for spirits of the dead, who could maintain their ceremony after death.

¹⁹ Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, February 23, 2013) stated her grandfather (Albert Peters aka Munquadom) “took particular note of constellations…if they were out at sea at night they would not lose directions…the stars guided us”.
tree and being tear-drop shaped of varying lengths up to 400mm. They are coloured with red ochre and Roth (1898) believed they are possibly “charms for begetting fine young children [and he] also found several of them mixed up with the bones etc. in one of the shelter-cave graves in the North Island” (p.31). Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, February 18, 2013) believed that:

young girls were given these as a birth rite, they are a women’s object and they carried 'em like babies and it was a charm to have a lot of babies and it also then became a burial doll because when Roth desecrated our burial caves these were everywhere and these went with their women when they passed away, so they're very spiritual to our women, very, very special, they were initiation, charm, fertility and burial.

It is unclear if the ‘dolls’ were part of a birthing ritual and then given to the newborn girls as part of a ceremony or if their placement in the burial chamber has other spiritual associations. Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, February 18, 2013) believed that there were two different types and the second, shorter ‘cone-like’ artefacts may have been grave markers to identify burial grounds. The majority of dolls were in private and public collections. Mr F. Jardine advised he had a number of these in his private collection (Morning Bulletin, 9 July 1936) and Roth (1898) gathered from a burial cave a number of ‘dolls’ which were subsequently sold to the National Museum in 1905. These were returned to the Woppaburra women at Kuril Dhugan in the Queensland State Library on 11 November 2011. The dolls were subsequently returned to Konomie Island with ceremonial proceedings on 10 December 2011.

Figure 4.9. Items from National Museum returned to Woppaburra women. Longer item likely a doll; smaller item a grave marker. H. Van Issum (Photographer).
A second example of a women-only activity was called ‘Woo-ro’ where three to four young girls would build a small shelter or grotto from rocks and take turns throwing pebbles into the chamber’s opening (Roth, 1898, p. 31). It appears that this may only be for amusement but the information clearly indicated that these are female-only events or ‘women’s business’ similar to knowledge and access to birthing locations across Ganumi Bara. Unusually, the Woppaburra woman also had scarring down the outside of the thighs and sometimes amputation at the first joint of the small finger (Roth, 1898, p. 33). It is believed that the horizontal cicatrices on the thighs may be as a result of injuries while mourning the death of a close and respected kin (Roth, 1898). The reason behind the small finger amputation and associated process is largely unknown. A number of aspects of Woppaburra culture have clear demarcations between male and female roles and responsibilities. Specific details regarding women’s issues have not been investigated deeply as it is inappropriate for male clan members to enquire or discuss. The following section outlines burial rituals which are predominantly male domains.
4.2.7.4 Burials.

Burials rituals for most Aboriginal people are some of the most important cultural aspects of traditional and modern life. Alan Morris, a long-time resident with substantial family history on the island, described some Woppaburra rituals passed down through social memory within his family. Morris (1989) described an occasion when a ‘warrior’ was killed. Initially his body was returned to the homeland, where an elevated platform with lateral sticks was constructed away from camp. Morris (1989) explained that his body would be located on the platform and “here the body was allowed to decompose. The juices and fat from the body would fall to the earth below” (p. 15). After the body was reduced to a skeleton the bones would be gathered in a fishing net and deposited in a rock shelving cave with the entrance blocked by a number of stones. The skull and jaw would be located separately from the other items in the same cave. Morris (1989) indicated that the burial cave locations were headlands of Little Peninsula, Leeke’s Creek, Puddley (also known as Putney) Beach and through to Monkey Point (p. 18). There were also a number of ‘tree butt’ burial sites where remains of other ancestors were deposited in the bottom of burnt out or core rotted trees. The diagram indicates where Morris believed the burial sites were.

Gaiarbau, an Aboriginal cultural advisor who spent time with the Woppaburra, also described this exact process of how an elevated platform was made, the drying of skeletal remains and eventual placement in a dilly/fishing bag woven from lawyer cane (calamus australis), then deposited in a rock cavern for that purpose (Winterbotham, 1959). Gaiarbau also stated that the bodies of younger children were wrapped in bark and placed in the same location. Gaiarbau indicated that those associated with the funeral were covered in gypsum (white clay) and the burial area had a smoking process to rid the site of any bad or lingering spirits (Winterbotham, 1959, p. 88).

Roth’s (1898) description of burial processes concurs with the previous descriptions, though he adds that “the three rock shelters visited were all on the coastline, well exposed to the cleansing influences of the sea air” (p. 35). He described two such cavities on Konomie. The first, approximately 1.5 metres wide and one metre deep from front to rear containing eight adults and two children, the second a similar size contained seven adults brought there “a considerable time after their massacre” (p. 36). Roth (1898) also noted the presence of the remains of a young child wrapped in bark inside a dilly bag hanging in a tree in November, 1897. Roth (1898) described the site at Little Peninsula on Woppa where “Mollie who died in Sept ’97 [1897] has been laid to rest” (p. 36). Roth (1898) also described ‘tree butt’ graves on both islands. He noted that such burials in surrounding areas were typically in bloodwood, stringy bark and ironbark trees with the apertures cut approximately two metres from the ground. The three accounts give similar descriptions of burial practices on Ganumi Bara and museum notes that accompanied skeletal remains failed to indicate why some skeletal remains were in tree butt graves why others were in rock shelters (observation, June 28, 1993).

Notes associated with skeletal remains in the Australian Museum, Sydney, indicated that all male and juvenile remains were located in rock shelters while all women, except one, were tree butt burials (Donlon & Pardoe, 1991, p. 4). Roth (1898) also took the young child in a dilly bag as part of his ‘artefact’ collection, and recorded it in these notes as a “dilly bag burial”. The skeletal remains were distributed between what was called the Roth Collection in the Australian Museum and the H.A. Craig Collection donated to the Queensland Museum. Two ancestors from H.A. Craig’s collection were
subsequently sent to the Royal College of Surgeons in London in 1928 for ‘scientific research’ (Longman, 1928). The female ancestor was destroyed in the bombing blitz during WWII and the male ancestor was transferred to the Natural History Museum, London in 1955. It is likely that in 1905 Walter Roth, Protector of Aborigines, wrote one of the accompanying notes when he sold the ‘collection’ to the Australian Museum. The note in the museum catalogue stated that the skulls were from the people on Konomie who were “murdered and left to rot; the remains were subsequently collected and placed in a cave whence they were obtained” (Larnarch & MacIntosh, 1972, p. 8).

Further photographic evidence from the H.A. Craig Collection of skeletal remains is available in the Rockhampton Municipal Library. This photographic evidence showed his ‘proud’ collection of Woppaburra’s skulls.

*Figure 4.12. Woppaburra Skulls (ca.1924-1928). Photograph held in the H.A. Craig Collection, Rockhampton Municipal Library.*
There are several references in Roth’s 1898 report The Aboriginals of Rockhampton and Surrounding Coastal Districts that his key sources of information came from W.T. Wyndham, W.H. Flowers, C.E. Roe and a Mr A. Cowie. Mr Cowie was a long-term resident of Rockhampton as he was a key informant for Roth on matters in the region prior to 1897. A. Cowie later sold many artefacts, photos and skeletal remains to H.A. Craig sometime between December, 1920 (Craig’s arrival in Rockhampton) and June, 1924 (H.A. Craig’s address to the Royal Geographical Society regarding these items).
Notes on the back of the photograph in his collection discussed the idea of Aboriginal people possibly knocking holes in skulls ‘to let the spirit out’ however a recent study by the Australian Museum indicated that, of the 11 skulls in this collection, many clearly had bullet holes (Donlon & Pardoe, 1991). A further unusual factor was the widespread presence of auditory exostoses (Donlon & Pardoe, 1991; Rowland, 2002), a bone growth in the ear canal which indicated that the Woppaburra spent considerable time in cold wind and water conditions.

The Donlon and Pardoe (1991) paper also indicated that a further, very large mandible was buried in the St. Paul’s churchyard located at 89 William St, Allenstown, Rockhampton. Further notations associated with the pictures in the H.A. Craig Collection in the Rockhampton Municipal Library stated it may be from a ‘mission cemetery, Keppel Island’ and the text further noted that ‘skulls sent to Brisbane Museum came from here’. It appears that this entire collection was sent to the Brisbane Museum around 1926 (Longman, 1927).

Figure 4.14. Note on reverse of photograph of mandible found in Mission Cemetery, Keppel Island (ca.1927). It is likely that this entire collection was sent to the Brisbane Museum around 1926.

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21 In an address H.A. Craig gave to the Royal Geographical Society on 19 July 1924, he stated that he ‘found’ this item in the St Paul’s churchyard.
It seems that the unique aspect of the burials are placement in coastal crevices with most tending to be in northern and north-eastern parts of Woppa and Konomie. The Australian Museum in Sydney indicated that these skeletal remains, along with other items collected by Roth, were sold to the Museum in 1905 and registered by Mr Thorpe, the Curator of Anthropology (Donlon & Pardoe, 1991, p. 5). Both of the skeletal remains in these collections were repatriated to Konomie in 1992 as part of a federal program. The Woppaburra consider that returning ancestral remains to traditional homelands is a serious cultural obligation and part of their responsibility as Woppaburra. Aunty Chrissy Doherty believes that the identification and retrieval of all cultural artefacts are necessary to connect closer to ancestors (personal communication, April 11, 2013).

**4.2.7.5 Weapons, implements and jewelry/adornments.**

The data source of several photographs taken by Roth in the late 1890s and located in the State Library of Queensland (John Oxley Collection) show the Woppaburra with extensive jewellery and weapons. The adornment of such jewellery and possession of implements were essential parts of Woppaburra culture. A visit to the Australian Museum in Sydney in February, 2013 identified a number of the same items which were taken by the Protector Walter Roth in 1897 and sold to the Museum in 1905 for £450 (Donlon & Pardoe, 1991, p. 5). This is the equivalent of $64 331 AUD today (http://www.thomblake.com.au/secondary/hisdata/calculate.php). The various items were yilum (nautilus shell) jewellery, harpoons, nawul (an oyster shucking tool), nol-lu (fishing nets), i-ya (fish hooks), a canoe and a length of woven human hair approximately 3 metres long and 1cm in diameter. An important adornment for the Woppaburra, was the use of the nautilus shell (likely nautilus alumnus) known traditionally as yilam, for jewellery on both men and women. Figure 4.4 shows the use of oval shaped, pearlescent blue-grey pieces carefully fabricated and connected by twine. The items held by the Australian Museum (observation, February 18, 2013) also showed the use of colourful red toadstool or fungus as an item of adornment. Combined, these items were tied around the forehead and also used as a necklace (Roth, 1898, p. 32). Interestingly, these necklaces were worn by both genders of varying ages. Considering the rarity of the
nautilus mollusc and its propensity for deep water habitat, such jewellery would have been highly prized.

Roth (1898) noted that there appeared to be no boomerangs, woomeras or other commonly accepted Aboriginal weapons (p. 44) but there are clearly tum-ba (digging sticks) shown in museum photographs (National Museum of Australia [NMA], 2013) and described by Roth (1898) as being made from mangrove timber with charred extremities and used for digging yams (p. 39). Roth, who also authored *The North Queensland Ethnography, Bulletin No.3*, described the fishing hook and nets used by the Woppaburra (Queenslander, 4 January 1903, p. 12). The hook is approximately 20-25mm in diameter in a crescent shape made from cocoa-nut and turtle shells. He claimed that the hooks and process for manufacture “is met with now only on the Keppels” (p. 40) although seen decades before in other regions. It is produced with a stone drill made from the shaft of ra-la (a grasstree) forked at one end, boo-ran (a sharpened quartz tip) and bound by ran (the fibre of a tea tree) (Morning Bulletin, 4 January 1902, p. 12). The article also indicated that soldier crabs were a common bait used. In addition, Wyndham (1890) indicated that soldier crabs were used as ‘berley’ and thrown into crevices around rocks at night, perhaps a type of tidal fish trap where they would then be caught by hand (p. 115). The items described are tools reflecting the daily life of the Woppaburra and provide additional information on who the Woppaburra were as a cultural group. The fish hook is indicative of an isolated culture, as it was seen decades before in other locations. Other physical artefacts that were observed in the Australian Museum are a useful data source to understand the semi- isolated nature of the Woppaburra culture.

A canoe and harpoon artefact (NMA, 2013) observed in the Australian Museum on 18 February 2013, show some unusual characteristics which give evidence to the Woppaburra’s unique culture. Wyndham (1890) advised that during the daylight hours, Woppaburra would use a canoe and use a specially constructed harpoon to catch large fish, dugong and turtle (p. 115). The harpoon located in the national museum shows how the head piece of the harpoon with attached twine was fitted into a socket at the end of the main shaft which would dislodge upon spearing its prey. The sea creature would tire and the fisherman would take his catch. Intricate descriptions of the harpoon are similar
in Wyndham (1890), Roth (1898) and particularly Massola’s (1964) accounts showing a movement of harpoon technology which traversed the eastern seaboard as far down as Sydney, up to Japan and perhaps wider\textsuperscript{22}. Uncle Vince Singleton (personal communication, June 16, 2012) discussed his father’s construction of harpoons as a child living in Yarrabah in 1958. “I remember dad making them spend[ing] hours on them with a file…hunt in the inlet in rowboat of the bay and come back with dugong and turtle (Uncle Vince Singleton, personal communication, June 16, 2012, p. 9). He confirmed the use of a single barb as used on Ganumi Bara and how this technology was passed down in the family. This indicated that maintaining traditional hunting methods and processes is valued by many descendants and considered a means of keeping the Woppaburra culture alive.

In addition, Ganumi Bara canoe construction was similar to surrounding regions with Roth (1898) describing two items seized by himself and Mr A. Cowie (p. 37). The Morning Bulletin (6 March 1883) also described the construction of mainland canoes from large pieces of bark from an ironbark tree, using tea-tree bark strips and vines as oakum to seal the ends. They stated that the canoes are “most ingeniously constructed” however one person would have to paddle while the other bailed continuously (Morning Bulletin, 6 March, 1883). It specifically mentioned that such canoes have “been known to visit the [Keppel] islands”. There is also contemporary evidence on Woppa of the ‘scar tree’ described by Roth (1898) which was used to make a canoe (p. 37). Both items described by Roth are currently located in the Australian museum, Sydney. The use of canoes was superseded by dinghies and larger boats as the Woppaburra’s resources and access to technology evolved.

Uncle Vince Singleton (personal communication, June 16, 2012) described his father in the Cairns inlet with a small dinghy and oars but never with any motor. Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, February 23, 2013) also reminisces about the hours of rowing from Urangan to Round Island, Little Woody, Big Woody and eventually to Fraser over a number of days. Thus, while technology enabled the

\textsuperscript{22} Harpoon design in Newfoundland and Alaska where Inuit hunting of seals and whales commenced at least 1500 AD (Dickenson & Sanger, 2005) show striking similarities to those on the east coast of Australia.
Woppaburra to access modern equipment, many traditional fishing and hunting techniques such as the use of harpoons remained (Uncle Vince Singleton, personal communication, June 16, 2012). The association with boats, sea and fishing was a common theme through all interviewees. The association with the ‘sea’ as the primary food source and implements such as canoes or boats were as important as items on ‘land’ for the survival and ongoing cultural practice of the Woppaburra.

4.2.8 Western artefacts.

An atypical artefact prized by the Woppaburra is a series of brass breast plates now located in the Queensland Museum. Although they are not a traditional cultural artefact, they are considered historic and a representation of who the Woppaburra of the late nineteenth century were culturally. More broadly, brass breast plates were the settlers’ attempt to control and direct the Woppaburra by instituting a hierarchical system similar to the British. Most breast plates had inscribed “King of (location)” (NMA, 2014). Breast plates were bestowed upon chosen leaders who may become loyal and useful to the colony to settle disputes and maintain order (Darian-Smith, 2015). Three such plates made of brass were awarded to the Woppaburra. The first two are similar in that they were not awarded in the general sense as a means of controlling the Aboriginal population, but rather in response to the recipients’ acts of bravery. They have the inscriptions, “Paddy - for saving life, 10-4-96”, and, “Ulowa-King of Wapparaburra- for saving life 10-4-96”. Each has an etching on the left side of an upturned boat in rough seas and on the right edge an image of two men’s heads in the sea (Morning Bulletin, 27 May, 1896, p. 5).

The Morning Bulletin described the heroic actions of the Islanders on 13 April 1896, just three days after the event. It detailed how the 24-foot boat named the Undaunted and owned by W. Smith (also known as ‘Hoppy Billy’), capsized on Friday evening 9 April 1896. The crew was Smith and three ‘lads’ Wilkins of Lakes Creek, and Clark and Winlow of Rockhampton. The youth Clark could not swim and was saved immediately by Ulowa and brought back to the upturned craft. The ‘white’ crew stayed holding on to the keel while Ulowa and his son Paddy took the oars as buoyancy devices and swam to a beach between Tanby Point and Emu Park. After swimming for an hour...
and a half in the water, they sounded the alarm and by daybreak the next day all the locals on the boat were saved just off Pelican Island located in the southern section of Ganumi Bara. The *Morning Bulletin* (13 April 1896, p. 5), emphasised the rescuers’ deeds and stated, “there can be no doubt great credit is due to Mr Long [captain of rescue boat and local school master], Constable Johnson, and others who so readily set out to look for the men who were in such peril”. No mention is made of the Woppaburra, Ulowa and Paddy, who swam for an hour-and-a-half at night to alert the rescue party.

On 23 May 1896, about six weeks after the event, Mr Ringwald (Ringy) McLelland who was a local businessman and friend of the Woppaburra, moved to get due recognition for their acts of bravery. Ringy McLelland organised and paid for the manufacture of breast plates and awarded these to the recipients (*Morning Bulletin*, 27 May 1896, p. 5). At some point between January 1900 and September 1902 when the last Islanders were removed from the islands to the mainland, the southern protector, Archibald Meston, acquired these items. Archibald Meston, the Protector of Aborigines, retained these in his personal collection and they were subsequently entered into the Queensland Museum collection on 14 May 1924 (Queensland Museum, 2016b, 2016c). Archibald Meston, the past Protector of Aborigines, had passed away on 11 March 1924, hence they were most likely donated from his estate.

![Breastplate, awarded for bravery in 1896 to Ulowa, was acquired by Archibald Meston, the Southern Protector, and eventually given to the Queensland Museum in 1924. Queensland Museum. (2016c). Brass breastplate: Ulowa, King of Wapparaburra, for saving Life. Register no. QE-2630-0. Brisbane, Australia: Queensland Museum.](image1)

![Breastplate, awarded for bravery in 1896 to Paddy, was acquired by Archibald Meston, the Southern Protector, and eventually given to the Queensland Museum in 1924. Queensland Museum. (2016b). Brass breastplate: Paddy, for saving Life. Register no. QE-2625-0. Brisbane, Australia: Queensland Museum.](image2)
The third breastplate which was uncovered by chance on a recent visit to the Queensland Museum has the inscription “Jimmy- King of Conomie” with no date inscribed. This was donated to the museum and registered in 1996 after the passing of well-known curator and naturalist Frederick Stanley Colliver in 1991 (Queensland Museum, 2016a). After it had passed through many hands, this breastplate was acquired by Colliver sometime between 1938 and 1991. The breastplate has an image of an island on the left with trees and water in the foreground and an Aboriginal man with a spear on the right side. The similarity in size, material, design and lettering would suggest conferral around the same period and possibly the same manufacturer. Interestingly, one of the breastplates in its current state was hung by a twine of human hair and natural fibres (Queensland Museum, 2016), human hair usually being used only for ceremony and healing purposes (Aunty Chrissy Doherty, personal communication, April 11, 2013).

Discussion regarding the ‘King Plates’ brought mixed reactions from current descendants who either venerated or despised them. Elder Aunty Gwen (personal communication, April 22, 2013) knew very little about the King Plates but appeared quite pleased as they acknowledged that “they were the king of the tribe. They were the master”. Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) stated, “Jimmy….you’ve just recently found his king plate, it was unbelievable….I was crying”. Some Woppaburra seemed to appreciate the acknowledgement by the colonial powers that their people had some status, on the other hand some saw it as an insidious way of controlling their people. Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, March 22, 2013) when asked about ‘King Plates’ stated “no, I’m not particularly keen on that” as we were all raised without a competitive spirit and our Elders were more guidance than leaders, it
was “Western society who gave them names as chiefs…””. Aunty Francis Gala (personal communication, April 23, 2013) stated “we had no kings and queens”. While the historical presentation of King Plates has some historical value, it also demonstrates Western values which conflict with Woppaburra and general Aboriginal perspectives of leadership and governance. Underlying the physical artefact is the Woppaburra’s’ motivation for such an act of bravery. This may have been out of duty, fear or a sense of compassion for the survivors. Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) spoke of a “generosity of spirit” of the Islanders which indicated the inherent ‘goodness’, which she believes is part of the cultural and moral values of the Woppaburra and a possible reason behind the acts of heroism.

4.2.9 Hair.

Hair has a very important meaning to many cultures, from the Christian and Jewish tradition of strength through Samson’s hair (Comay & Brownrigg, 1993) to the Torres Strait Islander, ‘Yalbup Poethay’ or first hair-cutting ceremony signifying transition from toddler to childhood. For the Native American Lakota people, Means (1996) explained that the hair holds memories, and mourners cut locks to release those memories. The people in these memories can then transition to the spirit world. For the Woppaburra, hair strands held several meanings from holding memories to medicinal healing to inherent powers. Roth (1898) stated that:

among the Woppaburra people, a human hair cord, plaited quite 3/8 in. thick, is tied tightly round the forehead for headache, round the belly for stomach-ache and so forth. To make this rope, the hair is cut off by a sort of sawing movement with the sharp edge produced by splitting a ra-an (cuttlefish shell) vertically down its centre (p. 11).
The item described above was collected by Roth in 1897 has been located in the National Museum since 1905. On a recent visit to the National Museum in February 2013, all Woppaburra present avoided handling or touching this item except for Uncle Vince Singleton, a strongly spiritual man. After looking at the item and running the plaited hair cord through his fingers he stated, “this means a lot to us, it’s our ancestor hair…touching this and feeling this it feels good…and just got a good atmosphere here at the moment” (personal communication, February 18, 2013). Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, March 22, 2013) stated, “hair was very sacred in our culture, with hair, they used hair to locate people you know, hair was not put in the same category as you might put a Coolamon or bark canoe”. Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) also confirmed that it can be used in healing ceremonies and that upon the death of grandparents, many mourners would cut a lock of hair for safekeeping. Linda Jordan (personal communication, April 11, 2013) advised that she still had Nana Conomies’ brush with her hair in it.

Conversely, hair could be used to create harm by use in ‘magic’. Aunty Chrissy Doherty became a little cautious and stated, “I can’t say too much because I’m superstitious”, although she did explain how her Aunty Ethel would say “don’t leave hair laying around. Don’t leave your brushes, don’t leave any hair” (personal communication, April 11, 2013). Aunty Chrissy Doherty explained how “you can be sung up if someone has your hair” (personal communication, April 11, 2013). This cultural belief about hair is based in traditional fears of how other people, particularly the ‘feather foot’ or ‘medicine man’, can use a person’s hair to cause them harm. Part of this ritual is the ‘singing up’ of bad spirits. Hair is more than a historical artefact and more than a cultural relic. It is one of the few remaining parts of an ancestor’s biological remains. It occupies a position as a symbol of healing, a tangible link to ancestors and holder of special powers. It is common to cut locks of hair from small children or deceased relatives as a

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23 Roth (1903) in *North Queensland Ethnography: Bulletin No.5. “Superstition, Magic and Medicine*” discussed how ‘Medicine Men’ “having placed some hair…of the individual he wishes to injure into his piece of bone or bamboo, he burns it to make his victim sick” (p. 31). This concurs with the Woppaburra beliefs.
keepsake and it has a central position of importance. The traditional and contemporary beliefs about hair are important facets of Woppaburra culture.

4.2.10 Stories.

The physical act of being on country is useful for getting into a position to know country but the more significant way of knowing country is by communicating with traditional owners (Benterrak, Mueke & Roe, 2014). Narratives created by the ancestral creators and passed onto current Woppaburra Elders allow a reading of country that slowly form a mosaic of who they are and were. Benterrak, Mueke and Roe (2014) stated that “the country does not offer up the fullness of its meaning to the receptive individual as some romantics and spiritualists would have us believe” (p. 67), rather it is by the collection of partial knowledges that the true picture of who the Woppaburra were as a people is developed. Storytelling, as a traditional cultural practice, is a major aspect of reading country. The data set identified that, for the Woppaburra, a select few family members have sought to listen carefully to their old people and have had the role as storytellers bestowed upon them.

A Woppaburra story teller ‘Darlutta’ (Aunty Chrissy Doherty), in her customary role as family storyteller, stated, “I could not fulfil my customary duties, as a family storyteller, without giving deep respect and recognition to my mother land and to my ancestral women, who shaped the traditional woman I am today” (Aunty Chrissy Doherty, personal communication, April 11, 2013) . On our first meeting, she proceeded to trace her genealogy back verbally to her great grandmother Aunty Conomie, through aunties and her mother. Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) stated, “Aunty Ethel made me her next storyteller and she bestowed [upon] me a traditional name as the storyteller”. For Darlutta, the process of holding and passing on of stories is deeply spiritual,

my beautiful ‘women mothers’ gave me, my dreamings, my song lines, my skin, my mother land, and I am so proud and honoured, to share their stories and traditional knowledge with all our young ones, I pass down their precious legacy, traditional knowledge, as they would expect me to do, with dignity and kindness,
to always share with others, and my personal promise, to my Aunty Ethel, to keep our history living (personal communication, April 11, 2013).

Darlutta mentioned both traditional knowledge and history. There is a clear connection to country with the process of maintaining and passing on of these stories. In a traditional sense, the content of these stories relates to the dreaming and creation, a time when the islands were created and social practices were enshrined into Aboriginal lore. For an island clan, most stories are based in sea country, and to a lesser extent, in land country. The ideas form the basis of social practices and are bound within a number of sea creatures as totems. In an historical sense, Darlutta believed that she has a responsibility “to keep our history alive” by sharing with others (personal communication, April 11, 2013). These themes from the interview data help us understand who the Woppaburra were culturally and historically, and who they are today by integrating traditional stories and history within contemporary lifestyles. A selection of stories below drawn from the data set relate to totems and give a sense of how they relate to the Woppaburra.

4.2.11 Totems.

The Woppaburra believed they shared a ‘life essence’ with all natural elements of the environment. As with other Aboriginal people their social world included the natural world and conversely, the natural world was humanised (Berndt & Berndt, 1999). The Woppaburra, as part of the wider Darambal language group, use the word ‘bikanh’ as the term for totem (Terrill, 2002). In real terms a totem is a human representation of a natural feature. This is seen most often as an animal or sea creature but it also can be flora or geographical features such as waterways and unusual land features. Broadly, the Woppaburra Elders identified totems at three separate levels. Those being the language group level, clan group level and individual level.

The Woppaburra clan group is part of the wider Darambal language group whose totem is the waterlily. Aunty Glenice Croft (personal diary, May 31, 2016) advised that “nakiu-pink waterlily is the Darambal/Woppaburra sacred dreaming flower”. The four leaves in the waterlily totem used at the Dreamtime Cultural Centre at Rockhampton surrounding the lily itself refer to the four main clans (Dreamtime Cultural Centre, 2015).
Tindale (1974, p. 166), believed there were four clans of the Darambal and recent research by Memmott (1993) confirms this also (p. 41). Ron Hurley (1988), renowned Aboriginal artist, described the story of this ‘tribal’ totem in his 1988 artwork ‘Darumbal Totem’. He explained how

the Darumbal [people], as part of a ceremony, collect the roots [of the waterlily] and cook them in ant bed ovens, where they are left uneaten, to be washed away by flood waters. The flood carries the old roots out to sea, the strong young roots stay in the ground near the camp, while the seeds are carried into creeks and lagoons. This ensures a plentiful supply of food for the next season. Each part of the lily is regarded as a member of a family: the flower and seed pod is the father, the main root the mother, the young roots the children, the short stalk that bears the bud the eldest son, the little roots surrounding the mother are unborn children and the bulrushes are the old women guarding the family.

The Woppaburra know that they are a clan group of the wider Darambal nation. Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) stated that when she was a child “granddad always said Darambal never Woppaburra…I never heard it [Woppaburra]” and Elder Chrissy Doherty stated, “Nana Conomie…always identified herself as Darambal” (personal communication, April 11, 2013). Given the distance between the islands and the mainland, while the Darambal and Woppaburra shared the same language group it is unclear how strongly the Woppaburra identified with the Darambal totem. Images from the H.A. Craig Collection from Rockhampton and physical artefacts from the National Museum of Australia showed no images of the ‘waterlily’ totem on any artefacts, nor were there any references in the accompanying notes (observation, February 13, 2016). In addition, only one interview participant discussed the Darambal totem but that person was cognisant also of the Woppaburra clan group totem. The waterlily is prolific around the creeks and freshwater areas in Rockhampton but is not present on Woppa and Konomie. Hence, it was not surprising that stories related to the Darambal language group totem were not broadly discussed by the Woppaburra.
The second level of totemic ancestors is at the family or clan group level. A clan group totem is represented by an animal, plant or other natural feature which becomes the identifying symbol of that clan. Not dissimilar to the Scottish tartan or English coat of arms, a symbolic representation which identified members who belong to a specific clan is had by Aboriginal Australians. The traditional group totem of the Woppaburra is ‘Mugga mugga’, the humpback whale. In their language the term ‘mugga’ is humpback whale, and as is common in many Aboriginal languages, the plural is by simple repetition of the word i.e.: Mugga mugga. Historical captions on Figure 4.4 identify one Woppaburra male as ‘Mugga’ and body painting similar to the humpback baleen.

Creation stories associated with the whale include identifying the humpback whale as bringing life to the islands. A characteristic of the humpback is that it has two spouts; one created the island environment and the second sprayed the people out to occupy these lands (Angela Leitch, personal communication, November 21, 2014). Uncle Gary Smith (personal communication, April 23, 2013) gives another insight of the clan totem through stories:

I used to sit down and talk with Uncle Albert around the fire, around the fire up at the point there [Dayman Point] and he would tell us a lot of good stories but we thought he was only bullshitting because he’d have a good laugh. I’ll never forget the one he told about the point there, a whale brought him up to the point there and spat him out. Stories, I tell ya, Uncle Albert would tell a few yarns… oh yeh! I just used to like sitting there listening to him… Stories about the whale spitting him out at the beach there at Dayman point there. And he reckons he was diving one day and came to this big cave with treasures and he reckons he seen this shark and the shark bit him...and he bit the shark back....

It is possible that cultural beliefs about totems and creation have morphed into stories or have manifested as stories. The interview data indicated that stories were accepted without value judgements of truth or accuracy (Elder Linette Russ, personal communication, June, 5, 2013). The use of the clan totem is strongly featured in all contemporary ceremonies such as the historic land transfer in 2007 (observation, April 4,
Apart from clan group totems, many of the Woppaburra also had personal or individual totems.

Individual totems are also represented by flora, fauna or other natural features. They are given to Woppaburra children but it is unclear if it is at birth or some point during their formative years. Archival documents in section one show traditional names for many of the Woppaburra which translate to natural features. My grandfather Munkwadran’s totem was the sea eagle and he, upon death, has returned to country as that entity. Many Woppaburra believe that this bird is not so much the spirit of the person but the re-incarnated person himself, who will give guidance when fishing or “protect you from harm” (Aunty Vanessa Kirk, personal communication, February 23, 2013).

Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, February 23, 2013) also gave examples of ancestral dolphins showing the safest route home through water and blooming wattles to indicate arrival of schooling fish such as mullet. Aunty Glenice Croft (personal communication, April 23, 2016) advised that her mother’s traditional name and totem was (Kalulu) which was the bottlebrush from the Banksia plant on Konomie. These data indicate that observation of seasonal changes are not simply a natural occurrence but are also associated with the arrival of ancestors to assist with current life and its challenges. A distinguishing feature of personal totems is the taboo on hunting or consumption. Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) explains how at a very young age her grandfather spoke about the dugong.

Well dugong has always been a bit of a worry to me. There was one down at the jetty at Hervey Bay, but grandad just... I don’t know what he did … but I can’t eat dugong. I remember eating it once when I was up at Hopevale because all my life I had been told by grandad that I can’t eat it. But I just wanted to see what it tasted like, so when I went to Hopevale, oh they had a bloody big dugong, the fat was that thick [indicating with fingers]. But that’s the thing... he [the hunter] said “would you like to taste this” and I sort of was thinking ‘will I or wont I’ sort of a thing. I just wanted a little taste of it, he gave me some and I said I wasn’t allowed to taste this. It tasted like pork, it had a nice taste about it. I haven’t had it ever
since and probably never will but I just needed to try some. That’s what dugong means to me.

While it is not explicitly stated and there is the passing of almost 60 years since this discussion with her grandfather, it appears that Elder Linette Russ’ totem is a dugong. It has the typical characteristics of refraining from hunting and consumption. Even though there was a brief tasting, she indicated a lingering doubt on the cultural taboo attached to this. As the son of this elder, I was fortunate that my mother offered to bestow this totem upon me during the interview. An honour which I graciously accepted. Other aunties and relatives in recent years have assumed totems as they have re-connected with Woppaburra culture, but the process of how this occurs is not well-understood. Aunty Glenice Croft (Warinkil) advised recently that her “totem is the crow” (personal communication, June 21, 2016). Aunty Glenice Croft advised that on occasions where a totem has been bestowed upon the Woppaburra it is associated with a story or event that gives some clue to the totem or role (personal communication, June 21, 2016). All interviewees through the interview data speak extensively about being told stories from Elders as they have been passed down through generations, although there were few specific details when pressed about these stories.

Observations made during the collection of interview data showed that the joy and happiness of remembering a story told by their Elders, whether deeply cultural or purely for humour, was an important aspect of remembering the person through story. In contrast to elder Linette Russ and the cultural discussion about dugong as her totemic ancestor, another Elder, Uncle Gary Smith, remembers stories as simple enjoyment. The acceptance of a story at face value might be the recollections of the Elders as young children but a deeper reading could interpret this knowledge as a section of a creation story of how the clan totem created human beings. Traditional totems and their contemporary influence have been drawn together from the small components gathered from each of the participants. A recurring theme was the presence of Mugga mugga as a clan totem and as a symbol of meaning and cultural identity. The interviews with Elders was a rich source of data which identified numerous issues which are important to the future body of cultural heritage information for the Woppaburra.
4.3 Textual Vs Visual Representations

In the first section of Chapter 4, I detailed a body of evidentiary data to answer the first research question of who the Woppaburra were culturally. The data has been assembled through a scientific method of rigorous data collection using instruments and methods such as formally transcribed yarning sessions with female and male Elders. While these knowledges and skills have been presented in a formal textual format, Indigenous Standpoints detailed in Chapter 3 insist that data is collected and presented in formats that respect Aboriginal peoples’ cultural traditions. Elders consulted in this study saw their interpretations as being more visual and symbolic than textual for explaining the trinity between the human, physical and spiritual worlds. Hence, the following section uses the symbolic representation of traditional practices and knowledge through an artistic lens. As a key informant, male Elder, the late Uncle Vince Singleton, has enabled the elucidation of substantial knowledge and the exposition of traditional practices. As a respected Elder, Uncle Vince Singleton is considered ‘a man of high degree’ with the status to explain the culture of the Woppaburra by fusing the links between the physical and spiritual worlds. His knowledge clarifies Western misunderstandings and provides some form of moderation of interpretation that lies outside a curator’s account. This is worth a brief explanation.

Anthropologist, A.P. Elkin (1994), although a staunch advocate of assimilation, viewed personal development in a traditional Aboriginal man’s life as a “progress in knowledge” (p. 3), where young males progress to a state of higher learning through living life. He insisted that upon completion of the ritual journey, an Aboriginal man can state, “whereas previously I was blind to the significance of seasons, of natural species, of heavenly bodies, and of man himself, now I begin to see; and whereas before I did not understand the secret of life, now I begin to know” (Elkin, 1994, p. 4). While this study may not reveal the ‘secret of life’, knowledge of many of these aspects were revered due to their sanctity and many were highlighted in participant interviews. Many participants related their discussions to seasonal characteristics, the cyclic nature of events and related

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24 A.P. Elkin first published the text *Aboriginal Men of High Degree: Initiation and Sorcery in the World’s Oldest Tradition* in 1945. It details the spiritual dimension of men who have direct links to beings of their dreaming.
totemic ancestors. If we accept that Elkins, as a conduit, merely captured the way Aboriginal men of high degree understand the world through seasons, natural species and spirituality, and that Aboriginal people themselves are key features of the ‘progress of knowledge’, we are bound, or even instructed, to present findings through a medium which is true to our beliefs. This esoteric knowledge is best displayed in a combination of media to explain and understand the Woppaburra’s culture and attachment to country. So, while the findings listed in the first section of Chapter 4 were stated in linear terms, discussion of Woppaburra culture needs to be more comprehensive to respect the cyclic nature of the lives of the Woppaburra.

A useful way to present concepts of cultural practice and beliefs is through the Woppaburra’s own representation of a cultural map incorporating a seasonal calendar with a textual accompaniment that instantiates data of the study. Elder Aunty Glenice Croft referred to this representation more accurately as a ‘cultural mapping’ process (personal communication, June 21, 2016). The artistic representation drew on themes around current knowledge of weather patterns, animal and sea-creature habitat and migrations, and plant usage which is unique to the Woppaburra. Many of these themes are based in creation stories and have been identified in contemporary practices and discussions with male and female Elders.

As a form of triangulation, such representations have been supported by direct observations while conducting interviews with Woppaburra Elders. Data gathering interviews were conducted in two contextual locations and each contributed to a deeper understanding of the cyclic nature of the physical and spiritual worlds. Each location included objects that participants considered to be sacred. The first context was home environments, where each Elder had a number of symbolic representations of their culture. For example, Aunty Gwen Muir had maps and photographs of Woppa and Konomie, a traditional fishing hook, shells and jewellery made of nautilus shell. These items, now included on the artwork, were referred to after interviews as a medium to fill in knowledge gaps, provide a fuller understanding and demonstrate the relationship with the Woppaburra homeland (observation, April 22, 2013). Uncle Malcom Burns’ home environment contained boats, fishing nets, turtle shells and paintings of Woppa and Konomie (observation, April 23, 2013). Gary Smith, residing in the same location
discussed hunting methods while relating to these artefacts (observation, April 23, 2016). Aunty Frances Gala has images of Mugga on shirts, photos of activities and wall hangings (observation, April 23, 2013). Each artefact served as a daily reminder of their traditional homeland by linking memories associated with Woppaburra culture through this medium. Participants discussed the spatial and temporal dimensions of Woppaburra life in a type of intrinsic cultural map. These revered artefacts were the stimulus to spark this discussion.

The second context for interviews was the Woppaburra’s sea-country surrounded by features such as the sand, sea creatures, flora and fauna. The environment is considered an immersion into Woppaburra culture and a consecrated environment. As many Christians retain images or objects of a divine being, the Woppaburra gather natural and manufactured artefacts and stories which ‘contain’ the spiritual essence of their traditional country. The relationship between such symbols and traditional country is difficult to explain and an elusive concept. While Westerners may refer to myths and folktales, the Woppaburra Elders spoke of creation stories, totems and the dreaming which gave the impetus to probe deeper into the concept of symbols and how we can understand the Woppaburra’s experience. D.H. Lawrence (1998) when describing myth and symbols stated:

… and the images of myth are symbols. They don’t ‘mean something’. They stand for units of human feeling, human experience. A complex of emotional experience is a symbol. And the power of the symbol is to arouse deep emotional

Figure 4.19. Albert Peters (with pipe) and Fred Ross, tending to nets on beach at Hervey Bay (ca.1940) Photograph in possession of Aunty Frances Gala.
self, and the dynamic self beyond comprehension. Many ages of accumulated experience still throb within the symbol. And we throb in response (p. 318).

D.H. Lawrence stated that symbols are an attempt to narrate the human experience but they go too deep in the blood and soul for simple mental explanations. Its value is dynamic and emotional (Lawrence, 1998). For this reason the medium of artwork that captured the essence of these symbols accompanies this discussion. The reader is encouraged to view the visual representation while simultaneously reading the text. Many people may considered the artwork a ‘seasonal calendar’, but a cursory glance will demonstrate that it is more a compilation of concepts mentioned by those interviewed and confirmed in member checks with the interrelation of these concepts then included as part of the progressive member checking. The collection of cyclical symbols and concepts are orchestrated to give some clarity to the Woppaburra culture and their representation today.

4.3.1 Symbolic representations of the Woppaburra culture.

In this section I drew together a plethora of data collected from various sources detailed in this chapter which relate to the culture and spirituality of the Woppaburra. The data have been collected as key aspects of the lived experience of saltwater people from Ganumi Bara. The evidentiary sources are classified as a range of human and wider environmental events which correspond with the unique characteristics of the Woppaburra’s case.
Figure 4.20. Woppaburra lifecycle as a visual representation. This image contains the cultural understandings drawn from the Woppaburra Elders’ interview data source. The interpretations of the timing and nature of cultural practices and symbols have been represented and confirmed by Elders as capturing the experiences, feelings and other affective aspects of collective memory rather than a textual explanation alone.
The symbols which are drawn from the data sources have been presented as a thematic cultural map, which was viewed by the Woppaburra community upon completion of the artwork to ensure it accurately reflected the concepts Elders had discussed during interviews. The textual component was also presented at a community meeting as required under the concept of ‘reciprocal obligation’ discussed in Chapter 3. The cultural map is presented as a metaphor of the lifecycle of the Woppaburra, metaphors being a noted data analysis technique regarded by Yin (2009) as useful in organising both theory and presentation (p. 169). It also reflected a second aspect of what Yin (2009) regarded as high quality analysis in a case study, “your [my] own expert knowledge” (p. 161). The visual image and textual explanation has taken the form of a cyclic process without a distinct beginning or end, but rather with a continuous spiral of inter-relations among people, flora and fauna, weather and cultural patterns over the year. An essential part of the development of the artwork was the discussion with Elders and confirmation of concepts drawn from the interview data. An explanation of the various aspects of the interrelations will be presented with spiritual association of totemic ancestors applied through the cycle. This will also draw on Martin’s (2003) Ways of knowing country\textsuperscript{25} described in Chapter 3, which is specific to “ontology and Entities of Land, Animals, Plants, Waterways, Skies, Climate and Spiritual systems” (p. 7). Considering the spiritual nature of the Woppaburra’s connections with the environment, Mugga as the bikanh (clan totem) is an appropriate starting point.

\textsuperscript{25}Martin, K. (2003) discusses the rights to varying knowledges of country, at different levels, times and places, that must be operational for group function. It incorporates contexts and processes. In this study the contexts and processes have been incorporated into the seasonal calendar metaphor.
4.3.2 Konomie (North Wind).

This section of the image represents the period of Konomie which corresponds with September/October on a Western seasonal calendar. The central image is Mugga, a baleen whale, meaning it has plates of whalebone in the mouth for filtering krill, plankton and small fish when feeding. Mugga mugga grow to 16 metres in length, weighing 25-45 tonnes (National Geographic, 2016). The Woppaburra have observed that visually, they range from black and grey to white and mottled. The front of the head has large bumps (tubercles). The skin is often scarred and the front flippers frequently have barnacles. Elder Aunty Chris Doherty after viewing the image commented that “I like how it has these markings, the scars and the barnacles, it shows real character of its life journey (personal communication May 28, 2016). The comments connect the Elders’ discussion of the totem in the results and the painted image. The reference to character and life journey is akin to human qualities and the personification of the sea-creature and totem.

Mugga is a central figure in the lifecycle of the Woppaburra. The following description of some of the humpback whale’s feeding practices were discussed collectively upon the unveiling of the artwork at the festival (observation, May 28, 2016). The Elders spoke about an interesting feature of feeding which is termed bubble-net feeding where Mugga mugga swim collectively in a circular pattern below the surface while blowing rising bubbles. This forms a cylindrical wall of bubbles which harnesses...
the krill and plankton in a concentrated mass as the whales spiral to the surface. The humpbacks then feast in a gulping motion. This indicates a close social bond where the members of the pod are communal and work together to gather their harvest. While Mugga mugga spend most of their lives around Antarctica, during the migration north the Woppaburra see them from August to October each year. The Woppaburra have observed the order of migration, which is with young males leading with pregnant cows and cows with newly born calves bringing up the rear. The gestation period of mugga is 11 months which means some calves are born in transit and others are born upon reaching the tropical waters of Queensland. Mugga mugga arrive in the Woppaburra sea country and spend approximately two months breeding and calving, as the waters provide the optimum temperature to maintain the health of calves. During this period the calves consume large amounts of high fat milk from their mothers who slowly become weaker due to loss of body fat. The adult whales do not consume any food during this season when they are around Woppa and Konomie.

Elder Aunty Chris Doherty commented, “that’s our sacred totem Mugga mugga, it means a lot to us” (personal communication, May 28, 2016). The Woppaburra Elders, unexpectedly, have knowledge of various scientific data about Mugga mugga. For example, the knowledge of feeding characteristics were likely passed on by ancestral observations. It is known that the practice of bubble-net feeding occurs in the Southern Ocean but it may have been observed further north just prior to their period of fasting around September. The understanding of communal gathering and fasting are characteristics that the Woppaburra mimic at that time of year. The data set indicated that the family groups were closely connected and historically remained in one large camp. Additionally, the timely arrival of the clan totem indicated the onset of initiation ceremonies which included regimes of fasting for 8-12 weeks, the duration of the whale’s stay in Woppaburra sea-country. The order of the whales’ arrival with young males leading correlates with the young males’ ceremony of coming of age, where they are expected to become leaders. These actions may be observed, however, it can be inferred from the data that Woppaburra Elders have an intimate knowledge of the characteristic of Mugga mugga which have been observed in various activities of the Woppaburra.
interview data and the visual representation in the artwork indicate that the most common of these activities are initiation ceremonies at this time of year.

4.3.3 Gurinya (become ‘initiated with cuts’).

Upon arrival of Mugga mugga, eligible young boys were identified for ceremony. Walbara (uninitiated young men) are taken through a process where they go through gurinya (become ‘initiated with cuts’). Elder Chris Doherty commented that Mugga mugga’s scars on the artwork were analogous to ceremonial scars on the walbara (personal communication, May 28, 2016). Although this process is considered men’s business, the data set indicated that women had rudimentary knowledge of ceremony. The gaps in social memory data indicated that many specific details have been lost over the decades, however many small aspects have been passed on which allows for reasonable reconstruction of what the ceremony entailed. Historical data indicated that the boys would be taken from the large bora ring and travel a few hundred metres to the smaller ceremonial ring that aligns with the southern-cross constellation. Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, 23 February, 2013) explained that the women would often wail and show their sadness at the loss of their sons who were on the threshold of moving to the next stage of their lives. The prospective outcome of a successful candidate for manhood was that, as an independent adult, he was expected to be able to hunt, look after a family, communicate effectively and be knowledgeable on all matters related to the clan.

Findings have also indicated the presence of bora rings on Konomie and Woppa. Woppaburra man Robert (Bob) Muir believed he had identified the remnants of the last
remaining bora ring on Konomie on a north-facing area, large enough to conduct such ceremonies (Queensland Heritage Council, 2003). In addition, Woppa has a bora ring located near Long beach (Morris, 1989) with access to ample fresh water, flat camp grounds and food resources to sustain a reasonably large group. Robert Muir (personal communication, April 24, 2014) believed that the ability to hunt, fish, construct fish traps, locate fresh water and build dwellings was all part of the required knowledge for survival which was tested at this time of year. The section of the image that speaks to this process is shown as a series of dotted lines between landmasses which indicates travel between the islands. This relates to the ability to travel between islands during ceremony for the purpose of connecting the dreaming sites which include the locating of fresh water sites. The dreaming paths or song-lines are important knowledge for survival, and Elders insisted on this representation in the artwork.

The limited archival and interview data regarding ceremony indicated that knowledge and skills were clearly important, but the ability to withstand physical pain was also involved. The final component was where the fully initiated men with traditional body paint would cut their charges with oyster or similarly sharp-edged shells. Photographic data and artefacts from the National Museum substantiate this practice. The opened cuts would be filled with fine fire ash to cause a raised line upon healing to clearly accentuate the scarring. The photograph below indicates that Woppaburra men used a series of short vertical cuts down the arms, the chest and back. The men with extensive scarring were considered to be the strongest warriors. Upon completion of the period of ceremony, the boys would be presented back to the community in the larger bora ring with corroboree and celebration. Such body scarring is also considered a ritual process of identification with the clan and the pattern of scarring is unique to the Woppaburra. Similar patterns identify the association of individuals to their clan, not dissimilar to a Scotsman’s tartan. Contemporary Woppaburra youth rarely participate in traditional ceremony but engage in tattooing practices which serve to ‘scar’ the body and identify cultural heritage.
Figures 4.24 & 4.25 show the traditional and contemporary practices which scar the body and show cultural heritage. The photograph of Ulowa in Figure 4.24 is from the John Oxley Collection. (Negative no. 14119). State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. The photograph of Matthew Boustead is from the personal collection of Muir, R. (Snr.). (Photographer). (2015). Tattoo on Matthew Boustead, Woppaburra man showing clan name and image of Mugga, clan totem.

The ‘coming of age’ or initiation ceremony is considered the most important in an annual time frame although this may occur only every two to three years. Many of the activities listed above associated with the ceremony are deeply connected with the clan totem, Mugga mugga. Close scrutiny of the ceremony showed that it occurred at the same time of year that Mugga mugga arrived. At the time when young men fasted, similar to the adult whales during the ceremony, initiates received painful scarring recognising the ability to deal with future physical and mental tribulations. The throat grooves and scarring are clearly visible on the associated artwork. The Woppaburra pictured in Figure 4.26 show the similarities between body painting and the clan totem’s baleen which has come to light during the current research. A further association is that only adult male Mugga perform the recognised ‘whale song’ while present in the waters off Ganumi Bara. Similarly, upon completion of the ceremony, the clan celebrate in the main bora rings with now-initiated men singing and dancing. Although specific details have been lost, I contend in light of other similarities that the dance movements are most likely to be
in unison with the movements of Mugga. The multiple similarities of the visual aspects and characteristics indicate a significant relation in time, place and representation in the appearance and purposes of the Woppaburra and the clan totem at this time of year.

The Woppaburra viewed their clan totem, Mugga, with reverence. They carefully observed the graceful moves and the bulls’ association with their cows and calves. The Woppaburra are a patriarchal clan, meaning the men lead in hunting, ceremony, decision making and initiate alerts to signs of danger. An example of the Woppaburra men traditionally protected their women, was illustrated in the first violent interactions with Robert Ross on Konomie Island. Figure 4.26 shows the image of the Woppaburra in traditional dress and body paint. The caption on the reverse of the photograph stated, ‘Mugga’, as the name of a Woppaburra man. This is also the name of the clan totem. Mugga mugga are never hunted and are not considered reincarnated beings but rather that they ‘contain’ the spirits of ancestors. On return to the Antarctic, Mugga mugga allow their newborn to take the lead while adult cows and bulls follow. For the Woppaburra, it represents careful oversight of the growing children and ensuring no family is left behind. Once again, the behaviour of the Woppaburra mimics or appears to parallel that of Mugga mugga. Aunty Glenice Croft stated that, “this would be the start of our song line” and such social conventions have been passed down for millennia (personal communication, June 21, 2016).
Interestingly, it is not simply social behaviour that appears to mimic Mugga mugga, but also the physical characteristics of Mugga mugga used during ceremony. The features of the Woppaburra body painting are a close replica of Mugga’s throat grooves. Photographic data (Figure 4.27) of traditional body art at recent land handover celebrations (observation, April 4, 2007) have shown the adoption of similar patterns. These various features show how Mugga permeates the very being of the Woppaburra and is a unifying thread which draws many aspects of culture together. Another lesser but still
significant aspect of the Woppaburra culture at this time of year is the North wind known as Konomie.

September is a time when winds change from the predominant south-east during the mornings to east and north-east in the afternoon. Occasionally, the wind blows directly from the north, and after long periods the ocean brings in coral spawn and box jellyfish (Chironex fleckeri). The odour of the coral spawn is also a sign of this change in weather patterns. The box jellyfish image and white lines across the artwork below Mugga mugga is indicative of this wind. The name of the North Island is ‘Konomie’ meaning North Wind. The North Wind is seen as a sign of fertility for our people. The late Aunty Konomie Richards often spoke about being born on Considine Beach on the north side of the island. Chris Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) advised that the Woppaburra women are aware of the birthing areas, but cultural protocol dictates that only women care for this area and maintain it as an important cultural location. It is also the case that some of our deceased ancestors, repatriated in 1992, are buried on the northern side of the island, thus completing a cycle of being born here and eventually laid to rest not far from their birthplace. The artwork is also symbolically cyclical, detailing ongoing life in an anticlockwise direction.

This time of year is also considered to be spring in Western seasonal terms. It is common to see the flowering and fruiting of the nuni (sandpaper fig), gunda (cabbage tree palm), ya-win-yob (wild cherry), do-lon (white current), wan-do-on (scrub honeysuckle), wan-di (pandanus), ombu ombi (bush plum), wun-dur (grasstree) and the cocky apple (planchonia careya). Uncle Gordon Barney showed how the bark of the cocky apple can be used as de-oxygenator of water to ‘stun’ the fish for capture (observation, May 28, 2016). As an Elder involved in saltwater fishing and resources gathering, his extensive knowledge was drawn in a large part from his grandfather taken from the islands in 1902. The information drawn from the interviews shows that September and October were the most important times of year for the Woppaburra. They involved the arrival and departure of the clan totem, fertility winds, initiation ceremony, a proliferation of flora and sea life and the arrival of clear blue skies. Darambal countryman Malcom Mann (personal communication, 24 April, 2014), emphasised how the various seasonal changes confirmed that “the country speaks to you” to advise what
must happen at this time of year. Hence as the abundance of resources continued over the next period of the year, the Woppaburra took counsel from nature.

Given the plethora of cultural activities and natural occurrences over this period, the Aboriginal metaphysical worldview confirms a strong link between these events. The North Wind as a spiritual entity brings fertility and is a strong influence in the conception and location of birthing. In addition, the noted location of a bora ring on Konomie is situated with views to the north. This also coincides with initiation ceremonies further demonstrating a link to the importance of this time of the year. No doubt, it would be useful to have a continuous narrative of interconnected evidence to confirm such assertions. However, the disparate fragments give sufficient evidence to construct likely connections. This is the reconstruction of a new understanding of traditional knowledges for this period of year. Contemporary Western practice dissect calendar years into months and seasons which is impractical for such discussions, and any blurring of boundaries leading into and out of this period are warranted because it is more representative of traditional practices and the interpretation of Elders’ view of cultural practices. Hence, finite distinctions between seasonal periods in the artwork are not provided and the transition to the western season of ‘summer’ is marked by an image showing the arrival of tang-o-i (turtles).

4.3.4 Tang-o-i (Turtle).

November marks the time of year when tang-o-i (turtles) are plentiful as they return to the Islands for egg laying. The common species for that the Woppaburra observed were flat-back, we-lun (green) and loggerhead turtles. Tang-o-i typically return to the same rookery each year. Gary Smith (personal communication, 23 April, 2013) discussed how turtle was an important part of the Woppaburra diet and how the Islanders would catch we-lun (the green turtle). He observed how Uncle Albert (Munkwadran) would row towards a mid-sized turtle and dive

Figure 4.28. Tang-o-i return to lay eggs.
in holding the shell on either side before bringing it back to the surface. Those inside the boat would receive the turtle and humanely end its life. Uncle Gordon Barney (personal communication, May 28, 2016) advised how he still used this technique for catching turtle until recently when age prevented him from continuing. Uncle Gary Smith (personal communication, April 23, 2013) also described how the Woppaburra collected eggs by walking along known hatcheries. He used a stick to locate cavities 30 -50cm below the disturbed soft sand. These were then dug up and collected for later feasting. Rookeries currently exist on Peak Island and smaller numbers exist on Leeke’s Beach and other northern oriented beaches in the Woppaburra Sea country. I have interpreted the Elders’ memory of the practice in the image above which was further incorporated into the wider ‘cultural mapping’ exhibited in this artwork. The Elders present at the unveiling of the artwork confirmed that the images of tang-o-i were consistent with their visualisations of the practice of hunting and collecting.

In the northern part of Konomie, a site has been observed that is referred to in the literature as an ‘increase site’ (McIntyre -Tamwoy & Harrison, 2004). Typically, this is a site giving clear vision to the seas below to identify food sources such as tang-o-i. In a literal sense, it is a mount of rocks and includes remains from tang-o-i. In a spiritual sense, men called to ancestors to help with a prospective hunt. It is difficult to be certain, but interview data provided evidence about such sites, hunting methods and other connections with the Woppaburra. Aunty Glenice Croft (personal communication, June 21, 2016) stated how, as children, they were taught to request assistance from ancestors to catch turtles and “we used to say thank you when we even caught a fish”. The region is a noted site for tang-o-i arrivals and egg-laying. The currency of these events reflects the historic accounts provided. Social memory indicated that the Woppaburra men, both traditional and contemporary, hunted turtles and those providing recounts of doing so maintain a tradition practised since creation. Additionally, from artefacts exhibited in the homes of interview participants, emotive attachments that have been built between tang-o-i and the Woppaburra can be inferred. During the data collection phase, several interview participants described the mounted tang-o-i shells displayed in their homes as more than mere physical adornment, being a strong linkage back to memories of traditional hunting and collecting practices.
4.3.5 Garimal (Heat).

In December the weather warms. This is known as garimal (heat). The time of year is characterised by long hot days, high tides and the first onset of heavy rain. There is an increase in the number of cloudy days, which the Woppaburra call ‘burum’. During this time, research participants advised that fresh water is freely available and travel between islands for resources is due to the abundance of food sources. The plants flowering and fruiting in the last months still provide enough sustenance to maintain the clan, and turtles are common on specific beaches. The image shows the method of inter-island travel using a pandanus log as buoyancy. The historical accounts of travel between islands using such logs and canoes were also confirmed by Elders. Aunty Glenice Croft (personal communication, June 21, 2016) recalled that her grandfather told her about dreaming paths between islands and “even at Hervey Bay showed us how to make a canoe”. This travel was likely to take advantage of the abundance of turtle eggs before the constant heat developed the turtle eggs into hatchlings. The dataset indicated that at this time of year, ceremony would have ceased, movements between islands would decline and the Woppaburra are content to maintain a presence on one island before cyclone season commenced. The transition into wet season commenced and became more intense through the early parts of the Western New Year.

Figure 4.29. Garimal – Hot days, high tides, first onset of heavy rain.
4.3.6 Yamal (Rain) – Dana (Humid).

The start of this period is known as Yamal (rain) and its end is called Dana (humid). Heavy rains and high humidity are common over this time which are conditions essential for the hatching of tang-o-i. The turtle hatchlings usually exit at night and swim due north to deeper water assisted by the prevailing currents. Archival data indicated that winds tend from the southeast. This creates powerful wave action with strong associated tides. The northern and western parts of the islands and beaches became the refuge for the Woppaburra during these months. The associated artwork indicates the themes drawn from interview data which detailed the northward movement of tang-o-i, a further reference to the ‘Northern’ features prominent in the culture of the Woppaburra. Tang-o-i has a specific spiritual meaning as a personal totem, meaning those members with this totem would not hunt or participate in any preparation or consumption of the sea creature (Robert Muir, personal communication, March 19, 2016). Having said this, tang-o-i were and are still an important part of the diet of the contemporary Woppaburra. The distinction here is between clan and individual totems. The data set indicated broad agreement for the importance of Mugga mugga, being held with reverence and having a close association with multiple aspects of Woppaburra’s culture and lifestyles. In contrast, individual

![Figure 4.30. Mugga Mugga, clan totem of the Woppaburra.](image)

![Figure 4.31. Yamal and Dana](image)
totems such as the tang-o-i are hunted and eaten by all of the Woppaburra, save for those with that individual totem. The depiction of broken shells is consistent with data themes built around the capture and consumption of this sea mammal.

4.3.7 Waku (Oysters).

The artwork symbolically indicated that, at the commencement of April on the Roman calendar, tides are still large and hence, low tides give easy access to exposed reefs for the start of the prolific waku (oyster) season. This time of year is also known for an abundance of fish species. The rain reduces, winds drop and the nights get cooler. Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) advised that by the end of May, some sections of country are appropriate for burning as the moisture content and low winds ensure a slow burn. This helps to generate fresh shoots after winter and more visible access to wildlife. Possums and koalas were available prior to colonisation, but goats were common thereafter. The first full moon (ba-pam) after the last rains indicate the commencement of oyster season. Aunty Glenice Croft (personal communication, June 21, 2016) during the May 27 festival commented on the “oysters Gordon got us, they were so big”. Waku were an important food source and so abundant that the first settlers forced the Woppaburra to gather these for sale at the Emu Park oyster saloon. The process of labouring for settlers produced artefacts that are, ironically, an important symbolic attachment point for the Woppaburra today.

The sense that ancestors used such implements serves as a tangible link to past people and practices. An oyster shucking tool belonging to ‘Oyster Maggie’ was given to direct descendants by museum staff during a 2013 visit to the National Museum. The apical ancestor, ‘Oyster Maggie’, was given this name by James Lucas due to her dexterity opening oysters. Similarly, fishing nets were viewed and manipulated by the men at

Figure 4.32. Waku – Historical and cultural association with the Woppaburra.

26 The Queenslander, 5 September, 1902, p. 22, described them as “The largest fattest rock oysters I have ever seen…a variety known as the ‘Keppel Island Oyster’, a few of which are found on the rocks of Point Lookout Stradbroke Island.
this time. The women cradled the artefact as a ‘living’ item and wept openly while the men were in awe of the items which had not been observed by the Woppaburra for over 100 years. Along with these items were a harpoon, bark canoes, human hair, twine, fish hooks and jewellery. The reactions to physical artefacts are difficult to describe. As a connecting symbol between past and present, each person perhaps imagined their ancestors gathering raw materials, carefully constructing the item and using the artefact for the intended purpose. Observations made at this time indicated that, more than a nostalgic connection to old wares, this was a personal association where descendants took on the role of their ancestors with these artefacts.

The narratives, photos and family heirlooms which permeate the lives of contemporary Woppaburra are well known to family members. However, museum artefacts symbolically represented in the artwork presented a connection to ancestors that had not been observed previously. It is clear that artefacts which were part of the daily lives of the traditional Woppaburra also have an intangible presence. The data set indicated the Woppaburra’s connection to these artefacts, through interviews and the positioning of these in prominent places within their home environments. The discussion and placement of such implements show an emotional, spiritual and organic link. These items contain the sweat and blood of ancestors that have been embedded as part of their very being over a century ago. Aunty Chris Doherty (personal communication, 11 April, 2013) and Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, 23 February, 2013), carefully handled the women’s dilly bag and oyster shucking tool but both women commented about how hair, as an organic material, is considered the most important artefact to the traditional and contemporary Woppaburra. This was due to its being part of a human being and, by association, containing the spirit and memory of relatives.

The interview data indicated that the Woppaburra believe that aside from the social narratives passed down through family, other artefacts convey messages, stories and attachments that are difficult to qualify. Malcolm Mann (personal communication, 24 April, 2014) stated that the country and everything associated with it will ‘talk to you’ but it requires that you ‘listen’. The intangible relationship between the Woppaburra and ‘country’ was observed while conducting interviews in the relaxed demeanour and emotive expressions when referring to different aspects of ‘country’ (personal
observation, May 28, 2016). Interview data indicated that Uncle Vince Singleton always spoke to ancestors on arrival and departure from the islands. Similarly, the spiritual and emotional relationship with artefacts was confirmed by witnessing these items in the hands of the contemporary Woppaburra. The handling invoked a strong sense of connection to past ancestors and summoned relationships from a past era. This part of the connection with ancestors has lain dormant for over a century but has been exhumed and re-awakened by these museum artefacts. This has occurred through the spirit and essence of ancestors contained within the artefacts. Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, 18 February, 2013) spoke of visualising ancestors using these items and placing herself in their position. This connection, though difficult to narrate, was an authentic linkage to the past which overwhelmed the recipients. This attachment to ancestral artefacts, such as fishing nets, and ongoing participation in traditional hunting and gathering practices today, demonstrate that the Woppaburra have maintained significant cultural practices.

On a day to day basis, participants stated that the very nature of collecting oysters, fishing, making and repairing nets were ongoing practices through their lives. Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) visualised “grand-dad tying those knots” and Aunty Frances Gala (personal communication April 23, 2013) recalled the intricate fishing knowledge of the Woppaburra. It is clear that their range of stories, memories, artefacts, pictures and other evidence combine to forge a link between traditional people and practice, and the identity of the Woppaburra today. This has been observed in recent decades with the Woppaburra returning to the islands, reinstituting these activities and reinforcing relationships to ancestors and country. This has also been observed to occur in line with times and seasons. For example, annual celebrations on Woppaburra land and sea country align with the coming of Mugga mugga and many Islanders participate in fishing, oyster-gathering and production of traditional tools. Traditionally, time spent producing tools and repairing nets was completed prior to the onset of the coldest period of the year when many fish are prolific.
4.3.8 Guriala (Sea–eagle).

The colder months with shorter days are best times for oyster-harvesting and the commencement of mud crab collection. The oysters are full and continuing low tides allow much easier gathering. Mud crabs are scarce but become abundant at the end of August on the Roman calendar. Guriala (the large sea-eagle) is common and gural (mullet) migrate seaward from estuaries and shallow coastal flats. The Woppaburra expect good catches of sea mullet with surface nets. Winds start to blow from the west and lack the moisture of the summer winds. Fresh water becomes scarce and Islanders may travel between islands to access known permanent sources of water. A scar tree on Woppa is the result of canoe production, however Roth (1898) observed Islanders swimming using a pandanus log in an unusual formation as illustrated in Figure 4.29.

A constant theme developed as information from the study was collated for what started as a simple seasonal calendar. This was a growing evidence base of intimate knowledge of the natural environment and particularly of sea country. The artwork contains a number of contemporary practices and historical information gathered from study participants. Aunty Francis Gala (personal communication, April 23, 2013) stated how this information was kept within the family and the late Uncle Albert Peters “never trusted white fulla’s [sic] ... never ever. Always said he was friends with ‘em and that but he said, ‘Don’t trust ‘em’.” Aunty Francis Gala also spoke about how, “they stuck to themselves, they never went anywhere, bub. They never went to others’ places, they stayed with one another. And they were always with one another and other parts of the family” (personal communication, April 23, 2016). This indicated how the Islanders remained a close family unit and as a result, retained the knowledge of fishing practices and the environment within the family’s collective memory.
4.3.9 Sea country.

Aunty Frances Gala’s observations also emphasised the extensive knowledge of sea country, “you wouldn’t beat ‘em about the sea. Not about the movement of the ocean, nothing. Lived down here all them years. Couldn’t beat ‘em. Read the weather everything, what it was going to be like…[but] they never spoke much to other people about it” (personal communication, April 23, 2016). Aunty Frances Gala recalled the fishing nets being strung from one side of the yard to the other and the men repairing them before being treated with tar to preserve them from oxidation (personal communication, April 23, 2013). Throughout the discussion, Aunty Francis was careful to point out that some things are strictly men’s business and “you should ask Gary about that”. Garry Smith (personal communication, April 23, 2013) gave some further information gathered as a man participating in fishing activities. He described Uncle Albert as “the best fisherman in Hervey Bay…he’d get up on the mast of the boat and see things, birds and fish and things. He could see a school of fish five miles away. He never really looked at other animals, just fish, mud crabs and stuff yeh…” (Garry Smith, personal communication, April 23, 2013). Much of the knowledge passed down to Elders was about the identification of signs or changes in the natural environment. The knowledge was passed down informally through participation in activities for most descendants and, more particularly, for men. The artwork depicts several cultural artefacts and totems, which is now a contemporary artefact itself that contains a representation of the data gathered from Elders. Elder Aunty Glenice Croft (personal communication, June 21, 2016) stated that the image might rightly be viewed as a form of cultural mapping or a contemporary representation of traditional practice.
4.3.10 Summary.

A range of evidence collected as part of Yin’s (2009) case study method has demonstrated that the Woppaburra are a distinct population with many practices that are unique and worthy of analysing and recording. The data has shown that while Elders have extensive knowledge of recent family connections, archival data has given specific data of family groups, traditional names and the number of people who were residing on the islands during the colonial period. Interestingly, taboos associated with knowledge such as who has the right to hold knowledge and the types of questioning appropriate in cultural context is a protocol that has survived for well over a century. In addition, sea-based activities practiced throughout the lives of Elders are similar to traditional practices identified in archival reports by the ‘Protector of Aborigines’ Walter Roth (1898). This indicated a maintenance of unique practices which were achieved in some cases by using artefacts such as fishing nets and spears. Similar artefacts were uncovered in the visit to the Australian museum in 2013. A range of archival photographs also contributed to the data set giving a strong triangulation of evidence and a comprehensive account of the cultural representation of the Woppaburra.

The Woppaburra’s uniqueness was due to isolation and their specific cultural practices. My attempt to capture the Woppaburra case through data has been presented as both a textual treatment of available data related to the Woppaburra and a visual representation. What started as an artistic seasonal calendar has been developed into a cultural map. The images drawn from the data based on Elder collective memories have been represented on the artwork. Importantly, the Elders’ viewing of the images contained on the canvas were validated or confirmed as being consistent with how they had imagined and remembered those practices as young people. The discussion bridged a gap between traditional and contemporary practices and beliefs, demonstrating the extent to which these beliefs have been maintained and reinforced. Even though the Woppaburra have been removed from their homeland for more than a century, the representation of their ancestral past and their present lives shows who they are culturally. The chapter opened with a quotation from Kovac (2006, p. 99) who suggested that “cultural production of the period as having exclusively an imperialistic agenda”.
This section has presented a counter-narrative which has faithfully represented the data set drawn primarily from Elders’ interviews.

In the second section of this chapter I used the metaphor of symbols in a cultural map to describe connections between the Woppaburra and their metaphysical world. I discussed an empirical basis from the study data for representing the Woppaburra’s understanding of their cultural worldview. As a metaphor it described various images and symbols to demonstrate the connection between the spiritual and physical world (Kelly, 2016). D.H. Lawrence (1998) stated that “some images, in the course of many generations of men, become symbols, embedded in the soul and ready to start alive when touched, carried on in the human consciousness for centuries” (p. 318). This notion is similar to the Yolgnu concept at the start of this chapter, of how ancestors leave a footprint or some cultural or spiritual essence for contemporary kin to reconnect or find the pathway towards their ancestors. The Woppaburra have this footprint through the abstract symbols drawn from the interviews with Elders which have been represented on the artwork. These representations are without temporal restrictions, however western historiography is bound in chronological systems. The following chapter will answer the research question of who the Woppaburra were historically. It will be loosely grouped in time periods as extensive archival material has been gathered and ordered chronologically. While Indigenous Standpoints rejects this as a primary consideration, the liberation of the voices of the Woppaburra through this discourse is the gold to be sought. The chapter commences with the earliest sightings of westerner seafarers through the waters of the Woppaburra’s sea country.
Chapter 5

Woppaburra History

5.1 Introduction

In this section I have constructed a version of the history of the Woppaburra from a balanced perspective, more inclusive of Aboriginal people’s position in written history. This was constructed by drawing from the empirical data uncovered through archival and broader research. Government documents which were particularly useful as they were not customarily available for public viewing, hence they exposed more liberal interpretations of colonial interactions. The evidentiary data is drawn primarily from historical newspapers and government archives to illustrate the colonial interactions between the Woppaburra and the ‘white invaders’. I have analysed these documents and historical public newspapers and ‘read between the lines’ to reconstruct a counter-narrative of our history. How this is developed draws from the principles listed in Chapter 3 regarding Indigenous standpoint theory (IST) and critical discourse analysis. This section follows the case study approach established in this study to focus on the unique case of the Woppaburra using a variety of archival data, but I will also use photographs and maps to discuss the history of the Woppaburra. The tenor of the text will be discussed in what Martin (2003) described as an Aboriginal way of knowing, by the processes of “listening, sensing, viewing, reviewing reading [and] allowing it to expand and contract according to social, political, historical and spatial dimensions of individuals, the group and interactions with outsiders” (p. 9). I will also highlight the discourse used to describe the Woppaburra, but importantly, the motives that underpin this text and terminology. Such an analysis and interpretation allowed the construction of a counter-narrative to understand who the Woppaburra were historically.

Early historical accounts are almost void of Aboriginal voices. Fortunately the values and intent behind the written words has highlighted sufficient evidence to gain a sense of the Woppaburra’s position during the physical and cultural incursion by colonisers. The data demonstrated that initial contact was respectful and courteous. However, there followed a stealthy encroachment onto the Woppaburra’s islands and
lifestyles and a relentless pursuit and destruction of natural and human resources. I will present evidence of how this unfolded by first outlining an account of the seafaring incursions through Ganumi Bara by British explorers. While Cook and Flinders sailed past Ganumi Bara with little fanfare, they were simply mapping the coastline and endeavouring to identify arable land, good water and areas suitable for settlement. The subsequent explorers and settlers believed they had a legal right of dispossession throughout the next 200 years until the Mabo No.2 case in the Australian High Court dispelled the myth of terra nullius or ‘land belonging to no-one’. The archival data showed how the Archer family initially encroached upon the lands of the Darambal people at Rockhampton in Central Queensland just south of the Fitzroy River, and soon after, other settlers such as Robert Ross, moved north and east to claim the lands of the Woppaburra. After a series of tragic events including massacres, neglect and maltreatment, the Woppaburra were eventually taken from their homelands and transferred between various Queensland church missions and government reserves. They were to return eventually to their homeland after almost a century of absence.

This section is constructed in five parts. In the first part I outline the arrival of Captain James Cook in the barque, *Endeavour*, Mathew Flinders and other mariners who passed Ganumi Bara or made brief stopovers with limited interaction with the Woppaburra. Secondly, I discuss the development of the township of Rockhampton and the squatter incursion towards Ganumi Bara and eventual proprietorship. I will show how the major landholder, Robert Ross, took possession of Ganumi Bara for pastoral land and brutally disrupted the lifestyle of the Aboriginal people. In the third part I present evidence of maltreatment and slavery, followed by the application of the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld). This was an act of parliament intended to ‘protect’ the Aboriginal people, but instead resulted in further hardships for Woppaburra leading to their eventual removal from their islands. In the final part I have discussed the removal of the last Woppaburra from Woppa and other transfers between sites identified under the ‘Protection Act’. First, I will detail entries from Cook’s journal describing his exploration of the Queensland coastal area.
5.2 First Contact

On Friday May 25 in 1770, the barque, *Endeavour*, rounded Cape Capricorn on the north-eastern tip of Curtis Island, named due to the proximity of the Tropic of Capricorn (Cook, 2015). Cook entered the bay and noted that the northern land “appeared to be an island”. This was Hummocky Island north-west of Cape Capricorn. Cook dropped anchor in 12 fathoms and on the morning of 26 May described the position as “having mainland and all islands in a manner all around us” with a tide difference of 7 feet (2.1 metres) (Cook, 2015). Cook also noted the passage between the outermost islands (Woppa) and the main [land] with several small islands between. The depth ranged from 12-4 fathoms (20-7 metres) which prompted Cook to send a boat ahead to sound the depth. The *Endeavour* drew 14 feet (just over 4 metres), so caution was necessary as he investigated further. Cook was not to know that the entire bay was a mass of shoals that would make progress difficult. He saw smoke on the mainland with obvious human inhabitation and assumed a river entrance. This would most likely have been the communal fire of the Darambal clan group. However, there is no record of his sighting the Darambal people as, due to the bay’s shallow waters, Cook resisted further investigation from the mothership.

Cook sent a master and two boats to explore a passage through the bay which was found to have a depth of between 9-15 fathoms (16-27 metres). The passage veered in a northerly direction before running out between Woppa and Konomie (the now-named North and South or Great Keppel Islands). At this point Cook declared, the “large bay… I call’d Keppel Bay and the islands that lay in and off it are known by the same name” (MacGillivray & Stanley, 1852, chapter 8). He named them in honour of Augustus Keppel, a British Royal Navy officer and Vice-Admiral. Although he “caught no fish here” he considered it a useful anchorage and was sure it afforded fresh water due to the smoke observed by day and the fires by night upon the mainland and one of the islands (Cook, 2015). The fire indicated the presence of people and hence occupation on at least one of the islands. A constant fire would have been present at the Woppaburra’s camp as they were approaching the winter months. While noting the presence of human activity, Cook listed no description or details of the people involved in that activity. Similarly,
interview data from Woppaburra Elders provided no evidence through social memory of a record of this early voyage. There is no further evidence of contact until 1802.

The data speaks to the intentions of the first explorers and their attitude towards the Woppaburra. An analytic perspective on these data has shown, as in Said’s (1978) observation, the imperial attitude of the period. Cook’s journal of 1770 stated that he sailed in the proximity of Woppa and Konomie and weighed anchor on 26 May, ironically the date of the now celebrated ‘Sorry Day’, a commemoration of the mistreatment of Aboriginal people and the forced removal of Aboriginal children during the nineteenth and twentieth century. The visit was not to be the commencement of a conciliatory relationship for the Woppaburra and the European visitors. Cook’s first action was to rename the islands after a British naval officer, Augustus Keppel, and, in one action, erased the history and common law rights of the Woppaburra. The traditional names of the two main islands and bay were not investigated and their summary dismissal instigated a process of exploitation of people and resources which was to last for over 100 years. Broadly, Cook’s explorations were limited to claiming ownership through imperial naming conventions but this still left many questions over the physical mapping of the continent and coastline.

The impetus for further investigation of the coastline was based on the unknown answer to the question of whether the territories of the Dutch New Holland (1606) and Cook’s New South Wales (1770) were physically connected. Archival data indicated that Mathew Flinders with strong support from Joseph Banks who had been a botanist travelling on the Endeavour, mounted a strong case to solve this mystery and were funded to map the coastline. In his vessel, the Investigator, Flinders passed Cape Capricorn on 10 August 1802 seeking water and wood (Lee, 1915). During this discovery voyage of an attempted circumnavigation of Australia, he was ably assisted by the tender, Lady Nelson, a survey vessel. Both vessels proceeded to sail towards Keppel Bay upon dusk on 10 August:

At half-past 8 P.M. fired a gun and hoisted a light at the masthead which was answered by the Investigator. By midnight came to with the small bower about 2 cables lengths from the Commodore. At daylight hoisted in our boat, on the
Commodore getting underway, we did the same. At half-past 9 A.M. passed in between the Rocky Island and Cape Capricorn. At half-past 10 Captain Flinders hailed us and told us to try for a passage in between some rocks and the main of Keppel's Bay (Lee, 1915, p.3).

The vessels’ logbooks indicated that both vessels travelled near Keppel Bay and crewmen went ashore on the southernmost part of the Hummocky Island. The notes in the logbooks of the Lady Nelson described the island as being full of low shrubs, grass and many stones but they found some water on the east side. Flinders also noted the existence of crab shells, turtle bones and remains of fern roots around ‘native’ fireplaces. These data indicated the presence of the Woppaburra living on a diet of seafood and tubers. The volume of meat in a nominal turtle would indicate the presence of at least a large family group at this site. The *Investigator*, having a deeper draft, tacked east and cleared the bay by 4 pm on 18 August. The *Lady Nelson* however, with a shallower draft, sailed inside the bay and past a “large inhabited island”, likely to have been Woppa, and “by noon passed abreast the northernmost island”.

Lieutenant Grant of the *Lady Nelson* stated in the logbooks that on the northern island they “observed two natives on the highest part of it bellowing to us, no canoes in sight” (Lee, 1915, p. 3). This observation indicated that the Woppaburra had been willing to make contact with those they saw in the *Lady Nelson*. Grant also discussed landing on one of the islands and finding fresh water (Lee, 1915, p. 3). The reference to canoes assumes that Grant’s prior experience is that Islanders are likely to travel between islands and the mainland. In both cases, the reports are referring to Woppa and Konomie due to fresh water access and resources required for habitation. The data also makes reference to water depths, channels, rocks and reefs. As a data gathering exercise, the process initiated the first steps of the colonial practice of claiming a continent. It laid the foundation for further investigation by keeping recorded data for future explorations and possible exploitation.

The early sightings of the Woppaburra by seafarers, make it unclear if there were two separate family clans on the islands or if they were the same clan/family group located on different islands due to seasonal availability of resources. However, the
interaction does give an indication of the feeling of the traditional people towards foreign vessels. ‘Two natives bellowing’ to the British assumes a friendly or at least inquisitive relationship not yet tainted by violence or hostile interactions. The British, on the other hand, are following a pattern of decades of exploration, conquest and exploitation, already imposed on African continental countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, South Africa as well as on India and the Americas. In Australia, the British followed a process of resource acquisition and exploitation that was carefully planned and executed. Both Cook and Flinders focused on the availability of fresh water, a mandatory requirement for future inhabitation. The notations in both explorers’ journals also described the foliage or flora required for the construction of future settlements. It was a carefully rehearsed plan played out through all British colonies and included the listing of resources for future exploitation and level of the possible resistance by the current occupants. The deception of the explorers was cloaked in the concept of being friendly visitors. The future plans of British explorers were not obvious to the Woppaburra who innocently attempted to greet the new arrivals.

In the years after Flinders’ excursion, several other exploratory vessels passed. However, little information was recorded about the islands or about the Woppaburra and their practices. On 1 June 1819, Lieutenant P.P. King, accompanied by Alan Cunningham in the vessel, Mermaid, sailed through Keppel Bay and again in 1821, King and Cunningham made a similar journey in the Bathurst (Morning Bulletin, 19 September, 1947, p. 3). Just over ten years later on 17 May 1832, H.M. Brig Zebra arrived off Woppa and was “boarded by a Chief in his canoe, who stated two white men were on the island” (Sydney Herald, 19 July 1832, p. 2). Captain Mackmurdo ordered their capture and the following day identified the two men. The first was Maguire who was previously on the seized ship Cyprus out of Hobart and the second, James Palmer, a crown prisoner who had escaped from Sydney in the ship Hashmy (Sydney Herald, 19 July 1832, p. 2). These men were promptly detained and immediately returned to Sydney.

Although Aboriginal people did not have chiefs, the British assumed a hierarchical structure based on their own lines of authority. Again, the Woppaburra had little hesitation making contact with British ships, either through inquisitiveness or a
desire to assist the stranded sailors. It would have been a gesture of good will to return
the lost travellers to their people, but the usual response should have been a form of
reciprocal obligation or some recompense for this gesture but archival data indicated no
evidence of this. The actions of the Woppaburra showed no fear of foreigners at this point
but I suggest a sense of confusion that these explorers lacked the courtesy expected in the
Woppaburra’s culture. After feeding and caring for two white men for several months,
some form of recompense would have been expected but was not forthcoming.

No doubt periodic seafarers bypassed the islands over the next 15 years, however,
it was not until December 1847 that further record of British contact was made with the
Woppaburra. The survey vessel, Rattlesnake, met with foul weather on 21 December, and
was forced to seek anchorage inside Woppa. She took shelter in a known anchorage and
recorded 5 fathoms (9 metres) with a sandy bottom (MacGillivray & Stanley, 1852). The
anchorage, being on the north shore of Woppa, provided good coverage from the
prevailing winds from the southeast. Upon daybreak, they were surprised to see a reef
barely a quarter of a mile leeward of the ship where the existing charts (likely drawn by
Flinders) had shown ‘safe anchorage’. The area was described as a rocky reef and coral
outcrop which lay uncovered at half-tide. This description is consistent with the now
named Leeke’s Beach and Half-tide Rocks. The vessel stayed for three days until storms
passed and some of its crew, including John MacGillivray, a naturalist, made an
investigation of Woppa.

John MacGillivray landed on Woppa on 21 December 1847. He initially found
the island to consist of poor stony or sandy ground (MacGillivray & Stanley, 1852) but
still took some time to investigate the island’s features. He stated:

the ground [was] thinly covered with tufts of coastal grass. Behind a long sandy
beach, abreast of the ship, there was a mangrove swamp to which the flood tide
gave admittance by salt water creeks. In this were the usual inhabitants of the
coastal swamps- climbing perch and crabs. I came upon one small well, and
beside it a large shell for the purpose of drinking from. I followed the recent
tracks of two natives, but they concealed themselves among the mangroves, with
their usual caution, although armed with spears, as I could see by the marks left
during their hurried flight, and they knew I was alone. A small group of women and children were afterwards met with by a shooting party from the ship, but they ran off affrighted, leaving behind their baskets which were filled with a small blue gregarious crab, common upon the sandy beaches… (MacGillivray & Stanley, 1852, Chap. 1.2)

The text indicates two features. The identification of resources such as fresh water and food, essentials for human survival and the ‘fearlessness’ of British explorers. MacGillivray, as a simple naturalist, infers that he scared the natives away perhaps due to his ‘superior’ presence, ‘they knew he was alone and they carried spears’. His courage is questionable given that traditionally only men carried hunting and fighting weapons but in this account only a woman and children were found. The marks left were likely to have been made by digging sticks and not spears as the Woppaburra were gathering food due to the description of baskets filled with crabs. MacGillivray also stated that soon afterwards the ‘shooting party’ from the ship confronted the group. It is also stated that the Woppaburra acted with ‘caution’ upon the arrival of sailors’. There is no written evidence of conflict in the ship’s journal and any wrongdoing is unlikely to be recorded in the logs but it can be seen that the disposition of the Islanders has moved from inquisitiveness to caution particularly due to the small group being women and children.

The first seafarers were clearly exploratory and temporary. However, given the more regular arrival of male-dominated vessels, competition for resources and possible exploitation of the Woppaburra women by seafarers, it appears that the local people were weary of increasing numbers of outside intruders.

In late 1859, Captain Sinclair in the vessel Santa Barbara, arrived on islands scoping for the likely water sources and the capacity to hold sheep (Sydney Morning Herald, December 13, 1859, p.9). In a brief interaction with the locals, Sinclair observed several camps and how the Woppaburra showed no fear when “they came down upon us in the morning, screaming and shaking their spears” (Sydney Morning Herald, December 13, 1859, p. 9). The Woppaburra who were initially inquisitive when Cook arrived, moved to a disposition of caution after several more ships appeared and eventually to a demeanour of anger towards Sinclair upon his arrival in 1859. The results borne out by
the archival data indicated that the Woppaburra resented the intrusions and had intentions of resisting albeit with rudimentary weapons. The wave of frontier incursions were escalating but there was yet to be any permanent changes to the lives of the Woppaburra. This was about to change with movements towards permanent occupation and leasing of Woppa and Konomie.

The traditional lifestyle of the Woppaburra was no utopia as the interview data from some contemporary Elders would attempt to have us believe, but traditional life was predictable and relatively stable. The Woppaburra were aware of the presence of mainland clans and participated in occasional skirmishes but the predatory behaviour of the British sought to investigate and commence to exploit the useable resources of the islands, leading to inevitable anger and thus creating the basis for resistance. The results based on archival data indicate that there was limited contact, and geographic isolation left the Woppaburra reasonably intact as a family group. However, even this limited contact marked the islands as a prime asset for future pastoral use. In the following section I will present the data that provides evidence that land-based intrusions into the wider Darambal territory was the first steps towards later incursions onto Woppaburra country. The eventual incursions created major conflicts between the settlers and the Woppaburra. This data supports a position that the power imbalance contributed to the dominance of squatters and native police with technologically superior weapons such as firearms. This change in the historical position of the Woppaburra is the subject of the next section.

5.3 Land-based incursions towards Ganumi Bara

In 1844, Ludwig Leichhardt had been exploring inland routes through the central Queensland region mapping the Dawson and McKenzie Rivers but he was unclear about the river systems to the east and how they flowed into the ocean. Leichhardt had assumed they flowed into one common river which would indicate good country. He spent some time with Charles and William Archer at Durundur (near Woodford) and years later, the brothers, keen to take advantage of an expansion opportunity, travelled north with the assistance of two black trackers (Bird, 1903). On 4 May 1853 they sat on the coastal range seen by Flinders 51 years before and observed a fertile valley and a winding river
which made its way into the sea at Keppel Bay (Bird, 1903). They travelled seven miles north from the bottom of the range and named the tidal river they encountered as the Fitzroy. Soon after, in 1855, a section covered in rocks which restricted further travel upstream was named Rockhampton by Mr. H. Wiseman, the Crown Lands Commissioner. The Archers returned in 1856 as squatters, to lay claim to a huge run at Gracemere around 2331 km² located just south of the Fitzroy River. Shortly after, another brother, Colin Archer, with a Norwegian shipbuilding heritage, oversaw the building of a 5-ton cutter called the *Elida* at Maryborough to supply the Archers’ property at Gracemere. He filled it with supplies and with two crewmen sailed through Keppel Bay and into the Fitzroy for the first time (Bird, 1903). The entrance of the Fitzroy river is south of Ganumi Bara therefore it is unlikely that any contact was made with the Woppaburra as the Archers were developing their pastoral empire.

Rockhampton at this time was developing as a town and port for the carriage of wool. Bullock drays filled with wool were dissecting the broader Darambal Nation with wide tracks being cut through the scrub disrupting and disturbing the local Aboriginal people. The steady influx of people in the late 1850s and displacement of the sizable Darambal population caused conflicts needing immediate resolution. Settlers demanded protection at their homesteads and while they transported their commodities to the Rockhampton wharves. The schooner *Enterprise* was one of the first to support the expanding wool industry out of Rockhampton. On its exit from the Fitzroy it was met “by a boat manned with Native Police, under Lieutenant Freudenthal” who had come up from Gladstone (*The Brisbane Courier*, April 12, 1924, p. 18). The arrival of the violent Native Police Force, described as a military style junta, initiated the decimation of the Darambal people (*The Brisbane Courier*, April 12, 1924, p. 18). This coincided with the 1858 Canoona Gold Rush just 56 kilometres north of Rockhampton that brought a further 16 000 people to the area on a number of steamships. The new arrivals quickly dispossessed the Darambal people of their lands. However, many miners had disappeared by 1859 as the rush died out (Rowland, 2004).

The prospectors who remained north of Rockhampton exhausted smaller alluvial gold discoveries at Morinish, Ridgelands, Crocodile Creek and Cawarral (Queensland
Parliamentary Votes and Proceedings, 1884). Gold was a stimulus for rapid settlement and it created the impetus to seek further transportation hubs. Captain Sinclair was offered this task of seeking a new port and travelled from Sydney in the schooner, *Santa Barbara*, hoping to receive a finder’s reward. In September, 1859, he provided an extensive overview of Ganumi Bara, its water sources and its capacity to hold sheep (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 December 1859, p. 9). In a brief interaction with the local Woppaburra, he observed several camps and described how Islanders acted with aggression towards the party (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 December 1859, p. 9). No doubt stories of shooting parties and maltreatment27 were shared with the Woppaburra who spoke the same language as their mainland brothers. However, as an explorative venture, the arrival was rare as even steamships bypassed the islands in search of commercial activities along the Fitzroy River. By December 1859, when the declaration of the new state of Queensland was made, the islands were considered to be economically unimportant and their isolation gave some measure of safety for the Woppaburra.

In contrast, Rockhampton as the key settlement close to Ganumi Bara was considered an important site due to its safe haven for steamers that cruised up the Fitzroy River to deliver supplies to the new settlement and to carry goods back to Brisbane. Settlers increasingly encountered the Darambal people, a sister clan of the Woppaburra, who occupied this region down to the settlements now named as the towns of Emu Park and Yeppoon. Initially the settler development was confined to the Gracemere and central Rockhampton region. However, ongoing encroachment onto Darambal lands towards the coastal region instigated further hostile interactions with the local Darambal people. Although they shared the same language, the Woppaburra were quite different from their mainland counterparts. The Woppaburra had a strong sea-based culture and were geographically isolated. This isolation gave a measure of protection in the early years due to the limited available boating access. However, as water transport improved and squatters sought to expand their empires, historical newspapers showed that the

27 Colonial powers neglected to record the slaughter of Aboriginal people when areas were settled. Elder (1988) in ‘Blood on the Wattle’ gives several accounts of the brutal practices of Native Police upon entering newly developing areas in colonial Australia.
Woppaburra were soon to have regular contact with mainlanders eager to exploit the islands (Morning Bulletin, 17 January 1903, p. 6).

The period from 1859 until 1901 was characterised by an increase in intruders to Woppa and Konomie. The historical newspaper data supports the assertion that the Woppaburra initially did not fear seafaring ‘white’ men (The Courier, February 26, 1864) and first visits appeared to be for exploration leading to more calculated inspection to identify the resources that the islands could offer. It was a period of squattocracy, and the archival data indicated that the seizure of any viable pastures was escalating at a rapid rate. A strong push to acquire any workable land had moved from the plains around central Rockhampton, down along the banks of the Fitzroy River to Emu Park, the key departure point to Woppa and Konomie. The colonial powers had mercilessly slaughtered the Darambal mainlanders in this area (Rockhampton Bulletin, August 2, 1899) by installing a military style punitive police force with little regulation or reporting mechanisms. In 1859, the newly formed Queensland government intensified this system of justice by using the Native Mounted Police as their front line of attack.

The Queensland Native Mounted Police was known as a well-drilled, military style killing troop. The Darambal people of the Rockhampton area bore the brunt of frontier violence, however fortunately for the Woppaburra there was a distance of 15km between the shores of Emu Park to the beaches of Woppa. This water barrier gave them some protection. Fortuitously for the Woppaburra, as Queensland was a fledgling colony there were limited capacity and funds for government officials to acquire suitable vessels for travel to disrupt the Woppaburra’s lives. However, private landowners were not so financially restricted and the combination of a boat-owning, wealthy squatter named Robert Ross and the Native Police allowed for easy access to the reasonably protected lands of the Woppaburra. Robert Ross as a pioneer colonist had plans to control any pastoral competition or other interests by restricting access to the islands. This is the subject of the next section.

5.4 Access To and Occupation of Woppaburra Lands

In the years that followed these first contacts, the large tract of land north of the Fitzroy River towards the coast was known as the Cawarral Bullock Paddock and
incorporated the area of what is currently the township of Emu Park (Bird, 1903). The land covered the area from Rockhampton near Mt. Archer to the mouth of the Fitzroy River and up to the Shoal Bay causeway which is located about halfway between the current Emu Park and Yeppoon townships. Robert Ross, a Scottish man who arrived in Sydney in 1836, travelled north and laid claim to the Cawarral area around 1860. As one of the pioneer squatters in the area he ran cattle and sheep but also had a lease to grow sugarcane and coffee in an area around Emu Park (Smithwick, 1979). Engaging in agricultural farming meant priority access to South Sea Islander ‘slaves’. These labourers had been brought in by the Queensland government since 1863 specifically for this purpose (Polynesian Labourers Act, 1868). It was not long before Ganumi Bara became an object of further expansion and Ross, now one of the wealthiest squatters in the region, made his first excursion to the islands around 1865 (Morning Bulletin, 17 January 1903, p. 6).

J.T.S. Bird (1903), writing on the early history of Rockhampton in the Rockhampton Bulletin, recounts a story by Dr. W. Callaghan of an excursion to Konomie. It was written in a section titled “A Plucky Blackfellow” which set a jovial tone for the text, then subsequently described the group as, “Mr Robert Ross, Mr R. Spence, Dr. Callaghan, Lieutenant Compigne of the Native Police, two black trackers and four aborigines named Jack, Dundally, Tom, and Paddle-Nosed Peter. The party were all armed” (Bird, 1903, p. 6). They commenced in a boat from Cawarral Station, down Cawarral Creek to the mouth south of Emu Park and after camping overnight set sail at daybreak for Conomie Island. The party arrived on the southern shore around 7.00am on what was likely to have been Mazie Bay and after seeing no Islanders, traversed the island to the northern rocky outcrops past Considine Bay. In a cave they observed several women, who upon discovery, bolted for safety towards the sea. One unfortunate woman fell approximately 3 metres down the rocks and became injured. It was recorded:

Seeing this, one of the black fellows, probably the gin’s ‘Benjamin’28 jumped into the sea and swam back to his partner’s assistance. He soon got ashore and ran up to the injured woman. He half led and half carried her to the sea, and swam off.

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28 ‘Benjamin’ was a derogatory term for a ‘black’ man/husband in the nineteenth century.
with her to the distant rock, where he had previously been sheltered (Bird, 1903, p. 6).

The point being made was that an Islander returning to almost certain death had the courage to save his partner. The troopers were refused permission to shoot even though “troopers usually fired at the wild blacks on sight” (Bird, 1903, p. 6). The incident “quite charmed the white onlookers” (Bird, 1903, p. 6). Although armed, it is probable that Ross’s primary objective was not to engage in conflict in front of his invited guest Dr. Callaghan, but to cautiously scout out further expansion opportunities for his already extensive cattle and sheep properties.

The written account appears to show an innocent exploratory visit which included a humorous event. However, with the Woppaburra retreating to a far corner of the island instead of eagerly approaching boats as done previously, it would suggest some recent adverse treatment by settlers, boat parties or the native police. The history of the Native Police in central Queensland supports this assertion. Upon establishment of the town of Rockhampton in 1858, Captain Walter Powell was charged with progressing the Native Police station along the banks of the Fitzroy (Richards, 2008). Barely 10 years into settlement at Rockhampton, local newspapers indicated that there were few Aboriginal people living without the fear of the Native Police force and local settlers declared war on the Aboriginal people after uprisings during the mid-1860s (Rockhampton Bulletin, August 2, 1899). Bird’s (1903) text clearly expresses the ‘usual’ treatment of Aboriginal people indicating previous shootings and maltreatment through ruthless frontier pragmatism. In this environment, the respected Dr. Callaghan may have been exempt from witnessing any ‘unsavoury’ incidents on the island and as a consequence saw the venture as more explorative in nature.

An analysis of the newspaper’s textual data showed how the roles of the participants are clearly an indication of their intentions. Mr. Ross and Mr. R. Spence were pastoralists primarily running cattle in the Central Queensland area. Ross’ intention was to explore the island for viable pastures, identify a regular supply of water for livestock and assess the numbers of Aboriginal people who had the potential to disrupt his plans. Lieutenant Compigne of the Native Police is no doubt highly influenced by Ross, who as the owner of the boat, initially requested his company to travel to the island. The two black trackers were under the clear direction of their superior, Lieutenant Compigne, to carry out any orders of tracking down the illusive Islanders. Finally, the four Aboriginal men who accompanied the group would most likely be Native Police officers, given the description which stated that “the party were all armed” (Bird, 1903, p. 6). The presence of Dr. Callaghan, as a respected doctor and citizen of Rockhampton no doubt saved the Islanders from execution on this occasion. However, the newspaper data would lead us to surmise that the fear exhibited by the Woppaburra was due to previous hostile actions. The closest landholder, boat owner and firearms possessor was Robert Ross, although the archival data shows no evidence of a previous visitation.

Two years after Ross’ purported first visit to the islands in 1865, the Rockhampton Bulletin (April 4, 1867) reported his intention to form a cattle station on one of the Islands, after a visitation by some representatives previously. A week later, the...
Rockhampton Bulletin reported on the favourable condition for a grazing lease, rich soil, well grassed and a freshwater creek running the length of the island. The Rockhampton Bulletin also described a “diminutive race of blacks who inhabit the island ….and subsist chiefly on fish and roots…they are quite wild” (Rockhampton Bulletin, 9 April 1867, p. 2). It seems Ross was also concerned about the impact on his future grazing sheep by the Woppaburra if left unchecked. Following a further visit to the islands in 1867, Ross reportedly “counted 84 blacks in one place, when he drove them into a cave” (The Capricornian, 10 November 1883, p. 15). It is difficult to determine the accuracy of this estimate given that Ross visited for one day. It is also unclear how he conducted this count or of his intention of driving people into a cave. Conversely, the Woppaburra had no reason to escape Ross’ small group unless they were aware of, and fearful of the impact of firearms.

Newspaper data indicated that just three years prior in 1864, Commander James Jeffries had camped on Woppa, in the area of Long Beach, for a period of four months while making his survey of the coast in the colonial schooner, Pearl. He estimated that there were “not more than thirty aboriginals…and never saw more than ten at one time” as they seemed “shy and too much frightened to come near his tent” (Rockhampton Bulletin, 29 December 1870, p. 2). A naval officer with clear orders to survey Ganumi Bara sea country is unlikely to have attempted an extensive exploration of the island itself which may account for the discrepancy in population numbers. Commander Jefferies, as a naval man, would likely have carried firearms but he did not report any adverse interactions with the Woppaburra.

Robert Ross had different motives. He pressed ahead with his plans to assume occupancy of Woppa and Konomie. The Rockhampton Bulletin (26 October, 1867) stated that, “two of those islands- North and South Keppel are held by lessees of the coastal
runs, the former by Mr Young\textsuperscript{30} and the latter by Messrs Ross and Co. who intend to stock them as soon as practicable”(p. 2). Young obtained a ‘Permit to Occupy’ Konomie in November, 1866 just after Ross was granted a 5-year lease over Woppa in August 1866. The ‘permit to occupy’ simply gave access to the lands and excluded other settlers which may have been Ross’ intention. It allowed him to simply ‘lock up’ the district and prevent others from seizing grazing opportunities and limiting competition in the meat and wool markets. Giving no secure title over land, a ‘permit to occupy’ could be revoked at any time. It appears that although he signalled his intention to stock the islands (\textit{Rockhampton Bulletin}, April 4, 1867), the acquisition may simply have been a strategy to secure the land until other more secure forms of leasehold or freehold tenure were available.

Ross’ partners were C.E. Beddome and Sir Arthur Palmer, an MLA for Port Curtis 1866-1878 and Commissioner for Lands 1866-1869. Ross strategically aligned himself with Palmer to be granted some favour due to the upcoming and more restrictive Crown Lands Alienation Act 1868 (Qld). Up to this point in time, early settlers simply marked out huge tracts of crown land and ‘squatted’ to graze livestock and although initially having no legal rights to the land, they dispossessed Aboriginal people and claimed its usage by being the first European settlers in the region. However, the golden age of squattocracy was coming to an end and governments legislated for more control over what they perceived as crown lands. Ross’ strategy of having a government official as a partner to influence the tenure of land holdings was unsuccessful as the Mackenzie government was voted out in late 1868, thereby reducing Palmer’s influence. Regardless of this setback, Ross’ domination of the area was clear as several residents were arrested for trespassing on the beaches of his selection around Emu Park while seeking refuge from the hot Rockhampton climate (Ganter, 1985).

Neither Ross’s insistence on criminally charging trespassers nor his partnership with the Commissioner of Lands could halt the movement of residents to the seaside town of Emu Park. As a result, Rockhampton residents petitioned to develop Hewitville,

\textsuperscript{30} Regina Ganter in her Honours thesis on Great Keppel Island (1985) believed Young was an employee or acted on Ross’ behalf due to information in several letters to Surveyors General office in late 1866 describing useful land on islands “immediately opposite our station.”
as it was then known, as a ‘Watering Place’ which was established as a township in 1865. Although Ross opposed this development, the area was effectively excised from his land. Early in 1869, after the election loss of the Mackenzie government, the site was gazetted as the town reserve of Emu Park. The town was visible from Gamumi Bara but was previously only accessible by travelling through Ross’ property. When Ross lost the battle against excision it increased traffic to Emu Park via a route from Rockhampton running through his lease. Ross’ obvious displeasure with this arrangement allowed him to negotiate the extension of his existing lease northwards to Farnborough as compensation (Voss, 1951). By 1870 he took in the area of Taranganba and around Yeppoon, which was already established as a town in 1867. This huge tract of land ran parallel with Ganumi Bara and further expanded Ross’ empire.

Ross’ family was arguably the most affluent in the area and empires such as these were successful only with a useful supply of cheap labour and access to strong markets. As a result of his further expansion of his pastoral lease, labour needs increased. Ganumi Bara appeared to house a contained population that met these needs.

5.5 Woppaburra Labour and Mistreatment

The dataset primarily drawn from local Rockhampton archival newspapers described the Woppaburra as a source of labour from a Western colonial perspective. In this perspective, the position of the Woppaburra moved from the social status of inconvenient occupiers of newly acquired crown land to that of people who were to be a source of labour in the interest of the colonists. The Woppaburra themselves moved from traditional owners of the islands to objects of exploitation. This was due to the influence of pioneer squatter Robert Ross. In general, the key reason that squatters such as Ross developed property around the Rockhampton area was to build stock numbers, fatten herds and make profits through sales on an ongoing basis. Economically, this could only be done in frontier areas with a large submissive workforce. The Darambal people in Rockhampton were in an ongoing state of conflict, often described as a frontier war (Reynolds, 1982, 1987a; Connor, 2002), with local graziers over access to traditional lands and water sources. And though it would have been useful for squatters if the local Darambal population worked on ‘their’ properties, in reality the uneasy co-existence
extended for a number of decades after first contact. While it is generally believed that some squatters such as the Archers treated Aboriginal people with respect and had workable relationships with them (Reynolds, 1987a), Robert Ross viewed the Woppaburra as either a source of labour or a hindrance for his pastoral plans for the islands.

Considering the lack of a permanent manager on the islands, treating the Woppaburra as a labour source, who would be tempted to kill his sheep, would be risky.

Archival data suggested that Ross’ initial assessment of the Islands as a potential grazing property made it attractive for him to run sheep from 1866 (Rockhampton Bulletin, 26 October 1867) until the acquisition of the lease by Rockhampton solicitor Mr Robert Lyons in 1883. However, it is likely that Ross ran a stock of sheep on the islands for only brief periods and attempted to control the Woppaburra’s access to sheep as a food source through sporadic violent actions. Unfortunately, the lack of available data in the period from 1866-1882, means there is no formal record of social interactions or conflicts with the Woppaburra. However, archival

Figure 5.3. Excerpt from Morning Bulletin, 6 November, 1883, reporting, on p. 2, evidence of depredations experienced by Keppel Islanders
evidence uncovered after 1882 supports the view that there were ongoing punitive actions against the Islanders after the new lease was prepared in 1883. In late 1882, the government auctioneer advised the Lands Department of the successful lease acquisition of Woppa and Konomie by Mr Robert Lyons at a price of £16/5/- per square mile per year, an exorbitant price in those times. The lease on Woppa was to commence in January 1883, but by June 1883, Lyons had not yet received his lease agreement. He wrote to the Minister of Lands and it was finally prepared in September and signed off in October of that year. It can be seen that the practice of excluding other interested parties from the islands was coming to an end for Ross, as the Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act 1876 40 Vic c 16 and the Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act Amendment Act 1882 46 Vic c 11 set prices on previously unrecorded lands at prices that Ross refused to pay. Lyons, a man with no experience in sheep farming, invested heavily, intending to capitalise on a recent wool boom in 1881-82.

Lyons had sheep brought to the island from mid-1883. After July, 1100 sheep had been transported and were being moved from Taranganba at 130 sheep per day (Morning Bulletin, 24 July, 1883). Given that Taranganba was Ross’ property he is likely to have sold the sheep to Lyons. In the shadow of the recent wool boom from 1880-1881, Ross likely took action to prevent Islanders from spearing his sheep. In The Capricornian (December 22, 1883, p. 15), he mentioned the ‘depredations’ and how Islanders previously “commenced an attack on the sheep, about a hundred of which it is estimated, they destroyed and consumed”. This was Ross’ reason for assisting the present lessee to “rid the island of blacks” (The Capricornian, December 22, 1883, p. 15). He was successful in this endeavour as further newspaper reports indicated that Ross estimated that there were 84 ‘blacks’ in 1867 and 31 by 1883 (Morning Bulletin, November 6, 1883, p. 2). If we were to consider a stable deaths and birth rate over this period, at least 53 people were unaccounted for. The collective evidence indicated that Ross with almost exclusive access to the islands was most likely to blame for this sharp reduction in population numbers.

The article also detailed that in subsequent years, “Mr Ross discovered about 20 skulls, and close by a similar number of shank bones”, and it also mentioned his removal...
of two pairs of the inhabitants to his property at Taranganba on two occasions (Morning Bulletin, 6 November, 1883, p. 2). Any remaining stock on the island prior to Lyons’ taking up of the lease would have belonged to Robert Ross and it may have been a simple purchase and transfer arrangement. The sale would also avoid his dilemma of the Woppaburra hunting sheep rather than native wildlife. Given the lack of permanent workers on the island, Ross previously had little chance of preventing the Islanders from hunting the slow-moving sheep unless the Woppaburra were physically removed or brutally shot down. Data drawn from historical newspapers and legislation indicated that Ross’ other option, apart from en masse shootings, was to remove the Woppaburra to use as labourers at his Taranganba property. The archival evidence describing his past actions and dominance in the area would suggest that Ross was responsible for the massacre of the Woppaburra which resulted in the skeletal remains he had ‘discovered’.

The widely reported ‘first’ permanent occupant Mr Wyndham arrived in July, 1883. He entered into a 3-year engagement to sub-lease the property and run the sheep enterprise from the beginning of 1884 until the end of 1886 (Morning Bulletin, 2 July, 1883). Wyndham was advised that the “island is occupied by a tribe of blacks who do not possess and weapons of war but are expert in stone throwing” (Morning Bulletin, 2 July, 1883). The article also indicated that Wyndham had lived with Aboriginal people and may “be able to conciliate the Keppel Island inhabitants without ‘dispersing’ them31”. The Morning Bulletin (24 July, 1883, p.2) noted that “Wyndham has set about

31 The term ‘dispersion’ in colonial literature was a colloquial term for ‘shooting’. “The word has been adopted into bush slang as a convenient euphemism for wholesale massacre” (The Queenslander, editorial, 1 May 1880). While in the early stages of the colony it may have meant the scaring of local inhabitants, from 1848-1905 it referred to brutal slayings of local inhabitants by the Queensland Mounted Native Police Force. See Richards, Jonathan: The Secret War. A True History of Queensland's Native Police, St Lucia Queensland, 2008.
erecting a hut for himself and those along with him” and “although the number of blacks where [sic] more numerous than anticipated” is getting on well with the local population who have come into camp and assisted him with fishing. On one boat fishing trip, Wyndham noted the distress of the Woppaburra when it appeared they would not be returned to the island. This highlighted a strong attachment to their homeland. It appeared that Wyndham had a friendly relationship with the Woppaburra and had a social rather than economic relationship which extended to close living quarters with the local people.

Wyndham was a well-known ethnographer and appeared to be more interested in the culture and practices of the Woppaburra than their economic use. It is during his preparations as a manager around September, 1883 that Robert Ross used his cutter to remove seven Woppaburra men which concerned Wyndham enough to write an anonymous letter to the Brisbane Figaro published 27 October, 1883, p. 2. A further article titled “Alleged Kidnapping of Keppel Island Blacks” discussed this letter and the intimate knowledge of the ‘correspondent’ “whose communication bore the stamp of genuineness” (Morning Bulletin, 2 November, 1883, p. 2). Wyndham had given his name, address and details of references as proof of his “respectability and reliability” (Morning Bulletin, 2 November, 1883, p. 2). With unrest intensifying regarding the incident, the lessee Ross and solicitor Lyons unsuccessfully demanded to know the informant from the paper and countered that the story was “inaccurate and one-sided” (Morning Bulletin, 10 November, 1883, p. 2). Lyons stated that the facts were that the Islanders had no food to survive and Robert Ross generously transferred them willingly to a mainland Aboriginal reserve (Queensland Figaro, 10 November, 1883, p. 5). Several subsequent articles (Queensland Figaro, 17 November, 1883, p. 3; Queensland Figaro, 24 November, 1883, p. 2; Morning Bulletin, 4 December, 1883, p. 2).
1883, p. 2; *Queensland Figaro*, 8 December, 1883, p. 10 and *Queensland Figaro*, 22 December, 1883, p. 2) continued the feud and attempted to uphold the reputation of Robert Ross and denounce any wrongdoing. The *Morning Bulletin* (24 January, 1884) published parts of Wyndham’s diary during this period and confirmed the killing of some sheep and the subsequent removal of the Woppaburra from Woppa by Ross (p. 2).

Approximately 14 years later, Dr. Walter Roth, the Aboriginal Protector, drawing largely from Wyndham’s diaries from 1884-1886, furnished a report to the Commissioner of Police, and described evidence of recent tragedies in the period leading up to Wyndham’s occupancy on the island (Roth, 1898). The excerpt below written by Dr. Roth gives a summary of Wyndham’s account.

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8 males were shot down one night in cold blood, the father of one of the surviving girls (who described to me the scene that took place) being butchered while his little girl was clinging round his neck. Others were then considered deported and decoyed, by false promises of food etc., to the mainland: some of them (among them 'Goolwa') succeeded in swimming back the distance of between 6 & 7 miles, while others were shark-eaten. But this was not all, for some three weeks after the last occurrence, both white and mainland blacks came over, hunted up as many women and children as they could find, and took them away too. Human lives were sacrificed for sheep! Mr.
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*Figure 5.6. Excerpt from W.E. Roth’s original Report in 1898, The Aboriginals of the Rockhampton and Surrounding Coast Districts. This excerpt, on pp. 9-10, describes in great detail how Islanders were ‘sacrificed for sheep!’ Below is the typed version of Figure 5.6.*
“On North Keppel is still to be seen the actual camping ground where at least 7 or 8 males were shot down one night in cold blood, the father of one of the surviving gins (who described to me the scene that took place) being butchered while his little girl was clinging round his neck. Other males were [correction] deported and decoyed, by false promises of food etc. to the mainland: some of them (among them “Yoolowa32”) succeeded in swimming back the distance of between 6 & 7 miles, while others were shark eaten. But this was not all, for three weeks after the last occurrence, both whites and mainland blacks came over, hunted up as many women and children as they could find, and took them away too. Human lives were sacrificed for sheep!” (pp. 9-10)

This explanation shows the indiscriminate killings and subsequent deception of the Woppaburra on the island prior to their kidnapping and arrival on the mainland. It also mentioned the additional movement of the remaining Islanders. It appears that Robert Ross was intent on removing those who interfered with his and Mr. Lyons’ sheep enterprise which also allowed him to extract slave labour from the Woppaburra on his mainland property. At the height of ‘blackbirding’33 Ross considered the idea of getting South Sea Islanders as an unnecessary expense and that the local ‘blacks’ should be sufficient for his labour requirements (Voss, 1951). In addition, the Polynesian Labourers Act 1868 (Qld) required that the indentured labour from the Pacific Islands were to be used only for agriculture due to the reduction in cotton production during the American Civil War (1861-1865). While this was not strictly adhered to, the proclamation left squatters with pastoral properties seeking slave labour from Aboriginal people. Voss (1951) recalled an incident passed down through social memory on her family’s property where the recalcitrant Woppaburra were mercilessly killed.

Only slightly less notorious than the Mt Wheeler ‘dispersion’ was the end of the Keppel Island aborigines-on land now owned by my own family at Emu Park. Mr Robert Ross of Taranganba- evidently attracted by the shorter distance and, thus, the lesser cost of importing local ‘abos’ from the Keppel Bay Islands, instead of

32 In several documents listed as Yulowa, Yoolowa or Ulowa.
33 Blackbirding involved the kidnapping of South-sea Islanders (known then as ‘Kanakas’) to work as slaves and later as cheap labour on cotton or sugar plantations and other properties in Queensland. This operated from 1847 to 1904 in Queensland although the first formal legislation was only enacted in 1868.
Kanakas from the far off Solomons or New Hebrides – had the blacks from South Keppel Island shipped over to Taranganba. A sugar and coffee plantation on the Ross’ Emu Park property was bruited at the time, and stockmen for the cattle were always needed at Taranganba. .., the Rosses found the local natives …. [who had] absconded with supplies from Taranganba. The Rosses and some native troopers followed the runaways, finally catching up with them at on what is now Vosses Point [now known as Tanby Point], a long narrow peninsular running out into Keppel Bay. Some of the natives seem to have been shot down; and the rest, rather than face the mounted troopers, plunged off the point and of course tried to make for South Keppel Island, more than 10 miles away. All but two were drowned, or taken by sharks. The old legend puts the number of island blacks involved in this sordid story at more than sixty; but this is almost certainly an exaggeration. (p. 37).

Full and accurate details of the incident are difficult to ascertain but given the notorious Mt Wheeler incident alluded to above, it is clear that Ross used the Native Police to provide frontier justice to Darambal people on his runs. A brief biography of Lieutenant Frederick Wheeler, a Native Police Officer at the time, gives a useful context. After entering the Native Police in 1857, this trooper was part of a detachment which killed a number of Aboriginal people in Brisbane. He was noted as being particularly callous and brutal and was charged for the incident, but was exonerated as simply a ‘zealous and valuable’ officer. He was promoted and took up a position in central Queensland (Richards, 2014). Wheeler of Native Police operated in the Rockhampton area from 1866 – 1876 and boasted he could “shoot as many [Aboriginal people] as he liked without interference” (Rockhampton Bulletin, January 17, 1871). He had already carried out ‘dispersals’ on Robert Ross’ property at Gawula (Mt. Wheeler34), located between Cawarral and Yeppoon, at the behest of Ross. He was further charged in 1876 for killing an Aboriginal prisoner at Clermont, but absconded after paying £1000 bail.

34 Named after Gold Commissioner John Wheeler not the Native Police Lieutenant in question. See Jonathan Richards (2014). "Many were killed from falling over the cliffs": The naming of Mount Wheeler, Central Queensland”. In Clark, Ian D.; Hercus, Luise; Kostanski, Laura. Indigenous and Minority Placenames Australian and International Perspectives. Canberra, Australia: ANU Press.
never to be seen again. Wheeler’s history gives an indication of the nature of the Queensland Native Police Force and their penchant for shooting Aboriginal people.

Given the incident described by Voss (1951) and how Ross treated the Woppaburra on his properties during the period from ca.1860-1883, the atrocity committed upon the Woppaburra on Woppa and Konomie was likely to be from the Native Police Force under the direction of Ross. McLelland (Morning Bulletin, January 27, 1903) stated, “the blacks showed me a line of bones over a hundred yards long” giving evidence to this atrocity. An incorrect description of this incident by Roth (1898), was that both ‘whites and mainland blacks’ committed further injustices under the direction of mainland ‘whites’. This is unlikely as the Darambal people of the region had been decimated by the Native Mounted Police and had no access to boats for such practices. Given the need for labour it is likely that Robert Ross or his employees returned to commit further injustices or collect more of the Woppaburra for his work on his Taranganba property.

It seems that Ross was in the practice of frequenting the islands to ‘kidnap’ Islanders as workers. The Capricornian (10 November, 1883, p. 15), a local paper, gave a useful history of the preceding twenty years. The paper claimed that Ross had visited the islands around 1867 and since that time he had repeatedly landed on the island and had never been ‘attacked’ nor in any way did he “molest the inhabitants”. In 1871 it claims he brought over two Islanders to the mainland but returned them, and since then brought “a black fellow and his gin to Taranganba” (The Capricornian, 10 November, 1883, p. 15). On several occasions Ross took Islanders on fishing expeditions in his cutter and occasionally gave them mutton which apparently initiated “their taste for flesh and the killing of up to 100 sheep” (The Capricornian, 10 November, 1883, p. 15). The article also stated that as a result of this action Ross, due to his goodwill, despatched the Islanders to the mainland near his property at Taranganba. The same article stated how a local resident came across from Woppa with the first seven ‘black fellows’ and described how they were deceived into coming onto Robert Ross’ cutter as they had done previously for fishing. He initially took the men and four days later returned for the ‘gins
and piccaninnies\textsuperscript{35}. The article stated that they remained here for a period where the men worked for rations. Soon afterwards Ross removed them to the reserve for ‘blacks’ at the mouth of Water Park Creek (approximately 30 km north of Yeppoon) where they were “supplied with food and fishing lines” (November 10, 1883, p. 15). The story follows that they made their way back through Corio Bay and returned to Yeppoon.

The Woppaburra in the group residing at Yeppoon at this time consisted mostly of very young and a few older women “and it is supposed [that] the middle aged females have been killed and eaten” (\textit{The Capricornian}, December 22, 1883, p. 15). Ignoring the poor understanding of cultural practices and inaccurate stereotypes, this does raise the question of the location of the middle-aged women and the seven men and where they were located. There is little doubt that Ross seized the Woppaburra to work for him but he denies that they were coerced in any way and claimed that they were willing travellers. Further south, for some time stories of kidnapping had been circulating in the \textit{Brisbane Figaro} (October 27, 1883) that a ‘well known Rockhampton man’ was responsible. The \textit{Morning Bulletin} (December 4, 1883) reported the demise of perhaps the same Woppaburra near Ross Creek at Yeppoon just north of Ross’ Taranganba homestead. It stated:

\begin{quote}
A gentleman who lately paid a visit to Yeppoon states that the aboriginals brought over from Great Keppel Island some time ago by Mr. Robert Ross are dying off very rapidly. On Thursday last his wife was strolling along the beach, in the direction of Ross’ Creek, and with the intention of finding a shady place to picnic went up the creek a little. To her surprise, at the edge of the scrub she came upon the body of a blackfellow, and a little further on half of the carcass of a gin. She paused on, thinking she had passed out of the presence of the dead, but this proved not to be the case, as on coming to the blacks’ camp there lay the bodies of two piccaninies. The four who were found dead were seen about the commencement of the week camping where the piccaninies were found. Our informant says one of the residents at Yeppoon avert three gins and one blackfellow of the Keppel Island lot died the previous week, on account of their being unable to eat the food given to them. We state these facts without note or comment, and leave the public to form their own conclusions upon them.
\end{quote}

\textit{Figure 5.7. Excerpt from the Morning Bulletin, 4 December, 1883, p. 2. This excerpt describes, ‘without note or comment’, the facts around the finding of Aboriginal people’s bodies on the beach towards Ross’ Creek, leaving ‘the public to form their own conclusions upon them’.

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\textsuperscript{35} Gins and piccaninnies are derogatory colonial names for native women and babies.
brought over from Great Keppel Island some time ago by Mr Robert Ross are
dying off very rapidly. On Thursday last his wife was strolling along the beach, in
the direction of Ross' Creek, and with the intention of finding a shady place to
picnic went up the creek a little. To her surprise, at the edge of the scrub she came
upon the body of a ‘blackfellow’, and a little further on half of the carcase of a
gin. She passed on, thinking she had passed out of the presence of the dead, but
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bodies of two piccannies. The four who were found dead were seen about the
commencement of the week camping where the piccannies were found. Our
informant says one of the residents at Yeppoon avers three gins and one
blackfellow of the Keppel Island lot died the previous week, on account of their
being unable to eat the food given to them (p. 2).

The colonial practice of giving food infused with strychnine poison may well have been
the cause of these deaths. Ross’ homestead was barely a kilometre from Ross Creek
which drew more attention to Ross’ activities.

While attempting to deal with this public scandal, Lyons’ management of the
lease on Woppa was unsuccessful as a marketable wool-producing pasture. Although the
lease was signed for ten years and ran from 1884 until 1893 it was likely that the
experienced pastoralist Ross anticipated its failure due to Lyons’ inexperience and the
high costs associated with the rent on the lease. Alternatively, Ross could have been a
silent partner, as local newspapers previously reported that Lyons’ flock of sheep was
transferred in Ross’ cutter from Taranganba (Morning Bulletin, 24 July, 1883). Lyons, as
a solicitor in Rockhampton, is likely to have rarely visited the islands and was more a
professional than a pastoralist. Only months from Wyndham’s expiry of the 3-year sub-
lease from 1884 to 1886, it was transferred to Robert Ross in July, and as a result of a
division of the run and re-evaluation, yearly rent was set at £2- per square mile. This was
a huge reduction in the £16/square mile previously paid by Lyons. Wyndham moved
down to Boyne Island and Ross, showing his business acumen, in a short period of time
had re-established himself as the manager and lessee on both Woppa and Konomie. He
restocked these with sheep and carried on the enterprise until his death in 1893. This coincided with the expiry of the lease’s 10-year term.

There is little data regarding the period from 1884 until 1993. Due to the historical convention of reporting interactions, data sources existed insofar as they reported the actions of settlers. The data related to the Woppaburra, was as a consequence of settler interactions rather than actions initiated by the Woppaburra. Therefore the data trail has followed the interactions with the pioneer squatter Robert Ross as he encroached on the traditional country of the Woppaburra. Ross arrived in Sydney as a young man in 1836 so by 1884 he was well into his 60s although life expectancy at the time was around 50 years old. Ross maintained leases over the islands but the downturn in the wool industry and severe economic depression from 1890 to 1893 further limited economic activities on the islands. Limited data from a newspaper report in 1888 indicated that the Woppaburra were living on Wreck Beach, the most eastern beach of Woppa, using the stern of a wrecked London steamer, The Eastminster, as a dwelling support (*Sydney Morning Herald*, March 2, 1888, p. 8). The eastern beach is far from previous pastoral infrastructure so it might be assumed that this decade was a quieter period with reduced interactions between white colonisers and the Woppaburra. It is also possible that Ross, in an effort to avoid publicity due to the incidents in 1883, ignored the Woppaburra while they camped on the most remote beach on the island. Robert Ross passed away in 1893 which coincided with the expiry of his island leases.

Upon the death of Robert Ross in 1893, the island leases were not simply rolled over with exclusive possession. Due to changes in the Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act Amendment Act 1882 46 Vic c 11 regulations and confusion regarding these changes, Colin Ross, Robert Ross’ son, eventually retained the leases in April, 1894. However, they were converted to a ‘Permit to Occupy’, meaning a tenant must be located upon the leases at all times. The data set indicated that a visit to the islands by A.E. Hardaker in 1894 confirmed the presence of one of Ross’ employees, Peter, who was possibly ‘French Peter’ on Konomie with ‘one black fellow and nine or ten gins’ and a German man on Woppa with ‘a black fellow and a number of gins’ (*Morning Bulletin*, November 20, 1894, p. 3). Roth (1898) reported that the Ross family employed James
Lucas, a teamster from Longreach, in 1893 on Woppa. As the overseer, he may have employed the German man to assist with the dwindling sheep industry.

After James Lucas arrived, he seized the Woppaburra’s hunting and gathering implements and it became difficult for the Woppaburra to fish, hunt and travel (Roth, 1898). Lucas also located his residence at the site of the only fresh water on Woppa. This meant that without means to gather the basics of food and water, the Woppaburra were forced to gather around the homestead and work for James Lucas for meagre rations. The Woppaburra tilled the earth for vegetables, gathered oysters for Lucas’ saloon at Emu Park and tended flocks of Angora goats as the sheep industry declined. Data from archival newspapers and various government reports authored by Protector of Aborigines Archibald Meston, show that Lucas was a harsh taskmaster and meted out callous treatment to the locals. This period of misery was to last almost a decade with Lucas and his German employee infecting many women with venereal disease and the population declined as a result (Meston, 1902, September 11, p. 2).

The death of Ross did not result in freedom or peace for the Woppaburra, and when James Lucas secured the manager position, he was simply another cruel settler who treated the Islanders even more harshly than Robert Ross had over the past three decades. The Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld) was designed to protect a dying population who were expected to be only a memory in coming decades. This legislation was passed in December, 1897 and a new system of Aboriginal protectorship was instituted in January, 1898. This is the subject of the next section.
5.6 Legislation and Protectors

This section speaks to the dataset that has been drawn from government reports, letters, and other correspondence in the period from 1897 until forced removal of the Woppaburra in late 1902. This archival data have been coupled with historical newspaper articles and gives a comprehensive account of the Woppaburra’s history due to the volume of data sources. The evidence to date has shown how a colony permeated with racist ideologies has sustained widespread killings and harsh treatment meted out to the Woppaburra. This was set against a backdrop of colonial life that was driven by economic imperatives. Suitable land was required to develop pastoral or agricultural activities, a workforce was needed for labour and markets were required to sell these products. Personal ambitions to be part of this lucrative system meant a speedy migration of opportunists from the cities to the rural regions ready to plunder the resources. However, the cumbersome bureaucracy of government was slow to move and control this unfettered expansion which left the Woppaburra vulnerable. Initially, pioneer squatters provided their own brand of justice with random shootings of Aboriginal people and this was followed soon after by the murderous Queensland Native Mounted Police Force. An improved system of land management was legislated in 1882 and the first act of parliament to provide some specific structure around the plight of Aboriginal people was enacted in 1897.

The mechanism for this change was the introduction of the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Qld) (see Appendix 1). The regulatory regime in Section 31 of this act was an attempt to categorise Aboriginal people based on ethnic background and skin colour. This act of parliament took effect from 1 January, 1898 and though only nine pages long, it allowed for the control of every aspect of Aboriginal people’s lives. Section 31 of the regulations allowed for, among other things, the “removing of aboriginals to a reserve, and from one reserve to another…prohibiting any aboriginal rites and customs… [and the placement] in service with suitable persons” (Aboriginal Protection and the Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897). The police had the responsibility of enforcing the regulations within the Act under the direction of the newly established positions of Aboriginal Protectors. Far from being a protective
regime, it controlled the physical, social and economic aspects of all Aboriginal peoples' lives in Queensland.

The act was also the basis of all further legislation concerning Aboriginal people for the next 50 years. However, caution must be used, as it is not useful to speak in absolute terms with these dates. There were a number of movements towards this legislative regime several years before. For example, the use of Aboriginal people as cheap or slave labour was commonplace but simply formalised through the 1897 legislation to allow the Queensland government to formally acquire the fruits of this labour through work contracts\(^{36}\). A previous example of controlling mechanisms for the Woppaburra was the issuing of brass plates for saving lives in 1896 (Queensland Museum, 1896b; 1896c), giving some semblance of importance based on British values and the ability to impose a hierarchical structure. Even though there was formal state legislation and awards, for the Woppaburra it meant little change to the day-to-day lifestyles. Even when well-meaning locals attempted to sporadically ameliorate their condition, the incumbent lessee continued to exploit the Islanders even though the legislation was designed to avoid this. Unfortunately, the legislation was poorly applied due to the Woppaburra’s isolation and the conflict between two protectors who were each responsible for the Islanders’ welfare at different times. The Woppaburra’s ability to navigate the space between two dogmatic protectors is a key feature of this section.

To fully comprehend the location and transfers of the people it must be understood in the context of the overarching authority responsible for the land and people at that time. This can be understood by observing the regimes and the responsible officers who under the Act had oversight and decision-making powers for the Aboriginal people in the area. The area around central Queensland was particularly unusual as it was the cut-off point between the northern and southern areas and it was also a site of dispute between two influential ‘protectors’ named Dr. Walter Roth and Archibald Meston. Historically, the position of so-called protectors evolved from the colony’s desire to stop the very barbaric and punitive treatment of Aboriginal people and transition to a

supposed position of ‘protection’ around the turn of the twentieth century (Reynolds, 1987). The state was split into two sections with the Northern section under the control of Dr. Walter E. Roth, as the Northern Protector. The Rockhampton district, being around the centre of Queensland, was deemed to be part of the Northern protectorate and for the Woppaburra it meant that they would be under the control of this Protector until December, 1899. At this time, a redistribution of boundaries located the Rockhampton district in the zone of the Southern Protector, controlled by Archibald Meston, until March, 1904 (Blake, 2001). From March, 1904 onwards, the office of the Southern Protector was abolished and control was once again returned to Dr. Roth as the Chief Protector of all Aboriginal people in Queensland.

Dr. Roth was responsible for the protection of the Woppaburra but, as a keen anthropologist and physician, he also engaged in the recording of customs and language, and theft of a number of Woppaburra artefacts which he later sold to the Australian Museum in 1905 (Donlon & Pardoe, 1991). His strong interest in recording cultures overshadowed his ability to ensure the welfare of the people under his care. A example noted in The Brisbane Courier (18 September, 1913) is the callous treatment by the then lessee of Woppa, James Lucas, who in the 1890s strapped the Islanders to a plough like horses and used a whip to induce maximum effort (p. 6). Morris (1989, p. 32) corroborates this account, recalling that his Uncle Ollie Morris and grand-father James Morris witnessed this ongoing torture. So, while the Woppaburra were treated harshly by the early lessee Robert Ross and manager James Lucas, there was no reprieve under the new legislation which was designed to protect the very people it enslaved. Walter Roth, after making at least two visits to Woppa in 1897 made one further visit in 1898 (Ganter, 1985) and relied on the word of James Lucas and his son Andy, as to the standard of the Woppaburra’s living conditions rather than complete an adequate assessment himself. This continued for two years until Archibald Meston assumed the protectorship of this area in January 1900.

While the Queensland government continued to administer the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, local residents were aware of the plight of the Woppaburra. Several editorials in local newspapers requested that Woppa
and Konomie should become a safe haven or reserve for the Woppaburra. A noted member of the local gentry, Mr. McLelland, was one of the advocates calling for better treatment of the Woppaburra (*Morning Bulletin*, January 27, 1903). As part of his efforts over almost a decade, he collected food from local residents, pocket knives, tomahawks, ball gowns, brooches, beads and carnival dresses used at the Callaghan park raceway and donated these to the Woppaburra (letter from E.O. Morris, c.1960). A picture taken in 1897 shows some of this attire (Figure 5.9). In Foucauldian terms, the image is heterotopic, where ‘things’ are different, mismatched and so can be described as a duality that seems out of place. The celebratory scene included the Woppaburra as almost citizens in Queen Victoria’s Jubilee celebrations but the faces demonstrated an obvious reluctance to participate. A closer examination has also revealed that all children are of mixed heritage, half ‘black’ and half ‘white’. The subject of separating black and white ‘races’ to avoid this mixed heritage was recommended in a prior report (Meston, 1896) and addressed in the new legislation as a form of social engineering.

![Image of Woppaburra at Emu Park for Queen Victoria’s Jubilee Celebrations, 1897.](image)

*Figure 5.9. The Woppaburra at Emu Park for Queen Victoria’s Jubilee Celebrations, 1897. Photograph by Gordon Studio, held in the John Oxley Collection. (Negative no. 69642. State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.)*

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37 On Sunday 20 June, 1897, The Commonwealth celebrated Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. The public holiday was declared on Tuesday, 22 June and included all foreign places where British subjects were resident.
The Woppaburra were always considered in sociological terms to be ‘the other’, however the new legislation divided them further into well-defined and distinct racial categories based on skin colour.

The range of archival documents presented shows that after the enactment of the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld), there is a distinction between ‘Aboriginal’ people and ‘others’. This legislation is the genesis of the Queensland government’s official societal separation based on race, commonly known as an ‘apartheid’ regime. This distinction meant that only the ‘full-blood’ Woppaburra were subject to the conditions of the new act which created inconsistency regarding the treatment of different family members as shown in many of the Protector’s reports and locally in newspapers. For example, the *Morning Bulletin* (June 17, 1902) indicated the future removal of the Woppaburra, those being “five women…three of them being Aborigines, who will be sent to Durundur... the other two are half-caste girls and they will be sent to the South Brisbane home for girls”(p. 5). Part of this separation was to allow easily identification of the Woppaburra. The so-called ‘full bloods’ were expected to die out while the ‘half-castes’ having some British heritage could be assimilated into wider society.

An indicator of the state’s ability to identify and record the Woppaburra is the desire to impose easily pronounced British or anglicised names on the newly born children of the Woppaburra. The archival data comprised of demographic tables (see Table 1) and historical birth certificates (Registrar General, 2012), indicated that most of the Woppaburra controlled by legislation after 1897 were given names after the British royal family such as Albert, George, Gordon, Edward, James (Jimmy), Margaret (Maggie) and Mary. The names applied to the ‘half-caste’ population were a pseudo-message to treat these people differently due to their perceived ‘advanced white’ parental lineage. Government officers applied this convention near cities but in remote areas, such as Woppa and Konomie, where protectors rarely visited, it meant little difference in the treatment of those termed in the legislation as ‘full-blood’ and those considered to be ‘half-caste’.
Regardless of the supposed protection offered under the new legislation, it had little effect on the Woppaburra. Archival data sources indicated that Andy Lucas (son of James) maintained his control of the Woppaburra by taking their government-issued blankets, working people like slaves for almost 10 years without any form of payment and by giving very few rations for survival (Meston, February 15, 1900; Meston, December 9, 1901; Meston, July 7, 1902). Andy Lucas also infected the women with syphilis (Casey, February 7, 1900; Meston, July 7, 1902), and fathered many children. Archival data also indicated that Andy Lucas took out fishing permits for several of the men, used the Islanders to collect his oysters and failed to pay nominal wages required under the Act (Meston, March 27, 1900; Meston, July 7, 1902). It is scandalous that Lucas could operate in this manner with impunity but his close relationship with the protector, Walter Roth, allowed him to avoid detection from police and other government officers. Dr. Roth as the Northern Protector and keen anthropologist was hoodwinked by Lucas when he provided Roth with a number of artefacts such as a canoe, skeletal remains, spears, fishing nets, harpoons, drills and hooks. Given the extensive data drawn from Roth’s 1898 report about the Central Queensland Aboriginal people, it appeared that Lucas exchanged artefacts for favourable reports. The relationship between the office of the protector and Lucas changed when the boundary responsibilities for Aboriginal Protectors were changed and Archibald Meston took over control as Protector of the Central Queensland region as part of the Southern protectorate from December, 1899. This meant that Lucas was more closely scrutinised regarding his treatment of the Woppaburra which resulted in eventual removal from their homelands.

5.7 Events Leading to Removal

In January 1900, one of the first tasks of the new protector, Archibald Meston, was to request a report regarding the condition of the Woppaburra. Meston made the request to Police Inspector A. Meldrum who in turn made a formal request dated 10 January 1900, to Acting Sergeant Casey at the Emu Park station. The letter requested full numbers and “the condition of the Aboriginals generally on Keppel Island and if they are kindly treated by Mr Lucas” (Tozer, 1900, January 10). Casey requested and was granted permission to delay the completion of the report until after Lucas had arrived back at the
islands as Lucas had been conducting business in Rockhampton. This conveniently gave
James Lucas a few weeks grace before police arrived. The report (Casey, 1900,
February 7) was completed and sent to the Protector’s Office in Brisbane. It detailed the
names, ages and gender of those said to be present on Woppa. It stated that Oyster
Maggie has been isolated and in an advanced stage of venereal disease and that two other
women had been sent to the Lock Hospital for similar reasons. Police Inspector Meldrum
added a written note in the margin dated 9 February, 1900, stating that Lucas has advised
that several times during his absence from the islands that “white men go across from
the mainland and got amongst the gins, hence the presence of diseases among them” (Casey,
1900, February 7).

As Lucas attempted to deflect blame from himself, it appears that Meston had
done his own investigation in late 1899, and barely two days after the police report was
received by the Home Secretary on 16 February 1900, Meston furnished a further report
giving contradictory evidence (Meston, 1900, 15 February). Meston advised in this report
that he had spoken with doctors in the Lock Hospital and local Emu Park residents
regarding the poor “condition” of the Islanders but he refrained from making an approach
due to Dr. Roth’s being the incumbent Protector before January, 1900. His report stated
that the Woppaburra on Woppa, “do all his [Lucas’] work for nothing” and Meston
requested that those in the hospital might better be sent to K'gari (Fraser Island) (Meston,
1900, 15 February). The Home Secretary advised that a personal visit to the Islands by
Meston should first be undertaken, as possible removal of all Woppaburra to Fraser
Island may well be necessary.

Meston undertook a visit to the Islands some time over the next four weeks and
wrote a strongly worded report (1900, 27 March) concerning events during the period
that Dr. Roth was Protector. This indicated that all the Woppaburra women had been
infected with syphilis at various stages over the previous two years and that, “Dr. Roth,
who stayed there two or three days expressed himself satisfied with their condition,
which had been a public scandal for years” (Meston, 1900, 27 March, p. 2). It is also
worth stating that a newspaper memorial mentioned that Lucas’ wife, aged 43, had
passed away approximately two years earlier on 4 May 1898 (Morning Bulletin, 7 May,
1900) leaving him without a partner for the last two years. Not coincidentally, this timing aligned with the duration of the venereal infections of the women. Protector Meston also advised that he visited the Lock Hospital and had the two Woppaburra women (Kitty and Judy) and their children aged 6 months (Rosie) and 7 years (not named) taken down to the Women’s Home in South Brisbane and recommended their further removal to Fraser Island. The Home Secretary agreed and ordered that the Woppaburra women to be sent on to Fraser Island with Mr Gribble the Anglican Minister and Warden of Fraser Island (1900, 31 March). A note in the margins of Meston’s report also recommended removal of all Woppaburra to Fraser Island (Meston, 1900, 27 March).

Figure 5.10. Excerpt of letter from A. Meston to Home Secretary received 16 February 1900. This excerpt shows Meston’s strong objection to Lucas’ treatment of the Woppaburra and his concern at their present state.
It appears that government correspondence for the next 18 months has been lost or destroyed. No further correspondence is available concerning the matter of removal, until one of the Woppaburra women, Judy, coming from the Goodna Mental Health Hospital (west of Brisbane), was inadvertently “transferred to Durundur with the others [hospital inmates]” early in 1902, due to absence of police for ‘handover’ at Maryborough (Meston, 1902, 8 January). Judy and Kitty were later transferred back to Fraser on Sunday 6 April 1902 after a request from Reverend Ernest Gribble\(^\text{38}\) of Yarrabah (Gribble, 1902, 2 April). In the meantime, Meston advised there were three other Woppaburra women in the Lock Hospital (likely South Brisbane) and once again asked for a final decision on all of the Woppaburra (Meston, 1902, 8 January). Although there was a prior recommendation for removal, it is likely that a stay was advised pending further investigation. Meston once again requested removal of the Woppaburra, which was once again approved by the home secretary (1901, 9 December). Meston (1901) reiterated how all Islanders work for Lucas on the sheep run and gather oysters for sale at Emu Park, however “none of them receive any wages”\(^\text{p. 2}\). Given the slow colonial forms of transport and delayed responses through rudimentary communication, it was six months until Meston’s next arrival in the central Queensland area to visit Woppa.

Meston continued to carry out his duties\(^\text{39}\) as required under the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Qld). Newspaper reports (\textit{Morning Bulletin}, 13 June, 1902; \textit{The Capricornian}, 14 June, 1902; \textit{Morning Bulletin}, 17 June, 1902) all discuss the arrival of Meston to Emu Park for the purpose of removing all single women from Woppa. The government steamer, \textit{Fitzroy}, which was coming up from Cape Capricorn was to pick up Archibald Meston at Emu Park, proceed to the Islands to pick up the Woppaburra women, then return to Rockhampton and possibly later on to Durundur. The \textit{Morning Bulletin} (17 June, 1902, p.5) indicated the future

\(^{38}\) Halse, c. (1996) advised that although Rev. Gribble was Mission Manager at Yarrabah (near Cairns) since 1893 and responsible to the Northern Protector, Walter Roth, he (Gribble) also was Warden of Fraser Island Bogimbah Creek Mission which was responsible to the Southern Protector. This placed Rev. Gribble in the compromising position of being responsible to two different protectors. Meston took over the region of Central Queensland previously held by Walter Roth and criticised his methods. Meston also changed processes previously put in place by Dr.Roth (Lucas’s telegram to the Home Secretary dated 7 July 1902). This rivalry between Roth and Meston placed Aboriginal people as pawns in their stoush.

\(^{39}\) The Act allows transfer of any Aboriginal person in the state to or between Mission Stations and Reserves (see Appendix 1 for 1897 Act. Regulations).
removal of five Woppaburra women. However, Meston did not count on the cunning of Lucas and his desire to defy the Home Secretary’s orders. He failed to locate the Woppaburra women with his party, which included two black trackers, and he returned from Emu Park to Rockhampton and back to Brisbane on 26 June 1902 (Meston, 1902, 9 September). As a result, Meston viewed Lucas as a callous and deceitful man and wrote extensively of the deplorable situation on Woppa. An extract of the letter sent to the Under-Secretary dated 7 July 1902 is reproduced below along with a more legible transcription.

Figures 5.11, and 5.12 & 5.11 below. Excerpts of original letter sent from A. Meston to the Under-Secretary, 7 July 1902. This excerpt from A. Meston details his actions and those of Lucas regarding Lucas’ treatment and exploitation of the women on Woppa.
The seven women are absolutely at the mercy of these men. Several women have died of syphilis in recent years and two or three of the others have been in the Local Hospital in Rockhampton.

Besides the three resident whites those women have ever been at the mercy of any boating parties visiting the island.

They have been worked like slaves by Lucas and have not even been decently clothed or properly fed. He has always endeavoured to keep them away from anybody likely to ascertain their condition and report it.

Indignant complaints of the condition of these blacks have been received from time to time from private citizens and the police. Finally I obtained the present Home Secretary's authority to remove the 5 single women.

Accordingly I advised Mr. Lucas by letter that such were the Home Secretary's instructions and asking him to kindly have the 5 women ready when the steamer Fitzroy would call two days afterwards.

This would have left the two men and their wives still on the island. One of the men, named "Paddy," son of the elder man, acts as a boatman for Lucas, and apart from not getting any wages is not even properly clothed or fed. Paddy came over periodically to Bun Park with oysters gathered by the women and sold at an oyster saloon kept in a hut on the beach by a daughter of Lucas, a single woman about 35 years of age.

Naturally all the other fishermen and oystermen who do their own work, or pay other white men to assist them, have long complained bitterly of competition by Lucas employing nine aboriginals to whom he paid nothing and who had frequently to find most of their own food.

Lucas spent the two days at his disposal in frightening the blacks about my coming and doubtless telling them many
The lessee of Keppel Island, a Mr Lucas, caused me a good deal of trouble, some expense, and loss of time, by the attitude he chose to assume with respect to the five single Aboriginal women whose removal had been authorised by the Home Secretary.

About 2 years ago I removed two women from Keppel Island and sent them to Bogimbah where they still remain. It has ever since been to me a sincere regret that I did not remove the whole of the blacks on the island. If the history of the Keppel Island blacks were published it would make very unpleasant reading. Men have gone to St. Helena and the gallows for far less crimes than were committed on those blacks during the past twenty (20) years. Originally about two hundred, they are reduced to two men, seven women and three children. Seven of the women are single, two being half castes, about 18 and 12 years of age.

There is no white woman on the island. During my visit the Whites included Lucas and his son [Andy] and a white man apparently dying of syphilis [German Shepherd].
The seven women are absolutely at the mercy of these men. Several women have died of syphilis in recent years and two or three of the others have been in the Lock Hospital in Rockhampton.

Besides the three resident whites those women have ever been at the mercy of any boating parties visiting the island.

They have been worked like slaves by Lucas and have not even been decently clothed or properly fed. He has always endeavoured to keep them away from anybody likely to ascertain their condition and report it.

Indignant complaints of the condition of these blacks have been received from time to time from private citizens and the Police. Finally I obtained the present Home Secretary’s authority to remove the 5 single women. Accordingly I advised Mr Lucas by letter that such were the Home Secretary’s instructions and asking him to kindly have the 5 women ready when the steamer *Fitzroy* would call two days afterwards.

This would have left the two men and their wives still on the island. One of the men, named ‘Paddy’, son of the elder man, acts as a boatman for Lucas, and apart from not getting any wages is not properly clothed or fed. Paddy came over periodically to Emu with oysters gathered by the women and sold at an oyster saloon kept in a hut on the beach by a daughter of Lucas, a single woman about 35 years of age.

Naturally all the other fisherman and oystermen who do their own work, or pay other white men to assist them, have long complained bitterly of competition by Lucas employing nine aboriginals to whom he paid nothing and who had frequently to find most of their own food.

Lucas spent the two days at his disposal in frightening the blacks about my coming and doubtless telling them many lies about their destination, and their prospects as he did before I removed the two women on a previous occasion. When I went over for the women all the blacks had disappeared. I had sent over Noble and Alberta three days before but Lucas would not allow them to speak to the blacks although two of the women tried to get near them, so that from the first he clearly intended to defy the Home Secretary’s instructions.

I then sent over Harold Meston, Sergeant Dwyer and two troopers. Mr Hirst, reporter of the Rockhampton “Bulletin” accompanied the party as I deemed it well to have some impartial person there as a safeguard against any statements that might be made by Lucas. However when Lucas knew I was returning he and his son left the island and remained away until the party had left leaving his place in charge of the white man, who is a miserable wretch with disease and hardly able to walk.

The blacks remained in concealment in the rough parts of the island for the two days the party was there and as I had no intention of capturing them one by one like wild animals I decided to recall those who went after them and adopt different tactics on a future occasion.
The action of Lucas and his son was of a most contemptible character. I warned him that it would be bitter fruit for him as the present Home Secretary was a most unlikely man to allow his authority to be defied in that or any other fashion. At Emu Park he gave the absurd reason for his own and his son’s departure that “their lives were not safe with Meston on the island”. Had I known he would have scared the blacks after he knew the Home Secretary’s orders, I would have gone over without any warning and taken the women quietly for they would only be too delighted to get away if they knew where they were going.

Lucas had a permit from Protector Inspector Brannelly but it expired in March and is not at all likely to be renewed. I told him what penalties he was liable to for employing blacks or having them about his premises so he knows his position exactly.

I would now ask the Home Secretary for authority to remove the whole of the Keppel Island blacks, for the sooner they are out of that the better for themselves. The Port Clinton Fish Canning Company will take the two married men, Paddy and his father, at fair wages, the three single aboriginal women go to one of the Reserves, and the two half caste girls to service.

I shall undertake to see that the Home Secretary’s instructions are faithfully carried out with the least possible delay.

The removal of all Keppel blacks would end what has long been a public scandal becoming constantly more disgraceful.

These blacks speak very little English and their dialect is but little known to any of the survivors from the mainland tribes.

Lucas has purposely kept them as much as possible away from whites and made them believe he had the power of life and death over them.

Figure 5.13 Typed version of the excerpt, pp. 12-16, of the letter (Figures 5.11, 5.12 & 5.13) sent from A. Meston to the Under Secretary dated 7 July 1902, detailing his actions and those of Lucas regarding Lucas’ treatment and exploitation of the women on Woppa.

So while Meston tried to remove the Woppaburra, it appeared that James R. Lucas tried to use his ongoing harmonious relationship with Dr. Roth to keep his captive workforce. On Roth’s advice (details included in Roth’s later letter to home secretary, 1902, 24 July, p.7), Lucas’s telegram to the Home Secretary dated 7 July 1902, stated, “[Local] Protector Aborigines acting on Meston’s instructions refuses me permit to employ Keppel Island Blacks submit this great injustice to blacks and myself. Dr. Roth authorises me, refer to him for character and facts”. Unbeknown to Meston, the extract of his report dated 7 July 1902 on the condition of the Woppaburra was also sent to the
Northern Protector, Walter Roth. This was done due to Lucas’s telegram request for character references from Dr. Roth and also by virtue of the fact that Dr. Roth was previously the Protector responsible for the central Queensland district.

The content of Meston’s report to the Home Secretary dated 7 July 1902 received by Roth painted Dr. Roth in a poor light and while he contemplated a response, Archibald Meston completed a written request for Harold Meston and two black trackers, Jack Dowling and Alpha Bob to be available for work at Ganumi Bara and Clermont (1902, 19 July). It is likely he took this preventative action in case Lucas attempted to hide the Woppaburra women a second time. A few days later, a nine-page report written by Dr. Roth was sent to the Home Secretary. In it he strongly disputed all of Meston’s claims of the Islanders maltreatment and gave support for the good character of Lucas (Roth, 1902, 24 July). As part of this response, Roth included extracts from his October 1898 report on the Aboriginals of Rockhampton and Surrounding Coast Districts and photos of the Woppaburra four years prior.

As Northern Protector, Dr. Roth had no jurisdiction in southern Queensland and was unlikely to have visited Ganumi Bara since 1897, when he visited on two occasions and possibly once in 1898 (Roth, 1902, 24 July), but he takes umbrage at Meston’s assertions and attempts to protect his own reputation and that of Lucas. He makes special mention that the approval of a Fisherman’s Reserve on the western side of Woppa created an influx of boats leading to unscrupulous behaviour by these fishing parties (Roth, 1902, 24 July). In the meantime, Meston sent two Aboriginal people to Woppa to gather the Woppaburra ready for removal. Lucas once again contacted Dr. Roth by way of a telegram to advocate on his behalf (1902, 25 August).

Roth’s telegram to the Home Secretary (1902, 25 August) stated, “Lucas Keppel Island wire late Saturday night asking me to inform Home Secretary that Meston has sent [a] black-fellow and gin. Half the blacks are camped with them on the reserve waiting for Meston - Dr. Roth”. (The lady referred to as a ‘gin’ was Judy, a Woppaburra woman, who was brought back from Fraser Island to Woppa to advise the Islanders of Meston’s
Dear Sir,

I have read this report with considerable astonishment, but am not surprised at Dr. Roth making a special effort on behalf of a man to whom he is indebted for many favours and who appears to have successfully deserved him with regard to the general treatment of the aboriginals when there were no visitors present. While Dr. Roth was on the island the blacks were clothed and fed and everything was made to look as attractive as possible. Lucas produced the same illusive appearances during my first visit and somewhat misled me too, but only for a brief period.

Of course Dr. Roth received every attention, and on his behalf Lucas rifled the caves and graves of all the skulls and bones in the burial places of the blacks, who were highly indignant at the desecration of all they held sacred, and Lucas also presented the doctor with many ethnological specimens and has maintained a
plans\(^{40}\)). The same afternoon Roth send a second telegram on Lucas’s behalf, “Re: Wire this morning. Lucas again wires [that] Meston [is] inducing blacks to camp on fisherman’s reserve which is open to boating parties, the majority refuse to leave my camp” (Roth, 1902, 25 August). Meston’s handwritten notes on the same telegram stated that, “these ‘blacks’ are under effective care until the Home Secretary’s decision is known, especially as they have previously never been under any care”.

The following day Meston immediately sent a scathing response concerning Roth’s last report in support of Lucas. The letter to the Under Secretary dated 26 August, 1902, emphatically outlined a number of issues described in the letter below. The letter detailed Dr. Roth’s desecration and theft of artefacts from grave sites where “blacks were highly indignant of the desecration of all they held sacred” (p.1), his use of five-year-old photographs to prove ‘good condition’ of the Woppaburra, Lucas’s failure to distribute 12 blankets sent annually by police, lack of adequate food or clothing and contravention of work permit regulations (Meston 1902, 26 August). The full contents of the letter are reproduced below.

\[\text{Figure 5.15}\]

\(^{40}\) The Keppel woman sent up from Fraser Island (Judy) was one of the two women previously removed by Meston. Source: Telegram from Meston to Home Secretary dated 27 August 1902 and Letter from Meston to the Under Secretary dated 26 August 1902, p.8, indicating her identity as the mother of Conomie.
Figure 5.16

He says Lucas gave the blacks goat flesh, and milk and sweet potatoes. Lucas does not kill Angora goats for blacks, and milk and sweet potatoes have not been seen by them for some considerable time.

Their chief diet for a recent period has been oysters and flying foxes and fish.

The blacks did not even get the Government blankets that were sent to them and have none at the present time. The two women I removed had none although blankets were obtained annually from the police at Yeppoon. 12 pairs annually.

Figure 5.17.

Figures 5.15, 5.16, & 5.17 show excerpts from A. E. Meston’s letter to the Under Secretary dated 26 August, 1902 revealing in great detail his observations and actions regarding the situation of the Woppaburra as a consequence of the actions of Lucas and the administration of W. Roth.

The Home Secretary could see the tense relationship that had developed between the Northern and Southern Protectors but saw that the islands were clearly the responsibility of Meston as the Southern Protector. In a notation on this letter, the Home Secretary stated that, “Dr Roth went further than needed” and “it would have been better if Meston in his reply had been more guarded”. He reverted to his original position and directed Meston to simply remove all Aboriginal people from Woppa (Meston 1902, 26 August). The following day, Meston advised the Home Secretary of a ‘wire’ received from Constable Fahey of Emu Park, indicating that all Woppaburra are now at Emu Park,
with “no blankets, not a stich on them, [the] weather [is] cold and showery” (Meston 1902, 27 August). Meston also advised that the Islanders, “were after all in the neglected condition described in my report on the statements of Dr. Roth” and that Roth’s ‘solicitude’ for Lucas was totally wasted.

The following day Lucas bypassed Meston’s office and forwarded a telegram directly to the Home Secretary which advised of his daughter’s supportive efforts to persuade the Woppaburra to go to Emu Park with Constable Fahey and that they are now there “waiting your instructions” (Lucas, 1902, 28 August). Meston viewed the telegram on the 29 August 1902, and hastily scribbled in the margin a note of how “the daughter did her best to stop the blacks leaving on a previous occasion” and “this statement of Lucas must be regarded as an unusually audacious fabrication” (Meston, Notes on Lucas, 1902, 28 August). While this bureaucratic stoush continued, the Woppaburra were put on a train within a couple of days from Emu Park to North Rockhampton (Morris, ca. 1960\textsuperscript{41}). Meston’s report dated 11 September, 1902 reproduced below has the full details of the incident and all the Woppaburra who were removed from Woppa.

\textsuperscript{41} E.O. Morris (son of James Morris) in his letter held in the Rockhampton Historical Society titled, “History of the Island Blacks”, stated that he went to the old camp after a lapse of 60 years and missed the ‘yabber of the natives’. This would indicate the date for the writing of the letter to be around 1960.
Figure 5.19. Excerpt of report from A. Meston to Home Secretary, 11 September 1902. This excerpt reveals details of forced re-locations of the Woppaburra.
The Capricornian (6 September 1902, p. 37) summarised a short history of the treatment of the Islanders over the past twenty years and gave specific details of how 14 Woppaburra, including “six full-blooded women, one half-caste girl aged eighteen years, two half-caste boys, two full-blooded children, two full-blooded and one half-caste baby 5 months old”, were camped at the North Rockhampton Police Station waiting for transition to either Durundur or Fraser Island by the government steamer, Fitzroy. Perhaps not coincidentally, Lucas settled into the Commercial Hotel at Rockhampton and once again wrote a letter that requested that the following Woppaburra remain, “Mary Anne and Katie- incurables [his emphasis], Ulour [Ulowa] & his gin Annie & an old woman. 5 in all. Paddy has no black gin on the island” (Lucas, 1902, 3 September). This was Lucas’s last failed attempt to keep a captive and unpaid labour force to help with his island enterprises.

After seeing through Lucas’s treatment of the Islanders, Meston removed the remaining Islanders and ignored this request. Soon after Meston attempted to prosecute Lucas for theft of government materials, namely the dozen blankets meant to be distributed each year by police to the Woppaburra (Meston, 1902, 3 September). The blankets typically were given to local fisherman, such as James Morris, to give to Lucas.
for distribution. Meston’s fear was a police summons would simply cause Lucas to destroy blankets and be left with no tangible evidence for prosecution (Meston, 1902, 3 September). Several telegrams were sent between Meston and the Home Secretary and requests were made to Sub-Inspector of Police Toohey, to settle this matter. Meston in the end advised that the “Blanket business had been settled” with no further explanation (Meston 1902, 5 September). Given the expense of visitation and police work involved, it is likely Meston conceded defeat and attempted to instead seek other methods of retribution against the lessee.

Three days later on September 8, 1902, Meston sent a telegram to the Under Secretary, Home Office requesting that the Lands Department not accept rent for three Occupational Licences Lucas held on the Islands pending his report of the treatment of the Woppaburra (Meston, 1902, 8 September). Meston’s report of the events, stated how Lucas took out seven fishing licences for the Woppaburra, paying a shilling a week each for two years, but that “not one of the blacks received a shilling in wages” (Meston, 1902, 11 September). A sum which would have grown to over $62 000 in today’s monetary value. Meston then instructed Rockhampton solicitor, Mr Pattison, to demand wages due or to take the necessary action. The Home Secretary’s hand-written response in the report margin was that:

proceedings for wages against Lucas should be abandoned. The gain is not worth the candle\(^{42}\) especially as the expense of taking witnesses to Rockhampton will be considerable and the ignorance of the Aboriginals will handicap them in giving evidence to make good their cases (Meston, 1902, 11 September).

Meston tried once again to induce the Home Secretary to proceed if only as a bluff to get Lucas to pay a reasonable amount, but the matter was not further investigated (Meston, 1902, 11 September). The protector avoided pursuing further action against Lucas and instead initiated a process of dislocation and transfers upon the Woppaburra that would endure for many decades.

\(^{42}\) A phrase meaning “not worth doing” as candles were a relatively expensive item prior to electrification.
5.8 Displacement and Transfers

The point and process of dislocation is a critical juncture in the history of the Woppaburra. The data set that speaks to forced relocations has shown how physical removal was but one aspect of the removals, family separations and loss of cultural cohesion with their homeland, which created ongoing social and cultural difficulties. Staff Commander James Jeffery of the Royal Navy surveyed the region around Woppa (Wapparaburra [sic] listed on the map) and Konomie in 1864. To the layperson, the map detailing his efforts appears to show the path of a lost navigator moving in multiple directions to record water depths across the bay.

He indicated features on the map such as: - islands, headlands, rocks and water depths. Each number on the paths indicated the water depth in fathoms. The bearings have no organised pattern but change direction haphazardly to fulfil his final objective. The Woppaburra were removed from Woppa in 1902 almost 40 years after this map was drawn. The map is analogous to the transfers and movements of the Woppaburra from

Figure 5.21. Map of Woppa and Konomie showing islands, headlands, rocks and water depths, 1864. Map: East Coast of Australia, Queensland, Keppel Bay and Islands. Surveyed by Staff Commander James Jeffery RN, 1864, QSA.
1902 until 1940, a point at which many Woppaburra achieved some sense of geographic stability.

Apart from physical dislocation and dispossession, the Woppaburra were distanced from many of the cultural and spiritual links with country. Elder Chris Doherty believed that “the second genocide was loss of culture and language because they weren’t allowed to use either” (personal communication, April 11, 2013). The bulk of the Woppaburra, who were sent to Durundur (near Woodford), resided with various other clans (Tronson, 1903) which led to some mixing of cultural aspects. In many cases the reserve managers deprived the residents of the opportunity to engage with their traditional practices at all. Bodies such as the Presbyterian Heathens Committee was charged with stopping these practices (Roth, 1905). Inhabitants of the Durundur reserve were expected to wear Western clothes, speak English, attend church and assimilate into new Western customs. The Woppaburra were also deprived of their liberty and termed ‘inmates\(^\text{43}\)’, hence signifying that life on a reserve was more a prison camp than a residential compound.

The Woppaburra located at Durundur were in the first stages of being denied the ability to practice their culture, as it was deemed paganist and primitive. Roth (1905) stated that, “it is not advisable that a race of half-castes and quadroons should grow up without religion and education and continue their present life of more or less vagabondism” (p. 9). Under the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld), managers of reserves sought to separate traditional Aboriginal people and those of mixed heritage. The Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld), specifically prohibited “any aboriginal rites or customs that, in the opinion of the Minister, are injurious to the welfare of aboriginals living upon a reserve” (p. 7). At the Durundur site, traditional women remained on the reserves while those of mixed heritage were sent out to service. A precondition of service was to convert to Christianity and reject any aspects of one’s traditional culture. The desired outcome of

\(^{43}\) Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for 1904 referred to Aboriginal people on reserves as ‘inmates’.
this change was to construct a docile Christian workforce ready to labour for the state of Queensland.

In addition to cultural deprivation, the conditions at Durundur were unsanitary, unhealthy and open to exploitation from the local population. *The Brisbane Courier* (1904, April 27), detailed the poor condition of the Aboriginal children on Durundur. A letter to the editor stated:

> there were a dozen children half-starved ranging from 6-12 years of age. The majority of them were half-castes, who seem to feel the cold and wet more than their half-brothers. It is a great pity that the fathers of these poor unfortunates are not compelled to pay for their maintenance, as some of their fathers are in good positions…I fail to see where the protection of the government comes in for them (*The Brisbane Courier*, 1904, April 21).

Another newspaper report indicated that, “local residents would be happy to feed and clothe woman if they were allowed to do some work but the Super Intendent does not allow this” (*The Brisbane Courier*, 1904, April 27). In response, the matron on the Durundur reserve said “ she has to be extra careful who goes out and who they go to work for, and she refuses to let several women go out to work, for she knows their character is bad” (*The Brisbane Courier*, 1904, April 27).

These data drawn from archival newspapers showed that Durundur reserve managers as well as ‘white’ fathers of ‘half-caste’ children failed to provide adequate assistance for a reasonable standard of living but also blamed Aboriginal women for having a lack of moral values. Some local residents offered some suggestions for improvement through employment but this was met with rejection due to the perceived ‘bad character’ of young Aboriginal girls” (*The Brisbane Courier*, 1904, April 27). This situation shows how protectors had ultimate decision making power through the act’s regulation, which stated that, “a Protector may permit any aboriginal or half-caste ….to be employed” with the proviso was that it was at the discretion of the reserve superintendent (Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld), p. 3). The legislative regulations, enforced through the superintendents, had
multiple objectives which included a reduction in the number of children becoming wards of the state, a separation of cultures and the development of a labour hire regime.

The Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld) was designed not only to segregate ‘black’ and ‘white’ people but also to develop a work contracting system to fund the operation of the reserves. Superintendents had the power of apportioning “the net produce of the labour of such aboriginals or half-castes” as they saw fit (Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld), p. 7). The Superintendent of the Durundur reserve engaged the Woppaburra men in hand-clearing work contracts as far down as Pimpama and the matron contracted women to service many local farms as domestic servants (Tronson, 1905, March 7). Therefore, in addition to the severe restrictions under the Act, funds generated by workers were retained negating their ability to support their families and creating further negative views from wider society of the Woppaburra and others on Durundur.

The wider societal view of the poor character of Aboriginal people at this time was based on a flawed premise, given that most young Aboriginal girls were in subservient positions compared to the more dominant white male settlers. However, the matron may have been right to maintain some segregation between the ‘races’ as the expansion of the Woodford region was imminent which would have also increased the interaction between settlers and Aboriginal ‘inmates’ resulting in possible further exploitation. Data from archival newspapers also showed that some locals “do not feel very comfortable with the knowledge that hordes of blacks are so near them” (The Brisbane Courier, 1904, January 25, p. 4). The Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld) was designed to segregate Aboriginal people and ‘white’ settlers and control the Woppaburra as part of this population. The Durundur reserve was located in an expanding township, not conducive to the provisions of the act and this increased the interaction between the ‘black and white’ populations. Various sources of data drawn from archival newspapers indicated that locals pushed for a speedy removal of Aboriginal people from the picturesque Woodford site to more isolated areas away from public view (The Brisbane Courier, 1903, May 4, p. 4; Morning Bulletin, 1903, June 6, p. 5; The Capricornian, 1903, June 20, p. 18).
The Woodford area was intended only as a transition point, as Durundur as a site was not a registered Aboriginal Reserve under the act, but rather a 2130-acre ‘Police Paddock\textsuperscript{44}. As such, the tenure did not allow exclusive use of this land as a holding reserve or for cropping, cattle or sheep farming. Meston tried unsuccessfully to have the tenure of this site converted to enable such uses, but the Commissioner of Police vehemently opposed this idea (1902, 9 May). As a shared arrangement, with an increasing number of Aboriginal people being brought to Durundur, suitable areas were required to sustain the wholesale removal of Aboriginal people from town areas and pastoral properties to reserves. The last Aboriginal ‘town’ people in Rockhampton were send to Durundur in June 1902 (\textit{Morning Bulletin}, 1902, 4 June) and soon after 17 more people, 14 of those from Woppa, were sent to the Police Paddock (\textit{The Brisbane Courier}, 1902, 8 September, p. 4; \textit{The Queenslander}, 1902, 13 September, p. 613), further placing pressure on the Durundur site and broader Woodford area.

\textit{The Queenslander} (1902, 4 October, p. 784) stated that there were “nearly 180 persons in the station including the last batch from Keppel Island”. It also stated that the nearby Durundur Estate was about to be ‘thrown open’ and the ‘inmates’ on the Police Paddock had done excellent work of clearing. The article advised that the Minister “is on the lookout for another reserve…and hopes to get the blacks removed to a place where they will come less into contact with the whites” (\textit{The Queenslander}, 1902, 4 October, p. 784). The nearest functioning reserves at the time were at Barambah (later known as Cherbourg) and the Bogimbah Creek site on Fraser Island. The Barambah site which opened on 30 April 1901 with an intake of 40 men from Durundur was preferred (Meston, 1902, 22 October).

The Fraser Island Mission was the previous residence of the two Woppaburra women, Judy and Kitty, who had been removed in 1900 from Woppa to Fraser Island by Archibald Meston, until Judy was taken back to Woppa and used to convince the remaining Islanders living on Woppa to go over to Emu Park. Unfortunately, she was transferred onto Durundur with the other Woppaburra, leaving her children alone at

\hspace{1cm}\textsuperscript{44} Prior to Police having vehicles, large paddocks near the police stations were used to stable and rear horses.
Bogimbah Creek on Fraser Island. After appealing to Meston for Judy’s return, Reverend S.C. Harris wrote to the Home Secretary requesting the return of the Woppaburra woman “Judy or Kitty” and that he would happily take “all the Keppel Island people at Fraser Island” (Harris, 1902, 24 November). Meston’s response was that he would happily return Judy to Fraser Island and was also waiting for further advice from the Home Secretary on the final placement of the Islanders (Meston, 1903, 8 January). The Home Secretary approved the return of Judy within a few days. However, he had no permanent location for the Woppaburra still at Durundur and soon after (24 January), the Minister for Lands, Mr Foxton, chaired a forum to consider the use of Woppa for an Aboriginal Reserve (Morning Bulletin, 1903, 24 January, p. 5).

This forum sought to return the Woppaburra to Woppa, but by this time attending the beaches of Woppa had become a leisure pursuit. Several deputations from a number of businessmen tried desperately to convince the Minister of the unsuitability of the location, preferring to extend its use as a summer picnic area and fishing reserve. A Rockhampton resident of more than 40 years and local identity, Mr Ringwald McClelland, gave strong support to the proposed reserve as he had a close affiliation with the Islanders over a number of years (Morning Bulletin, 28 January 1903, p. 6). He stated that:

the blacks lived on this island before and were content and happy until some whites took possession of the islands, and shot down the aborigines like wild beasts. And this in the face of the hard fact that the blacks had no weapons of war at the time, showing that their intentions were peaceful. I was over on North Keppel Island some 5 years ago [1898], and the blacks showed me a line of bones over a hundred yards long, and told me they belonged to a tribe of blacks who were shot by a boating party of whites many years before…the late Mr. Ross of Cawarral took a number of the boys over to the mainland, but only one lived to return to the island which he reached by swimming…some of the others buried their faces in the sand actually smothering themselves rather than trust to the mercy of the white man.
McClelland’s arguments were that the Woppaburra had a strong association with their homeland. Despite this, the fisherman’s reserve was extended (*Morning Bulletin*, 1903, 7 October, p. 7) and the Woppaburra were not to return to an established reserve on their island but remained at the Durundur Police Paddock.

Meston wrote a further report dated 13 January, 1903, of details not previously contained in his annual report. He advised that the three Woppaburra women taken to the Lock Hospital in Brisbane had now been transferred back to the Hospital tent at Durundur (Meston, 1903, 13 January, p. 6). A number of newspaper reports over the remainder of the year (*The Brisbane Courier*, 4 May 1903, p. 4; *Morning Bulletin*, 6 June 1903, p. 5 and *The Capricornian*, 20 June 1903, p. 18) all refer to an increase in number of arrivals at the Durundur reserve, its temporary nature and its impending movement to a larger area. The *Australian Town and Country Journal* listed Meston’s retirement as the Southern Protector at the end of 1903 (16 December 1903, p. 9), with the Northern and Southern protectorate offices to be abolished on 25 March, 1904. Walter Roth took over as Chief Protector of all of Queensland from 30 March 1904 (Roth, 1905). Considering the temporary nature of Durundur and Roth’s upcoming responsibility for the entire state, little was spent on upgrading the site. Superintendent Tronson’s correspondence dated 1 December, 1904 indicated six deaths and limited funds spent on provisions (Tronson, 1904).

In addition, the local residents’ opposition to the close proximity of numerous Aboriginal people and the Police Commissioner’s refusal to convert the tenure of the Police Paddock to an Aboriginal reserve were two key reasons to wind down operations and move the Aboriginal people from Durundur to another settlement. Most of the Woppaburra were forced to move to Barambah, later known as Cherbourg, more than 180 kilometres inland. In early 1905, women and children travelled by train while the remaining males including the Woppaburra men deconstructed the buildings and were forced to walk to the new settlement before once again re-constructing the limited infrastructure (Letter Dunbar, R. to W.E. Roth, February 10, 1905).
The empirical evidence\textsuperscript{45} indicated that the Woppaburra were sent on to Yarrabah and Barambah with further transfers to Maryborough. The various transfers between Barambah and the Wide Bay region coincided with imposed government work contracts. The standard work contract for domestic servants was 12 months, with all employers required to request a renewal annually (Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897). The findings also indicated that there was a cohort of Woppaburra at Bogimbah Creek Mission on Kgari (Fraser Island) which closed in 1904. The Protector noted that “a large majority of inmates … having been removed to Yarrabah …” (Roth, 1905, p. 13). A few of the remaining Woppaburra such as Fred Ross who was located at the Bogimba Mission on Kgari (Fraser Island) settled at Hervey Bay (Aunty Frances Gala, personal communication, April 23, 2013).

There is little specific information regarding the Woppaburra through 1903 and 1904. What is known is that two women, Judy and Kitty, and some of their children, Rosie and Jesse,\textsuperscript{46} were located on the Fraser Island Mission at Bogimbah Creek. This mission failed and was closed in 1904 with the remaining residents transferred to either Durundur or Yarrabah (Roth, 1905, pp. 13-15). The data drawn from archival newspapers indicated that 30 of the inmates were to be taken to Durundur on 27 August, 1904 and the remainder would be ferried up to Yarrabah on the vessel Rio Loge with all buildings and infrastructure (The Brisbane Courier, 1904, August 24, p. 4). At this time in 1904, the previous mission station\textsuperscript{47} of Yarrabah was changed to a reformatory and eventually declared as an Aboriginal Reserve (Queensland Government Gazette, 1904, 16 July, p. 92, Vol. LXXXIII). Jesse ‘Keppel’ Ross named so due to her origins, then established a family in Yarrabah before moving to Bessie Point and onto Cairns where most of her family grew up (Uncle Vince Singleton, personal communication, 16 June, 2012).

\textsuperscript{45} Qld archives has a list of entries for letters received but originals have been destroyed. The limited information is sufficient to track the movement of some of the Woppaburra. Ref: A/58994 & A/58995.

\textsuperscript{46} Report from Protector Archibald Meston to Home Secretary dated 27 March 1900 lists a 7-year-old child and further in the Report from Protector Archibald Meston to Home Secretary dated 11 September 1902 lists a 9-year-old girl. In addition, an interview with Uncle Vince Singleton indicated that this was his great-grandmother Jessie ‘Keppel’ Ross taken from Fraser Island and married at age 16-17 in 1910.

\textsuperscript{47} Mission stations were typically established by various church denominations from the early 1800s while Aboriginal reserves were brought into effect in the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld) from January 1898 onwards, however the government had oversight of both Mission Stations and Aboriginal Reserves from this point.
The bulk of the Woppaburra were still located on the Durundur mission station which was in the process of being prepared for transfer to Barambah during the last months of 1904 (Roth, 1905). However, there are two statements by Meston which contradict this. The first stated that “at the time, all the last survivors of the Keppel Islands were removed by me to Fraser Island (Morning Bulletin, 1923, 14 April, p. 7) and “all remaining natives of Keppels to Fraser Island during my period of Queensland Government Protectorship” (Morning Bulletin, 1923, 28 April, p. 5). Given the duration was 20 years after this event, his recollections must be incorrect as the Woppaburra were among those transferred to Barambah early in 1905. The Monthly Return of Aboriginal Attendance and Government Relief at Durundur Mission Station for the month of February 1905, indicated “40 left for Barambah” on 21 February (Tronson, 1905, 7 March). All buildings and structures were also dismantled and taken to the new settlement.

The Durundur reserve was closed on 1 March 1905 with the remaining 160 residents moved to the newly reconstituted Barambah reserve (The Brisbane Courier, 1905, 4 March, p. 3). William John Thompson, a member of the Salvation Army, controlled Barambah reserve under the auspice of the Aboriginal Protection Society, however, it was poorly resourced, poorly funded and was severely affected by drought (Blake, 2001). The Salvation Army effectively handed its operations to the Queensland Government in early 1905, coinciding with the Durundur removals. Of these removals, 61 men were forced to walk 180km from Durundur (near Woodford) to Barambah, now named Cherbourg (near Murgon), while the remaining 115 women and children were taken by train from Caboolture to Murgon (Dunbar, 1905, 10 February). The Woppaburra were among the group transferred from Durundur to the new settlement of Barambah, not far from Murgon. Further archival data has indicated that the Woppaburra were at the Barambah settlement. A letter from the Superintendent of Barambah to the Chief Protector Dr. Roth, dated 20 October, 1906, stated “I have made a place for the goats, and put the Keppel Islanders to mind them”, this was likely due to the Islanders’ work with Lucas’s Angora goats on Woppa.
The Woppaburra who were transferred to Barambah came in two cohorts. The first of these were those who had been residents of the former Fraser Island Bogimbah Mission (Roth, 1905, p. 15). The second cohort were the people listed in Table 4.2 as ‘Keppel Islanders’ who were residing at the Durundur reserve at Woodford in June 1903. The Durundur correspondence dated 30 June, 1903 had a specific reference to an ‘old woman’ aged 63. *The Brisbane Courier* (1913, 18 September) described an ‘old woman’ at Barambah, “who was removed about 12 years ago with her husband and family from Keppel Island” (p. 6). It is not exactly clear which members of the Woppaburra arrived at Barambah but this source indicated at least a married couple and ‘family’. Although most archival letters regarding this period have been lost or destroyed over time, four archival entries list the events soon after 1910. The first entry lists the Superintendent of Barambah asking if Bessie Blair (nee Morris) has a ‘permit’ to marry Albert Peters (Ross) dated 8 January, 1912. The second entry records that the local Protector at Maryborough (30 kilometres from Hervey Bay/ Fraser Island) gave approval to allow the marriage of “Bessie Blair to Albert Peters of Fraser Island” on 17 January, 1912. This indicated that Albert Peters was a resident of Fraser Island. The third archival source is a letter dated 29 January, 1912 from a C. Jorrs of Maryborough, requesting postponement of wedding due to further work required of Bessie Blair in service. Finally, a fourth entry from the Protector of Maryborough reported on the “marriage of Albert Peters and Bessie Blair or Morris, both half castes on 13.2.12”.

A marriage certificate of Albert Ross (Peters) (Munkwadran) to Bessie Blair places him at or near Maryborough settlement on 13 February, 1912 and indicated he was a “timber getter, and usual residence Fraser Island” (cert. ref. 12/002348). It is likely that the married couple were cohabitating while Bessie Blair was in service as a domestic servant for a Mrs. E. Armitage of Kent St, Maryborough (A/58996). The entry indicated a request for “balance of funds from her account” on 24 December, 1912 (A/58996). Further, a birth certificate of their daughter and second child to Bessie Peters (nee Blair),

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48 Entry for archival letter from Superintendent of Barambah settlement received 7 October 1908 indicated the marriage of Bessie Morris to Frank Blair in 1908 (A/58994) and further requests for access to her funds for her child (A/58995). This marriage must have dissolved sometime between October 1908 and January 1912.
Lillian Cecelia Peters is dated 3 May, 1914 at Maryborough about two years after their marriage. Not long prior to this the newspaper report titled, “Death of Old Woman” on 23 August, 1913 mentioned above stated, “She was practically the last representative…from Keppel Island” (The Brisbane Courier, 1913, 18 September, p. 6). At this time Albert Peters was only recently married with a three-year-old child and a pregnant wife, so it is unlikely he attended the funeral. There are no further archival references until 1927 and it is likely that up until this date Albert Peters and Bessie Peters remained at Urangan, Hervey Bay, due to logging work at nearby Kgari (Fraser Island). The marriage certificate of Albert Peters from 1912, indicated he was a “timber getter, and [his] usual residence [was] Fraser Island” (Registrar General, 2012, May 3).

Under the removals order correspondence there is a reference to the removal of “Albert Peters, his wife and child Lillian (aged 14)” from Kgari (Fraser Island) to Barambah on 16 July, 1927 (Queensland State Archives, Removals Order Correspondence Index. July 16, 1927). There is no reference of the transfer of her first child Uncle Gordon Peters who may have remained at Hervey Bay due to being in his late teens. It is likely that Lillian Cecelia Peters resided at Cherbourg for four to five years with her parents. As Elder Linette Russ recalled, “she used to work at the hospital, they used to call her a nurse …at the Cherbourg hospital” and “there were pictures of her at Cherbourg although I don’t think it was for a long period of time” (personal communication,

Figure 5.22. Excerpt from The Brisbane Courier, 18 September 1913, p. 6, describing death of ‘old woman’.
June 5, 2013). While there is no further archival correspondence, Lillian returned to Maryborough to marry Ernest Barney in 1932 while her parents remained in Cherbourg until 1939. Requests from the broader Woppaburra family and a letter from E. Clayton, the Country Party State Member for Wide Bay, to the Chief Protector were sufficient to return Albert and Bessie Peters to Urangan, Hervey Bay (Queensland State Archives. Register of Letters Index for Cherbourg, 1939).

The Woppaburra sent to Barambah and Yarrabah are difficult to track due to the nature of those mission stations and misplaced or destroyed archival records. Deebing Creek, Barambah, Yarrabah and Mapoon were considered reformatories under the Industrial and Reformation Schools Act 1865 (Qld) (Roth, 1905). The sites that the Woppaburra were sent to were two of the four functioning reformatories. The nature of reform institutions was that any Aboriginal child could be legally removed and placed in these schools which ‘trained the inmates’. The corollary of training was mandatory employment at various locations in that region. This explains the movement of Bessie Blair (nee Morris) from Camooweal to Barambah and onto Maryborough as a domestic servant and Albert Peters (Ross) from Barambah to Fraser Island (Linette Russ, personal communication, June 5, 2013). There appears to be useful data sources at points of transition but few records outside these moments. The Woppaburra who no longer remained on mission stations and reserves avoided the usual tracking and monitoring processes common on these sites. The following period draws together more recent history from the collective memory of Woppaburra Elders.

5.9 Relative Freedom from the Act

As a result of the Second World War (1939–1945) and the critical shortages in labour, Woppaburra who were still loosely controlled by the various acts, travelled relatively freely to visit relatives or seek employment in capital cities. It was fortunate that the Woppaburra in the Wide Bay area were no longer residing on the Cherbourg mission station which enforced strict regulations under the Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Act 1939 (Qld), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Act 1965 (Qld), and the Aborigines Act 1971 (Qld). These remained in effect until they were repealed by the Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984 (Qld). Outside the mission
stations and in the coastal haven of Hervey Bay, the Woppaburra had relative freedom to settle into family life.

Those unable to undertake employment in Wide Bay sought work in Brisbane and resided in housing commission areas. The majority of Woppaburra settled in Inala, Woodridge, Acacia Ridge and Zilmere. It is the case that data regarding the mobility of the Woppaburra became very scarce after removal from Woppa in 1902. The Woppaburra, now not residing on mission stations, were not as closely scrutinised and reported upon. Aboriginal people who identified strongly were targets of government inspection, therefore it appears that the Woppaburra like many other Aboriginal people maintained a low profile. This desire to remain away from official gazes and the lack of governmental reporting requirements combined to give the Woppaburra a life away from intense government control. This sense of freedom perhaps generated interest from those Elders previously removed to once again return to Woppa.

Elder Linette Russ born in 1941, recalled her grandfather speaking about a quantity of opals he had left on Woppa as a child and her eldest brother, ‘Barno’ (Ernest) returned with their grandfather in 1959 to collect them (personal communication, June 5, 2013). Nothing was found and this may have been a clever plan from an old trickster to have one last visit before passing. However, the possibility of gem stones left on the island nearly 60 year ago was not without basis. The *Morning Bulletin* (1931, 5 November) stated, “a few years ago a turquoise deposit was reported from Keppel Island, situated in Keppel Bay, Queensland. The colour, however, had the same defect of the New South Wales stones; they were green instead of blue” (p. 10). Grandad Albert Peters passed away in 1962 and it is believed that no other Woppaburra returned to the islands until 1984 (Ganter, 1985). The impetus for re-engagement was archaeological diggings and archival research begun by Dr. Mike Rowland in 1979. This resulted in Dr. Rowland’s contact with Woppaburra Elder, Aunty Ethel Richards (Aunty Conomie’s daughter). From this point forward there have been yearly visits to the Islands by a number of Woppaburra for various purposes such as a desire to strengthen Woppaburra culture and conserve the island environment.
5.10 Summary

In this section, the collected data revealed how the Woppaburra had lived an isolated existence rarely interacting with the mainland Darambal people. The arrival of Cook and other seafarers were more of an inquisitive nature than punitive incursions, however with the coming of the Archers and the development of Rockhampton as a township, this changed. Settlers quickly seized the most fertile land within reach of fresh water which meant movement down the Fitzroy River towards Woppa and Konomie. Robert Ross, an opportunist and ruthless businessman, seized land north of the Fitzroy River and eventually took control and later ownership of leases on Woppa and Konomie. The cohabitation of the Woppaburra and sheep without resident overseers allowed for an environment where Islanders assumed that the introduced species were available for hunting and consumption. The evidentiary dataset has shown that this led to maltreatment through violent reprisals and in some cases wholesale massacre. The arrival of James and Andy Lucas in 1893 on the islands as managers for the Ross family, resulted in the Woppaburra being treated harshly, used as slave labour and infected with venereal diseases. The Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld), legislated in 1897 and designed to safeguard Aboriginal people, had the opposite effect, with the Islanders being virtually ignored while the Northern and Southern Protectors spent years debating the real ‘condition’ of the Islanders. In September, 1902, this shameful period resulted in the eventual removal of all remaining Woppaburra from Woppa to Oopal (Emu Park) then onto Rockhampton and later between government reserves and mission stations.

The data set has shown how, after government-sanctioned removal and subsequent transfers between reserves and mission stations, the Woppaburra were still stringently controlled by legislation that was racially motivated and was focused on economic and social control. Physical displacement removed the perceived economic barrier between the land holders and development that Aboriginal people represented. However after removal, the Woppaburra were still used in an economic capacity as a source of cheap labour to fund Queensland’s operation of its racist legislation. Socially, it controlled every aspect of Aboriginal people’s lives from liberty to marriage, opportunity
to access or purchase housing and even operate bank accounts. The actions in this time period were laid down in legislation as a permanent record of the Queensland government’s attempts to move the Woppaburra specifically, and Aboriginal people more broadly, from eugenics to fascism. The eugenic aspect was an attempt to improve the genetic quality of the Australian population by selective inclusion. This was accomplished by preferencing children of mixed heritage over the more traditional Aboriginal people, who were perceived as being destined to die out (HREOC, 1997). I contend that it moved to a fascist regime as individual Woppaburra had no civil rights and were punished without any ability or right to mount a legal defence in court.\footnote{Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 allowed administrators to control Aboriginal people through the use of regulations which could be made lawful simply by a proclamation by the Governor-in-Council. In this sense, decision-making passed from politicians to public servants. Section 32 stated that such regulations have the force of the law.}

The first 50 years of the twentieth century was a very turbulent period. In the early stages, Queensland was recovering from the depression of the 1890s, several failed mission stations closed in the early 1900s and South Sea Islanders were being deported due to the provisions of the Pacific Islander Labourers Act 1901 (Cth). Conversely the Immigration Restriction Act, 1901 (Cth), also known as the ‘White Australia’ policy, placed restrictions on people of colour from entering the country. Considering the social unrest created by a second depression in the 1930s and the participation and recovery from two world wars from 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, the state had to expend its efforts across a range of major social upheavals. Aboriginal people on church mission stations and government reserves were still under strict controls but by 1940, the Woppaburra were no longer located on these sites and were spared extensive transfers. This resulted in the creation of very few documents in this period. Current Elders who were interviewed for this study were born between 1940 and 1960 and the data for this time period were based on current collective social memory. During this period the Woppaburra were self-supporting and not a financial burden on the government. After years of regulation, reporting and control, the Woppaburra were most successful when left alone and beyond the scrutiny of government officers.
These restrictions were relaxed in the late 1960s particularly when a national referendum allowed the Commonwealth to control Aboriginal affairs rather than the state governments. Some believe that the rise in South African apartheid from 1948 was based on the Queensland’s Aboriginal Protection legislation (Graham, 2006; Pilger, 2013). It was common knowledge that the then Prime Minister Robert Menzies strongly supported apartheid and refused to condemn the 1960 Sharpeville massacre in South Africa (Limb, 2008). This enhanced the two nations’ diplomatic relationship (Limb, 2008). In terms of the treatment of ‘native’ populations there was a similar ideology, but while most of the Western world condemned apartheid, Australia supported its ideals as it had treated it’s own ‘native’ population in a similar fashion for many decades. The history of the Woppaburra from the turn of the twentieth century until today was strongly influenced by overarching governmental control as borne out by the dataset. It is ironic that in the past 40 years since 1970, relationships with governmental departments have become the vehicle for the Woppaburra’s reconnection with country and have enhanced their ability to engage with sustainable and conservation practices. This is the subject of the concluding chapter.
Chapter 6
The Woppaburra Today

6.1 Introduction

In the final chapter I have presented data that describe the recent associations of Woppaburra with Woppa and Konomie and how they have strengthened their culture and history. I will detail the daily practices common among the Woppaburra and the more specific association with government agencies. I have provided evidence that in recent decades the Woppaburra have made strategic alliances with various state and national departments to protect, conserve and promote Woppaburra culture and history. These relationships were strengthened in the late 1970s due to the freedoms arising from civil rights campaigns of the 1960s. A key turning point was the federal referendum in 1967 which resulted in deletion of section 51 from the Australian Constitution, hence allowing the commonwealth to take control of Aboriginal affairs from the states. The federal government’s control of Aboriginal affairs was the impetus for the development and funding of a number of community-based Aboriginal health, education and legal organisations. A further change was the inclusion of Aboriginal people on government boards in advisory capacities. The actions, as a result of federal constitutional changes in 1967 and wider civil rights movements in the 1970s, resulted in the Woppaburra’s alliances seen today with environmental, education and land-related government departments and bodies. These alliances have assisted the Woppaburra to reconnect physically with country, essentially seeking out the footprints of ancestors and fulfilling a promise to return.

Debra Bird-Rose (2011) when referring to an Aboriginal clan and their association with country stated that:

a moral human life depends not on staying in place, nor on wandering at will, but on returning. The traces that remain when the person who made them is gone, are both a sign and a promise - they are a sign of their former presence, and a promise of their future return. Living things return and leave again, crossing time and
space. Country holds time and stories together, and every return is a moral action, a promise fulfilled (p. 135).

Bird-Rose (2011) encapsulates the key idea of a clan either moving briefly away from country or, in the Woppaburra case, being removed from country for an extended period. The removal, transfer or exclusion is a secondary moral issue for such people, because it is the return to country that is the critical moral choice that the clan must make after displacement. The Woppaburra living in disparate centres across Queensland were acutely aware of their history, connection to country and the range of cultural practices. Bird-Rose (2011) posited that the return to country is linked to traces that remain after a clan has left, but these traces are a sign of former presence and a promise to return at some time in the future. For the Woppaburra, the traces that remain are contained in various data sources used in this thesis. The case study method drew together Elders’ stories, knowledge of cultural practices through collective memory as well as a range of Woppaburra artefacts. The traces which were present since the time of departure in 1902 retained a promise of future return or an obligation to reconnect. Bird-Rose (2011) suggested that country itself holds time and stories together, hence a return to country is a fulfilment of a moral obligation or promise to come home. Linear time frames are unimportant from the Woppaburra perspective and Elders consulted in this study believed that the helix of time has simply cycled to pull together people and country. In this sense, chronological points in time when the Woppaburra returned to country are not the focus of this section, but rather the nature of these connections.

6.2 Painful Memories

The previous chapter discussed the Woppaburra’s forced removal from their homeland and subsequent transfers between a number of reserves and mission stations. The government protectors responsible for enforcing the racist Queensland legislation, were responsible for the dispossession of the land and sea country and segregation of family members from each other. After the chaotic first few decades of the twentieth century, the Woppaburra were living in regional and urban centres with little geographic movement in the period around the middle of the twentieth century. Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) recalled that her grandfather Mumkwadran
(Albert Peters) returned briefly to Woppa in 1956 with her eldest brother Ernest in search of a purported stash of opals. This was the first time Mumkwadran had returned for over 50 years and the memories were bitter-sweet. Uncle Mackie Burns stated that, although Mumkwadran had been separated from his country, he demonstrated his cultural knowledge through daily activities such as fishing and spoke his traditional language through songs, stories and private discussions (personal communication, April 23, 2013). But Mumkwadran rarely spoke about the events, activities or treatment that the Woppaburра had received on Woppа and subsequent mission stations.

As stated by Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013), her grandfather (Munkwadran), like many trauma victims, was reluctant to discuss the actions and treatment that the Woppaburра had received on the islands when he was a child. Mumkwadran was born ca. 1888 and was a young boy for the period when James Lucas was the cruel manager on Woppа. It is common for people who have witnessed death, torture and/or beatings to suffer a form of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) similar to those in battle zones (Smith, Ryan, Wingard, Slymen, Sallis, & Kritz-Silverstein, 2008). Uncle Gary Smith stated:

What hurts a lot of our people is when they took the children away. Took ‘em away to reserves and all that, away from our homes, terrible that hurt… our people are still hurting. They’ll never get over it for the rest of our lives hey…

(personal communication, April 23, 2013).

A common symptom of PTSD is to avoid reminders of such events as a coping mechanism. As a result, a whole generation of Woppaburра rarely discussed the culture and history of Woppа and Konomie, placing the next generation in a position of gathering an understanding from their own lived experience. The generation of Woppaburра born from 1930-1960 are present-day Elders and their knowledge is contained like vignettes of their childhood, when they had interactions with their Elders. These interactions have been captured in the symbols and images drawn from their memories and placed in the included artwork. The investigation into who they were as a people, historically, started in earnest in the early 1970s with family meetings discussing
Woppaburra culture and a desire to take pride in their heritage. This coincided with wider national promotion of Aboriginal issues by the newly formed Labor government in 1972. The Labor government’s political drive was to institute the policy of ‘self-determination’ allowing Aboriginal people to make decisions regarding their own welfare on their own terms. On a grass roots level, the Woppaburra chose to reinvigorate discussions about their cultural heritage and history which had been long concealed by grandparents.

6.3 The Genesis of Woppaburra History Today

Bird-Rose (2011) stated that “country holds time and stories together” (p. 135). The Woppaburra were forcibly removed from their country in 1902 and almost randomly moved from one reserve or mission station to another. The then government policy specifically targeted Aboriginal people and controlled every aspect of their lives socially, culturally and economically. Socially and culturally, the Woppaburra were dispossessed of country, deprived of liberty and forbidden to practise cultural activities including speaking their language (Aunty Chrissy Doherty, April 11, 2013). While living in government-controlled reserves under harsh regimes, there were no social security benefits and the Woppaburra had to rely on government rations as a means of survival (Uncle Mackie Burns, personal communication, April 23, 2013). As part of this regime, Aboriginal ‘Protectors’ engaged the Woppaburra in work contracts with wages deposited into the state government Welfare Fund for ‘safe keeping’. Hence the Woppaburra were also economically controlled and had to request their own funds which were only received with strict protector approval.

In addition, decades of trauma forced the Woppaburra into a mindset to perceive their culture as primitive, unimportant and uncivilised (Elder Linette Russ, personal communication, June 5, 2013). This meant that the children of those removed from Woppa and Konomie were exposed to only fragments or traces of their cultural birth rite. If Marika-Munungiritj and Christie (1995) are correct, the Woppaburra can “see the journey of their ancestors” from these traces or footprints. These traces have been filtered through a second generation of Woppaburra social memory and reconstructed into a narrative which as best as possible recreates the original values, beliefs and
practices of their traditional ancestors. This narrative in various forms is creating today’s history for the Woppaburra.

6.4 Knowledge and Practices Drawn from Collective Memory

Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) acknowledged that there was the loss of some customs but believed that sufficient knowledge has been passed down by Elders through social memory to record and pass on culture and history. For example, Uncle Gary Smith and Uncle Mackie Burns (personal communication, April 23, 2013) recalled that, “they used to make fishing nets down Urangan there, Miller Street … fixing nets and making nets down there. Uncle Freddy Ross and Uncle Albert … years ago we were only just kids”. These data speak to collective memory as a basis for transgenerational narratives. This was seen at the festival of events on Konomie based on cultural activities drawn from the collective memories of Elders (observation, July 4, 2014; May 28, 2016). The kind of traditional activities in which the Woppaburra are engaging today are the men’s knowledge and skills in fishing and net-making. These customs are also in the process of being recorded today. Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) advised that, Mr. Phil Gordon, Curator at the Australian Museum, “wanted to get Uncle Mackie talking about the [fishing] nets” and to explain the intricacies of their production and their use. Hence, the Elders who were interviewed recalled cultural practices from the past that are being reinvigorated and passed on specifically at festivals and, more broadly, to national museums.

Data from the interviews included not only knowledge that Woppaburra Elders had of past practices, but also a meta-level acknowledgement that it was an expectation that they would be keepers and relaters of such knowledge. Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) stated that, “when our old people were removed right across Australia and put into missions a lot of those customs were lost. But, through our old peoples’ traditional knowledge [these are] some of the things we want to see in the future”. The statement that a lot of customs were lost is countered by the existence of old people’s traditional knowledge. Here, one of today’s Elders reiterated “we’ve had generations of Woppaburra passing down that knowledge” (Aunty Chrissy Doherty, personal communication, April 11, 2013). For example, Aunty Chrissy
Doherty’s creative fiction story of the Yulowa and Paddy’s rescue of several men in a boating mishap in 1896 has recently been published (Central Queensland University, 2016). The expectation that knowledge is passed on through narratives or modern day publishing is made explicit in the following passage from Aunty Chrissy Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013).

…Aunty Ethel made me her next storyteller and she bestowed me with a traditional name as the story teller, because I guess they wait and see who has a hunger for that knowledge and I guess I was always the one in my family, me and my sisters um, nana Konomie um had ten children and a lot of them didn’t show that interest but I’ve shown that interest since I was 16 years old and I just had a hunger to know my roots and I loved listening to Aunty Ethel’s stories ... and that’s my connection to my country.

The data set through collective memory spoke to practical activities, observations and transgenerational narratives. Conversely, Aunty Glenice Croft (personal communication, June 21, 2016) stated “the terrible things that happened to our people. No wonder they [grandparents] didn’t talk about things”. The varying accounts show that many unsavoury aspects of history were avoided altogether while other aspects of culture were passed down through observation, participation in activities and narratives. The data set highlighted many cultural aspects as common daily practices which became increasingly distinctive at special occasions such as festivals.

6.5 Current Practices

6.5.1 Practices related to sea-country.

Traditional practices related to Woppaburra culture that are being undertaken today can be viewed as daily activities or special occasions developed specifically to highlight these practices. The interview data showed that seafaring practices were routinely part of daily activities. Aunty Frances Gala (personal communication, April 23, 2013) stated, “they would row everywhere, all the way to Fraser Island, [a]round the islands” in an effort to catch fish and crabs. Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) also recalled hours of work pulling beach worms to be later sold as fish bait
from the front of the family home to fishermen. These daily, saltwater-country skills were passed on informally to the children as they grew up. These children are now the Elders of today passing on these same skills. These skills might be considered rudimentary to the Western observer, but Elders also recalled more acute skills such as the ability to navigate and identify natural features with heightened senses. Aunty Frances Gala stated, “it was that foggy, you couldn’t see the mainland ... we would just look at the island and know, a tree or the shape of the island” (personal communication, April 23, 2013). The interview data indicated that skills for identifying country were carefully honed and had been passed on through observation and participation to the Elders of today.

In addition, the abilities to locate fish, understand weather patterns and develop fishing skills are also exhibited by Elders today and borne out in the data set. As Aunty Frances Gala observed, the Woppaburra Elders took note of the “movement of the ocean … [and] read the weather” (personal communication, April 23, 2013). The interview data indicated that such skills have been passed down and used in various contexts. Elder Linette Russ when asked about her thoughts of the movement from her home near saltwater country in Queensland to a river in the middle of the Kimberley region in Western Australia stated, “it’s a river but it’s still fishing” alluding to the skills she acquired from her grandfather as a youth (personal communication, June 5, 2013). Aunty Vanessa Kirk when visiting Konomie discussed how she observed Guriala (the sea eagle), the totem of her grandfather which advised appropriate time and place for fishing and hunting (personal communication, February 23, 2013). This was based on observing seasonal variations, weather patterns and cultural protocols around this totemic ancestor. Part of this was a desire to use traditional language terms where possible.

6.5.2 Language terms.

An element of Indigenous standpoint theory outlined in Chapter 3 is the inclusion and application of perspectives from traditional Aboriginal custodians’ terms of reference or points of view. It has been indicated through the interview data source that the increasing use of traditional names was deliberate and appropriate over the last three decades. For example, in 1993, the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage requested permission to name their newly acquired vessel after the local people (Godwin,
1993). This occurred on the morning of 19 December, 1993 (personal observation, December 19, 1993). The Department of Environment and Heritage Marine Parks vessel was fitted with a placard named *Konomie* and Woppaburra woman Michelle Croft designed two emblems of their dolphin and whale totemic ancestors which sat alongside the name (Rutherford, 1993).

The interview data also revealed that Elders used Woppaburra terms extensively for islands, artefacts, animals and names of descendants (Aunty Chrissy Doherty, personal communication April 11, 2013; Aunty Vanessa Kirk, personal communication February 23, 2013; Gary Smith, personal communication April 23, 2013). As an example, Elders rarely used the terms Keppel Islands preferring to revert to the original title of Woppa and Konomie. In addition, Elder Uncle Robert Barney completed a study on Woppaburra’s language use in 1993 which also confirms this (Central Queensland Aboriginal Language Program, 1994, 23 June). The data set indicated that contemporary Woppaburra are re-engageing strongly with traditional terms passed down through social memory which were highlighted in Elders’ interviews and also uncovered in archival documents.

The Interview data and documentation also highlighted various uses of language terms in varying contexts in recent decades which is part of who the Woppaburra are today. For example, many newborn children and Elders now have traditional names such as Darlutta (Aunty Chrissy Doherty, personal communication, February 23, 2013), Warinkil (Aunty Glenice Croft, personal communication April 30, 2016) and Kululu, (Aunty Bess Catley, personal communication, April 30, 2016). In a speech during the Woppaburra Land Transfer ceremony on 4 April 2007, Linette Russ gave an address that included sections in her traditional language (Russ, 2007). The address stated,

Dala yunga-a birrangan nhugl woppa-burra. Dala talli birrangam gapsa nghugal

Today, the people here are Woppa-burra. Today we speak on land belonging to us.

Dala birrangan algal nhugal gapsa taboon yunga-a wappa-burra.

Today we are here to celebrate return of land from white man to our people.
Linette Russ (personal communication, 5 June, 2013) also added that, “we do speak a little of our language and we do have some understanding” highlighting that there is a range of cultural practices still maintained today. Uncle Mackie Burns (personal communication, April 23, 2013) spoke about just “sitting down having a yarn…talking lingo” and how Uncle Albert would dance and sing in his traditional language. Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) recalled “we’d laugh at the time when granddad did know some of his language and he did know songs in his language”. Interestingly, the interviews and archival data showed a range of recorded traditional names which have been promoted in contemporary documents but also as children’s names. For example the name, “Conomie/Konomie”, was included in children’s names in 1884, 1918, 1945, and consistently in the 1990s and today (Aunty Christine Barney, personal communication, May 28, 2016). This naming practice detailed in the data set is an example of how traditional terms are being applied today for the Woppaburra.

6.5.3 Expressions of linkage to country.

The late Uncle Gary Smith (personal communication, April 23, 2013) also stated that he loved “watching corroborees … that’s very traditional to us” even though he had not spent time on his traditional country. This indicated that the cultural connection to country remains in some form through activities or events outside the physical location of Woppa and Konomie. Although these are periodic events, it has indicated that the Woppaburra are engaged in what might be considered common Aboriginal events but also specific practices unique to the Woppaburra. For example, at a recent visit to Konomie, Elder Uncle Mackie Burns stated, “I still remember Uncle Albert doing that traditional dance around the fire at Dayman Point” (personal communication, May 29, 2016). It is clear that there were broader practices such as attending corroborees, spending time with extended family, fishing and hunting that can be attributed to Aboriginal people in general but issues such as traditional language, dancing and direct associations with Woppa and Konomie are unique to the Woppaburra. The data set indicated that specific creation stories, totems and spiritual beliefs are drawn from the land from which they were created. Aunty Glenice Croft stated that “you always need to
map the songlines and the dreaming paths” which told the creation story of the Woppaburra (personal communication, June 21, 2016). This aspect of Woppaburra culture has been perpetuated through much of the interview data through the discussion of totems.

The data set also indicated that the Woppaburra have maintained an interest in Woppaburra spiritual culture as a part of their daily lives. Apart from the cultural connections listed above, the data spoke to a spiritual link with sea creatures which permeated the interviews. Elder Linette Russ stated that, “our spiritual connection with the islands will remain [as] strong as it was at the time of creation” (Russ, 2007). In this address, Linette Russ referred to memories of her Aunty Conomie, “using Dolphins to assist in the capture of fish”. Elder Linette Russ also mentioned other forces at work when the buried coffin of the callous manager Andy Lucas was exposed and ejected into the sea during a cyclone. Linette Russ stated “perhaps the spirits of the land and our people were at work here…and used nature to purge him from our land” (Russ, 2007). Although many of these statements relate to events of the past, today there remains a divine sense of connection between the Woppaburra, their country and sea creatures throughout their lives. Such beliefs and practices continue today as part of day-to-day lives and through highly structured events incorporating culture and history. A number of these are listed and discussed below.

6.6 Specific Contemporary Actions and Events

The varying data sources indicated that there was little documentation of Woppaburra events until the mid-1980s although the isolated nature of Ganumi Bara was highlighted in archaeological research (Rowland, 1979; Rowland, 1983). Soon after the publication of these articles, archaeologist Mike Rowland assisted the Woppaburra to obtain archival data detailing genealogical and chronological history. This stimulated conversations by Elders drawn from social memory about cultural practices and the history of their people. The interview data highlighted the collective memory from Elders who paved the way for the Woppaburra to engage in traditional cultural practices such as burial rituals in the form of repatriation of skeletal remains, a consistent
application of traditional terms, access to and knowledge of regulatory land issues, conservation and management practices. The data set indicated that a significant number of Woppaburra are involved in committees, trusts and boards regarding their land and sea-country (Aunty Vanesa Kirk, personal communication, February 23, 2013; Aunty Chrissy Doherty, personal communication, April 11, 2013). An example of these are the Woppaburra Land Trust (WLT), Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) Committee and the Native Title Claimants. These are discussed below.

6.6.1 Formation of Keppel Islands Lifestyle Aboriginal Corporation (KILAC).

On 31 August 1979, archaeologist Mike Rowland delivered a paper to the Anthropological Society of Queensland titled “The Prehistory of the Keepel [sic] Islands, Central Queensland” at Opal House, Brisbane (Rowland, 1979). The contents of the paper described an archaeological dig which contained evidence of the occupation of Woppaburra on Konomie for over 5000 years. The paper gave a brief history of Ganumi Bara and Rowlands believed that it was a unique site to study similar to Tasmania in its evolution as an occupied island. Upon returning to the University of Queensland, Mike Rowland had discussions with Woppaburra Elder Linette Russ (nee Van Issum) and Mr Ray Vaughan which led to the incorporation of the Keppel Island Lifestyle Aboriginal Corporation (KILAC Newsletter, 1994). Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) recalled “I met him first at the University of Queensland and I remember where we could have been because he had done all the diggings and you could see where the shells were and so forth”. Ray Vaughan, as an interested volunteer, was registered as the Corporation’s Public Officer and controlled all regulatory paperwork for the Corporation. Meeting notes at this time was a key source of data to describe what the Woppaburra were engaged in. A key moment of the early 1980s was the gathering of a number of the Woppaburra in 1984 and an historic photo commemorates the visit to Woppa (Ganter, 1985). Mr Vaughan’s friendship with Regina Ganter resulted in the first major modern day study of the Woppaburra. The unpublished Honours thesis titled “The History and Development of the Keppel Islands” in 1985 acknowledged Mike Rowland, Ray Vaughan and the Woppaburra among others (Ganter, 1985). These actions
stimulated further interest in strengthening linkages to Woppa and Konomie for the Woppaburra.

6.6.2 Repatriation of skeletal remains.

Information regarding the existence and location of Woppaburra’s skeletal remains were presented to Elders by the then public officer of the Keppel Island Lifestyle Aboriginal Corporation (KILAC), Mr Ray Vaughan, at a meeting held at the home of Aunty Ethel Richards in 1985 (Meeting notes, Vaughan, 1985). A subsequent KILAC newsletter from 1994, described the first KILAC meetings and also referred to the recent repatriation of skeletal remains that were previously held in museums and universities (KILAC Newsletter, 1994). The interview data also indicated that the repatriation of skeletal remains was a point of discussion for many of the Woppaburra. The data set showed how the members of KILAC were guided by the chairperson Aunty Ethel Richards and members made deputations to the University of Queensland Anthropology Department and Australian Museums to collect the remains and return their people to Konomie. The skeletal remains were identified as the H.A. Craig and Roth Collection respectively. In 1993, KILAC sought and received funding for a part-time public officer in Rockhampton to progress the repatriation of skeletal remains to Konomie rather than Woppa. Aunty Glenice Croft (personal communication, June 21, 2016) commented how she was “glad they weren’t buried on Woppa … as a lot of terrible things happened over there”.

The data sources describing the repatriation event included pictures, public addresses, newspaper articles and a repatriation report. Pictures and the repatriation report (Van Issum, 1993) indicated that the first burial site was chosen with input from Elders Aunty Ethel Richards, Aunty Heather Saunders and Uncle Luke Stanley on 26 June, 1993. The repatriation report also indicated that Mr Robert Muir was responsible for the selection of the second site (Van Issum, 1993). The government representative accompanying the site selection visit was Regional Director of the Department of Environment and Heritage at Rockhampton, Dr. Luke Godwin. Dr. Godwin recorded sites with a Global Positioning System (GPS) device during the site selection visit (observation June 26, 1993). On 19 December, 1993, the repatriation ceremony was held
and reported in the local media (Rutherford, 1993). The repatriation report datum indicated the presence of fourteen Woppaburra engaged in a traditional burial on Konomie at two separate sites (Van Issum, 1993). The report stated that the “Woppaburra feel they have fulfilled a cultural obligation to return their people to the islands” (Van Issum, 1993, p. 2). Further issues that were stimulated as a result of the reburial were concerns for reinvigorating language, uncovering written accounts of history and conservation of the natural environment (KILAC newsletter, 1994). In addition to these actions, documentation as a further data source for case study method indicated that contemporary Woppaburra engaged with administrative bodies to further the process of land acquisition (Queensland Department of Natural Resources & Water, 2006; Queensland South Native Title Services, 2013).

6.6.3 Action through organisations.

Newspaper articles and documents such as meeting minutes, newsletters and letters from government bodies indicated that the Woppaburra engaged in efforts to formally re-acquire traditional lands in various ways including joining government committees and by informal protests. In 1991, the Queensland Parliament’s Aboriginal Land Act 1991 (Qld) was passed and, as a procedural mechanism, developed regional Aboriginal Land committees. The Woppaburra through KILAC were members of the newly formed Central Queensland Indigenous Land Title Committee (CQILTC) operating through the Gurang Land Council in Bundaberg. The newsletters of the Woppaburra Aboriginal Corporation (WAC) indicated that Sonny Van Issum and Bob Muir attended several meetings during 1992 in an effort to progress the Woppaburra land claim which was ultimately submitted in September, 1992 (WAC newsletter, 1993, 19 April). Just prior to the land claim submission, on 3 June 1992, the Mabo (No.2) decision had the effect of drawing the Woppaburra’s attention away from the Queensland legislation and towards the high profile federal Native Title legislation currently being drafted.

The Mabo and others v. the State of Queensland No 2 (Cth) decision was the impetus for further action to progress the Woppaburra claim to land on Woppa and Konomie (Woppaburra Aboriginal Corporation Newsletter, 1993, 19 April). On Australia
Day in 1993, Woppaburra man Bob Muir made a political statement when he placed the Aboriginal flag on Fisherman’s Beach on Woppa and re-claimed it as Woppaburra sovereign territory (*The Weekend Australian*, 27-28 February 1993, p. 5). This was intended to bring attention to the plight of Woppaburra people with respect to access to their lands through the Native Title legislation. The double-page spread in *The Weekend Australian* highlighted the tragic history of the Woppaburra and their efforts to return to their land and sea country (*The Weekend Australian*, 27-28 Feb, 1993, p. 5). This social protest was intended to highlight the ramifications of the High Court *Mabo* decision which proved the Australian continent was not ‘terra nullius’ (land belonging to no-one) and that the Woppaburra were the rightful owners of their land under common law prior to British acquisition. This direct action was part of the contemporary Woppaburra’s desire to have sovereign rights over their country.

The Native Title legislation was passed on Christmas Eve in 1993. This marked a point of redirection for the Woppaburra to use the more progressive Native Title legislation with a view to escalating the Woppaburra land claim. The Woppaburra data sources documented that in 1994, the CQILTC was abandoned to develop the new Aboriginal Native Title Committee Central Queensland Limited (ANTCQL) (*Woppaburra Aboriginal Corporation Newsletter*, 1995, 2 April). After several meetings between ANTCQL, based in Bundaberg, and KILAC, based in Brisbane, Bob Muir developed a separate organisation with decision-making powers in Rockhampton. The Woppaburra Aboriginal Corporation (WAC) was registered on 14 February 1994 with the Constitution accepted by the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations in September, 1994 (*WAC Newsletter*, 1995, 2 April).

The newsletters as sources of data from both the KILAC and WAC indicated that the Woppaburra engaged in several community organisations while pursuing similar goals. In a meeting with the Queensland Lands Department on 9 April 1995, the Woppaburra laid claim to 200 ha of vacant Crown Land on Woppa (*WAC Newsletter*, 1995, 2 April). The process of land acquisition was slow until Tower Holding, a superannuation company and an influential developer, purchased the lease for the dilapidated resort on Woppa in early 2007 (*Tower Holdings*, 2012). The project plan was
to redevelop the resort and acquire a large portion of the Woppaburra’s future land for permanent residential dwellings. The data sources of documents, letters and newsletters from Woppaburra community organisations indicated strong community interest in land holdings on Woppa and Konomie but there was little access to resources or strategic alliances to progress this (Central Queensland Indigenous Development, 2006).

6.6.4 Development and protest.

The superannuation company and resort developer Tower Holdings saw an opportunity to work with the Woppaburra to progress the redevelopment of the resort on Woppa. Tower Holdings employed ex-deputy Premier Terry Mackenroth as a lobbyist for three years to work on the redevelopment of the resort site (Morning Bulletin, 2015, 3 May). A key part of his strategy was to work with the Woppaburra to get their land returned under the Aboriginal Land Act, 1991 (Qld) and subsequently have Tower Holdings lease this land on a perpetual basis as part of the resort grounds. Terry Agnew, as the CEO of Tower Holdings, employed the Woppaburra Bob Muir and Christine Doherty to obtain community support and also employed Terry Mackenroth to use his connections to fast-track the application through the government bureaucracy (Muir & Doherty, 2006). Unusually, Bob Muir and Christine Doherty were in a contradictory position of working at acquiring their traditional lands while being financially assisted by the resort developer who wished to subsequently lease this.

The Woppaburra had little input into the selection of land parcels for the proposed transfer but the parcels were ‘coincidentally’ made up of all the key beaches and prime sites bordering the proposed resort re-development. There was speculation that the incumbent Labor government “was doing a mate [Terry Mackenroth] a favour by transferring the land to the Indigenous group” (ABC News, November 13, 2008) and as a corollary, progressing the move towards land acquisition for the proposed resort re-development. Other documentary data indicated that Bob Muir and Christine Doherty, both Woppaburra and employees of Tower Holdings worked towards the first stage of acquiring a Shared Responsibility Agreement to develop a functional land trust to oversee the six parcels of land on Woppa (Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements, 2016). Woppaburra culture had no knowledge of formal mechanisms to oversee the
acquisition of land, so Bob Muir and Christine Doherty moved to assist their people to acquire this land through the governmental process of a Shared Responsibility Agreement.

On 14 June 2006, the Woppaburra secured a Shared Responsibility Agreement to progress the land transfer with a range of government partners amounting to $274 908, which employed Bob Muir and Christine Doherty as project officers (ATNS, 2016). The 12-month project was to facilitate the transfer of land, develop a land trust with required governance skills, complete a cultural audit and identify business opportunities. Documentary data sources including notes from a meeting dated 16 September, 2006 at Scrub Hill, Hervey Bay showed that the land claim for 170 ha on Woppa was successful and the meeting selected 55 Woppaburra trustees (Doherty, 2006). The Woppaburra nominated Elders and other Woppaburra representatives to hold the land in trust for all Woppaburra. The land hand-over ceremony was held on 4 April 2007, at the soon-to-be-defunct resort on Woppa.

Barely a month after the acquisition of the five land parcels on Woppa, Tower Holdings requested that they (Tower Holdings) rent/sub-lease the key land holdings in perpetuity to be part of the resort redevelopment. Uncle Mackie Burns (personal communication, 23 April 2013) expressed the Elders’ sentiments clearly when he stated, “I just said talk to us, about our land. There was one word I saw - perpetuity - [my emphasis] and I fucken’ hate it. I said you have that there [and] if we would have signed it we would never have seen our land again”. The interview data indicated that while the Woppaburra of today are involved in processes of land acquisition, there are third parties jockeying to take advantage of these acquisitions. Elder Linette Russ stated that developers didn’t understand, “it wasn’t just possession… we got to be more attached to the land itself” (personal communication, June 5, 2013). In addition, as a result of the
land transfer, the Department of Natural Resources policies under the Act insisted upon the formation of the Woppaburra Land Trust to oversee the interests of all Woppaburra (Aboriginal Land Act 1991 (Qld)).

6.6.5 Woppaburra Land Trust Committee.

The Woppaburra developed a Land Trust and gained the necessary governance skills. The structure of a land trust under the Aboriginal Land Act, 1991 (Qld) is such that the tenure of the land is transferred under a deed of grant in trust also known as a ‘DOGIT’ transfer. It must be held for “the benefit of Aboriginal people particularly concerned with the land and their ancestors and descendants” (Aboriginal Land Act, 1991 (Qld)). The land is freehold in tenure except for two provisos. The first is that the land can never be sold and secondly, if the land is leased for more than a 10-year period, the trust must seek approval from the Minister of Natural Resources. The proposal to lease the newly acquired land perpetually by Tower Holdings from the Woppaburra was made to all trustees. Uncle Mackie Burns as chairperson of the trust stated to Tower holdings representatives at the time that “when you have it worked out and you have everything covered I’ll show it to the executive” (personal communication, April 23, 2013). This proposal was strongly rejected by Elders at a meeting organised by Tower Holdings (observation, June 7, 2007). Some Woppaburra saw the economic benefits of employment during construction and on an ongoing basis but the Elders were strongly in favour of conservation and protection. Uncle Vince Singleton (personal communication June 16, 2012) stated “it will spoil Keppel, what they want to do there” and Elder Linette Russ (personal communication, June 5, 2013) spoke about the profound influence of development,

…you don’t destroy something which is beautiful. When you start bringing people on to it and everything which comes with it. It loses its beauty.

Figure 6.2 Tower Holdings CEO, Terry Agnew and Elder Aunty Fracis Gala at a meeting organised by Tower Holdings, May 2013. Photograph from the Morning Bulletin, 5 May 2013.
sacredness... you, you, you destroy it, you destroy its culture you even destroy the people even because once you start doing that it changes their lifestyle... I don’t think it should change... I just think it’s been has always been a beautiful island, let’s keep it that way. You know... we are being taken over by all these big resorts you know. Capitalism... whatever you want to call it...materialism, all this sort of stuff. We are losing too much beauty in this world... which keeps us sane I believe.

The two comments from Elders indicate the reluctance to develop any of the traditional lands. Western culture may see development as an improvement of land based on economic value, whereas the Woppaburra Elders see the development as destroying their spiritual homeland and as a corollary, the people themselves. The Woppaburra Land Trust has 55 trustees with approximately half of the group comprised of Elders and older respected Woppaburra and an executive group who meet regularly (Woppaburra Land Trust Constitution, 2009; Department of Environment and Resource Management, 2012).

After the long process of acquiring traditional lands, the data sources of newspapers and photographs have indicated that the Woppaburra were engaged in actions to oppose the Great Keppel Island resort redevelopment on conservation and cultural grounds. Initially, conservation groups and the Woppaburra sent a series of written submissions opposing the resort to the Department of Infrastructure and Planning based on the terms of reference related to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) released in 2010 (http://www.environment.gov.au). As well as individual submissions from the
Woppaburra, the Woppaburra Land Trust made a submission based on the objectives listed in the Woppaburra Land Trust Constitution. The objectives from this data source asserted land rights and sought to preserve and protect sites of cultural significance (Woppaburra Land Trust Constitution, 2009, p. 5). The EIS received approval in early March, 2013 with almost 14,000 positive submissions based on economic benefits but only 260 negative submissions based on environmental and cultural concerns (Department of State Development, 2012, pp. 4-7). In addition, public protests were conducted by the Woppaburra on Woppa led by Elders who expressed their opposition to the approval of the EIS for the proposed resort (Uncle Mackie Burns, personal communication, April 23, 2013).

Among the broader Woppaburra family group there are mixed opinions about the possible benefits of development and the level of natural environment destruction. Away from the Western view of the economic value of land, the majority of the Woppaburra focused on the spiritual and cultural attachment to country. Aunty Glenice Croft (diary notes, February 6, 2016) stated that:

Woppaburra descendants are becoming more savvy in understanding the insult of Native Title and the bull crap of governments and Tower Holdings’ disrespect of Woppaburra Lore and Cultural Sacred Connections/Songlines [that] Woppaburra have to our Islands.

The spiritual and cultural values alluded to above permeate the Woppaburra Land Trust objectives which drove the opposition to development on Woppa. The land trust is guided by Elders whose priority has always been the conservation of their cultural heritage and the natural environment (Woppaburra Land Trust Constitution, 2009, p. 5; Elder Linette Russ, personal communication, June 5, 2013). This is the direction today of the Woppaburra acting through the Woppaburra Land Trust. In addition, there is a related body named the Woppaburra Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) Committee established by the Land Trust which has similar principles about the conservation of sea country. “As reps on the Land Trust we became the reps on the TUMRA” (Aunty Glenice Croft, diary notes, February 6, 2016).
6.6.6 Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) Committee.

Interview data indicated that Elders believed that the TUMRA was “a very valuable tool for us to be involved in research about sea-country” (Aunty Vanessa Kirk, personal communication, February 23, 2013). The Woppaburra TUMRA Committee was first established as part of the Australian Government Caring for Our Country Reef Rescue, Indigenous Land and Sea Country Partnerships Program. The priority of the TUMRA committee is conservation, marine protection and management of traditional sea country (GBRMPA, 2013). The Woppaburra view their land and sea country as a holistic entity of physical, spiritual and cultural integration whereas Western governmental structures segregate these into individual entities. As a data source the TUMRA (2013) implementation plan stated that the committee is a body who works with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP). The purpose is to allow the Woppaburra to retain traditional practices as much as possible but also be involved in the governmental structures related to management of sea country. Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, February 23, 2013) gave a pertinent summary of the benefits of this committee.

… we got young people involved, we have signs put up on country, recognition of our boundaries, we know if someone’s gone into our no-go areas, we got a live-in museum… return of some of our artefacts back, we are now working on a project with some of our own people to be trained as sea rangers on country to be able to live on country, it’s a tool to form different partnerships and be part of marine park stakeholders.

Elders’ perspectives in the interview data described the TUMRA as body with a number of partnerships and linkages to government departments and community organisations. The documentary data (TUMRA Agreement, 2013-2023) showed how the Woppaburra are involved in management operations on country through recognition of country with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, on country education with the

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50 The Woppaburra Land Trust objectives as outlined in the 2009 Constitution describe an holistic view of ‘country’ and combines ‘air, land and sea’ and stated the connection to be ‘physical and spiritual’.
North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre (NKIEEC) and sea country activities through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). Aunty Vanessa Kirk’s description also included return of cultural artefacts to a keeping place and monitoring of sacred sites (i.e., no-go zones) (personal communication, February 23, 2013). While the management practices through the TUMRA are not strictly traditional, they give an avenue for the Woppaburra to ‘have a say’ and be involved in the conservation and protection of their sea country. A by-product of these management structures is the ability to spend more time on country, which is an important outcome in itself (observation, 29 May, 2016). The Woppaburra have also developed a strong relationship with the North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre (NKIEEC).

6.6.7 North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre (NKIEEC).

The North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre is located on the western side of Konomie and is built on the site of a defunct resort. Interview data indicated that the Woppaburra have a close association with the education site and share traditional knowledge and practices with teachers on the site. Christine Doherty (personal communication, April 11, 2013) stated, “I don’t want to keep weaving and net-making all to the Woppaburra, why can’t we share that with some of our lovely little school kids, the non-indigenous kids’/ children”. There is a clear understanding between the Woppaburra and the school principal who represents Education Queensland. The NKIEEC website shows visits by the Woppaburra to the education lease including a yearly festival (Department of Education & Training, 2016). The Woppaburra of today have a strong education imperative, due to the number of teachers, people engaged in education employment and the objectives of the Woppaburra Land Trust which attempts “through education [to] promote awareness of Woppaburra culture, protocols, customs and traditions” (Woppaburra Land Trust Constitution, 2009, p. 5). Aunty Vanessa Kirk (personal communication, 23 February, 2013) stated, “we are signing off on an MOU with Education Queensland in June”. This document, renamed a Statement of Intent of the Woppaburra and the North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre, was signed in June 2013 by two Elders and the current principal, Mr Roger Searle.
6.7 Summary and Conclusion

A Yolgnu Elder stated that we must, “understand the clouds and the tides, the animal tracks and the flowers, the clan totems and the sacred designs, and the signs that have come from creation” and “even if we can’t see the creators and ancestors, we can still see their Lundu exactly where they have been” (Marika-Munungiritj & Christie, 1995).

Who the Woppaburra were culturally and historically was the focus of this study. There currently exists no comprehensive understanding of the Woppaburra, their culture or history and the limited literature that does exist is predominantly archaeological in nature. More broadly, the culture and history of Aboriginal people have been written by the colonisers, void of an Aboriginal voice. The voices in Aboriginal society that are most respected are those of our Elders. Given the age of many Woppaburra Elders, it was significant that these narratives be captured and recorded. Initially this was for the benefit of the Woppaburra themselves and secondly for the public understanding more broadly. The research questions simply stated were: - Who were the Woppaburra culturally and Who were the Woppaburra historically? These two questions were addressed against a backdrop of countering the dominant Western perspectives of research practice.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the existing literature on historiography showing how history and culture of Aboriginal Australians have been commonly presented. Attwood (2015) stated that the space where Aboriginal Australians write about their own people is notably absent and Kovacic (2006, p. 99) spoke about the “cultural production of the period as having exclusively an imperialistic agenda”. This study attempted to fill the absent voice in literature that sits outside the imperialist agenda. It takes the Woppaburra’s worldview in contrast to the plethora of information written about Aboriginal people rather than by them. In addition, I reviewed the scant literature that was written about the Woppaburra. Attwood (2005) lamented the lack of history written by Aboriginal Australians and Rowland (2002) was hopeful that a Woppaburra person would take up the challenge to reconstruct and publish the social and cultural aspects of their past. The literature review highlighted a plethora of reasons why this had not been done to date. The reasons included the influence of white race privilege as a source of
maintaining imperial literature over those of the oppressed, such as Australia’s Aboriginal people. Secondly, critical race theory posited that new forms of ‘truth’ or constructions of truth are difficult to accept by those with a vested interest to maintain the status quo that is based on Western methods of determining validity and quality. It is against this backdrop that, through this study, I sought to provide a counter-narrative that uncovered a more accurate perspective of the Woppaburra’s culture and history.

In Chapter 3 I discussed the research design. The case study method as espoused by Yin (2009) advises researchers to use documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations and physical artefacts as sources of evidence to establish a complete record of a case (Yin, 2009, p. 102). Aboriginal Australian language and clan groups are unique to each region, hence, in the study of the Woppaburra, it was appropriate to use a case-study method. The various data sources are the basis for informing the case study of the Woppaburra’s past and present. In this chapter I discussed the process of reawakening Aboriginal counter-narratives which have laid dormant inside the social memories of Aboriginal Elders through narratives. This has been completed by drawing on an Indigenous standpoint and using the voice and ideas of Elders. In response to the first research question, I used physical artefacts as symbols of culture and the voices of Elders (interviews) as primary sources of data, while in answering the second research question, I drew strongly on documentation and archival records as historical data sources. A cautionary note was raised in terms of this data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 drew heavily from the social memory of Elders who have recalled data from their parents and grandparents. These parents and grandparents were from a past generation who were amongst those taken from the Woppaburra homeland.

Far from being able to construct a continuous narrative, parts of the study have been reconstructed from disparate recollections wearied by time. While this might generally be considered a limitation with scientific research, any remnants of Elders’ knowledge is considered a strength in Aboriginal communities. Halbwachs’ (1992) stated that the elderly “are in the most favourable position to evoke events of the past as they really appeared” as they were closer to these experiences (p. 47). In addition, while
Chapter 5 draws strongly from archival evidence such as newspapers, it is primarily these government documents that are permeated with British ideals of racial dominance and superiority. The intention was to filter out the racist undercurrent that lies behind the colonial discourse. A further limitation was the absence of many historical documents that have been displaced, destroyed and damaged over more than a century in government archives. They may have given a more thorough and deeper understanding, had they been available.

Chapter 4 discussed who the Woppaburra were culturally. Fortunately, sufficient empirical data existed to reconstruct the Woppaburra’s culture and spiritual association with country from their perspective. I have discussed Woppaburra culture and how it is embedded in the physical and spiritual aspects of the island and associated artefacts. The data were drawn from two competing sources: Western and Australian Aboriginal. From the Western tradition I explored Woppaburra culture primarily through archival records, early ethnographic bulletins and reports concerning various aspects of culture. This has been supplemented with anthropological and archaeological sources. The majority of these data have been gathered, synthesised and published by non-Indigenous writers and scholars describing what they saw as important in a Western framework of scientific research. From an Indigenous standpoint, reliance totally on such data can be problematic and perpetuate the very power structures in Indigenous research that Indigenous scholars seek to disrupt.

To offset this vulnerability, the basis for a counter-narrative was provided with data from a range of documents, pictures, interviews and observations from Woppaburra Elders. Social memory passed down from Woppaburra Elders through narratives and various personal artefacts have been a rich source of this data. It has shown that the Woppaburra see themselves as a unique people who relied on sea country for survival but who were also highly spiritual in terms of beliefs integrating the natural and spiritual worlds. Many artefacts indicating the physical culture of the Woppaburra were seized and sold, traded or swapped by settlers or government representatives. Some of these are now located in museums, libraries and universities across Australia and indeed across the world. In a fortunate twist of fate, these items have been protected, made available for
viewing and, in some cases, returned to our keeping places, to give a more complete picture of the Woppaburra culture.

Elders’ narratives described how they saw their country and culture through a range of media. They constructed a vision of their traditional lands by drawing on their recollections and referring to experiences with their parents and elders. They also viewed photographs and artefacts not unlike mnemonic devices that further stimulated memories. Yarning sessions with Elders highlighted how they connected to culture and country through abstraction. Visual abstractions were drawn from yarning sessions and progressively collated in a collective symbolic cultural map. A reading of the artwork shows a representation of Woppaburra culture that includes traditional practices, artefacts, totems and seasonal characteristics. The related text gives a more literal explanation of the graphic.

In the accompanying text, I discussed how the artwork had a strong focus on the ‘Konomie’ season, an important time annually for the Woppaburra. It is a period of the arrival of the clan totem Mugga mugga, fertility winds and ceremony. The symbol of Mugga is the principle image in the artwork and it is connected to traditional body painting, creation stories and the future survival of the clan group as detailed in Chapter 4. The artwork moves through the remaining Woppaburra time periods of Garimal, Yamal-Dana, Waku and Guriala which can be aligned with Western concepts of a seasonal calendar. Images presented in this cyclic calendar are associated with life events in which the Woppaburra engage on an annual basis. The archival evidence and limited historical documents provided evidence that the Woppaburra were a group with some practices that are unique due to long periods of isolation. The hunting methods, tools and jewellery were distinctive to the Woppaburra and their Islands. The centre of the artwork shows a large nautilus shell which was used to manufacture jewellery seen on the archival photographs of the Woppaburra which are now located in the National Museum. The chambers of the nautilus shell can be seen as a metaphor for the future life events of the Woppaburra. The shell commences growing as a small chamber, isolated, safe and closed until it moves to the next phase of its life. The analogy is that the Woppaburra, similar to the Nautilus, leaves the old space but retains the chamber carrying it along as
part its culture and history. For the second research question I sought data to address the history of the Woppaburra’s interactions with colonists. To extend the metaphor, the Nautilus has a series of segments which, like the Woppaburra, move forward with aspects of traditional culture but also retain memories of historical interactions with British colonists.

In Chapter 5, an attenuated history of the Woppaburra was outlined in a chronological order from first contact when Captain James Cook sailed passed the islands in May 1770, through to the harsh physical treatment and denigration of the Woppaburra and their culture for several decades by private settlers such as Robert Ross and the Lucas family. This occurred progressively from the establishment of the township of Rockhampton until the ad hoc movement and transitions of people imposed by the State of Queensland’s statutes from 1897 onwards. The onset of this legislation was seen in the Western dataset as a key point of transition, in terms of archival documents related to government-regulated labour, relocations and other socio-economic control. From an Indigenous standpoint, few of the Elders interviewed spoke of legislation. Rather, their data spoke strongly of the kindness of grandparents and the importance of human relationships, yet only touched on Woppaburra deprivation, loss of liberty and subjugation as passive workers for the developing colony.

Throughout this chapter I deconstructed and questioned the Western interpretation of Woppaburra history which was driven by capitalist principles through almost two centuries. I have viewed this history on the basis of its inattention to the Woppaburra’s perspectives of their own cultural and spiritual association with country. This counter-narrative has exposed ideas of Western capitalism common through the Western colonial narrative of Woppaburra history. I discussed the interactions between the Woppaburra and British settlers, squatters and agents of colonial administration and justice systems. The key data sources in this part of the case study were documentation and archival records. The first period of colonisation was characterised by occupation and leasing of the islands. The Western settlers saw Woppa, Konomie and the Woppaburra as an economic resource to be exploited. This process effectively took control of the Woppaburra homeland and resulted in a period of slave labour and maltreatment. The
Woppaburra went through a period of decimation with many government officials believing that the people would be extinct early into the twentieth century. Certainly, some archival newspapers reported this.

In 1902, the majority of the Woppaburra were forcibly removed from their homeland onto the Durundur reserve at Woodford. This was the start of random and periodic movements for various Woppaburra between Yarrabah and Fraser Island. In early 1905, the majority of the Woppaburra were once again forcibly removed to Barambah. The women and children travelled by train while the men walked a distance of approximately 180km and subsequently reconstructed the buildings previously erected at Durundur. There was no reprieve as the Woppaburra were removed from their homeland and mercilessly made to work for rations and meagre wages over coming decades. Within the next 70 years, the Woppaburra settled in various areas but the majority resided in Hervey Bay and Cairns.

Chapter 5 showed that upon enactment of the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Qld), there was strong government regulatory control and extensive reporting requirements embedded in the legislation. The reporting regime resulted in a rich data source for the study that included police reports, correspondence with the Home Secretary and annual reports from Protectors. The police were often local protectors and had direct contact with the Woppaburra. Due to the new legislation, for decades after 1898 all correspondence and requests went via the Home Secretary which developed a paper trail for even the most trivial actions. The period from 1897 until 1902 was highly disruptive, as two government-appointed protectors, Walter Roth and Archibald Meston, disagreed about the maltreatment, living conditions and future of the Woppaburra. The extensive correspondence, detailed in section two of this chapter, between Walter Roth, Archibald Meston and the Home Secretary leading up to the removal of Woppaburra from their homeland in 1902, was evidence of this. Outside of this controlled environment which was constantly under government scrutiny, and away from mission stations and reserves where the Woppaburra had been relocated, there were fewer requirements for official reporting. There is a dearth, therefore, of textual data from places outside of government-controlled reserves and mission stations.
Fortunately, current Elders interviewed for this study recalled significant cultural and historical information that they had learned as children from their parents and Elders. Their Elders, during the period from 1940 until 1970, elicited narratives about Ganumi Bara which spanned the time and events of traditional life and subsequent removals. It is worth reiterating Halbwachs’ (1992) view that, the elderly “are in the most favourable position to evoke events of the past as they really appeared” as they were the closest to the events (p. 47). For this study, interview data from representative Elders of each family clan presented both ‘events of the past as they really appeared’ and descriptions of how these events have informed lifestyles and practices today. In addition, over recent decades, due to interactions with government bodies and their reporting mechanisms, there has been an increase in both the desire for and official requirement to record events and activities. This was shown in government-funded programs developed specifically for Aboriginal people which require written proposals, interim and final reporting and financial auditing (Department of Premier & Cabinet, 2016). Similar to the 1897 legislation, today’s reporting requirements have allowed the gathering of documentation as an important data source to understand the position of the Woppaburra today.

The collective memory of Elders based on the cultural and historic legacy are outlined in this study. Interview data tells the reader that Elders growing up with this legacy considered their childhood to just be ‘living life’ and few details of the islands of Woppa and Konomie were formally spoken about by grandparents. However, the general lifestyle of many Elders who grew up on a beachside township of Urangan gave ample opportunities for their Elders to pass on informally various aspects of Woppaburra culture. In recent decades the importance of cultural heritage has been realised and these Elders have sought to expose or liberate this knowledge and understanding by sharing practices with their children and asserting their rights through various government agencies. Chris Doherty stated “I hope this will start a lot of our young ones wanting to go back to country to get married traditionally. I hope it starts that whole revival of our traditional customs” (personal communication, April 11, 2013). The specific agencies the Woppaburra are engaged with today are those related to land and sea country conservation and protection, as well as education institutions. These relationships have been built on a growing understanding of who they were both culturally and historically.
6.8 Concluding Comments

The Woppaburra live. The research reported here has shown the endurance of a people in the stories of old-time cycles of their natural world that was, is, and will continue to be. Importantly, the presence of those cycles has passed through presence on country to traces that have brought today’s Woppaburra from a century of forced removal to a return to land, and life. The traces that have produced this Woppaburra narrative are data and none are more critical than recollections from Elders. Stories and experiences of Woppaburra Elders have been exhumed, broken through a veil of colonially dominated perspectives of culture and history and brought to life. Western views of the Woppaburra and acquisition of Woppaburra land have typically been economically driven, under a rubric that Harvey (2005) viewed as ‘accumulation by dispossession’. Cultural or spiritual values have been usurped by accumulation practices which proliferated during the rise of capitalism. The newly arrived settlers accumulated land and exploited the Woppaburra. Western culture and Aboriginal culture were in competition and the Woppaburra were slowly ‘dispossessed’ of the land and as a result, many of the cultural and spiritual values associated with the land have lain dormant.

The Woppaburra have had little opportunity to tell their story to a world beyond themselves. In this thesis I used a case study method which included collecting of narratives as a data source. The oral themes discussed by Elders were not translatable to a textual explanation. Kelly (2016), when referring to Aboriginal Elders, stated that memories can sing a roadmap with paintings and sand drawings to help visualise it (p. 14), and that each section of a mythological landscape is a sub-heading to that narrative. A useful contribution that Woppaburra Elders have provided is the ability to transmit chunks of data in an “encoded metaphor” (Kelly, 2016, p. 30). The cultural map endorsed by Woppaburra Elders is a representation of such metaphors. The result is a thesis or body of knowledge constructed as a contemporary artefact which incorporates the traces of the past left by ancestors largely through the collective memory of Elders today.

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51 In the text, A Brief History of Neo-liberalism, Harvey (2005) gave several cases where millions of peasants have been displaced, followed by conversion of property rights into private tenure leading to a suppression of Indigenous forms of production and consumption. Hence the land is seen as a commodity for exchange rather than for its cultural or spiritual values.
Post script

On 8 November, 2016 during an investigation of a beach near Mazie Bay on Konomie, a Thangool student attending the North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre came across a number of ancestral skeletal remains. The site was that of a traditional burial due to the location in a rock shelter; the type referred to in Chapter 4. Currently, the author as part of a repatriation working group are working with the NKIEEC, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Partnerships and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to implement the next steps towards a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the site. In addition, this working group is also in the process of requesting the return of skeletal remains from the Natural History Museum in London. This repatriation and ceremonial activities will occur between March and June, 2018.

Finally, a pleasing outcome of some the work contained in this thesis, is the use of the artwork to create curriculum materials and conduct professional development for the teachers at NKIEEC between June, 2016 and January, 2017. This along with other activities such as the development of a ‘Statement of Intent’ was the impetus for the successful joint awarding of a Queensland Government State Reconciliation Award for Education between the NKIEEC site and the Woppaburra people (Queensland Government Reconciliation Awards, 2017).
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Photographs

Albert Peters (with pipe) and Fred Ross, tending to nets on beach at Hervey Bay. (ca.1940). [Photograph]. Copy in possession of Aunty Frances Gala.


Appendices

Appendix A

Aboriginal Protection & Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 (Qld), Section 31.

Section 31. The Governor in Council may from time to time, by Proclamation, make Regulations for all or any of the matters following, that is to say,—

(1) Prescribing the mode of removing aboriginals to a reserve, and from one reserve to another;
(2) Defining the duties of Protectors and Superintendents, and any other persons employed to carry the provisions of this Act into effect;
(3) Authorising entry upon a reserve by specified persons or classes of persons for specified objects, and defining those objects, and the conditions under which such persons may visit or remain upon a reserve, and fixing the duration of their stay thereupon, and providing for the revocation of such authority in any case;
(4) Prescribing the mode of distribution and expenditure of moneys granted by Parliament for the benefit of aboriginals;
(5) Apportioning amongst, or for the benefit of, aboriginals or half-castes, living on a reserve, the net produce of the labour of such aboriginals or half-castes;
(6) Providing for the care, custody, and education of the children of aboriginals;
(7) Providing for the transfer of any half-caste child, being an orphan, or deserted by its parents, to an orphanage;
(8) Prescribing the conditions on which any aboriginal or half-caste children may be apprenticed to, or placed in service with, suitable persons;
(9) Providing for the mode of supplying to any half-castes, who may be declared to be entitled thereto, any rations, blankets, or other necessaries, or any medical or other relief or assistance;
(10) Prescribing the conditions on which the Minister may authorise any half-caste to reside upon any reserve, and limiting the period of such residence, and the mode of dismissing or removing any such half-caste from such reserve;

(11) Providing for the control of all aboriginals and half-castes residing upon a reserve, and for the inspection of all aboriginals and half-castes, employed under the provisions of this Act or the Regulations;

(12) Maintaining discipline and good order, upon a reserve;

(13) Imposing the punishment of imprisonment, for any term not exceeding three months, upon any aboriginal or half-caste who is guilty of a breach of the Regulations relating to the maintenance of discipline and good order upon a reserve;

(14) Imposing, and authorising a Protector to inflict summary punishment by way of imprisonment, not exceeding fourteen days, upon aboriginals or half-castes, living upon a reserve or within the District under his charge, who, in the judgment of the Protector, are guilty of any crime, serious misconduct, neglect of duty, gross insubordination, or wilful breach of the Regulations;

(15) Prohibiting any aboriginal rites or customs that, in the opinion of the Minister, are injurious to the welfare of aboriginals living upon a reserve;

(16) Providing for the due carrying out of the provisions of this Act;

(17) Providing for all other matters and things that may be necessary to give effect to this Act.
Appendix B

Research Ethics Approval

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

05-Oct-2011

Dear Mr. Van Issum

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the provisional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "Woppa-burra:- past, present and future" (GU Ref No: EDN/86/11/HREC).

The additional information was considered by Chair.

This is to confirm that this response has addressed the comments and concerns of the HREC.

Consequently, you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

Regards

Gary Allen
Manager, Research Ethics
Office for Research
G39 room 3.55 Gold Coast Campus
Griffith University
ph: 3735 5585
fax: 5552 9058
email: g.allen@griffith.edu.au
web:

Cc:

At this time all researchers are reminded that the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research provides guidance to researchers in areas such as conflict of interest, authorship, storage of data, & the training of research students. You can find further information, resources and a link to the University's Code by visiting http://www62.gu.edu.au/policylibrary.nsf/xupdatemonth/e7852d226231d2b44a25750c0062f457?opendocument

PRIVILEGED, PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL
Appendix C

Research Information Sheet

Information Sheet for Participants

Project title: Woppa-burra: Past, present and future

Investigator: Harry Van Issum
School of Education Brisbane Logan
Griffith University, Mt. Gravatt Campus, Qld. 4111
Ph. 3735 5940 Email: H.vanissum@griffith.edu.au

Supervisors: Prof. Brendan Bartlett (Supervisor and Lecturer in
School of Education),
Dr. Dale Kerwin (Supervisor and Lecturer in
School of Education),
Email: B.Bartlett@griffith.edu.au or
d.kerwin@griffith.edu.au

Background
This research forms the basis of a PhD thesis and will examine the lifestyles and culture of the Woppa-burra
and Konomie peoples prior to colonisation through to the current day. This study will essentially be broken
into three elements, traditional, colonisation and future prospects. It seeks to pay respect to past and present
elders but also give the current youth a voice for the future.

What participation in this study involves and what you will be asked to do
You will be asked to sign an ‘informed consent’ form and the investigator will be available to assist with any
questions. Participation in this study asks that you complete a face to face interview which will be recorded
and possibly transcribed for analyses. This may also include an audio-visual recording. This interview will
take approximately 45-60 minutes. Depending on this outcome, you may be asked for a follow-up interview.
Due to the small number of clan members and identification through the land trust, people being interviewed
will be identifiable through the publication of the thesis and possible further publications.

Consent to participate
By signing the ‘informed consent’ form it means that you know what this research is about, your participation
is voluntary and you have not been coerced in any way to participate in this research. You should be aware
that you will be identified by name and position in any future publication. If you do not participate, it will not
involve any penalty. If you decide not to continue at any point through the process, you will not be
disadvantaged and do not have to give any explanation.

Risk
Participation in this program poses no known risks for your well being.

Confidentiality
Interview data in written or oral form will be kept in the possession of the investigator. Electronic records will
be kept on a Griffith University computer locked in the investigators office and password protected. Any
printed copies of transcription will be locked in a filing cabinet inside the investigators office. Subjects will be
referred to by name and specific identifying data will be used in the research report. All data will be kept in a
locked cabinet in the investigator’s office with restricted access for a minimum of 5 years. Similarly electronic
data will be stored on a password protected Griffith University computer.

If you want to complain about this research
Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct Involving
Humans. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project you should
contact the manager, Research Ethics on 3735 5585.

Privacy Statement
This research study involves the collection, access/use of your identified personal information.

Griffith University thanks you for your participation in this research.
Appendix D

Participant Informed Consent

Informed consent form

Project title
Woppa-burra: Past, present and future

Investigators:
Harry Van Issum
School of Education Brisbane Logan
Griffith University, Mt. Gravatt Campus, Qld. 4111
Ph. 3735 5940 Email: H.vanissum@griffith.edu.au

Supervisors:
Prof. Brendan Bartlett (Supervisor and Lecturer in School of Education),
Dr. Dale Kerwin (Supervisor and Lecturer in School of Education),
Email: B.Bartlett@griffith.edu.au or d.kerwin@griffith.edu.au

I have read the information form and understand that:
- This research is to investigate historical and present aspects Woppa-burra people
- I agree to being interviewed for approximately 45-60 minutes
- This interview will be recorded by audio/ audio-visual camera and later maybe transcribed
- My participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty or the need for explanation
- The research thesis generated and possible future publications may contain identifying features such as your picture, name and ideas.
- The raw data will be kept confidential at all times and stored in a locked filing cabinet in the investigators office for a period of 5 years before being destroyed
- Any electronic data will be kept on a Griffith University computer which is locked in the investigators office and password protected.
- A document about the study findings, any personal pictures and any audio-visual recordings which include me will be made available to me upon completion of the study. This may be done in a community forum.
- If I have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project I can contact the manager, Research Ethics, Griffith University on 3735 5585.

I have read and understood the information and consent form. I agree to participate in the study and give my consent freely. I understand that the study will be carried out as described in the information sheet, a copy of which I have kept. I realise that whether I decide to participate is my decision and will not affect me personally. I also realise that I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to answer any questions about why I am not continuing. I have had all questions answered to my satisfaction.

Name: _____________________________

Signature: __________________________

Date: ____________________________
Appendix E

Interview Transcripts

Participant: Uncle Vince Singleton

Date: 16/06/2012.

Venue: 10 Valmae Close, Woree, Cairns.

Initial discussion on ethics and procedural matters.

Speaker 1: I’ve got a lot of information but it’s not so much that stuff that’s been written, it’s more about what we think now.

Speaker 2: We could have gone to Keebra’s office, boardroom. So it would be nice and quiet. My eldest cousin, Coral, you looking at ‘er and you’re looking at oyster Maggie hey.

Speaker 1: oh yeah

Speaker 2: …and what Christine Doherty is saying they’re trying to claim North Keppel. Konomie Island and they trying to say that Conomie island is their island, but the point is and they using Conomie as their apical ancestor, but she is not. if they are using that where does it leave Albert and Jessie and Fred Ross? They are saying that Conomie is on a higher level than Albert and Jessie. And um, they are all on the same line.

speaker1: it’s a bit hard, that’s only because she’s got the same name

Speaker 2: And that was Johnny’s argument is, that we got back to oyster Maggie not Conomie, trouble is Fred Ross is a nephew on all the documents that I’ve seen is a nephew of Conomie and Albert, not a sibling not a brother. And Vanessa said that her grandfather used to refer him as his little Dharumbal. So all the conversation that I had, I got, states that Fred Ross is a kin, a nephew to Albert. See oyster Maggy had 3 kids, 4 kids, Conomie, Albert, Judy and Jessie and Judy died when she was a baby. Don’t know if she was murdered or if she just died. I read that in a connection report. And all along, even Vanessa said that Fred Ross is a nephew to Albert.

1: So whose is Fred Ross’ parents?

2: Don’t know. I don’t know

1: …this is one of those things, how do we determine things.
Documentation that Bob and Brenda put in north Keppel, in the education centre she got all the kids that were listed, as we moved from Keppel. And my granny was, was probably a young, my granny was married in 1910, now she would have been 15-16 when she got married, so she was a teenage girl when she left Fraser.

1: So is that Jessie then?

2: Jessie Keppel Anne, because she was from Keppel Island when she went to Yarrabah, but her name was Jesse Ann.

1: This is the original documents

2: I’ve seen these

1: I took a copy from the archives in Brisbane

2: this is what Brenda had in North Keppel. Fred, Fred is there now. He would have been 8 years old, um... it was um, I reckon the ‘alf cast aboriginal girl was my grandmother.

1: Have you seen this one before? That’s the police report when Casey, he took the people off the island. There the people there the ages

2: I’ve seen that with Brenda’s stuff over at north Keppel. You see um Judy would have been older, she died on Keppel so she wouldn’t have been in this list. Then Ulowi and oyster Maggie are brother and sister. That were what I was told. My grandmother always said and my aunt always said that she had a brother and a sister. A sister named Conomie and a brother named Albert. That’s what I was told by my grandmother and he had a daughter Lulu, Lillian, Lilly. That were what I was told by grandmother and my Aunty.

1: so there’s an Aunty Lulu who married Uncle Gordon in Elizabeth St.

2: so whose lulu then? I thought Lulu was Albert’s daughter?

1: Yeah. Lily is my grandmother, her sister would have been Lulu.

2: I thought Lulu was part of your family?, my aunt has a photo of her and lulu at Brisbane exhibition, long time ago, old photo. Rebecca’s father used to come out and visit us a lot from Deagon, I remember him he was a big fella. Early 70’s, in Deegan. Because Stephen and Rebecca stayed with my Aunty at Deagon. (unrelated)...I thought lulu was Albert’s daughter? My Aunty and grandmother always said that Albert had one daughter. The trouble is my grandmother never had seen Albert since she left Fraser Island. She met up with Conomie in 1972. A year later Conomie died.

1: Yeah that was 1973, what do you think about the distinction between north Keppel and great
Keppel? Were their different people or the same people?

2: I reckon they were the same clan, moving between the islands. Because um, the island that was partial lease was great Keppel wasn’t it. ...and I thought the indigenous mob lived on Conomie Island. That was my thoughts

1: yeah a lot of different stories

2: you look at it and there’s a big difference between there and there, open sea.

1: over 10 kilometres

2: So when Ulowi swam back where did he swim to?

1: He swam to Great Keppel.

2: From Tranby point. It’s a fair way ey. My grandmother used to tell us, she used to sit on her father’s lap when he steered the boat. That’s all she told us. She says I can remember sitting on my father’s lap. She told me and Bernie, I came from a place a long long way away. She says you might not have heard of it, Keppel Island. I always thought that we were from Fraser not Keppel.

1: What other things did she say about Keppel?

2: that’s all she remembered...all she remember was sitting in a boat, she didn’t really remember her siblings but she said I got a sister and a brother that are older than me, cause when my grandmother died in 1970, 71, 72, she was supposed to be 96. We always told that ‘er and Conomie was sisters cause she had a twin sister. Unless Judy was her twin sister, but Judy was supposed to be older than my granny unless ‘er and Judy were twins. My grandmother had twins too see. There’s no twins in our generation. But my grandmother, Marlene’s my cousin, Marlene Singleton, she married my cousin George but her father was supposed to be a twin. And my grandmother had 3 children that died in childbirth.

1: Where did your grandmother go to after Fraser, or did she go to Woodford first?

2: She was taken from Keppel to Fraser, and Ernest Gribble had a boat and he was starting off Yarrabah. Ernest Gribble said he would take these kids to the movies in Hervey bay, he loaded all these kids up and one Keppel Island girl, that was my grandmother and all the old people were crying on the beach and they just left from Fraser straight to Yarrabah and they landed at Yarrabah. I put granny was born in... If she was married 1910 at the age of 16-17. She would have been born about 1894.

1: Yeah 1894

2: yeah 1884 or 86.

1: 94 or 96?
2: I think she was 16, a very young bride. Freddy a cousin has got her marriage certificate, they are easy to get, Freddy has got it and I did have a copy of it.

1: albert was married 1913, married Bessie Blair, so he was apparently 10 or 12, or might have been 8 when he left the island.

2: Granny got married in 1910, on her marriage certificate.
1: Albert’s marriage certificate is 1913.
2: Grandma would have been 19 then. And Albert is younger than my grandmother.

1: 12 years old when he left the island in 1900 he’s 12.
2: I thought it was 1902

1: that’s the one where the police went over, this is the Meston report of the removal I think he just counted the people

2: So, where Conomie in this? That’s the way my Aunty spelt her name, with a C not with a K. if my grandmother was half cast girl, she didn’t have a native name you see. So if my grandmother is one of the ‘alf-caste girls, she didn’t have a language name see. Conomie was 17, Albert was 14. Albert that’s your grandfather there ‘ey. Albert was 14 then my grandmother would have been 9 years of age. But when you look at the photo that Chrissy had, she is um she is younger than um she is a young girl. This is Freddy’s father here now. Uncle Luke was good mate with Frances brother, Francis Richards, they about the same age. He’s the youngest of my grandmothers. Old Luke.

1: I’ve only got a couple of old ones from Konomie.

2: There’s another one with oyster Maggie, their mother, with Conomie on one side and Jessie on the other side.

1: I haven’t seen that one, but I have got in that book a couple of pictures.

2: Christine used to have them all when she was in Woppaburra Dreaming. That book I had ‘ey that Malcolm had a loan of he left on north Keppel he said, like this but a smaller one.

1: there’s not much in that one, he talks from memory, bits and pieces here and there.

2: I think that was there was my grandmother, I’m not too sure. Conomie and Alberts in that, Conomie is the one that looked after Albert and Jessie. But Vanessa said that Fred Ross was a lot younger than Albert. Freddy down as 8 years of age, which is probably right. Vanessa found more documents on the web, states that Fred is the nephew of Albert and Jessie.

1: I should have a look at that.
2: Did Vanessa tell you about the stuff she found? She said she would send it all to me but she hasn’t.

1: when was the first time did you go back to the island?

2: I didn’t go until, I went over there with tafe, we had a plan away a holiday and I said we should go to Keppel Island, would have been in the early 90’s. I planned a trip over there for the students and Bob came over and gave us a talk and went to the look out and the scar tree and gave us a talk about the history of great Keppel. So I would have went there about 1990?

1: would have been a bit later than that, I got here about 92-93 and bob got there about 93.

2: it would have been 95 I think I was doing tafe, mum and then went back for the reunion was it 84?

1: 84, yeah

2: Bernie took a mob down there when he worked in the department. That’s when this picture of Uncle Luke was taken.

1: I took this in 92, when looking for sites for repatriation.

2: he wasn’t there then

1: yeah he was, I took that photo. There’s a couple of others at the um site, that wasn’t a burial that was just selecting of the sites.

2: I went there with mum and dad and I don’t think he ever went back there

1: These pictures are from mum and Ang, contacted the museum and other places to try and get the skeletal remains returned. I was working with Dr. Luke Godwin in the Department of Environment heritage up there.

2: unless he went with his daughter but we would have known about it! Only time Uncle Luke went down there was 1984.

1: Yeah I took those pictures of him in 1992

2: unless him and his daughter come up from Brisbane

1: yeah not sure. They just selected the sites for burials. Aunty Heather was there too.

2: unless his daughter took him up from Brisbane. He lived in Brisbane with his daughter. It was my mum, dad and Uncle Lukey, my brother Charlie, three cousins, Uncle Luke kids. Bernie
arranged it all that was the reunion in 84. And I think its Fiona? Did her thesis on it, on north Keppel?

1: no, Regina Ganter.

2: yeah, yeah. 92, Della would have taken him up.

1: what do you think about those sites, Bob actually chose that one on Considine Beach.

2: The only one I know is …what about the ones on the hill,
1: That’s the one Uncle Luke and Aunty Heather chose at Mazie Bay.

2: They said they wanted it up there so nobody could tamper with it.
1: They also did a lot of digging on Mazie Bay, Mike Rowland did. It showed occupation there for a long time

2: There’s a big Midden there where the house is. All I could remember was what granny told us, sitting on her father’s lap, she always stated her father was a Scotsman.

1: Scotsman, Robert Ross?

2: yes, Robert Ross.

1: Those sites where we buried our people, How important are those sites to us as people?

2: They are very important, I reckon they are more important now with the remains there. I don’t know anything about North Keppel though. They didn’t mention North Keppel to me until the ‘Land Trust’ became you know. That’s when I heard a lot about Konomie. Konomie Island. But I mean, that would be important to us now of course because of the remains being there. Unless Bob knew something different. Because the Richards family always said Considine beach was important to them being the birthplace of Gran Conomie. Trouble is talking to Johnny the other day, north Keppel would be important because that’s where all out our old people lived and were born not on great Keppel. And Johnny’s only a few years older than me. Johnny said that’s where all our old people were born. North Keppel is not just Conomie’s birth place, it’s all our family birth place. There was only 17 people taken off the island and Bob came through Lucas, I eard, but Bobs great great grandfather is Ulowi. That’s the documentation I read. So Bob came through Ulowi and Ulowi is a brother to oyster Maggy, so we are still connected through blood line. Although he came through Lucas and we came through Robert Ross.

1: Well Lucas came to the island in 1892, a lot of children on the island prior to 1892 father would have been Robert Ross, after that, possibly Lucas.

2: Cause they go through Annie Smith, so where does Annie Smith come in? Annie smith was the baby taken off the island.
1: I think so, I have seen there’s a couple of Annie’s though on there.

2: You got a 4 month old baby, half cast girl.

1: also there Aunty may, But Aunty May is two years old but not on the other one, but they just didn’t list any names.

2: So where does May come in. Who was May?


2: Well Frances um, that’s where Linda, but then one of them is a school teacher, isn’t she Frances sister.

1: Reney. She’s a Clarke though.

2: Isn’t that Frances sister?

1: yeah

2: She go under McBride though doesn’t she?

1: No

2: Her son go under McBride? He done the photos at the TUMRA launch...and I met him on Palm Island. That was Rene’s son. And he go under McBride.

1: Not Billy McBride.

2: This fulla still alive and Frances, no Vanessa was thinking about putting him on the TUMRA. Frances reckon he’s a bit wongi and he talks about massacres, the white man killed out people and all this and that. And Frances reckon she was going to put him on the TUMRA. We don’t want people talkin’ like that when we got government people there. We’re lucky our reps on the TUMRA are Indigenous, Leon and Gail you know.

1: They are more flexible.

2: If we had people that are white, you know European on our committee, they wouldn’t like what’s going on. Like the language that’s been flying.

1: What do you reckon about all these names? How important are names to us as a people. I mean like Konomie instead of North Keppel and any of these other islands, like Myall Island? How important are traditional names?

2: I think it’s important to us that they are recognising us. By naming them after language names and our people, it shows respect and they do acknowledge us as people from that area. I mean, I had no input in renaming those things, that comes from Bob and Christine.
These names all come from traditional old documents from Roth.

Oh...

They were the original old names back in 1902.

of those places......

yes, I've got the documents; they were the original names our people gave them.

If they were the original names then its good our people took them back to that. Trouble is, that's just the Europeans acknowledging the language names form those areas.

I can get that stuff for you.

Me and Bernie never really got any stuff from history, we just got what we been collecting...and we got all e’s stuff. Bernie use to work for the department in that area. That why he was involved in that thing with Aunty Ethel. And Aunty Ethel been coming up to see my grandmother, when my grandmother was alive my Aunty was alive. And you know we grew up with Aunty Ethel. Mainly Aunty Ethel, but after that the Cummins boys used to come up and they used to lob on mum’s doorstep and mum took em in like she knew them all their lives. That’s why the Cummings boys had a lot of respect for my mum. And Johnny said to mum, what can I name my daughter and mum said name her Conomie with a ‘C’ not with a ‘K’. That’s how come Johnny’s late daughter is name Conomie.

And that’s also Fred Saunders daughter, named Conomie up there. And Aunty Christine second name and her daughter.

But they spell theirs with a ‘K’. My Aunty always said her name come from this area (pointing at North Keppel), but my name spelled with a ‘C’. And theta the same way Granny Conomie spelt it with a ‘C’. But this island spelled with a ‘K’.

I don’t know if it makes much difference. It wasn’t written down it was only verbal so...

And that’s how they pronounce it too.

If there is one person in the whole family that represents the island for you, who would you name? They don’t have to be alive.

The main person and who I had a lot of dealing with is Aunty Ethel.

Aunty Ethel knew the history of Keppel and she knew the history of Fraser. We used to sit down with her and she used to tell us stories.

What sort of stories?

When you go to Fraser she said, that where our people were taken. When you go to Fraser they chucked a sword or shield in the bottom of that lake...and no-one can find it. She always talk about Lake McKenzie is it. White sand and blue water. She said that’s where all out people were taken but she said we were taken from a place far away Keppel Island. And Aunty Ethel is
the one that I, you know, and the other person was your mother cause she said she always been going to Great Keppel from a young girl. There and Hervey Bay she talks about your mum.

1: I think a big change was when Mike Rowland uncovered the documents in 1979. I mean people already knew where we came from but it was some written evidence.

2: What found about your mum is that she always talked about Keppel Island. Not so much Fraser but Keppel Island and Hervey Bay. I don’t know when I met your mother first. As I say I met Rebecca fathers...I went to Brisbane in ’73. Stephen and Rebecca come to stay with my Aunty later about ’75. Stephen just started working on the railway. Rebecca would have started Business College. Rebecca would have been 16 or 17. I met Rebecca and Stephen at the same time. Their father and mother came down one day. They brought Stephen down. I was a young person and Barno was a lot older than me. And I always wonder where I go the nickname from. Cause my nickname I had from a child.

1: Did they say you looked like Uncle Barno?

2: I had a feeling that my Aunty and your grandmother was good mates. She named him Barno and that’s where I got the name from.

1: cause he’s Ernie.

2: I know

1: Barney to Barno

2: My name is Vincent, where do you get Barno from Vincent. My aunt was good mates with Lulu (Lily) your grandmother and that where I got my name from. People ask me and I say I don’t know. When I met your mob and my sisters and cousin was calling me Barno, they asks where did you get that name from and I had since I was a kid.

1: I’ve uncovered this other stuff. I found it down in AIATSIS.

2: The person you wanna talk to and get when he’s in town is Bernie. Bernie’s always in Brisbane so maybe next time we go to Brisbane I’ll give you a call or I’ll give Bernie your number and Bernie can talk to ya. Cause Bernie always meet up with Angela and mum all the time.

1: Two stories here Wyndham 1890, he talks about our mob hunting turtle and dugong and he describes the spear and how it’s used. And on the back I drew a little picture.

2: You know at the Native Title meeting the TI fellas were responding to the 7.30 report. And they showed us the way they traditional hunt. And the way they traditional hunt is, they don’t spear they dive on them and I was talking to Gail Barry and I said that’s dangerous the way they do it. But if that traditional, that’s the way we should be doing it.

1: Well our mob used to dive in, turn ‘em over.

2: You see, what people on Palm Island do, they dive for the turtle and grab them by the flipper and they wait for the turtle to come up.
1: These fellas if you look at the back, that’s what they show the Keppel Island barb used to look like.

2: That’s how my father used to make them for his harpoon.

1: They said they didn’t have two but just one barb out one side.

2: That’s exactly the way my father made his harpoon like that.

1: Where do you reckon he learnt that from?

2: (Pause)... 

1: because that’s the exact replica of the one from Keppel. Sits in the housing of the longer spear and this dislodges on contact with the turtle or dugong.

2: Most people these days have a few barbs, but this is exactly what dad used to hunt with. That type, it used to be dad and it had a barb.

1: Similar to Torres Straits.

2: They must all hunt pretty much the same way.

1: So the pattern of hunting was similar up and down the coast but we had this (single barb), but a lot of the others from the mainland and up had double – barb.

2: I remember when my ad used to make these hey, when we left Yarrabah I was four years old. I don’t really remember much on Yarrabah but when we were on Bessie point I was a teenager. And dad used to go hunting not in motorboat but dingys (rowing motion with oars). Hunt in the inlet in row boat. Of the bay and come back with dugong & turtle...but then dad used to share everything he get. I remember dad making these in Bessie Point and even in Cairns here for his nephews. Da used to make these. He’d spend hours on them with a file. Filing them down, no machine work, just by hand. And he used to make these harpoons, a wop. They used to put a metal ring around the bottom of the wop, to stop it splitting. I mean dad used to do all that. Only trouble is we moved to Cairns from Bessie point and from Yarrabah there. We lived there from 1958 till 1966 about 8 -10 years and mum and dad bought a house in Cairns, we lived in Cairns. My younger brother was born 66. He was born Freddy 65, 64. So we lived in Bessie point for maybe 8 years. That’s just on the other side of the inlet and we moved to Cairns then.

1: So that’s not far from Yarrabah.

2: Just around the corner, just on this side, just across the inlet and Yarrabah is on the other side of the mountain. See dad and his two brothers were removed from Yarrabah, their father was one of the first Indigenous councillors you know. And their father was a layman in the Church of England just like my grandfather, same as my mum’s father, but my mum’s father died in 1936 and 1938 was when Tindale came up. Tindale interviewed my grandmother and Uncle Lukey was only two years old when his father died in 1936. And dad and his brothers were removed off Yarrabah in 1958. Their father died in 1956 and they had to sneak over to Yarrabah to be with him when he died. My grandfather died on my birthday 56 years ago last Sunday. So dad
must have left a couple of years earlier than that, probably when I was born...maybe 54, but mum got her exemption in 1958. I still got a copy of that here.

1: So your mum, Joan, left Yarrabah in 1958 and you moved to Bessie Point and later on here (Cairns).

2: In 1966 we moved to Cairns. Dad was working in the council then. And he bought a house in the council. And dads two brother moved to Bessie Point and we all moved to cairns around the same time.

1: Have you seen this picture, the one that’s in the hall?

2: Over at Keppel yeh, I know the story behind that hey, I don’t know it but they got it on the wall. That’s Great Keppel.

1: This is the um, great Keppel and North Keppel, it’s supposed to be the removal. Yeppoon, and Ulowa came back here. Tranby point and where he swam back.

2: That’s where all our people died hey swimming back.

1: Yeh

2: And only one person made it back, because we were going to go down to Tranby point during the handover or was it the TUMRA and do something there but I don’t know what happened. Its affair way though

1: I think it’s about 16 k’s.

2: He must have been a strong swimmer, my young nephew Vincent, when we had the handover, him and his brother who is two years older than him, when they were walking back from the units and where those big tee-trees are um when you get to the swimming pool. They were walking down and this was just after the handover and he said to his brother “look see that old fulla there he got the same paint as we got on” and he told us a couple of days later, and I said what did you see somebody. He said yeh the old fulla was sitting there, he was painted up like we were painted up. Same kind of markings. Only one thing wrong he said he had a lot of scars on ‘im, on his body. So I got my computer out and I showed them all these photos and he said oh that’s that fulla there now, Ulowa. The other boy didn’t see it but eh younger one saw it. I said you’re, you’re privileged to have seen something, cause those old people were there on the day of handover. When I told Bob and Christine they just felt funny all over ey. They said oh well they were present there. Cause that night...they were talking about all the possums were out and that night we had the bar-b-que aft er the handover, there were no possums to be seen. Normally they are all there, you now and I was surprised.

1: Do you feel the same sort of things on North Keppel or ?

2: I...I feel more comfortable on North Keppel. When I went over there years ago I went for a walk by myself, I went to the scar tree, and I walked up to the hill, the lookout, but I got back that night I said , I’m so and so, where I was from and everything and wanted to acknowledge everybody you know, all the people who have passed before me, tell them who I am and see...but I feel more comfortable, I feel as ease over here though, even just sitting around that
fire it was good. When everybody left that day in December 2010, 2009? .. we had a meeting on country, an AGM in Rockhampton, I was there by myself all day while all the mob went in the boat trip, I didn’t go because me and Brenda(?) had an argument and my sister was sick and I tell ya it was so relaxing I mean. Usually when I’m in a strange place, you gotta walk outside to go to the toilet, well you can see things you can feel things but up there it doesn’t worry me. I feel more at ease on North Keppel than I do there. Really North Keppel to me is really the place where our mob were happy.

1: A lot of atrocities happened all over here, like Butterfly bay. They reckon this area was a burial ground also hey (pointing to resort area). Right here was a burial area.

2: I didn’t know that

1: That’s what this guy says in that book Morris (My Island Home-Morris). And they tell stories of the little huts they used to build on there and where people couldn’t sleep in certain huts. They ended up demolishing one of the huts. They said we can’t sleep in this one.

2: I wanted to go to the burial cave, I haven’t been there. But even walking around the ..where Svendens is there. The burial cave? The tidal cave I wanted to go there but have never been there. They say it’s very rough getting in there.

1: I was in there in 1992.

2: We supposed to go before the handover, when Mike Rowland was there doing a survey.

1: How do you feel about going to a place like that?

2: To go to a place like that, you have to ask permission first. You gotta talk and I think you know, if their gonna let you in there you got to be privileged to go in a place like that. When I go to Lockhart River, when I’m driving in when we get to the border we always beep the horn always sing out say who you are, you wanna go to Yarrabah I usually stop on the hill and sing out and say hello, say who you are, talk to people...people think I’m mad but I just say hello and talk to them tell ‘em we’re going there. That’s the same when I go to Keppel, I always have my little time to myself. When we went to that cave there near Svendsens you know, where the yachties were always desecrating. It’s nice just to be there by yourself. You much here but over there is where you feel it, even Bernie. Bernie says I gotta go for a swim, I’m feeling crook. And we were sitting there that night, me and Bernie. Bernie says we are going to be disturbed tonight and that fulla, that bus driver says what do you mean. And Bernie says, we’re gonna be tossed and turned in a good way. Them old people gonna come down and look who we are and just be with us. And Bernie says but don’t be scared, and that night we had a good sleep, I have a good sleep there. If I can’t sleep I just say look I want to go sleep now. Next minute, boom, its 7 o’clock in the morning.

1: If you don’t go back to the island for a few years, how does that make you feel?

2: Since I’ve started going to Keppel I’ve been going back very year, mainly in June. As I say the first time I went was 94, 95, 96? Then I didn’t go back until we formed the land trust when 40 of us went back there, 2000. I’ve ben back there about every year.
1: What do you reckon about the development on Great Keppel?

2: Well, I think we do, its progress we do need it but me and Bernie talked about it, Cleveland and we like to leave it. ‘cause Bernie seen Magnetic Island develop to what it is today and he wouldn’t want that for Keppel. What they got there now is good but what they want to develop on Lot 21 we just don’t agree with it. And I mean we’re looking at Rosslyn Bay. When you go to Rosslyn Bay, when I first went down there, there was no development on the hill and you go down there now and it looks good but it also destroyed a thing. And where they want to build that marina, will be just like Roslyn Bay, that’s what I feel. We gonna have no say because they are going to build right in front of our land. There an easement there and we can’t go past the high water mark there. It’ll spoil Keppel, what they want to do there.

1: This research is about connection to country, how you feel about going back to your country. Not just history but more about us now.

2: If I didn’t have this house the way I had it given to me for 13 years rent free, I would move to Keppel but if I were to up and run now I lose this and this has been good for me and my brother. The lady that left it is a good friend of the family and we grew up together. So that runs out end of next year (Dec. 2013) and I mean I’ll move to Keppel and live.

1: If there is one thing you would like to see in a book about Keppel what would it be?

2: Just acknowledge our people, our ancestors really, and the people leading up to it. I saw what Angela did and the book she done with a few copies hey.

1: Was that the report?

2: No, book on your family.

1: Oh. I haven’t seen it.

2: She showed us when she got it printed and their the people with a real connection to country. You lot, as I say my grandmother was taken and she never really returned to country. That’s why I thought that they would always take Aunty Ethel back there. They were going to cremate Aunty Ethel and take her ashes back to Keppel.

1: Aunty Ethel was supposed to come and select those sites but she was too ill.

2: I was surprised Aunty Heather and Aunty Ruth went back there. Aunt Heather came back when we had a meeting on North Keppel. That’s when I lived at Lockhart, that would be 1999, 2000. Bob had a meeting on North Keppel. Me and Bernie went down and Shane and Bernie son Jason. And that when your mum and Glenice come over and Aunty Heather went over there but she was reporting back to Aunty Ethel every night on the phone. And at the handover it was good to see Aunty Ruth there. Aunty Heather and Aunty Ruth they are the two last really connection we got to Keppel. I feel that Aunty Joyce, if she’s part of that Fred Ross, Aunty Joyce is the same generation as us and Frances is the same generation with you mob.. Vanessa the documents she got is saying Fred Ross is a nephew and all the documents I seen say that. Frances don’t like me saying that. If she doesn’t want me saying that she go to come out and talk to me. You see my aunt and grandmother told us, she come from an island long way away.
She said I never went back there, Fraser to Yarrabah. She remembers sitting on her father’s lap in a boat and going round the island.

1: that guy Lucas used to make a lot of money out of islanders collecting oysters and there was an oyster saloon at Emu Park. He probably ran a boat back and forward.

2: Oh. Yes.

1: There was a famous oyster called the ‘Keppel Island Oyster’.

2: back in 1984 mum and Uncle Lukey were cracking oysters, and the rangers said to Bernie, they can’t do that. And Bernie said are you going to tell those people, this is their land. He said ok I’ll turn a blind eye. My mum went back there and she talked about Keppel but it was my mum’s older sister Muriel that knew more and Aunty Heather used to come up and sit down and tell us stories. She even went back and traced the Scottish bit and she had tartan and all that stuff.

1: have you seen this picture?

2: Oyster Maggie (she was a small person), Marlene looked and ..........

**Participant: Uncle Vincent Singleton**

**Date:** 18th Feb, 2013

**Venue:** Australian Museum- Sydney

My name is Vincent Singleton and I’m a Woppaburra person from great Keppel Island. We are here today to view some of our objects that were taken off our island and off our people around the turn of the century 1905 sat that date but they’d be much older than that. First of all, this mean a really lot to us it our ancestors hair...they use to um cut it with these knives but theyre really um made from cuttle shell and I mean they got an edge on it, but these here [hair] are platted and just touching this and feeling this it feels. It feels good..and just got a good atmosphere here at the moment.
Interview transcript

Participant: Linette Russ

Date: 5th June 2013.

Venue: Gibb River Station, Kimberley, West Australia.

Initial discussion on ethics and procedural matters.

Harry: We can do that later. Can you see and... Well firstly you can start and just locate yourself in the family. Sort of like, who’s your mother who’s your great grandad where do you fit in, you know that sort of thing.

Linette: Yea.

Harry: So tell us...

Linette: Ok, who’s my mother? Cecelia Lilian Barney and is now deceased.

Harry: And when did nana pass away?

Linette: It was 1969, I still get confused as to whether it was August or September? But yea that was the end of August. Just trying to think of the date even, but anyway, it was August.

Harry: Yea nah, I remember when I was a kid, she would always send me around the corner to the cut price store to get a bar of chocolate. Just a little bar of chocolate... I don’t know she must have just liked...

Linette: Mum yea...

Harry: ...bar of chocolate, you know.

Linette: Yea, she actually use to have a problem eating it, it was like peanuts, she use to chop it up then eat it. Because she lost all her teeth.

Harry: Yea I still remember as a kid, she was at our place. Ok nana and her dad tell us how to connect back to Keppel.

Linette: Yea... Grandad, and Albert... Ross. Well of course he was always known as Albert Peters I believe, he used to be a boxer? But then they changed his name for some reason to Peters. I don’t know why! From then on we have always been Peter’s but that’s naturally he is a Ross and I have had a look through our ant history and we did come from everything so we are definitely Ross... it was just changed by someone. Given his boxing career.

Harry: Yea, what year would that... would have been?
Linette: Oh... gosh I can’t remember, I can’t even remember anything else but Peters. So way before I would say I was even born.

Harry: Oh ok...

Linette: I can’t remember him ever being Ross.

Harry: You know Gary Smith from Hervey bay?

Linette: Yea?

Harry: Yea he is... Yea I was talking to him a few weeks ago and he said oh yea yea yea... he was an old pug a boxer he use to do 30 rounds sort of a thing you know... I didn’t know if he actually saw him or someone had just told him a story you know?

Linette: Yea. He was definitely a boxer. What it was from me was he use to have the tattoos all on his arms and things too... yea he had tattoos.

Harry: Oh I didn’t know... I didn’t know he even had tattoos.

Linette: Yea I even remember, it’s just a thing you remember about people you know? I can’t really remember what the tattoo was... it would have been like a... it must have been something like an maybe anchor or something? But yea, he had tattoos on his arm, right about there. It was unusual because I would never see people with tattoos. But maybe in those days, because he did work on the wharf and the wharfies and things did have tattoos and things on them.

Harry: What so he unloaded the sugar and stuff?

Linette: Unloaded the sugar at the jetty at Urangan. And those hooks, you know those hooks, I remember. I mean that’s pretty hard work hey! And loading those big holes, the ships use to come in and he would use those every day hooks... I used to think god what a job! But you know the big thing I keep remembering is... how hard people worked those years ago. I mean he rode from Urangan down to the jetty and rode back every day and I mean that was a long way. I can’t think of how long the jetty was but it’s been cut off now. You know but that was every day and he never mentioned it, he would just go on his bike. And now people wouldn’t even walk that far to go to work or whatever these days.

Harry: I was just... I was just... you look at everything you see and they are as fit as hell... I mean you didn’t have a fat guy.

Linette: Yea... That is it, isn’t it... all the physical work was there. And of course he did like his fishing too and he would go out netting. We used to have the nets... and I know because he taught me, ‘cause I can even do the movement now (twisting fingers) how to make a net ... how to fix a net. Yea twist it around those little things... you use to have to twist it to make the nets. So those sorts of things...
Harry: We um... I just noticed in that picture...

Linette: Oh yea...

Harry: ... there is a big net next to Freddy Ross there...

Linette: Yea that’s right... they use to all go fishing... yea they are very much part of the sea. I suppose Grand- dad coming from the sea, from Keppel Island. I think it was ideal that he was brought down to Fraser, so that... Moongalba

Harry: Fraser?

Linette: to Moongalba

Harry: was it Bogimbah creek?

Linette: Bogimbah creek , But yea...where they were community was, it was mission. It was very hard, yea... so um... Well that was his... I believe that was his nephew. Fred Ross.

Harry: Yea certainly.

Linette: it was very difficult... I mean everyone called them Uncle and aunt. I mean even in this community I am a Nanna or a Mucka which is an Aboriginal work here for Nanna. So I use to think... I mean he probably was... because he was a Ross too. The chances are... it was his relation that’s for sure.

Harry: Well what’s her name... Barno... He always use to go “oh but Uncle would always refer to him as my little Darambal “. Yea so you always had this assumption that it was his nephew. I don’t know... it is hard to say it was just so long ago.

Linette: Yea and the other thing is Darambal was the word and it wasn’t Woppaburra. When you were kids I remember Denise as a kid doing her thing on the Darambal people. And you know it wasn’t Woppaburra. So...

Harry: But maybe people identify by the language group because I know um... I know I have seen the king plates and that you know? And it says Paddy of Woppaburra, yea and I saw another one again the other day. This was actually... this was only a couple of months ago in a museum in Brisbane. And it’s got Jimmy... it’s got a breast plate which says Jimmy of Conomie. Conomie with a C.

Linette: Oh yea...

Harry: That must have been James or something? I don’t know if that’s the... but I have seen his name on other documents. He is a Keppel Islander guy. There is a lot of um... you know I have a lot of old archive material and newspapers and they do say Woppaburra quite a bit. So...
Linette: I can honestly say I have never heard it…. but I suppose...you get to know the Keppel Island, what is the white man’s name of the place and that’s what you sort of heard about, you know? Used suppose at home... but I suppose it was used... now that I think about it mum and dad and we’d laugh at the time when grand dad did know some of his language and he did know songs in his language...

Harry: oh, okay. See that’s the interesting part I would love to know the songs, you know? Or even what they were about.

Linette: Yea, and I think that’s where we... I feel like I missed out... or when I say missed out, no I didn’t miss out on a lot just thinking it was just not having those things. That I can record away or put it down away and you hear it and think, what’s granddad doing? And I... I can just remember him singing and I can remember him sort of a having a dance sort now I think of it and he could say words in the language but then again a lot of us spoke a bit of our language mixed up with the Batjala together. You know, the words we used aren’t always words from the Keppel Island it was because where he grew up. Like he was 14 or something when he was sent over to Fraser Island there see?

Harry: Mackie used to see him sitting around and talking to each other in their own lingo. They would be laughing and carrying on and he said I wouldn’t have a bloody clue what they were saying. They would be talking and talking you know, in their own language. They must have known a reasonable amount to actually know.

Linette: You see he was taken when he was 14 and you see at that stage of your life you can speak the language don’t you? What else would they speak? I know you have the white contact but... arhh... they definitely do have a understanding of the language but yeah.

Harry: Yea. Seen as we know a little about the fishing... finishing stuff. What if that’s just a lot to say coming directly from Keppel. That’s how you live that’s how you survive mostly from fishing or knowing when to fish...

Linette: Yea... well yea, they... I think that when you look back to Sally Ann and he had the boat but it wasn’t actually his but it there and owned by somebody else. Grandad use to take it out and get people on it and go out to what we use to call parties or whatever and take them out for the day to say round island or Woody Island. I suppose in that way, when you think about it, it was like work too because people use to pay. They use to get on and they use to pay and go fishing. Come to think of it, it was an enterprise he was part of all those years ago.

Harry: Now was that a fishing boat or a sailing boat, like did it have a mast on it or...

Linette: No, but I do believe at one stage they did have a sailing boat. Arh, but I think that was Alby or someone that’s Uncle Fred’s son -Ross. But he’s... I believe something happened, he came to be known as I can’t remember the name. But what grandad had was a cabin like... it
wasn’t a really big thing but you could put 6 or 7 people on the thing. Yea it wasn’t a real big thing it was called the Sally Ann.

Harry: So it wasn’t that picture you showed me the other day? You know that you were in the middle.

Linette: Who knows? O no no no! That was going across to Keppel island, no it wouldn’t have been, i was to young there.

Harry: Yea... yea,

Linette: Actually, I better have a look.

Harry: It has a little cabin thing?

Linette: Yea a look out, out the top?

[Both Speaking]

Harry: She talks a lot about doing a lot of things when she was quite young as well.

Linette: Yea, defiantly. Yea the good thing was he wasn’t taken inland somewhere he was by the sea. That was... that was good, because that’s where they grew up... by the beach. You know, granddad use to be digging worms because I remember Angela saying she was going to be writing this booking and call it... 20 cents or 2 bob... bait 2 bob, she recons she was going to write something Angela. Worms... because we use to go out digging worms out by the test house down near the jetty at Urangan.

Harry: Test house?

Linette: Test house yea?

Harry: what was it for at that point?

Linette: I don’t know. It was just a test house.


Linette: Yea, I don’t know but it was full of all those mangroves and stuff. People would park their boats in go in and that was where you get all the mud crabs from and stuff. All we use to be digging for was worms with a fork... you know? Yea, and then as the tide came in you would have to build a little mound... What do you call them? A little mound or something? It was to keep the water out so we could keep digging. Yea like a dam, like a circle around. Actually yea I think that is another thing... when you look at it now, in our family there is always... kind of like little enterprises. There is no...we just to just put it in the sand first then roll it in newspaper. People got to know the Barney’s... that was where you get your bait. Granddad use to go over and just get another load.
Harry: Did you have a fridge or a box where you would just go...

Linette: I can’t remember having a fridge because you.... you know?

Harry: It wouldn’t matter I suppose?

Linette: No..no.. I mean we got a fridge at one stage... one with the block underneath. We use to get those tongs and put them on the steps with ice...and you could put them underneath if I remember correctly. But I don’t think...no I don’t think. All you would have to do... it would last one day or two day... if you left it too long, I could even see it now. The worms would go all sort of flat and hard. You know if you want to go fishing you sort of want to use it for 2 days or the next day. Or even straight after.

Harry: I did see on the on... you said grandad is always around the sea. I did get the certificates all those years ago, the marriage certificate. Says they were married in Maryborough.

Linette: Yea that’s Salvation Army wasn’t it?

Harry: Yea, at St Paul’s church.

Linette: Oh St Paul’s.

Harry: Albert Peters timber getter of Rockhampton, usual residence Fraser Island, you would have seen those before.

Linette: So it must have been in the island he was cutting timber, yeah

Harry: But I did read at one point there that he was on Cherbourg around 1928 I think it was? I read something that he was in Cherbourg.

Linette: Yea well I know nana was Grandmother was. I wasn’t aware he was... He was known as a Peters.

Harry: I read something about 1928 and I am thinking, did he go out there for a little while? And then come back or something...

[Irrelevant discussion]

Linette: But anyway...Bessie Blair, Batjala...parents were...

Harry: So Bessie and Maggie is the same person?

Linette: No, it’s her Mother’s name and her married name. Nana was Bessie and her mother’s name is Maggie. Father’s occupation was a horse trainer. Her father’s name was Morris, yea and Grandad’s mother was Judy as we know. And his father’s occupation was a farmer.

Harry: Grandad’s mother was Judy?
Linette: No I am talking about, I am talking about your grandad’s mother was Judy. And his Fathers occupation was the farmer. They got his father’s name and surname was Peters. Because he was given that name just because he was a boxer and his father was Robert Ross anyway.

Harry: Yea I think they may even adjust them because my birth cert. is spelt wrong now and they were right 40 years ago. And I don’t know why they make mistakes... I don’t know if they put ck in instead of k in instead of ck. They should have Jan instead of lan... so weather they take it of a written record and they have transferred it correctly and that’s all it is.

Linette: Yea Nanna was a Blair... Yea. Gee wiz hey Peters he always said that.

Harry: So your Nanna, Aunty Frances reckons she came from Normanton?

Linette: Camooeel.

Harry: Camooeel... because there was rumours...Mt. Isa

Linette : I can’t see the marriage certificate... have you seen it ?

Harry: No.

Linette: Let’s leave this here... the birth certificate I must have that and the marriage certificate. It’s just the same...

Harry: It says Cloncurry on there?

Linette: Oh, that’s not far.

Harry: Cloncurry isn’t far from Mt Isa but maybe it’s the registry where they actually write it up. That’s what happens...

Linette: Yea, but I always heard that being Camooeel.

Harry: Thats different because only... Frances always says north... north from there. Not... not um... Mt Isa. But the thing is... is that you talk to half a dozen people and start to get the right information... you know when you start seeing the...

Linette: Camooeel.

Harry: I will chase it up anyway.

Linette: As far as I know he is Camooeel on the border.

Harry: Oh ok... well that’s ok. And your mum... where was she born.. Urangan?

Linette: As far as I know Maryborough hospital.
Harry: Place of registration ..........  

Linette: No it would have to be there... also no hospital in Hervey bay.

Harry: That’s not very close to Urangan? But there is a place of registration in Maryborough.

Linette: I say Lliy but I always thought it was Lilian Cecelia. I got that right.

Harry: Cecelia...

Linette: Yea Cecelia... the 3rd of May. Um... I know the surname, Albert father labourer Rockhampton. Camooeel, that’s not very far from the border is it?

Harry: So what year is that? Is that 1914 is it?

Linette: Mum was born 1914, that’s right.

Harry: Well they were married... married in 1912. So she was borne two years after they were married.

Linette: Well...

Harry: I did read something about grandad going out to Cherbourg for a period however... it was around 1928 if he went there... must have been the time working there or something? I remember reading something about 1928 in Cherbourg... Well maybe

Linette: Bessie Brown, Maudie Turner

Harry: If Nanna was from there, well maybe... maybe they just went back there for a little while. For work or to visit relatives.

Linette: I don’t know how she ended up there because she came from out west from down Melbourne or somewhere down south. Coming up to Queensland but at some stage she was defiantly out there because that’s where mum was for a while. Out at Cherbourg

Harry: So how did Nanna end up being out at Cherbourg?

Linette: Yea... Come to think of it now mum was definitely at Cherbourg because there were pictures of her at Cherbourg. Although I don’t think it was for a long period of time though?

Harry: How old was she when she was there? How old does she look in the picture?

Linette: Well what what what... She was supposed to be about 18 or something when she got married. Because dad was about 10 years older.

Harry: Well if that’s um... let me think, born 14 at 18, 1932. If she was by herself, if she was a couple of years younger than that... she may have had kids as a late teen maybe... in Cherbourg? But anyways it’s just interesting seeing where people are from.
Linette: I tell you what she used to work at the hospital... they use to call her a nurse, she use to be a nurse. We all know she worked in the hospital in Cherbourg.

Harry: That was before she was married hey?

Linette: Must have been yea...

Harry: Because that would tie in, if she was born 1914 I did read something about.... Uncle Albert being there in 1928 which would make her 14 there. So maybe 28 -30 14-16 type of a area, and then went to Hervey bay and married grandpop in probably 19...that would make it 1932. She was 18, so that could tie in. You just submit little things which can tie in together.

Linette: But I suppose you need to realise that they didn’t seem to talk too much about things...

Harry: No but see you get things through...

Linette: Yea, but you see we didn’t even think to ask being who we are... we just didn’t think to ask those sorts of questions. It’s sort of like disrespect... you didn’t ever ask their age, I didn’t even know my grandfather’s age... we just didn’t talk about age because it was irrelevant it wasn’t... it is irrelevant no matter what age you are.

Harry: People don’t have birth certificates... that’s why I was so surprised when you said oh nanna... your nana’s birth certificate... I though well that’s unusual...

Linette: Well when they were on the mission they kept all their records you know?

Harry: I thought if you were born on a mission they would keep records but...

Harry: What about the first time you went back to Keppel which was what 1984 was it? The first time you went back I think?

Linette: Yea I think that actually was the first time because Angela went back. I know grandad took the biggest one back well Barno took him back, only because granddad said he had a lot of opals cause they were bad luck. Bad luck or something. So Barno took him up there____

Harry: I heard that story though Gary Smith, and there is treasure up there... there’s treasure.

Linette: Oh yes I remember, I remember talking to grandad about it... he said it was only going to cause him bad luck so he wasn’t going to take it with him. But the other thing was always... always the peacock feather was bad luck. Wouldn’t have one in the place, peacock feather. But it’s really pretty... no I wasn’t allowed to have that that it was bad luck.

Harry: What I find interesting is all the superstitions that are around.

Linette: There is probably a reason...
Harry: But even things at home, you know you don’t step over someone’s legs. Was that just because you would trip or was that... you just don’t do it.

Linette: Sometimes there was a reason like why they say the boogie man we use to say Mook Mook there are other names as well... was because when the sun goes down and it was getting late you should have been home anyhow. So if you stay out to long and it gets dark someone will get you or grab you or something, you know? So if there was a reason behind these sorts of things. You just don’t do it... like stepping over the legs you weren’t supposed to do it, it was bad luck. There could be something behind it but I suppose you didn’t question it. Just don’t do it... you just wouldn’t do it.

Harry: It’s funny how in the bible people though this and that happened. Jesus said this so you would do this. People wouldn’t look at it and go why when you have beliefs you don’t question it you just sort of accept it. So when you grandfather said don’t that... you just sort of don’t do it. You don’t sort of go... well why? Why? I remember as a kid you would always be talking about bloody ghost stories and spirits all around Hervey Bay all those ghosts and spirits. I just remember as a kid, I just thought maybe that is part of the Aboriginal culture that... all about the spirits that are there... or whatever.

Linette: They are with you. Always...Oh, I think a part of growing up...because death is a big thing. It always a big thing, The way we saw it, I think that they never really leave use anyway because they are very spiritual people and you could talk to them if you wanted to which we do. I know there are times when I do talk to mum but I am just thinking that I could be walking at night and grandad would say, there is something there with us, and they are looking after us. And I just said okay... so he... he. And I do believe to this day I would say I am a believer in the spiritual soul. Because I think that if we feel that they’re always there with us we can accept death more easily. The problem with today society is with all this wailing and carrying on I just think, that’s not what they would want anyway. You know, mum would want to be here for me to remember her for who she was and so would nana. I’m getting emotional....So what I am saying is, I think that way is good because that way you can accept death as an eventuality. It’s going to happen to all of us, but that way they are always going to be with you in spirit.

Harry: You were saying the other day that you use to see Grand-dad just walking along talking to people?

Linette: Yea... Yea. Because we use to walk down at nights to pick up my sister, Aunty Bessie who use to go to the school a Maryborough and after school you would have to walk down to pick her up when she came back from Maryborough and across the crossing to bring her home. And that’s the time you saw things when you were walking along and he would be saying things or talking to somebody... talking to somebody... you would say I know its ok or something. Yea okay, she is alright, you’re alright there is somebody here. You know, you weren’t scared or anything. Maybe that was a way of not being scared, you know a way of making you feel safe... you know?
Harry: Or maybe in reality it is just somebody guiding you along and keeping you safe... over seeing you.

Linette: Yea, because I think in really bad times... there is only. Well there is usually... well I suppose our mothers will always be the closest to you because it’s your mum. But...but I think really... you know in bad times in life when it’s not too good or whatever, I think it’s always been mum. But the person I have felt who has influenced me more would be my grandmother, Bessie Peters. Only because I think having twelve kids you’re sitting round and she was the one who got you ready for school and cooked your meals, brushed you hair, took you to the movies, screamed at you. You use to be a funny thing because she could never remember all our games and she would be calling me Glenice and I would just ignore her. I knew she would be calling me but I would just ignore her. I can remember things like that, you don’t remember my name I am not going to come back. So she would be going through the names... someone was saying the other day you know, Glenice or Christine or Vanessa...yeah, she’ll get to it. But because she was big and I’ll say the Aboriginal word, nummu’s...her breast like, women and she would sit like a big cushion because she was fat. And she would be busting your hand... it was a nice feeling wasn’t it, the warmth of the body. When she use to comb our hair because we use to have long hair.

Harry: You use to tell me when there use to be the cyclones of Hervey Bay and you would slide under the bed and your grandmother would jump on top. Every time you had slid under she would jump on top and squash you from on top of the bed.

Linette: Yea because you would go to grab the wood from under the bed before you would let go... Oh yea I remember her sitting on my blinking hand and she was a big lady. Oh, nana...But you could hear the wind coming through and breaking the glass. You would walk down the beach later on once the wind ad gone it was all grey and leaves and trees. The freshness of the air was just beautiful after a cyclone goes though.

Harry: The thing I find interesting is the senses... you might see a picture of something but you can’t pick up the reality of it unless you are there. You smell that storm in the air, hear the noise, just the feeling on your skin you know the people have all those sorts of senses.

Linette: You can feel it when a cyclone is coming towards you.

Harry: Because people... they always talk about connection to country and you sort of think... I could never sort of understand it how when people would go... oh I am from Fraser and then later on down the track... no they are from Keppel. People sort of have this attachment to Keppel... and I am thinking you didn’t even know you were from Keppel so how does this attachment work? It’s sort of interesting to sort of go...

Linette: It works for me because I don’t think you ever forget where you come from. My grandad... he was taken from there they didn’t really want to go there because of the bad treatment. And of course they were brought across to the main land but what do you do, you
know? If you’re put on an island (Fraser)... it was great but I am never going to forget where I came from. And um... you know you will always... there is always an attachment with Fraser Island which is just out from us at Hervey Bay. That’s where grandad was in the community over there backwards and forth over to Fraser Island. So that’s what was closest to use. But always... always, never ever would I have forgot... always... always...

Harry: What it was like there... or stories from there, songs from there?

Linette: Yea, you never... I never... I never ever thought of Fraser Island being where we came from because we didn’t come from there. He came from Keppel Island... that was his country, that was it, there was no if buts or whatever.

Harry: Have you seen that picture? That was up at the dining hall up at Keppel. And that illustrates that people, people were taken from Keppel. Taken to Yeppoon and this is the track going back... going back home. And then here, going straight back to the Island. People died in between. You were lucky to get back and it kind of illustrates that line to get back. Yea...

Linette: And I suppose in a way too... it was good that Barno took him back because we didn’t have the money or anything to get up there or go anywhere. We didn’t even have a car you know. When you are growing up with 12 kids but um, my little brother was only one when he died but... you don’t have the money to go back up and so forth... but I know I was pleased that Barno...whatever the reason was that he got to go back to his country.

Harry: Was he different when he came back? Was there any feeling of... I guess sort of happiness or fulfillment or something?

Linette: Oh I would say... I would say there was yea? Yea but I suppose that arh... it kind of like a kid at home. It was probably good that he went back home and had that contact again, and so forth. The opals and stuff but if they didn’t get anywhere. No no no I think... yea it was a good feeling. I know... I am trying to think back because I remember them going and so forth and the importance of it too and so forth. But I can’t... yea... by all means.

Harry: What do you think out of all the Islands... what do you think are the most important places... say to you?

Linette: I think what... you know... to me, I don’t know exactly where. But one which would be... would be the place they grew up and where their house was and things like that. I know the significant things for me now naturally is where we took to the remains back and buried them. You know that would be more important place for me. But was there ever a point where we could point out. I don’t know where though.

[Irrelevant conversation]

Linette: to me I have seen many different places... I have seen the building where the Lucas house and it is just exactly and maybe... you know there are different places I can’t. Maybe I
have forgotten or something I don’t know a particular area where you can say grandad lived there.

Harry: I mean they had a camp on the beach. There was a camp there... they use to call it the old camp. There’s um... I remember you saying to me years ago that Aunty Conomie always said that I was born on Constantine beach. And um... when I went to Constantine beach, to see the beach you know you have a big long beach then up on one end you have a creek which comes out and I always thought to myself... I actually told Aunty Vanessa and all them as well... well to be I thought that was actually a woman’s area. Which is probably where that creek is and where it comes down to be that pond kind of an area near Considine beach where it comes down past that little crevice up the right hand there I would imagine.

Linette: Actually now that you are talking... I actually remember... what’s his name? Is that his name? The bloke who did the diggings?

Harry: Mike Rowland

Linette: Mike Rowlands... yea. I met him first at the University of Queensland and I remember where we could have been because he had done all the diggings and you could see where the shells were ____ and so forth. So you could imagine that people would have lived there or they ate their food there I suppose. I mean it’s not as if it’s a really big place to live. I can’t say exactly where but I think... I don’t know exactly where... but the fact is the island. It wasn’t just possession of things we got to be more attached to the land itself. And I suppose where you lived was important it wouldn’t be like on the main land because you would be hunter and gatherer all over the place. But up there you wouldn’t be doing that as much, would you? You would be more....

Harry: That’s right and so you would only have to go so far.

Linette: You would have too...

Harry: The think with the whole Island feels I have noticed... was that a lot of people when they go back. Just how you feel you know that first sort of second time when you put your foot on that sand. Like what’s the significance of it all?

Linette: I think I remember saying the words... well actually when we got off the boat we actually... well I did, just jumped in the water you know. I just remember... what did I say? “It’s great to be back” or something like that. Not that you ever were there before....buts it’s just like because your... you know it’s been part of you all your life? Then to go and see the place where... your grandfather came from, what happens and it’s just such a beautiful place. You know... and you would think like some of the aboriginal communities are absolutely beautiful some of them! And you would think, to be taken from there, I always said I was happy he ended up on Fraser Island because that is an island too, a beach and its... you know and it’s connected with the salt and that you know? So I am just thinking. I remember saying... something like,” it’s
great to be back”. It was the first time I had ever been there but the connection was through my grandfather... so maybe it’s just like you know... you’re a part of it with them with the family? Back there on Keppel Island.

Harry: The thing I found in this research is that people will go back there, and the first thing is you do is take off your shoes. You want to feel that sand in between your toes and have that connection. But the other thing was, I would come back to anyone’s house to have an interview and there was parts that link you back to that country somehow. I just noticed that bottle of shells... now they aren’t shells from here? Now... like...

Linette: Yea well I am a bit of a shell collector... and I know I get shells.... they could be from anywhere. I get the bring shells from Keppel Island I think that’s something. I don’t know I just do... I know that if I go to Hervey Bay I will pick up a shell, you know because that’s where I walked around that’s where I lived. And I know Keppel Island is where Grandad and Aunty Conomie and all them came from. So I will have one here... it’s just one of those things part of Keppel Island.

Harry: So what sorts of things have you got? So you have some shells... what sorts of things do you keep?

Linette: I think it’s mainly been just shells... I can’t even think... I am just thinking what else.

Harry: What is it about these places? Like you always have... at Mackie’s place see there is a turtle shell on the wall.

Linette: Oh yea...

Harry: And there are a couple of other things... and a couple of artefacts associated with the sea. There is a picture of Keppel Island map on the wall... just little things like that? There are just all these little connections associated back to country, you know.

Linette: Well that’s what we use to have back at home in Hervey Bay... turtle shells on the walls. But we haven’t had it here. I suppose use moving here means stuff is still in boxes and things unlabelled. You know, I think it’s pretty.... I think it’s the sea... um.... or even with paintings... oh no I do have paintings out there. See to me I see there is either bush or there is still the sea. I have actually sold a few paintings and they have been of the sea, because I like the waves and I like the sand. I think that there is still that there for me... I know that when I do paint, there have been a number paintings where I do paint. Oh... Keppel Island? Where’s that one? Yea in a lot of cases I have packed things away. You know, but they were actually... yea I did have one too. That’s another thing... I gave them to my work place. I actually had Keppel Island and that beautiful white sand and I can’t even think what beach it was. It’s something you always talk about that is always there. (bottle of sand)

Harry: It’s nice to see that link... I will show you a couple of these photos. These are some of the recent photos from the ... black and white one...the dugong.
Linette: Well dugong has always been a bit of a worry to me. There was one down at the jetty at Hervey Bay, but grandad just... I don’t know what he did or if it was his totem or something but I can’t eat dugong. I remember eating it once when I was up at Hopevale because all my life I had been told by grandad that I can’t eat it. But I just wanted to see what it taste like, so when I went to Hopevale, oh they had a bloody big dugong, the fat was that thick. But that’s the thing... he said would you like to taste this and I sort of was thinking will I or wont I sort of a thing. I just wanted a little taste of it, he gave me some and I said I wasn’t allowed to taste this. It tasted like pork, it had a nice taste about it. I haven’t had it ever since and probably never will but I just needed to try some. That’s what dugong means to me. I don’t know anyone else who would do that.

Harry: So that’s part of our family now in some sense, so could you pass that on to me?

Linette: What?

Harry: The dugong as a totem.

Linette: I suppose so, I mean it was given to me, so I could pass it on to you...

Harry: .....thanks mum,,,,

Harry: If you have just got pictures of the Islands it’s no big deal...

Linette: Oh yea... see the erosion has taken place, it’s terrible isn’t it? Grand dad, Aunty Conomie see when you look at them in that way you can see a nose and that...

Harry: Yea, what about these? Grave dolls.....

Linette: Oh yea, I remember going to the university and a museum I think it was... I remember going...no... It was a talk by Aunty Ethel yea. We talked about these, weren’t these in the museum in Brisbane?

Harry: There at Keppel now... keeping place on the Island. That’s a reburial from 1992.

Linette: Oh yea all those trees.

Harry: So here you go. There’s Aunty Ethel

Linette: Oh yea well there you go. Ulowa, wapparaburra ....Aunty Heather. How is Aunty Heather?

Harry: She had started to lose her mind and getting dementia.

Linette: Where is she, up at Hervey Bay?

Harry: Yea Hervey Bay.
Linette: Is there up there with Sam.

Harry: Yea.

Linette: Oh, and then you have the... that’s it there isn’t it?

Harry: Yea ___ they call it, the shell. How important is language do you think?

Linette: I think you lose the language when you lose the culture, that’s what I think. I think the language is really important.

Harry: There are a couple of words which have floated though. It’s interesting you look at some of the things and if you look really close you can see the body... on the body paintings. If I blow it up you can see it... their core is very straight up and down. Yea... and the guys as well you can see the lines.

Linette: Yea, that’s important for us to know what that is...

Harry: Yea and I actually have seen that same thing on the back of a Roth document. And I have noticed that a lot of the traditional paintings that people have which relate to their totems...

Linette: 1898... gee.

Harry: Now what I have just shown Angela actually a few weeks ago... I said you know what, I have seen the painting on here with lines going up is exactly the same as the humpback whale where it has the baleen coming up the bottom. Well I thought that’s probably the analogy there... you know?

Linette: Did you ever hear about that... dugong in your travels? Because grandad said there was supposed to be one down by the jetty there but he had this thing about it... to me and I remember him talking to me about it. But did anyone else mentioned a dugong?

Harry: No not really... but a lot of people did mentioned the humpback whale, the humpback whale as being the totem etcetera... um

Linette: Oh, well that’s great.

Harry: So that’s sort of interesting, the other thing I was going to say was this one here was by Allan Morris... here it is.

Linette: Oh yes I have that one.

Harry: He talks a lot about these... every cross is the burial grounds. So that is the resort near the kiosk, so there are burial grounds here, here and here. At the beach as well and peninsula. I don’t think anyone ever spoke about those. But um....

Linette: What... what’s that Main beach... what’s that called? Where we land?
Harry: Fisherman’s beach? Yea that’s actually there... they normally call that Fisherman’s beach.

Linette: Monkey, long.... Now where is the beach you were talking about?

Harry: Here, here... it’s here. This is the direct beach post 1900’s... but they use a camp site here, there was an old camp site there. I just wonder if anyone mentioned because this looks like Aboriginal graves... it says prior to 1900’s. Down around this bottom area for some reason there seems to be a lot of grave sites.

Linette: See... yea. No you see I am 71 but just thinking Aunty Bessie maybe the oldest... well she is the oldest now. Have you had a bit of a talk with her?

Harry: No but I should go talk to Aunty Bessie. Umm... but some people have said that she left a long time ago. She left Hervey Bay quite young? Whereas a few of the other kids spend a lot more time...

Linette: I was only 15 when I left. No well she went to high school and everything there... so she would have been older than me when she left. At the beginning of 1st’s or 2nd’s she you know... could probably tell you more than what I can.

Harry: What do you think of king plates? Some people think...oh no it’s a European thing...

Linette: Well it is. But then again it has given use a bit of history too. But I was thinking with the name Woppaburra that gives you some historical thing because it’s saying to me well there you go... Grandad always said Darambal so um... it wouldn’t have been just put there because it would have had of been said and it was a significant thing to them. I have never been one to wonder about these they put their values on Aboriginal people and so forth. It... it did always worry me but then again there are other things you can look at. Like I was just thinking for me it was my see...there you go ______. That wasn’t really... I can’t remember my granddad saying that. But then again it was always Keppel Island I suppose and even then, all those years ago.

Harry: You get use to the European name.

Linette: It was the European name... and that’s just what they called it.

Harry: I suppose the final thing is the massive development. To put this massive resort on there, you know putting golf courses and shops and going to be a big marina as well.

Linette: Well I feel the same way as the Kimberley’s... you don’t destroy something which is beautiful. When you start bring people on to I and everything which comes with it. It loses its beauty, sacredness... you, you, you destroy it, you destroy its culture you even destroy the people even because once you start doing that it changes there lifestyle. I am talking here now in the Kimberley, I suppose really...it’s not a very big island. There has always been problems with getting water and so forth... so really why choose that island? If you want to know what I think. I don’t think it should be there. I have no... and that’s been an island always. I don’t think
it should change... I just think its been has always been a beautiful island let’s keep it that way.
You know... and these big... we are being taken over by all these big resorts you know?
Capitalism... whatever you want to call it...materialism, all this sort of stuff. We are losing too much beauty in this world... which keeps use sane I believe.

Harry: The last thing I was going to ask you was just... some people I suppose go... your mother has come from a seaside water area. She loves her fishing, she loves the sand and loves the beach, and she is a salt water person. But now she is in the middle of the Kimberley’s? How does that work? Because you get these people who say oh, you are a salt water person... and I am thinking is there some commonality there between the two?

Linette: I think we have got the rivers, the fish. I go fishing as you know, I got my bait here. I think where ever... it’s a river but it’s still fishing. I think to me it’s the wilderness... it’s the last frontier true Australia. I think that’s the attraction to the beauty the gorgeous ranges and the people living there. Although we have our ups and downs I feel privileged to be in a country where people can still speak their own language. I feel a little sad in a way that even though we do speak a little of our language and we do have some understanding um... I would like to think that this mob will never let it die that we will keep too. Like you were saying about Keppel Island, I suppose to answer that question is that... I don’t know why we tend to destroy things we think are beautiful. And I just think that when you come here there is this peace and even though I come from Hervey Bay I lived in the city too for a long time but I go to the beaches and things like that. And I think that is all it is. It’s still... like I was saying... it’s the beauty of the place. Because I like painting and I just think... I could have the peace that you just don’t seem to have that in a lot of places. I think you would just appreciate that you were still surrounded by aboriginal people, probably more than I have ever been in my life. I’ve been around more traditional people, I have learnt some of their language and they have accepted me. I just think... as I suppose being married to a person who comes from here it’s a choice. It has always been a bit of a tug a war. Because he seems to think I will always go back home and he is thinking oh bugger we are going to have to go back home for a little while, which we probably will do for a couple of years.

Harry: You never know... I just think he belongs here is just like when you get the traditional aboriginal people here...

[Irrelevant conversation] End
Interview transcript

Participant: Malcom Burns

Date: 23rd April, 2013

Venue: 242 Scrub Hill Rd, Nikenbah, Hervey Bay.

General conversation on informed consent and project description.

H: Mostly you would sit down as a kid and talk with your old Uncles but they don’t say much...

M: I used to sit down and talk with Uncle Albert around the fire, around the fire up at the point there.[Dayman Point] and he would tell us a lot of good stories but we thought he was only bullshitting because he’d have a good laugh. I’ll never forget the one he told about the point there, a whale brought him up to the point there and spat him out. Stories I tell ya Uncle Albert would tell a few yarns.

H: As a kid you probably believed them all?

M: Oh yeh! I just used to like sitting there listening to him.

Garry: Stories about the whale spitting him out at the beach there at Dayman point there. And he reckons he was diving one day and came to this big cave with treasures and he reckons he seen this shark and the shark bit him...and he bit the shark back....

(the joy and happiness of remembering a story told by elders whether deeply cultural or purely for humour is an important aspect- remembering the person through story)

Garry: And we’d have a good old laugh...we’d see him and he’d always have that old pipe in his mouth, that pipe. You see Uncle Albert he was the old pug. He used to be an old pug...like that bare knuckle, used to fight 30 rounds sometimes.

H: hard days..no gloves.

G: yeh, bloody hell. Uncle Georgey was a good fighter when he was in the army, you know national service...but he used to knock ‘em all out in the first round. When I was young I never used to take much notice , how to flick his wrist to flick that left wrist. I should have took notice of him. He was deadly the way he would flick his wrist old straw.

(General unrelated conversation)

G: Remember in the old days they used to have the old bars and the man hole. The bullyman locked him up and he was the only fulla he was skinny see, squeezed through the bars and he escaped!
M: Them nets, you now I can do those nets but there’s a special net there I seen when I was down there in Sydney lookin’ at it but there’s a special net and that’s the one I can’t do.

H: I was trying to get a close picture...

M: I need to get a good look at it but I couldn’t get a close good look at it. And Chrissy’s telling me they want me to go down and do it again just have a look at it and that. Last time I thought I was going to fucken die but this time I’ll go down and be aware. It’s very delicate.

H: I took some pictures, a real close view of it.

M: That’s the one we need to get a good look at it. I can see the first one, but the second one, that’s the one. The strengthener, that was the strengthener.

5.30

G: What hurts alot of our people is when they took the children away. Took ‘em away to reserves and all that, away from our homes, terrible that hurt our people and still hurting. They’ll never get over it for the rest of our lives hey. Not too many elders left, I sit down and think they’re all gone. All them old people just sittin’ down and havin’ a yarn. They’re all gone. When I was a young fella and started getting old I didn’t like mixing with the younger generation. Middle aged people and older people, they would tell you a lot of stories and that. Sit down and have a good yarn around a fire, camp fire or something. They used to talk about personal things like lingo and how to hunt, how men used to hunt and all the women used to hunt get berries and all that sort of stuff hey. Turtle eggs, things like that, honey and that sort of stuff...and gave us a little bit of knowledge about that stuff.

H: turtle eggs?

G: Ping pong balls, when they’re lowered they bounce around, about the same size as a ping pong ball too. Orangey yellow colour too. Poke along with a stick in the sand to find up. Sometimes when we used to put the turtles up years ago we would, female ones, we would get all the eggs out of them. Boil em up, yeh.

H: Who did you catch the turtles with?

G: Oh, Uncle Albert Ross, he used to dive in, dive in and roll them over on their back and hand them in the boat with big fucken sharks swimming around, bloody hell. Uncle Ikey, Ikey Owens he would just dive in in the channel there. Yeh we used to go up the gutters there, the water was about that deep. Uncle Albert used to row along real quiet and we would make a splash with the oars, sneak up on the turtle and he used to jump in grab ‘em and throw them in the boat. He was bloody good.

H: I remember Uncle Popeye catching turtles with dad in Brisbane. Big turtle into the boat.
G: Big green turtle, they’re fucken heavy to get in the boat too. Yeh. Where’d they get him, in the bay here.

H: No, this was down Donnybrook.

G: Okay. Must have got him in the shallows there, snuck up on him and jumped in and turned him on his back. Popeye used to do alot of crabbing there, Donnybrook and them places there.

10.00

(unrelated conversation)

M: Yeh that, what’s his name? Aloisis? I just said talk to us, about our land. There was one word I saw perpetuity and I fucken hate it. I said you have that there if we would have signed it we would never have seen our land again. We would be paying to go there. He said yeh, I’m sorry about that.

H: The perpetual lease goes on for ever.

M; They’re cunts. I said when you have it worked out and you have everything covered, we’ll show it to the executive, let other people have a look at it, then we’ll have a meeting. We’ll have a crack at it and see how we go.

H: Once we get native title up and going it will give us a bit more leverage.

(unrelated discussion)

End
Interview Transcript

Participant: Uncle Gary Smith

Date: Tues. 23rd April, 2013.

Venue: 242 Scrub Hill, Nikenbah, Hervey Bay.

H: What do you remember about grandfather Ross (Fred Ross)?

G: Oh, he was a good fisherman, he was a runner, he was a good sprinter and a good cyclist.

H: In terms of fishing was he better than you?

G: Oh yeh, he was the best fisherman in Hervey Bay. He taught all them other fullas. O’reilly’s Larsons, he taught ‘em all. They are professional fisherman and alot of those fisherman have passed away, ‘e taught all them.

H: And what sort of things would he show them?

G: He’d get up on the mast of the boat and see things, birds and fish and things. He could see a school of fish five miles away. He never really looked at other animals just fish, mud crabs & stuff yeh....

H: When I was a kid, mum used to always have these superstitions. Did you ever find them old fellas had then as well.

G: oh yeh lots of things, they wouldn’t tell us the men’s business and all that about bora rings. They would tell us.

H: What are some of the stories they would tell you?

G: oh...they used to tell me about lingo, about bloody animals and things like that. A bit of lingo...yeh...

H: Aunty Frances said you know all the words for turtles and things.

G: Yeh..but I only know a couple now.

H: What are those ones?

G: You know yarraman is horse, turtle that might be the woppaburra language too, dungui and shark wobaigubba and the Batjala word for dingo – worri gulleye

H: I think alot of words got mixed up hey?

G: Yeh,

H: With those fullas coming to Fraser.
G: Yeh, yeh, yeh. Buna gini that means grass-stick hey.

H: Grass stick, black boy

G: Grass stick, black boy, yeh.

H: Did ever talk about the island?

G: yeh, they would talk about the island and that. The old people and how they were brought up and that. Hard, they had it hard. The great depression and all that, they had hard times.

H: I think great grandad Albert was out at Cherbourg?

G: Yeh, yeh ...................

H: Did they ever tell you stories about Keppel?

G: No no, just lingo and that and other things.

H: They had it pretty hard.

G: Yeh, I should have written it down over the years but you forget those things ay... I’m getting old, I got a bad memory and can’t remember all those things

H: Ever seen this book here, my island in the sun by Alan Morris, he grew up on Keppel.

G: Muri fulla?

H: No not a murri fulla, he’s a migaloo...muthard. He talks about our old people and who he used to know.

G: hang on I’ll get my glasses.

**Count: 6.30**

G: Must be ‘round for along time that fulla and that book

H: He wrote it in ’89 and talked about his grandfather.

G: oh ... deadly old people, deadly...kept them roots , berries and all that and grass seeds.

H: Here’s some other pictures from the state library. Remember these king plates?

G: They wear around their neck.

H: What do you reckon about those king plates ... good thing or bad thing?

G: I guess it just their ID, their Id and their culture too, a tradition (for the English)

H: This one here says for saving the life ...
G: oh...like medals of bravery sort of....

H: Have you see these before the grave dolls

G: oh yeh...seen something like them...darumbal or something..its sort of a root there

H: Yeh it looks like a sweet potatoe or something

G: Looks like a plant or something

H: Its the base of a grass tree

G: It looks like some bloody big yam. Yeh...poor old Aunty Ethel yeh (Aunty Ethel was in the picture with the grave dolls) She was about 90 when she passed away

H: I used to go visit her at the seventh day Adventist home.

G: yeh, that’s when she got sick...some nice photos there. Who’s that?

H: That’s Uncle Luke Stanley from Yarrabah

G: yeh ... their related to us too, on grandfather Ross’s side.She was a doctor...Muriel Stanley

H: Did you know Jessie...

G: Jessie Richards

H: No...Jessie Keppel Ross –Stanley.

G: Uncle Albert and Aunty Bessie.

H: I think that’s Aunty Konomie.

G: Yeh... probably is Aunty Konomie & Uncle Albert Peters

H: Did you ever talk to Uncle Albert?

G: No, well we spoke but only talked about natural things

H: I think they used to make fishing nets...

G: yeh...they used to make fishing nets down Urangan there. Miller street. Yeh fixing nets and makin g nets down there Uncle Freddy Ross and Uncle Albert. Years ago w were only just kids (1950’s)

H: I like seeing those traditional skills

G: Yeh...watching corroborees and all that stuff. That’s very traditional to us. Any Indigenous things I like going to.
H: See this picture here...the traditional painting, lines going down their body..
G: oh yeh...I can see the white there...
H: Its interesting stuff, did you go to the land handover?
G: I had the opportunity to go up there a few times but I never went up there.
H: You should get up there one day
G: yeh, I reckon its lovely up there too, nice yeh Keppel.
H: Did you ever see those harpoons those fellas made?
G: No, no...
H: There’s a number of them in the Australian museum in Sydney.
G: oh yeh...
H: That’s the painting that’s in the dining room up there in the education centre.
G: Deadly fellas those Keppel Islanders.
H: This one here is the story of um those taken from the island to Yeppoon and they walked back to Tranby Point. Many tried to return but most died on the way.
G: They drowned or something.
H: Yeh... and here the tail of a whale.
G: That’s their totem the whale, humpback whale. Is that south Keppel
H: No that’s North Keppel. Here’s fisherman’s beach. That’s where the resort is.
G: Yeh, yeh...be good fishing up that way too...
H: Yeh, its a nice place, you should get up there.
G: Yes, I wouldn’t mind getting up there someday.
H: Actually they are going up there this Saturday for the protest.
G: yeh...Aunty Francis with Aunty Gwenny Smith...her married name Muir. They probably see Bob up there as well, her son.
H: yes he’s still up there with Brian.
G: Yes, the younger brother. Brenda...she’s in Brisbane.Yeh.
H: Who’s the other one Matthew?

G: That’s Brenda boy. Yeh...yeh

H: I thought you may have had a few stories from the early days.

G: No No....

H: I guess we forget over time.

G: I should have taped it or something.

Mackie: What are you doing I haven’t got much time got to be at the doctors at 10! Grandfather never used to talk much.

G: I only know a bit of lingo.

M: They used to just sit down and talk to one another but we never knew what they were saying.

G: We be sitting around while they talking lingo but didn’t know what they were saying.

M: They used to come down from up top there and sit around and talk see. Sit around and have a giggle those two old fellas.

H: Gary told me about those fellas making nets...

M: Yeh, Russel and me and Tony, they used to show us how to make them nets.

G: We used to sit around and watch them all the time. Used to sit around mending them....I used to have a go for a little while then give up. If I knew more I’d be happy to talk to you about Keppel Island and Fraser Island.

M: Don’t go I’ll only be 20 minutes.

(general discussion about leaving and coming back, start showing pictures)

M: Yulowa, Woppaburra, Paddy for saving life. Fucking hell. It’s deadly up there. Me and Gemma, going to go up there this week end to protest. Hang around till I get back. Yes me and Vincent handing those things back.

G: Uncle Ernie sold that muthard a mud crab but it was a rattler. He sold the crab and Barno was saying ‘mister that’s a rattler’. And Uncle Ernie was saying be quiet and gave him a hiding when he went. It was empty. You struggled them days except for crabs and fish....no pension or dole them days. The old house, yeh I miss the old house when they knocked it down. In Edwin street ,yeh. All the Foley’s and Desache’s ? they used to live behind there. Nola, Eric Desache, Betty davo and Aunty Elva and all them Shirley Foley
H: Wondunna mob

G: Yeh, they were old Vincent Morgan for a while and next door Mrs. Orchard

H: Yes, I was only a kid when nanna passed away. 5 or 6 in the late 60’s.

G: I was probably about 19 in ’68. Grandfather died in ’63 and I was only 14 when grandfather died. Nana passed away when I was 21.

H: You say you fished in Barneys hole. Where was that?

G: Between Round island and the old lighthouse. Just out a bit further. Old Barno he knew where to go.

H: I remember when Uncle Barno passed away at Maryborough there he had the old crab hook in the rafters.

G: yeh, did he leave the place to Rebecca??

H: ...dont know....

(unrelated discussion)

G: Old Ernie, the old bull pup. And poor old Rob.

H: Yes he was only 59 when he passed.

G: He would always come out and see us you know. That’s when he had lady Thomson..Cheryl..She would come down home a few time ... see poor old Cheryl. Sad he passed away, Jeannie too ay.

H: Yeh, she has cancer...and Aunty Estelle from asthma. She was a Roe...

G: She was a lovely person, broke Popeye’s heart ey.

H: Left him with six kids.

G: She passed on too ay Aunty Ellie. Yeh, not long after Uncle Colin...or Colin went before her I think.... down at skill park at the Indigenous footy.

End.
Interview transcript

Participant: Aunty Frances Gala

Date: 23rd April 2013


General discussion on informed consent and explanation of research

F: My old grandfather I found out how his mother came into it. They look too much like Pakistani’s and that- grandfather, old Uncle Albert and Aunty Konomie and even the pictures of Aunty Jesse too. They don’t have that aboriginal look whatsoever. And I said to Aunty Joycie it comes out in some of the kids. It comes out in Norman and this fula comes up an he’s talking like an Indian to him. He says nanana I’m aboriginal. And I said to Aunty Joycie I wonder how grandfathers mother name come up and her name was Fanny Singh.

H: Singh spelt S I N G H

F: Yes I think so and he said I want you to remember that. I think he said his father was Charles Ross. You see old nana Singhs mother must have been a Keppel Island woman, cause this fulla sing went over there to the Keppel Islands. An Aunty Joycie has it all on paper in research and that’s where that name comes in. And that’s where that looks comes in...and the old people

H: And it looks a bit like Aunty May was like that as well.

F: Yes, mum, Aunty Audrey had that look a bit, well Aunty Joycie and all of them. And grandfather and Aunty Konomie were like twins. Grandfather told Janice that he was Uncle Alberts baby brother and Aunty Konomie said the same thing. She said that’s right Franny and it’s not like grandfather cause he never said a word. And I think it was because of all the shame and everything that went on over there. It just traumatised them a bit. She said grandfather came out with things, they were just walking down to the beach, grandfather and Uncle Albert, and grandfather was talking about things showing him things about signs. And she said that’s Uncle Albert now and I never heard it but Aunty Konomie said it too and grandfather said it to Janice. And it won’t lie as well cause it’s a Christian you know. I said you well you can see it. I used to look at Aunty Konomie and look at her and think no this cant be nephew...they look too much alike

H: There’s a bit of a debate there.

F: They’re too much alike. You just cant separate it to be an Aunty and a nephew, it couldn’t be.

H: So where was your dad born?

F: He was a Victorian.

H: Victorian?
F: Framlingham mission.

H: Ok, that’s Geoff Clark and them. Framlingham...that’s Archie Roach as well.

F: He’s a cousin of ours, Archie. [I hope it’s cooked properly, look at that not a bit of fucken brown on it! No I like a bit of brown on it pop, its raw. (fish and salad)] He[grandfather Fred Ross] would have done all the talkin to Gary like I said. Only ...used to come out of his mouth to us. I’m sure he said his father was Charles Ross. Cause I was sitting under the tree and i thought he was going to say Fred Ross but he didn’t and he said I want you to remember that.

H: Charles Ross?

F: Yes, there is a Charles Ross there. Unless they had, you see oyster Maggie may not have belonged to them...them 4 or 5, they might have had Fanny Singh too cause they look too much alike. Not unless that old fella was around the ridges a lot. But that’s all grandfather would say, he wouldn’t say or even mention Uncle Albert and Aunty Konomie when he spoke to us...cause they had to say it themselves. That’s how they thought about things.

H: Yes.

F: They stuck to themselves, they never went anywhere bub. They never went to others places, they stayed with one another. And they were always with another and other parts of the family. I asked Aunty Konomie once, I said Aunty Konomie will you tell me some of the language and she said yes but you can’t tell any white people...and I should have recorded it. She was talking to me.

H: That’s what happened to David Unaipon

F: Who?

H: David Unaipon- central Australia in the 50’s and he wrote books about his people and customs and everything. White fella from England took it and put his name on it and published it and made a lot of money out of it. That’s why...he’s on the 50 dollar note. I guess that’s why some people say” don’t tell them white fellas anything) They take, they use it, they claim it.

F: They do bub.

H: That’s why we have ethics now or why Aunty Konomie kept it to ourselves..

F: They never trusted white fulla’s ... never ever. Always said he was friends with them and that but he said don’t trust ‘em. And he was told there was a will from his father...and he told the bullyman and he said it had nothing to do with him. And he went back twice, I remember that years ago. He said I would if I were you mister Ross cause you will benefit. We’ve try to look for that will now but we can’t find it, must have been looking up the wrong name....see Robert Ross when I was looking for Charles Ross...and I’m thinking and thinking and I’m sure grandfather said Charles. Its Charles or Robert but I’m going towards Charles now.
H: It’s hard to know because a lot of people have nick names as well.

F: But he remembered walking on the beach with his father.

H: On Keppel?

F: Yes, he would take him for walks. When they knew that that Dr. Roth was going over there they had to run and hide…’cause he’d take ‘em. And him and Meston were always fighting over us. But I didn’t know who he was talking about until I started looking at books and stuff and I’d see their names. Oh, and I’d say these are the fulla’s grandfather used to talk about. We weren’t interested that much because it’s just…..

H: Yes, he was a biologist and a surgeon as well Roth.

F: Yes

H: And all he wanted was our people’s bones.

F: He said there were a fair fulla there with blond hair and blue eyes. I think he’s either Robert Ross or someone else’s son. That was grandfather, he was a fair fulla and he used to run and hide from old Roth because he would come over. I think that’s where old nana Mariah, that’s Beatrice Fitzgerald’s grandmother, she was blood relation to grandfather and she said sister, that was her brother, Beaty said but nan said she was Darambal. I said , yeh they said Darambal .

H: And what was her name?

F: Mariah, poor old thing she just died too, she was the only one her nana grew her up, and her grandson there. And that Cornelia, there’s her great grandmother there in that picture with old darumbullow …nursing that baby. The book with Bob Muir, that’s his old Aunty, what’s her name?

H: Annie Smith

F: Annie father was Lucas. It’s all about their ways I remember. They never take a pregnant woman out in a boat, it was bad luck but I don’t know if it came from the Keppels or from …..

H: Batjala. There’s alot of things like that, when people say mum didn’t say much and dad didn’t say much but then they say

F: Things come back after a while and you try to remember it what they say to you.

H: Yes , and it might just be while you’re fishing or fixing something, standing /sitting. They say don’t do that. Don’t step over that persons legs.

F: Oh yeh, never allowed to step over someone’s legs…it was a big no-no. That was really disrespectful, stepping over people. Never butt into their conversations. Grandfather wouldn’t take notice of you, you’d be saying grandfather, he’d just ignore us and say don’t you ever come
over and sing out and interrupt while I’m talking. Unless some one was hurt, then he’d turn around. And to teach us to swim he would just throw us in the channel.

H: Like pushing the baby bird out of the nest.

F: Yes, sink or swim that’s how he done it. See and in that picture, I think I gave it to Vanessa, she had a good look with that magnifying glass at the net. With old Uncle Albert there sewing the net.

H: You said you had a picture here.

F: No, I can’t find it. It’s here but I hide them and can’t find it. I even had that big pearl thing.

H: I need to get a copy of those things because they are so precious.

F: Yes, he was really young Uncle Albert. It would remind you of Uncle Alby. And that what made me pull up at that photo it reminded me of Joe. Standing real straight and I’d say go back with that net and she went back and I thought it was Joe Joe...then I saw that pipe in the mouth. It’s Uncle Albert with grandfather next to him. And I think there were Uncle Gordon and then Uncle Ikey and Uncle Alby was standing just a kid and Aunty Joyce was sitting in nana’s lap. That picture would have to be well over 80 years old.[1930]

H: Need to copy them.

F: Yes, I gave one to Vanessa. And that was the only black photo, besides traditional owners. But it was the only black photo of people related to us ... They were always doing the nets.

H: It’d be good to see that picture actually.

F: Yes, well ask Vanessa... she’ll have a copy.

H: Last time I saw her she said get that picture off Aunty Frances.

F: No I gave one to her...oh, which one?

H: The one with the nets.

F: Yeh, no I gave it to her.

H: Have you seen this map here. This is that book called my island in the sun, Allan Morris. It has a map of Keppel there. See this little legend down the bottom it has crosses, the crosses he says are where all the burial grounds are on Keppel. Here’s one where the resort is and up around towards near Monkey Point. Leeks beach etc.

F: Yes, not that windy see.

H: And a lower flatter area for tree butt graves I’m thinking, this is fisherman’s beach.
F: I don’t think you’ll find them over here, ’cause that is where they buried Lucas and the storm came, uncovered it, got his coffin out and spat it into the ocean.

H: This book is not too bad but a lot of things you don’t know how accurate they are because some things don’t make sense because they contradict each other. Some bits must be fairly accurate because his father was there with the old Keppel Islanders from a very young age.

F: Take notice of the ..where’s this one....

H: I thought these burial sites might be important...

F: They are.

H: I was thinking if he wants to get this golf course going, that might be good information.

F: What’s up here is a women’s area [low area behind runway], cause when Gwenny said she walked out there, peace came over her. She said she has never felt that in my life.

H: Yeh. I think she said she went with Lindy Mallan, and Lindy said walk over this way. Aunty walked that way and when she got there she knew this was some special place. She had that feeling.

F: Yes.

F: This bastard here (Morris book), they’re trying to tell us.... Every part of that island belonged to the Keppel islanders.... and all of Australia belonged to Aboriginal people. So I wonder why they left some special areas alone....you know like, what do they call it now, um, that leasehold land there. You wonder why they left it because they took everything else.

H: I think that some of that leasehold land is crown land.

F: Yes and that’s what we got.

H: I think it’s too hard to get over there, as in if it was on the mainland they would develop it and put houses on it. When it’s on the island its harder to get water, power,

F: When they get an island , it’s worth more than the mainland.

H:oh, yeh.

F: You know , cause people want to get away. I’ve know this because George Villaflor (lawyer) says we are the only ones that he knows of, the only aboriginal group that’s got an entire island. You see they can take that from us too, as quick as look at us... because they took that Mt. Walker back from the Dharumbal. They gave it to them, then too many white people puttin’ up a protest, a stink so the government took it back. Then they only gave it back to aboriginals to look after.
H: That’s right they can make it into a national park then say you can have a role in management.

F: I don’t think I would have been so calm as that woman.

H: It’s a way of shutting people up.

F: So I hope with us doing all this, the protest, they don’t step in and take ours back.

H: Can you see that picture there, you notice when you look real close, you’ll notice the painting on those fellas. Vertical stripes up here.

F: Yeh.

H: And down the arms.

F: the paint..I think that’s my grandfather there

H: I need to get the original photos, there a bit clearer. That’s just a picture of a picture. One thing I did work out and I haven’t told anyone yet actually. You can see one of those fellas standing there like that, the lines like that going up their arms... its just like the humpback whale. It come s up with those lines, its exactly like the same.

F: Yes, yes.

H: That is our totem and the exact pattern on the humpback whale they had painted on.

F: I remember them saying , there’s mogga mogga. I said who’s mogga mogga...your grandfather. They said Uncle Abert is Munkurran. They said it meant tide(?) All them fullas had names connected to country spiritually. Poor old fellas, they were good to grow up with, completely different than today. They never talked about anyone. Not at all. If they didn’t like what you said they would either hit you in the head or walk away and never speak to you again.

H: They loved their fish.

F: All fishy fullas.

H: What if some of that’s from the mission or Keppel isles.

F: That’s it, cause that was their way. They were very strict, strict ways. Old Aunty Konomie used to go out, ay and if their dog had pups, any female one, bang in the head... want a taste of this bub...some fish.

H: Thanks

F: Is that them photos you had up there.

H: Yeh, same ones.
F: Men’s business and women’s business was very strict. They’d kill ya.

H: I think I showed you these...Uncle Luke there and Aunty Heather.

F: Who?

H: Luke Stanley

F: Is he still alive?

H: No, he passed on. I didn’t know him that well but he’s part of the Singleton clan up there.

F: Vanessa was asking for money for travel from the TUMRA. I said not for travel. (unrelated discussion)

H: Have you seen this picture of Aunty Ethel, Aunty Heather. They are funny things these King plates. What do you think about them?

F: We never had plates...we never had Kings and queens in our society. The elders were the ones, period, because say one of those elders son’s done something really wrong and had to die, he would die. You broke a strict rule, no favouritism or nothing, you’re gone.

H: Some people like the idea of king plates but its like the kings and queens of England...medals and accolades...some people hate them. Did I tell you I found another one from Jimmy, ‘Jimmy of Conomie’, at the Queensland museum. Six months ago I found it and took a picture of it. I sent a copy to Chris Doherty. It’s a real one.

F: Old people. Gary would be the one they told. He’s a fella.

H: I’ll give him a ring and see if I can talk to him.

F: And I said that to Glenice. I never heard my grandfather call Uncle Albert..’Uncle’. When he was charged up...oh may as well talk to the wall, I seen him twice and they would all panic. He’d walk along that veranda pissed up, Georgy would go out and grab him and he would say I’m a Dharumbal, that’s what they always said. But in another day, I said grandfather, old Uncle aAlbert said you were a Woppaburra and he buste out laughin and said that means a possum, ‘cause that’s what they called the ring-tailed possum.

H: That’s the other thing, it was on the Woppaburra Haven sign at Keppel, always had the little possum.

F: Aunty Konomie could speak the language and speak Butchella too.

H: I always wondered because most of the Dharumbal language they got from Aunty Konomie.

F: They were having a Dharumbal language course up there in Rocky when I was there.

H: I’m just wondering if that was Dharumbal or Woppaburra or if it’s the same.
F: When I listened to this woman give a welcome in the Dharumbal language, it sounded
different to grandfather and them, but he only told Gary those things you know...cause they
were strict with their law. They seemed to do a lot of men's business because woman weren't
around really...and they were split up.

H: In Sydney the museum, looking at a lot of those artefacts, you don’t know if they are only
made by women or men, like the nets and that, and were dilly bags for women only.

F: Mmm. Grandfather, Uncle Albert, Uncle Alby and Uncle Freddy would stand there all bloody
day, and they would start with a piece of twine and tie it. That’s how they start. Before you
know it the net would be over double from the front of the yard to the back. And they had to
know where to put the sinkers and the corks. And I’m sure they did the double net. And I asked
Aunty Joycey and she said tar.

H: Tar the joints?

F: No the whole nets.

H: To make it water proof?

F: Soon as Gary could get the pitch he would tar the net.

H: I haven’t heard that before.

F: They were the loveliest fella’s too. Old Uncle Albert and Aunty Bessie [nee Blair] had the most
wonderful natures. I think when poor old Aunty Bessie died he walked from Urangan up to
Pt.Vernon every Sunday and no-one knew. I think Aunty Lulu and Uncle Gordon seen him up
there and brought him home to Edwin Street. Then they’d pick him up every Sunday, Uncle
Gordon, and take him to the grave. (not audible) put this in a frame

H: The ones in the bottom right in the Kimberley's they call them Gjorn gjorn figures. Those long
stick men.

F: I had a book here, I don’t know what I done with it. It was about the Ross’s. The thought of
grandfather’s father being involved in all the killings, that’s why grandfather wanted nothing to
do with them, no will, no nothing. It must be all Yeppoon that old Bjelke Peterson gave to the
Japs. Cause they give it away when no-one claims it within so many years.

H: The resort, Iwasaki resort.

F: I was telling Abby that and he said oh, right sayanara but leave ya geishas. So weren’t allowed
round them when they talked, grandfather and Uncle Albert. They get together and talk, and no
matter what you would say he would go one better. You’d say I was 5/8 and he would say I’m
5/9. They look at ‘Im like that I reckon. I got an old photo of him as well. I don’t know where it is
now but I’m sure it was done Aunty Joyces. When the ration days, Uncle Albert was at the back
and he was a big wild fulla as well.
H: I'll have get a scanner for these pictures.

F: Yes, you wouldn’t beat ‘em about the sea. Not about the movement of the ocean, nothing. Lived down here all them years. Couldn’t beat ‘em. Read the weather everything, what it was going to be like. They never spoke much to other people about it.

H: Some of those old Roth document and Meston would talk about how they could locate a school of fish when the white fella’s couldn’t get a scale.

F: I remember going out here with Uncle Alby, I don’t know if Vanessa was there, there was about three of us and they would row everywhere, all the way to Fraser Island, round the islands, that’s why they had the big arms. All these other white fisherman were over there in a boat, he was fishing and he was catching tailor but he’d hold them at the side of the boat, cause they’d look over to the boat to see what Uncle Albert would pull in. He hold it until they weren’t looking and then quickly pull it in. We got about 8 tailor and he said let them see the last one. He they see it they start their motors and come over next to us.

H: They know what they were looking for.

F: And we were near round island and it was that foggy you couldn’t see the mainland. And they would say which way is the mainland? They’d say they must belong to the Owen’s they know, but we would just look at the island and know, a tree or shape of the island. You want me to sign this thing.

H: Yes that ethics. Informed consent.

END
Interview transcript

Participant: Christine Doherty

Date: 11th April, 2013

Venue: Mercure Hotel, George Street, Brisbane.

Initial discussion concerning explanation of study and informed consent

H: What struck me is the connection to country and where it comes from?

C: The heart

H: We’ll start with firstly with the family context, who your mum is and dad is and how you fit in to the Woppaburra.

C: My name is Chrissy Doherty and I have my connection to Woppaburra through my great grandmother Konomie Ross and um that’s my mother’s way...and I have Batjala connection as well because my nana Konmie when they were removed from the Keppel Islands in 1902, well they were sent, well they ended up on Bogimbah mission on Fraser Island. I’ve retraced their steps, I’ve actually went there....and my nanna Konnie married a Batjala man, poppy Charles Richards...and um my darling father Phil Hansen, my grandfather was Danish, that’s where Hansen came from, and he married an Indigenous woman nana Law from Cherbourg. Nana Mabel Law who was the youngest daughter of George Law and that’s very interesting because when nana married grand dad Hansen, his own Danish family disowned him because back in that era it wasn’t the done thing to marry an Aboriginal woman...but he stayed true to her and they had eight children and my father was one of the children and um I guess my heart belongs to the Keppels. Cause my father doesn’t want me to do any of the history from his family ‘cause he has a lot of painful memories there so I have respected my father’s wishes but um everything I know about the Woppaburra, the Keppel Islands is through listening to my mother Susie Hansen and Aunty Ethel, nana Konomie’s eldest daughter, listening to her stories all my life, I just couldn’t get enough, um I have a natural hunger for knowledge, any type of knowledge, I love history. Not only my own but I love helping people trace their own history, it just brings so much reward you know, um....

H: And when you say Woppaburra, do you identify as Woppaburra, Konomie or both?

C: What I, what I ....Aunty Ethel made me her next storyteller and she bestowed me with a traditional name as the story teller, because I guess they wait and see who has a hunger for that knowledge and I guess I was always the one in my family, me and my sisters um, nana Konomie um had ten children and alot of them didn’t show that interest but I’ve shown that interest since I was 16 years old. And I just had a hunger to know my roots and I loved listening to Aunty Ethel’s stories and I couldn’t get enough and I have a photographic memory, mum wrote everything down but I store it in my knowledge bank and I don’t need to read a piece of paper
because it’s now living in my heart. And that’s my connection to my country and um, I identify as my nana Konomie did. She always identified herself as Dharumbal.

H: Ok, so more by the language group.

C: Yes she identified herself of the language group and Dharumbal was the primary language group of central Queensland and um, and then she would always refer to herself as a Keppel Islander. I’ve got her language transcripts. She did it all and mum and I took over, and my sisters you know, um and from my traditional knowledge that was passed down from Aunty Ethel that we are from the Ganomi, spelt with a ‘g’ and I’m not getting too caught up with the spelling because ours is an oral history and everything that has been written today has been written by white explorers. So i’m not getting caught up on the spelling.

H: I think the g and k’s are interchangeable anyway. Like Kubbi Kubbi, gubbi gubbi, goorie, koorie.

C: It’s the white man’s law, interpretation. You know Tindale, Roth, Meston they wrote down things how they sounded and a Swiss linguist interviewed nana Konomie.

H: Nils Holmer.

C: Yes, Nils Holmer, and so I don’t get caught up on spelling but my Aunty Ethel always corrected me. If we said something and it wasn’t the right pronunciation she would correct me, like I used to call old Ulowa, Ulowa and she would say no Christine its Ulowa so I loved that you know...but she always said her mother nana Konomie was named after her clan and her clan were the Gonomie of North Keppel. We were North Keppel Islanders and um we had the clan on Great Keppel but we were all Woppaburras.

H: Okay

C: Cause in any tribal lands you have clan groups of a specific area.

H: Family groups.

C: Family groups, but to me they were are Keppel Islanders.

H: I thought the south island was Woppaburra people and the North Island were Konomie people and then there was a sort of merger of everyone?

C: I think that’s just the name of the clans. Yes, there’s a lot of mystery and I think there’s a lot of things we are yet to learn, you know Sonny, and I think life is that. Aunty Ethel used to say you will learn something every day. And she said to me...even when she said that she was in her eighties and I’ve found those incidents in life where somebody said something to me and then I thought that’s what Aunty Ethel said you learn something every day. But I think there’s still a lot of mystery around that Sonny, but Mike Rowlands has written a lot of reports and I think it confirms some of the things that they were all Keppel Islanders. You know there is mystery
about where they originated from, you know but I can only go back tom my nana Konomie’s mother was Maggie (oyster Maggie) and nana Maggies brother was James (Jimmy)... and you have just recently found his King plate, it was unbelievable...I was crying.

H: Leonie Coghill said we have a few things up here, just opened the draw and out of nowhere it was just there.

C: Yes, adn you know why, alot of our research has been on Woppaburra with ‘w’ and ‘K’ for Konomie but never ‘C’ Conomie.

H: That’s right.

C: I was just astounded when you found that Sonny, because

H: I didn’t think you believed me when you said ‘send me a picture’...

C: Yes (laugh) I had to see the picture, and there larger than life, all my, I heard Aunty Ethel’s stories all my life about King James. About Uncle James being a king. You know maybe back in those days, they were law men but she always said there was a special hierarchy and that’s who she was referring to...and when you showed me that I cried because all her stories just hit me, because she said there was a breast plate. She said he wore a special sash but Lucas’s took all his things and we never saw it again , and when you showed that picture it just blew my mind because it just brought all Aunty Ethel’s stories together, it just fused it you know.

H:What do you think of when you see one of those king plates from Paddy & Ulowa?

C: To me those breast plates were like a tag for the...that was introduced by the white man because they could like tag...they needed to see the hierarchy

H: Like kings and queens of England or something.

C: Yes, like in our tribal society they needed to see who the head men were, and old Ulowa and his son as we all know was given the plates for saving the lives of some early Eurpoeans, and but then our great Uncle James, it’s got on his breast plate King...so I think it was the white man’s way of putting a tag so they knew where the hierarchy was. Do you feel that?

H: Yes, and some people say I don’t want to know about those King plates they’re a white fella thing but others say it’s part of our history and its some status.

C: Thats right its a tag of status of tribal society and you see it right across Australia.

11.40

H: Whats your happiest memory of the islands?
C: Oh, gee I have many but I think the one that stands out and I still cry today is the handover ceremony. Seeing all our young people dance for the first time in 110 years since our ancestors were removed. That was just special. There has been many special moments, things we’ve done, I mean we’ve had the repatriations, Aunty Ethel was involved in, because she was alive then and Aunty Heather, in the repatriation of our ancestors remains. I wasn’t there then but I honour that moment but the moments that are precious to me are the ones I saw visually and seeing our young people up there dancing that whole crowd of 300, there wasn’t a dry eye anywhere, that was a precious moment.

H: What is it about the dancing, what does the dancing mean?

C: The dancing is about culture, it is about...when our old people were removed culture was lost for a long time through our generations, and to me it was the revival the actual revival of our old peoples customs... and to see them all painted up in our ceremonial colours, red and white. I still get teary about it.

H: Have a look at a few of these photos.

C: That’s beautiful. Rosie & Debbie

H: I’m just looking at the colours.

C: The red and white.

H: Yeh.

C: That’s a beautiful one of Aunty Gwen. What you can’t see in these photos is, it’s another precious photo, it’s not on country but at the museum she talked about all these artefacts, you can’t it but she’s crying, because it brought her so much joy, because shes...its like those ...shes listened to her mother, I’ve listened to her and the moment you cry is when you touch something you’ve heard your ancestor talk about...like when you found the breast plate of James. For her, she heard about Ulowa from her mother all her life and then for her to touch those artefacts was a moment of...she was crying and when ..that’s why it was such a special moment too. But yeh, Mike Rowland was doing a talk that day and he asked me if we could get some of the Woppaburras in, cause Aunty kept asking me about the artefacts, so I talked to Mike Rowland and he thought it was a great idea to bring them in while he’s doing a talk about the Woppaburra, that last paper, Myths and Massacres or something. And we got a cab home and she cried all the way (voice quivering) and that’s a treasure.

H: That’s really powerful, um, I guess that’s similar to when you were at the Australian museum and seeing those artefacts.

C: Yes, you hear about them all your life and to actually touch the artefact that you’ve heard about is awesome. Poor Aunty bless her, poor Aunty.
H: What’s it feel like, because I remember they said this is the oyster shuckker from oyster Maggie. What’s it feel like when you actually put that in your hand because I just noticed that, like you say, soon as you touch an artefact, people just broke down.

C: Because you are just living those stories your old people have told you. And the first thing I thought, I thought to myself, I’d love to think that my great great granny Maggie, oyster Maggie may have held this because the Europeans gave her that name because she could open oysters so fast, and that’s the first thing I thought. I’d love to think she might have used this and I was proud that I was holding the oyster picker and our great nana oyster Maggie thats why she was given that name. So it’s connecting that traditional knowledge with the artefact you are holding. Oh my god it just brings it all together, you know...its highly emotional Sonny.

H: It is! I also think about when I was in the Kimberley’s with my young fella, he was probably 13 and this guy Samson from the Worrowa people over there and they have the Wunjina spirits and he said oh, you know, you’re a good young bloke and I’d like to adopt you into my family clan. And part of that ceremony was using his sweat putting it onto my son and accepting him into the clan.

C: beautiful.

H: So the sweat is the essence of who they are in their identity. When I see that, I think of the oyster shucker and that would have the sweat and the DNA of our people. It contains the spirit of our people.

C: Absolutely.

H: So that when you hold it.....,

C: you are connecting with them, to me it’s on a spiritual level that’s hard to explain and its exactly what you are saying, um that sense of holding something your old people made , its out of this world.

H: They used it and survived with it.

C: You know, we are really lucky to have all that, the artefacts but we are lucky too...it’s very hard for many descendants of today to find photographs of their ancestors going back that far and we have the artefacts that are in the photos with them. You know it’s pretty special.

H: And the other thing that really struck me is when I looked at the photos and artefacts ...the actual necklaces were

C: We touched them!, we touched them!, we connected with our old people spiritually.

H: Yes and I’ve also noticed they were made from the Nautilus shell.
C: Yes thats right.
H: Which I didn’t know, I thought they were just an oyster.

C: No, no, a nautilus. Well you know what, to connect that story, nana Konomie’s third eldest child was Konodie Jesse. That was our grandmother and the name she was given was Dulling and Dulling means Nautilus shell. And that name was given to Linda by mum and so she carries the name of Dulling and it means pearl shell. And I was given the name Dullata and Sharry has Degulling, yeh, but we were given the names...only nana Konomie and poppy Richards, um, three eldest had traditional names Aunty Ethel was Bittabung, Uncle Cyrell was Baboot (morning dawn) and Uncle Charlie was Degulling, um, Uncle Franky had a traditional name but it slips my mind. But the five eldest had traditional names. And you know we know the traditional meanings.

H: How important are traditional names to us.

C: I think it’s so important because for Indigenous people today we live in two worlds and we are all getting caught up in the mainstream world. I see a lot of, um, Indigenous kids, I call lost. They are caught in between our beautiful world of culture, custom and tradition and the mainstream world. It’s like they are caught in the middle but to me, those traditional names place me and our connection to our country in my heart. It connects us all the time and I think that’s just part of our culture it keeps us linked, Sonny, you know.

H: And what about names of country.

C: Yes, all that I hope one day when our old people were removed in 1902 last 17 that was happening across Australia, you know the white Australia policy and they were put into the Aboriginal missions that were run by church groups and that’s where I think the second genocide happened...the first genocide was removal from country and the second genocide was loss of culture and language because they weren’t allowed to use either.

H: I was even thinking about all my Uncles you know, Gordon, George after the kings and princes of England. So we’ve gone from the traditional names into this...

C: Yes, mainstream.

H: And now people are going back and reclaiming names.

C: Reconnecting and I love that because you’re embracing all of our future generations with those traditional names, it keeps them connected to their tribal country and um their history. Yeh, um, I used to get really upset with um the church groups because that’s when our culture was not allowed, they were, what’s the word mainstreamed but you know, we thank god we still have our old people from the Keppel Islanders, the Woppaburra. We’re very lucky.

H: When you go back to country and you stay on country, what’s the feeling of staying on country?
C: I’ll tell you what I love, what I love...walking on the beach, getting off the ferry, walking and stepping into the ocean and then walking onto the beach with no shoes and feeling the sand underneath my feet, because I know that’s where my old people walked...so every time I hit the islands, no shoes, I want to feel that sand under my feet like the old people cause they...to me their essence is in every grain of sand on those islands. That’s the first thing I feel.

H: I notice when Uncle Vince he usually turns up and announces that he’s here...and I’m thinking they already know we are here.

C: (laugh) yes they do Sonny.

H: I remember laying there at night, I was laying there in the cabin at night and he couldn’t sleep and he yells out “old people just let me sleep”. He said he was tossing and turning and then he could sleep.

C: Yes

H: And the same thing when he leaves, thank you for having me here.

C: Yes, and Uncle Mackie had that same experience on Great Keppel at the hand over. He was having restless, restless sleeps and he too felt that he had to tell the old people please let me sleep. And the other side of it sonny is the sadness when we go to the islands and how old people were treated like animals. I think some of our old peoples spirits need releasing because while I’m wrapped to be on country I know the way our old people were treated was barbaric, the drowning cave... I been on both islands North Keppel and Great Keppel and I’ve had dreams of crying in my head and it’s ‘woken me up ...and my sister Sharon has inherited what they call a medium of today but she speaks to nana Konomie, she speaks to our old people and she has visions. I think nana is trying to tell her that our islands need cleansing, our old peoples spirits need to be released, you know because I feel like in the drowning cave I feel like their spirits are all trapped in there because they were murdered. You know, and it’s something...my sister has been telling me this for years that before anything can happen before any good can come it needs cleansing, spiritual cleansing and we really believe that Sonny. And the day of the handover, the thing that really blew me away, I don’t know of anyone else noticed but we had all these birds and little animals coming in and I thought oh my god that’s the old people and Vincent saw, Vincent’s nephews saw an old fulla sitting there, I knew our old people were there. You could feel them you know.

H: And in that book Morris, he says that was a burial area around there...part of where that resort is.

C: Because when they first did that Sonny, when they first dug that up for development they did find our old peoples remains. And um, there’s a lot of stories around it. I’ve heard a few versions around it...that they just reburied them, but you know from what Aunty Ethel said that was a primary old camp area there at fisherman’s beach as was Wreck beach.
H: And he does say from his side Morris that when the old huts were there they had things falling off shelves and those sorts of things would happen quite often, and they were quite aware that that place had spirits.

C: And not only that, I spoken to a lot of lovely old mainstream people up there in Rockhampton and some of the stories they have told me where their ancestors have brought things back from the islands and they’ve got bad luck to the extent that some one has passed away or been hurt bad and even back way back then they knew what the taboo was if they took stuff from the island. You know that’s why I like talking to old people from pioneering families in Rocky too, because the stories they’ve got from their ancestors, you know its amazing.

H: If there’s one person you identify as your, they call it apical ancestor, the main one, doesn’t have to be the oldest but the main one that connects with the islands?

C: Well being a female I would go back through my matrilineal lineage and it would have to be oyster Maggie, but then I’d also connect to her brother James, Jimmy but Sonny I’ve taken my research far and wide for our old people, I know where they are buried. They’re buried at the old Rockhampton cemetery, in the Pagan section and I think one day we’ve all got to approach the Rockhampton Council that there’s Dharumbal and South ea islander people all thrown in to the Pagan section, you know, I don’t know if we would ever be able to find them because I went to the library and they told me that it would be very hard because there are no markers but I said that’s not going to stop us we’ve got to find them you know. But I needed to find my old people because of the way they were treated and that gave me a sense of feeling so good to find my family and where they are and like you say we might have to have them repatriated back to our country.

H: There’s always been a strong feeling towards burials and that sort of thing in Aboriginal society and for us it’s been similar um so when we repatriate those people, what are your feelings on that?

C: Well I get very angry because European societies have cemeteries, they have family plots where they can go and visit their loved ones and pay respect you know put flowers there, but for Aboriginal people it’s been very painful, because our ancestors were taken, our caves and our tree butts were our sacred areas for burial but early pioneers just desecrated them, you wouldn’t go to a cemetery and do that. But and then they took their remains in order for “scientific research”. So I fell our old people have been, were lost all that time. Lost souls, and even though I couldn’t be there, I was so happy all my aunties could be there and all the families took our old people home because they were lost. You know, what happened to them was unforgiveable, Roth desecrated all of our places of sacredness, like cemeteries you know, but it happened all across the world and I acknowledge that. ..but you know we’re talking about our own people Sonny, and um I was just so happy their souls weren’t lost anymore and they were home on country. And um, a few years ago I was given the greatest honour with Batjala elders nominating me to go to Vienna to bring back two of our ancestors remains where those early
Europeans came over here and desecrated grave sites and took them, this one our ancestors remains have now been in that Viennese science centre for over 120 years. And, um, I accompanied by other traditional owner group representatives because there was a mass return of ancestors and um I’m really glad that’s happening, it’s been going on for a long time. And you know we have some great Indigenous people here fighting for repatriation of remains, you wouldn’t believe how many countries have our people’s remains.... Poland, America, France, we’ve got a Woppaburra ancestor in the natural museum London. So, there’s a lot of lost souls out there that have to come home to country. And I think repatriations are essential for healing.

H: Are there other sites on the island that you identify as being absolutely important for us? I mean there’s the burial sites and the drowning cave.

C: Well, Maisie Bay to me is outstanding because it’s the oldest site Mike Rowlands has dated. The evidence, the physical evidence that Mike Rowlands dated is 4000 years old. On the Queensland coast there’s not quite anything like that so I feel proud that we’ve got the...I mean we’ve got these wonderful photos, we’ve got all these artefacts but we’ve got the physical evidence too of their occupation...thats ...we are very lucky, we really are. But thats only because we’ve had generations of Woppaburra passing down that knowledge 34:35

Maybe not just the knowledge but the ability to be inspired by our ancestors hardships and then the desire to find out?

H: You know before you were talking about Dales work, talking about trade routes and stories that go down trade routes and artefacts and things back and forth. We were fairly isolated in that sense.

C: Absolutely.

H: So, what does that mean for us in terms of our artefacts and things, how similar are they going to be to others.

C; Well, that’s very interesting because I now a lot of our artefacts are not found anywhere else. Some are similar to other island groups, coastal groups but they are very unique and our ancestors had very genetic features too, you know that’s why I know that our people are very special. And that’s why Mike Rowland has spent all these years because he knows our old people have a link there somewhere to somewhere else that could be important to Australia. That’s make me feel proud Sonny, and I’m sure it does you too love. There’s another special place on North Keppel. North Keppel will always be my motherland, I love Keppel, I love Woppa but North Keppel is where, its our motherland, that’s where our family were create... thats were we were born. Thats where we come from. I love great Keppel but North Keppel is very very special.

H: I remember years ago mum saying to me, because she used to talk with Aunty Konomie, and she said yeh, she was born on Considine Beach there...and when I was there I thought there’s
only one creek area and there are pools of fresh water, it’s probably a woman’s birthing area so I better stay away from there.

C: Yes, Aunty Ethel spoke about that.

H: I thought I won’t go near there but knowing that, what do those areas mean to you as women without going too deep.

C: Well the birthing areas are sacred areas that only women should go to. But then ...you know Aunty Ethel spoke about Considine, that’s you know, there are no remnants of the old camp on Considine. Especially Considine, there was a lot of erosion and back in those times things would have been a lot different environmentally as well. And um, I think, if we love our culture and we respect our culture we got to keep mans areas sacred and men’s areas sacred.

H: I guess the thing I’m leading onto is that they had ceremony years ago.

C: Of course they did.

H: And just recently you were talking about maintaining ceremony on country, with I think your nephew was getting married I think. That’s another link ceremony back on country.

C: Absolutely, because if we don’t practice the custom we will lose it. And Sonny everything I do is about culture living, if we don’t talk about it they will never know, I want to teach all mine what Aunty Ethel taught me, because I promised Aunty Ethel I would carry on passing down her stories.

H: I always thought Aunty Ethel had a dilemma because she was so Christian. And she had this doctrine of Christianity but she had her culture and she was caught in between.

C: She was, she was, there was many times when mum or I would go down and visit her and something she wouldn’t talk about, the next time...the thing with my great Aunty is that you would leave something with her. If you talked about something you would leave that with her. Don’t expect an answer straight away, ‘cause she would tell us to come back. And blow me down if there were things mum and I would ask her and she was uncomfortable talking about that at that time but we would go back next time or the time after that and she would talk about it. You know I don’t think we can rush things, some people just want answers like that. But you got to respect your old people too and Aunty Ethel she wouldn’t be pushed either, if she wasn’t ready to talk about it there and then you got to respect that. But even though it was disappointing not to know something about our history I knew I would be told sooner or later. And it did and she did have that constant battle between Christianity and culture.

40:00
H: And sometimes I think maybe there’s another side to it. She is looking at you and thinking you are not ready for it yet. Give it a couple of weeks because you’ll be thinking about it and be digesting it.

C: Maybe it was more of a lesson for me. Absolutely. She was a smart old woman..poor old Aunty Ethel. But there’s also that beautiful all my life I’ve heard the story of my nana Konomie being carried up to the ceremonial ground for North Keppel there. And it’s a beautiful story there. She was about 5 or 6 and they thought she was dying so they whaling and mourning for her and they started the ceremony of taking her up to the ceremonial ground up there, you can’t see it now its covered. I tried to find it last time. I saw it many years ago with Bob Muir and I asked him to take me up there because I wanted to connect my nan’s story. I want to stand in the stone arrangement, I want to stand in the ceremonial ground. And Sonny it was awesome, I was there with my son Regan, and have you ever seen it.

H: I looked for it last time

C: It’s covered by undergrowth.

H: You see the goats pretty much ate the place bear and you could see better but now goats have been removed its back to how it was before.

C: And Sonny it was huge. It was from that door to here (5meters). It was three, a big one in the middle then two and I’m standing in it and I’ve got goose bumps cause I’m thinking I’ve listened to this story all my life about my great grandmother being brought up here because they thought she was dying and they were whaling her and you know but she must have been, as my Aunty Ethel tells me, she must have had a fever. And they thought she was dying and she woke up real indignant “what are you doing, I’m not dying” I not dead I’m here, but at that time they didn’t know fever and all that but I to stand in that ceremonial ground was amazing. That’s another things you asked me before about special moments, that was one of them. But what upset me about that is that I had to plead with Bob to take me up there. Um, and ...

H: I think there are some people who think they are the keeper of knowledge and they don’t want to tell anyone.

C: Yes there are but, even if I don’t go back there again and never find it again I had that one outstanding moment where my nana was laid, my great grandmother, we didn’t take pictures that day because I just didn’t think it was the right thing to do.

H: I’d love to know exactly where that is you know, I’ve done a lot of...

C: Its been GPS’ed and you know who’s got it? Bob Muir he knows but he won’t share.

H: I thought it might have been Luke Godwin DEH.
C: It might be some parks and wildlife people and Luke Godwin he’s been over there too. But trying to get information out of people like that it’s like you’re talking alien to them. They don’t want to share. Maybe we have to approach Luke again.

H: We should do that because I think that’s important

C: Sonny, I want all of young people to stand in that and feel what I felt. Like from my feet up I was just goose bumps... it’s was incredible you know. Just to ...and that was the only one that was left there were more but with development over the islands over the course of the last hundred years you know, I know of a lot of spots that Aunty Ethel spoke about but they’re all probably gone because of development of our islands and that remains protected while nobody knows where it is but that’s what I worry about when I worked for the environmental protection agency, we had a dilemma with rock art and ceremonial grounds through out all the national parks. If you bring attention grounds to it by trying to protect it you and you actually bringing people ...vandals. Sometimes things are best hidden from vandals because some of those vandals used to use spray paint on that beautiful rock art.

H: Yeh,

C: Oh, it s a tragedy

H: Yes, it is a tragedy. Are there any other stories that you remember from Aunty Ethel or... see I was really too young to know Aunty Konomie...

C: oh... I was about 13 when nana Konomie died I think.

H: Was that 1973 or something.

C: Yeh, cause I remember we used to go over nana Konomie and poppy Richards they lived in an old Aboriginal camp at Moorooka before they had housing commission houses for the poor Aboriginal people in Brisbane. Brisbane Blacks do you remember that book? A lot of good history there about what happened but I’ve got photos of my old nana and granddads tin shack in that old Aboriginal camp at Moorooka- Salisbury. And that’s fringe dwellers again.. put them all out on the fringe and then Sonny they had old potato sacks for warmth, newspaper on the floor but lucky my great grandfather poppy Richards was a wonderful gardener. Where ever they lived poppy had a vegetable garden, so they never went without. Mightn’t have meat but they always had vegetables... then they had the old housing commission home out there in Wittingham Street at Acacia Ridge. And I remember going over to nana and pops place and they had these old bloody geese and ganders... this one old gander it just had it in for me whenever we went there with all my sisters and brothers it didn’t worry about them he waited for me to enter that fence then he would chase me (laugh)... Het Linda and we had that old mulberry tree and the house was always filled with all of us, children nana Konomie and family. I remember going into the bedroom and my nana Konomie wasn’t well. And she was always on her bed but my mother and her brother Uncle Ken they were the oldest grandchildren, they were raised by
nana, so we used to hear nana and whenever she and pop were growling or having an argument, nana Konomie would let fly with the Keppel language. Mum feels blessed that she grew up with the Keppel language and heard the language spoken...but only when she was wild with pop.

H: Its one of those things that anyone who swears in anger usually they do it in their native tongue. My dads Dutch so it would come out in dutch.

C: Yes...(laugh) its true.

H: I’ve never heard that before actually.

C: But you know there’s also the Ross connection, the Ross brothers. There’s a lot of sad things that happened to our people. You that happened to our old people, the murders, the rapes but thats something that’s not talked about and I don’t know how comfortable you’d feel me talking about that but as a woman and as a descendant that’s something that just tears me apart cause my own great grandmother was at the age of twelve...and Aunty Ethel that’s one thing she would never talk about because of her Christian beliefs, she would always find the good in people. That’s the Ross brothers , that’s where that name comes from.

H: I remember when Mike Rowlands uncovered those documents for the first time and he went and saw mum and said I’ve found these documents about your people and I think it was 1979. Basically it was like...I thought we were Batjala from Fraser but now we’re actually from Keppel, and we had some details about Aunty Konomie and I remember people saying don’t show this to Aunty Ethel. This is not nice..

C: She would never talk about it Sonny. She just could not deal with it and the word they used was ‘tampered with’ and that’s what nana Oyster Maggie died from Syphilis. I mean those things had to be talked about but in the right forum, you know, it tears your heart apart.

H; Yes it does , to see how people, I’ve got this othet friend , you probably remember Greg Douglas from the uni , he was Gumbaayirr, he just hated white people. When his mother was pregnant in the 60’s and she went to have him at the hospital she wasn’t allowed in and he was born under the back steps of the hospital.

C: Thats terrible.

H: So he has this burning hatred and he can’t get it out of his system.

C: Everyone says forgive but there’s some things for some people that are too hard. Thast very personal.

H: The other thing I find very funny but interesting is when I was a kid everybody always had ghost stories and there was always lots of superstition, don’t do this and that, don’t step over legs. I used to think are they just making this up.
C: (laugh) nana Jessie Swan, nana Konomie at Rocklea, we were never allowed to drag sticks behind us, nana used to say don’t drag them sticks or you’ll drag something home. ...and you know to this day if I see my grand daughter dragging sticks... ... Aunty Ethel always spoke about hair. Don’t leave hair laying around. Don’t leave your brushes, don’t leave any hair. And I believe of those things and then I’ve got dad’s side of the family Cherbourg ...everything ...the black dog every time you look back across the bridge it gets bigger and bigger, and the min min lights, you know its all from my dad. I’ve seen ghosts in Cherbourg, I have seen things that I still can’t explain today Sonny that terrified me.

H: That’s why at the Australian museum and I saw that hair, it just sent shivers through me. I thought that’s...part of our people and part of our ceremony.

C: ...it is Sonny because they used the hair for medicine. You know in all these photos here, the one common thing is that they all have short hair because they used hair to intertwine with other natural fibres but they used it for medicine. And they also used it to do stuff too like rubbing it in between...I cant say too much cause I’m really superstitious, Aunty Ethel always used to say never to leave our hair anywhere. I tell you Sonny you can go to mums place, you can go to our place and you’ll never see a hair on our floors or a brush.

H: But it is true because hair is used often in witchcraft type things, bits of clothing with sweat.

C: And it was used in healing ceremonies but it has been in Indigenous cultures that you can be sung if someone has your hair...and I believe that. I really do believe that...why would Aunty Ethel say that? - never leave you hair or brushes out.

Linda: We used to sit on nana’s lap and play with these two hairs on her face and she would say never pull them out because ones your mother and ones your Uncle.

C: True story. She would never pull them out. Nana Jessie, there was Aunty Ethel, Uncle Cyrell the our nana, nana Jessie. Her name was Nana Konomie but everyone knew her as Jessie Swan. My poor old nana was a wild child. But that’s very true what Linda is talking about, again hair see it just goes back to that. That used to give us 20c to pull the hairs out of his ears.

L: But goes along way back because my dad when we were babies cut it off each and every one of us and put it in his bible. He’s still got our hair.

H: A lot of people do that.

L: And I’ve still got my nana Konomies brush with her hair in it.

C: The traditional ...I hope this will start a lot of our young ones wanting to go back to country to get married traditionally. I hope it starts that whole revival of our traditional customs.
H; I might never have told you this but my cousin Michelle had a still born baby years ago and she had her cremated and we took her back to the islands and her ashes were scattered on North Keppel because that was her wish to be with the old people and a sense of healing.

C: Yes, of course it was. That is very special and personal you know. It’s a beautiful thing.

H: What does the future hold for us?

C: Some of our customs and traditions are unique. Phil Gordon rang from the museum because I wanted to get Uncle Mackie talking about the nets and its the very thing he asked me. Are any of your people today carrying on tradition of net making and all...and I said no Phil because we have to teach the craft because I said what you have to remember is that when our old people were removed right across Australia and put into missions a lot of those customs were lost but through our old peoples traditional knowledge and memories I said some of the things we want to see in the future, funding for workshops, like Aunty Francis she got women from Maningrida to retrain us in weaving you know. Its not our fault our customs and that you know, look at the nets and the dilly bags... the weaving is so intricate and would live to learn that, but we have to be revive all those customs because I believe our people were master weavers. And they used everything from natural resources.

H: And what the main purpose of reviving all this stuff.

C: For our young people. You know its carrying on culture, if we don’t do this today...Aunty Ethel always used to use the word legacy so I guess I take it back to where I made a promise to her that I would pass on this knowledge. Its a legacy. And I would not break that promise to my Aunty. It leaves something to carry on...it’s a living culture. Mainstream people across Australia think our culture is all based on myth and legend but it’s a living culture. But we are unique that we have to live in two worlds but there some why not bring it all together. I don’t want to keep weaving and net making all to the Woppaburra, why can’t we share that with some of our lovely little school kids the non-indigenous children. I believe things are there to be shared.

End

Participant:  Christine Doherty
Date:  18th Feb, 2013

Hello my name’s Chrissy Doherty and my traditional name given by my great aunties is Dalutta. And that name was given to me as a storyteller in passing down our traditional knowledge. I’m from the Woppaburra people from the Keppel Islands. I’m from the Konomie clan on North Keppel and our people have lived on the islands since time began. We have had an archaeologist
who has dated some of our sites on North Keppel, which we call Konomie, as nearly four thousand years old.

We’re here today for the first time in the Australian museum, and we thank you, to view our sacred artefacts for the first time since they were donated by protector Walter Roth in nineteen hundred and three and what i’d like to talk to you about today something very special for our women, these are Kun-ya and they were made from the um... roots of the... the grass tree and they were painted with ochre, you can still see the traces of the red ochre. They’re our ceremonial colours, red and white ochre. Our young girls were given these as a birth rite, they are a women’s object and they carried 'em like babies and it was a charm to have a lot of babies and it also then became a burial doll because when Roth desecrated our burial caves these were everywhere and these went with their women when they passed away, so they're very spiritual to our women, very, very special, they were initiation, charm, fertility and burial. They are very sacred objects. And we are just blessed to have them here in this collection and the other um artifacts we have.

I’m pretty sure this is a grave marker, made from the same way and the same plant. And basically we had sacred objects from our women but we also had grave markers and our culture is based on respect way back then, so that when you saw those grave markers you knew that was a gravesite. And our ancestors used all the caves along the islands for our burials, they also use the butts of trees. And they used to hang these beautiful...our ancestors remains in the dilly bags and they would plant them in the trees, tree buts or they would place them in the caves. And I’m honored to tell their story today...thank you
Interview Transcript

Participant: Aunty Gwen (Nellie)
Date: 22/04/2013
Venue: Hunter Street, Pialba.

Initial discussion about ethics, informed consent and nature of the study.

H: Place yourself in a family. Who are your parents, where does the link to Keppel come from?
G: Where did it come from? It come from mum.
H: And what was your mum’s name?
G: Annie [Smith]
H: I might ask you questions where I know the answers but...
G: You want it on that... Annie and I don’t know where she picked up the Levelle, the surname cause grandma Nellie, she had the Nellie Levelle. I don’t know where that came in, if she was working for people on the station and took their names, I don’t know.
H: What station was that one?
G: You know out west working on the cattle station or whatever, yeh... I don’t know where she picked that up you know, whether it was coming from that I don’t know.
H: That’s the same with us I don’t know at what point Ross changed to Peters, Uncle Albert was Ross then it changed to Peters. Somebody said it had something to do with his boxing name.
G: Yeh, that’s what I heard too, because he was boxing they changed it to Peters.
H: Then they were all Peters.
G: Then somebody said there were too many Ross’s out on the pier, out on the boat or something. Ships come in and they had the long pier and something about that too I heard. They reckon there were too many Rosses and changed it. And Peters it could have been the boxing but I don’t know if that is on record.
H: I should look that up. I remember going to Uncle Gordon’s place in Elizabeth street and seeing all the boxing trophies. Silver cups and that.
G: Oh yeh.
H: So your mum was Annie Smith.
G: Well she married a Smith.
H: So what was her maiden name?

G: What?

H: Her maiden name?

G: yes, well that was the name she had, cause grandma, that was the name she had, I don’t know where. But mum she was a baby when they took them of the island. She grew up under that name Levelle. And then my grandmother married a Moffat and on her marriage certificate it says married a Dick Moffat and her name it had Nellie Levelle. I remember mum used to say it’s not level it’s Le

velle. You know a French name. Whether they were working for French people I don’t know.

H: There’s a few Levelles in Sydney...Kooris. There was actually a lot of French out at La Perouse outside of Sydney, some French Connection. Whos to know? When you talked to your mum did she identify more with the north island or the south island? Did she say I’m from the North?

G: Mum never spoke to me because I was the youngest in the family...and mum being away all the time. You know she was over on Peel Island in Brisbane. I never ever got to, you know growing up, never got to be talking about these sorts of things. Even my brothers and sisters older than me weren’t talking about Keppel. Until one day Paul and I was living here in the 70’s and Alby, young Alby Ross called me over and told me and I thought oh, so we come from Keppel an island you know and I couldn’t believe that. I asked Pat my brother and he says yeh, its true we come from Keppel. So Paul and I, that’s when we started looking into it then. Old records and things like that.

H: Its a it of a shock.

G: Yeh, well thats then, you know mum had passed away in the 60’s...61.and I never got to ..well I didn’t know those things then, and she never ever mentioned it. Cause I was just 7 when they took her away. My oldest sister, she reared me up and they never ever talked about Keppel. I’m just reading and hearing from all the family around me now, depending on who knows this or that.

H: Mum used to say to meas we were growing up, yeh we’re from Fraser. We’re Batjala you know. Then I think in the late 70’s got to know that guy Mike Rowlands.

G: The archaeologist

H: Yeh, and I knew we were from Keppel, you know. And we were like what, mum goes i thought we were from Fraser because her grand dad didn’t talk about much either. People just didn’t talk about it.
G: Growing up I thought I always come from New Zealand, cause I looked different from the Aboriginals. When they used to say your an Aboriginal, you’re an Abo...you know I don’t look like them. Used to always think I came from New Zealand.

H: But you never really asked anyone.

G: No in my mind I would always think I’m from New Zealand.

H: I remember mum telling me about the reunion back in 1984, they went back to the island. When’s the first time you went back.

G: No I didn’t go to that meeting. I just started a new job then at New Farm cooking. And I thought I can’t go asking them for time off to go up there. Paul rang and said when you get your holidays we’ll go up there. And so we went up, we had a 16 footer boat and went across and anchored there. Went on the island and walked about.

H: And when abouts was that?

G: That was the same year when I got my holidays, yeh, the end of the year...cause I only just started when they went up there for that reunion and I missed out. I thought I’ve just got this job I better not upset them.

H: I was an apprentice and couldn’t get time off. How did you feel going back for the first time?

G: Oh I couldn’t believe it when I saw the island, I thought god it is big you know, and I saw all these little shops on the island and the resort. Gee it is big. I was real pleased with it. But oh, pity they didn’t tell me this a long time ago when I was growing up you know...only found this out this time when Alby told me you know...cause we were living here only for a couple of years and that’s when we went to Brisbane and we started lookin up all the records. And when they said they were going up there for the first reunion I couldn’t go.

H: I remember I was up at Rocky, 1992 I think, and I think Bob came about 1993...only about a year later. But I remember when he came he was so excited about knowing about Keppel and I remember him saying I know where I’m from now, I’ve come back here and this is going to be my life’s work. Getting back on country you know.

G: When they had that...the deeds you know, I was in hospital I couldn’t go to that either. And I thought laying in bed there watching it up on TV and I’m crying my eyes out you know I wished I was there, you know.

H: And what were you feeling at the time.

G: Oh no, I couldn’t believe it that this was our island you know and my ancestors came from there and only wished I had known my grandmother. She died before I was born you know, passed on you know, and I wished I known more about this place. But that’s when we started all this, looking into it and hearing from the family here you know.
H: Yeh, I think it’s funny you know, people say I don’t know much about where I come from but when they think about it and what their parents told them or the things they did or the way you went fishing ...you sort of think that’s from the old times that stuff. And things pass on that you don’t really think about. I was talking to Chrissy Doherty and I said that in our family we always had a lot of superstitions, they were always talking about ghosts and things. Did they have any of that we you were a kid... the things that you just don’t do... you don’t step over someone’s legs, you don’t drag a stick behind you, those sorts of things

G: No, I don’t think we ever really talked like that. Cause when mum left I was about seven, and when they took them off the island [Peel] I was about 14 then and cause when mum came of the island well she wanted to go visit all her family all over the place Cherbourg and that.

H: Was that Fraser?

G: No, Peel cause she had leprosy and they took them over there and I wasn’t allowed to go on that island .

H: I remember that.

G: Kids weren’t allowed to go there. She was over there for seven years on the island. That’s between Cleveland, Wellington Point and Dunwich, Stradbroke Island .

H: Yes , I’ve actually been there. Horseshoe Bay is in the front of it.

G: She was on the island yeh, they had a little residency you know, hospital, doctors. When they got very sick they often brought them up to, in the ambulance up to the Royal Brisbane Hospital. We used to live at Cambridge street at Coorparoo...and she’d ask the ambulance driver can you drive past that street because my daughter will be standing there waiting, and I’d be waiting on the corner there to give her a hug and talk to her and the only time I could see her was when she was in the hospital here when she was in Brisbane. On the island they wouldn’t allow it.

H: I don’t think they got a cure for leprosy for years did they?

G: No no, well when they took them off let them off there, they did have tablets so they could still mingle with the people and its not contagious like they thought it was years ago.

H: I don’t even know how it starts and where it’s from.

G; oh well, I know when they used to go down on the Mirramar from Brisbane river their it used to go to Dunwich. And you’d hear people say oh Peel Island that’s where they out ‘em over there because they lose their fingers and toes and ears and nose. And yet mum never lost anything like that.

H: That’s how they dealt with that in the old days just isolate them and send them away somewhere, you know.
G: Well they were going to send her to Phantom Island up there near Palm Island. Where they sent all the Leprosy people up there, well they call it Hansens disease now.

H: Yeh

G: And um when they wanted to send her up there she said no Peel because family was there, Effie was looking after us, Effie was only about 18 then...and she had to care for us, her brothers and sisters younger, yeh so that’s how mum ended up there and that why she never talked about the island you know Keppel. Its only that I found out through Alby.

15.50

H: It’s a funny thing, when I was a kid I knew nothing about who we were or where we were from or anything. People ask you questions and it was real shame you know. Don’t you even know?, you know. But when you learn more it’s sort of good for your identity.

G: Yeh, I’m feeling real proud now I’m from Keppel...and they say oh yeh! I always say that.

H: So, I’ve noticed around here there is lots of maps and things of Keppel.

G: Have you seen that, that photo..do you know what that is?

H: This one here?

G: Do you know what that is?

H: It looks like sand and it looks like the drowning cave.

G: Yeh, but see the figure.

H: Thats eery.

G: That’s water running out of it. And I never noticed it and Frances said you can see the chain around the leg.

H: Who took that picture, did you take it.

G: I don’t know, Bob sent that down to me, so I don’t know. I think he might have taken it.

H: It looks like someone’s lying down.

G: But see the legs, the light beard, the arms, the legs, the chain around the legs.

H: Pretty eery.

G: Yeh, isn’t it. He just happened to take that photo and it come up like that. Must be the water coming out. And the boss name where they had the chains are on that wall. And I took photos of
that but I don’t know what ever happened to those photos. It shows the two rust bolts that he put in the...

H: I remember a couple of years ago a guy from the Australian took them.

G: Who?

H: The guy from the Australian newspaper, he took a picture because I was there with Bob and this would have been 1993 or 1994.

G: Oh, yeh.

H: the guy from the Australian took the picture and you could still see the rusty bits.

G: Yeh, well I did that but I don’t know what I done with the photo.

H: I’ll try to chase up a couple for you. What’s it feel like when you go back to places like that?

G: What’s it feel like? It feels good, you know it our country when you walk around. A couple of places there you get a real peaceful feeling comes over you. Then Carl Svensen, his brother I think it was Chris Svensen he said there’s a spot there and you’ll know it when you come to it. I don’t know what he means but I thought I wonder if he means talking about strange um, strange peaceful feeling you know that you get. And it is real you know.

H: Do you get that feeling anywhere else or only when you get back there?

G: No, just when you go on the island and cause when we found out we were from Keppel, Paul and I, we got a yacht and we sailed all up the coast and we would hang around that island and Carl took us around and showed us all the camping spots and I walked all over that place I know all the middens where they used to camp and that you know.

H: So what are some of the sites you know there other than the middens. Was that on Wreck beach.

G: Yes, there was a big one there, I even got a photo of it, there’s one there and one in front of Svendsen’s Beach, I think ...Wreck beach and Monkey beach I’m not sure. I think it was because Bob, Brian and young Robert they built that walkway there over it so people and tourists won’t disturb it. So I don’t know whereabouts on the whether it s right around or just up in the cornet there, that’s Long Beach, um Clam bay, Wreck Beach, Leekes Beach. The cave was around here somewhere and teh shifting sands right across. Big peninsula, shape of it, it looks like a dog.

H: There’s a lot of history, like we got a lot of newspapers and stuff and there’s a few things recently we’ve looked at, and I found the breastplate of Jimmy from Conomie spelt with a C.

G: I’ve heard about it but I don’t know

H: Its in the Qld museum
G: Where?

H: The Queensland museum, Southbank. I sent it to Chris Doherty and she said oh yeh it is too. And I’ve often wondered what the true feeling is of a breast plate? What does it represent? Some people don’t like them but other people say its our history . What do you think.

G: They say they were there because they were king of the tribe. They’re the master

H: Or they’ve done some deed like swimming and saving people or that sort of thing?

G: Oh, like a medal or something.

H: Yeh.

G; I don’t know, I always thought it was, you know, it was the head of the tribe.

H: I think Yulowa got a breastplate after they saved a guy. Hey swam back and, a guy got ship wrecked and they swam back to Emu Park, and notified a guy and come back and saved them. I think it was Paddy and Yulowa.

G: No, I didn’t know much about that.

H: I was just wondering because some people say it’s just an accolade given by colonial governments to passify the people.

24.32 (meals on wheels at the door)

G: Frances rings me yesterday and wants me to go to this protest.

H: I sent a few email to the Greg Norm Golf Course design asking to speak with TO’s and observe cultural heritage regulations. Lot - 21. Have you seen this book before?


H: His dad had an oyster saloon at Emu Park and he grew up on the island as a young kid.

G: Alan did yeh.

H: And he talks about some history and he talks about Aboriginal history as well. He has this map here and I don’t know if you’ve seen it. He marks on it all the burial grounds, aboriginal burial grounds prior to 1900. He’s marked them with an ‘X’. He’s got right here, this one right here next to the kiosk where the resort is and the shell house, right at the end of the run way in the front. As you go round to Monkey Beach here and here, middle of Leeke’s Beach over here as well.

G: Ohhh.

H: I don’t know if you have been aware of them in the past.
G: I know that they reckon there was one right under where they built the office[resort office]. There was a burial ground there and they reckon it was haunted.

H: This guy reckons right across the front there where they had the cabins, they knew there was something’s wrong because things would fall off shelves and all sorts of things. And that’s where he has located those.

G: Oh, he’s got a cross there yeh.

H: And it’s a funny think cause during the handover I was talking to Uncle Vince and he said one of the young fulla’s, Young Bernie, he said he saw an old fulla sitting there and he said ‘he was painted up just like us’. And I said to Uncle Barno at the time that this was a site of a burial ground and he said “oh, I didn’t know that”. Well that’s what this guy reckons, Morris, I don’t know if its totally accurate but ... 

G: Being a boy going over there all the time he probably would have seen whether there was, I don’t know they wouldn’t have had crosses in those days. How would they identify where...

H: Well maybe, you see there were tree butt graves, where there were skeletal remains in tree butts so they may have been visible but also Chrissy Doherty reckons the small grass tree butts, the really short ones, she reckons they may have been grave markers. And the long ones were the grave dolls. She reckons the markers may have marked where the graves were. The short little ones.

G: Oh those long things , like the sweet potato things shaped like that, about that long.

H: Yeh, she reckons it’s the really short fat ones. They might have been grave markers. I’m not sure.

G: I thought they were just dolls the women carried around. I don’t know why, what for?

H: Yes the long ones were but you haven’t heard about these burial sites.

G: No, no.

H: These are the um , I took some pictures, I may have showed you before. Its one of the burial sites, we actually chose that site.

G: Where was that?

H: That’s over on Considine Beach.

G: Oh, over on the North,

H: This one’s on Maisie Bay up on the hill there. Aunty Heather and Aunty Ethel I think chose those ones. That’s Aunty Heather.
G: Have you seen her?

H: Yeh, she’s up the hill [Scrub Hill] but she got some dementia now.

G: She won’t remember much

H: It’s hard to get sense out of Aunty Heather.

G: I think I’m going that way too.

H: Here’s one of you?

G: Who’s that I’m talking to?

H: That’s the principal Roger. Roger Searle.

G: And the ones you gave us at the meeting there?

H: What’s it like when you get painted up like that for ceremony?

G: I don’t know.

H: Is that important?

G: I don’t know if they had any in those days, whether they painted themselves up? I know they had jewellery.

H: I don’t know if I’ve got that photo, here it is, if you look really closely you can see the lines, they have their tribal painting on. If you look really close at these guys you can see the lines going up their body and down their arms. This guy here you can see it as well.

G: Oh, yeh, yeh!

H: The ceremonial painting.

G: There it is on all there, the women coming down onto the breast. I thought with the head band and the necklace you know, things like that they might have had, I’ve never noticed that they had markings on them.

H: I didn’t know either until I looked very closely and I saw the design of it and I also saw the design of the ...it’s in the back of one of the Roth books as well.

G: Each one got the same marking yeh.

H: Do you think that is something important to us that we should keep going? Or..do it at our gatherings and ceremony.

G: I don’t know if they had ceremony or gatherings because they reckon we were different to the mainland, that we were marine people and lived off the sea.
H: I notice you have a shell around your neck.

G: Yeh, that was ...I made that, you know craft work it was filed down and just turned it into that.

H: What sort of shell is that?

G: I don’t know, the teacher she collected these, looks like it might be, what do they call it tortoise...

H: It looks a bit like mother of pearl doesn’t it. Sort of like a clam shell or oyster, not oyster, clam shell like them. They’re pretty thick with a bit of colour.

G: Yeh, might have had the pearl in it.

H: That’s it. What I did notice about all these blokes and women is they had shells around their necks and across their foreheads. I did notice that the shells were made of nautilus shells.

G: I got one there.

H: I didn’t know until I went to the Australian museum in Sydney. When you see it really closely you can see it.Ok...

G: That was already like that you know they did it with the quartz. Used the quartz as a drill.

H: So who made that one?

G: No, that was how I found it.

H: Oh, you found this on the island...

G: Its like my great grandmothers jewellery.

H: You’ll have to put something around it and wear it.

G: No, I’m frightened to because it’s that brittle and I’d just rather leave it.

H: Unless they could dunk it in some plastic to preserve it.

G: But it’s too brittle, I started putting a chain through it but it was too brittle and a piece broke off and I thought I won’t touch it I’ll just leave it as it is.

H: See these lines down the side it’s definitely from the nautilus shell. I have one at home and the inside has mother of pearl just like that. That would be a traditional one which is pretty amazing because it has the hole and everything.

G: I couldn’t believe it when I saw it. They say not to remove anything from the island but I thought I’m not leaving that behind.
H: So, what does that piece mean to you?

G: When I found that a funny feeling comes over you, and the first thing you think is it could be my great grandmother wore it or Aunty. And when I saw the photos how they got it round that head band or round there neck, so it’s hard to say who it belonged to.

H: Yeh.

G: To me it was like my great grandmother jewellery.

H: When we were down in Sydney, the Australian museum we saw, I didn’t take pictures of them but all the bits and pieces down there which was the nets, they had shell fish hooks and they had an oyster shucker and they also had two big nets. That was pretty amazing and Chrissy Doherty.

G: They had drawings but not an actual photo, just drawings.

H: When they were actually holding them there, I mean some of the people were just breaking down and crying, just having this artefact and saying that could have been my great grandfathers or great grandmother might have held this and used this. You know everyday, their sweat is in that piece of wood there. Some part of them is imprinted in that you know. It’s just like that there, your great grand mother might have been holding that and wearing that. Its...

G: I couldn’t believe that when I saw that. At first it was just in the sand just saw the top part with a hole in it. And when I picked it up I thought I’m not leaving that behind.

H: It’s a pretty strong connection that is, because it’s a genuine thing that is.

G: Yes, I get a funny feeling that it could have been my great grandmothers or could have been my Aunty, don’t know.

H: We seem to be reconnecting with the island, what do you think will happen in the future.

G: Well these young ones, whether they’re going to carry on... cause the way these women argue all the time we’re not getting anywhere. You know years ago, we could have had everything up and going but now all they want to do is argue all the time...and young ones they don’t want to come along and listen to that.

H: What about in terms of development?

G: Even that, there’s land there and nothings being done. No-one’s got the money to build anything.

H: What about Tower and those guys building the resort?

G: I don’t know, I think they wanted to help us but nobody wanted to let them come into it.
H: Maybe people have been burnt too many times with big developers.

G: I thought they would have helped us, and later on left us alone you know, left us on our own then got us going. But they didn’t want white man telling them what to do.

H: It’s pretty hard dealing with a big group with a lot of different opinions, not likely to get one answer.

G: I don’t know, we not going to get anywhere the way we are going. It’s going to go on and on until each one dies and is out of the picture and the young ones, whether they’ll take over I don’t know. ...whether they are listening what we come up with all about Keppel. Yeh, but I don’t know.

H: You probably remember these ones, there’s Aunty Ethel with the king plates.

G: Yeh, I was there that day at the museum, at John Oxley library.. I got a photo of us and all us behind her.

H: I find this really interesting, these grave dolls I’m not exactly sure what their purpose is.

G: Well they reckon that the women were carrying them around but I don’t know what for? And what they meant?

H: And they did also find them in the sheltered graves, the rock shelter graves. So they found them with bones of ancestors. Maybe people said this is your possession and it get buried with them or some other attachment.

G: The mayor, up in Yeppon there she had one, she wanted to give it to me, never got it, I kept forgetting to ask her for it. Cause we had the corporation going when we were living in Yeppoon there. We used to have meeting there.

H: Should have a chat to her.

G: Shes not there now that was years ago.

H: Yes, we need a good keeping place.

G: Oh, that’s those plates yeh,

H: they are funny.

G: Its doesn’t say what for ey, what they got it for.

H: See if you read that one, it says ‘For Saving Life, Paddy’.

G: Oh, now I can see it. But how did they know Woppaburra? I thought that just came in when we all got together and had meetings and that.
H: Oh, no...its always been Woppaburra, from before 1900. I’ve got lots of old newspapers and archive documents from 1860 and it’s called Woppaburra.

G: Was it? Oh... I thought that came in when we started having meetings and they wanted to call it that.... but it’s been like that and then it’s got Konomie burra for the north Keppel.

H: Yes, Konomie means north wind.

G: (Looking at a painting) See how he did the white whale here and that was 2001...and not long ago they saw the white whale. I thought that was funny.

H: that could even be part of the, you see some people of the gold coast have a story about the white dolphin called Gwonda that used to help bring the fish in. It could be one of our ...

G: I don’t know what year he did that. Oh 1999, similar paintings, same green.

H: That might do us

End
Diary notes (taken from Aunty Glenice Croft facebook social media site)

Participant: Aunty Glenice Croft

Date: 6th February, 2016.

Venue: 20/7 Gamelin Crescent, Stafford.

Warinkil:
Woppaburra Land Trust AGM.
Waiting to hear from our chairperson Uncle Malcolm Burns...Will post details..
Woppaburra Native Title should be finely at the end process.
If a determination is given Woppaburra people will have a lot of major decisions to come together to discuss.
Woppaburra will find out if TOWER Holdings has been given the okay by the Qld Government to honor the recommendations of his lease or not, to build a Resort on "Woppa" Great Keppel Island.
This TOWER Resort process has been inactive for nearly eight years and TOWER Holdings does not seem to want to consult with Woppaburra Wise Ones/Elders, they only talk to those they think they can manipulate and it falls through.
Lots of Woppaburra descendants are becoming more savvy in understanding the insult of Native Title and the bull crap of Governments and TOWER Holding disrespect of Woppaburra Lore and Cultural Sacred Connections/Songlines Woppaburra have to our Islands..
Woppaburra descendants come from a strong line of warriors, whose stories of past atrocities by invaders to our land will never be forgotten. Respect.
This year Woppaburra voices and hearts and spirits must be united with Our Ancestors to make good decisions for our grandkids and their grandkids.
Woppaburra Official Social Media will be following the TOWER fiasco.
Finely I cannot discuss Woppabuurra Land Trust or Native Title business without permission.
Some Woppaburra Elders want me to do some stories on Woppaburra past and present, some on video, this is in process.
So many Talented and educated young and old ones whose stories are so heart warming.
If any Woppaburra descendants would like to be interviewed/on video to be put on Woppaburra Official Social Media website or facebook or youtube please call me on 0488334761..
Or Contact (Glenice Croft) on messenger.
Email : warinkil@dodo.com.au
Peace xo Love xo Healing xo
Warinkil 🎉
Woppaburra Wise One

(5 April, 2016)

Warinkil: Firstly I would like to acknowledge all Woppaburra Wise Ones past and present and all Woppaburra descendants.
As we remember 04/04/07.
Nine years ago Woppaburra descendants were given a 99 year Lease to our Sovereign Sacred
Dreaming Land.
Five pieces on Woppa - Great Keppel Island.
It was a day of celebration and sadness.
With this slight victory of land ownership by white man’s law, one could still feel the pain and suffering our Ancestors went through.
As our Mob celebrated with song and dance, it was heart-warming to feel the spirits of our Ancestors touch all hearts as the young and old Woppaburra came together in unity.
May this feeling of "UNITY" from our Ancestors touch our hearts again as the Woppaburra Land Trust meets for our AGM in Hervey Bay on 09/04/16.
Peace xo Love xo Healing xo
Warinkil“Aunty Glenice
(9th May, 2016)

Warinkil: Woppaburra people are amazing caring gentle people...We may have our differences, but our Ancestors keep us strong by calling us home.
Photos from last TUMRA Festival on Konemie. Respect to those now with Ancestors in photos.
Many Woppaburra descendents will be attending a TUMRA gathering on our Spiritual Dreaming Homeland "Konemie" North Keppel Island at the end of May.
(31 May, 2016)

Warinkil: Nakiu - Pink Water Lily is Dharanbul/Woppaburra Sacred Dreaming Flower. We are Sister Clans and Konemie is a Woppaburra Woman's Dreaming Island.
All development is happening on Woppa not Komonie as that is where the ( WLT) has the responsibility of five pieces of our Sovereign land leased for 99 years from the Qld Government for all Woppaburra descendents.
Reading some of your comments, one can see, you all have big beautiful hearts and would like to see something happen on Woppa - Great Keppel Island to the benefit of our people..
My thoughts and a few others who have commented is that we have many educated young and old and older ones that with the help of the right people, we could develop our own Eco Resort and Cultural Centre on Woppa.
It would be good to find out if anyone is interested or have any ideas as to how to go about it. If we Woppaburra descendents develop the proposal, our pieces of leased land would stay in Woppaburra hands for future generations..
Please Comment
Love Peace Healing
Warinkil“Auntie Glenice
Munquadum TUMRA Rep., Sonny Van Issum designed this Seasonal Chart mapping with Woppaburra Totems... (while observing the painting)
(12 June, 2016.)

Chrissy Doherty: Aunty Glenice, I am so glad that you have created this private group. A private place, where Woppa descendents can talk and discuss issues privately and discreetly.. Just
wanted to Thank You with a Happy Memory..xx Remember this Incredible Day, private viewing of our ancestors artefacts.. I dearly miss my Aunty Ethel, I miss hearing her voice, miss hearing her stories..Bless You Aunty..Always in our Dreaming..xoxo

(30 May, 2016)

Warinkil:

This is one of those times when Woppaburra descendants should be checking out all aspects of this proposal..
Not just agreeing without knowing all the facts..
This land on Woppa - Great Keppel Island that this mob want us to hand over our leases to them on a whim is astounding.
Thank you Marcia for your info about the KMPG mob who work for FMG who have court proceedings against traditional Yindjibarbi people.
They would most probably do the same to our mob if they are let loose on our Country. 😞
Check that out on Google..
This sends up a red light.
Also this mob of jackals want our leases, another TOWER Holdings move that got crushed by the Woppaburra Land Trust (WLT)
What is most disappointing is as I read this badly written proposal is the fact that it smells like another grab for our leasehold Land. 😞
It was great to hear our (WLT) Chairman Elder Uncle Malcolm Burns on Konomie 29/05/16, tell the Bob Muir presenter/messenger of this proposal that, the proposal should have come through him as the chairman of the WLT.
Uncle also said " This proposal will be discussed at the WLT AGM on 23 July 2016 in Brisbane".
So all you teck savvy young ones do some research as some of the names in this proposal don't even exist .. Another red light.. 😞
Love to all you deadly Woppaburra descendents ❤️
Warinkil ❤️Auntie Glenice❤️

(29th May, 2016)

Warinkil: Thinking of Munquadum family descendents❤️
Our mother Kalulu and nephew Michael and my younger warrior brother Robert whose birthday is today all now with Ancestors ❤️
Can feel their beautiful spirits amongst us❤️
Love to little sis Vanessa and family ☺️
Love to Loreena and Lea-ann and family..
Love to all Woppaburra descendents remembering those now with Ancestors.🙏❤️️ Respect.🙏❤️️
Peace❤️Love❤️Healing❤️
Warinkil❤️Auntie Glenice❤️❤️
Interview transcript

Participant: Aunty Glenice Croft

Date: 21st June, 2016.

Venue: 20/7 Gamelin Crescent, Stafford. Q.4053

Initial discussion about ethics, informed consent and nature of the study.

G: Under the land trust constitution its direct descendants, they are still out family but they are not direct descendants. Under the native title they must be direct descendants.

G: I remember he went to Cherbourg he told us that. Even mum lived on Fraser island.

G: We always had the close connection to Cherbourg. We always had Cherbourg people in our house.

G: You did the first burial there with Robert. I’m glad they weren’t all buried on Woppa, that would have been disgusting. Terrible things happened over there.

TUMRA

G: We had the land trust and had out reps. I was voted in as our rep. Darambal was going and we said to Leon we should form one. We took over the Darambal one but Woppaburra section. As reps on Land trust we became TUMRA reps. They set it up later away from the trust. It was set up as a separate thing. It should always have an overarching body.

G: They excluded me and did all signs without other people. They did all these things and didn’t tell anyone about it. I don’t like disrespect.

G: A lot of this had to happen, we go through all this stuff until we get to the place we are now. Chrissy was put there for a reason.

G: We met with Cyril and the other fella, Ethel didn’t get on with Ethel. He spoke language and play piano.

Season’s discussion

G: Uncle Gordon the Crabber, the best one out!

G: You always need to map the songlines and the dreaming paths that a lot of people don’t do.

G: The logs. Grandfather told us about that. Even at Hervey Bay they showed us how to make a canoe. I don’t know why I remember that, maybe I’m an alien.

G: Our circumstances who we are grandfather had to show you things, that’s how he was. I watched how he talked and saw the connections. It was really good time. A lot of bad things happened but there was a lot of love.
G: We didn’t have shoes, only the migaloo kids had shoes. Dad made me a pair of shoes. Mum made me dolls, clothes.

G: We only knew Hervey bay but I haven’t see this as a Woppaburra calendar before. Here’s the shell, we used to collect these as a kid. We grew up, we ate turtle and that. Our whole live was about the sea.

H: The dreaming paths-

G: that’s a good idea, we’ve got to list our dreaming paths somehow. Konomie is our island. There so much stuff on that island, it’s so powerful.

H: The bottlebrush is red.

G: It must have meant to be red.

H: The North wind, September and arrival of mugga mugga.

G: That would be the start of our song line.

G: Tangoi, that’s my daughter’s totem (Janine). It can be male or female the totem. I don’t talk about her stuff. My totem is the crow.

G: I always say Darambal and us are sister clans. There’s lots of fresh water on the island. There was whip tail Kangaroos, koala bears.

G: Did you see the oysters Gordon got us, they were so big. (Winter, May 17th, 2016)

How do you bring Global warming into the calendar, with the change of seasons?

G: What’s that shell again?

H: Nautilus.

G: Nautilus that’s right. We had a big shell like that at home. We always had a good one of those in our house.

H: Aunty Bess told me that as well.

G: The past. The terrible things that happened to our people. No wonder they (grandparents) don’t talk about things.

G: We can heal ourselves. But I use gumbi gumbi. A traditional and natural plant, I rub it on my leg but I have to say “this is going to heal me and really believe it”. In the old days we used to say thank you when we caught a fish. It wasn’t praying but the white man would see it as praying.

G: A fire is very important to us and all Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people have so much power.

G: The only people who cared for this earth are Indigenous people.
Interview Transcript

Participant: Aunty Lillian Bessie Catley (Born 1934 & currently aged 82)

Date: 03 June, 2016.

Venue: 29 Bernecker Street, Carina Q.4152

Initial discussion on ethics and interview procedure. Notes taken as participant did not want to be recorded. Family background was not covered as it had been done extensively by others.

H: Tell me about grandad Peter’s

B: Well I really don’t know too much because I was never there. I was the first to go to high school so I got up at 6.30 and didn’t get home until 7.00 o’clock.

H: Was that in Maryborough?

B: Yes I’d have to catch the train down to Maryborough and back and I was only home on weekends.

B: Grandad was working at the wharf, it was about a mile long. I used to go down and deliver his dinner at night on a bike. They would unload big bags of sugar with the hooks when the ships came in.

B: We used to dig worms down there past the test house. We would sell them on a table at the end of the veranda. 2 shillings for worms. We would put them in the old capstan tobacco tins. Mum, she could row a boat …all the way out past Round Island. The first time I brought Des up there they went out and caught a Blackall. They had a place that they lines up with Round Island, the lighthouse and trees which they called Catley’s hole.

B: The house had verandas down the right side and across the front but we closed in the side gradually as more kids were born. Georgy and Franny they had that part out the front. Bloody Georgy, if he didn’t catch a fish after 10 minutes he’d want to move.

B: Grandad used to cook mud crabs for the holiday makers, they were 7 shillings each. We would get the same people each year coming back.

B: Calendar- yes I love the mud crab, Barno was a good fisherman, he got those crabs.

What about Uncle Gordon?

B: Yes well we called him Popeye for as long as I can remember. The name just stuck.

H: Who called him that?

B: I don’t know but the cartoon was around at the time and I guess that’s where it came from. He loved fishing. (Popeye the Sailor Man)

(Showing the calendar)

H: What do you think about the artwork?
B: Who painted it?

H: Glenn Barry with two n’s

B: Oh, he’s one of those...He should have put his name on it. This is our totem, the humpback whale. Ok and there’s mums totem the bottlebrush, ok...um Kululu, that was mums traditional name. So this is January when it starts flowing

H: Yes it flowers from then until about July

B: Yes, so the birds can get the nectar. And here’s the oysters in winter. Uncle Gordon brought me back the biggest oyster on the weekend, it was lovely. The full moon and what’s this one again.

H: The sea-eagle or Guriala.

B: Okay... the dugong, what’s this in the middle here?

H: That’s the Nautilus shell.

B: Oh yes that right, we had the biggest one at home that always used to sit on the shelf. It’s the most beautiful shell.

H: Have you seen the old picture of our people with the shell jewellery?

B: Yes, well it was a beautiful shell. The inside is like mother of pearl so it’s lovely. We used to always have baler shells around the home as well.

H: I know the old days they used them to carry water.

B: Yes, we had lots of them around...these are the turtles...oh and I see the hatchlings up here.

H: Gary Smith was telling me a bit about the collecting of eggs.

B: He’s the one that’s cross-eyed?

H: Yes.

B: Oh look at these guys I didn’t even see that. Swimming along, that was the pandanus. Did you see that stone Christine had?

H: Aunty Christine showed me the discipline stone, had you seen that before?

B: No I know nothing about it. Christine was dads favourite and Vanessa was mums. Christine was born 1948 and Vanessa 1951, the baby of the family will be turning 65 this year at Christmas. No I’ve never seen it before.

H: Do you remember the early days of KILAC?

B: Yes, with Aunty Ethel at Wittington, Withering Street was it. She lived with Aunty Lou, I loved Aunty Lou she was a lovely person. I did have some of the documents about the Corporation around here somewhere but I put them all away when I moved.

H: It would be useful to see any old meeting minutes or documents.
B: Yes I have a look and let you know if I find anything.

General discussion about not remembering members, meetings, issues or how & why it started—unfortunately no usable information.

(Needed to have breakfast and discussion ended)
On country observations & discussions

Date: 27th May, 2016
Venue: NKIEEC, Konomie.

On the boat over to North Keppel, the principal Roger Searle advised that it was blowing a North Westerly wind which was uncommon at this time of year.

(the calendar shows the North Wind during important occasions, ie: ceremony, etc.)

Uncle Gordon Barney-
Grandad never told me anything, he just told us to bugger off and leave them alone. They were doing their own thing. I do remember him talking lingo with Uncle Fred Ross.

Aunty Glenice Croft-
Bullshit, he taught you how to fish Gordon.

Aunty Christine Barney

C: Have a look at this, I got this from Grandad when I was a child. It’s the discipline stone.

(the stone was located in a small jewellery box with her mother’s Rosary beads. The stone about is about the size of a goose egg with marking on one end that looked like a face, surface appeared to have been handled a lot, very smooth and deep black colour –onyx looking)

H: Wow, look at that. Why is it called the discipline stone?

C: I don’t know? It was just called that. I’ve just kept it for years. And here’s mums Rosary beads that she had as well. I keep my sacred things in this box. Here’s the crystals from up the top of the highest peak on South Keppel.

(Maybe there are two parts to make of the story of the stone (i) coming from stories, as warnings to avoid falling into error or trouble or as superstition and/or (ii) coming down through time from very old physical objects, as symbols to help to give reason to our beliefs (e.g. religious), to the past and our place in the world.)

H: Ok. Mt. Wyndham.

C: Yes, I was up there with Karl Svendsen and I collected these from the very top.

H: I guess that could be a mine for making spear tips and things. Can I take a picture of the stone?

C: Um… I don’t know. I’ll have to think about that for a while. I’m not sure...

Other unrelated discussion

H: I know your second name is Konomie, who is that named after?

C: Mum named me that after Aunty Konomie and so I’ve passed that on to my daughter. Lots of other people have that name also like Freddy Saunders daughter Konomie.
Christine Doherty

C: I have made a number of out I-ya for the TUMRA committee. I only have a couple with me, so I’ll give this one to Bob. This means a lot to us, our artefacts.

H: Very nice, is that bone.

C: No, I’ve made it out of a polymer, fiberglass and polished it up. I’ glad you have included that on the calendar because it means a lot to us.

(the hook means a lot to us?, unique identity, symbol of Woppaburra people, used in NKIEEC etc.)

H: Can you see the objects?

C: Yes I can see the sacred women’s objects here- Kum-ma...of course Mugga Mugga our clan totem. That’s our sacred totem Mugga mugga, it means a lot to all of us.

H: What do you mean by that?

C: Well, it’s our clan totem, it’s something that is precious and we all identify with it. It guides us in our life journey.....I like how it has these markings, the scars and the barnacles, it shows the real character of its life journey.

(Collective identity, marking- life’s journey)

H: What do you feel when you see that image here. (Pointing to the whale)

C: I think of our ancestors and how they would see Mugga mugga when it arrived and how they would celebrate its arrival. We’re just so fortunate to be able to be on our own country and be part of our dreamings. It gives me a real sense of pride.

(pride- proud of the whale or proud of continuing a tradition that has been happening for millennia, part of a song-line?, retracing ancestors steps.)
Observations on country- Konomie

Date: 28th May, 2016.
Venue: Konomie, Central Queensland.

Sharon Brown, Michelle Croft, Lorraine Barney

Visited Considine Beach and entrance to women’s area.

Three women walked to beach and up towards the birthing area. They seemed happy to reconnect with country, no shoes, feet in the water and sand, touching plants and observing bottlebrushes. Absolute silence. Taking in all the different parts of the island.

Uncle Mackie Burns

I still remember Uncle Albert doing that traditional dancing around the fire at Dayman Point.

Norman Barney (Calendar)

We know that whenever we see the Albatross inland there is a cyclone at sea.

We catch bream, flathead, tailor, calamari, squire (April to September).
Winter whiting & Sand crabs (June, July)
May, June July August- no muddies

Aunty Vanessa Kirk   (interview- 3rd June, 2016). This was a five days after the visit to country. I used the copy of the artwork as a stimulus)

H: Here’s a copy of the artwork that I showed on country.
V: Okay.....Where’s the sea –eagle? Oh there’s granddad. He’s got a lot of brown on him, he needs a little bit more white.
H: Yes that’s a young one actually.
V: Yes they get whiter as they grow.
H: And here’s the bottlebrush.
V: Yes that’s mum, Kululu, the bottlebrush. What’s this here?
(that’s mum and grandad, the embodiment of members of the family as totems)
H: that’s the Southern Cross stars.
V: ah yes good, grandad used to navigate by the stars, I remember him looking at the stars a lot.
(Garbau- talked about the Southern cross ‘coal sacks’ being seen clearly at two main parts of the year March and September)
Appendix F

Additional Publications Relevant to the Thesis


