Sharing Kinship with Nature:

How Reconciliation is Transforming the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Report prepared for the National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW as part of the research project: 'Kinship with the Natural World: Influencing the role and function of field staff within the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service'.

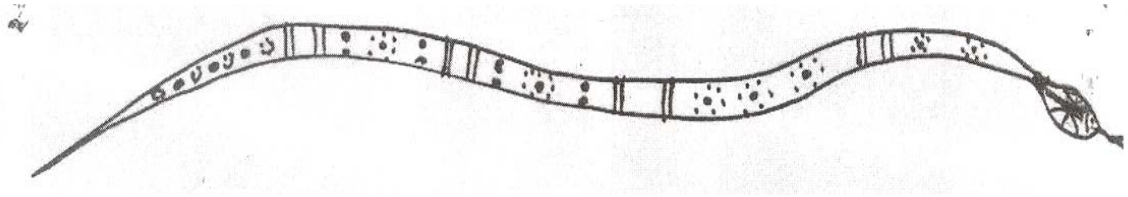
Deborah Bird Rose

Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies,

The Australian National University

June 2003

Research undertaken with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service's Cultural Heritage Totemic Landscapes Project

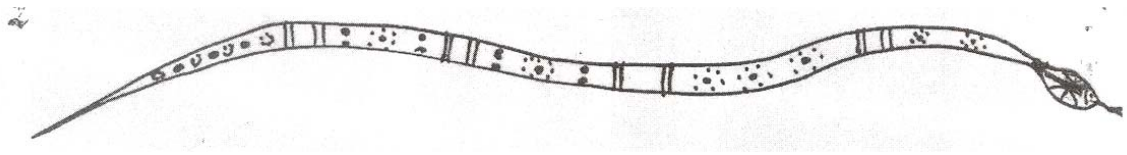


‘We’re in it together. We have to walk this road together. We’re all in it for the same thing: to look after country. So we have to walk together, to look after country. And part of that is maybe going over some lumps and bumps in the road. If it’s going to take that for us to walk together, well fine, let’s walk together with it. Otherwise … it’ll be just a waste of time.’

Phil Sullivan, Sydney Workshop
14 May, 2003

The analysis I present in this report was developed from conversations with NPWS / NSW staff and with Aboriginal Elders in March, April and May 2003. The views they express are their own, and are not officially reflective of NPWS / NSW. The interviewees are not responsible for my analysis and, of course, may disagree with it.

Table of Contents:



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Acknowledgements

This report owes a special debt to the Aboriginal NPWS staff who allowed me to spend so much time with them, and whose words are instrumental in formulating this report:

Steve Meredith, Griffith
Phil Sullivan, Bourke
Maxine Walker, Coffs Harbour
April Blair, Dubbo

In addition, Rebecca Ogden-Brunell and Peter Peckham, both of Dubbo, and Gary Currey (Queanbeyan) and Graham Moore (Merimbula) assisted my understanding from their varied perspectives.

This report was prepared with enormous in-put from all the people who consented to be interviewed. In order of consultation, I thank:

In Griffith:

David Egan, Ranger
Michele Ballestrin, Ranger
Tim Sides, Ranger
Colin Killick, Area Manager

In Bourke:

Tony Meppem, Area Manager
Hugh McNee (of Cobar, consulted in Bourke), Acting Area Manager
Rite Enke, Ranger
Ron Wardrop, Discovery Ranger

Steve Wolter (of Cobar, consulted in Bourke and at Gundabooka and Sydney), Regional Manager

Angela Seymour, Ranger
Paul Gordon, Elder

In Coffs Harbour:

Ann Walton, Ranger
Denique Littler, Planner
Greg Wallace, Ranger
David Nalder, Ranger
Lynn Baker, Threatened Species Unit
Rebecca Edwards-Booth, Archeologist, Cultural Heritage Division
Martin Smith, Ranger
Glenn Storrie, Area Manager

Cheryl Perkins – Yarrawarra
Dee Murphy – Yarrawarra

In Dubbo:

Peter Christie, Threatened Species Unit
Jan Farrar, Human Resources
Terry Korn, Western District Manger
Jeremy Walsh (former NPWS Payroll Officer)
Liz Mazzer, Conservation and Planning Unit
Allan Hutchins, Archeologist, Cultural Heritage Division
Sandra Walpole, Acquisitions

In Sydney:

Denis Byrne, Cultural Heritage
Tony English, Cultural Heritage
Rodney Harrison, Cultural Heritage
Peter Stevens, Programs Manager

In Cobar:

Sharron Ohlsen, Mt Grenfell Handback Negotiating Panel
Elaine Ohlsen, Elder
Rob Hurst, Ranger
Duncan Scott-Lawson, Ranger

Special thanks, as well, to all the participants in the Sydney Workshop. A complete account of the consultations is contained in Appendix 2.

1.2 The Brief

This research was carried out in response to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service brief 'Kinship with the Natural World: Influencing the role and function of field staff within the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service'. The research follows directly from Stage One of the Totemic Landscapes Project, the results of which are presented in a report titled *Indigenous Kinship with the Natural World in NSW* (Rose et al 2003).

The research brief addressed in this report was responsive to suggestions from Aboriginal staff. The proposal was to consider establishing a program that allows Rangers to adopt aspects of Aboriginal kinship as part of their work practice and identity. At a broader level, the brief was designed to offer strategies by which NPWS may extend to non-Indigenous staff a better understanding of Aboriginal kinship with the natural world.

The brief designated four main aims. These are to:

1) Provide NPWS with advice about how the work practice of field staff such as Rangers and Area Managers can be shaped to allow recognition of the concept of kinship with the natural world. This should include consideration of the idea of Shared Kinship Program.

2) Discuss ideas and options with NPWS staff and Aboriginal community representatives.

3) Provide an indication of whether other park management agencies around the world or in other parts of Australia have attempted to embed respect for kinship values in field operations.

4) Report on the research and consultation process.

The brief also proposed that the research would involve six key tasks. These were to:

1) Analyse the key issues associated with the idea of implementing the Shared Kinship Program.

2) Analyse and consider alternative strategies designed to allow field staff to understand and respect kinship values.

3) Discuss the Shared Kinship Program and alternative ideas with a range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff within the agency and determine their views and ideas.

4) Discuss the project with a number of Aboriginal community members to determine their views and ideas.

5) Attend an internal NPWS workshop where ideas and strategies can be discussed.

6) Produce a report that documents the aims, methods, and outcomes of the project.

This report fulfills the sixth task. The remainder of the report discusses the first five tasks; it includes a few issues not listed as tasks but clearly relevant to the research.

1.3 Style of reportage

In this report I aim to communicate for readers the sense of passion and commitment that I encountered in interviews with people in a number of locations around NSW. I take two main approaches: the first is to analyse the issues broadly, and the second is to include fine-grained first-person accounts of experiential evidence, as suitable. I hope to facilitate communication around these issues. The interviews I conducted with people brought me into contact with Indigenous and Non-Indigenous members of staff who are committed, caring, and glad to be challenged. It is clear that their ideas for action, the experiences they report, and their visions for the future are embedded within processes that are extremely fluid. The best of these processes are open-ended (see section 3.3.1). Participants in this research project emphasised the fluidity of the interpersonal and intercultural work they are engaged in. Most of the participants expressed a sense of excitement over the fact that rapid changes are happening and that they are at the cutting edges of these changes. Many expressed visions of what these changes have the potential to accomplish at a variety of scales (personal, within Agency areas and regions, within the state of NSW, and nationally). Having examined the evidence from overseas to the best of my ability (section 4.5), it seems clear that what is happening in NSW is a world-first.

1.4 Methods

I took the first two aims to be my primary goals in this research. Investigating the open-ended question 'how the work practice of field staff can be shaped to allow recognition of the concept of kinship with the natural world' seemed to me to require very open-ended methods. Accordingly, I developed a set of methods that seemed commensurate with the tasks, and then trialled them in one site to test their suitability and to refine them if needed.

The main method for this portion of the research was face-to-face conversations with Agency staff and community members. Some of these conversations remained informal, but many developed into in-depth interviews. I anticipated that this research would provide an informed basis on which to conduct further telephone interviews. I found that a great many members of staff are extremely willing to share their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and hope, and I did not find that telephone interviews were equally conducive to this depth of sharing. I decided, therefore, to focus on face-to-face encounters rather than telephone interviews. My questions worked toward several main issues: what is the person's background in terms of education and work experience; what are their interests and responsibilities; are they interested in becoming more deeply embedded in Indigenous worldview; what obstacles do they encounter; what experiences have changed their thinking; and where do they want to be going in this work?

The method of in-depth interview, when it is open-ended, is designed to attract conversation around matters that are of particular concern to the person being interviewed. I asked a series of relatively standard questions, but I was especially interested in exploring the issues that were capturing the passion of the person being interviewed. This method does not produce a high number of yes/no responses around a standardised set of variables. Its great potential is to enable people to speak deeply about their own experiences and concerns. It proved to be extremely well suited to the open-ended nature of this project.

Another primary method was everyday ethnography: observation, participation, informal interviews, and site visits. This aspect of the research was of necessity short term because of the time factor. In carrying out short periods of participant observation, I spent time 'hanging out' with staff, observing the work they do, the issues they confront, the ways they handle them, and discussing these issues with them. This method enables access to everyday taken-for-granted knowledge, and has the great merit of leaving

space for the unpredictable and unexpected to enter into the research. This means that the research is not only framed by my expectations of what I think I want to learn, but is also shaped by the actual experiences of staff. It is a method that can engage opportunistically with the fluidity of daily life.

Both the brief and my methods required that I spend time in several areas. I selected four areas: Griffith (the trial area), Bourke, Dubbo, and Coffs Harbour. I interviewed people at all levels of the organisation including Discovery Ranger, Rangers, Area and Regional Managers, and Director. The greatest amount of contact was with rangers, the least with field officers. In addition, I interviewed: Cultural Heritage Division Archaeologists (Coffs Harbour and Dubbo), Threatened Species Unit personnel (Coffs Harbour and Dubbo), Conservation and Planning Unit personnel (Coffs Harbour and Dubbo), Acquisitions (Dubbo), Human Resources (Dubbo), and Programs Manager (Sydney). During the Workshop the lack of specification of research with field officers was identified as a weakness in the brief, and is a weakness in the research overall. If further action is to be taken on these particular issues, it will be essential to work harder to include field officers.

I spent time ‘hanging out’ doing everyday ethnography with Cultural Heritage and Sites Officers Steve Meredith, Phil Sullivan, Maxine Walker, and April Blair.

My contacts with Aboriginal community members were not in-depth. The issues of concern in this research go deeply into the heart of a number of contentious and hurtful domains. In addition to kinship and the question of whether it can be shared, there are issues of racial injury, appropriation, animosity toward parks, and others that, as I became aware of them, suggested to me that it would not be wise to try to explore contentious issues in a short period of time with people to whom I am a stranger. I spoke with Aboriginal community members in Coffs Harbour and Bourke, and I believe that I laid the beginnings of a foundation for further work if it is found

to be required. I also had the opportunity to meet some non-Indigenous community members in Griffith as part of my everyday ethnography with Steve Meredith.

The fifth task of this research project was to attend an internal NPWS Workshop. I was asked to present the outcomes of Tasks 1-4 and to engage in discussion on these and other issues. The Workshop was video recorded, and a copy is available from NPWS. Some of the Workshop discussion is included in this report. I summarise parts of it, and I have also transcribed a few especially significant statements.

The ethics procedure is as follows: all interviews were conducted with the express permission of the person being interviewed; with permission of the speaker a few discussions were taped; all interviewees have been asked to edit their remarks, to delete any they wish to delete, and to indicate whether or not they prefer anonymity for part or all of the ideas and quotes that enter into this report. A copy of this report was circulated to the participants before being released publicly so that they would have the opportunity to assess the use of their words in context.

1.5 Background

Indigenous Kinship with the Natural World (Rose et al 2003) provides detailed results of research undertaken in 2002. The present report will make best sense if the main points in the earlier report are presented. It should be noted that the term ‘totem’ proved to be a blunt instrument, and was offensive to many Aboriginal people. We found that the concept of kinship with the natural world effectively and coherently communicated what ‘totemism’ means in New South Wales. In extreme brevity this ‘kinship with the natural world’ consists of mutually life-giving relationships among people, non-human species of plants and animals, some landforms, and some other ‘natural’ phenomena. In embedded and embodied practice, ‘totemism’

concerns actual relationships between particular people and particular parts of the natural world. These are kinship relationships, and they are characterised by mutual care and respect. We used the term ‘worldview’ to refer to an Indigenous cosmology that is place or landscape-centred, that is holistic, and that works across scales from individual (person, animal, plant, place, country) to cosmos, enmeshing living things and their country in connectivities that are mutually beneficial to their on-going lives. We also suggested that this worldview can be formalised under the concept of ‘totemic’ Law. This Law offers the basis for ways of thinking about co-management and sustainable futures. It was clear that ‘totemic’ Law would pose serious and difficult challenges that cut across many government departments, and across the worldviews of many non-Indigenous Australians. At the same time, we concluded that ‘totemic’ Law offers a guide for social and environmental justice that promotes the possibility for long-term sustainable habitation within Australia’s unique and threatened environments. We suggested, that is, that ‘totemic’ Law could guide the whole of Australia, not just Indigenous people. We concluded that in strengthening its commitment to ‘totemic’ law, NPWS/NSW would be in a position to lead Australia toward more ecologically aware consciousness and toward more sustainable long-term inhabitation of this country.

One of the main difficulties that many of the Aboriginal people we interviewed raised is the western separation of culture and nature. This division is fundamental to NPWS, as it is to international conventions on heritage, to the educational system, and to many other domains. One of the recommendations arising from the research with Ngiyampaa men, quoting Phil Sullivan, was this:

- National Parks need to recognise that for Indigenous people the 'natural' and 'cultural' heritage is not separate. This is an artificial 'whitefella' separation. They are still boxing the whole into sections, we need to

integrate management into a holistic view of the living landscape. (Rose et al 2003).

NPWS recognises this difficulty and explicitly addresses it in the Statement of Reconciliation. There is still a long way to go, and as some of the analysis in this report makes clear, the issue continues to trouble Indigenous staff.

In *Indigenous Kinship with the Natural World* we did not want to conflate worldview with 'culture', because aspects of culture vary from place to place across NSW, and local knowledge always needs to be learned (see Moore 2001). We also emphasised that while the term 'worldview' suggests a way of seeing the world, in this context it is also a way of being in the world – it encompasses aspects of identity, personhood, connections, ecological care and ultimate values and goals. I continue to use the term 'worldview' in this way in this report.

'Kinship with the Natural World' offers a way of stepping outside of the pigeon-holed divisions of western cosmology. As such, it offers a huge challenge. The current research is designed to facilitate people's ability to understand better the grounds for the need to step outside these divisions, and to analyse practical measures to facilitate the shifts from a divided worldview to a holistic one.

1.6 Statement of Reconciliation

The main issues addressed in this report are stated explicitly in the NPWS Statement of Reconciliation. This research is responsive to the process of implementation of several key items:

- 'The staff of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service acknowledge that the indigenous peoples are the original custodians of the lands

and waters, animals and plants of New South Wales and its many and varied landscapes.'

- 'As a guiding principle, we acknowledge that the Aboriginal peoples of NSW do not recognise the distinction between the natural and the cultural in relation to heritage.'

- 'We will invite greater involvement of Aboriginal communities in the management of all areas under NPWS control.'

- 'We are committed to moving towards a whole-of-landscape approach to Aboriginal heritage.'

A significant finding of this research is that in some areas NPWS is surpassing its own expectations.

2. EFFECTING CHANGE: SHARING UNDERSTANDING

The NPWS Statement of Reconciliation is evidence of a strong desire for change. Aboriginal staffs' dissatisfaction with the nature / culture divide and other aspects of a fractured worldview, is also a call for change. Many of the people I interviewed are well aware of the challenges they and Parks face.

The question that arises is: how do people change? In this chapter I look at several processes through which the people I interviewed understand themselves to have changed: direct and focussed learning (cultural awareness programs); local knowledge events (bush seminars); participation in broader social changes; transformative experiences (spontaneous and unpredictable).

I separate these types of experiences for analytic purposes, but I also need to state that this type of learning is cumulative and amplifying rather than compartmentalised, so the processes work with and reinforce each other. Furthermore, the individuals are not separate from the changes taking place within their communities and society (2.3). There are recursions between people, Parks, and society that enable people in Parks to be changing, as well as being changed by, Parks, community, and society.

2.1 Cultural awareness programs

There is no doubt that cultural awareness programs have the capacity to change people. Steve Meredith spoke about the cultural awareness program run by Christian Hampson and Graham Moore:

> 'You could actually see their faces change. Yeah, that was the most rewarding thing for me. That smug look on day one, till day three – and you should see some of these guys… You can't do it just sitting

> down in a room. You really have to show them. And people do change. I was really surprised. We do an evaluation, and some of the comments, like 'every Australian should do this course', stuff like that. It warmed my heart.'

Graham Moore discussed his experience, during the course of the Workshop. He said that people who took his course still ring him up and use the Indigenous names they were given during the cultural awareness program. In his view, as well as learning about Indigenous culture, people changed their understanding about stereotypes (see also 5.3):

> 'The bottom line is, what happened prior to Europeans is still affecting us. Traditional ways are still taught, still very strong in a lot of us. When I talk to people I find that [people still think that] Aboriginal people in NSW haven't got knowledge, haven't got understanding, haven't got stories, we've lost everything. Which is just not the case. It's just not the case.'

I interviewed Terry Korn, who took this course, and it was clear that what he learned had stayed with him, and continues to inform his work. One important understanding to come out of this course was an appreciation of some of the major differences between Indigenous lifeways and bureaucratic culture. Terry Korn explained:

> 'It was very effective in demonstrating how comminutes and families relate to each other. And for totems and landscape – seeing it from that viewpoint. You were given an animal to see as yours. Your country was defined and you defended it. They used the structure to demonstrate the importance of family and mob ties. Rules, for example: who you look after first. That's how it works. It's not bureaucratically aligned. It takes significant tolerance to adapt to the rules, the mob, the duties to people.'

The challenge was to find ways to increase Indigenous people's involvement with Parks whilst respecting the culture which is not aligned with bureaucracy. He discussed his goals:

> This Agency allows you to work with people to further these relationships and to put in structures to assist. We're moving into co-management issues. I'd dearly love to see a lot of parks fully managed by Aboriginal people in future. I've talked with people around the campfires, and I know we need to respect each other's skills and knowledge.'

As Gary Currey, (Cultural Heritage) described this course in the Workshop, one of the great things about it was that executives and others all mixed together. He described some parts of the program as being very emotional. Graham Moore picked up on the idea of mixing, and said that for the Aboriginal people who had participated in the course it had also been a journey of learning. He described the course as a two-way street.

NPWS is in the process of ensuring that over the next few years all staff will be able to do a cultural awareness program. At this time, a significant number of staff have not taken one. There is an urgent need to institute cultural awareness programs as soon as possible for staff who have thus far missed out.

During the workshop there was some discussion of whether cultural awareness programs should be mandatory. The discussion is not 100% clear, as several different proposals were discussed at once, but there seemed to be a consensus that it is no longer appropriate for Rangers and other staff to have no cultural awareness training. Steve Wolter succinctly clarified this view: 'I think that the cultural awareness training should be built into future ranger competencies. The current competencies are antiquated and will be

getting reviewed and up-dated in the near future.' Others agreed with this view, and look to the Agency for a strong statement that this is the right way to manage Parks today. Maxine Walker noted that there are legal requirements for consultation, so this is not really an optional issue any longer. Phil Sullivan advised that it should be required for all Agency personnel, not just Rangers. Maxine pointed out that a cultural awareness program is a stepping stone. Where people go from there 'is up to them individually'.

2.2 Bush seminars

During the Workshop the question was raised as to whether it would be better to have a standardised cultural awareness program for the whole state, or to have local cultural awareness programs that are responsive to local people and local issues. Graham Moore emphasised that the cultural awareness program he designed incorporates both strategies: it is a standardised structure that can be taken from place to place, and can involve local Elders, local staff, and local issues.

It is also the case, however, that staff move around and that local situations change (Elders die, groups shift alliances, issues come and go). There is an on-going need for contexts in which local learning can take place. In addition to formal cultural awareness programs that may be treated as one-off events, there is a further need for on-going events that are tailored to the local contexts. For convenience, I will use the term 'bush seminars' for such learning contexts. Another term is 'teaching camps'.

Maxine Walker organised a cultural program for Coffs Harbour staff that exemplifies the kind of learning event I am outlining. She had people spend one day in a classroom situation and one day in the bush. In her words:

> In the program I ran, the emphasis was on giving non-Aboriginal people our story. How we have survived, why we survived, why are the way we are. How all the things that happened in our past and your past, how they have affected us and how you can consider for yourself, as a non-Aboriginal person how to make a place for us in the non-Aboriginal system. Because we're not going to go away, we have survived this long and we'll continue to survive. We're very diverse. But like I said, giving non-Aboriginal people our story about what has actually happened: how the stolen generations have affected us, how the health situation is, and a lot of the social issues in our Aboriginal community, that non-Aboriginal people have not necessarily had the opportunity to hear from us rather than a non-Aboriginal person telling it from their view. So I think that was really strong in the program I ran, and a lot of people said, 'It's really given me a different perspective on Aboriginal people'.

The significance of local involvement is critical. Ann Walton expressed it well: 'The understandings have to come from the local indigenous community, and in a way to capture people's understanding and sympathy. We need to learn where they've come from and just how significant their role is.'

The importance of face-to-face encounter was vividly demonstrated in this and other such programs. Non-Indigenous people who have read widely on Aboriginal issues can find themselves moved to a degree that they never would have anticipated when confronted with personal testimony. Ann Walton for example, described a course in Aboriginal cultural heritage that she took at Flinders University while doing her undergraduate degree. This was her first encounter with personal story-telling:

> In our first lecture on Aboriginal cultural heritage, it was a really good way to introduce it because it really shocked us into the reality of what being Aboriginal means today. How they got there. And basically this

> woman was just relating her story, of how she was a young girl in the Pitjatjantjara lands and she remembers distinctly the day the government people were coming to take the children away.. … And then being taken away by government officials to be brought up in a mission. And just everyone really thought, then, about where Aboriginal people have come to, and just how hard they've had it under the European system, and just how ignorant … we really are of their culture.'

During the Workshop Brad Nesbitt emphasised the point that it is important for people to be able to reaffirm their learning and understanding. He expressed concern about the fact that for some Agency personnel there may be very few contexts in which to sustain their on-going intercultural learning. Peter Stevens spoke to this issue as well, saying personal learning requires exposure. It is interactive with Aboriginal people, and can't be done in isolation.

Bush seminars can be cumulative, building on people's experience as they continue to participate. They can thus honour the growing experience of the non-Indigenous staff who continue to participate, while at the same time accommodating people who are new to the region.

Another important aspect of bush seminars is that they can provide an opportunity for discussion, questions, sharing, and unpredictable moments of transformative understandings. This is not to say that sharing knowledge does not or cannot take place outside of formal events (see section 2.4). But it is also fair to say that all the people I spoke with, staff and community members, lead very busy lives. Opportunities for in-depth discussion, and relaxed, open-ended conversations, may be relatively rare.

A further benefit is that a prescribed learning context creates an area in which it is permissible to ask questions that might, in a more daily context,

seem inappropriate, and to ask questions that seek the kind of clarification that leads to transformation. It is often difficult for professional people to ask questions that show a degree of ignorance or vulnerability. Contexts that promote learning through constructive dialogue should be able to promote the questioning attitude that enables people to learn to the fullest possible extent.

When I was with Steve Meredith in Griffith a group of people from Murrumbidgee Irrigation was doing a cultural awareness course at the local TAFE. The course was developed and coordinated by Lloyd Dolan, who is an excellent teacher. In the afternoon he brought the people to Griffith, and Steve took them to a swamp to show them some sites and artefacts, so that they could know what things look like. Then we went back to a meeting room at Murrumbidgee Irrigation in Griffith, and Steve gave a terrific talk about himself and his country, about artefacts and sites, and about a landscape approach to understanding Aboriginal relationships with country, past and present. There was plenty of time for people to ask questions, Steve encouraged them to do so, and they asked some very interesting ones.

A lot of those questions, it seemed to me, really had to have a context in which information had been offered and questions had been invited. One example will make the point. Steve was talking about the Rainbow Snake, and also about the Murray Cod, and one of the people there said: ‘I thought they were stories to teach the kids, but you’re saying its true.’ Steve said ‘yes – and now people are starting to understand that.’ This man experienced a huge cognitive leap. He shifted from thinking that these are kids’ stories to thinking that these are living stories that people know to be true. This transformative shift in understanding happened, or started to happen, just in one afternoon. I came away wondering how many Parks staff have such accessible opportunities to learn.

Regular bush seminars for Parks people, organised periodically to build on the knowledge sharing that is taking place, would become a significant part of people's ability to continue to change with the changing (and challenging) circumstances of their daily work, and enhance the process of sharing knowledge and responsibility between NPWS and Indigenous people. Lynn Baker (TSU, Coffs Harbour) spoke of this with reference to scientists:

> 'In terms of scientists and natural resource managers understanding the landscape from the cultural perspective, I believe that this is best achieved by people going out into the field together and discussing the landscape and its management on site. This would allow both groups to see the issues from the other's perspectives.'

Short courses that are not necessarily designed for cultural awareness can also have significant effects. Allan Hutchins (Archaeologist, CHD, Dubbo) described an aspect of a site recognition in landscape exercise he took people on:

> 'I saw attitudes starting to change. There were a couple of comments like 'oh, this is really a respect issue. Like, if somebody was coming on to my land I would expect some warning up front about what's being proposed.' Its just basic courtesy. And they might be simple little words, respect and courtesy, but it's as though somebody has just dropped two bob in a slot machine and the lights have just finally gone on. There's that sort of realisation….'

Almost every non-Indigenous Ranger and Manager I spoke with discussed their work toward relationship building. This daily work is absolutely essential as Parks shifts toward co-management of much of the land under its control (3.2, 3.3). Bush seminars offer an episodic opportunity to continue the work of relationship building outside of the specifics of any given project.

The talent and skills that Aboriginal staff bring to their jobs include, in many cases, their ability to run bush seminars or similar events. Phil Sullivan was forceful, as usual: 'National Parks don't know they've got this huge resource in Aboriginal community and in the service. It would blow their minds.' April Blair spoke passionately about how Parks often does not make the best use of the human resources they have:

> 'There are all the local resources – the sites officers, and the Elders and other Aboriginal groups. There are organic forms of connection that could be better engaged. Aboriginal staff often take a holistic approach to their job, community, and country. We do the jobs because we want to bring our culture and community into the jobs.'

I discussed Steve Meredith's excellent teaching with Murrumbidgee Irrigation staff. He could be invited to do such short projects more broadly within Parks. In Dubbo, April Blair has talents and skills that have not yet been put to work in this area. Before joining Parks, April developed lectures and other teaching events to give non-Indigenous people an understanding of Dreaming Law and holistic connectivities. She has shared her insights on overseas lecture tours as well as in Australian high schools and college. Her experience is not at this time being drawn on to the extent that it could be. A copy of one of her teaching diagrams is included on page 28.

I have emphasised the sharing of knowledge from Indigenous to non-Indigenous people, but a good bush seminar would share knowledge in all directions. Bush seminars would offer staff the opportunity to answer questions from the community, and to negotiate shared understandings. It would be an opportunity to build trust and to build relationships outside of the daily work of Parks personnel and Aboriginal community members.

Changes are being effected in community members' perception of Parks as well. These changes are most effectively brought about by action. Cheryl

Perkins (Yarrawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Gumbainggir Nation) said: ''We're getting some small wins, and they count for a lot. People are sick of doing consultations when nothing changes.' She told the story of a road within a Park that went over a midden. The Elders asked for it to be changed, and NPWS moved the road. She said that people could hardly believe it. 'The respect aspect is extremely important.'

2.3 Participation in broader social processes

The process of learning about the suffering inflicted on Aboriginal people by the dominant society has been profoundly moving and personally transforming to many Australians. Parks staff have unique opportunities to start to turn around relationships of oppression, exclusion, and dispossession, and many are deeply committed to doing so.

The NPWS/NSW Statement of Reconciliation was driven by staff members' awareness of broader social processes. To quote Glenn Storrie (Area Manager, Coffs Harbour): 'The Reconciliation Statement was staff driven, not agency driven. We are starting to do a good job with cultural heritage. We're doing work that is leading government rather than following.'

I encountered an impressive number of deeply committed non-Indigenous staff. They have a strong and pervasive sense that what Aboriginal staff are doing for the Service is profound, and they expressed the honour they feel at being able to work with Aboriginal people in effecting change that it is leading to far-reaching transformations within the Service and within society more broadly. To quote Terry Korn:

> 'I've been working closely with Barkandji Elders at Lake Victoria. This work has really reinforced some of the views I had. I have extreme sympathy for Aboriginal people. We as a community have a serious obligation to work with them to ensure their connections with family

> and landscape are paid due respect.
>
> I feel really sad that a lot of people have been disconnected from land. They used to work out there, and now they're in town. I'm honoured that Parks provides an opportunity to reconnect. We can facilitate that.''

When I asked people about how they had developed this commitment, many referred to their own knowledge of, perhaps their own personal encounters with, Australia's history of injustice. Steve Wolter's passion for working for Aboriginal people is based on the feeling that a wrong has been done and that a lot of positive things need to be done now. He has worked toward changing the legacy of the past for years: 'wherever I've gone I've done similar things – to help Aboriginal people get back to the land.' Coming back to Cobar as Regional Manager gives him the opportunity to influence the course of things.

As participants in processes of social change, Parks staff have opportunities to press for continuing change. Glenn Storrie said:

> 'I have an interest and commitment to making a difference within my areas of responsibility in working with Aboriginal people. I like many in the community are committed to reconciliation and to the traditional ownership of land by Aboriginal people, we're learning more about how they've been impacted by invasion or settlement. With others I am becoming socially aware, consider the impacts on Aboriginal communities, and identify ways to redress these impacts.'

At local and daily scales Parks personnel are in the position to influence local change and local power relations. Community involvement is becoming a priority in areas where managers take the view that their role is to encourage social change. Terry Korn, for example, provided money and gave staff time

out of the office to work on the 'Elders Tent' at the Red Ochre Corroboree in Dubbo over Easter weekend. This community initiative is establishing a flagship Aboriginal event in Dubbo that aims 'unite people of all races in our region, with a particular emphasis on Aboriginal culture (traditional and contemporary).[1]

In a similar vein, Tony Meppem and Phil Sullivan in Bourke organised a youth camp at Gundabooka NP, as one way of initiating new and more engaged relationships between NPWS and the Bourke communities. The camp was funded by NPWS. It addressed a problem that matters deeply to the Indigenous community: the alienation of youth. It started to build credibility with the community, and to build links with key organisations, especially, in this case, Centrecare. In addition, they have been making stronger links between all the local Aboriginal agencies and NPWS. While I was in Bourke a group of people was invited to the office for lunch. Tony explained:

> 'Sharing a meal is a way to get to know people. These meetings are about relationship building. You take the time, you have conversation and food, its more relaxed. You've got to keep having events, and then people will talk in between them. This is a policy approach that recognises Aboriginal ways of working.'

There are many such examples of Parks personnel engaging with communities to build relationships and bring improvements both to the community and to Parks. These initiatives are part of a broader shift in NPWS culture that sees Parks as integrated within social landscapes, rather than seeing them as zones of exclusion. The longer-term effects of such initiatives may be far reaching. In changing communities, people are changing the regional social landscape, and thus are creating conditions under which new Australian forms of society, land management, and sense of place can emerge. At the same time, in changing communities, people are changing

[1] Quotation taken from the Red Ochre Corroboree promotional materials.

their own lives, and the lives of their own families. To quote Steve Wolter again: 'Community outreach is important: we need to work with what matters to the community…. And we're part of that community. Parks and community-based management, people adopting the park.'

2.4 Transformative experiences

A number of people spoke with me about experiences that had transformed their consciousness. I have quoted Ann Walton (section 2.2) on how this took place for her in the classroom. Most of the other people who spoke of such transformations described events that took place in the bush with Elders. Glenn Storrie's account is very clear and luminously honest. He attended a meeting with Elders in the bush, and:

> 'Elders of the community stood together at the beginning of the meeting to welcome me (and other NPWS representative), and wished for good negotiations. That was a humbling experience. These generally Elderly people were giving me respect, it demonstrated the generosity of these people. That was an important moment.
>
> It's not just a formality. Once you start to realise what these people have been through and to also be so generous is also humbling.'

The paradoxical aspect of the unexpected is that it cannot be engineered. However, enough people told me enough stories about being changed in some fundamental way whilst in country with Elders, that it is clear that these conditions provide a context within which the unexpected can continue to grab people and change them.

Transformative experiences ought not to be imagined as one-off moments of enduring change. The world changes, the issues change, and people change. It is clear that people go on being transformed throughout their lives if they

are open to encounter, and if they are in the right circumstances for change to grab hold of them.

Parks is now providing transformative experiences for visitors as well as staff (discussed in Rose 2002). Phil Sullivan works consciously for this outcome in his guided tours at Gundabooka: ‘I want them to understand who I am. If they go away understanding a little bit more about my country and who I am, then I’ve done my job. I want to touch their emotions, so when they go away their values change.’

The rangers and managers who work at the cutting edge of relationship building and social change have the greatest opportunities to experience such change. They are Agency leaders in this area.

2.5 Prospects and priorities

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the experiences I am discussing here are not separable. They are cumulative, and they start to amplify. Glenn Storrie stated: ‘We’re starting to see people across numerous contexts, and they’re getting to know each other, seeing each other often enough. Lots of little things happen that build relationships.’

‘Lots of little things’ can take many forms, including just dropping by for a cup of tea. But at the end of the day they also take time, and thus have to be prioritised. David Nalder (Ranger, Coffs Harbour) posed the question this way: ‘The question is the relative priority, among many competing priorities, that we assign to just hanging out and listening.’

Phil Sullivan always encourages people to go the extra mile, so a question becomes:

> 'Will people take time outside of the job to sit and talk with others. That's what it will take for Parks to be the leading government Agency to bring Aboriginal and white people together. Because they work so close to the land. In Parks it all comes back to the land – everything.'

2.6 Generosity

The work of effecting change involves Parks personnel at every level. I have noted that for non-Indigenous staff there are many challenges here. It is only fair to note that while non-Aboriginal people are working hard to rise to the challenges, none of this would be happening at all without the generosity of Aboriginal people – those within Parks, and those outside of Parks who are assisting in all these projects. Gary Currey's statement (in the Workshop) of how to handle people who are not learning well is, to my mind, a richly generous statement of how Indigenous staff are reaching out to others in attitudes of extreme generosity:

> There's people in our organisation that still have problems [with cultural awareness] and it's up to us to try an work through those, assist them, give them some guidance, and hopefully the culture will change.

2.7 Recommendations arising from Chapter 2.

- Institute cultural awareness programs as soon as possible for staff who have thus far missed out. Whilst setting up a permanent structure, do what is possible now.

- Cultural awareness training should be built into future ranger competencies.

- In addition to the formal programs, make more effective use of the many talented and committed Aboriginal staff members. Foster increasing development of short courses that:

  - Are local / place-based,
  - Are episodic (not one-off),
  - Are tailored to local issues and people, and
  - Involve Elders,
  - Involve visits to country,
  - Sustain openness to questions, and
  - Promote dialogue.

- Include informal opportunities to take time to just sit and listen among the priorities of Staff duties.

- Enhance the culture of learning to allow a space within which lack of knowledge is an acceptable basis for people to be asking questions and continuing to develop.

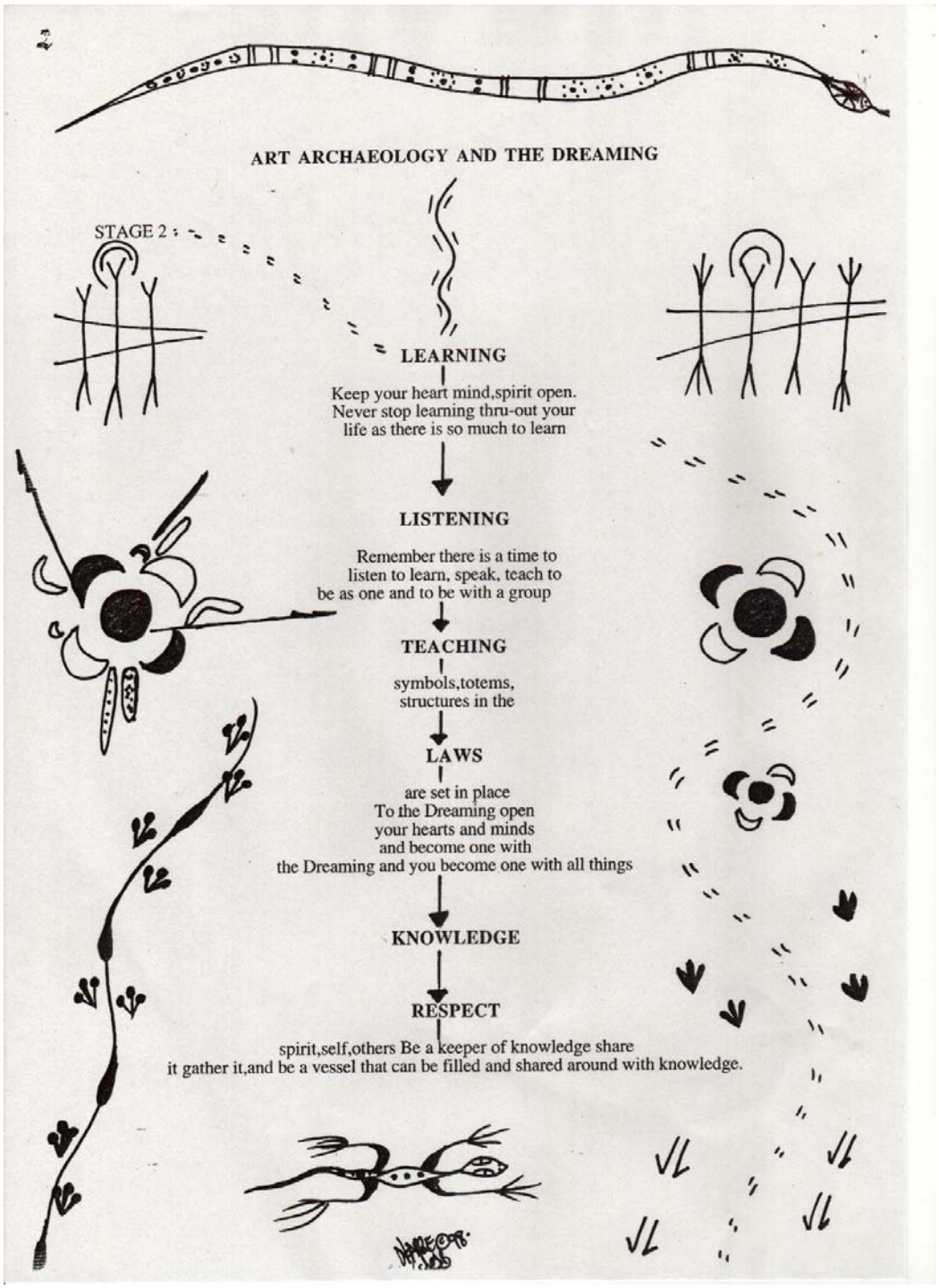


Figure courtesy of April Blair

3. CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LAND

As Phil Sullivan said: 'In Parks it all comes back to the land – everything.'

Reconciliation is driving change in relationships with land; these changes require new understandings and are, at the same time, producing new understanding. The cumulative and amplifying processes of gaining understanding through learning (Chapter 2) also involve changing relations with land. In this chapter I bring land into the dynamic. My discussion touches on several aspects of co-management or joint management. I do not plan to replicate the voluminous literature on this subject. Rather, I want to show how Agency staff are encountering and handling demands for greater community involvement and commitment. I will conclude with a discussion of some of the forms of sharing that go beyond standard visions of co-management.

3.1 Whose landscape, which landscape?

The NPWS Statement of Reconciliation expresses commitment to the view that Aboriginal people were the original custodians of the land. Steve Wolter takes this commitment much further. He expressed his view forcefully at the Workshop:

> 'In my region, when I got there, one of the first things I made very clear: we're all working on Aboriginal landscapes. That's the first principle that all rangers and field staff are going to come from. So everything you do impacts on that landscape. That's the first line of thinking that a ranger has to have … I'm the Regional Manager, that's the direction.

> That's where we're going, and that is the vision for the region. That's how we operate.'

Phil endorsed Steve's work, saying: 'that's stepping right out, and he's taking it on. And changes are really happening in Bourke and Cobar.' In Phil's view, Steve has set a first rate standard in the Upper Darling Region.

The Statement of Reconciliation also expresses commitment to a whole-of-landscape approach to Aboriginal heritage. This commitment, too, is being taken further. In many areas Managers and Rangers are taking a whole-of-landscape approach that exceeds the boundaries of Parks and that includes plants, animals, water and people. The whole-of-landscape approach is thus moving in the direction of a holistic 'country' approach.

The shift to a landscape approach was a shift away from the former site-based approach to cultural heritage. It required a shift from artefact to living culture. Allan Hutchins described the process of stimulating understanding through landscape:

> 'As a unit [Cultural Heritage Division], we've come a long way, particularly under Jason Ardler's leadership. There have been significant changes in the culture of NPWS, and that's just now starting to bear fruit.
>
> In the past cultural heritage got a token view; that can only change if people do it more fully. They need to begin to get away from site and artifact, and on to social and landscape aspects in order to understand it better. When this happens the connectivities start to crystallise in their minds. It's a good start and I hope it keeps going.'

He described a trip to Gundabooka:

> ‘And there’s one focal point where you can stand and look out over this landscape, and most people just see a range of hills, or whatever, but when the story associated with it is explained to you, you can look at it with different eyes and see what Aboriginal people saw in it. Then you start to get an appreciation of why the art sites are where they are, and why that little area around the creek is so important to them. So it starts to give people an appreciation straight away of how Aboriginal people lived in that environment. So, two things happen. One is about improving the experience for visitors. But more than that, its about sharing of information, and along with that sharing of information, there’s nothing put across in a simplistic fashion. Its done without giving away those parts of the story that have extreme importance or significance. You’ve shared that information, and you’ve educated people as well, and I think that goes a long, long way toward building respect and breaking down a lot of these divisions that seem to be there.
>
> And in a sense, that’s why its so important for NPWS to look at this on a landscape view, because it does get back to that traditional Aboriginal role, and that in itself makes dialogue between regional staff and Aboriginal groups a little bit easier.’

Glenn Storrie links the whole landscape approach to improved consultations with Aboriginal communities: ‘This process is about: we want you to tell us what you want to talk about. We’ll talk with you about the whole plan, not just cultural heritage. People have links to the whole landscape, not just the bones and stones.’

Steve Meredith spoke to the Murrumbidgee Irrigation people about the shift in thinking from site to landscape. He used the metaphor of stretching, and he linked it to Aboriginal mobility. Thus, in his view, sites are in the

landscape as discrete places, but are also ‘stretched’ across country by reason of being joined to other sites through Aboriginal mobility across whole landscapes. In addition to stretching sites across country, he also discussed how they are stretched through time, connecting the past with the present and the future.

In addition to Aboriginal mobility, Steve discussed Dreaming connections. His discussions of the Rainbow Serpent (Wawi) and the Murray Cod, led to an awakening sense of the wonder of being in the presence of a whole new way of thinking about the world (2.2). At least one ranger volunteered that this is an approach she would like to implement in thinking about whole landscapes. Rita Enke (Ranger, Bourke) said:

> ‘There are broad landscape issues that connect, like Dreaming tracks. Mt Gundabooka, junction of the Barwon – Darling, Culgoa and Bogan Rivers, Mt Oxley, Yambacoona, Brewarrina fish traps, Byrock rockholes. If I had influence I’d be looking at those broader Dreaming track or sites as important for Aboriginal culture.’

She linked the tracks with her own training in ecology: ‘Often areas with a lot of evidence of Aboriginal occupation are also areas of high biodiversity… These areas are important also in terms of natural heritage conservation.’

On the whole, the Aboriginal Parks staff wanted to take this concept of whole landscapes further, to include people not only in the past but in the present as well. Steve Meredith explained:

> ‘With the sites and stuff, the people were there too. That means to me that they are there together. When you talk to old people you don’t talk about separate issues, or that’s an animal, or that’s a plant, it’s just all part of it. They don’t even use words like environment. When you say, ‘what you call that?’, [they answer] ‘oh, used to be home,

> such and such was born there', or 'the eldest was born here', things like this. They know things very fondly, and they know all the things that went on. And the really intimate stuff. And they'll tell you things you just don't see, but they don't make themselves separate from it.'

I will return to the issue of culture / nature separation at several points in this report (see 6.1.2), but it is also important to consider it in the context of the whole-of-landscape approach, because a whole landscape is not just cultural remains and living ecologies; it is also living people. As Dee Murphy (Yarrawarra) explained:

> 'The natural and cultural are one. Aboriginal people and landscape, the environment, they go as one. Aboriginal people want to care for "nature". It's part of them, it's who they are. It's really important to have people involved because it all matters to them. It's not until things get to the threatened stage, that non-Indigenous people seem to start to get the sense of it.'

3.1.1 Threatened Species Units

From an indigenous point of view, threatened species are part of the whole landscape. There is no good reason to exclude animals or plants, any more than people, and yet, the divisions within NPWS/NSW work against this level of holism. The current restructuring agenda may contribute even more to a division that people are only recently finding ways to bridge. It would be a great loss to the NPWS commitment to reconciliation if this important work toward holism were to be sidelined, suspended, or brought to a halt.

Lynn Baker (TSU, Coffs Harbour) has given a lot of thought to this issue. Her anticipation of the benefits that could arise from greater involvement of Aboriginal people with the TSU may have been shaped by her years of experience in the Pitjatjantjara lands (Nesbitt et al 2001), but it is clear to

her that the possibilities in NSW are equally important. She and Tony English (Research Unit, CHD) are engaged in trialling the joint management of threatened species in collaboration with local Aboriginal communities. Other joint activities include the work Peter Christie (TSU, Dubbo) is doing with the people of Mutawintji NP on the yellow footed rock wallaby, and work on the South Coast with koalas (Allen 2001). Peter Peckham (CHD, Dubbo) expressed his pleasure: 'We should have been working closely together years ago. They'd like to work more with us. Threatened species are all part of us.' (see Chapter 4).

In Lynn Baker's view, the Threatened Species Units would benefit greatly from an identified position:

> On the question of how to integrate physically: we need an identified position as a liaison person in our Threatened Species Unit, and probably other units, who can help integrate the natural resource management work we do and the cultural component of that natural resource management. This would mean we have somebody on the team who knows the issues and knows the community and who can help establish connections. As it is, we rely on Aboriginal Heritage Units to do the initial introductions and coordination and this works extremely well, however, it places additional demands on the Aboriginal Heritage Unit's resources. I would like to see more of a partnership between the threatened species unit (and others) and the AHU's and the identified positions could provide the linkage point. With regard to threatened species recovery planning, we are now required under the Threatened Species Conservation Act to consult with Aboriginal people when preparing recovery plans. This will require a significant commitment of time and resources if we are to do it well. Here I can see the identified person as being the coordinator of the consultation processes, working with AHU officers, the Threatened Species coordinators (who would write the plans) and the communities

> to be consulted. One of the statements made during a community consultation recently was “Don’t place us in a cultural heritage box – we want to be consulted and involved in the whole recovery process.”’

During the workshop there was very brief discussion of the lack of consultation with Aboriginal people on matters of pest control. This issue arose briefly in some of the interviews, and was expressed most succinctly in the Workshop by Graham Moore who pointed out that in his region some of the so-called weeds are very important medicines.

3.1.2 Research

NPWS-sponsored research is amplifying people’s understandings, and suggesting more directions for knowledge-sharing. One example is research into Indigenous ecological knowledge. The Cultural Heritage Division and other units are funding research into ethnobotany, and use of terrestrial plants and animals, and sea resources (for example, see English 2000, 2002). In this context Tony English is expanding the conventional definition of ‘heritage’, enabling it to connect in a positive way with Aboriginal people’s real-life landscape concerns and interests:

> “Heritage” can derive much of its meaning from active interaction between people and place. This interaction can be linked to past events or practices, but can also be a facet of contemporary life. Using wild resources is one example. (English 2002: 3)

Taking another approach, Denis Byrne (2003) and Maria Nugent are mapping Aboriginal people’s actual use of landscape – tracks, travels, resource use, and inhabitation within the racially separated landscapes of colonisation (see also 5.2.3).

Across NPWS, research is bringing new understandings into the Parks environment. It is essential that such research be well circulated so that it can achieve its potential in helping people shape their thinking and practice in their rapidly changing work environments. Glenn Storrie, among others, expressed his interest around ideas that are quite new in Parks contexts:

> ‘In addition to sites, there are the cultural association to plants and animals and their uses. We’ve not fully considered these matters in our management. We’ve not thought about whether it is food, or is it sacred. It gives depth to our management, more than scientific knowledge, there’s a cultural layer too – given that it’s existed ‘forever’ for Aboriginal community. We’re doing better at understanding, and we’re helping their culture as well by getting people back to their land. We have the capacity through resources such as funds, expertise, and equipment to help the Aboriginal community achieve some of their aspirations in getting back to the land.’

3.1.3 Regions

The wider edge of the whole-of-landscape approach is the issue of regions and regionalisation. Tony Meppem has been thinking deeply on this matter, and his vision for a future landscape approach is to develop regional linkages. In his view:

> ‘An alliance of Aboriginal people across the northern Murray Darling region is ambitious but would allow for required negotiating capacity to get real outcomes for Aboriginal people: we should be linking people up on a landscape scale, where they used to move around. We should be acting to support getting people involved on that scale. There needs to be cross-border linkages as well, with Parks in Queensland. There

> should be Aboriginal policy development meetings around the whole catchment that are supported not driven by government agency. Making a healthy environmental governance system is about getting diversity of self-interest in negotiating outcomes. If there are only a few groups, it's not healthy (equivalent to low biodiversity).'

Such an approach has the potential to link up Aboriginal regional coalitions with bio-regions and new regional catchment management coalitions to enhance participation in decision-making.

3.2 Consultations

The requirement that Parks staff engage more deeply, consistently, and effectively with Aboriginal community groups arises from legislation requiring consultations, and from the direction Parks is taking toward co-management. Everyone seems to be on a steep learning curve. Consultation works best when communities have organisations that can be responsive, and when their own internal divisions can be managed so as not to impede consultations. Non-Indigenous staff who had not formerly been required to engage in consultations have expressed hesitancy, and in some cases, fear, as well as strong interest. Many of the people I interviewed spoke of these issues, and yet all of them were getting on with the job. Their gratitude to Aboriginal Heritage and Sites Officers was immense. Glenn Storrie's words express ideas that most of the people I interviewed expressed (in relation to their own locations and Officers):

> 'Maxine [Walker] gives us a conduit to community. Rangers didn't know how to start. They have a desire not to give offence, and they have respect for the community. This led to us not going as far as we could. Maxine has made it possible.'

April Blair expressed similar views from the perspective of an Aboriginal officer:

> We've been getting involved with other units and other departments, and we've made them aware of how things are on the land, landscape, and consultation. We have done projects like teaching Cultural Archaeology and site survey to inmates at Yettadhinnakal [prison]. A lot of people have trouble with consultation, and even working with Aboriginal staff. Because they don't know how to handle it/us. I think they're frightened they're going to say something wrong, or do something wrong. It's not a bad thing. It's not negative. Particularly here, it was a bit of a difficult start for me, I think everyone felt a bit awkward because they didn't know how to approach me as an Aboriginal with an Aboriginal issue, people would go to Allan as a non-Aboriginal person to ask him about Aboriginal issues, we felt upset by this. But as a person they were fine, very friendly. It just took for us to look at each other as people. But we openly said, 'ask us'. If you're not sure, come and talk with us. This opened the doors for culture awareness and a hope for a better working relationship. This sort of stuff happens between our mob too, so don't think I'm just singling out non-Aboriginal people. It's the case if you're in you're in, if you're not you're not, and you're then also isolated.

Allan Hutchins added an important point: 'No wrong step is ever totally irretrievable. I can't think of a single incident of irreversible error, with people.'

Many of the interviewees said that their first contacts with local Aboriginal communities were mediated by Aboriginal officers. Ann Walton spoke vividly of her desire to be introduced:

> So [Aboriginal Officers have] always been my first contact. And I've waited for them to introduce me to the people. I haven't actually bowled up and said 'Hi, I'm Ann, you've gotta know me', sort of thing. I've just waited until there was an appropriate time and the sites officer wanted to take me into those groups. And I've found that that is a good way of doing it because you've got a link then, and if you develop a relationship with your sites officer, then you can go into those environments. If the sites officer has trust and respect, that will pass through to the people that you need to talk to, like the Elders groups…. And I don't want to tread on anyone's toes, or go over anyone's head, or do the wrong thing. So it's always best to be introduced at the appropriate time. And that's the process I go by. It will happen with time. Its not something that should be rushed into.'

Introductions do not solve all the problems, of course. I asked Greg Wallace (Ranger, Coffs Harbour) what sorts of problems he encountered, and he discussed his work at Nambucca, where Aboriginal people are rapt to be involved. 'They haven't had that consultation before. Taking them out [to parks] – they love it. I'm trying to do it less formally, to build a rapport.' He added that 'the challenge is that you may end up dealing with people you really like, and maybe not getting a full and broad consultation.'

Like many others, Greg stressed the need to seek advice from the community about the level of involvement they want on any particular issue. 'Get togethers in parks seem to work real well. We're developing ideas here, but it is important that we ask the community to tell us how they would like to be involved.'

The Statement of Reconciliation states that NPWS 'will invite greater involvement of Aboriginal communities in the management of all areas under NPWS control.' Community involvement requires relationship building, trust-building, and, as Ann Walton put it, 'no hidden agendas'. As discussed in

Chapter 2, relationship-building may start with camps and seminars, or may start, as Tony Meppem did in Bourke, by door knocking all the Aboriginal organisations in town.

Glenn Storrie summed up much of the new knowledge in this way: 'I've learned it is very much about relationships. We didn't previously have that. They need to be built and maintained. The basics of meaningful consultation is relationship.'

The understandings that are emerging through relationship-building offer three important insights. The first is that not all communities want the same level of consultation, and that one community may not want the same levels on all matters. The key process is to ask communities to indicate the levels of consultation they prefer on any given issue. Thus, not only is consultation an emergent process, but the even the consultation to determine the consultation is an emergent process. Such consultations have to start right at the very beginning of the process. As Maxine Walker said, 'Plans of Management are mostly written or drafted before consulting with us, and we're getting left out of the real process.'

The second point is the question of whole landscapes. As discussed in section 3.1, it is probable that there may be nothing that Aboriginal people would not want to have the opportunity to consider, and it must be noted that their landscape concerns do not stop at Park boundaries.

The third concerns time lines for consultations. Almost every person I interviewed, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, mentioned the need to try to calibrate different time lines into a workable procedure. Tony Meppem was particularly acute in his analysis (see Meppem & Bourke 1999). In his view, the bureaucratic orientation toward problems with discrete time-bound solutions is itself a problem:

> ‘The problem-solution approach is itself a problem. It’s got a cultural orientation. Basic problem: we close on problem definition real quick because we are conditioned that to suspend is indecision which is weakness. Good outcomes for the environment require capacity building, which is not happening effectively. Consultation is always being closed down. We [whitefellas] are good at operational planning, but getting complexity in there is a more challenging issue…. We like discreet problems because then we can find solutions. This really narrows the focus.’

In addition to inappropriate demands, there is the further problem that Aboriginal communities work to their own time frames, and must include discussion with many people, most of whom have many other concerns in their lives. As one of the Coffs Harbour interviewees put it:

> ‘We’re finding that follow-up is the most important thing. The plan of management process is new to them. Its about management being flexible, and consultations being flexible. It’s a process – the Elders are gaining trust in the process and in the people. We’re getting a lot of positive feedback through Maxine [Walker], and the plans of management are changing. Having Maxine has been a huge help. It’s a trust thing – they know her.’

Time demands may become considerable burdens. Rebecca Edwards-Booth put the problem succinctly: ‘Everybody wants the Elders to answer all our questions. We try to find a balance between consultation and deluge.’

Effective consultations have outcomes, and those outcomes contribute to building trust within communities. Cheryl Perkins and Dee Murphy spoke of their pleasure at the mutual respect that developed in recent consultations with the Marine Parks Authority: ‘They employed us to do consultations and they <u>really</u> listened and <u>really</u> incorporated our views into the plan.’

Elaine Ohlsen's description of her relationship with the Cobar Parks group is an ideal result: 'We've got a good relationship with Parks. They always come to us and let us know what they're doing. I come in when I want a cup of tea, and say hello to them. It's a friendly place.'

3.2.1 Bindarri NP

I will include one example of a planning and consultation process that has been widely admired. I had the good fortune to accompany Maxine Walker, Ann Walton (Ranger), Denique Littler (Planner) and a group of Elders and field officers on a visit to Bindarri NP.

The trip was part of a process of consultation that had involved numerous steps. The first step was consultation with the Northern Aboriginal Heritage Unit to identify the relevant groups and individuals that should be consulted. Second, letters were sent to local Aboriginal Land Councils, Elders groups, and community members letting them know that the Plan of Management process was being initiated and inviting their in-put. The letters were followed up with phone calls inviting people to a meeting. At the meeting the Plan of Management process was explained, and people were invited to offer guidance for how they would like to be consulted with. At the meeting people stated that they would like to visit the park. Two field trips were organised, one before the draft plan was prepared, and the second during the exhibition period of the draft plan. A different group of people attended the second field trip than had attended the first. After the second field trip there was a follow-up meeting to discuss the draft plan. Minutes were taken at the meeting, and they went back to the local communities for endorsement. Those endorsed minutes constitute the Aboriginal communities' submission on the plan.

As Glenn Storrie said, this is a heightened level of involvement for Parks as well as for communities:

> ‘Consultation on Bindarri National Park Plan of Management is a demonstration of where I want to go. We have a need to work more closely with the Aboriginal community. We have a lot to learn from Aboriginal people. For a start we need a greater acceptance of the traditional ownership. We’ve given it lip service. We’ve gone through the motions. This is a learning process, and I realised we had to put more resources in and make a real commitment here.’

Maxine Walker offered a punchy summary (in the Workshop) of the work Glenn Storrie and Regional Manager Allan Jeffreys are doing: ‘Glenn and Allan had the balls to do something different.’

3.2.2 Commitment and career

The process of building trust and building relationships is set within time, and so a further aspect of time factors concerns commitment to place. Glenn Storrie expressed part of the dilemma: ‘Our work with Aboriginal people is an on-going dialogue for relationship building. We as bureaucrats do our thing and move on, but relationships have to be sustained in between issues.’ Many Rangers, particularly younger people, have to weigh up the requirements of career objectives with their desire to make a commitment to a place. Bourke is a good example. This is a community that is described as being peopled by a large generally settled Aboriginal population and ‘a circulating group of nomadic professionals, usually from urban backgrounds, pursuing their own career trajectories’ (Cowlishaw 1997: 179). Rita Enke has been there for four years, and she finds herself feeling torn, as many of her friendships with other professionals have been interrupted because people left:

> ‘I think about a change, but I’ve learned so much, building up relationships, and there are things to complete. If I go someone else I would have to start again. There’s so much potential here – but then, do I want to stay here forever? There is a high turnover in Bourke. People I became friends with have moved on. Some who left tried to get back, they regretted leaving.’

Steve Wolter took a very determined view. As a Regional Manager who had returned to Cobar as part of making a commitment to place and process, he put it this way: ‘I’m the fourth manager in four years. Morowari people said “why should we trust you?” I’ve had to build trust – its going to take a long time. It’s a commitment I have to make.’

This is a decision that has far less impact on Aboriginal Staff, as most already are in or near their home country, and most see themselves in Parks for purposes that extend beyond Parks, beyond careers, and into the future beyond their own lifetimes. Steve Meredith explained: ‘we’re going to live and die here, a lot of the others come through as a career move. They make decisions and move on.’ He noted that some of them get along very well, and some of them really want the experience of the west, but many of them are on a career track that will take them away.

In contrast to young rangers who spoke of their need to gain experience and stimulation through change, Ranger Tim Sides (Griffith) has made a place-oriented choice that links family and place through time. Tim Sides grew up on a farm in the district, and is part of the fifth generation of his farming family. His commitment is to the local region, as he explained:

> ‘The majority of people in these areas don’t know the area. Eventually they’ve got plans to move on. The majority is conscientious, but at the end of the day it’s not part of their life. This means that things can

> become disjointed, but it is good to have people come in with new ideas. That's part of it too.'

I told Tim that I was noticing the fact that he seemed to see both his past and his future in the country here. He said, 'Its an intergenerational thing. I'd like my family to grow up in this environment.' In wanting to connect his life to the future, he said, 'the history of this area since white settlement is something I'll always be proud of, and look to the future – to make the future more sustainable, more viable, more environmentally friendly.'

To be fair, not everyone has the option of staying or leaving. Ann Walton expressed the dilemma:

> 'Having connections with the Aboriginal people makes it harder to leave if you have to leave. Starting again from scratch is awfully hard. You have to learn it all over again: who to consult with, all that stuff, and getting to know people – letting them know who you are, you learning about who they are. Here, I've only just started getting to know people. And its not fair to the community. The community doesn't want to lose you. We're just starting to get somewhere. Starting over is hard work for everybody.'

Greater degrees of permanence will improve the long-term prospects of consultations that are taking place, and is absolute necessary for relationship-building. As the consultative process deepens, it is becoming urgent to recognise that NPWS will need to adopt some fluid measures to ensure that both desires – for experience and change, as well as for depth and continuity – are met. This may mean considering people's whole family situation in meeting their requests for permanency or for change. It may mean developing flexible secondment arrangements that can give people opportunities to expand their experience without having to sacrifice the work they have put into an area. It will almost certainly mean providing more

financial incentives to help people stay in 'remote' locations. It may also mean enabling more people from head office to have their jobs transferred to regional areas so as to ensure that sustainable relationship-building is not only being done by Rangers, Field Officers, and Managers.

3.3 Communities and co-management

Tony Meppem discussed one of the key changes in Parks, as he sees it:

> Instead of National Parks linking back to Sydney, with policy and expertise appearing to come from there, consideration needs to be given to working toward a National Parks place-based approach. This means understanding that Parks are nested within their communities. It's a process-driven approach, and supportive of local communities and their relationships. You'd still bring in expertise from outside, but its more ethical, and is accountable within the local context.

Situating Parks within their region and in relation to their communities marks a major shift that Parks has been working on for some years now. In Tony's words: 'Parks was formerly about locking up space – to conserve and preserve. We look at how the parks can contribute to contemporary social issues through approaches that promote conservation.'

Collaborative relationships designed to address contemporary community needs as well as contemporary Parks needs bring a new dimension to what has been called co-management.[2] Traditionally, joint management has been seen as a set of trade-offs. In a recent article, for example, Dermot Smyth, says that joint management means:

[2] The terms 'co-management' and 'joint management' are often used interchangeably. According to Michael Adams, 'joint management' is the term used in legislation in NSW, and 'co-management' tends to be used more inclusively to refer to a range of arrangements from formal to informal.

> … the establishment of legal partnership and management structure that reflects the rights, interests, and obligations of the Aboriginal owners of the park, as well as those of the relevant government…. Joint management arrangements represent a trade-off between the rights and interests of traditional owners, and the rights and interests of government conservation agencies and the wider Australian community. (Smyth 2001: 75-6)

A number of the interviewees introduced me to ideas that go far beyond the trade-off model, and I was told of other people with other ideas who would be good to interview. I regret that it was not possible to continue the research further. This and other research on cultural heritage would benefit from being pursued in more locations and being sustained through time. On the basis of my limited discussions, the following points stand out.

The cumulative and amplifying effects of increasing cultural awareness and expanding knowledge base, combine with the ramifying implications of whole-of-landscape approaches, and the increasing involvement of Aboriginal communities in management issues. Parks is moving rapidly beyond the trade-off model and into new and socially transforming ways of thinking and doing ‘co-management’. It is probable that NSW NPWS is now developing world leadership in new forms of community engagement. As Meppem said, ‘You can't just think inside the fence.’

I will discuss two examples of ‘thinking outside the fence’. I want to show not only that people are thinking outside the fence, but also that the new ‘co-management’ is taking on a regional flavour because it is working with local Aboriginal groups, local Rangers and Managers, local Parks and issues. Rather than seeking to impose structures, the new thinking is facilitating the emergence of new relationships. The emphasis is on synergy rather than trade-offs. For this reason, the new thinking is dynamically engaged with the

local, the regional, the national, and the global, and is very much in transition.

3.3.1 Co-management

Tony Meppem made a conceptual link between co-management and sustainability. In a series of recent articles, he and his colleagues have proposed a communicative approach to sustainability (Meppem & Gill 1998, Meppem & Bourke 1999, Meppem 2000). Their intention is to reconfigure discourses of sustainability by re-imagining sustainability itself. Rather than being imagined as a future outcome, they argue that sustainability is best imagined as an on-going negotiation within a discursive community. In re-thinking sustainability they call for participatory decision making that aims for developing 'shared meaning' which is 'they key for effective articulation and implementation of sustainability strategies' (Meppem & Bourke 1999: 401).

Co-management, in Meppem's view is best brought into being through similar negotiations. In his view, co-management is an on-going negotiation that never stops.

Steve Wolter, the Regional Manager, takes a similarly open-ended approach:

> 'Co-management – it's a direction that evolves itself. It is unknown. Co-management could take almost any direction and it depends on the type of park or reserve and the aspirations of the Aboriginal community. It's a landscape approach, it's not just sites. And it's culturally sensitive; it is connection, and it all has cultural significance.'

This is a dialogical and reflexive way of thinking and entering into co-management. It is based on open-ended negotiation, and thus works toward both predictable and unpredictable outcomes; it is designed to share power

and to improve the quality of life in local communities of which Parks and Parks personnel are a part.

One of the most interesting aspects to the open-ended processes now happening is the corollary capacity within NPWS to ask disturbing and important questions. For me, this question arose forcefully in conversations with Sandra Walpole (CAPU, Dubbo). She pointed out that the question of assessing and prioritising cultural heritage values is an open question. Since the assessment process depends on quantifiable factors, she continued her querying of the process by noting that cultural heritage often is not quantifiable compared to species and plant communities. And given that the whole process depends on ranking, she asks: 'is it even ethically right to rank cultural heritage values the way natural heritage values are ranked?' Sandra Walpole went on to discuss the process of acquisition, again with questions: 'We're setting up expert panels to identify high priority purchases. We've been asked to do that for cultural heritage. How should it be done? Is it ethical?'

3.3.2 Co-caring

Glenn Storrie takes an equally open-ended approach to co-management, recognising it as a huge challenge:

> 'The implementation of co-management, as outlined in the NP&W Act (Part 4A), is one of the significant challenges being undertaken by NPWS and the Coffs Coast Area. The process of working through co-management does question your own biases. It's a big process, we're at the door. It is my opinion the outcomes from this process will be significant for both the Aboriginal community and NPWS. For the community there will be capacity building through training and job opportunities and gaining the responsibility for management. For

> NPWS the challenge is we don't have primary management responsibility, it puts Parks in a different role.
>
> This is a key strategy of Parks – working with Aboriginal people, and implementing co-management opportunities. So we're in on the ground floor. Real action, with real outcomes. Land, resources for community development, real ownership and management of land.'

Our conversation took an interestingly philosophical turn, and Glenn reflected on one of the big differences between western environmental thinking and Indigenous thinking about landscapes: 'We use a more western model that says the environment is to be managed for the flora and fauna. Now we're getting a far greater acceptance that the two – culture and environment – are one. It's a big challenge for a lot of people.'

Glenn spoke about 'care' and 'caring for country'. I asked him what he thought the difference is between management and care. His response arises from his years of experience, and is extremely thoughtful:

> 'Management of environment is what I perceive as a western concept, using science to manage plants and animals, without considering culture. Caring for country involves people, particularly traditional Aboriginal concepts. You arrive at possibly a different outcome, and one that is more complex as well. Management is anthropocentric, and therefore contrived, because there's a limited set of people who are making decisions. Western science-driven management: it's the human who sets the standards, it's us saying what to do about them. Caring: it has the essence of love of country, respect for country; let the land tell you how it needs to be looked after. Hopefully that could be a paradigm we could move toward. Maybe we could get it into a vision statement: 'working with communities to care for our country'.

> If people could see the land as their country – not to appropriate the concept, but to learn to look after it.

Glenn Storrie's vision calls for co-caring, rather than co-management. It thus includes a vision of major changes in non-Indigenous people's thought and practice.

Steve Wolter takes an equally expansive approach to the kinds of changes he is working toward. He spoke about the film 'One Night the Moon' and quoted the line of song: 'this land is me'. In Steve's view, people have to learn to understand their relationships to land in that mode before they will be able to manage land properly.

These are some of the major changes in thinking about co-management: that it is open-ended, that is dynamic, that it will change all the parties to the interaction, and that it has the potential to change Australian environmental culture. These ideas may sound idealistic, and in one sense they are, as they seek to shape a future that does not replicate the status quo. But at the same time, the people who are thinking outside the fence are in positions to act on their thought, and they are doing so.

3.4 Recommendations arising from Chapter 3

- Create identified positions for Threatened Species Units to speed up the process of integrating the work of TSU into consultation with Aboriginal communities.

- Ensure broad distribution within the Agency of results of current research.

- Ensure that the consultative processes continue to be flexible and interactive with the fluidity of local opportunities and requirements. The corollary: resist efforts to standardise the process.

- Consider flexibility in career structures that would enable greater achievement of two main issues:
  - Enable individuals to work flexibly with the desire for change and the desire for permanence.
  - Enable more opportunities for people in head office to be in regional centres in order to gain the experience of what is happening there.
  - Facilitate increased permanency in 'remote' areas.

- Ensure continued flexibility in the interactive approach to co-management. The corollary: resist efforts to standardise the process.

4. SHARED KINSHIP

The brief called for investigation of the idea of shared kinship, and more specifically to investigate the idea of 'establishing a program that allows Rangers to adopt aspects of the Aboriginal kinship as part of their work practice and identity. Such a process might involve vesting staff with a personal totem or skin name.' It also called for other options to be considered.

One interviewee expressed a view that seemed to be widespread: 'Kinship with the natural world … is … a foreign concept to most people.' In order to assess the idea, it seems reasonable to offer some background explanation. In this chapter I discuss the broader issue of kinship before turning to the 'totem' idea.

4.1 What about kinship?

Definitions of kinship vary from place to place, from culture to culture, and from person to person, but as a general principle, kinship involves enduring bonds of shared substance and mutual responsibilities. Human beings are social animals, and kinship provides the primary and enduring responsibilities

through which humans are socialised, incorporated into groups, and taught about how they fit into the wider world.

Kinship is patterned – there is a system into which people fit. It is well known that Australian Aboriginal kinship systems are among the most complex on earth. Furthermore, there is no single system of kinship complexity across the continent. Rather, there are many different systems. Some are closely linked, but for the outsider it is always wise to assume that one knows very

little in a new context. This advice holds good in relation to Koori kinship systems which, as I understand them, organise their complexity within a set of context-specific norms that require immense amounts of social knowledge to understand properly.

In Anglo-European societies such as 'mainstream' Australia kinship is usually restricted to demonstrated connections between people, traced along lines of ancestry. Furthermore, Anglo-European systems of kinship tend to restrict membership in the group of kin to a relatively small set of people who share connections to common ancestors. In contrast, Australian Aboriginal kinship systems tend to include a larger set of people within the kin group, which is to say that broad boundaries are recognised. More importantly, Aboriginal systems of kinship do not require demonstrated descent from known ancestors. There are several criteria for kinship, of which descent is one. The inland NSW concept of 'meat' (discussed in detail in Rose et al 2003) is an excellent example. The term 'meat' is roughly equivalent to the English term 'flesh' when used in the context of kinship. British-origin people speak of their own 'flesh and blood' meaning their own kinfolk. Ngiyampaa and other inland people speak of 'meat' and mean their own human and non-human kinfolk. 'Meat' is thus a category that brings the human and the non-human together as kin. There is a descent aspect, as one's meat is inherited from one's mother. However, the people of this group share their meat with their totemic species. Thus, for example, emu people have or are the same 'meat' as the emu birds. Birds and people are kin, and thus family. The Ngiyampaa Elder Paul Gordon discussed this with me recently in the context of this research: 'Some animals can't just be classified as fauna. Pademelon is my meat. They are my people, my relations.' He linked this discussion to NPWS practice: 'If National Parks has something going with Pademelons, they should talk with us – it's our family.'[3]

[3] 'Pademelon' is a small marsupial; the term may refer to a member of the *Bettongia species.*

Kin relationships cross species, connecting particular humans with particular animals or plants. In the same way, human emu groups who are not related through any known ancestor, and who may be from different countries and tribes, are family within Aboriginal kinship systems by reason of their shared substance.

One of the most significant aspects of kinship in Aboriginal contexts lies in the fact that Aboriginal societies in both past and present are kin-based societies. They contrast with civil societies. In civil society the dominant view of the person is that each person is autonomous. In this context autonomy implies that the person is disembedded (from context) and disembodied (personhood not classed according to gender, race, age, etc). The correlated view of society includes several ideas: that moral impartiality depends on recognising others as autonomous; that fairness belongs to public justice; and that the public system of rights and duties is the best context for managing moral equity and accountability (Benhabib 1992: 157 and elsewhere). One's human rights are, in principle, disconnected from one's family, class, education, and profession. This is to say that in principle no one is without rights and everyone has a basic status of equivalence as members of civil society. There are of course excellent critiques that go to show the many areas in which civil society fails to live up to its principles, and also good critiques that seek to develop a concept of civil society in which people are understood in relationship rather than in disconnection (Cox 1995). It is also the case that it is possible to seek redress for wrongs by appeal to the laws and standards of civil society. The image of justice blindfolded is meant to communicate the idea that before the law, in civil society, all receive equal treatment irrespective of status, wealth, or connection.

In contrast, in kin-based societies the person is defined first and foremost in relationship. There is no such thing as an autonomous (disembedded) person. To be disconnected, or expelled from context, is to experience social death. In Australian Aboriginal contexts, most persons are in relationship

with country (as ‘owners’ or as many people prefer to say, as ‘custodians’) and with other species (totems). Persons have moral standing, or as philosophers say, moral considerability because they are part of an enduring moral order of connection. This means that a person’s entitlement to moral treatment is embedded within the system of relatedness. It is kin-based. By the same token, animals are entitled to moral standing because they too are embedded within the system of relatedness. They are ‘persons’ in the sense of being participants in a kin-based moral order. More broadly, country, too, can be thought of within this same system of relatedness.

The reciprocity of care keeps this moral order active. One’s responsibility is to take care of others; the right to be taken care of follows from this. As many Aboriginal people say – country takes care of them and they take care of their country. Reciprocities of care produce strong forms of belonging. Steve Meredith emphasised the idea of ‘fit’: ‘It goes back to where you fit. You can fit in a lot of different ways. You can fit with other humans, you can fit with country, you can fit with animals…’

4.1.1 Kin terms

Within kin-based systems strangers pose difficulties. Lacking any relationships of connection, they lack responsibility, accountability, and thus moral standing. They are roughly in the position of an out-law, being outside all social relationships, and the default presumption is that if they cannot show a connection they must be up to no good. The position of being a stranger is also barely tolerable for the person who experiences it, as the knowledge of being without moral standing is at best unpleasant. My own experiences of being a stranger help me to articulate this position: not only does one experience all the discomfort associated with being a stranger and an outsider in a civil society, one also begins to realise that one has no moral presence, that no one has to take any responsibility at all (for you).

Aboriginal people in Australia have of course had to learn to live within societies of strangers, but at the same time Aboriginal people work hard to socialise strangers into more seriously connected relationships. Kinship terminology is an important way of fitting strangers in with local people. The use of kin terms is not necessarily intended to produce the enduring and substantive bonds of kinship. Rather it works toward inclusion, responsibility, accountability and security.

The use of kin terms is an important step in a process of transforming the stranger into a social person. It signals relationship, and thus brings the stranger into a realm of interpersonal responsibilities. For the non-Indigenous stranger, the use of kin terms can signal a sense of being claimed: someone has decided to take an interest and take a responsibility. Answering back with kin terms reciprocates the responsibilities.

At this time Aboriginal people are using kin terms to help fit Parks staff into relationships. I will discuss two types: same generation kin terms and kin terms of seniority and respect.

Same generation kin terms include people within a circle of social relations, bringing the stranger into relationships. The use of the terms ‘sis’ and ‘bro’ do a great deal of work in transforming strangers into persons. They are widely used, and do not necessarily carry a great burden of responsibility, but they do signal a relational shift. Much of the meaning of the quality of the relationship is context-specific, so that the same terms can designate shallow or deep relationships depending on the people, the place, and the occasion. The moral content of the relationship can be deepened by using kin terms in local languages.

The intergenerational kin terms that are significant in Parks contexts are ‘auntie’ and ‘uncle’. These are terms of respect, most frequently used by people of a younger generation, but also used in any context where respect

is owing. Elders are by definition ‘aunties’ and ‘uncles’ to those who turn to them in an attitude of respect.

One of the issues that non-Indigenous Rangers and Managers are now confronting is how to negotiate their own use of kin terms. Many people feel uncomfortable reciprocating with same generation kin terms, as it may seem presumptuous. I think that most would agree with the general proposition that the use of kin terms, like the use of the Koori handshake, must be initiated by Aboriginal people. These steps toward inclusion are not to be taken lightly, nor are they to be asked for, and nor are they to be treated with anything other than respect.

The use of the terms ‘auntie’ and ‘uncle’ is more difficult. People recognise that they are respectful terms, and are used to show respect. At the same time, the terms are recognised as kin terms, and most of the people I interviewed held the view that these terms, too, should not be used without the person being expressly invited to use them. The following is a representative selection of responses to my questions about how non-Aboriginal people negotiate these issues:

- ‘I’m learning about knowing my place and knowing my role. Kin terms are part of the transition. That’s the way [the Elders] are happy to be addressed. I want to respect them.’
- ‘I wouldn’t call them auntie or uncle unless they asked me to.’
- ‘You have to be given authority to call someone uncle or auntie.’

Other staff expressed concern about not knowing what to do when they get conflicting advice. All of the people with whom I discussed this issue were finding the process of learning how and when to use these terms extremely interesting as well as occasionally confusing.

In sum, the use of kin terms is proceeding in interesting and locally relevant ways. The research did not reveal any need for further action. The fact that relationship building is developing more rapidly in some areas than in others is a fact that may need to be addressed if markedly different levels of relationships start to emerge.

4.1.2 Can kinship be shared?

I raised this question at the Workshop, and Graham Moore offered a very helpful analysis. In his view, there are two ways that totems can be acquired. One is through descent, and the other is through bestowal. Both forms of relationship are set within the deeply significant context of participation within a moral order. Both are to be taken completely and deeply seriously. Whereas descent is limited to relationships into which one is born, bestowal is not so confined, and nor is it confined to culture, race, or ethnicity. It can be shared, and it is a form of kinship. Graham emphasised most strongly that this and other issues of kinship must be set within the context of understanding.

The Ngiyampaa Elder Paul Gordon took up this issue from another angle. He noted that for Aboriginal people skin is an extremely significant part of one's being and one's identity. He also noted that colour was never a category of skin classification for Aboriginal people. He spoke of white men who had been accepted into groups, put into the law through initiation, given a skin and a totem and thus adopted.

In sum, according to these two knowledgeable people, there are ways in which kinship can be shared. Both of them stress that fact that it is very serious business, and thus not something to be undertaken lightly.

4.2 The totem proposal

I have offered a broad general outline of how totems fit within a moral order articulated through the responsibilities of kinship. The brief was not specific about how the process of sharing totems might be accomplished, or, for that matter, what it might specifically be expected to achieve. Two major ideas have been discussed, and it is worth considering the differences between the two.

The first is that bestowal of a totem would be a way of bringing people more closely into Aboriginal social relations. Like the use of kin terms, it would have the effect of starting to socialise people, to give them an identity that includes them within groups, and that offers them forms of accountability. The shared kinship at issue would be kinship with people. A further effect might be to enable the person better to understand the world the way Aboriginal people do so, but in the first instance, the bestowal would be about identity.

The second is bestowal of a totem as a way of teaching. The purpose is to help the person see the world as Aboriginal people see it, and most specifically to help the person think outside the nature / culture divide. The shared kinship at issue would be kinship with the natural world. The effect would be that the person would be learning from a variety sources. A further effect might be to enable the person to be more closely integrated into an Aboriginal social group or groups, but in the first instance, the bestowal would be about learning and understanding.

4.2.1 The ‘identity’ totem

One consequence of the lack of specificity in the brief was that people who read the brief interpreted the idea differently. I should also state that few people had had time to read the brief. I encountered very few positive responses to the idea of Rangers having a totem or skin bestowed upon them. I found that the negativity had the potential to interfere with what

were otherwise very positive and, often, intimate conversations. I decided not to try to conduct a comprehensive survey, as doing so would not only have generated negativity, but also would have taken up a great deal of valuable interview time explaining the brief to those who had not read it.

A representative sample of the negative responses include the following:

- ‘It seems to be almost assigning people within the service a totem-like role. It could create some good outcomes, but what about the sensitivities? Given that within communities totems are linked to genealogy and connection, is it arrogant of the agency to just assign them?’

- ‘It’s like naming your boat with a Gumbainggir name, but never having a Gumbainggir person on your boat. It’s a façade. You have to have the solid guts of relationship first. It should come from a process that identifies what the significant attachments are, rather than just dreaming up a significant attachment. I think it would be very confusing. It wouldn’t work. Totemism doesn’t get a grip on me. If it was a unit (of people), it wouldn’t work. I don’t see why people in the service would want that. And groups have all different ones [so how would you decide]. And its sacred, so why would they want to display it?’

- ‘It’s not to be demeaned by another agency or whatever. It’s not to be demeaned by being given in order to interact better, or whatever. If totemic affiliations are given to non-Indigenous people, let them earn it. Let it be given for the right reasons.’

- ‘I don’t think I’d be comfortable with the idea. I think its important to try and get an understanding of how Aboriginal people view things and acknowledge and appreciate that it’s different. I’ve been brought up in

> a totally different environment and culture, and can't see how I could take on board part of someone else's culture just because it was part of my job. Try and understand it … yes. Adopt it … no.'

At this general level of speculation, only one positive response was offered:

- It could be a good idea. It would help land councils to accept that person as an honorary participant.

4.2.2 The 'research' totem

Phil Sullivan had developed a much more specific idea about totems. His proposal might be termed a research or teaching totem. His explanation is as follows:

> One of the things I wouldn't mind seeing introduced into a cultural awareness program is something like – your course on cultural awareness is not complete until you find out everything that is to be known about an animal or a tree, or a totem as we call it. Aboriginal people had – maybe three or four, even, at times, probably five. But just for this, you just get one totem and you find out everything about that. Your research – you find out everything about that particular plant or animal. And your awareness workshop is not complete until you've done that. And that should take you about twelve months to find out exactly what makes that particular animal – it could be a bilby, it could be an eagle. And find out if they are totems of people within the landscape, particularly in NSW. And find out how they look at it and how do they feel about that totem. And part of that is, also, if it is an endangered species, how do we bring it back to the landscape again? And that will be part of the job, part of the person's job, is to find out as much as they possibly can about that particular totem….

And hopefully, in doing that, it might take away that line in the first paragraph of most NPWS reports about the natural and cultural landscapes. Where we look at it, as Aboriginal people, as just being the cultural landscape, and we're actually bringing things together. So yeah, this will be the totem they'll be looking at. And find everything out about that totem. So, it just goes a little bit closer to saying: 'We know a little more, we understand a little bit more about who you are.' We know about the archaeology of Aboriginal people as physical evidence. We go across the landscape and we see archaeology all over the place, the paintings and the caves and that, the scarred trees and whatnot, the burial grounds and all that sort of stuff, we actually see that with our eyes. That gives a bit of an idea that this is where they travelled and that, but that's only part of who we are. And maybe this is just another part.

Mine's the yellowbelly, mind you.[4]

Debbie: What sort of research materials would you expect them to be using?

Phil: I'd be getting them to do research in books, initially. There's a lot of reading in it. Take, for instance, the bilby.[5] Obviously there's a few books written about the bilby. But there is a lot of Aboriginal books going around that have people whose totem is the bilby. So they'd have to research them too. And then they'd have to go and talk to the people. The research is one thing, but the sitting down and talking to that person, if that person's totem is the bilby, to sit down and talk to them about it, they might never talk about the bilby. But the idea is that they could sit down and have a talk anyway. That's part of the deal. That's research – just having a yarn. That's it – you'd got to

[4] 'Yellowbelly' is the golden perch: *Macquaria ambigua.*
[5] 'Bilby' is a member of the *Macrotis species.*

> learn not just about the bilby. That person would get to learn a lot of other stuff about an Aboriginal person…. That's the best part. I wouldn't mind being a student either, just listening to some of the old fellows talking.

Gary Currey supported this idea, and he added the point that if a number of people had the same research totem, they might communicate with each other during the course of their research, and thus form new networks around their shared interest in their totemic species.

During the Workshop Graham Moore offered the view that the research totem program would work well as a form of mentoring. My understanding is that he anticipated that a non-Indigenous participant would be mentored by an Indigenous Parks person, finding their way into the program with guidance from their mentor. I asked if Graham or others would see this as an extra workload that could become too burdensome. Graham replied: 'I do it everyday anyway.'

Gary Currey, like Phil and others, made it clear that a totem program would be a learning experience for all the participants. This view is consistent with the more general view that the changes that are taking place in Parks at this time constitute a journey of learning for the Indigenous staff as well as for the non-Indigenous staff.

The idea was discussed at the Workshop, and there was general consensus that if it were to be adopted, it ought not to be mandatory in the first instance. It seems to follow, however, that if it were to become part of the cultural awareness program, then it could become mandatory in due course.

4.2.3 Appropriation or enhanced understanding?

One of the issues that immediately arises is: does this constitute a form of appropriation? Phil considered this point too. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, he and others tread a fine line between the desire to share and the desire to avoid being appropriated or left without distinctive markers of their true selves. In Phil's view, Aboriginality cannot be depleted to the point of being lost:

> There are some people who might think they're intruding on the last stand of Aboriginal culture which is the totem side, the language side. But I'll promise you, they won't understand it all. They'll never understand it all.

He also saw mutual benefit in sharing knowledges:

> It's got to be both ways. We've got be able to sit down and sort things out…. There's that fear. But we've got to yarn, and its got to go both ways….

In my view, the research totem offers several interesting opportunities:

- The issue that Phil and others are striving toward is to go beyond the nature / culture divide. As long as we are thinking about the divide we are acknowledging its presence. The research totem steps outside that divide. Rather than thinking outside the fence, it offers a way to think without fences. In focussing on a single species and asking the participant to learn as much as possible, using a range of methods, about the one species, the question of nature vs culture need not even arise.
- In setting up specified mentoring relationships, the program could facilitate relationship building in many ways – between mentor and learner, between learner and other Aboriginal people, between learner

and the totemic species, and among learners with the same totemic species.

- The process is open-ended. It is an idea that is so new that one could not really say where it might go. At this time the point of the process is the process itself. However, as with other forms of relationship building, the research totem could bear unexpected fruits that would take NPWS personnel into more complex relationships.

Phil's deeper goal was toward raising understanding around substantive issues of meaning of life: 'Totems is a way of trying to make people understand – you gain it, you earn it, by moral systems, value systems.' There is no way to predict what the totem idea could achieve in this domain. The evidence from people's discussion of change (Chapter 2) suggests that engaging in research concerning the totem would provide opportunities for many forms of deeper learning to take place.

At the very least, the research totem project would help non-Indigenous people toward understanding the world as Aboriginal people see it, and this in itself is a benefit to the Aboriginal staff. Steve Meredith explained:

> 'National Parks is starting to look at things [holistically] … and they're thinking about talking to old people. But they still got to separate all these things. It would be a lot easier to manage if, it would be a lot easier from our point of view … if they looked at it like that, as a whole. And that would make it easier for us because that's the way we look at it.'

4.3 **Alternatives**

I was asked to consider other practices that might move people in the direction of shared kinship. In this section I look at two suggestions: a

welcome from Elders and naming. Both of these ideas are more in line with identity issues. That is, they would have the effect in the first instance of bringing the person more fully into Aboriginal forms of social life. The process of enabling the person to learn would flow from there, but the main intent would not necessarily be to help people to think more holistically.

4.3.1 **Naming**

The idea of giving people names came up spontaneously in my conversation with April Blair. In the context of discussing a welcome, she offered this view:

> ‘This would be a tricky one to take on and would have to be done absolutely correct to the letter of the Aboriginal people in the area!! And made absolutely sure that abuse of the use of this honour did not happen! This type of thing would need to be monitored also as to watch for disrespect and if it is abused in any way the honorary name be taken away!! Good luck!! I haven’t heard of it being done inside NPWS except with our unit and CHD meetings (welcome to country), but I do see a value in it. Because that would get people working together rather than competing over whose land, or who's taking care of it. Most rangers just want to the best job possible, and be seen to be doing it (the ones I’ve worked with). Most NPWS probably don’t mean to be ignorant of what’s happening with Aboriginal staff but keep clear of it for various reasons. But sometimes people don’t know how to ask, or don’t know how to step in to offer help. So they try to do it their own way. Or they’re frightened of Aboriginal people and vice versa.
>
> I think it’s a good idea, if there’s Aboriginal staff in that area. They could arrange with the Elders in the area whether the person/s were eligible for the name (which is usually earned over time and respect

> for our culture is shown) if so then do the appropriate introduction and ceremony. I think it's a good idea so long respect is given at all times!!!!. Provided that the ranger is willing to do that, and work with it. I think it would work. I think it would be a good working relationship. I think that they'd be absolutely honoured if they got some ceremony to invite them in and even, give them a name. Giving someone an honorary name doesn't give them cause to take power or abuse that privilege. Name's that indicate sharing to care with the traditional 'carer of my land' or 'carer of my sites'. Of course, a lot of sites are men's or women's sites, so there'd have to be women rangers and men rangers that are willing and eligible. They'd have to have respect and be prepared to listen to Elders and traditional owners. This would give them that respect for Aboriginal culture and to work with the actual sites and Aboriginal people. Which would be great for breaking down the fallacy that our sites, culture and people (true Aboriginals) are all gone!!!'

As her last sentence makes clear, one of the problems she seeks to overcome is the idea that Aboriginal culture is somehow all 'lost' or 'gone'. I will return to this issue in Chapter 5.

During the Workshop Graham Moore said that many of the people who had taken his cultural awareness program continue to use the identity / names they had been given in that course. I was able to observe for myself that this is the case. It is strong testimony to the effectiveness of the course, as all the people with whom I spoke attest.

Two instances of a non-Aboriginal person being given an Aboriginal name were brought up in the research. Jeremy Walsh, the former payroll officer in Dubbo, was given a name by Badger Bates. The name is Gubba Waku – White Crow. The story of Walsh's work is one in which the unpredictable effects of personality, interest, and opportunity combine to produce an

unexpected outcome. Jeremy Walsh has a strong rapport with Aboriginal people in the region, and wanted to visit people in their home offices or home communities so as to be able to assist them in obtaining their entitlements. He attended Board Meetings for Mutawintji, for example, and assisted the Board members there. His manager, Jan Farrar (Human Resources) had the insight to realise that his gifts should be nurtured: 'He had an understanding and respect for Aboriginal people. They wanted the relationship too. I gave him space to do that. Because he did connect, and that's a skill to be cultured.' Walsh's decision to take up a permanent position with the Police is a good example of the issue raised in section 3.2.2.[6]

The second instance concerned Duncan Scott-Lawson, Ranger at Cobar. Duncan was leaving Cobar to take up a position in Oberon. He had worked closely with Ngiyampaa people on the Mt Grenfell negotiations, and at the farewell party Elaine Ohlsen presented him with a poem of appreciation and a name, on behalf of her family. Their warmth toward Duncan was expressed in kinship – they adopted him. The poem begins:

To our dear adopted Duncan
And your little sweetheart Aine
We'd like to wish you all the best
When your future takes you yonder.

In sum, naming and other forms of inclusion signify relationship, and at the same time build relationships. These relationships are meant to endure, and are full of dynamic warmth.

4.3.2 **Welcome or introduction**

[6] Jeremy Walsh now works for the police in Dubbo. NPWS was unable to offer him a permanent position.

The idea of a formal welcome was raised early in the research, and I discussed it with a number of interviewees. The idea of a welcome is to ensure that new Rangers and others are formally welcomed by Elders into the community and within the parks or reserves they will manage. This idea would need to be implemented carefully, as it would probably not be feasible to repeat the welcome for each Park or Reserve in a formal way. It is possible that a welcome to the area could be incorporated into the regular bush seminars or teaching camps.

Many of the interviewees expressed a cautious interest in such a program. The logistics clearly pose some issues, but in principle the idea met with a positive response. As the following responses make clear, people had different ideas about the purpose of this proposal. Some thought it would situate people in relation to Elders and country, others thought it would be a good way to handle introductions:

- 'Yes. It would teach them the rules and the responsibility.'

- 'You're dealing with Aboriginal people all the time. You need to have awareness. Get some basic intros and understandings. The local Aboriginal people I deal with regularly really just like to go for a walk out in the park and tell you about how they grew up there and what they know about the country. The information doesn't come out of context, so if you can be introduced properly, you'll do a better job.'

- 'It's a good idea. When they're new, they're not often told. But also, they need to know that its fluid.'

- 'It would be a good idea. All of this is providing the ranger is willing. I think they'd be honoured if they got a ceremony to welcome them in, and maybe got a name…. It would give them respect of Aboriginal culture and for sites.'

Allan Hutchins described the work he has done in introducing rangers to Elders:

> The ranger staff at Narrabri has changed. I think they've had three, four rangers there now. And what I've done on every occasion is actually introduce the rangers to the Elders on their land. Its not: walk up to the door of the land council or the Elders group and introduce them: 'Uncle Ted and Uncle George, this is the new ranger I'd like you to meet. Michael Heinz, I'd like you to meet Uncle Ted and Uncle George'. I've actually got them out on ground, so that they could get a sense – not only to meet this guy but so that he could get a sense of the depth of feeling and understanding and affiliation that these Elders have got with the park that these rangers are going to have to manage. Not only does it work well, because what it does is straight away gives the new ranger a very quick sense of what it is he's dealing with in terms of people's attachments to that land, number one. Number two, it gives the Elders an opportunity to assess that young fellow, or woman, right up front. And if they sense any shortcomings they're pretty forward in addressing those. Right up-front, and sort of establishing some ground rules, even though they've got no formal position in relation to that place, they're just getting that message out really really quickly about how important this is to them. I think it makes a huge difference to those rangers. And they've all come back to me and said 'geez, I'm glad you did that.' So that in itself is good.

In sum, the benefits of such a formalised process include enabling Rangers to do a better job, but the potentials go further:

- To demonstrate clearly that this is Aboriginal land with Aboriginal people who are responsible for the land and for what happens there.

- To situate the new Ranger within an Aboriginal system of authority and responsibility
    - by demonstrating the existence of that system, and
    - by situating the Elders as the senior people in that system

- To initiate the process of relationship building by establishing a relationship within which the ranger is welcomed and starts to learn who to learn from.
- To enable new people to get feedback on their work from people they respect.

Possible disadvantages include:

- The logistics could prove cumbersome.

- If there are disputes about who the senior people for country are, the welcome process could aggravate the situation unless handled wisely.

Cheryl Perkins and Dee Murphy of Yarrawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre offered another point of caution: 'It would have to be emphasised that its not a one-off. They're not just coming out for the job, but to keep the friendship going. It's a major thing – to keep the relationship going.'

4.4 **Examples within Australia**

I have not been able to locate any examples within Australia that correspond to the totem proposal. There are, however, many examples of Parks personnel being given a kin or skin classification, so that people know which kin terms to use with them. This process is similar to the use of kin terms discussed in section 4.1.1: the purpose is to bring the stranger into a moral order. There are examples of non-Aboriginal people being taken further into the moral order, as Paul Gordon discussed, but as far as I know there are no

instances of people attempting to institutionalise the management of such deep relationships.

Over the years, some non-Aboriginal people have declined to be given a kin classification. Their reasoning is that they need to be able to deal equally and equitably with everyone in the relevant community. Even to begin the process of being incorporated into Indigenous sociality might seem to start to compromise their ability to be even-handed. If they were seen to be more closely aligned with one group or another, or to be implicated as participants in local factions, they might lose their capacity to perform their role fairly, or to be seen to perform their role fairly.

Several of the interviewees expressed their awareness of the need to deal impartially across factions and groups, but thus far the use of kin-terms seems to be facilitating people's consultations, not impeding them. The Koori kin terms discussed in this report (4.1.1) are, in fact, ideally suited to changing strangers into persons without forcing people into factions or families in ways that would be detrimental to their roles and responsibilities as Parks staff.

4.5 **Examples outside of Australia**

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is moving in directions that are broadly consistent with those of relevant other countries, particularly Canada, New Zealand, and the US. The shift toward cultural landscapes, and its parallel with shifts toward bio-regional planning, is a good example. There is also a broadly similar set of issues around 'co-management' of Indigenous and mainstream ecological knowledge. Similar debates about land rights, appropriation, and shared concerns arise (see for example, Ross & Pickering 2002).

I searched the web to find out if any overseas Parks seemed to doing work that corresponds to the idea of sharing kinship, and I found nothing. Knowing that web sites do not always reflect current on-the-ground practice, I wrote to colleagues who have experience of working with Indigenous people in Parks. No one had heard of anything comparable, and most expressed considerable interest in this research and its outcomes. Here I present a representative sample of responses, as they express the main issues:

- "I don't think I can help much. I have never heard of 'sharing kinship' before. Most protected areas issues I know are about conflict and exclusion, not sharing! There are all kinds of partnerships developing." (Maylasia)
- "I can't think of anyone doing quite what you're doing… If I think of anything I'll let you know. And yes, I'd love to see the results – I'm willing to bet they're exciting and important." (UK, with connections around the world)
- "What in interesting issue this is! Right off the top of my head I can't think of a circumstance in a U.S. park that is quite like what you're describing." (Wyoming, western USA)
- "I've been wracking my brain over and over for any reference, situations etc which might relate to the NPWS research, but at this point I have to say that I'm not aware of anything that even comes close." (Australia, with experience in Canada and Africa)
- "I'm afraid I can't actually help much with this one … I think that relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Parks tend to be polite (most of the time) but very restrained here, and I can't actually imagine such an initiative coming up in any community where I work … but it may well in the future and I would be glad to pass on any successful initiatives that come from your part of the world." (British Columbia, Canada)
- A respondent in Alaska discussed adoption: "It is a knotty question. I have been approached … to be formally adopted (it has not yet

occurred) and have been given a name…. I was told that this would require that a certain amount of money would need to be paid to the other side who witnessed this formal adoption. It is my impression, having watched the Governor of Alaska, Jay Hammond, be adopted into an Angoon Tlingit clan, that the present pattern is essentially honorific and carries with it no true rights, but perhaps obligations if one is called upon." (Alaska)

- "After giving it a thought, I found the idea very exciting! I have to give you a quick and not so promising answer though. I do not know of any case, either in Taiwan or in Canada (or anywhere else), in which the indigenous people share their kinship identity with "outsiders". However, I think this idea … is really worth exploring." (Taiwan)

Several other consultations turned into dialogue. A colleague in Alaska replied:

- "Sounds interesting. I don't know of anything comparable, but you might find Yup'ik naming practices interesting…. Basically, names are viewed as carrying on some very real aspect of those who have passed away. And non-natives, especially children, are often given Yup'ik names. I and my children have been given a variety of names in a variety of contexts, connecting us to many family networks." (Alaska)

I wrote back and asked if she knew of any Parks people who had been given names. She then put me in contact with a man who works for US Fish and Wildlife Service, and I asked him about this question. His reply is, I think, extremely insightful:

- "In the organisation I work with, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I have seen occasions where a Yup'ik person bestowed a Yup'ik name upon a non-Native fellow employee. Frequently this will be a descriptive name, however such as 'one who works with birds'. Therein

lies the issue, at least in my mind, of whether there is any strengthening of cross-cultural relationships as a result of this name-giving. The identity, in Yup'ik culture, that comes with the name that is bestowed upon a person, is very real, and has deep cultural and societal importance. By comparison, the lending of a name to a non-Native person is often frivolous and artificial.

In the context of mutual cultural respect I have not seen that the practice has been beneficial – in fact in some cases it appears to be disrespectful to some Yup'ik people because of the frivolous nature bestowed upon a somewhat sacred ritual…. This is what my perception of this issue is, based on living in rural, predominantly Yup'ik communities for many years.

Good luck."

In addition to Parks, I decided to approach one of the First Nations where I know that Indigenous people employ non-Native people in 'resource management'. This is the response from a correspondent in the Quinault Nation, Pacific Northwest, USA:

- "The problem we encounter is a distinction between cultural and natural resources. The indigenous people do not see this distinction, since all resources come from the environment and because their use is ingrained into their every day use (culture) they are considered cultural resources (today's terminology). For indigenous peoples there is no separation between the two…. We do not have any special programs to integrate non-tribal staff. Often the selling point is a developed fondness for the "Rez" and its people. Certain people often adopt the Rez as their homeland through development of relationships with staff and/or community members. They often comment on the spiritual aspect of the community or development of the spirit within themselves because of something within this environment."

This correspondent's view that 'a developed fondness' is central to how non-Native people start to integrate themselves into 'the Rez' speaks to a process that was alluded to in section 3.2.3, and may be starting to happen for more broadly. I will return to this issue in Chapter 6.

4.6 **Recommendations arising from Chapter 4**

- The research totem proposal should be implemented on a trial basis with opportunities for evaluation during and at the end of the trial. In consideration of the fact that would be best to start with a voluntary program, I suggest the following:

  - circulate a brief discussion of the idea to rangers, managers, sites officers, cultural heritage people, and others, calling for volunteers
  - hold a workshop of volunteers to clarify the proposal and the process, and to ensure shared understandings
  - implement the program for one year
  - consider a six month workshop to discuss progress and problems
  - convene a final workshop to debrief and to develop a refined program to offer to another group of volunteers
  - track the program with focussed qualitative research aimed toward trouble-shooting both during and at the conclusion of the first year's trial
  - ensure that at the conclusion of the program results from the final workshop are made available throughout the Service

- The idea of a welcome is dependent on the local Elders, and is best discussed and implemented (if desired) at the local level.

- Introductions seem to be working well, but there can be no doubt that the most meaningful introductions are also in some sense a welcome: they take place in country, with Elders.

- At this time two types of naming occur. One is the product of the cultural awareness program. The other is the product of personal interactions. Both should remain as they are for now.

- During the Workshop various ideas for further action were discussed, without consensus being achieved. They should be pursued to discover if there is an interest. These include:

  - Conducting further research along these lines, but with a strong focus on field staff, and any others who may have been left out at this point.
  - Conducting workshops like the Sydney one at local or regional centres to allow a full discussion of these issues by a greater number of people.

5. ABOUT SEEING

A number of times during the Workshop Graham Moore exclaimed passionately: 'It's all about understanding. It's all about learning to see as we see.'

The phrase 'learning to see as we see' came up in many of the interviews with Aboriginal staff. I began to 'see' that it was referencing some of the difficulties that Aboriginal staff face in this period of rapid change. In this chapter I discuss issues of visibility and invisibility, relating them first to Australian social history and then to the current Parks situation.

5.1 From stones and bones to culture

The problem with the shift in emphasis from artefact to living culture is that living culture may not be visible until one learns how to see. The fact that one has to learn to see implies a further question: did one have to learn not to see? I discuss three factors: the policy of assimilation, the racial gaze, and the quantum theory of culture.

5.1.1 Assimilation

Assimilation policies in Australia were built on the idea that Aboriginal culture was doomed to die out when confronted with a 'superior' civilisation (Anglo-Australian). The 'fatal impact' theory was promoted by Professor Elkin, an anthropologist who dominated anthropology in Australia for decades, and who had a great deal of influence with government policy makers. There can be no doubt of his influence, but at the same time, there can be no doubt

that his ideas fell on receptive ears. The idea that Aborigines would disappear was central to settlers' desire to build a white nation.

The taken-for-granted beliefs that underwrote assimilation policies and practices raise some very strange issues about seeing, once we start to think our way into them. From the perspective of many white settlers, seeing Aboriginal people was like seeing a disappearance in progress. An analogy might be with a train: white people thought they saw Aboriginal people as they were hurtling away. There were not migrating onwards (as settlers were doing), however, but were disappearing into the past, and would soon be gone forever. Familiar phrases such as 'the tail end' of historical processes, the 'last of his tribe', or the 'last stand' all signal a moment of encounter in which the white settler sees the last moment of a process of disappearance. There is often a rather nauseating nostalgia tied up in these phrases, but in their time they were so widespread as to be almost unremarkable.

Within the taken-for-granted knowledge that Aborigines were rapidly disappearing, seeing them was a momentary phenomenon which could not repeated – after the last, there is nothing left. This posed a problem for all the people who were left after the 'end' was declared. In NSW and other parts of the south-east, the survivors of disappearance were in a terrible position.

5.1.2 Race and seeing

Racism is generally defined as classifying individuals on the basis of their putative membership in a group, and attributing to the person the qualities that are stereotypically associated with the group. In Australia, white settlers' ways of seeing depended on colour coding. People were classified by skin colour, and colour was thought to be a result of the person's blood quantum ('full bloods', half-caste', etc). The skin colour or blood quantum was further classified in relation to culture. Thus, the lighter the skin, the less Aboriginal

culture was said to be contained within the person. On the other hand, the darker the skin, the more Aboriginal culture was thought to survive. By the same token, the darker skinned person was classed as less capable at 'white' skills than lighter skinned people.

These ideas underwrite Australian racism, and racism is not dead in Australia. A thousand daily social facts confirm that it is alive and well. As Cowlishaw (1997: 179) says, racism can be obscured by its denial. In her view, based on her research in Bourke, the statement "I never look at a person's colour" conceals and denies 'intense awareness of colour'.

None of the interviewees suggested that racism is a problem within NPWS, although some stereotypes may linger. However, Aboriginal people do live in a society in which racism is alive, and many live in small towns in which awareness of race is never absent. Phil Sullivan spoke about Bourke, a town that is known for its racism because it has been written about (Cowlishaw 1988 & 1997, Kamien 1978), but that is probably no better or worse than many small bush towns. He talked about the need to break down barriers. I asked what it is exactly that needs to be broken down, and he said 'racism is what needs to be broken down. Until we address the inequalities, we'll still be back there [in a history of injustice].' He went on to say:

> 'Racism is here in Bourke – alive and bubbly, but not overt. It's more in the body language. I try to think of it like water off the duck's back. People just aren't dealing with things. They're looking after self, not after community. They're not willing to make sacrifices.'

When Phil spoke about racism being in the body language, one aspect that he discussed was how people look at you or how they look away. There have been a number of studies of the white racial gaze. Racial conventions and the vocabulary of blood quanta assume that it is possible visually to assess the actual 'blood mixture'. Many non-Aboriginal Australians have in the course of

daily life made, and today make, visual assessments that are based on the assumption that they can read the quantum of inner substance off the external features. The idea is that the visible surfaces references the inner being. This leads to a sense of transparent skin, as if white people could look right inside the bodies of racialised others. Years ago Fanon articulated the pain of the 'genocidal gaze': it penetrates the body of the black person in a colonial context, causing pain like knives opening within. [7] Aboriginal people's experience of the racial gaze is a story properly told by them, and not by outsiders.

From an analytic point of view, the white racial gaze confronts an Aboriginal person. It may hit the skin and stop there, forming snap judgements about the person on the basis of colour. Alternatively, it may assess an interior quantum. If the determination is that no culture is left, that it has all been 'washed away by the tide of history', as Olney J. expressed it in the Yorta Yorta case, then the gaze may not linger at all. It may just shoot through, producing an image of invisibility, as if there were nothing to see there at all.[8]

5.1.3 Culture as quantum

In Australia, Aboriginal culture has been subjected to a classificatory system that parallels the quantum theory of race. The process has been to identify readily visible signs of Aboriginality (in the positive sense). Language, ceremony, and song are key signs. They can be made into a checklist and quantified: is language spoken? By how many people? Is it as complex as it used to be? What constitutes the extinction of language? Is ceremony performed? Are the young learning it? Is it as complex as it used to be? And so on and so forth.

[7] Discussed in Mitchell 1996.
[8] These and other issues are discussed in Rose 2001.

These questions may have validity; people may want to know these things for good social purposes. The overwhelming problem is in equating them with culture. When visible signs are equated with culture, they implicitly construct a cultural quantification: how much culture, if any, is left? And if all those markers are not present in quanta that 'experts' define as viable, then the presumption is that the culture is dead, or dying. The theory is clearly related to theories of purity and boundaries. Although such ideas are now known to be both wrong and archaic, it must be noted that they have found fertile ground in many Native Title cases.

The quantum theory of culture produces an effect similar to the effect of the 'fatal impact' theory. It often seems to imagine culture as a one-way process, going into oblivion. Depending on the quantum, the outsider can know with some degree of certainty, whether they are seeing the whole train go by, or maybe just the last trace of its passage. The impact on Aboriginal people of being the survivors of a colonising process in which they were expected to disappear continues. April Blair spoke about 'the fallacy that our sites, culture and people (true Aboriginals) are all gone!' (4.3.1)

Culture need not be defined in terms of quanta. The interesting thing about quanta in this context is that the signs are readily visible or audible. So the question remains for outsiders: what should they be seeing? How can they see the way Aboriginal people see, if what they have expected to see does not seem to present itself to them?

This is the question that Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in Parks are working through at this time. The cultural awareness programs and other teaching events are doing excellent work here. The emphasis on seeing as Aboriginal people see is an effort to enable people to think outside the fence-like theories of colour and quanta.

5.2 Seeing the real

One of the main messages Phil Sullivan communicates in his Gundabooka tours is to not be looking on the surface of people, but to be looking into who people really are. He speaks from a position of immense generosity and faith in human beings: 'People can look through the prejudice and stuff and still see people as people…. Its important to be looking at things and people for what you don't see – at meaning and such.'

5.2.1 Seeing a full person

Phil spoke with considerable anguish about his sense that people, including, perhaps, Parks staff, do not see him as the full and real person he knows himself to be. The problem as he expressed it is this: 'You don't recognise me as an Aboriginal person, because you don't recognise all of me, you only recognise part of me.'

In our conversation we explored his sense of being diminished by not being seen as a full person, and Phil brought out several points. One is the issue discussed above in the shift from stones and bones to culture: 'They see the scarred tree and the tools – they don't see the connections to country.'

This issue brings us back to the culture / nature divide that lies at the heart of this research project. As long as culture and nature are kept separate, encountered separately, and conceptualised separately, it will not be possible to see Phil and other Aboriginal people as full people. To go back to the scarred tree, it is possible to look at the scarred tree and to know that it was worked by Aboriginal people, and to 'see' a connection between Ngiyampaa people today and their ancestors who made this tree. When looking at the river, however, how does one learn to 'see' the people there? They are the on-going human counterparts to an ecosystem that defines them; their ancestors nurtured the river and were nurtured by it; some of the totems,

like Phil's yellowbelly, live there; the river's association with extra-ordinary beings and its connection with the Rainbow Serpent are part of its significance and danger today; the river's flow is a region of connectivity between land and water, and between human groups along the river and into the hinterland. Aboriginal families lived along the river in historical times, and today it is part of themselves and their lives in many significant ways that are known only to them.

Phil tried to raise some of these issues at a meeting of the local irrigators. It was clear that nobody had any interest in engaging with him. In that context the river was not even a flowing, life-giving body of water. It was just a quantum of gigalitres.

Another aspect of this issue for Phil is that the full person is shaped not by their socio-economic status but by their morals, values, and dignity. Here, too, he argued against the idea that external visibility references internal reality. He contrasted 'culture' with 'values':

> 'We're being forced to change, but the thing that should never change, and that we should always work on, is the value. One of the old fellows said to me, "when the referendum came down, we got our freedom, and money started to come in, we should have invested back into our culture, instead of putting the money into other people's pockets, into houses, and cars, and all that. It should have gone into teaching language, and totems, and stuff."'

In considering questions of continuity and change for today, Phil's view is: 'Culture is changing, evolving with the times. But the values shouldn't change. Like, wear blue jeans, but don't change your values.'

In this context, his sense of not being seen as a full person may also have expressed his dismay at what he sees as people's unwillingness to be their

fullest possible selves – to go the extra mile. This is not a criticism of Parks personnel, although bureaucratic culture does not align well with Aboriginal sociality and personhood. Phil's view is strongly flavoured by his moral commitment to people, country, and the best that we all have to offer. He said: 'Respect just is not enough. It's got to go further – to step into the dark for your brother and sister. That's what the old fellows passed along to us.'

In Phil's view, the research totem program would address many of these issues by bringing people into encounter with many of the facets that are part of a full person. Speaking of his own totem, he said:

> 'Like … going to the fisheries and finding out all about the river flows, and the weeds, and going to talk to Uncle Roy about all the little fish that used swim in there. I'd be really getting into my totem, the yellowbelly, and finding out about that, you know. And teaching other people about that: how they swim, where they swim, when they come and when they go. It would be awesome, really.'

His research totem idea calls for people to gain information from all sources. Not only does it bridge the nature / culture divide, it also bridges knowledge systems and research methods, and thus aims toward fullness.

5.2.2 Seeing the country

As is well known, Anglo-European settlers were out of their depth when they landed in Australia. They knew almost nothing about how to see this continent on its own terms. As Jay Arthur (2003) explains, their default sense of place was England, and Australia was generally considered a failure in that it refused to conform to a landscape aesthetic for which England was the formative place and the default referent. One of the most significant aspects of country that was consistently invisible to them was Indigenous people's care of country: their firestick farming, their organisation of the

country, their protection of refuge and breeding zones, and other action that kept country productive.

One of the disasters of colonisation is that by the time settlers started learning to see the country as it really was, they were already destroying it. The destruction of Australian ecosystems continues at a rapid pace, and it becomes ever more difficult to see the connections between Aboriginal people and country because the country is no longer a 'full' country. Phil's desire to 'talk to Uncle Roy about all the little fish that used swim in there' is a case in point.

Other Aboriginal staff and Elders discussed other aspects of environmental change. I did not follow these conversations through in depth, as they seemed to lie at the outer edge of what the brief called for, but they are extremely significant, and in urgent need of research. Paul Gordon, a Ngiyampaa Elder, for example, discussed a trip he made to Gundabooka with his uncle who had known the place as a young man. Paul said that his uncle said: 'Gundabooka used to be beautiful. The white people have fucked it.'

Less explicitly, but no less emphatically, Steve Meredith discussed a conversation he had had:

> 'Auntie Beryl Kennedy was telling me about thirty years ago at Hay you could tell if somebody had their swimmers on or not. That's only like 30 years ago, the water has degraded that much. She won't give you a technical term, she'll give you an example. You take what information you need from that. Now it's just muddy old creeks, you couldn't even call them rivers.'

Aboriginal staff define oral history as a priority in their research. Indigenous oral history will be entwined with environmental history. Learning to see the

people requires also learning to see the country, and both must be seen in the context of rapid change.

The urgency of this research is directed toward the fact that old people are not going to live forever. A further urgency is the rapid loss of environments. Oral histories with a place-based focus will contribute to all aspects of Parks management, including the work of the TSU.

5.2.3 Seeing history

Denis Byrne (2003: 190) makes the excellent point that in Australia 'racial segregation barely registers as a subject for heritage recording or conservation, a situation which I suggest resonates with the invisibility or denial of segregation in public discourse during the period in which it operated.' Since the late 1960s state and Commonwealth governments have rushed to introduce progress into Aboriginal communities. The provision of goods and services has enabled numerous positive changes, but it has also come with numerous social costs. One cost is erasure: homes (that had the visual appearance of shacks) were bulldozed to make way for improved housing, the fences of racial separation were torn down, the separated seating at picture theatres, and other visible signs of segregation and oppression have been eradicated.

I listened to stories about segregation told by a Coffs Harbour Elder, and I thought, yet again, that story-telling never seems to lose its potential to inspire thought. Stories gain some of their power from the fact of physical erasure: without stories, how would people know how things were before?

One consequence of all this erasure is to assist non-Indigenous people in forgetting a past of which they are not proud. For Aboriginal people a major consequence has been that the visible signs that connect people to their

previous generations, from today going back through the life in towns, on missions, on stations, and in the bush, are now not visible.[9]

History, like culture, has been rendered invisible. For this reason, oral histories are urgent. For this reason, too, story-telling and personal testimony are of the utmost value in cultural awareness programs (2.2). The rare written and photographic records are also of value (see, as an excellent example, Myers [1988] study of Wilcannia, with photos and sketch maps).

In the future, it may be possible for Parks to develop history tours in the towns that are closely associated with Parks. Such tours would allow visitors to understand the histories of the people associated with the Parks, as well as the histories of the Parks themselves (from which Indigenous people may have been displaces for decades).

5.3 Aboriginality

April Blair raised with me her sense of not being seen as the person she knows herself to be. In her vivid words: 'There's a misfit between Aboriginal culture and bureaucracy. It puts you in a box, and you don't know how to get help or when you try it causes difficulties and you're then seen as not fitting in.' April described feeling like she's put between sheets of glass:

> 'You're in suspended animation. You can't be who you know you are, and you don't know how to change that. The best way to cope is be true to yourself and honest and keep a happy positive outlook as best you can. Essentially you walk in the different worlds and be proud of who you are and your culture, and your achievements even if they are not recognised and respected by some. Fortunately there are some that do have an open respect for you.'

[9] Research initiated by the Cultural Heritage Division is now being undertaken to redress some of this invisibility.

As discussed previously (2.2), April Blair has given a great deal of thought to teaching about her people, her culture, her history, and her sense of Aboriginality. Her teaching is designed to bring the visible and the invisible together:

> These talks were and are an important way of educating all in the need of cultural awareness and sharing. It teaches us the values along with breaking down any the delusions that that is often asked whether or not our Dreaming exists/ed. Because it's the creation of places, of where we've been, and who we actually are and where we are going.
>
> Debbie: What's the connection between your life today and the scarred trees in your country?
>
> April: It connects me back to my ancestors and what they were doing and how I was a part of that. Apart from being genetically connected, but also the sense of how you feel in your heart. It ties you to who you actually are. Like the scarred trees they could be a tree that they took a canoe out, or a coolamon, a burial wrap, a shield, a boomerang (in the roots) and ceremonial markers. There are a number of things that the trees were used for. So you can see there are a number of things that connects me back. It's a teaching of our practical site evidence that teaches you about that culture, and about learning and listening, because it's still, I'm not sure how to put this. You see, the Dreaming, and our culture is something that is not just a story about how a scarred tree was made, but also to teach us to learn, to listen, to carry on those stories, and those Dreamings and our culture….
>
> But we need to actually get that Dreaming, or ethnographic stuff, tied in as a realistic, something tangible that we can see feel and touch. Because when they say that the archaeology is evidence, or science,

> its solid, you can see it; that's how people like to believe something: 'I can see it, I can feel it.' If they can't see it or feel it, they can't sort of grasp it. But if they turn that around and look at it through the Dreaming side of it, it is actually real.

April's emphasis on the reality of Dreaming reminds one again of the question that Steve Meredith encountered (2.2) from the man who thought the stories were just for kids, and had never realised that for Aboriginal people they are real. April wants to take this further. She is seeking ways to show non-Aboriginal people that the Dreaming is more than a set of beliefs; that it is real.

In discussing Aboriginality, April, like Phil, brings it back to an invitation for others to get to know her in a way that will recognise and respect an inner state:

> Since early settlement and continuing migration of other cultures that were/are integrated with our culture instigates cultural shifts. So you've got Aboriginal people that have got Chinese, or Indian, or European. With all this mixture of cultural backgrounds blends and creates a new look at who we are suppose to be today realistically which causes confusion for a lot for a couple of generations to today young ones. Which brings us to the society that is made up of who we are now. But our Aboriginality doesn't go away it's in our hearts even the ones that deny it or don't know it! It's in our heart. And regardless of what shade of colour or background we actually are or from. It's how we feel and who we are in our heart.

5.4 What is Parks for?

The major difference that I encountered between non-Indigenous staff and Indigenous staff is in how they understand their role and responsibility within Parks, and in how they work toward the reconciliation process now

happening. As I have stated, most of the non-Indigenous staff I met are extremely committed to their work, to the communities they interact with, and to the reconciliation changes they are experiencing and helping to drive.

A number of interviewees put the view that the desired outcome of shared park management is to improve the socio-economic status of Aboriginal people. A representative statement is this:

> 'Cultural heritage management often seems to be tacked on to planning and decision-making processes. It is evolving. There's often a focus on bones and stones. Really, we need to focus on future socio-economic aspirations and how they relate to landscape. That's the way toward a viable future. I have an opportunity to contribute to that, within the constraints of the agency….
> The management of cultural heritage values is about future socio-economic development.'

In contrast, the Aboriginal staff did not raise the issue of socio-economic status as a primary goal. From my perspective, socio-economic factors were noticeably absent from their discourse. Maxine Walker was emphatic. What she wants for her people is: acknowledgement, respect, equity and understanding**.** I asked her if she had a concern for socio-economic improvements, and she said that that would be a nice bonus. Sharron Ohlsen made a similar point in respect of the Mt Grenfell Handback and Joint Management negotiations. I asked her what she and her people get out of it, and she replied:

> What do we get out of it? A sense of belonging once again. We're not left out. In the past, we were just sitting on the sidelines. We had no say. Now we get all the say. We can do anything with Mt Grenfell, as long as it's in the legislation. I know it's only a little area, but it means that much, it's a matter of how much we want it to happen.

Phil Sullivan was equally forceful, and especially wanted to emphasise the difference between economics and values.

> 'Employment and education is fine, but if moral standards aren't in place, it's nothing….
> The economic system is really taking a toll on our people. We want Parks to gain an understanding of who we are – so as to understand why we want to do things the way we do. They need to understand who we are, where we come from, what we have to offer, what benefits can be gained from that, and how we could work together to better national parks.'

What would an ideal understanding consist of, in Phil's view? 'If they could just understand – this is our country, this is ours, this is all about us, and I'm part of it.'

Learning to see is a key part of cultural awareness. As I have stated, it is unevenly distributed among the non-Indigenous staff. It is also a long term learning process. There is always something new to be learned about how to see as Aboriginal people see. Phil's assertion that 'you'll never learn it all' is, in my view, an extremely important statement of the fact that cross-cultural learning, even more than many other forms of learning, is a life-long project. It is also always an unfinished project: the complexity of human culture is never fully comprehended.

5.5 Recommendations arising from Chapter 5

- Prioritise funding for Aboriginal oral history in full respect of the fact that oral histories contain stories that are pertinent to every aspect of parks management.

- Expand the documentation of Aboriginal histories of place and communities; consider ways of bringing the results of these studies into visibility in communities and in Parks; enable visitors to gain a greater understanding of connections across space and through time.

6. 'RE-THREADING THE FABRIC'

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service today is at the forefront of processes that are working across many of the divides that characterise the modern world. For example, this study is evidence of NPWS's commitment to working across the nature / culture divide. The Statement of Reconciliation and its implementation offer strong evidence of commitment to working across the black /white, Indigenous / non-Indigenous divide. The neighbors' policies and units such as AHU and TSU show commitment to working across the fractured land tenures of contemporary NSW.

The changes that Parks is both experiencing and initiating are leading a wave of social change that resists classification. The changes go against the prevailing modernity, and at the same time they go further than the prevailing post-modernity. They are not exactly counter-modern, since they have their origins in modernity and are working within the modern state and modern bureaucracy. They are not exactly post-modern, in that they go beyond deconstruction and social analysis. These changes are clearly linked with reconciliation and they are reparative in theory and practice. At the same time, they are working toward new relationships amongst people, between people and ecosystems, people and place, history and ecosystems, and so on. In short, they work across divides, and seek out possibilities for connection. Some of these relationships are recuperative: they aim to restore connections that have been lost or damaged. Others are creative: they seek to forge new connections.

I had an all too brief conversation with Martin Smith (Ranger Coffs Harbour), in which we discussed these changes. I was floundering for a way to express what I was seeing, and he suggested the phrase 're-threading the fabric.' In this chapter I examine several of the ways in which Parks is re-threading the

unraveled fabric of Australian society and environment, and in the process is creating alternative futures for all Australians. I will discuss two aspects of the process of fracture: modernity and colonisation.

The main idea is that the changes Aboriginal people are calling for are creating opportunities for non-Aboriginal people to think 'outside the fence', and to articulate their own desires for change. The amplification dynamic thus works its way through staff-driven demands for a Statement of Reconciliation, to the opportunities it affords to Aboriginal people, to changes in Parks, to new opportunities afforded to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to articulate and facilitate more change.

6.1 Modernity and post-modernity

The Swedish anthropologist Alf Hornborg (1994) carried out research in Eastern Canada, and has written about how the Indigenous Mi'kmaq people protested against the destruction of their sacred mountain. He sets his story within a broader analysis of modernity, and he defines modernity as a process of disembedding the local (see Giddens 1990). He means that modernity works to break up local relationships, local loyalties, and local experience. The qualities of the local that are being broken up are: experiential knowledge gained interactively, a sense of place that is not exchangeable, a sense of history that belongs to the place and the people, and other forms of non-interchangeable connections. Modernity works with abstractions and interchangeability; it works against that which is irreplaceable.

According to Hornborg's analysis, fragmentation is a key process in creating the conditions of modernity. Fragmentation and disconnection are processes that cut off connectivities; they erect fences and divides, and seek to replace the local, the connected, and the irreplaceable with the global, the disembedded, and the replaceable. Life worlds are fractured, persons and

other living and non-living things are dispersed. Hornborg found the mining company's proposal to transform the sacred mountain into a heap of gravel to be a perfect analogy for the processes of modernity he was analysing.

Social scientists' analysis of modernity and fragmentation are parallel with ecologists' analysis of the effects of landscape fragmentation on species and ecosystems. Their work shows clearly that fragmentation is one of the great causes of environmental disasters in the modern world. As yet, however, their calls for corridors, re-connections, and an end to fragmentation have had less impact than is required. Similarly, from a social perspective, modernity has been shown to be responsible for large numbers of contemporary disasters (see Scott 1998 for some excellent case studies). Social scientists have had about as much success as natural scientists in effecting the major changes that are required.

Modernity is also based on immense reductionisms and simplification. The ideas of modernity (or 'high modernity') depend on assertions that there is one universally superior way of knowing (abstraction, science, in particular), one universal history (progress), and one universal drive toward production (mastery of nature). Within this paradigm, those who fail to conform are defined as 'backward' and in need of improvement. Modernity claims to improve them by fragmenting their life worlds and integrating them as disembedded citizens who are not attached to local places, people, or species.

Theories of post-modernity seek to analyse the power relations of modernity, particularly in relation to its singularities. Post-modern analysis has done excellent work in deconstructing theories of the universal and showing the power relations that silence, suppress, or erase alternative histories, knowledges, and forms of production. It has emphasised multiplicity, deconstruction, and decentralisation. In the extreme, post-modernism has appeared to take destabilisation as an end in itself: it deconstructs universal

stories, whilst offering very little toward repairing the disasters of fragmentation.

Parks's commitment to reconciliation in land management situates it in a unique position. Reconciliation resists modernity because it is about dialogue (not a singular story) and because it is not abstract: it takes place amongst real people in real places, with real histories and real futures. The openness to multiplicity in relation to knowledge, ethnicity, values, and histories, gives reconciliation a post-modern flavour, but in its commitment to places, people, and reparative action, reconciliation resists the extremes of post-modernism. Whilst resisting modernity, reconciliation is also moving society out of modernity. The capacity for social change is enormous.

6.1.1 Reciprocity / connectivity

The culture / nature divide that is so troubling to Aboriginal Parks staff is one of the major disconnections of the western world. Steve Meredith's explanation of 'pigeonholing' expresses much of what Hornborg and others refer to as disembedding:

> 'What happens is because the fellow went to school, for birds, they're a bird expert, and then you get somebody went to school, they're a plant expert. And the birds eat the plants, which is related to the soil which is related to the water which is related – that all interacts with the people, but they never seem to look at it that way. So that's why we say they pigeonhole things.
>
> Whereas, the funny thing about it is, they pigeonhole all these things, and because they went to school they're higher than all that, they're above nature, and they tend to look down and study nature, like it's ants on the ground. But when you fall asleep, eh, them ants they'll crawl all over you. They'll bite you, or sometimes they don't, but them

> ants might be carrying out their research then, on you. But either way you look at it, you can't be separate from it….
>
> It goes back to where you fit. You can fit in a lot of different ways. You can fit with other humans, you can fit with country, you can fit with animals….'

Steve's idea of fit is a powerful statement of life embedded in local systems. It calls on awareness of the uniqueness of place, and the uniqueness of one's place within the specifics of place. It resists modernity, and it also resists post-modernity. Rather than reveling in the free play of multiplicities, Steve brings living things together into reciprocities: 'them ants might be carrying out their research on you….' His words offer a critique of modernity and (implicitly) of post-modernity from a position outside of the conventions of either.

6.2 Reparative and connective action

My research was of necessity limited by factors which I have discussed throughout this report: the requirements of the brief, the amount of time allocated, the need to work in-depth in several areas. The changes I report on in this section do not constitute an exhaustive account of the many changes that are taking place in Parks today. To the best of my knowledge, they constitute a fair sample of the leading edge of contemporary change.

6.2.1 Connecting people, landscapes and stories

Steve Meredith noted that many stories are fragmented, so a lot of his work involves putting the pieces together. Oral histories are part of the work, because people moved around a lot. To get the full existing story for a place, it is necessary to find all the people who know something about it. They may be in Hillston, Hay, Griffith, Leeton, Darlington Pt, Neranderah, etc. This

work requires him to know people in these and other communities – to interact with a dispersed set of several thousand people who also know him. His work is connective, putting together the pieces of the stories, reconnecting sites and artefacts to form a living landscape, and locating signs of Dreaming action in order to articulate a Dreaming landscape.

In a similar mode, Rebecca Ogden-Brunell (Technical Officer) told me: 'Parks is initiating a lot of coming together.' She was speaking in particular about the work she is coordinating with women at Bourke. They are funded for an oral history project, and they see the project as reparative, educational, and helping the young to gain respect and understanding. The 'coming together' is taking place within the Aboriginal community. In due course their work is intended to be educational for non-Aboriginal people too.

6.2.2 Reconnecting people with country

Terry Korn seeks to ensure that Parks fulfil its potential to reconnect Aboriginal people with their country: 'I feel really sad that a lot of people have been disconnected from land. They used to work out there, and now they're in town. I'm honoured that Parks provides an opportunity to reconnect. We can facilitate that.' He was especially interested in the shift from a single vision of land use to multiple visions: 'Parks provides a way to care for country without having to produce anything, without agriculture. Using land isn't only about agriculture. There are lots of land uses.' Other interviewees expressed similar views, both about the importance of multiple land uses, and about their goal of assisting Aboriginal people to find multiple ways of interacting with their local parks.

6.2.3 Linking attachments and stories across social divides

The opportunities to reconnect with country are not limited to Aboriginal people, and nor is the desire to remain in connection with country limited to

Aboriginal people. In Terry Korn's view: 'It's important that everybody come to have strong attachments and respect for land.' He was referring to non-Indigenous people as well as Indigenous people, and was imagining an Australia in which people's attachments and respect for land shaped their land use practices.

For Tim Sides (see also 3.2.2) attachment to land is part of his life, his family history, and his work in Parks. For him, Parks offers an opportunity to stay involved with the land in the area where he grew up and where he hopes to raise a family. He is in charge of a new Park – Oolambeyan – where he plans to integrate understandings of the place as holistically as possible. This means including both Aboriginal and Settler histories.

Just as Aboriginal people are pressing Parks to include non-material culture in cultural heritage management, Tim Sides wants to ensure that settler non-material culture also become part of Oolambeyan:

> 'There is more to European Cultural Heritage than just the buildings, the sheep/wool industry, pastoralism, exploration, and closer settlement. I believe that there are many people out there, like myself, that have a kinship with the land just as much as the local Indigenous groups have. It may be expressed in a different way, and it may be a different type of kinship, but the link is definitely there, and I don't think enough credit is given to this relationship.'

I would not endorse any effort to try to quantify these relationships, but Tim makes it plain that his relationship to place is of deep and passionate significance to him, and one senses that he may feel excluded from the discourse of belonging. He brings his dedication to place into a holistic plan for managing Oolambeyan: 'All the values should be promoted. It's got to be holistic. It's all part of that reserve over the period of its life.'

6.2.4 Re-thinking belonging

Australia is in the midst of re-thinking place and belonging, and at this time all the terms and all the issues are in debate. Pete Read's books – *Returning to Nothing*, and *Belonging* – have been major contributions to this work (Read 1996, 2000). So, too, has Land Rights and Native Title, as legislation has required Aboriginal people to articulate their sense of place. Settler Australians, including many who opposed Indigenous people's efforts to claim their entitlements under the legislation, have sought to articulate their sense of place in cultural terms. This is not to say that settlers had not thought about belonging and love of place prior to Aboriginal land rights. What is suggested is that Aboriginal people have been in the lead in opening up a public, rights-oriented discourse about belonging within which other Australians recognise aspects of themselves and seek to express themselves. The fact that much of the discourse to date has been oppositional ought not to obscure the fact that it is happening at all. Opposition will be resolved with time, and the legacy of this often harsh period may well be an invigorated sense of shared history and co-existing attachments.

Another problematic of this type of change is that as settlers take up the discourse of belonging they may be seen to appropriate the unique voice and culture of Aboriginal people. This is a very real and potentially damaging social issue. Within Parks, however, this issue is at this time being managed with adequate sensitivity. Most people seem to be aware of issues of appropriation, and at this time people seem to be benefiting from the expanded opportunities for thinking about cultural heritage and attachments to place.

6.2.5 Reconnecting local knowledge with abstract knowledge

In other parts of this report I have discussed interactions between different knowledge systems. Here I discuss another aspect of reconnecting people

with land: Parks is developing its neighbors policies to improve relationships between Parks and people across numerous land tenures. This means that communication between Parks and local people is going to have to change to enable greater flows of information in all directions, and this means breaking down the barriers of technical language. It may also mean breaking down social barriers (between the bush and the city, for example). Tim Sides explained the dilemma he faces:

> Unless you've worked with this stuff for a long time its gobbledy gook. You have to write a plan in the appropriate technical language, but if you release the whole document people feel threatened. You need to be out there to discuss it with people.'

The problems are manifest: people who are expert in technical languages also need to communicate in plain English, tailored to local inflections. At the same time, these people need to learn to understand local ways of communicating knowledge – by stories and by example, for instance – in order to understand the knowledge that is being offered. Increasingly, of course, everyone is expanding their repertoire, as local people gain more access to expert knowledge and methods, and as experts learn to listen to local knowledge. The problems of technical language are well known, but the further step of knowledge exchange is still in its infancy. Steve Meredith explained the issues with great affect:

> 'Rather than getting into Latin names, why not use the old names that people know and are comfortable saying. It also shows the respect to the old people. If we're in the country, I won't say casuarina and like that, I'll say bilarr, because that's the name – bilarr tree.'
>
> The main thing is, [information] has to be spoken and written in a language that people understand…. Why Cobar Peneplain? Us people of Cobar Peneplain – they've taken our own term for ourselves, and

> changed it to the Cobar Peneplain. … Its full of good intention, but why not just name it how people knew it? Why try to make us into something else? They're all baby terms. Whereas the terms for country, they're the proper terms.
>
> This kind of work is by people who are away from the area. They go to the area, but it's a study area. But for me, that's home, that's my mother's country. That's to me everything. That's my family, that's why I'm here, you know.'

The communication issues are huge, and they connect almost every issue already discussed in this report. Relationships building is the most important key to gaining competence in unfamiliar modes of communication. This is because while abstract knowledge can, be definition, be learned abstractly, local knowledge can only be taught by local people. In this form of embedded communication, context is paramount.

6.3 Reconfiguring loyalty

Several of the interviewees mentioned the misfit or misalignment between bureaucratic culture and Aboriginal culture. It is possible that Aboriginal culture highlights the misfits because we have come to take it for granted that Anglo-Australian culture can readily co-exist with bureaucratic culture. What seems to be happening, though, is that the changes in Parks are pressing people to re-think and perhaps re-configure some of the ways in which they relate to their own culture and to bureaucratic culture. One of the main issues, as it emerged in this research, concerns loyalty. In traditional bureaucratic culture, the individual's loyalty is to the bureaucracy. This is made possible by a sharp distinction between the public person and the private person. The bureaucrat is expected to leave his or her personal life and passions at home, and in the office to work for the bureaucracy.

6.3.1 Place

In my research this issue came to the fore around the choices people were making to stay in one place. Steve Wolter's decision to make a commitment to the region so as to be able to build relationships that would facilitate co-management is a good example. So, too, is his acknowledgement of being part of the community to which he has made a commitment. Other people also spoke of wanting to be in a particular place because it was a place where they could raise their families and be part of the communities they were working with. These kinds of decisions cut across the bureaucratic division between the public and the private. They bring family, loyalty, and commitment to place and community into the realm of work, office, duty, and payroll.

6.3.2 Ecologies

National Parks started with a charter for conservation. This goal has never been dropped, but it has been massively expanded. It is interesting, then, that conservation is a good example of an abstraction. It means nothing, really, until there is a context, and in context, conservation means more than it can possibly mean in the abstract. Glenn Storrie's words about care (section 3.3.2) demonstrate the reconfiguring of loyalty that is happening here. Loyalty to specific living things, in specific places, differs from the abstractions of conservation and biodiversity; it argues powerfully for the non-replaceability of species, ecosystems, and the people who are enmeshed with them. Abstract goals and ideals become embedded in place; they take on the flesh and blood of living things; they enmesh human beings into the connectivities as participants. This process, too, is extremely open-ended.

6.3.3 People

For Indigenous staff, Parks offers a way of working in the world that enables people to continue their loyalties to their own place and to their own people. April Blair spoke of her commitment to Parks: ‘We do the jobs because we want to bring our culture and community into the jobs.’ The Aboriginal participants all made similar points: they are in the bureaucracy out of loyalty to their family and their community. A number of non-Indigenous staff also emphasised their desire to integrate community, work, and family in more enduring bonds of mutual benefit.

Glenn Storrie described the work of Parks personnel in the context of some of the tensions with bureaucratic expectations: ‘Our work with Aboriginal people is an on-going dialogue for relationship building. We as bureaucrats do our thing and move on, but relationships have to be sustained in between issues.’ Out of these relationships new possibilities are emerging for how relationships to place can be reconfigured and sustained. Glenn Storrie hoped that this work of reconciliation might make it possible for some white people to adopt some aspects of Aboriginal culture. I asked what aspects he had in mind, and he replied: ‘Respect for the land. Understanding its fragility.’

In sum, through its Statement of Reconciliation and its inclusive work with Aboriginal staff and communities, Parks is developing a culture that fosters love and loyalty to place, ecosystems and the future.

It is interesting to think of NPWS as a microcosm of society. In this mode, we would see a new, more engaged, and more sustainable Australia emerging in regional centres through cross-cultural engagements around land, history, society, care, and the future.

References cited:

Allen, C. 2001 (May) 'Koalas, Kooris and the Handback', *Coastal Custodians*, 1 (4), p. 9.

Arthur, J. 2003 *Default Country*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.

Benhabib, S. 1992 *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, Polity Press, Cambridge (UK).

Byrne, D. 2003 'Nervous landscapes: Race and space in Australia, *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 3 (2), 172-197.

Cowlishaw, G. 1989 *Black, White or Brindle: Race in rural Australia*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Cowlishaw, G. 1997 'Where is Racism?' in *Race Matters: Indigenous Australians and 'Our' Society*, G. Cowlishaw and B. Morris, editors, pp. 177-90, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Cox, E. 1995 *A Truly Civil Society*, ABC Books, Sydney.

English, A. 2002 *The Sea and the Rock Gives Us a Feed: Mapping and Managing Gumbaingirr Wild Resource Use Places*, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sydney.

Giddens, A. 1990 *The Consequences of Modernity*, Polity Press, London.

Hornborg, A. 1994 'Environmentalism, ethnicity and sacred places: Reflections on modernity, discourse and power,' *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 31, 3, 245-67.

Kamien, M. 1978 *The Dark People of Bourke: A study of planned social change*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

Meppem, T. & R. Gill 1998 'Planning for sustainability as a learning concept', *Ecological Economics* 26, 121-137.

Meppem, T. & S. Bourke 1999 ‘Different ways of knowing: a communicative turn toward sustainability’, *Ecological Economics*, 30, 389-404.

Meppem, T. 2000 ‘The discursive community: evolving institutional structures for planning sustainability’, *Ecological Economics*, 34, 47-61.

Mitchell, D. 'Sickening Bodies: How Racism and Essentialism Feature in Aboriginal Women's Discourse about Health', the *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 7: 3, 258-74, p. 267.

Moore, G. (with J. Davies) 2001 ‘Culture and Communication in Aboriginal Land Management in New South Wales: A Koori Perspective’, in *Working on Country: Contemporary Indigenous Management of Australia’s Lands and Coastal Regions*, edited by Richard Baker, Jocelyn Davies, and Elspeth Young, pp.108-22, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Myers, P. 1988 ‘On “Housing” Aborigines: The Case of Wilcannia, 1974’ in *Island in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture*, Pluto Press, Sydney.

Nesbitt, B., L. Baker, P. Copley, F. Young, and Anangu Pitjantjatjara Land Management 2001 ‘Cooperative Cross-cultural Biological Surveys in Resource Management: Experiences in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands, in *Working on Country: Contemporary Indigenous Management of Australia’s Lands and Coastal Regions*, edited by Richard Baker, Jocelyn Davies, and Elspeth Young, pp. 187-198, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Read, P. 1996 *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Read, P. 2000 *Belonging: Australians, place and aboriginal ownership,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Rose, D., D. James & C. Watson 2003 *Indigenous Kinship with the Natural World*, NPWS, Sydney.

Rose, D. 2001 ‘Aboriginal Life and Death in Australian Nationhood’, *Aboriginal History*, vol. 25, 148-162.

Ross, A. & K, Pickering 2002 ‘The Politics of Reintegrating Australian Aboriginal and American Indian Indigenous Knowledge into Resource Management: The Dynamics of Resource Appropriation and Cultural Revival’, *Human Ecology*, 30 (2)m 187-214.

Scott, J. 1998 *Seeing like a State; How Certain Schema to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Smyth, D. 2001 ‘Joint Management of National Parks’ in *Working on Country: Contemporary Indigenous Management of Australia’s Lands and Coastal Regions*, edited by Richard Baker, Jocelyn Davies, and Elspeth Young, pp.75-91, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Appendix 1

Organisation of information in relation to NPWS report requirements:

- Overview and summary of the aims, methods and outcomes of the project: Chapter 1
- Analysis of the potential benefits or impacts of instituting the Shared Kinship Program or any alternative strategies or actions: Chapter 4
- Discussion of the views of all those people consulted during the project, including a summary of the project workshop: Chapters 2-6
- A list of those consulted and how they were consulted: Appendix 2
- Concluding comments: Chapter 6
- References: p. 107.

Appendix 2

Persons consulted during the research

Griffith/ NPWS Officers

Steve Meredith – personal interview
David Egan – personal interview
Michele Ballestrin – personal interview
Tim Sides – personal interview
Colin Killick – personal interview

Griffith / Others

Lloyd Dolan – TAFE NSW, Riverina Institute – informal contact
Brenda Poole – TAFE NSW, Riverina Institute – informal contact
Suzanne Lawson – Murrumbidgee Irrigation – informal contact
Lilian Parker –Murrumbidgee Irrigation – informal contact

Bourke/ NPWS Officers

Phil Sullivan – personal interview
Tony Meppem – personal interview
Hugh McNee – personal interview (informal)
Rite Enke – personal interview
Ron Wardrop – personal interview
Steve Wolter – personal interview
Angela Seymour – personal interview

Bourke/ Community Members

Paul Gordon, Elder – personal interview

Coffs Harbour / NPWS Officers

Maxine Walker – personal interview
Ann Walton – personal interview
Denique Littler – personal interview

Ron Naden – informal contact
Mark Flanders – informal contact
Michael Phillips – informal contact
Travis Kelly – informal contact
Greg Wallace – personal interview
David Nalder – personal interview
Lynn Baker – personal interview
Rebecca Edwards-Booth – personal interview
Martin Smith – personal interview (informal)
Glenn Storrie – personal interview

Coffs Harbour / Community Members

Marie Tarplee, Elder – informal contact
Kenny Nayda, Elder – informal contact
Ken Craig, Elder – informal contact
Tony Flanders, Elder – informal contact

Cheryl Perkins, Yarrawarra – personal interview
Dee Murphy, Yarrawarra – personal interview

Dubbo / NPWS Officers

Rebecca Ogden-Brunell – personal interview
April Blair – personal interview
Peter Christie – personal interview
Peter Peckham – personal interview
Jan Farrar – personal interview
Terry Korn – personal interview
Jeremy Walsh (former NPWS Payroll Officer) – personal interview
Liz Mazzer – personal interview
Allan Hutchins – personal interview
Sandra Walpole – personal interview

Queanbeyan / NPWS Officers

Lorraine Oliver (TSU), telephone conversation
Gary Currey (Cultural Heritage), telephone conversation

Sydney / Head Office

Denis Byrne – personal interview
Tony English – personal interview
Rodney Harrison – personal interview
Peter Stevens – personal interview

Cobar / NPWS Officers

Rob Hurst – personal interview
Duncan Scott-Lawson – personal interview

Cobar / Community Members

Sharron Ohlsen – personal interview
Elaine Ohlsen – personal interview
Iris Harris – informal contact

Workshop Participants:

Tony English
Deborah Rose
Greg Croft
Peter Stevens
Hugh McNee
Maxine Walker
Steve Wolter
Sabina Partl
Kath Schilling
Gary Currey
Brad Nesbitt
Phil Sullivan
Rodney Harrison
Peter Harris
Sharron Ohlsen
Graham Moore
Georgina Eldershaw
Michael Adams
Denis Byrne
Dan Lunney

Appendix 3

Alphabetical list of people quoted in this report

Baker, Lynn (TSU)
Blair, April (Cultural Heritage)
Currey, Gary (Cultural Heritage)
Edwards-Booth, Rebecca (Cultural Heritage)
Enke, Rita (Ranger)
Gordon, Paul (community)
Hutchins, Allan (Cultural Heritage)
Jan Farrar (Human Resources)
Korn, Terry (Director Western)
Meppem, Tony (Area Manager)
Meredith, Steve (Cultural Heritage)
Moore, Graham (Cultural Heritage)
Murphy, Dee (community)
Nalder, David (Ranger)
Nesbitt, Brad (Consultant)
Ogden-Brunell, Rebecca (Cultural Heritage)
Ohlsen, Elaine (community)
Ohlsen, Sharron (Mt Grenfell Handback Negotiating Panel)
Peckham, Peter (Cultural Heritage)
Perkins, Cheryl (community)
Sides, Tim (Ranger)
Smith, Martin (Ranger)
Stevens, Peter (Programs Manager)
Storrie, Glenn (Area Manager)
Sullivan, Phil (Cultural Heritage)
Walker, Maxine (Cultural Heritage)
Wallace, Greg (Ranger)
Walpole, Sandra (Conservation Planning Officer)
Walsh, Jeremy (former NPWS Payroll Officer)
Walton, Ann (Ranger)
Wolter, Steve (Regional Manager)

Appendix 4: Author's Qualifications

Short C.V.

Name Deborah Bird Rose

Address Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies
The Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200
02 6125 0584; fax: 02 6248 0054
Email: deborah.rose@anu.edu.au

Degrees

1984	Ph.D. Anthropology. Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA (USA).
1977	M.A. Anthropology. Bryn Mawr College
1973	B.A. Anthropology (honors and distinction). University of Delaware, Newark, DE.

Summary: Dr Rose is a Senior Fellow in the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, ANU, Canberra. She has worked extensively in the field of land rights, and has carried out research in the NT, WA, and NSW. She publishes widely in Australia, the UK, and the USA, writing in the fields of anthropology, history, philosophy, and religious studies. Her work in both academic and practical domains is directed toward social and environmental justice.

Professional Memberships, Advisory and Leadership Positions:

Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, Fellow
American Anthropological Association, Member
Australian Anthropological Society, Fellow
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Member
Editorial Board, Aboriginal History

Publications

Books and major reports:

2003 *Indigenous Kinship with the Natural World in New South Wales*, co-authored with Diana James and Chris Watson, NPWS/NSW, Sydney.

2002 *Country of the Heart: An Indigenous Australian Homeland*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra. With Sharon D'Amico, Nancy Daiyi, Kathy Deveraux, Margy Daiyi, Linda Ford and April Bright.

2000 *Dingo Makes Us Human*; *Life and land in an Australian Aboriginal Culture*. New in Paperback, Cambridge University Press. Winner of the 1992/3 Stanner Prize.

1998 *Tracking Knowledge in North Australian Landscapes; studies in indigenous and settler knowledge systems*, edited with Anne Clarke, NARU, Darwin.

1996 *Nourishing Terrains; Australian Aboriginal views of Landscape and Wilderness,* Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

1995 *Country in Flames; Proceedings of the 1994 symposium on biodiversity and fire in North Australia*. Biodiversity Unit, Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories and the North Australia Research Unit, The Australian National University, Canberra and Darwin.

1992 *Dingo Makes Us Human*; *Life and land in an Australian Aboriginal Culture*. Cambridge University Press. First printing.

1991 *Hidden Histories. Black Stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River, and Wave Hill stations, North Australia*. Aboriginal Studies Press. Winner of the 1991 Jessie Litchfield Award for Literature.

1988 *The Shape of the Dreaming. The cultural significance of Victoria River rock art*, co-authored with Darrell Lewis. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

1988 *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions; Ethnographic and Historical Studies*, co-edited with Tony Swain, Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Bedford Park, SA.

Recent Chapters in Books

2003 'Oral Histories and Knowledge', in *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, B. Attwood & S. Foster, eds, pp 120-131, National Museum of Australia, Canberra.

2001 'The saga of Captain Cook: remembrance and morality', in B. Attwood and F. Magowan, eds, *Telling Stories: Indigenous history and memory in Australia and New Zealand*, pp 61-79, Allan & Unwin, Sydney.

2001 'The Silence and Power of Women', in P. Brock, ed*, Words and Silences: Aboriginal Women, Land and Power*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, pp. 92-116.

2001 'Sacred Site, Ancestral Clearing, and Environmental Ethics' in A. Rumsey & J. Wiener, eds, *Emplaced Myth: Space, Narrative, and Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea Societies*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu., pp. 99-119.

2000 'Signs of life on a barbarous frontier: intercultural encounters in North Australia', in R. Torrence and A. Clarke, The Archaeology of Difference: Negotiation cross-cultural engagements in Oceania, Routledge, London.

2000 'The Power of Place' in S. Kleinert & M. Neale, eds, *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, pp. 40-5, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

2000 'Writing Place' in A. Curthoys and A. McGrath, eds, *Writing Histories: Imagination and Narration*, pp. 64-74, Monash Publications in History, Department of History, Australian National University.

2000 'Tropical Hundreds: Monoculturalism & Colonisation', in J. Docker and G. Fischer, eds, *Race, Colour, Identity: Constructing the Multicultural Subject in Australia and New Zealand*, pp. 59-78, Stauffenberg Verlag (Tubingen) and UNSW Press (Sydney).

1999 'Indigenous Ecologies and an Ethic of Connection' in N. Low, ed, *Global Ethics for the 21st Century*, pp. 175-86, Routledge, London.

1999 'Hard Times, An Australian Study' in K. Neumann, N .Thomas, & H. Ericksen, eds. *Quicksands: Foundational Histories in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*, pp. 2-19, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.

1999 'Does Cultural Survival have a Gender? Indigenous Women and Development in Australia' in T. Fenster, ed, pp. 140-52, *Gender, Planning and Human Rights*, Routledge, London.

1998 'Consciousness and Responsibility in an Australian Aboriginal Religion' in *Traditional Aboriginal Society, A Reader*, W. Edwards, ed, second edition (first published 1987), pp.239-51. Macmillan Company, Melbourne.

1998 'White People on Sacred Ground', in *Becoming Australia*, R. Nile & M. Patterson, eds, pp. 47-58, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.

1998 'Ned Kelly Died for my Sins' in *Religious Business, Essays on Australian Aboriginal Spirituality*, M. Charlesworth, ed, pp. 103-119, Cambridge University Press. (Reprint)

1997 'Dark times and excluded bodies in the colonisation of Australia,' in G. Gray and C. Winter, eds, *The Resurgence of Racism. Hanson, Howard and the Race Debate*, pp 97-116, Monash Publications in History, Monash University.

1997 'Australia Felix Rules Ok', in G. Cowlishaw and B. Morris, eds, *Race Matters; Indigenous Australians and 'My' society*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, pp. 121-38.

1996 'Rupture and the Ethics of Care in Colonised Space' in T. Bonyhady & T. Griffith, eds, *Prehistory to Politics — John Mulvaney, the humanities and the public intellectual*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, pp. 190-215.

1996 'The public, the private and secret across cultural difference', in J. Finlayson & A. Jackson-Nakano, eds, *Heritage and Native Title: Anthropological and Legal Perspectives*, pp. 113-28, Native Title Research Unit, AIATSIS, Canberra.

1996 'Histories and Rituals: Land Claims in the Territory' in *In the Age of Mabo, History, Aborigines and Australia*, B. Attwood (ed), pp. 35-53, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Recent Refereed Articles

2001 'Aboriginal Life and Death in Australian Nationhood', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 25.

2001 'Decolonising the discourse of environmental knowledge in settler societies', *The UTS Review*, 7, 2, 43-58,

2001 Review Essay: 'Settler colonialism and the transformation of anthropology', *Post-colonial Studies*, Vol 4, No 2, 251-261.

2000 ‘To Dance with Time: A Victoria River Aboriginal Study’, *The Australian Journal of Anthropology,* Special Issue 12, 11:3, pp. 287-296.

1999 ‘Social Justice, Ecological Justice, Reconciliation’, in L. Manderson, ed, *Reconciliation -- Voices from the Academy*, Occasional Papers of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, No. 2, pp. 30-39.

1999 ‘Taking Notice’, *Worldviews; Environment, Culture, Religion*, 3: 97-103, (Special edition, ‘Ecological Worldviews, Australian Perspectives’, F. Mathews, editor.)

1998 ‘Signs of Life on a Barbarous Frontier: Intercultural Encounters in North Australia’ *Humanities Research*, 2, 17-36.

1996 'Land Rights and Deep Colonising: The Erasure of Women' *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 3, 85, 6-13.

1996 'Indigenous Customary Law and the Courts: Post-Modern Ethics and Legal Pluralism', Discussion Paper No. 2, North Australia Research Unit, Darwin.

Guest Editorship

Cultural Survival Quarterly, summer 2002: ‘Nurturing the Sacred in Aboriginal Australia’, co-editing this volume with Ian Macintosh.

Consultancies / Commissioned Research

In addition to this research with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, over the years I have undertaken numerous consultancies with the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, The Northern Land Council, the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, the Kimberley Land Council, The Australian Heritage Commission and others.