

Unfinished Business in (Post)Reconciliation Australia

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IN THE LATE 1980S INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS CONTINUED A SET of conversations—conversations that had emerged during the bicentenary—about the need for proper recognition of Indigenous peoples by the state. These discussions focused on legal and political issues and took place alongside an increased interest from non-Indigenous people in thinking about ways of ending racism. In 1991 Reconciliation was posited by the federal parliament as the key state intervention to deal with these issues. This article traces the 35 years of reconciliation since the *Council of Reconciliation Act* was passed in 1991. It engages with questions asked by Tessa Morris-Suzuki (9) about who the parties are that are involved in the reconciliation process and what reconciliation would look like if it were achieved. This analysis draws on the historical sociological theory of the event to undertake this work. In this perspective events are ‘that relatively rare subclass of happenings that significantly transforms structures’ (Sewell cited in Clemens 541). Elisabeth Clemens, drawing on Marshall Sahlins’s work notes that some events ‘may be capable of disrupting established associations and oppositions’ (541). For example, the legislation that mandated a decade of reconciliation in Australia produced a situation where citizens thinking about Australian race relations had their cause legitimated in a new way. Again to draw on Clemens, reconciliation as an ‘event’ enabled interested citizens:

to incorporate[e] the even[t] into their discourse, thus creating new definitions of the situation or even new realities, and new means to resolve the problems it raised, abandoning or reworking discredited arguments, and reframing issues in the debate. (Ellingson cited in Clemens 541)

Keeping Morris-Suzuki's questions in mind, this article analyses the ramifications of this continual reworking and reframing of reconciliation discourse over three decades.

Two sets of discursive framings or discourses are deployed. Initially, the article considers a pair of discourses that I suggest developed to describe or represent the phenomenon of reconciliation as it unfolded in the first part of the 1990s. The first discourse is an 'historical filling in' discourse. The logic of this discourse is explanatory. Historical filling in describes the history of poor race relations in Australia. The approach involves the replacement of fantasies of 'visionary futures' with a tendency 'to dwell on the past' often in the 'form of a confessional encounter with the blighted history' (Posel 120). The second discourse is one that imagines solving or producing policies for better race relations. Labeled as the 'action/policy' discourse, the logic is that through 'witnessing, listening, and truth telling, we can restore trust and regain a larger, more inclusive moral community' (Sampson 181). This will be reflected in better policies and laws.

The second pair of discourses I identify are ordered around the framing of reconciliation across the longer reconciliation period. The focus here is on groups who have engaged with reconciliation through organised campaigns, policy development and community interaction. This includes state and national governments, corporations, NGOs, and civil society. The first discourse I call the 'sentimental national' and the second 'postcolonial rights'. The sentimental national draws strongly on liberal values and the idea of citizenship. A key trope is the notion of sharing, imagined as the development of a shared destiny. Associated more with governments of the period and corporations it draws on practices of consumption and the marketing of reconciliation through evocative symbols.

The postcolonial rights discourse is associated more with civil society, in particular Indigenous activist groups. The language is one of rights, especially land rights, but also critiques of colonialism, dispossession and the proffering of sovereignty as a solution. This discourse has a long history (Attwood and Markus). In the reconciliation decade this activist discourse was shaped by the emergence of the *Bringing Them Home* Report and the Mabo native title decision. The timing of these incidents was not chance. Rather the long history of Indigenous activism—emerging powerfully in the 1980s in response to the high

number of Aboriginal deaths in police custody (Royal Commission 1987-1991), ongoing claims around land title and the impact of policies of family break-up from the early twentieth century—all contributed to the social reality of the reconciliation decade.

The longer approach—35 years—of this analysis seeks to trace or follow patterns, shifts and changes in reconciliation discursive practices, mapping the intrinsically unfinished nature of a national reconciliation project. The methodology involves critical discourse and semiotic analysis of a series of activities, artworks, campaigns, images and texts that have appeared over the longer reconciliation period. In research undertaken on reconciliation and apology early in the twenty-first century, Martha Augostinos, Amanda Lecouteur and John Soyland (2002) used a critical discourse approach to analyse their material. Drawing on existing scholarship, the authors noted their method was designed to ‘demonstrate[e] how institutions, practices and even the individual human subject itself can be understood as produced through the workings of a set of discourses’ (Potter and Wetherell 47, cited in Augostinos, Lecouteur and Soyland). Pushing the model further, Augostinos and her colleagues then argued that from this perspective:

[T]alk and texts are viewed as social practices, and are analysed with the aim of showing how various linguistic resources and rhetorical devices constitute particular constructions of reality. (106)

I would add to this that aspects of the reconciliation process are performative, and particular articulations—textual, identification, resistance—produce particular realities, different from the ones that existed before. The aim is to use the two sets of discursive repertoires described above to trace the various and often contradictory articulations of a reconciled Australia across the period.

As Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith (2004) have demonstrated, the longer approach to reconciliation should be considered in relation to local as well as global forces. In the 1990s national reconciliation was impacted by significant anti-racism and powerful civil society revolutions taking place outside Australia. The most significant for the language and tone of Australian race relations took place in South Africa. The end of the long apartheid regime in 1994 and the implementation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission as the key political body to sort through the violence and inequality of the past had a significant impact on other countries (Posel). Another influential discourse was that which emerged in scholarly and governmental institutions pertaining to critical race studies. Work emerging from Britain and the United States, but even more importantly from other Commonwealth settler colonial states such as Canada

and New Zealand, re-emphasised ideas of sovereignty and the need to work with the specific relationship that attaches to Indigeneity (Moreton-Robinson xi-xxiv).

Lastly, it is an obvious point, but it should be stated clearly, that in relation to Suzuki-Morris' question of who was involved, the process of reconciliation in Australia was imagined in terms of a dichotomy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Though there were always small critiques or questions raised about this binary, it was a powerful logic. Across the decades of reconciliation, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have noted that the relationships between Indigenous people and those who are non-Indigenous were not necessarily the same. The process of addressing past wrongs in Australia is predominantly imagined as a triangular one, where a dominant white group, at the triangle's apex, rework their relationship with two distinct 'minority' groups—one imagined as the Indigenous people who predated their/my arrival and the other imagined as the non-white migrants who came after the British (Perera; Elder). The impact of this model of imagining reconciliation, as well as the resistance to it will shape this analysis.

The Reconciliation Act

A key 'happening' that in some ways sparked the reconciliation event, those material and cultural changes in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia, was the *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act, 1991*. It was designed to assist Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples with their thinking about the past, the present and the future of race relations in the country. Though the global reconciliation process was still in its infancy when this Act was passed, Australia was not alone. Chile had already completed its National Truth Commission into the abuses of the Pinochet regimes. That said, the Preamble to the Act suggests that reconciliation in Australia will not be about atrocity. It references Indigenous prior occupation and dispossession, noting there has not been any 'formal process of reconciliation' and noting that:

(e) as part of the reconciliation process, the Commonwealth will seek an ongoing national commitment from governments at all levels to cooperate and to coordinate with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission as appropriate to address progressively Aboriginal disadvantage and aspirations in relation to land, housing, law and justice, cultural heritage, education, employment, health, infrastructure, economic development and any other relevant matters in the decade leading to the centenary of Federation, 2001. (*Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act*)

The intention of this act was to address the problems of the past. The preamble makes it clear that the need for reconciliation resulted from the British colonisation of Australia. Part of the approach will fill in the story of the past. Section (e) suggests the action/policy approach.

Beginning Reconciliation

The key body driving reconciliation was the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) and it framed much of its work in terms of the historical filling in discourse. The CAR funded the publication of a series of four key issues papers explaining the history of race relations in Australia (as well as developing models for a better future). In *Improving Relationships: Better Relationships between Indigenous Australians and the Wider Community* (CAR 1994) Lillian Holt wrote on 'What racism feels like' (3-5). This first-hand account is directed towards a non-Indigenous audience, with little knowledge of the issue:

My world was my oyster until I was about 14 years old. I had a loving and secure home environment, and in many ways, a dream run. ... I first felt the pangs of my own 'difference', through name calling. I was called names like 'abo', 'boong', 'blackfella' and 'gin' by my school peers, but it washed over me to a degree. (3)

These types of recollections of racism formed part of the powerful discourse of historical filling in. Importantly, these memories were embedded in government educational resources and community programs.

The CAR also designed resources for group activities that were used by neighbours, councils, schools and universities. The *Reconciliation Learning Circle Kit* comprised a series of modules designed to be used by local communities in educating themselves to better engage with Indigenous peoples in their area. The modules were organised around discussion and activities. Indigenous and non-indigenous people took part as facilitators and participants. Their tone was conciliatory and the language was of emotions and the particularity of Indigenous experiences. One idea emphasised in the kit was that 'Reconciliation needs to come from the hearts and minds of the Australian people', also that there was a need to build 'more understanding of the unique position of Indigenous People in Australian society' and last that '[l]earning occurs through shared enquiry and dialogue'. The learning kits are still in circulation and at least in Geelong (Victoria) are part of the community education process for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples (Geelong Constitutional Recognition Project).

CAR at this time also sought more recognition for national days dedicated to Indigenous history or peoples. Drawing on the logic of the national sentimental this framing of reconciliation highlighted liberal values of citizenship. The National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Commemoration had emerged in the 1930s as an Indigenous-focused day. CAR put much more effort into this day being celebrated by the broader community, in particular schools. The day was extended to a week of festivity and acknowledgement. On 27 May 1967, the landslide 'YES' Referendum, which resulted in a change in Indigenous peoples' political status in the Australian Constitution, took place. Again, CAR sought to give this day more weight. During the 1990s a week of celebration and contemplation was planned around 27 May and it was dubbed Reconciliation Week. As part of a national framing there was a recuperation and retelling of raced histories as part of the future of the nation. New practices, especially around activities in schools, were also sutured into the national calendar.

Reconciliation after Mabo and *Bringing Them Home*

In the mandated decade of reconciliation two key occurrences radically reoriented the discursive repertoire of reconciliation. The first was the *Mabo Native Title* decision, handed down by the High Court of Australia (Attwood and Markus) in June 1992. The second took place five years later when the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report on the Stolen Generations was published (HREOC 1997). Each contributed to different narratives within the reconciliation drama. The Mabo decision as a legal decision opened up space for the postcolonial political framing that had been marginalised since the 1970s—in particular ideas of land rights, dispossession and sovereignty. By way of contrast the *Bringing Them Home* report significantly extended the access non-Indigenous Australians had to narratives such as those shared by Lillian Holt in the key papers series. The stories of the racist project of child removal described a long history of poor race relations. As with the semi-national days described above, the *Bringing Them Home* story was sutured into national practices with May 26 being designated National Sorry Day. However, what these two decisions had in common was that they helped redirect and split the reconciliation process. The everyday historical filling in discourse was extended to include the action/policy discourse.

The outcomes from the recognition of native title were unsettling for many non-Indigenous peoples. The legal ramifications that might flow from this decision were understood as more worrying than the social ramifications of recognising traumatised generations of young people. There was a dichotomy between soft social issues that touched non-Indigenous citizens' hearts and tough legal issues that were understood to possibly disadvantage non-Indigenous peoples or to give Indigenous peoples undeserved privileges. What happened was the

emergence of a radical alternative to normative reconciliation. This was Treaty. The result was a cleaving of reconciliation discussions that continues today. Reconciliation could now be understood in terms of the development of amicable race relations (perhaps signified by the notion of non-Indigenous people being sorry, that is the national sentimental framing), or it could be understood in terms of the development of new political relations (signified by the idea of sovereignty and the postcolonial rights discourse). By 1997, when *Bringing Them Home* was released, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was in train and provided a template for reconciliation modes designed to preserve the national. In particular, the decision to grant amnesty to white South Africans who had committed crimes under apartheid was seminal. It is therefore not surprising that, for the most part, the more radical discourse of Treaty was subsumed within the non-threatening and fuzzy rhetorical vision of national harmony.

At this time corporate Australia took up the national sentimental story. An example from the mid-1990s is a window display in Body Shop stores in Sydney which supported reconciliation with a campaign using this quote [Figure 1]:

Reconciliation is ... 'a united Australia which respects this land of ours: values the indigenous heritage, and provides justice and equity for all'.



Figure 1: Body Shop advertisement (Personal photograph)

It draws on the national sentimental discursive repertoire, which framed racism as a liberal problem of bad habits in the past, and so framed the solution also in liberal terms of respect, justice and equity. This normative approach sought not to confront non-Indigenous people. For example, when land is referenced, it is

not clear to whom the possessive pronoun refers. Indigeneity is referenced directly only in relation to heritage. The sentiments are sincere, but vague. This vague rhetorical vision of land and justice offers a more anodyne solution than that proffered by the Mabo decision.

However, the postcolonial rights discourse had some power. New repertoires emerged that were organised around the concepts of native title. A series of community activist groups emerged to support not only the official project of reconciliation but also new practices and aims. Citizens, to draw on Clemens' phrasing, created new definitions of reconciliation. In these discourses the focus of reconciliation moved from the need to understand historical experiences of racism in order to produce national harmony, to one that recuperated land rights as a key outcome, alongside an apology and compensation for the Stolen Generations. These new social practices got their energy from civil society. A key group that emerged and played an important role was the Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR).

The Stolen Generations and sorry happenings worked in a different way to the Mabo happening. The release of the HREOC report on the stolen generations, *Bringing Them Home*, was a publishing sensation. It was the first-person narratives by Indigenous peoples, who as children had been on the receiving end of systematic harsh and unfair treatment by the state, that were the focus. These stories became central to the discursive repertoire of non-Indigenous peoples in their production of a reconciliation story. Short forms of the report were released; as were kits designed to be used in the classroom. The release of Philip Noyce's film *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002), which was based on the autobiography of Doris Pilkington, deepened the range of new texts and added a new mode of representation, and further extended the accessibility of ideas about child removal and its link to the process of reconciliation. These resources and representations enabled new social practices. The stolen generations narratives about children being abused by adults became a form of account that many non-Indigenous peoples identified with, and so these testimonies became the bedrock upon which further ideas about how to achieve reconciliation became based. In some ways *Bringing Them Home* domesticated reconciliation after the postcolonial challenge of Mabo.

For many Indigenous peoples in particular, Mabo/*Bringing them Home* enabled them to disrupt the presumption that reconciliation would not unsettle political norms. Drawing on the postcolonial rights framing that emerged from the more politically and legally focused Mabo High Court decision enabled the mobilisation of the action/policy discourse, to mobilise the idea of Treaty as an alternative outcome of the reconciliation process. The logic of this approach was revolutionary rather than remedial. Unlike the vague sentiments that often

underpinned the national sentimental discourse of reconciliation, the idea of Treaty argued that Indigenous peoples were the victims and should be recognised as such. It was their voices and needs that should be central. Though many non-Indigenous Australians supported these more demanding or challenging approaches to reconciliation, in the face of a conservative government and a divided citizenry, a middle-road political solution was understood as the answer. So in 2001 when the final documents about the decade were handed over to the government the key phrase was that of a 'roadmap'—suggesting multiple routes to a destination.

That said, the final months of the reconciliation decade were strongly focused on non-Indigenous contributions to reconciliation. This was especially visible with the Sorry bridge marches and the Olympics. The national sentimental discourse dominated. Even so, when Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman lit the Olympic flame in the Sydney 2000 games, it was represented as being against the wishes of a vocal minority of non-Indigenous naysayers, who saw this act as pandering to a left minority. In many ways the story at the end of the decade was of a nation divided, but it was a division that was mostly between non-Indigenous people bickering over how much reconciliation symbolism was enough. Cathy Freeman's representation of successful reconciliation was matched by a subversive act in the Closing Ceremony when the band *Midnight Oil* wore outfits with 'sorry' written on them. This moniker suggested that something needed doing—an apology was still due and more work was needed. The message declared unfinished business.

Yet, in the years after 2000, the emphasis on reconciliation petered out. In the same year as the Olympics another issue overtook it, and race politics in Australia shifted to focus on the other relationship in the triangle—white Australians in relation to immigrants. Many reconciliation supporters used the national discussion on refugees entering Australia to keep the issue of poor Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations alive. There was a successful campaign to rewrite the pejorative term 'boat people' to refer to the 1788 British colonisers, rather than more recent arrivals. Attention was moved to another raced problem—immigration. The dissolution of the CAR at this time also meant a key institutional body representing a formal narrative on reconciliation disappeared. Though it morphed into Reconciliation Australia it did not have the statutory power of the original Council.

Reconciliation Place

Another, very different site for the performance of reconciliation emerged in Canberra's Reconciliation Place. This official site for the commemoration of reconciliation reflects quite powerfully the 'unfinished business' of

reconciliation. The decision to develop a monument to Reconciliation was made in December 2000. The brief for potential designers emphasised that Reconciliation Place should offer a way of placing reconciliation both physically and symbolically in the centre of Australian democratic and cultural life ('Reconciliation Place'). The government understandings of what the new commemoration space would achieve drew on the national sentimental and the historical filling in discursive repertoires that had circulated across the reconciliation decade. Architect and academic Jillian Wallis suggests 'the brief offered little direction regarding the specific aims of the competition, outlining a wide range of objectives and themes' (24).

The main feature of the winning entry was a central mound, with pathways on either side heading towards the National library and National gallery. Along the pathway the winning design noted that in time the space would or could incorporate up to fifty 'slivers' made of glass, stone, steel and/or concrete upon which stories of reconciliation could be inscribed (Wallis 25). The entry did not include any detailed designs for these slivers so the design was literally 'unfinished'. Yet, to state in 2001 that in future the site would hold fifty sculptures was also to assert the presence of reconciliation deep into the future of Australia.

When Reconciliation Place opened in 2001 four slivers had been installed. Today there are about seventeen. There has been sufficient will and money to maintain an ongoing commemorative presence in Reconciliation Place. The subjects of the original four original slivers were: A Ngunnawal welcome to country; a Strength, Service, Sacrifice sliver [**Figure 2**], linking war service with sporting achievements, including Cathy Freeman's lighting of the Olympic cauldron; a Native Title sliver, featuring the story of the 1992 Mabo decision; a Citizenship sliver, commemorating the 1938 Day of Mourning and the 1967 Referendum. These are a mixture of representations to do filling in work and represent the national sentimental. The inclusion of a Mabo sliver makes visible the more disruptive postcolonial rights discourse. The first of the next three slivers installed were on the subject of Indigenous Leadership, focusing specifically on Neville Bonner and Vincent Lingiari, and the remaining two on the subject of the Stolen Generations, echoing the ongoing power of this 'happening' and its attendant hope of apology in the national psyche (Celermajer). As further slivers are installed, the intention is that they will combine to provide an ever-growing collection of inscriptions and artworks that will, 'through teaching, learning and experience, further the process of reconciliation' (CAR 2000).



Figure 2: detail of Service sliver, Reconciliation Place, Canberra.

Given the focus on Indigenous experience and the emphasis on teaching and learning, what is learned in Reconciliation Place will differ according to which audiences engage with it. The experience will change over time. New Indigenous artists, historians, cultural custodians and leaders will emerge and their new, or repeated, visions of what reconciliation might entail will be pressed into the space, to sit alongside the older existing imaginings.

The History Wars

In 2002 Keith Windschuttle published the first volume of his polemic *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* inciting a national academic/media war about history and violence on the colonial Australian frontier. Conservatives and liberals were pitted against each other again in fierce discussions and intellectual debates about history, accountability and the past. Enmeshed in debates about how many Indigenous people were actually killed in frontier wars, and if historians had misrepresented these figures, was a fight about how much the present generation of non-Indigenous Australians had to atone for this historical violence. Again, it needs to be noted that this discussion took place within a global field where South Africa and newly independent countries from the former Yugoslavia were working through contemporary issues of violence and state and personal responsibilities. These other sites of (post) national reconciliation provided arguments for minimising non-Indigenous Australian culpability for the past, but also provided an increasingly generic framework for assessing past wrongs.

As Sue Kossew (elsewhere in this Special Section) demonstrates, this national discussion about representing the past moved into a range of different cultural

spheres, including academic publications and contemporary fiction. Reconciliation narratives were also produced through television. As in other colonial and postcolonial nations at this time, Australian television producers developed historical reenactment series in which 'history [was imagined to be] managed ... framed, reproduced, brought closer ... made part of our human experience again, in a reassuring way' (Lamb 1). *The Colony* (SBS 2005) and *Outback House* (ABC 2005) both invited Australians—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—and Irish visitors to see if they could live like Australians in the past. As with many reality television programmes, viewers shared the personal impact that reenactment had on participants. The series also functioned to make visible some of the 'crimes and injustices that have occurred in the course of [history]' (Lamb 5). For example, in *Outback House*, an episode late in the series involved the staking of land claims (reenacting a version of what happened after the passage of historical legislation), an activity that one Indigenous participant did not feel right reenacting. In *The Colony*, set in Tasmania, the Indigenous participants were not mixed in with the non-Indigenous reenactors. Instead the programme was organised around the two different communities and a national sentimental reconciliation narrative of working together was deployed. In this hellish pre-electricity and pre-zipper world the two groups needed to cooperate first, to literally survive, and second to metaphorically build a nation. Though academic talking heads explained to the audience the reality of colonial Tasmania, in this potentially reconciliatory reenactment the participants had the opportunity to do history differently.

As long as a conservative federal government was in power, there would be no official apology to the Stolen Generations, so this became a background issue. What was foregrounded in this period was a related discussion about what history was and how it should be presented. It became obvious that history was not just a filling in exercise, but a deeply contested political space. Even so, the national sentimental discourse was deployed by so many non-Indigenous Australians to suggest that nationalist visions designed to formally bring warring groups together should be supported in the present, and should be deployed in the production of history. Further, as the phrase 'black armband history' suggests there was an argument, which had significant traction, that it was anti-Australian to publicise a minor set of infractions against Indigenous peoples instead of focusing on the glory of the Australian past. It was in relation to this fierce and long cultural battle over history that the apology was finally offered to the Stolen Generations in 2008 by a new Labor government.

The Apology

The Stolen Generations story, the sorry campaign and the idea of an apology fitted quite neatly with the national sentimental discourse. Though the *Bringing*

Them Home report had recommended monetary compensation for the Stolen Generations, the overwhelming non-Indigenous popular response focused on the symbolic performance of an apology as the key practice that needed to be enacted by the state. When the apology was delivered it was probably one of the most momentous national performances associated with the Reconciliation event. Taking place in the national parliament it had the power to stop the nation, and in many ways it did. Australian citizens, through digital streaming technologies, were able to watch the event, in thousands and thousands of locations, often as part of their own local ceremonies. The elaborate and moving parliamentary delivery of the apology, with its significant Indigenous audience, and all the pomp of a national occasion, gave gravity to the formalities that were rightly deserved.

That said, the national sentimental framing of the Stolen Generations meant the idea of apology could be co-opted and used in other national narratives. This point is made strongly by Denise Cuthbert and Marian Quartly in their discussion of national apologies to children. In the lead-up to, but also after, the apology to the Stolen Generations, there was significant purchase in demanding apologies for other maltreated child citizens. This approach meant that any apology to the Stolen Generations was seen as 'volume one' in a series. The experience of non-indigenous mothers whose children had been removed, and British 'orphans' who were brought to Australia as cheap labour by Christian organisations were presented as 'volume two in this trilogy of national apologies' (Cuthbert and Quartly 179).

What can be noted here is that for many non-indigenous Australians, even the vague or soft idea of the national sentimental discourse of reconciliation as an asymmetrical process, favouring Indigenous people, was rejected. Unlike some of the earlier narratives where the uniqueness of the Indigenous experience was accepted, here there was a dismissal of the idea that Indigenous peoples' experiences were exceptional. This was replaced with a story of the Stolen Generations experience as something that could be shared by other non-Indigenous Australians. In this narrative any privileging of Indigenous experiences unsettled their sense of national belonging and induced a resentful feeling of marginalisation. The recalibrating of apology as deserved by any generic child who had suffered at the hands of the Australian state enabled the specialness of Indigenous people to be replaced by a general national experience of suffering.

Unfinished Oz

In the wake of the apology there was a lull in the energy devoted to reconciliation. In some ways the delivery of the apology signified a type of

'mission accomplished'. But there was, of course, still 'unfinished business'. In 2009, a Reconciliation Australia campaign used literally the idea of the unfinished nature of reconciliation to create new impetus for the project. The aim of this campaign, called 'Unfinished Oz', was to 'help reconnect' Australians 'to support reconciliation' and to 'finish what we started' (Unfinished Oz). Able to draw on media technologies that did not exist in the early years of Reconciliation, one part of the campaign involved a YouTube video featuring well-known Australians each contributing a chunk of speech to a message that when run together created the narrative of 'finish[ing] what we started'. It referenced the Sydney Harbour Bridge walk, noting that participants had formally 'registered' their intention to take part in this event. This idea of registering is used in the Unfinished Oz campaign. The website—with a black background and featuring pinpricks of light that appear on a night map of Australia—invites Australians to use a proto-social media format to again formally register and be part of a group who are finishing the reconciliation project **[Figure 3]**. When a new participant signed up they were asked for their name, location and to make a reconciliation statement if they wished. They then appear as a small pixel of light on a map of Australia. Moving your cursor across the map enables a participant to tag any dot of light, which is then highlighted and the person's name and contribution appear.

The site draws on the language of mapping and on the notion of filling in. However, unlike the earlier reconciliation resources where filling in had been temporal, here the focus was on an intimate spatial motif of connection, something that was a key aspect of social media such as Facebook (which emerged in 2004). The spatial imaginings of what reconciliation would look like suggest an endpoint. The join-the-dots feel of the beautiful webpage point to a time when all the connections might represent a harmonious Australia. But it also references social media logics that presume an endless accumulation of 'friends', keeping the process open.



Figure 3: Unfinished Oz Webpage.

When I registered on Unfinished Oz there were 2739 other supporters. This initiative did not garner the support and attention of the Bridge walks. Indeed, the website itself is no longer active and the domain name unfinishedoz.com.au is now owned by a company that enables viewers to share stories of successful beach holidays in Australia. The achievement of reconciliation in the Unfinished Oz campaign required the energy of a mass movement, long after the reconciliation event had been relegated to the back of the collective non-Indigenous Australian mind.

WWI Centenary and 'Black Diggers'

The lack of success of the Unfinished Oz project can be contrasted with a less obviously reconciliatory project that emerged out of a national and nationalist commemoration event around war. This project was a popular museum, archival and academic recognition of Indigenous soldiers who had fought in the two world Wars, but especially in World War One (Daley). As the earlier discussion of the History Wars makes clear, reconciliation has always been caught up in nationalist projects. This particular performance of national identity, through a military history prism, produced a new way of representing reconciliation in the 2010s. In the lead-up to 2014, the beginning of a four-year celebration of the centenary of the Great War, there were opportunities for national and local institutions to apply for money to support their own individual projects and many of those chosen for funding were designed to include new recognition of the diversity of war experiences. In the extravaganza of nationalism that started in 2014, Indigenous soldiers' contributions to the nation were frequently foregrounded. The Australian War Memorial website has a specific 'Indigenous commemoration for the Centenary' that lists its particular aims and projects as 'producing a list of Indigenous personnel who served in the First World War, and [using] their stories ... throughout the new galleries' (AWM 2016). Similarly, the

State Library of New South Wales made specific Indigenous focused archival projects as part of its 2014-2018 commemoration.

The emergence of World War I as a site for performing some of the work of reconciliation meant that Indigenous and non-Indigenous race relations were presented through a logic of masculinity, mateship and love of country. The narratives drew on the national sentimental and historical filling in discourse to perform reconciliation. This meant that reconciliation discussions moved from the vexed local space that had made the History Wars so divisive, to extra-national war zones, where the key representation was of courage and mateship. In texts and visual materials about World War I the national sentimental narrative focused on a shared Australian martial citizenship, performed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men (and the occasional woman). It did have to be acknowledged that this recognition of Indigenous men's national military contribution, and the recognition of their citizenship, had taken place very late—100 years after the fact—but this atonement enabled the renewal and extension of Anzac commemoration for the 2014-2018 period.

The narratives of national shared military history were reproduced across a range of sites and resources, including memorials and museums, as well as ad hoc community events, and in substantial and well-produced academic publications. As a result, some Indigenous warriors are more tightly sutured into a key national military story. This has, however, opened up discussions about Indigenous warriors in other contexts. Indeed, it has created new spaces for narratives associated with the postcolonial rights discourse. There is an emerging story of frontier wars associated with mass Indigenous dispossession. So on Twitter in 2016 there were hash tags on Anzac Day referencing #frontierwars and #lestweforget together.

Recognise campaign

The Recognise campaign is the most recognisable reconciliation 'happening' today. Billed as the 'people's movement' this group is governed by Reconciliation Australia (Recognise) and the campaign is focused on legal/political change. Recognise seeks to alter Indigenous people's place in the constitution of Australia. In this sense it is a powerful part of the action/policy discourse. Unlike Unfinished Oz where the emphasis was on achieving a nebulous harmony framed by a 'click' registration, and the loose ties associated with social media networks, Recognise seeks to change a political-legal document.

One of the obvious characteristics of Recognise is the split in Indigenous voices for and against the campaign's aim of constitutional inclusion (McQuire). Of course, this heterogeneous Indigenous response is not new or unexpected. It

occurs all the time. The group of Indigenous people who oppose Recognise note the ways in which so-called transformative actions or interventions result in a lack of change in terms of who holds power in Australia. They argue that particular voices continue to be included and others excluded. Most particularly they note that solutions recognising sovereignty remain unavailable. Further, the restless nature of political events means that some key institutions set out as central to the process of Reconciliation have disappeared. As noted earlier the CAR was disbanded and the legislated drive that gave the CAR its impetus was significantly diminished. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the main elected representative body for Indigenous peoples—an institution through which government ideas could be voted on—was disbanded by the federal government in 2005. No similar elected body has replaced it. So these political discussions about constitutional recognition have mostly been undertaken in the broad public sphere rather than between mutually agreed and properly nominated parties.

In December 2015 a national Referendum Council was established by the Prime Minister to 'advise us on progress and next steps towards a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution' (Office of Prime Minister). In 2017 the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 referendum will take place, and this occasion is being used to frame the recognition process. The idea is to have another referendum on the fiftieth anniversary that further recognises Indigenous belonging. The national sentimental discourse in concert with a notion of action/policy helps produce a set of stories and activities about change in terms of national race relations. What has become obvious in this piling up of 'recognising' anniversaries are some of the ways race relations are *managed* by the dominant group of white people in Australia. However just as CAR turned out to be a formidable group not always taking a conciliatory or normative view, so the Referendum Council, with its strong Indigenous membership, can draw on postcolonial rights discourses, so strongly articulated in contemporary Indigenous academic and public scholarship, to proffer answers that move beyond what a federal government or non-Indigenous citizenry might think would constitute recognition.

Conclusion

Reconciliation in the 1990s was imagined as a national act of renewal that would shift the unequal relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and produce a new national relationship. In the decades after 2001 reconciliation was no longer performed through a narrow government mandated frame and in some ways this enabled more voices to be heard in the debates that continued. It also meant that money, energy, and institutional support were no longer so readily available, and so sometimes ongoing efforts became marginal to the

national imaginary. A mix of narratives or discourses—often contradictory—continue to shape the ongoing reconciliation event and also to demonstrate the plural nature of the process. These discourses also reflect how reconciliation so often reflects a well-meaning, non-Indigenous project to manage the colonial past as it spills into the present. Equally, it makes visible the ongoing insistence by many Indigenous people that the ‘unfinished business’ of colonialism is not going to go away.

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