

Religious Expression in Australia post 1945



Aboriginal Spirituality

Dreaming

Land

Ceremonies

Kinship

Dispossession

Colonization/missionisation

Separation

Assimilation/Integration/Self –
determination

Land Rights – Native Title, Wik
Reconciliation

Religious relationship with
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Religious Affiliation immediate
post WWII

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Secularization and it's effects

Rise of New Age Religions

Denominational Switching

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Relationships

Christianity/Aboriginal Spirituality

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Dreaming

- the Aboriginal belief system which encompasses a holistic approach to their spiritual and social worlds.
- beliefs, ethics, ceremonials, sacred sites, kinship are related.
- an interconnectedness of the belief system.
- land is central to this belief system.
- is a “way of life”, a sense of being.
- from the “way of life” comes the various practices and rituals.

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Land

- A living organism – earth, trees, rivers, sky.....
- source of life - food and shelter
- sense of sacred
- collective ownership means collective responsibility.
- “communal” ownership: not the western notion of individual property.
- ownership is based on “division of labour” rather than possession.
- rituals are associated with hunting and harvesting cycles.

“we don’t own the land, the land owns us”

National Park Ranger in WA

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Obligations

- the land and all it contains is held in sacred “trust”, passed on from one generation to the next.
- tribal land for which there is shared responsibility is known as the *ritual estate*.
- sometimes referred to as “*my country*”.
- selected areas have spiritual significance and hence “*sacred sites*”.
- the “*elders*” have the responsibility of performing the ritual rites yearly.

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Aboriginal boys initiation ritual



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Male Initiation Rites

- **A rite of passage into adult life – a series of initiation stages.**
- **Rites vary amongst tribal groups.**
- **Confers rights and responsibilities, for example submission to elders.**
- **Circumcision is usually practised as the rite of passage, others include piercing, depilation etc.**
- **Learns about skin relationships, kinship and ceremonial obligations.**
- **Behaviour and relationships with females changes.**
- **Taught who to approach and learns acceptable**

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Male Initiation

- Usually occurs between the ages of 6 – 12
- Spiritual rebirth into adulthood.
- Taken by males elders from the community
- Women “wail” for the boy.
- Ancestral beings ingest the boy and then spews him out into the world as adult male.
- Performs certain actions marking the transition to adulthood.
- Sacred knowledge is imparted throughout stages of life.
- Once initiated, the adult may marry and participate in rituals.

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Aboriginal boys preparing for initiation rites

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Female Initiation

- **Varies according to tribal groups**
- **Not as vigorous as males.**
- **Only a small group of females relatives are associated with the initiation.**
- **Taken from the community at puberty.**
- **Taught about kinship, taboos and legitimate associations.**
- **Initiation usually follows menstruation where the initiate is ritually bathed, ochre painted and led back to the community.**
- **Only at marriage is adulthood recognised.**

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Aboriginal funeral ceremony

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Funeral Ceremonies

- **The spirit of the dead is returned to the “Dreaming places” from which they come – it is a transition.**
- **Dead are treated with great respect; names are not spoken, personal possessions are destroyed and in some cases the whole tribe moves camp.**
- **The dead are buried and returned to their “own country”...note the rituals that are performed and the places where aboriginals remains returned from European museums have been buried in recent times.**
- **Like many rituals, funeral ceremonies vary widely according to tribal traditions.**

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Funeral Ceremonies

- **Variations could include cremation, placing the dead on platforms, in trees, rock-shelters, hollow logs, or specially built humpies/houses.**
- **It is important that they are buried in the land of their ancestors...and in the ceremony the tribe will ensure that through song and dance their spirits will return to the land of their forebears.**
- **Sometimes the dead are buried in a sitting position, facing the sun.**
- **Mourning or “sorry business” varies from weeks/months/years.**

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Kinship

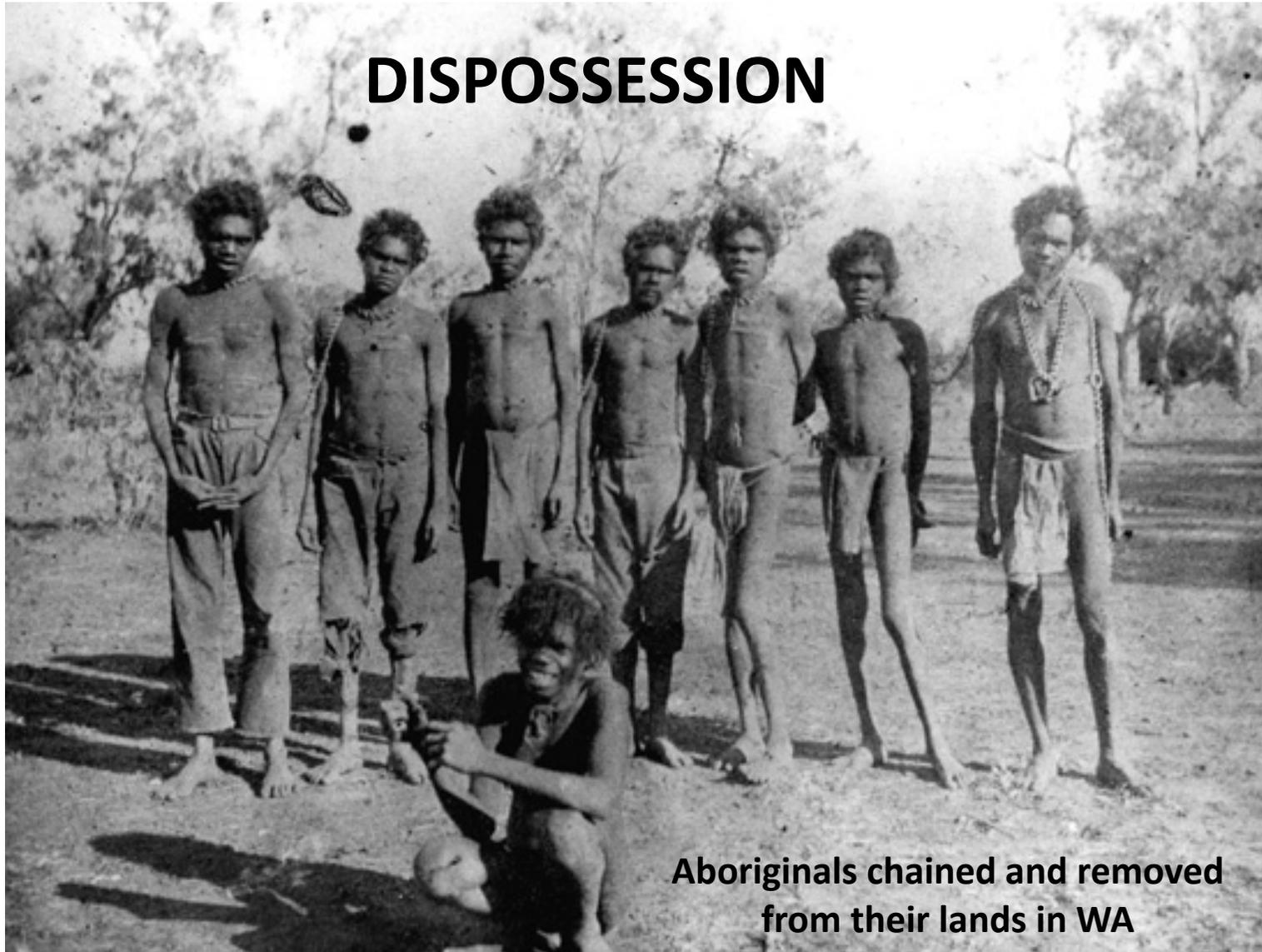
- **A complex network of social relationships which connects members of the clan/nation where each member knows their kin and social position in society.**
- **It is extended to all living beings, thereby connecting all to the Dreaming.**
- **It defines the member's position, roles and responsibilities within the group and provides a mind map of the extended family and relations.**
- **It sets out the moiety (based on skin colour) and determines who can and cannot be chosen as a marital partner.**

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Kinship

- **It connects all members of the language group (nation) together and is a means of educating the young, giving them values and responsibilities. In essence governs their social behaviour.**
- **Not uncommon for a member of the group to have a number of fathers, mothers, brothers etc.**
- **It gives them a sense of “belonging” to the group through a totemic sophisticated network of relationships.**
- **Binds the groups together.**

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Dispossession - usually understood only in terms of land and loss of territories.



But what
does this
image
suggest?

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Dispossession

Gain “*the consent of the natives*” was the instruction given to Captain Cook before he took possession of the land on behalf of Great Britain – **assumption here is that there would be negotiations between the existing landowners and the colonizers.**

- Capt Cook made several attempts to land on Australian shores and was repeatedly repelled by Australian aboriginals.
- Make no mistake, Australian aboriginals did not relinquish land voluntarily. Force was used, although some dispute this.
- Aboriginal warrior Pemulway is the most well-known amongst many others who led armed resistance against the colonizers.

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Dispossession

- Colonists ignored the legitimate ownership of Aboriginal lands (**some say contrary to the wishes of the British Government**) and claimed the “new land” for the crown and used the social construct of **Terra nullius**, dispossessing Aboriginal people of their lands without any compensation.
- The notion of **Terra nullius** meaning the ‘land belongs to no one’; no-one has legal ownership.
- The terra nullius construct was declared fiction and void by the Australian High Court in 1992.

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Dispossession

- **Within a short period of time, Aborigines were subjected to immense social upheaval:**
 1. **Deaths from introduced diseases – no immunity from the simplest of infections.**
 2. **Deliberate actions which caused massive loss of life.**
 - a) **Poisoning of Aborigines' water supplies**
 - b) **Discriminate shootings**
 - c) **“Dispersals” – Aboriginal murders**
 - d) **“Revenge parties” – paybacks from white settlers eliminating large numbers of aborigines.**

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Within a short period of White Settlement the tragic evidence of the devastation caused on the Aboriginal nations by Colonial policies were evident for all to see.

The Aboriginal people were not expected to survive.....all that could be done was to:

“smooth the pillow of a dying race”.

There is argument whether the near annihilation of the Australian aborigines was caused by *genocide or deprivation*.

Whatever word is used – the effects have been disastrous for the Aboriginal community.

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Colonisation - Dispossession??

- The connection here is that colonization has meant the destruction of Aboriginal lifestyles.
- European interests were the antithesis of Aboriginal people, religion and culture.
- Through colonization Aboriginal people were not only dispossessed of their traditional lands, but via other institutions they lost their traditional religious practices, languages, cultural heritage, names, freedoms, values and all that was central to Aboriginal life.
- The devastating effects were evident soon after colonization....but the colonial wheel was set in motion.

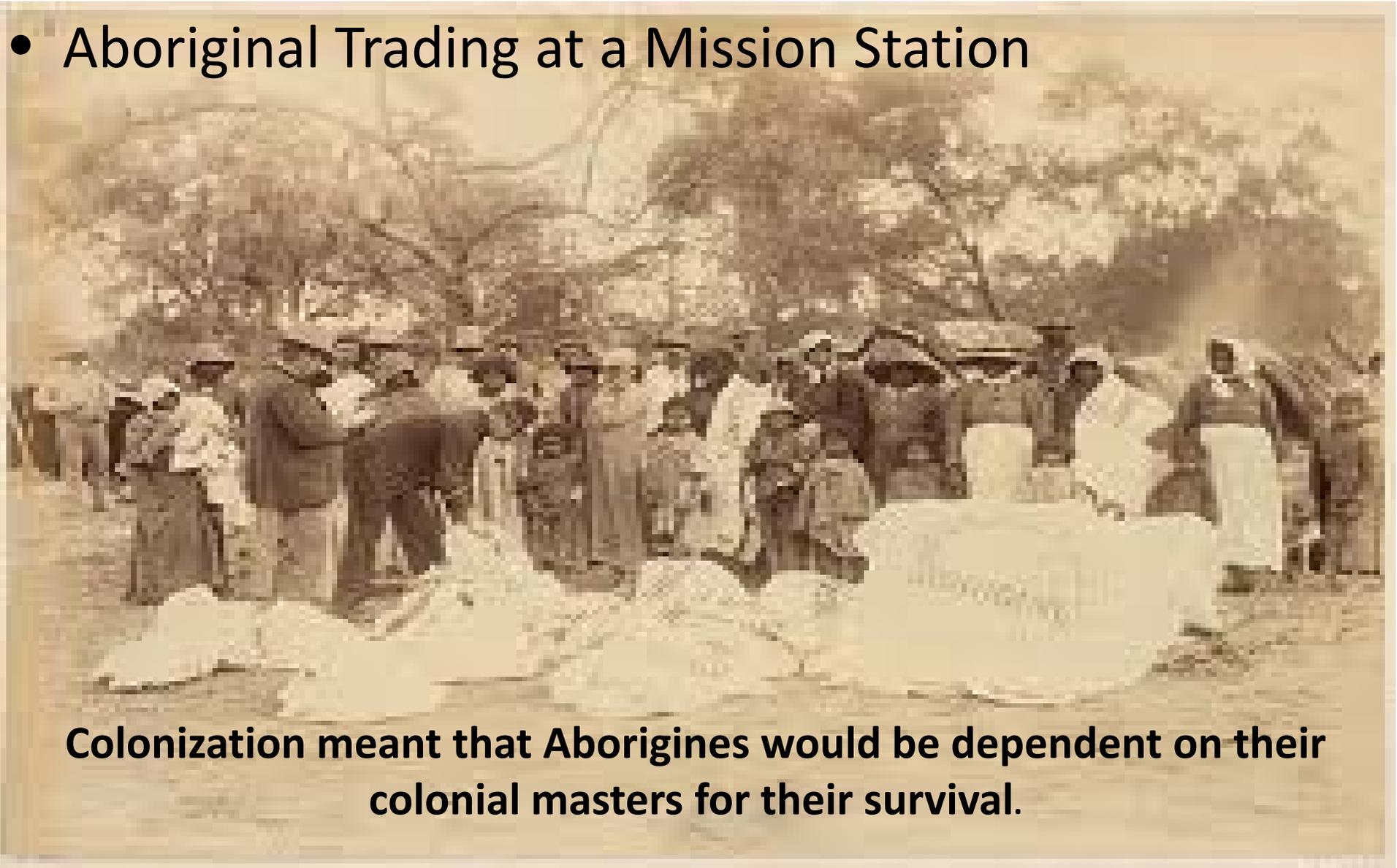
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Colonization

- **The establishment of British “settlements” in Australia**
- **There has been some questioning of Colonial intentions - were they ‘bona fide’ towards Aborigines?**
- **Or is it a case of the powerful vested interests overtook the initial good Colonial intentions?**
- **The effects of colonization clearly show the losers have been the Aborigines at every level: loss of traditional land, sacred sites, disruption to hunting and gathering, and not to mention the introduced diseases and vices (alcohol) which decimated aboriginal populations.**
- **Colonization made Aborigines dependent of their colonial masters for survival.**

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- Aboriginal Trading at a Mission Station



Colonization meant that Aboriginals would be dependent on their colonial masters for their survival.

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Missionisation

Theological view: Aborigines were to be “saved”, their religion was not recognised, practices were pagan, they were to be Christianized.

- **The churches were part of the colonial process – therefore part of the systemic segregation and assimilation processes of the colonial institutions.**
- **In the mission stations operated by the denominational churches, aborigines were given new names, forbidden to speak their native language, adopt Christian values, forbidden who to marry and removed from their parents and tribes, thereby creating the “Stolen Generations”.**
- **The Churches have acknowledged their complicity in the destruction of Aboriginal customs and traditions.**

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**Socialization of Aboriginal Children
in Missions**

*The Governor Sir Charles and Lady Grindler with Abbot Gossez
inspecting the children of St. Joseph's Orphanage, New Norcia, WA*

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Missions/missionation

- Ironically, mission were also part of the preservation of some elements of Aboriginal culture and lifestyle. How?
- As aborigines became marginalized and retreated to marginal lands (lands unwanted by pastoralist or Colonial interests), the church missions, realising their *higher* responsibilities, sheltered and provided aborigines with food, clothing and meagre personal support. After all they were assisting in “smoothing the pillow of a dying race”.
- Unintentionally some of these missions became a means of maintaining elements of Aboriginal spirituality as numerous adult aborigines congregated in town outskirts.

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In Church missions, boys were for employment as jackaroos by colonial pastoralists.



For girls, they were taught the task of becoming domestic help in pastoral stations

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Separation/Segregation

- **Initially Aborigines were dispossessed of their traditional lands, sacred sites and territories making it very difficult for them to retain any sort of traditional lifestyle.**
- **When the devastation was evident, and it was perceived that Aborigines would not survive the colonial settlement, policies were put in place that would make their demise “more acceptable”. They were protected – this meant they were removed from white settlements (to town outskirts) and particularly the young half-castes, were placed in church missions.**
- **Protection meant that Aborigines became totally dependent on colonial institutions (missions) for survival.**

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Separation/Segregation

- The policies were comprehensive:
 - a) Name changes
 - b) Traditional languages were forbidden to be spoken
 - c) Social roles were changed
 - d) Initiation rites were forbidden
 - e) Control placed on who could marry whom
 - f) Work/employment roles were dictated by authorities
 - g) Wages and employment conditions – sometimes they worked on pastoral stations just for sustenance.
 - h) Movement (from reserves and missions) was restricted

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Separation/Segregation

- The results/effect of such policies were:
 - a) Loss of link with the land
 - b) Religious rituals were not practised
 - c) Initiation rites was lost
 - d) Languages were forgotten
 - e) Traditional gender roles were blurred
 - f) Kinship – that bond that kept communities together was altered
 - g) Aboriginal spirituality and culture was overtaken by “white” dominance and Aboriginal traditions were devalued.

Colonization – Separation/segregation has had a devastating outcome for the Aboriginal nations

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Protectionism

Whilst protectionism was a well intentioned policy...its implementation complimented separation.

- **Global and domestic pressure bought about the change in policy.**
- **Protectors and assistant protectors gave the state unlimited control over Aboriginal lives.**
- **Government employees, police and missionaries were chosen for the positions – these were no clean skins in dealing with Aborigines.**
- **Some claim that the policy made Aborigines “wards of the state”.**
- **Individual protectors “tried to do some good’ but overwhelmingly the policy was seen as a disaster.**
- **In the end, the policy was abandoned and the Aborigines “were on their own”.**

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Assimilation

- **Aborigines did not “all die out”, as was predicted. They were excluded from census figures until 1967. They were not asked for input into the Australian Constitution of 1900 which as based on “egalitarianism”.**
- **Faced with the Aboriginal dilemma, Australian governments and institutions asked “Who’s to blame for the Aboriginal state of affairs?”**
- **In the post war period, Australia changed tact on Aboriginal affairs, moving from separation and protectionism *to Assimilation.***

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Assimilation

- **1937 Conference agreed that Aborigines who were “not full blood” should be absorbed into the wider population.**
- **Aborigines under the Government’s control were sent to “training homes” – trained as domestics, farm labourers.**
- **Children were fostered to non-Aboriginal families – leading to the Stolen Generation.**
- **Missions changed their focus from protectorates to assisting in preparing children for assimilation into mainstream Australian society.**
- **Policy was abandoned in 1972 but its pervasive effects are still evident.**

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Self- determination

- **1972 saw the embracing of multiculturalism in Australia...for Aborigines this meant self-determination – a concept whereby Aborigines are supposed to be able to determine and control their own future.**
- **The State powers on Aboriginal matters was surrendered to the Commonwealth in 1973.**
- **A number of Government agencies were set up to foster this this new approach.**
- **Some included: National Aboriginal Council, Aboriginal Development Commission, Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.**

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Self- determination

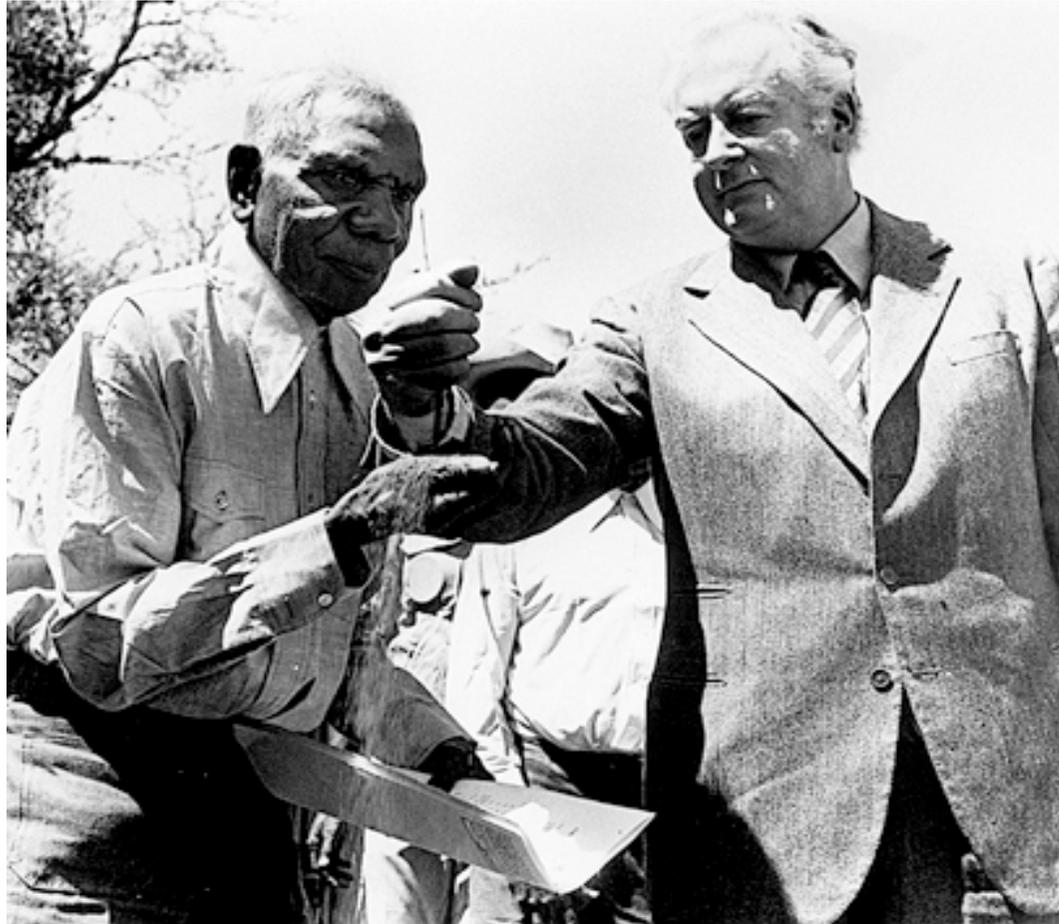
- **Australian Governments (via grants) still direct Aboriginal communities via direct and indirect financial control.**
- **Aborigines still perceive that Australia still has a very “paternal” view of Aborigines and not much has changed since colonial days.**
- **Notwithstanding “terra nullius” – Australia still does not recognize Aboriginal sovereignty in law, culture, religion, economics.**
- **Nevertheless...Aborigines have overcome many obstacles and continue with their beliefs.**

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Land Rights – Native Title, Wik

- **The movement is a religio-political one which seeks to secure land rights for Aboriginal so that their religious, spiritual and cultural heritage is secure.**
- **Whilst the movement is relatively recent (1950's), the struggle for land rights dates back to colonial days – Aborigines never relinquished their lands voluntarily; hence there is argument that the struggle commenced when they were dispossessed.**
- **1963 The Yirrkala people presented a petition to the Commonwealth Government protesting the loss of land taken over by a mining company.**
- **1965, a group of thirty some people, led by aboriginal leader Charles Perkins led a tour highlighting Aboriginal racial discrimination.**

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“I want to acknowledge that we Australians have still much to do to redress the injustice and oppression that has for so long been the loss of Black Australians.... And I want to give back to you formally in Aboriginal and Australian Law ownership of this land of your fathers.” Whitlam, 1975

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Land Rights – Native Title, Wik

- **1966, the Gurundji people went on strike pressing their claim for part of Wave Hill pastoral station – known as the Wave Hill strike.**
- **1967, the referendum allowed constitutional changes in favour of Aborigines – counted in national census and Commonwealth jurisdiction regarding Aboriginal peoples.**
- **1972 is important for the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy – in front of Parliament House Canberra – focusing attention on Aboriginal injustices, including land rights.**

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Land Rights – Native Title, Wik

- **Aboriginal appeals for land justice went unheeded....in politics and at the UN.**
- **Decision was made to promote land rights via legal avenues.**
- **1971, NT Supreme Court determined that Aborigines (Yolngu People) had no legal rights to their lands.**
- **1978, again their petition failed.**
- **1982, Eddie Mabo and 4 plaintiffs from the Murray Islands set in motion a case on behalf of the Meriam nation which would not be resolved until 1992.**
- **Up to 1992, all legal avenues for land rights failed.**

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Land Rights – Native Title, Wik

- The Native Title (Mabo) Judgement (1992) noted that: “the Meriam people are entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of the lands of the Murray Islands”.
- It was a majority judgment.
- Justice Brennan noted that the continuance of *terra nullius* constituted a perpetuation of injustice.
- Australian High Court ruled that British claims to sovereignty did not extinguish Aboriginal native title.
- Native Title legislation passed in 1993, enforced on January 1, 1994
- Aboriginal people who can prove that they have had continual connection with the land and subject to that land not being alienated, may lodge a native title claim.

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Land Rights – Native Title, Wik

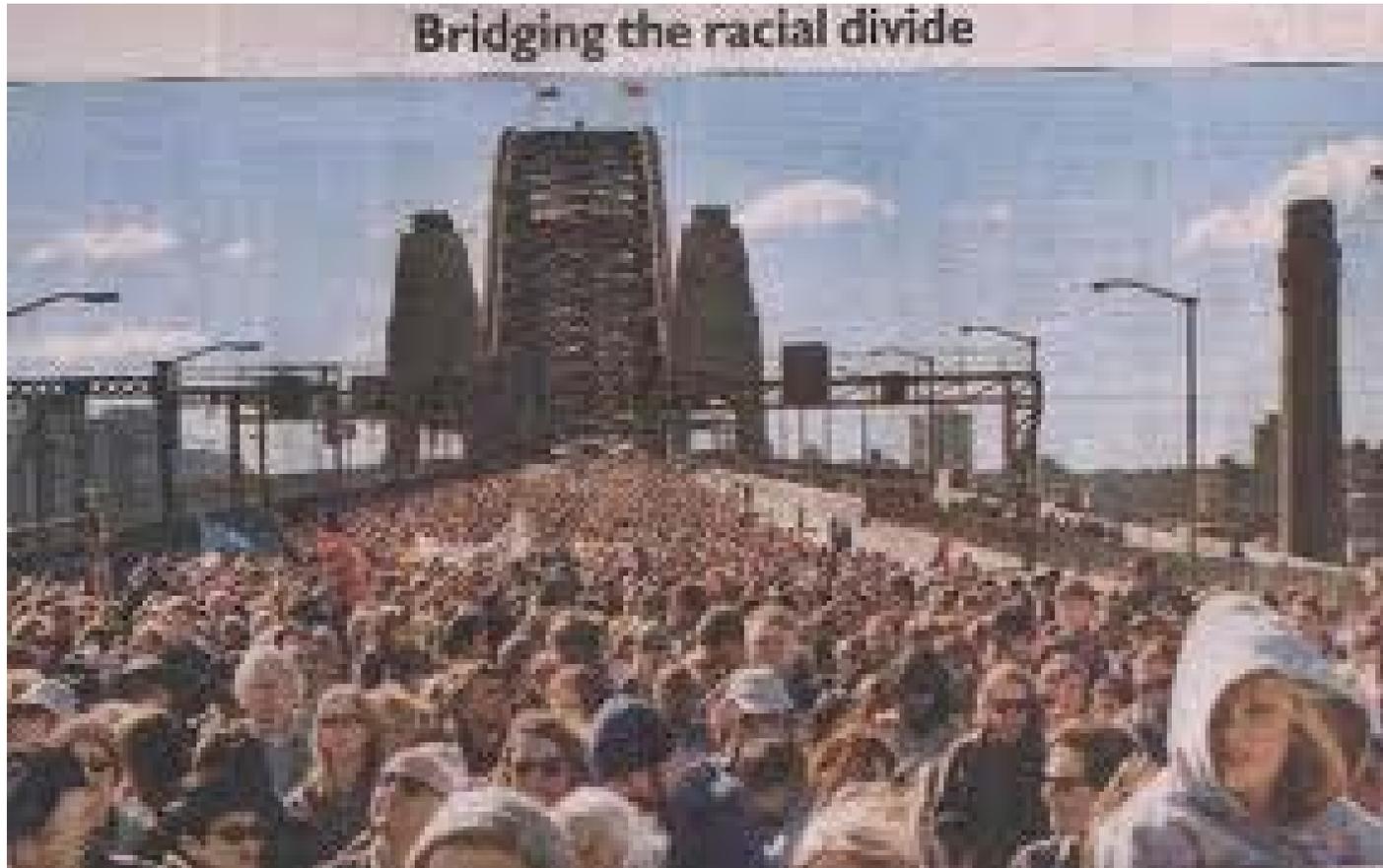
- There are difficulties with the “proof of connection” as it only affects a small % of the Aboriginal population.
- 1996, Wik v’s Queensland case determined that since conditions on pastoral leases vary, each case must be judged on its own merits....it created a minefield of difficulties therefore...
- Some claim that the Wik legislation weakened and undermined the gains made in the Native Title Act and the then Prime Minister, John Howard proposed a 10 point plan to make Native Title workable....one of these included the restriction placed on Aboriginal people to negotiate.
- Both pieces of legislation could be furthered (goodwill permitting), to see proper justice and recognition of Aboriginal land rights.

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Aboriginal Reconciliation

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Aboriginal Reconciliation March 2005

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Reconciliation – PM's Legacies

Paul Keating – probably the person with most integrity on Aboriginal issues. Tackled some historical untruths, bold leadership on Terra Nullius and the Redfern Statement in 1992.

John Howard – probably will be remembered as the PM who refused to apologize to Aboriginal Australia, would not allow cabinet members to march for reconciliation in 2005, watered down Native Title with his application of 10 point plan on Wik, paternal intervention in the NT in 2007.

Kevin Rudd – apologised to the Stolen Generation, initiated a bipartisan approach to Aboriginal injustices, continued the intervention in NT (bettering the lives of Aboriginal peoples) but the jury is still out whether the intervention is successful.

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Aboriginal Spiritualities and Reconciliation

- **Note the term Aboriginal Spiritualities**
- ***Reconciliation* an aim of the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report 1991.**
- **1991 Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) was established to investigate “an instrument of Reconciliation”.**
- **Reconciliation is more than “Land Rights”, but does not exclude them.**
- **Reconciliation includes the acknowledgement of past “wrongs” such as the issue revolving around the Stolen Generation, history etc.**
- **May 2000, CAR published the Reconciliation Document and there were marches throughout the Capital cities promoting Reconciliation. For his own reasons, PM Howard at the time forbade his ministers to march. It was considered a national disgrace by Aboriginal leaders.**

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Aboriginal Spiritualities and Reconciliation

The Australian Christian churches (all denominations) were among the first to offer Aborigines an apology for their behaviour in land confiscation, stolen generation and general anti aboriginal activities perpetrated by governments.

- The history of Christian missionary activity and its contact with Australian aborigines provides a context for its actions the development of an Aboriginal theology expressed within the Christian understanding.**
- Christian aimed for “salvation” of Aborigines through the acceptance of Christian practice and doctrine. There was no flexibility in the acceptance of Aboriginal beliefs.**
- Their practices were premised by “Hamitic curse” or social Darwinism – the supposedly inferiority of non-whites.**
- Some critics argue that Christian missionary activity intentionally distorted the biblical textsthereby rationalizing and legitimizing the subservience of Aborigines, the dispossession of lands and the support of colonial expansion.**

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Aboriginal Spiritualities and Reconciliation

Nominal theology:

Flowing from the Christian notion of mission, Christian churches and their pastors participated in Aboriginal “desecration” by:

preaching – baptizing – converting

Aborigines to various Christian denominations.

- **Force, violence, deprivation and others methods were used to coerce Aborigines into the acceptance of Christianity.**
- **In mission stations, Aborigines were obliged to attend the Church service, attend Sunday school, recite Christian prayers and so on.**
- **Failure to accept these traditions meant punishment, isolation and deprivation of food rations.**
- **Many Aborigines had no choice and became “nominal Christians”.**

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Aboriginal Spiritualities and Reconciliation

- **Some Aborigines have adopted this “narrow” theological approach to their lives and have absorbed this world view....especially in fundamentalist, Pentecostal and evangelical denominations.**
- **They have adopted the European “missioned” theology.**

Liberal Theology

This approach to Aboriginal Spirituality is more “socially nuanced”, focused not on individualism but of structural, economic, ecclesial and theological propositions.

- **This approach has been adopted by the mainstream Christian denominations and Aborigines from these churches have adopted this theology. Hence:**
 - **Mainstream Christian Churches use a holistic approach to Aboriginal theology**

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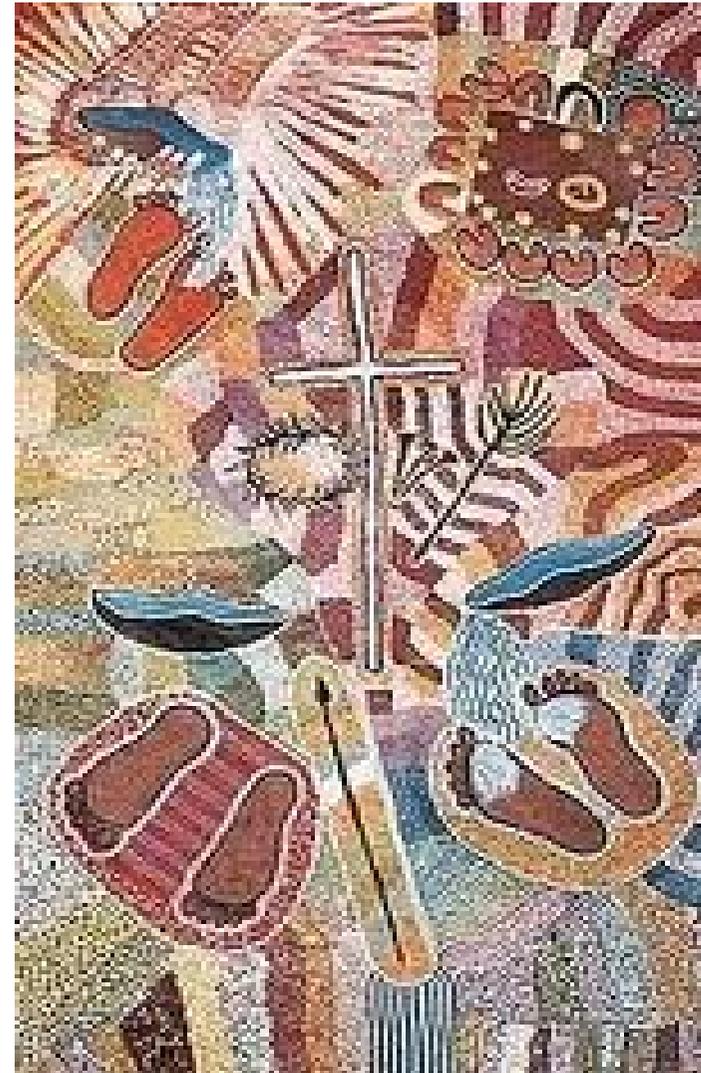
Liberal Theology

- Most Aborigines are affiliated with a Christian church and the churches have blended some characteristics of Christianity and Aboriginal culture to enhance liturgies. A good example is the Yarra Bay Church in Sydney, the “smoking ceremonies” used in recent canonisations by Catholics in Sydney, acknowledgment of Aboriginal land ownership at liturgical ceremonies.
- The use of Christian icons in Aboriginal art.
- Most mainstream Christian denominations incorporate Aboriginal ministries within their life.
- Many Aborigines today have connected Christianity to their original belief systems.

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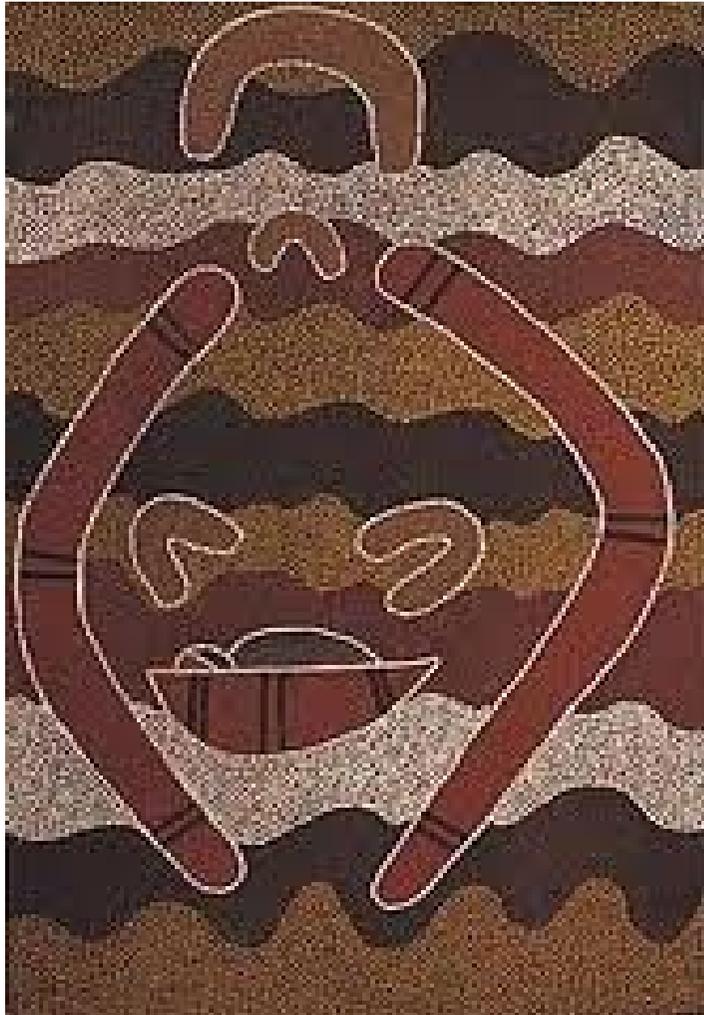


Mother and Child



God and Indigenous Aborigines

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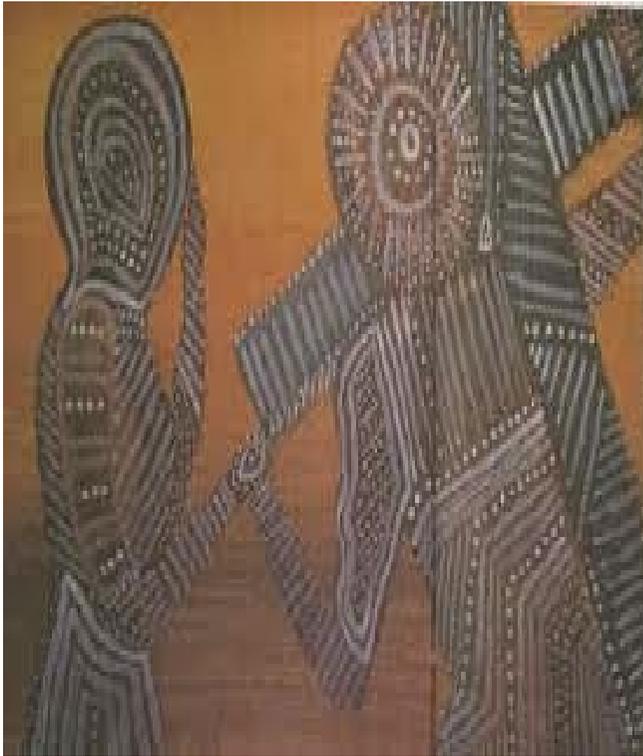


Communion/Eucharist

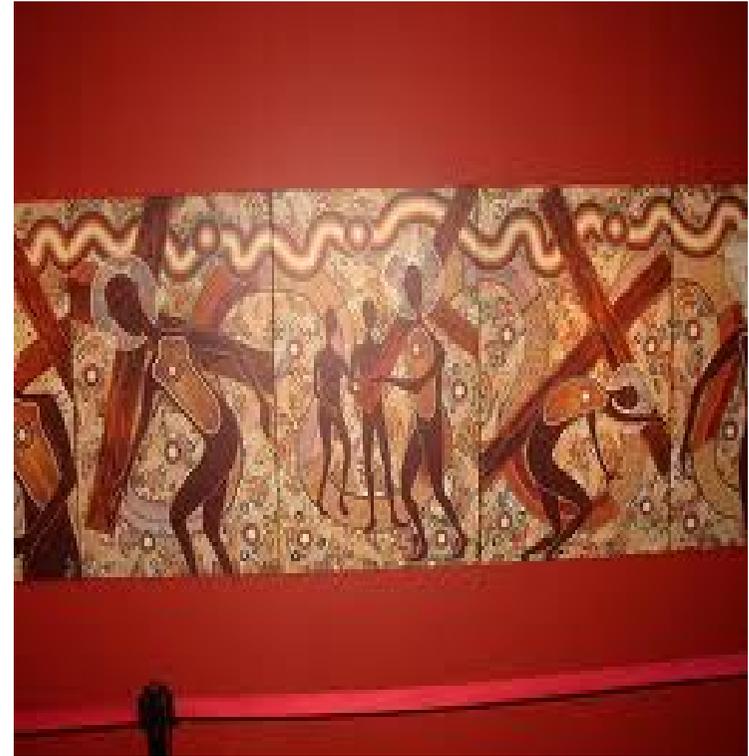


Holy Spirit

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Station of the Cross



Station of the Cross

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Aboriginal Theology

Some critics argue that this is a radical movement to create a distinct theology aiming at biblical justice.

Question: Should there be distinct indigenous theology(ies) or should there be a theology that allows for its expression in different forms?

- Aboriginal ministers/priests have been removed or resigned from their positions as they proposed various ideologies that were not consistent with denominational positions.
 - 1960 Rev Don Brady – Uniting Church
 - 1975 Rev Patrick Dodson – Catholic Church

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Aboriginal Theology

- Includes the oral tradition of Dreaming
- Woven into biblical scholarship
- Preserves wisdom, culture and tradition
- Reinterprets theological concepts to adapt to Aboriginal Spiritualities.
- NCCA (included the Aboriginal Islander Commission) to Aboriginal Spiritualities to the World stage in 1991, in Canberra through art, music, dance.
- Assists in the Aboriginal Reconciliation process.

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Religious Diversity in Australia

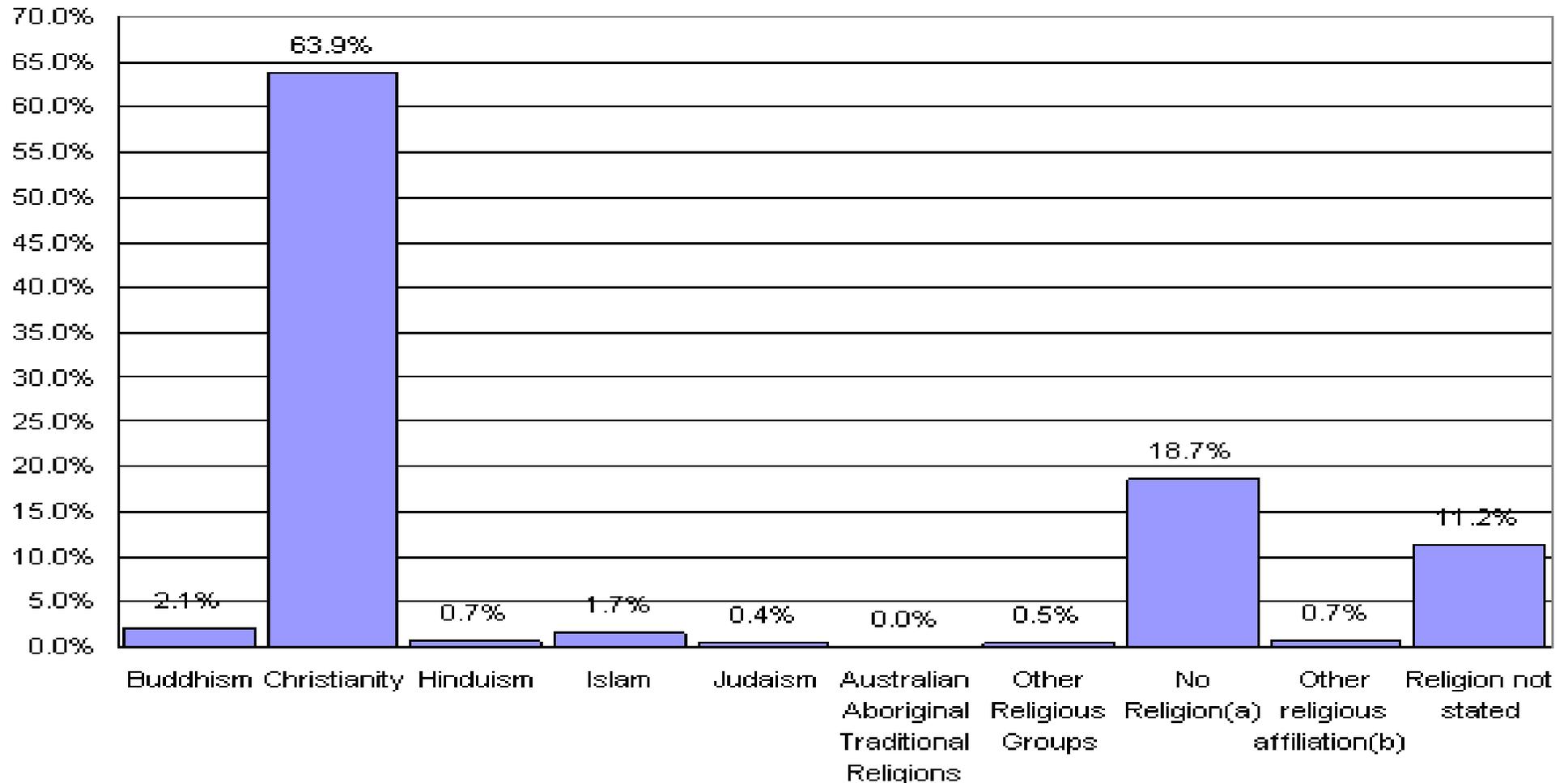
National census figures reveal much about the makeup of Australian Society. Since 1901, census figures reveal the cosmopolitan complexion of Australia. It is now described as a “multicultural” nation and in religious terms a

Year	Anglican	Catholic	Other	Total	Other Religions	No Religion	Non Stated	Total '000
2006	18.7	25.8	19.3	63.9	5.6	18.7	11.9	19,855.3

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Religious Diversity in Australia

A clearer picture:



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Religious Diversity in Australia

Basic Statistics:

- **Christianity is the major tradition in Australia = 63.9% - Catholic 25.8%; Anglican 18.5%; Others 19.5%. Between 1996 and 2006, Christian % fell from 71% to 64%.**
- **Non-Christian = 5.6% - Buddhists 2.1%; Islamic 1.7%; Hinduism, 0.7%; Judaism 0.4%**
- **Non-religion or non-stated = 29.9%**

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Impact of Migration

- **Christian Church in Australia is an immigrant church. Originally Catholic (Irish) and Anglicans (English) were the major denominations.**
- **Over time various migration waves changed the makeup of Christianity as well as other traditions coming into the country.**
- **Migration numbers (waves) have fluctuated according to prevailing economic and political conditions.**
- **Since 1945, there have been large numbers of immigrants from Catholic Europe, Phillipines and South America and these have bolstered Catholic numbers – making Catholicism the major group.**
- **Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus have also migrated in large numbers, they have changed the religious landscape so that**
- **All five major world religions are represented in Australia, making it one of the most diversified countries**

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Impact of Migration

- **Gradual demise of the White Australia Policy had a bearing on the increase of various religious faiths coming to Australia – whilst migrants came from Europe, Christian denominations prevailed.**
- **After WWII, as WAP was wound back, Buddhists (fastest growing religion in the decade to 1991), Muslims (especially after 1970) and Hindus arrived from SE Asia and the Middle East.**
- **1973, the WAP was scrapped altogether and this altered and increased the religious diversity in Australia.**
- **Remember that as migrants come to Australia, they bring with them their religious baggage and eventually settle into the Australian community.**
- **Judaism – has remained relatively constant throughout the study period.**

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Impact of Migration

- **Result is that Australia is a diversified and multi-racial society...with all types of “Faiths” represented: Jewish Synagogues, Islamic mosques, Orthodox churches, Hindu and Buddhist temples pepper the Australian landscape.**
- **There have been times of religious tension – Catholic/Protestant (pre 1945); Islamic/Christian (in the last few years and months). For example the building of the Islamic school in Campbelltown, the building of a Hindu Temple in Minto and the controversy of a billboard calling Jesus a “prophet”, the recognition by some Muslims of some type of “Shariah Law” in Australian legal system. These episodes have caused tension.....but overall, Australia’s religious faiths work well together, are tolerant and are an example of “religious diversity”.**

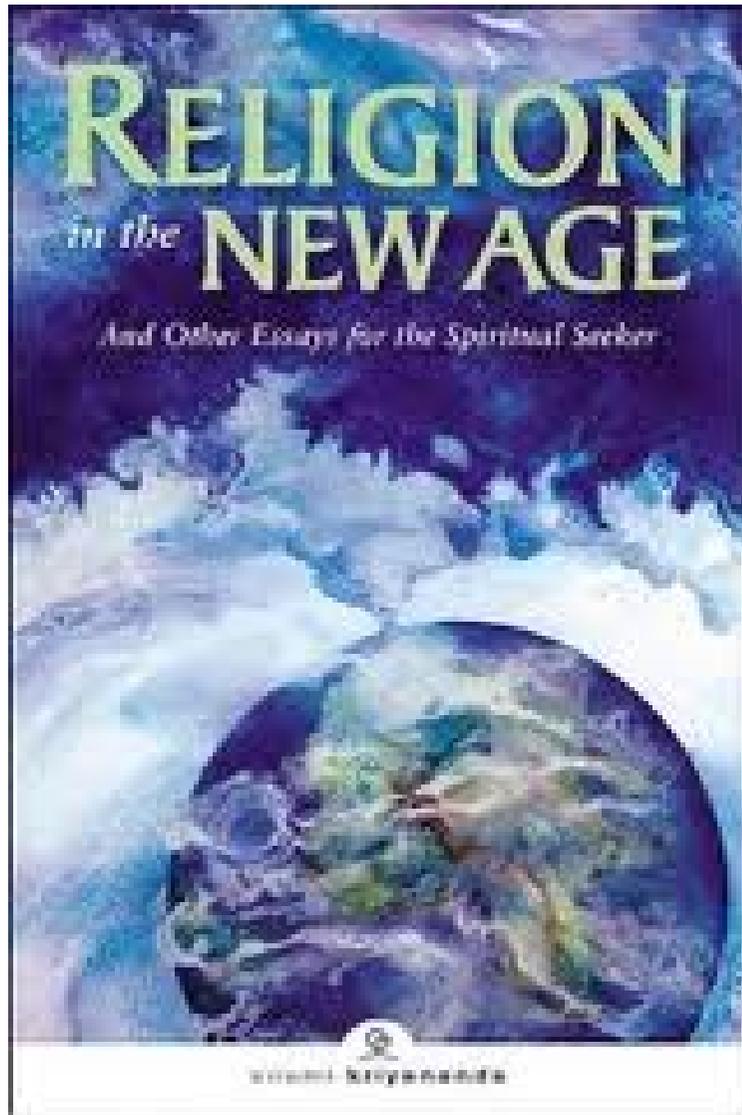
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Secularisation

The influence of secular society – consumerism and non-religious factors on believers leading to loss of faith and practice.

- **Gained impetus during the “Enlightenment period” – fostered by secular education systems.**
- **As a nation, Australians have never been deeply religious.**
- **A nation of paradoxes – happiness/high suicide rates, high percentage numbers of atheists, agnostics.**
- **Individualistic tendencies as opposed to social/communitarian values.**
- **People distance themselves from religious influences.**
- **Believers look for some other “religious” experience other than traditional religious institutions.**

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Secularisation – its effects

- **Loss of religious values.**
- **Lack of religious church practice – civil marriages, non religious funerals, shopping malls (the new cathedrals)**
- **Seeking alternative “religions” or “forms of spirituality”.**
- **Social standing of clergy/church – trustworthiness**
- **Political social action – Marxism, Green Movement etc.**
- **Influence of scientific humanism, economic rationalism**
- **Rise of New Age Religions which focus on personal satisfaction, wealth, self help groups, happiness, mind and spirit exhibitions, personal meditation, affirmation environmental “sit - ins”. These have all**

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Interdenominational Switching

- **Is not conversion to other “faiths” but moving from one religious denomination to another within the same tradition.**
- **Has a long history in Australia and mainly occurs between Protestant denominations.**
- **1991 National Church Survey states that 29% of respondents have switched denominations within the previous 5 years.**
- **Indicative of “denominational shopping”.**
- **Few Catholics switch – loyalty and Catholics Schools.**
- **Protestants seem to switch to “Pentecostal Churches”**

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Interdenominational Switching

- Pentecostal Churches have been the greatest beneficiaries of “switchers” due to:
 - **Aggressive evangelization**
 - **Focus on personal salvation**
 - **“Uptempo” gospel services**
 - **Attractive services to under 40’s in particular**
 - **Less focus on social, ethical or moral issues**
 - **Personal following of preachers**
- **Revolving door syndrome** - Pentecostal Churches loose membership as fast as they gain them.

Religious Expression in Australia post 1945

Interdenominational Switching

- **The Conservative Christian denominational Churches have lost members because:**
 - a) **Services are boring**
 - b) **Differences in “hard line” position on some ethical issues**
 - c) **Searching for broader views in spirituality**
 - d) **Hypocrisy of leadership**
- **Generally, searchers do not loose “faith”, they stop attending their usual church and go to another...or in the case of Catholics, cease attending altogether.**

Religious Expression in Australia post 1945

Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relationships



Ecumenism is the movement among Christian Churches promoting unity.

Inter-Faith dialogue is the co-operation and harmonious relationships between different religious faiths.

Religious Expression in Australia post 1945

Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relationships

- In Australia – Christian denominations have formed state and national bodies fostering the spirit of “unity”.



- ACC was formed in 1946 and superceded by the NCCA in 1994.
- Originally only Protestant Churches were members, the Catholic Church only had “observer” status.
- Catholic formally joined the group on 1994
- The Lutherans joined in 1998
- It is the body that speaks on behalf of all Christian Churches in matter of public debate.

Religious Expression in Australia post 1945

Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relationships

- **NCCA respects the theological positions of the constituent churches.**
- **They retain their own liturgies, beliefs, practices.**
- **Ecumenism does not mean uniformity...but they do speak with one voice on social and ethical issues**
 - **abortion, euthanasia, climate change.**
- **Some practical examples of the NCCA include –**
Sydney and Melbourne Colleges of Divinity,
Interchurch Trade Industry Mission, the formation of
the Uniting Church, Christian Research Association,
The Ecumenical Chaplaincy Service in the 2000
Olympics.

Religious Expression in Australia post 1945

Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relationships

In Australia, Inter-faith relationships are important by virtue of the existence of the Five world religions and some. Tolerant and understanding of the respective religions are important for the well-being of Australian society.

- World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) was held in Melbourne in 1989, now termed Religions for Peace.**
- NCCA and Australian Federation of Islamic Councils have issued joint statements recently as a result of the tension between Australian and Islamic groups.**
- This is particularly important with the advent of International terrorism.**
- The Uniting Church as a working relationship with the Muslim and Jewish communities.**
- Council of Christian and Jews has a strong national structure.**
- Universities have well established multi-faith centres**

Religious Expression in Australia post 1945

Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relationships

- Major capital cities in Australia have strong Inter-Faith organisations. Whilst they foster good relationships in general, some have specific purposes, such as:
 - a) Australian Council of Christian and Jews. They focus on anti-Semitism, educational seminars, Christian, Jewish and Muslim relations.
 - b) Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations. This group tends to look to better understanding of Islamic /Christian Faiths, educational support for teachers and students in their quest for knowledge on Islamic faith.
 - c) Women's Dialogue Network – associated with the Columban centre but includes women from the Quakers, Tibetans, Buddhists, Baha'i, Catholic, Jewish and Parsee groups.
- Affinity Intercultural Foundation is a group which involves young Muslim who want to extend their interaction with Australians. They focus on peace and harmony matters. Groups include Catholic, Anglican other Protestant