Reconsidering Aboriginal welfare dependency: The Howard Government years through the lens of Postcolonial theory

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The Ration House, Coorong, South Australia
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"Black men! We wish to make you happy. But you cannot be happy unless you imitate good white men. Build huts, wear clothes, work and be useful."

George Gawler, Governor of South Australia, 1838

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ABSTRACT

The Liberal-National Coalition Government led by Prime Minister John Howard (1996 to 2007) brought with it a new approach to Indigenous affairs. At the centre of the Howard Government's approach sat the concept of Aboriginal welfare dependency. This concept arguably has as much currency within Australian politics today as it did during the Howard years, and yet the Howard Government's normalisation of the concept of Aboriginal welfare dependency remains relatively under-examined. This thesis fills this gap and critically analyses the Howard Government's development of the concept over its four terms, through the lens of Postcolonial theory. In conjunction with Postcolonial theory, this thesis implements Carol Bacchi's *'What's the problem represented to be?'* (WPR) approach to policy analysis, as a way of structuring-in the application of Poststructuralist and Postmodernist insights around the power of ideas. This fruitful though unusual pairing brings together Postcolonial theory's oppositionary stance towards colonialism in all its various forms, and the streamlined Poststructuralist questioning of Bacchi's highly compatible WPR approach.

Using this dual approach, this thesis deconstructs and rethinks the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, with Australia's ongoing colonial context very much in mind. A clear picture of the problem representation is developed through a close examination of the Howard Government's policy material and public statements. The fate of the successful community-controlled Indigenous employment program – the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme – is charted through this process. The implicit assumptions within the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency are unpacked, and its neoliberal and colonial origins are traced. A portrait emerges of Aboriginal welfare recipients as failed economic actors, responsible for their own poverty.

This thesis then considers how the situation could be read differently. Flaws within the concept of welfare dependency itself are identified, calling into question the usefulness of the concept. It is argued that in employing this flawed concept to

explain Aboriginal unemployment, the Howard Government neglected to recognise the ongoing colonial context in Australia, as a problem in its own right, and as a cause of Aboriginal unemployment. In contrast, this thesis highlights how current levels of Aboriginal welfare use are directly related to the historic economic marginalisation of Indigenous people and the imposition of an alien and uncompromising economy (factors which had been ameliorated to a degree by the now dismantled CDEP scheme). By detaching Aboriginal unemployment from this broader colonial context, the Howard Government took a decisive step away from the acknowledgement and redress on which Aboriginal economic security and decolonisation both rely.

DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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INTRODUCTION

At the centre of the Indigenous policy approach of the Liberal-National Coalition Government led by Prime Minister John Howard for four terms (1996-2007)[1] sat the concept of Aboriginal welfare dependency. For the Howard Government, dependency on welfare payments was treated as both a symptom and a cause of malaise within Aboriginal Australia. As the Howard years went on, participation in the successful Community Development and Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme also came to be represented by the Howard Government as part of the problem. In this thesis, the Howard Government's construction of this problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency during its decade in power will be subjected to thorough-going critique. The concept of Aboriginal welfare dependency has since become a taken for granted component of accounts of Aboriginal affairs within wider public discourse, and continues to shape Indigenous policy directions to this day. The Howard Government's development and normalisation of the concept thus remains highly relevant. Although certainly contested, the Howard Government's conceptualisation of Aboriginal welfare dependency specifically has received little deep and detailed analysis. This thesis sets out to undertake such an analysis, to defamiliarise the Howard Government's depiction of Aboriginal welfare use as Aboriginal welfare dependency, and situate it within the ongoing colonial context in which it was produced. This thesis aims to disrupt the Howard Government's narrative of Indigenous failure and to explore alternate explanations of Indigenous unemployment that look further than the individual Indigenous welfare recipient.

The analysis performed in this thesis is guided by the critical perspective towards colonialism offered by Postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory is alert to, and challenges, the continuation of colonialism in its various forms and is thus well-suited to the study of Indigenous issues in still-colonial Australia. Drawing on Poststructuralism and Postmodernism, Postcolonial theory recognises the role ideas play in securing outcomes that support the colonial project. Carol Bacchi's *'What's*

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[1] Throughout this thesis, I use the term 'the Howard Government' to refer to the four consecutive Coalition Governments led by Prime Minister John Howard from 1996 to 2007.

the problem represented to be?' (WPR) approach translates these theoretical insights adopted by Postcolonial theory to policy analysis and her approach is implemented in this thesis. The use of Bacchi's WPR approach together with Postcolonial theory is novel and productive. Bacchi's approach streamlines the process of deconstructing discourse, while Postcolonial theory specifically targets the ongoing forms and consequences of colonialism. In this thesis then, Bacchi's approach is customised to carry out discourse analysis within colonial contexts and confront problem representations which further colonial ends and perpetuate colonial power dynamics.

Bearing in mind the colonial context throughout, this thesis follows steps 1-5 of Bacchi's WPR approach. After introducing the theory utilised in this thesis in the first section, the second section of the thesis provides a description of the Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency, then unpacks the problem representation's implicit assumptions, and finishes by unearthing its origins. The third and final section considers what the problem representation left out. The effects of the problem representation are reflected upon in the conclusion.

Following the lead of Postcolonial theory, and its theoretical benefactors Poststructuralism and Postmodernism (translated through Bacchi's WPR approach), this thesis takes discussion to a deeper level than conventional policy analysis, a level where stances on the legitimacy of Australia's colonial foundation can be gauged and engaged with. By thoroughly exploring the layers, the history, and the silences within the Howard Government's account of Indigenous affairs, it is possible to see the degree to which it upheld colonial logics, premises and objectives, and the position it took in relation to Australia's colonial beginnings and ongoing colonial status. As Bacchi attests, all public policies have ethical implications that warrant attention (2007), and this is certainly the case for Indigenous policy in present-day Australia, where colonialism is alive and well and where so much damage has already been done.

This thesis then understands colonialism in Australia to be ongoing, detrimental to all concerned, and objectionable. As Patrick Wolfe points out, "settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event" (2006: 388). Colonialism is viewed in this thesis as persisting as an overarching structure within contemporary Australia, still in place, continuing to cause harm. Indigenous academic Maggie Walter describes the colonial dynamic,

> [t]he relationship between the state and Australian Indigenous peoples has always been conflictual. Since the colonial declaration of Australia as terra nullius, or empty land, allowed the violent, but legalized, eviction of Indigenous populations from land deemed 'settled', the nation-state has deployed coercive power to ensure its will prevails (2010: 122).

Independence has not been granted to Australia's Indigenous people, access to and control of power and resources have barely shifted in the last two hundred years, and almost every aspect of contemporary society is conducted according to 'white man's way'. The legal system, parliamentary system, economic system and education system are all uncompromising imports with the benefits accruing to non-Indigenous Australia. Tim Rowse puts it this way,

> the Australian state remains a colonial state in that it endeavours to secure the reproduction of a social order in which non-Aboriginal interests take massive precedence over the interests of Aborigines (1988: 50).

Or as Mike Gooda stated as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [ATSI] Social Justice Commissioner "colonialism is not simply an 'unjust past event' but rather an experience that continues" (ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2011b: 79).

Postcolonial theory is well attuned to the persistence of colonialism globally, making it a pertinent theory for this thesis. Crucially, Postcolonial theory is critical of the injustices and power differentials that are the lifeblood of colonialism. Postcolonial theorist Couze Venn describes Critical Postcolonial studies as a goal to be realised, stating the following,

> Postcolonial critique ... continues and seeks to complete the work of decolonization. It develops an oppositional analytical standpoint that targets the conditions, the narratives, the relations of power that, in their combined effects, support the iniquitous forms of sociality and the varieties of pauperizations that characterize the current world order .... Postcolonial interrogation takes for granted the argument that the forces that established the Western form of colonialism and imperialism continue to operate, often in altered forms (2006: 3-4).

Importantly, Postcolonial theory recognises that colonialism has been achieved through, and remains cogent as a result of, the discourses that sustain it. Postcolonial theory grasps the key supporting role of discourse – ideas, modes of thought, worldviews, knowledges, truth claims, and the practices they produce and are transmitted through. A key example is the way representing the colonised as 'other', and the coloniser as their superior opposite, justifies and absolves mistreatment and moral breaches. Influential anti-colonialist Frantz Fanon explains, "[i]t is not possible to enslave men without logically making them inferior through and through" (1969: 40). Talking about the operation of colonial discourse in Australia, Ann McGrath stresses the connection between representations and action,

> [r]epresentations were not just 'mistakes' and nor did they remain in the realm of philosophy or ideology. Consciously or unconsciously contrived, they soon became practice via the actions of frontiersmen and policy-makers. But they were at their most powerful on the level of a comprehensive cultural discourse, an imperialistic discourse, which simultaneously ratified the ideals of the dominant culture and debunked those of the dispossessed (1995: 38).

Because ways of thinking, beliefs, and worldviews are recognised as having real life effects, they are seen as worthy sites of analysis – and possible points of entry for intervention.

Postcolonial theorists take from Poststructuralist and Postmodernist thought this understanding of the important role of ideas and values. Although there are clear differences between the two schools of thought, and neither are easy to pin down, they both contribute to Postcolonial theory a healthy scepticism of Western thinking's confidence in its ability to access and know the world. The hidden human observer is unveiled, unravelling Modernist and Structuralist claims of objectivity, neutrality and impartiality. Patricia Harris writes, Poststructural critics "wish to 'trouble truth' because established values can disguise the operation of particular interests, pretend to be universal when they are not, and silence conflict and difference" (2001: 345). Postmodernist and Poststructuralist thought highlight that all human knowledge is steeped in human input and meaning, and that post-Enlightenment European knowledge production is no exception. Humans represent rather than simply present, the world out there (Barnett, 1993: 349).

Postmodernism and Poststructuralism also helpfully draw attention to the connection between power and discourse. Power is transmitted through discourse, through the way it encourages people to think and thus act. Power is also what makes certain knowledges and ways of looking at the world "stick" (Bacchi, 2009: 33). Discourse remains open to channel power in either direction, however, and is thus a potential site of change. Key thinker in this field of scholarship Michel Foucault reminds us that

> [w]e must make allowances for the complex and unstable processes whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (1978: 101).

For Postcolonial theory, these breakthroughs in the relationship between power and discourse, and the effectiveness of interrupting power through discourse, are extremely useful. That is why Postcolonial theory adopts these insights and why they are incorporated within this thesis. Constructively, they direct attention to the task of 'troubling' colonialism.[2] To help apply these insights, this thesis employs Carol Bacchi's step-by-step guide to policy (as discourse) analysis (1999; 2009). As the name of the approach suggests, Bacchi encourages users to focus attention on how things are represented, and how problems are formulated. Her approach traces problems back to their founding assumptions, and further back still to their origins. This exploration of the background story shows problems to be historically contingent, and thus contestable, cultural constructs. Bacchi's WPR approach also invites consideration of how the situation could be looked at differently. Here users of the approach can "participate in struggles over meaning" (Goodwin, 2011: 167), defying the limits imposed by policy problems.

This thesis concentrates on the Howard years, and applies a Postcolonial theory inflected WPR approach to the representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare

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[2] Judith Butler introduced this use of the term 'troubling' in the context of troubling gender (1990).

dependency that emerged out of this highly significant decade in the recent history of Federal Indigenous policy in Australia. Prime Minister John Howard's Coalition Government was made up of the centre-right Liberal Party and the centre-right National Party. His Government took office in March 1996, defeating the other major party in Australia's essentially two party system: the centre-left Labor party. The Howard Coalition Government served four successive terms before Labor regained power in December 2007. During this ten year period, the Howard Government presented Aboriginal welfare dependency as a major source of problems for Aboriginal people. Despite the passage of time since the Howard Government left office, this period remains of interest as it marked a decisive shift in the approach to, and the framing of, Aboriginal issues.

The previous Labor Government's thirteen years in office, from 1983 to 1996, had seen steps taken in the direction of decolonisation – albeit incomplete and insufficient, and more so under Prime Minister Paul Keating's leadership than under earlier Prime Minister Bob Hawke. Some progress was made in the area of Aboriginal land rights (through the flawed and limited Native Title process), and self-determination became an (inadequately pursued) goal. The Howard Coalition Government made a sharp U-turn away from these decolonising impulses and the way Aboriginal affairs was conceptualised noticeably changed.

To compare, Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating famously stated:
> the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians .... it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice (1992).

In contrast, Howard Coalition Government Minister assisting the Prime Minister for Reconciliation, Philip Ruddock, offered the following explanation for the level of Indigenous disadvantage in Australia:
> [w]e are starting from a very low base. We're dealing with an indigenous population that had little contact with the rest of the world. We're dealing with people who are essentially hunter-gatherers. They didn't have chariots. I don't think they invented the wheel (in Australian Broadcasting Commission [ABC], 2000).

Prime Minister Howard soon added:

> there are a number of reasons why people are disadvantaged. What we have to do I think is to move on. I think overwhelmingly what we have to do in all of these things is to try and focus on practical solutions and once again if I can make the point about practical reconciliation I think we need to focus on ways of diminishing disadvantage not perpetually debate the why of the past (2000b).

As part of its 'practical approach' to Indigenous affairs, the Howard Government promoted its focus on Indigenous disadvantage as a focus on the present, towards Indigenous Australians participating "fully" in Australia's economic, social and cultural life (Herron, 1998b: 22). Within this focus, Aboriginal welfare dependency was defined as a central problem, the solution to which was "in their hands" (Howard, 2003a).

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs John Herron attributed Aboriginal poverty to "a culture of dependency and victim-hood" and spoke of "fundamental problems" as "nurtured within many indigenous communities themselves" (1999b: 6). Before he was Prime Minister more recently, Tony Abbott stated as Howard Government Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, that "the problems of Aboriginal communities owe at least as much to welfarism as racism", that "[m]ore so than with general unemployment, bringing Aboriginal unemployment down involves new attitudes", and that "the general public will find it hard to see past an 'Aboriginal problem' as long as too few Aboriginal people have 'real' jobs" because "Australians naturally warm to people who are doing it tough but having a go" (2002). Howard described his Government as having a "welfare practical reconciliation agenda" – unsurprisingly, the phrase did not catch on. He followed this by saying "they have to help themselves and they need to assume personal responsibility" (in ABC, 2004b).

The shift in framing that came with the Howard Government's approach to Indigenous affairs is particularly significant given its long-lasting impact. Aboriginal welfare dependency, and the associated themes of Indigenous responsibility and practical reconciliation, have continued to dominate the Indigenous policy discussion of all subsequent Governments: Labor (2007 to 2013, led by Prime

Minister Kevin Rudd and Prime Minister Julia Gillard) and Coalition (2013 to present, led by Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull) (Rudd, 2010; Gillard, 2011; Abbott, 2015; Turnbull, 2016). All of these Governments also followed through with the major policy expressions of this problem representation – the Northern Territory Intervention, and the putting to bed of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme. Understanding the decade long Howard era is crucial to understanding the current Indigenous policy environment.

The Howard Government applied the concept of welfare dependency to the wider population as well as to Aboriginal welfare recipients specifically. Although insufficiently defined, the term was used to imply a behavioural explanation of ongoing welfare use. The Howard Government employed the term welfare dependency to suggest that welfare recipients stayed on welfare instead of entering the paid workforce because they were in a self-destructive and disabling psychological state of dependency that affected their decision making and behaviour (Mendes, 2010: 1,6-7; Cass, 2005b: 49). Individual irresponsibility was at the forefront of the Howard Government's reading of unemployment.

In their second term in office, the Howard Government demonstrated the extent of their interest in the issue by announcing a welfare review, to be conducted by a reference group set the task of advising Government on how to "prevent and reduce welfare dependency among people of workforce age" (Newman, 1999: 3). Minister for Family and Community Services, Jocelyn Newman, released the discussion paper *The challenge of welfare dependency in the 21st century* in 1999, and the reference group, headed by Patrick McClure, produced the green paper *Participation support for a more equitable society* in 2000 (the McClure Report). The Australians Working Together package of welfare reforms, announced in 2001 as part of the 2001-2002 budget, followed as the Government's response (Commonwealth Government, 2002a: 1). The reforms emphasised participation and obligation through stringent strategies adding greater conditionality and harsher, punitive penalties for failure to meet conditions.

Amid the Howard Government's focus on welfare dependency generally, Aboriginal welfare dependency was singled out as a particular problem. In the very first year of its first term, the Howard Government talked about encouraging Indigenous people away from handouts and welfare (Herron, 1996b: 7) and before the end of its first term, the Howard Government had articulated its goal in Indigenous affairs as assisting Indigenous Australian's "move beyond welfare dependency" (Herron, 1998e: 1). Indeed, concern over Aboriginal welfare dependency seemed to eclipse concern over welfare dependency in the wider population (Engels, 2006: 8).

In constructing the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, the Howard Government drew heavily on the comments of Noel Pearson[3]. His contribution to debate is thus worth mentioning. In 1999 Pearson began condemning the "poison" of passive welfare[4] for his people in the Cape York, and stressed the importance of his community taking responsibility (1999). In 2000 he put out a publication entitled *Our right to take responsibility* (2000a). Pearson referred to welfare as a mindset; a mentality of recipients "who see themselves as ... having a right to assistance without reciprocation" (1999: 10; 2000c: 142). Pearson has linked welfare use with a breakdown in social norms, respect, functionality and individual behaviour generally (2007; 2000c: 139). According to Pearson "[w]hat we need in addition to opportunity is the exercise of responsibility ... Because we haven't taken responsibility" (2007). The use of the term responsibility was welcomed by the Howard Government; Minister Herron declared "[w]e are now able to talk about individual responsibility" (1999b: 5). The Howard government made Pearson a key advisor and appointed him to the National Indigenous Council which it established in 2004, after dismantling the peak elected Aboriginal representative body – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) – the same year.

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[3] Although to a lesser degree, the Howard Government also utilised comments made by fellow Indigenous leaders Marcia Langton and Warren Mundine, among others, to support its depiction of Aboriginal welfare use as welfare dependency.

[4] Pearson distinguished the CDEP scheme from passive welfare at this stage (2000a: 67).

Despite Pearson's apparent alignment with much of the Howard Government's perspective on Indigenous welfare, his viewpoint differed in important respects. Pearson has described Aboriginal people as having been "held down" (2000c: 148), and has acknowledged that

> [t]here are structural reasons why we occupy the lowest and most dismal place in the underclass of Australian society ... why all of our efforts to rise up and to improve our situation – are constantly impeded (2000b: 2).

Pearson has discussed the "continuing legacy" of economic exploitation – the treatment of Aboriginal people as "quasi-slaves", and the impact of the disruption caused to Aboriginal economies and the livelihoods they provided (2000c: 147; 2001: 10). He has also been willing to grant that "[o]f course racism, dispossession and trauma are the ultimate explanations for our precarious situation as a people", and careful to add "I do not thereby mean that the Australian welfare state is a bad thing. It is just that my people have experienced a marginal aspect of that welfare state" (2001: 13,10). Pearson has been comfortable talking about class and advocated for greater investment in capabilities building – a key aspect of the welfare state (2000b: 1-2; 2007). Although the Howard Government used Pearson's contributions to help legitimise its representation of the problem, these more complex elements of Pearson's account (unfortunately overshadowed by his inconsistent foregrounding of personal responsibility and behavioural change) distance it from the Howard Government's distinct problematisation of Aboriginal welfare use.

The project and scope of this thesis is to deconstruct the Howard Government's distinct, and consequential, depiction of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. It will dissect the Howard Government's representation of the problem (examining its parts and its origins), and explore what is missing. To carry out this project, the thesis will be divided into three sections, and fourteen chapters.

The first section will introduce the theoretical grounding of this thesis. Ever mindful of the ultimate purpose of theory, this section will lay out what the theories have to offer, and explain how they will be used. Postcolonial theory will be the topic of the

first chapter, as the theory that motivates and drives this study. The overarching objective and key tenets of the theory relevant to this thesis will be identified, and criticisms of the theory will be addressed. Chapter 2 will explore the crucial insights of Poststructuralism and Postmodernism that have lead Postcolonial theorists to tackle colonialism through its supporting ideas, justifications and mindset. The thinking of these theories on the power of discourse will be elaborated on, and the resilience of these theories against critique will be checked. In Chapter 3, Bacchi's *'What's the problem represented to be?'* approach will be introduced as an easy-to-use method of applying the important insights of Poststructuralism and Postmodernism. In order to keep Postcolonial theory's goal of decolonisation in view throughout the use of Bacchi's approach in this thesis, I have devised a slightly modified version of the approach. This modified version asks simply for mindfulness of the colonial context, and will be presented at the end of the chapter.

Sections 2 and 3 of the thesis will be spent applying the WPR approach, guided by Postcolonial theory, to the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. The staged format of the WPR approach will be loosely followed through the chapters.[5] The second section will focus on the problem representation itself while the third section will turn to consider an alternative reading of Aboriginal welfare use.

Section 2 will begin by carrying out the first step of the WPR approach, describing the Howard Government's representation of the problem. Various key Government outputs will be examined, including media releases, interviews, speeches, budget papers and discussion papers. Material released by the Howard Government during their first term (1996-1998) will come under the magnifying glass first, in Chapter 4.

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[5] The fifth step of the WPR approach, which looks at the effects of the problem representation, will not be given a chapter of its own. Instead, exploration of effects will take place in the conclusion, as well as in the body where the implications of the Howard Government's problem representation naturally emerge. The final step of the approach, Step 6, will be passed over. Whilst it asks interesting questions, this step extends the analysis to the broader question of the problem representation's communicative range (how it is disseminated and how it could be replaced) which is not absolutely essential to the execution of the approach.

This will be followed in Chapter 5 by a look at output from the Howard Government's final fourth term in office (2004-2007). The decision to look at just the first and the last of the Howard Government's terms (and not the middle two) has been made to allow for a closer examination of these two terms. It will also allow me to show the close relationship between the two framing terms. Although under the radar to some degree in the first term, the Howard Government laid the groundwork for the policy peak that was finally reached in 2007 in the form of the Northern Territory Intervention, and the abolition of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme, in urban and regional areas, and in the Northern Territory.

Still within Section 2, Chapter 6 will follow Step 2 of the WPR approach and will draw attention to the assumptions which underlie the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. This chapter will deal first with the assumptions within the concept of welfare dependency itself, and will then look into the assumptions within the Howard Government's specific representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. Chapter 7 will go further back to probe the origins of the problem representation, as directed by Step 3 of Bacchi's approach. This step will also be carried out in two parts: the broader genealogy of the term welfare dependency will be traced first, and then the genealogy of depicting Aboriginal people as welfare dependent. This process will highlight the capitalist, neoliberal and colonialist baggage that came with the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency whilst undermining its natural truth status by showing the journey its key ideas have travelled.

Section 3 will look outside the problem representation. This section is devoted to Step 4 of the WPR approach and is interested in how the problem could be thought about differently. There is much to say on this subject and Chapters 8 through to 14 address this step. Chapter 8 will start the process by rethinking the concept of welfare dependency generally. Challenging the concept, it will air the structural, demand-side causes of unemployment.

The thesis will then move on to rethinking Aboriginal welfare dependency specifically and this is the business of the next 6 chapters. Chapter 9 will first look at general causes of unemployment that have particularly impacted Aboriginal employment. I will then introduce colonialism as the bigger picture in Indigenous affairs that is omitted from the Howard Government's account. Having acknowledged colonisation as an issue in its own right that requires attention, I will then present it as a factor impacting upon Aboriginal employment. I reattach Aboriginal *welfare use* to this bigger picture, but not Aboriginal *welfare dependency*, as this is a concept I reject. I will clarify that I take issue with the focus on Indigenous fault and responsibility implicit within the Howard Government's use of the term welfare dependency to describe Aboriginal welfare use. I will explain that I find high levels of welfare use problematic for different reasons (as signalling poverty and inactivity rather than Aboriginal deficit), and point to different contributing factors, namely colonisation.

The following chapters will give space to three key ways in which colonialism has impacted upon Aboriginal employment and welfare use. Chapter 10 will turn attention to the relegation of Aboriginal people historically to the lowest rungs of the nation's economy (where economic incorporation took place). Following this, Chapter 11 will propose that the task of redressing this assignment of Aboriginal people to the economic margins had barely begun when the Howard Government came to power, stalling noticeably under Howard's leadership.

Chapter 12, 13 and 14 change direction slightly and they will fill in what I argue is an important gap in the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. These chapters will make a less familiar argument – that a further factor, implicated in the high levels of welfare use by Aboriginal people, has been the cultural incompatibility of the introduced economy. Chapter 12 will make the obvious but neglected point that the greatest catastrophe for Aboriginal economic prosperity has been the shattering of the Indigenous economies that operated across the continent pre-invasion. Chapters 13 and 14 will go on to

make the related point that the introduced economy is a poor cultural fit in Australia, being intrinsically disparate from those economies it displaced. This thesis will lay out two levels of cultural mismatch produced by the importation of the market economy. Chapter 13 will deal with the first level, and this covers more superficial differences (including non-conscious discrimination). Chapter 14 will look into a second level of deeper, more fundamental differences.

What these chapters set out to show is that incorporation in the mainstream economy for Aboriginal workers is not as straightforward or as ideal as the Howard Government presented it, and that the colonial context is entirely relevant. In order to achieve Aboriginal economic security, the receipt of welfare by Aboriginal people needs to be understood as but one of the grievous consequences of Australia's colonisation, and one that requires redress in imaginative and culturally supportive ways that return some control to Aboriginal people over the sorts of livelihoods that they pursue, as part of a wide-ranging and ambitious but ethically necessary process of decolonisation.

A final comment on speaking position before I get into the body of this thesis – I write this thesis as a non-Indigenous Australian. Australian anthropologist Yasmine Musharbash wrote at the start of her book *Yuendumu everyday* "[t]here is no point even trying to write myself out of the book" (2008: 10). Whilst Musharbash was part of her story in a way that I am not, I could say the same about this thesis. My social locatedness is relevant. I am an "outsider to the Indigenous colonized experience" (Denzin, 2005: 936). As a non-Indigenous person, my contribution to discussion of matters relating to Aboriginal people is necessarily limited and I would wish that my thesis be read with this in mind.

I make an effort not to refer to Indigenous people in the third person plural (they/them/their), and not to refer to non-Indigenous people in the first person plural (we/us/our) as that would imply my audience is not Indigenous. I try to use descriptive terms instead as I presume my audience is mixed. I write this thesis about Indigenous issues – focusing on the role of government – aware of my tacit

complicity within the colonial regime (by being here) (Land, 2015: 29), and of the way it systematically "overempowers" me (McIntosh, 1989). I am aware of the privilege and benefits I have gained – most basically through my access to Indigenous land, air and water. The words of the Anglican Bishop of Sydney in 1850 are surprisingly fitting: "in the occupation of their soil we are partakers of their worldly things" (in Boucher, 2015: 81).

Writing of the colonial experience of South Australia, historian Graham Jenkin observes "[t]he remarkable thing in this continent is that the invaders have consistently refused to accept responsibility for what their actions so patently produced" (1979: 68). It is crucial that non-Indigenous Australians, as insiders within the colonial system, accept responsibility and grapple with the consequences. As author of *Decolonizing solidarity* Clare Land states "[t]o understand white privilege should also be to consider ways to undo it", because the actions of non-Indigenous Australians impact upon Indigenous well-being (2015: 31,30). There is much work for non-Indigenous Australians to do. I take on board the wisdom contained in the quote below, sourced from Aboriginal elder Lilla Watson and the Queensland Aboriginal Activist group she was a part of in the 1970s,

> [i]f you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together (in Morley, Macfarlane, and Ablett, 2014: 7).

Section 1: Theory

CHAPTER 1: POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

Cognisant of the insidious ways in which colonialism maintains its grasp and ethically alert to the harm this continues to cause, Postcolonial theory is a highly appropriate, if under-utilised,[6] "tool-for-thinking" (Andreotti, 2011: 7) about contemporary Australia. Crucially, Postcolonial theory recognises that "there is no region, no culture, no nation today that has not been affected by colonialism and its aftermath" and that indeed "modernity can be considered a product of colonialism" (Wa Thiong'o, 2009: xi). Most obviously in Australia, there has been no power shift, no signing of independence, and no retreat of settler-invaders back to their mother land – the colonial order established in Australia two hundred years ago remains very much in place. As Wolfe describes it

> [b]eneath its changing operational modalities, Australian settler-colonisation evinces the primacy of a cultural logic of elimination, a sustained institutional tendency to supplant the indigenous population which reconciles a range of historical practices that might otherwise seem distinct .... In this light, invasion emerges as a structure rather than an event (1994: 96).

Postcolonial theory helpfully targets the production of knowledge and meaning that has sustained colonialism, and in Vanessa Andreotti's words, offers "significant shifts in thinking and practice", away from the coercive hostility to difference and the material and epistemological violence that has epitomised the colonial encounter (2011: 1). As Andreotti perceptively remarks, "[i]f we are to imagine possibilities and relationships 'otherwise' we need to unlearn the roots of what created this type of violence in the first place" (2011: xiv).

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[6] While the theory could be used more widely, there have nonetheless been a number of academics in Australia who have drawn upon Postcolonial theory in their work, such as Patrick Wolfe, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffen, Ken Gelder, Jane Jacobs, Barry Hindess, Alison Ravenscroft, Pal Ahluwalia, Jacqueline Siapno, Barry Judd, Alpana Roy, and Simone Bignall.

Applying the insights of Postcolonial theory, this thesis keeps in mind Australia's ongoing and problematic colonial context throughout its assessment of the Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency. I consider the extent to which this representation furthered, supported, challenged, halted or reversed the project of colonialism. I explore the impact of the colonial context on the Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency, and I look at the extent to which the colonisation of Australia was left out of the Howard Government's reading of the state of Indigenous affairs and Aboriginal unemployment. Adopting Postcolonial theory's focus on ideas/knowledge production/discourse as a means to undermine colonialism's stronghold (through "decolonising the mind" [Wa Thiong'o, 1986]), this thesis attempts to intervene at this crucial level. Towards such an intervention, this thesis suggests an alternative account to that provided by the Howard Government, which factors in the multiple ways in which Australia's colonisation has impeded Aboriginal wellbeing and economic security.

To introduce Postcolonial theory, this chapter will offer a loose definition. I will highlight Postcolonial theory's oppositional stance as a common thread which weaves together many disparate authors and works. I will break down the meaning of the terms 'post' and 'colonial' and look at their meaning alongside each other. In the process, a clearer impression of Postcolonial theory and its political project will emerge. The chapter will then move on to delve into Postcolonial theory's primary target in its efforts to disrupt the colonial order of the day: the discourse underpinning colonialism. Postcolonial theory relies here on Poststructuralist and Postmodernist insights in its understanding of the role and power of discourse. Before concluding the chapter, I will hear the criticism of Postcolonial theory that its interest in the discursive neglects the more material aspects of oppression. I will finally consider Postcolonial theory's continued relevance. By showing Postcolonial theory to be a politically engaged

perspective, critical of past and contemporary expressions of colonialism and attentive to the operation of power through discourse, I hope to demonstrate the value of Postcolonial theory to this thesis. In the remaining two chapters of this theory section, I will explore Poststructuralism and Postmodernism further, and outline Carol Bacchi's *'What's the problem represented to be?'* approach which will be used as a synthesis of their contribution to Postcolonial theory.

Definition disclaimer

So what is Postcolonial theory? This question is not straightforward to answer, as the theory apparently means different things to different people (Loomba, Kaul, Bunzi, Burton and Etsy, 2005: 3; Lunga, 2008: 191). This theoretical trajectory is not a homogenous school of thought or a clear-cut strategy, or even necessarily a set of principles to which all those who support its use subscribe. Indeed, Fawzia Afzal-Khan states "postcolonial discourse will always be productively split between the assertion of its political convictions and the critique of those very convictions" (2000: 24). Postcolonial theory has been described as "fluid", "free-form", "fragmented", "porous", "amorphous", and "broad and sprawling in scope" (Parry, 2002a: 72; Seshadri-Crooks, 2000: 19; Mbembe, 2008: 1; Mir, Mir and Upadhyaya, 2003: 53; Hiddleston, 2014: 1). There is in fact resistance to attempts to draw hard and fast boundaries around the field, in favour of an understanding that allows for movement and change and recognises that while it is a grouping, it encompasses a range of influences and disciplines and approaches (Hiddleston, 2014: 4,5; Schwarz, 2000: 6; Seshadri-Crooks, 2000: 19; Cooppan, 2000: 2; Hulme, 2005: 42).

Not only is it inter-disciplinary but it is inter-disciplinary in a decidedly appropriating sense, adopting thinkers to the fold regardless of whether they identify as postcolonial, such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan (Quayson and Goldberg, 2002: xvi). However, if Postcolonial theory is not a harmonious, homogenous field, neither is it a "babbling brook" with no coherence at all (Duncan, 2002: 320; Young, 2001:

69). Achille Mbembe's analogy is more fitting: "[b]eing the product of the circulation of knowledge between different continents and across different anti−imperial traditions, it is like a river with multiple tributaries" (2008: 7). Instead of trying to fix a stable meaning onto Postcolonial theory, it is more appropriate to think of definition as a process of *clarification* (Beasley, 2001: 204,205), referring to recurrent features that meander and intersect. I will attempt to offer such a clarification.

Oppositionary stance

Due to the good deal of divergence within the field, Postcolonial theory has been likened to Marxism and Feminism in the sense of drawing together a variety of viewpoints (Young, 2003: 7; Murray and Powell, 2009: 534). The link, in the case of Postcolonial theory, is colonialism and its effects, widely understood to be overwhelmingly negative (Young, 2001: 4,5). In his evocative account, Mbembe explains "Postcolonial thinking … seeks to know what it is to live under the beast's regime, what kind of life it offers, and what sort of death people die from" (2008: 2). As a theory, its intent is to think through, critique and ideally undo colonialism and its implications (Venn, 2006: 1,4,37-38). Postcolonial theory positions itself in opposition to colonialism and can be thought of as an emancipatory *project*: to realise decolonisation (Brennan, 2005: 102; Venn, 2006: 4). According to Patrick Williams "resistant discourse or politicized critique" is "one of the major justifications for postcolonial studies" as "postcolonialism has historically been both an analysis of, and hopefully a mode of, resistance" (2010: 88).

There is, then, an ethical component which animates Postcolonial theorists (Ahluwalia, 2007: 258; Young, 2003: 6), an unrest stemming from the awareness that there is something seriously wrong with the brutal premise, practice and results of colonialism. This moral objection is recognised by David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson as acting as an "enabling pretext" for Postcolonial theorists to carry out their work, although they note it is rarely

acknowledged (2002: xii). Jane Hiddleston writes that Postcolonialism "is both a political, and a broader ethical philosophy" (2014: 4). Postcolonial theory then cares; it criticises, opposes, objects, and ultimately hopes for a better future. As one of the key thinkers in the field, Edward Said reminds us, "one must not only hope; but also do" (2000 in Williams, 2010: 96). By and large the need for upheaval is appreciated within Postcolonial theory's ranks and the charge of affecting change is taken on (Young, 2001: 58). As Henry Schwarz puts it, "[p]ostcolonial studies at its best changes the world, providing interpretations that have practical consequences" (2000: 4).

The meaning of the 'post'

Establishing that Postcolonial theory sits in opposition to colonialism goes some way to explaining the term. It tells us that the 'post' in Postcolonial theory indicates an ideological and antagonistic position in relation to colonialism. To be clear, the 'post' is not (as it is sometimes suspected) intended to denote a period in time. It is not intended to mean, in this case, the period of time since official decolonisation commenced in those colonised countries where independence has been gained, such as post-independence India or Algeria (Ahluwalia, 2002: 196; Hiddleston, 2014: 3). It is a theory and a political stance and the post is used to indicate critique of colonialism, not the period in time following its superficial finale. It is not *after* colonialism but against colonialism and ultimately (ideally) transcending colonialism. As a way of signalling this oppositional meaning, and separating it from the temporal meaning, I have chosen to leave out a hyphen between the 'post' and the 'colonial', following the lead of Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge (1993: 38-39). This hyphen use as a way of distinguishing the two meanings is not uniform (Cooppan, 2000: 3; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffen, 1989: 2) but such is the nature of the field.

It is also worth mentioning, the field itself has been variously termed *Postcolonialism, Postcolonial Studies, Postcolonial thought, Postcolonial critique,* and *Postcolonial standpoint,* all of which generally refer to the same

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thing (with or without the hyphen). Terms that refer to the discrete post-independence period and phenomena are *post-coloniality*, *post-colonial* (as a adjective or a noun), and *post-colonial condition* (all with or without the hyphen). The lack of consensus around usage and meaning of the terms is a problem for Ella Shohat: "[t]his unarticulated tension between the philosophical and the historical teleologies in the postcolonial, I would argue, partially underlies some of the conceptual ambiguities of the term" (2000: 129). However, while it can obviously get confusing given the minute and subtle differences between the words, with careful usage and upfront explanation of how the term is being used, it is possible to get past any uncertainty.

What the 'colonial' refers to

If the 'post' in Postcolonial theory is about an antagonistic philosophical position, what about the 'colonial' that the 'post' sits in front of? The question of what Postcolonial theory objects to will now be looked at. Colonialism refers to the forceful taking of vast tracts of land (and the resources of that land), and the subjugation, economic exploitation, and dispossession of the native peoples of that land. Putting it most generally, Dawn Duncan sees it as "the sociopolitical domination of a native people by an encroaching alien power" (2002: 328). It is largely associated with the setting up of colonies across most of the planet by European powers over the last five hundred years or so, and is intimately connected with the spread of capitalism (Cleary, 2002: 111; Hiddleston, 2014: 3; Brennan, 2005: 113; Venn, 2006: 23). In Ania Loomba's words

> although European colonialisms involved a variety of techniques and patterns of domination, … all of them produced the economic imbalance that was necessary for the growth of European capitalism and industry …. [i]n whichever direction human beings and materials travelled, the profits always flowed back into the so-called 'mother country' (2005: 8-9).

For some, it is hard to disentangle capitalism from colonialism given the huge role each has played in shaping the other's success (Venn, 2006: 23). Timothy Brennan talks of colonialism as an ongoing system "on which capitalism has

feasted and continues to feast" (2005: 113). Capitalism certainly features as a central factor in understanding colonialism.

The sheer enormity of the European colonial project and the land mass it encompassed has led some to introduce subcategories of colonialism. Anne McClintock has differentiated between internal colonisation (carried out within territorial borders against a subsection of the population, as in Ireland), imperial colonisation (large-scale control over many regions exerted from afar, as from Britain during the 19th century), deep settler colonisation (entrenched colonisation making formal decolonisation especially difficult, as in Zimbabwe), and break away settler colonisation (controlled by the colony itself after independence is handed from the mother country to the ex-patriot colonisers rather than the native population, as in Australia) (1994: 257-8). Other proposed categories of colonisation are administrative (where settlement has not been necessary), plantation (where labour has been sourced from imported slave populations), mixed settlement and pure settlement (the main difference between the two being a greater proportion of colonisers in pure settlement, as well as different forms of labour exploitation) (Fredrickson, 1985 and Fieldhouse, 1965 in Cleary, 2002: 110-11). A more straightforward way of dividing up the numerous expressions of colonialism is simply between settlement and exploitation colonies – relating to the *primary* aim of colonies (Young, 2001: 17).

It is important to be conscious of the diversity of colonial experiences, and to be careful not to generalise as if colonial practices and circumstances were everywhere the same (Chrisman, 1994 in Loomba, 2005: 20). There is nonetheless certainly something peculiar to and significant about that European colonialism commencing roughly around the time Christopher Columbus ventured towards the Americas, that warrants study (Cleary, 2002: 111; Loomba, 2005: 9). There have been calls for the expansion of the study of colonialism by Postcolonial theorists to cover what came before the momentous

date 1492, and reflect on the impact of that more distant past and its colonising tendencies that no doubt had an influence (Altschul, 2008; Hulme, 2005: 42). However, the exceptional nature of the relatively new colonialism for which European powers remain responsible, justifies attention all on its own and this is the main focus of Postcolonial theory.

The longevity of Colonialism

There is some anxiety that within Postcolonial theory, colonialism is thought to be over and done with (Parry, 2002a: 73; McClintock, 1994: 254,256; Shohat, 2000: 131-3). This is partly related to the success of anti-colonisation movements in many regions which resulted in independence. The concern is that Postcolonial theory buys in to the official departure of colonialism in such places, not seeing its continued presence. Unfortunately, as great a feat as achieving independence was, the overbearing hold of colonialism could not be shrugged off so easily.

This fact is appreciated by many contributors who actually argue passionately that colonialism is not only that which came before the formal granting of independence in many colonised regions around the 1950s (Schwarz, 2000: 15; Jefferess, McGonegal and Milz, 2006: 2; Loomba et al, 2005: 1,2,13; Hiddleston, 2014: 4). It spills over into the present in insidious and far-reaching ways with Europe's descendants still the beneficiaries of centuries of rule. This "resuscitated oppression" (Williams, 2010: 88) defines the contemporary era in which power relations have barely shifted and global decision-making, agenda setting and access to wealth and resources remain beyond the reach of the large majority of Europe's formerly colonised subjects. Instead they remain concentrated disproportionately with colonialism's victors. Whether we look at the introduced political structures still in place, the elite classes that still flourish, the economic systems deeply entrenched serving foreign interests, or the pressures to comply with a global system essentially controlled by the West,

the notion that colonialism is a thing of the past does not stand up. Robert Young puts it like this

> [t]he entire world now operates within the economic system primarily developed and controlled by the west, and it is the continued dominance of the west, in terms of political, economic, military and cultural power, that gives this history a continuing significance. Political liberations did not bring economic liberation – and without economic liberation, there can be no political liberation (2001: 5).

Of course political liberation (if it can be called that) has not been achieved in all colonised spaces and in these places, like Australia, there is no doubting that colonialism is still a reality (Wolfe, 1994: 96). The ongoing nature of colonialism worldwide is widely recognised among Postcolonial theorists and is responsible for the urgency of much of the work in the field. Again, once it is cleared up that the 'post' in Postcolonial theory does not signify a focus on a period of time after colonialism, it becomes more obvious that the theory is not premised on the belief that colonialism is over (Venn, 2006: 4,7).

A focus on discourse

Now that it has been established that Postcolonial theory is a political standpoint critical of colonialism and its continuing presence, it is time to move on to the theory's line of attack. Postcolonial theory's main target is the thinking that underpins colonialism. What gives the theory its strength is its appreciation of the role of ideas in securing colonialism's victories. The theory sets its sights on the discourse that underwrites colonialism, understanding that it is via the imagination that colonialism's political and economic assault has been justified and enabled. As Bill Ashcroft, Gary Griffiths and Helen Tiffen stress, "the key feature of colonial oppression [is] the control over the *means of communication* rather than the control over life and property" (1989: 78, emphasis in original).

Edward Said's book *Orientalism*, published in 1978, is credited as introducing this focus on colonial discourse, borrowing (and modifying) Poststructuralist thinker Foucault's notion of discourse (Young, 2001: 385; Morton, 2007: 161-162; Said, 1978). Here discourse is more than a collection of sentences; it is the

production of knowledge through language. It ends up encompassing *practices* as discursive too, as there is meaning in what we do, and therefore a discursive aspect – it is all about meaning making (Hall, 2001: 72-73). Talking of the way speaking affects doing and back again (or the way discourse interacts with the lived world), Robert Young states "discourse is language that has already made history" (2001: 400). Discourse thus has a material aspect. Because of the influence and effects of discourse, it does not simply exist in the ideational plane.

Discourse and knowledge are intimately tied up with the workings of power; they deliver and enable power and are also part of the spoils of power (Loomba, 2005: 42). This was of interest to Said who saw the West's construction of knowledge about the 'Orient' as essential to the operation of controlling the 'Orient' (Loomba, 2005: 43). Said showed how the West created a feminised, sexualised image of the East, to facilitate its conquest (Abaza, 2003: 394). Said's insight, paraphrased by Schwarz, was that "European knowledge *is* colonialism" (Schwarz, 2000: 4). Recognising this insight, attention is paid within Postcolonial theory to the attitudes and narratives that accompanied and allowed colonisation – "its underlying, unethical representational structures" (Hiddleston, 2014: 6).

Discourse is understood to include the limits placed on what can be said (and done). There are rules governing what makes sense, what is a legitimate perspective, and what is incomprehensible. Drawing on Gayatri Spivak, a key thinker in Postcolonial theory, Diana Brydon refers to these "sanctioned forms of ignorance" that are part of colonial knowledge, where blindness to other ways of seeing things is a characteristic of such discourse (2006: 6). "The half has never been told", and has in fact been ruled out as unthinkable (Brodber, 1988 in Brydon, 2006: 9). It is what cannot be said – what is advantageously left out. As Couze Venn explains "knowledges and technologies *limit and*

circumscribe as much as they produce and reveal a world. Power is inscribed in the way they are operationalized" (2006: 14, my emphasis).

Subject formation

Colonial discourse is taken to exist in a wide range of forms ranging from official colonial documents to travel memoirs and more generally the less tangible philosophical premises and assumptions that circulate around the colonial project (Hulme, 1992: 2). The role of colonial discourse in shaping one's attitudes about oneself and others, about the colonised and the colonised, is considered especially significant within Postcolonial theory. The theory highlights colonialism's involvement in subject formation, or "soul-making" to borrow from Spivak again (Spivak, 1985: 243). Ngugi Wa Thiong'o describes how this works:

> you can see a situation in which a dominating section controls how the dominated people perceive themselves. We can see how our mental universe is connected with other realms… One way of abolishing the police and the army would be the total enslavement of the mind by those who are ruling the economy, the power relation, and the values. You can also see how that control can change not only how people look at one another but how they look at their relationship to those controlling them (2000: 122)

Stuart Hall echoes this understanding that colonisation has entailed the colonisation of the mind, seeing "dominant regimes of representation" as a crucial part of the exercise of colonial power (1996: 112).

> Not only, in Said's 'Orientalist' sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as 'Other'… It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge', not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm (Hall, 1996: 112-113).

Colonial discourse works at the level of subject formation of both the colonisers and the colonised, creating stark binaries between the two and filling the two categories with content and value. The category coloniser is loaded up with the

qualities of being, for example, rational, intelligent, and advanced, while the same is done for the category colonised except the attributes for this group are the derogatory opposites: senseless, stupid, backward and childlike (Young, 2003: 2). The two binary categories are linked together as if on either end of a set of scales, with the worthy coloniser valued as superior in relation to the inferior colonised subject. Coloniser and colonised are "bound together in a reciprocal relationship of asymmetrical dependence" (Scott, 2005: 396). According to Venn, this process of 'othering' the colonised defines the European model of colonialism in which

> its form of appropriation-as-dispossession is overlaid with a discourse that locates the colonized as 'Other', not just the stranger or the different, but as fundamentally and ontologically inferior beings to be brought under either the tutelage or the ban of the West (2006: 11).

Convergence of Modernist and colonial discourse

The assumption that everything associated with Europe is more developed and more advanced than what exists in the colonies is tied up with Modernist ideas fresh from the Enlightenment period. This period, between the 1600s and 1800s, is credited with the birth of reason and the innovation of rationality. It also saw the rise of market capitalism, promoted as the refinement of a superior economic model and connected with the rise of Modernism and colonialism (Venn, 2006: 23). The sciences flourished and were distinguished from religious views as well as paganism, which were relegated to the murky backwater of untruths. Another characteristic belief out of this era is that human progress is linear, and inevitable. Within this logic, 'modern' European cultures exist as a prime example of the progress time brings while non-Western backwardness is explained by these cultures being further back along the line of progress (Hindess, 2008).

Madina Tlostanova, Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert and Redi Koobak talk of the

> 'coloniality of knowledge', an epistemic regime of modernity that subsumes all models of cognition and interpretation of the world to the norms created and imposed by Western

modernity and offered to humankind as universal, delocalised and disembodied (2016: 214).

The inherent superiority of Western civilisation and the self-evident worth of rationality, reason, science and truth (newly discovered and value-free), is disputed by Postcolonial theorists (Dutton, Gandhi and Seth, 1998: 8). It is recognised that this conceit causes great harm in colonial settings where it is used to justify the (frequently brutal) ascendance of Western ways, at the expense of those of colonised groups. The goal of Postcolonial theory becomes

> that of dismantling the economic, political and social structures and *values, attitudes and ideas* that appeared with European colonialism and its complex combination with capitalism and Western modernity (Venn, 2006: 4, my emphasis).

Postcolonial theory relies on the theoretical insights of Postmodernism and Poststructuralism to launch its critique of the Modernist logic of European colonialism and also to point out that discourse has been instrumental in achieving colonialism (Schwarz, 2000: 6; Young, 2001: 67,68). I will explain these relevant insights in greater detail in the next chapter.

Perspectives of the colonised

Resisting the Eurocentric slogan that 'West is best' and the dogmatic singular voice of colonialism, Postcolonial theory is interested in knowledges from the margins; what Foucault referred to as 'subjugated' knowledges, particularly Indigenous knowledges (1980 in Bacchi, 2009: 36; Dutton et al, 1998: 8). Decentred positions from the periphery have gained new respect, bucking the Modernist bias towards centrism (Bhabha, 1994 in Morton, 2007: 172). Within Postcolonial theory there is recognition of local knowledges as deserving to be heard and as a source of creative energy (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 12). Postcolonial fiction has been an extremely popular medium for telling these stories, rewriting history, and increasing awareness that there are indeed multiple histories (Loomba, 2005: 16,17). The field of Postcolonial Literary studies devotes itself fully to analysing literature and its role in both cementing and resisting colonialism. This field was a forerunner to Postcolonial Studies and is so closely

related it can be hard to separate the two (Johnston and Lawson, 2000: 367; Goss, 1996: 244).

Postcolonial theory as different from Anti-colonialism

Postcolonial theory's attention to discourse is a defining feature of Postcolonial theory. As Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman state, "no other critical practice has foregrounded the links between cultural forms and geopolitics to the degree that postcolonial studies has over the past four decades" (2001 in Loomba, 2005: 263). It is helpful to realise that this sets Postcolonial theory apart from Anti-colonialism. The term Anti-colonialism is used to refer to the struggles for independence fought as far back as colonialism goes (Young, 2001: 6). It incorporates militaristic movements to overthrow colonial regimes as well as the work of individual Indigenous writers and thinkers.

That Postcolonial theory differs from Anti-colonialism in regard to Postcolonial theory's perspective on discourse is not to say the achievements of Anti-colonialist theorists are not treated with a great deal of respect within the field (Williams and Chrisman, 1993: 3). Nor is it to say that there are not Anti-colonialist thinkers whose work is welcomed into the fold of Postcolonial theory (Chrisman and Parry, 2000: viii; Parry, 2002b: 125; Brennan, 2002: 195). There are key Anti-colonial writers, such as Frantz Fanon (Ahluwalia, 2002: 197,199; Hall, 1996: 11,113,118), who are recognised for their ability to think outside colonial frameworks and who have contributed to breaking them down. This claiming of Anti-colonial thinkers for their contribution to Postcolonial theory seems to be done, however, in a retrospective manner (Hulme, 2005: 42). According to Mbembe, Anti-colonialism was Postcolonial theory's starting point, although it was not until later, around the 1980s, that Postcolonial theory came in to its own, asserting that

> the colonial project was not reducible to a simple military–economic system, but was underpinned by a discursive infrastructure, a symbolic economy, a whole apparatus of knowledge the violence of which was as much epistemic as it was physical (2008: 5-6).

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Anti-colonialism refers more to resistance movements (Hiddleston, 2014: 1) while the Postcolonial theory refers more to the critical study of colonialism. Postcolonial theory can also be understood as the product of the interaction between Anti-colonial struggle and Poststructuralist theory (Brydon, 2006: 106). Anti-colonial movements on the other-hand are associated with the adoption (rather than critique) of colonial ideals like nationalism, liberation, fraternity, humanism, and progress as rallying points to aid the uprising against colonial regimes (Cooppan, 2000: 23; Dutton et al, 1998: 7; Shohat, 2000: 128).

However, Benita Parry rejects what she sees as a misrepresentation of Anti-colonialism, as "parasitic on colonial categories" (2002a: 77-78). In Young's opinion, Anti-colonialism is too sweepingly equated with "a provincial nationalism" and written off on that basis (2001: 2). Young himself acknowledges, though, that Postcolonial theory does mark a shift (as well as a continuation) in thinking (2003: 4; 2001: 6). Identifying Marxism as a common thread between Anti-colonial movements and Postcolonial theory, he views Postcolonial theory as diverging from orthodox European Marxism present in Anti-colonialism "by combining its critique of objective material conditions with detailed analysis of their subjective effects" (2001: 6). It is generally accepted, then, that Anti-colonialism acted as a predecessor for Postcolonial theory with the two closely aligned (Venn, 2006: 4) and sharing their decolonising impulse. While the line between them is somewhat hazy, a comparison of the two does highlight Postcolonial theory's differing view on the nature of colonial power and how it can be challenged.

Getting passed materialist critiques

There are those who object to Postcolonial theory's leaning towards critically analysing the deployment of colonial power at the cultural, discursive level. Such authors include Aijaz Ahmad (1996), Arif Dirlik (1996), Benita Parry (2002a), Epiphanio San Juan (1998), Terry Eagleton (1998) and Neil Lazarus (2002). The main argument against this focus is that a supposedly 'textualist'

account of colonialism is not sufficiently materialist or Marxist. Postcolonial theory apparently misses the target of entrenched global capitalism, and is accused of being unable to mount a convincing attack while it has its sights set on dismantling colonialism's conceptual make up. San Juan captures this sentiment when he writes

> objections to postcolonial theory levelled by … critics range from the charge that it fetishizes textuality and offers a sly if civil evasion of 'contemporary imperialist practices' … to the charge that it exemplifies what Benita Parry calls an 'elective disaffiliation from the variable articulations of an emancipatory politics' …. In essence, the most blatant flaw of postcolonial orthodoxy (establishment postcolonialism employing a poststructuralist organon) lies in its refusal to grasp the category of capitalist modernity in all its global ramifications, both the regulated and the disarticulated aspects (2002: 222).

Along these lines, Postcolonial theory is criticised for being pre-occupied with wordplay and too wrapped up in exploring (for the sake of it) colonialism's cultural consequences in terms of hybrid mixed identities, border-crossing, cultural fusion, and the like (Cooppan, 2000: 12; Williams, 2010: 88). Some of this discontent has to do with wariness about the theoretical aspect of Postcolonial theory becoming disengaged from the on-the-ground battle, and the goal of perfecting high theory overshadowing the goal of affecting change (Williams, 2010: 94; Lunga, 2008: 198; Loomba et al, 2005: 5). Postcolonial theory does need to be vigilant of this but I would not agree that it is guilty as charged. I argue that there is a fundamental misreading at work, because it is forgotten that the textual and the material are not considered to be completely distinct entities. The interest in the discursive is mostly (though not always) accompanied by corresponding concern with the more tangible forms of oppression (Hiddleston, 2014: 6). It is understood that the discursive cannot be neatly separated from the material. This recognition that text has material effects largely dissolves the argument that by paying attention to one you are neglecting the other.

It is a belief in the potential of discursive interventions to forge change that drives the attention to discourse. The goal is to explode colonialism's founding knowledge systems (Lunga, 2008: 193), confront "the truths that sanction existing power relations" (Chatterji, 2001: 1), and force "alternative knowledges into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west" (Young, 2003: 7). It is the relationship between discourse and the real world that "demands the most persistent bringing-to-crisis of those European habits that allowed and condoned world domination" (Schwarz, 2000: 7). It is towards alleviating the lived reality of colonialism that colonialism's representational structures are targeted. So this interest in discourse should not be characterised as abandoning the fight against the socioeconomic deprivation and subjugation colonialism involves. Loomba et al helpfully reframe the debate when they state that they do not "imagine that there a choice to be made between empiricism or materialism, on the one hand, and theory, discourse, or culture on the other" (2005: 34).

Continued relevance

As Postcolonial theory has spanned at least three decades, there has been some reflection on whether the theory is outdated or up to the task of dealing with contemporary shifts in the world order, namely globalisation. Globalisation can be as hard to define as Postcolonial theory but basically refers to the recent shift in global relations marked by increased interconnectedness between and beyond nations with transnational flows of money, goods, people, and ideas. It should be noted that these flows are not multidirectional, that power still governs what can go where, and that the usual suspects (the West and the wealthy) continue to reap the rewards of the greater ease of passage (Grewal, 2005; Cooppan, 2005: 92-93). The problem is that many definitions of globalisation, and the study of globalisation, often fail to note these points. As a result, the field can lack a critical politics and, at the furthest end of the spectrum, can end up celebrating this state of affairs, for creating a global community (Albrow, 1997 in Lunga, 2008: 196).

This is where Postcolonial theory fits in. A number of theorists have defended Postcolonial theory against charges of being outdated in the face of globalisation, stating instead that the theory provides a much needed conscience for the study of our ever-changing world (Lunga, 2008: 197-198; Loomba et al, 2005: 8-16; Jefferess et al, 2006: 1-2; Li, 2010: 69). David Jefferess et al (2006: 2) reject outright claims made by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their much cited book *Empire*, that Postcolonial theory is only useful for the study of colonial history, and is useless for the study of current deterritorialised global power (2001 in Cooppan, 2005: 86,87). Instead Jefferess et al insist on "the importance of postcolonial theory and criticism as a valuable critique of a global economy in which the legacy of imperialism is still very much in evidence" (2006: 2). In agreement, Brydon argues "[t]he civilizing mission remains alive and well" (2006: 12). Williams contends that the globalised world is actually not so radically different but is simply the latest mask of capitalism (2010: 88-89). For this, Postcolonial theory is perfectly well equipped to study and critically analyse its workings. Unlike globalisation studies, Postcolonial theory has an intimate knowledge of and an established position in relation to the production of unequal power relations. It also has a keen appreciation of the way the past lives on in the present (Sardar, Nandy and Wyn Davies, 1993 in Young, 2001: 4).

Conclusion

In this discussion of Postcolonial theory, I have tried to give a sense of the varied, unfixed nature of the field, while highlighting those aspects which resonate most and which I consider useful for this thesis. First and foremost, Postcolonial theory stands out as having a clear politics and goal. It opposes colonialism in all its past and present forms and seeks to undermine its hold wherever possible. This emancipatory project which runs through Postcolonial theory is satisfying to encounter in a world increasingly precautious about bias and preoccupied with neutrality. Postcolonial theory's upfront objection to

colonisation is the foundation on which change can be created. Connected to Postcolonial theory's critical viewpoint is its recognition that colonialism is far from over. There is thus an urgency of purpose to the theory as it is realised that we are not simply dealing with the distant echoes of a previous era, but rather colonialism remains a defining feature of our current reality. Postcolonial theory operates on the understanding that "the enemy has not ceased to be victorious" (Benjamin, 1997 in Williams, 2010: 88). This understanding is vital in the analysis of Indigenous policy in Australia where the settler-invaders have stayed on, and where colonialism as a structure remains undisturbed.

Equally vital is Postcolonial theory's understanding of the part discourse plays in gaining and maintaining colonialism's hold. This is an incredibly useful insight. It alerts us to the power of discourse and pushes us to scrutinise the ideas and ways of thinking that make colonialism acceptable. When attention is paid to colonial logic, it becomes clear that Western Modernist assumptions feature heavily. As Postcolonial theory draws on Postructucturalism and Postmodernism in appreciating the importance of discourse and unpacking the Modernist content of colonial discourse, I too draw on these theories. I will devote the next chapter to exploring in greater detail the major break-throughs of these theories that have given Postcolonial theory its theoretical edge.

In closing, I reiterate that Postcolonial theory is a refreshingly politicised critical position with a keen eye for colonial continuities. And importantly, it has the theoretical sophistication to know that to destabilise these continuities, the conceptual frameworks supporting them must be dislodged. This makes it an extremely attractive and productive lens through which to critically analyse the Howard Government's Indigenous policy focus and to better understand its relationship to Australia's ongoing colonial context. It is because Postcolonial theory delivers ethically and theoretically that it is adopted in this thesis.

Section 1: Theory

CHAPTER 2: POSTMODERNISM AND POSTSTRUCTURALISM

The approach this thesis takes to the construction of the problem of welfare dependency in Indigenous Australian societies is informed by Postcolonial theory. Towards pursuing the goal of disrupting colonialism, Postcolonial theory enlists the services of Postmodernism and Poststructuralism. This chapter will look more closely at Postmodernism and Poststructuralism and the theoretical insights Postcolonial theorists borrow from these theories. It will provide a tentative and broad-brush definition of both theories and elaborate on the understanding of discourse and representation that they offer, before answering one potentially serious criticism levelled at them – that they are not politically useful. In the next chapter, I will extend this exploration of relevant Postmodernist and Poststructuralist thinking by focusing in on an approach which applies their key insights to policy analysis. This approach is Carol Bacchi's *'What's the problem represented to be?'* (WPR) approach (2009), which I will employ, in conjunction with Postcolonial theory, when I come to critique the Howard Government's Indigenous policy.

Provisional definitions

Some sort of definition of Poststructuralism and Postmodernism would be helpful in order to expand on what it is about these theories that is of use to this thesis. There are, however, problems attached to the task of defining Poststructuralism and Postmodernism. As with Postcolonial theory, providing a definition is not straightforward (Schwarz, 2000: 5-6). This is largely because of the scope, diversity and fluidity of the theories. Neat, discrete definitions belie the complexity and heterogeneity, or difference, within (Penna and O'Brien, 1996: 40). Judith Butler asks

> [w]hat is Postmodernism? What kind of existence does it have? …Do all those theories
> have the same structure (a comforting notion to the critic who would dispense with them all
> at once)? Is the effort to colonise and domesticate these theories under the sign of the same,
> to group them synthetically and masterfully under a single rubric, a simple refusal to grant
> the specificity of these positions, an excuse not to read, and not to read closely? (1992 in
> Barnett, 1993: 346).

Operating with this in mind, the definitions I suggest should be viewed as
guides only and not reflective of the variation within or the shifting nature of the
contents and boundary lines. The point is that both Postmodernist and
Poststructuralist thought are not necessarily unified by a set of identical
principles in terms of asserting one normative account of the world above all
others. What such thought is more likely to have in common is its role as a
critical stance (Harris, 2001: 335,337), directed most specifically at Modernism
and Structuralism, to various effects.

This brings us to the distinction between the two theories which is a move
towards understanding them better. How the two can in fact be differentiated,
however, remains up for debate (Worsley, 1996: 4). There is some conflation of
the two, with the terms used interchangeably and treated as synonymous (Penna
and O'Brien, 1996: 58). They can helpfully be seen as complementary though
distinctive, sharing premises, views, and ideas while having areas of divergence
and differing focal points. Ben Agger has described Poststructuralism as a
"theory of knowledge and language" and Postmodernism as a "theory of
society, culture and history" (1991: 112). Others have tried to distinguish the
theories according to their key thinkers, but this still leads to disagreement, with
it disputed where even Foucault would be situated in relation to the dividing
line. We return, then, to their originating focus of critique – Modernism and
Structuralism. The 'posts' in the context of Postmodernism and Poststructuralism
(like Postcolonial theory) signify a going beyond, an oppositionary positioning
taken by the theories in relation to that which proceeds their 'post' (Appiah,
1991: 348). Again, the prefix 'post' here does not indicate a chronological shift

or a different historical period, as it does elsewhere (where a hyphen often keeps the 'post' at a further distance) (Vijay and Hodge, 1993: 38-39).

The Modernism which orients Postmodernism is associated with the trend in European thought connected to the Enlightenment. Out of this period (around the 17th to 19th century) has come a focus on the intellectual and technological achievements of Western society, held as signaling a distinctive new era and project: Modernity. Modernity is seen as the refinement of Western knowledge – the mastering of reason – and part of the linear progression and perfection of humanity (Taket and White, 1993: 868). With time, the universe is rendered more knowable and the singular, ultimate truth is revealed; science is a mirror to reality (Agger, 1991: 115). The claim made by Modernism is that this uniquely available truth is superior to other less advanced accounts because it is neutral, objective and not clouded by values. The truth is understood as accessible through rationality and reason, from a centred and therefore valid positioning. From this vantage point, grand narratives are produced with great explanatory power (Dumont, 1998: 219-221; Taket, 1993: 868).

Structuralism is a school of thought that developed largely within anthropology, sociology and linguistics but it is not confined to these disciplines. Its interest is in applying scientific methods to understand the workings of the social world. Society is believed to be deeply structured, and it is thought that this systemic structure can be uncovered through comprehensive schemas (Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff and Virk, 2002: 186-187). Structure is seen as always already there, awaiting detection. In effect, society and reality become organised, totalised, unified, and mechanised by these schemas. The social is thought to be knowable and stable, symmetrical and predictable.

That Postmodernism and Poststructuralism emerged in response to Modernism and Structuralism respectively gives an indication of the sorts of positions they take. If Modernism may be said to insist that Western thought has reached the

pinnacle of human development (Hindess, 2008; 2009: 3-4) because it has discovered the ultimate truth, then Postmodernism would counter that this particular account of truth remains a product of the European historical context in which it emerged. It is thus not free from value and interpretation as it is claimed, but is in fact very much determined by its surroundings. Indeed, Postmodernists point out that the context in which this belief in the story of the West's gradual progress towards humanism is located, and in which non-Western cultures are compared less than favourably, is the very same that saw the colonisation of most of the globe by European powers (Penna and O'Brien, 1996: 53-54). Sue Penna and Martin O'Brien remind us of the important connection made between Modernism and colonialism within Postmodern thought.

> Dominant notions of social progress are challenged by demonstrating that the history of the West, generally presented as a progressive movement towards civilisation and order, was intertwined with its oppression of 'the rest' ... particularly in relation to colonised peoples and the enforced dispersal around the globe of Africans during the period of slavery (Penna and O'Brien, 1996: 53-54).

The self-belief in western knowledge as the highpoint of human history, and the confidence of Modernism that the universe can be thoroughly grasped and neatly graphed through reason, is rejected by Postmodernism. It is countered that "scientific knowledge does not represent the totality of knowledge", and is wrong to render all other forms of knowledge fables or falsities alongside its supposedly exclusive claim on the truth (Lyotard, 1979: 7, xxiii). In his famous publication *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-Francois Lyotard writes "Postmodern knowledge … refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable" (1979: xxv). Quayson interprets Postmodernism as "a vigorously antisystemic mode of understanding, with pluralism, borders and multiple perspectives being highlighted as a means of disrupting the centralizing impulse of any system" (2000: 90). Crucially, Postmodernism has been critical of Modernist assumptions of the superiority of the west in relation to the inferior, non-Western 'other' and this has had a

significant influence on Postcolonial theory (Quayson, 2000: 95; Schwarz, 2000: 6; Smith, 1992: 59).

Now we return to Structuralism and its relationship to Poststructuralism. If Structuralism proposes to track the organised order of language, culture or social relations (Dumont, 1998: 218), Poststructuralism would respond that this level of order is actually imposed. Structuralism's certainty of its knowledge of the social universe is contested with the rejoinder that things are not so simple, nor do they stand still. Poststructuralism suggests *de*construction (originally developed by key social theorist Jacques Derrida [1976]) as a way of reversing construction, showing that the structure of the social world is in fact artificially constructed (Taket and White, 1993: 873; Harris, 2001: 336).

Patricia Clough helpfully relays Barbara Johnson's description of deconstructive criticism (1977), as thinking of representation (or construction) as

> 'a knot' of words, things and desire that can neither be definitively combined nor indefinitely separated; deconstructive criticism then, is not an 'interpretation or an insight but an act. An act of *untying* the knot … by means of repetition of the act of tying it' (Clough, 1992: 547, emphasis in original).

So rather than simply following the maps of the social world provided by Structuralism, Poststructuralism advises that they be deconstructed, along with their claims of certainty, objectivity and truth (Harris, 2001: 336,344). According to Foucault, Poststructuralism is "not about 'what needs to be done' but 'an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is'" (1981 in Harris, 2001: 336). Poststructuralism does have critical potential, in its understanding of the limits of knowledge as well as the power of knowledge, and for this reason is a useful conceptual tool for Postcolonial theory (Bhabha, 1994 in Morton, 2007: 172).

The importance of discourse

Poststructuralism and Postmodernism share a critical approach that is highly cautious towards the pronouncements of Modernism and Structuralism about

their ability to explain the world. What is stressed is the important input of ideas and values in every aspect of human life and the emptiness of claims to stand outside them. This position tells us much about the pervasiveness of discourse; assumptions and values are understood to be alive in all perceptions and world views, and the practices they inform. Harris helps clarify that this position

> does not render values any the less important… Rather the reverse, as it constantly prompts (us) to consider and reconsider the basis of their knowledge and practice. The task is to learn 'how' not 'what' to value (2001: 345).

It is about qualifying scientific and empirical knowledges so that they are not regarded as superior on the basis of their status as truth. Instead they can be judged on the values they contain, what they do and what they contribute; their worth within the specific context in which they exist.

The extent to which ideas and discourse hold power and transmit power is highlighted. As Venn states, "the secret life of the concept reveals the unexpected and often invisible but ever present effects of power" (2006: 12). Ways of seeing the world and the effects they have serve the interests of certain groups. This relates to the creative nature of power which actively operates in discourses, and enables their dominance. The notion of power taken on here is sourced largely from Foucault, an extremely influential thinker (or "experimenter" in his own words [1978 in Flynn, 2005: 377]) whose work has shaped both Poststructuralism and Postmodernism. To this extent, Foucault's work has also proved of great use to Postcolonial theory, despite his remarkable silence on the workings of colonial power (Legg, 2007: 265; Young, 2001: 395). Bethany Lam helpfully paraphrases Foucault's concept of power, "[d]iscourse is both product and producer of power, the place where power and knowledge intersect" (Lam, 2008: 50). As well as an outcome of power, discourse is productive and powerful. It is time to turn to how discourse produces power – via representations and in turn actions which ultimately constitute and affect reality.

Understanding representation towards understanding discourse

Central to Poststructuralism and Postmodernism are ideas concerning the way representation works (Quayson, 2000: 90,92; Strohmayer and Hannah, 1992). Representations are at the heart of discourse and together with the practices in which they manifest, make up discourse. This way of thinking about representation is a crucial point of divergence from Modernism and Structuralism. Poststructuralism and Postmodernism's understanding of representation is relevant to their insistence on the importance of discourse as a site of power and a site of change. Their ideas on representation relate to a different conception of the relationship between the subject (or the knower) and the object (or the known) (Dumont, 1998: 220). The human subject doing the perceiving is brought back into the picture by Postmodernism and Poststructuralism. This subject is erased in Modernist and Structuralist accounts where the clinical, scientific western subject is no longer treated as significant. Armed with rationality, their perception is considered uncontaminated – they are not a factor determining their own perception. According to a Postmodernist or Poststructuralist position, however, the Modernist and Structuralist subjects cannot escape the influence of their values and conceptual framework and so are also actively involved in forming their account of reality.

The thinking here is that the description a subject has of the world is shaped by context and by language (Taket and White, 1993: 871-872). In a broad sense it means there can only ever be partial truths produced with relevance limited to particular settings. In a more specific sense, it speaks of a different conception of how truth is produced. The process of representation is rendered more complicated, although it still has an element of common sense. Signifiers, used to refer to that which they signify, gain their meaning from other signifiers (Dumont, 1998: 220-221). Words only make sense in relation to each other – in context. Efforts to extract the definition of a thing unavoidably rely on referencing other terms, for things that it is not. That which is different is always present, always called upon and always implied. That which it is not will

always frame any referent, making it uncertain and leaky. As meaning is made from other referents, this makes the referent unfinished, and the chain of signifiers which give it its meaning is endless (Dumont, 1998: 220). Because the meaning of referents exists in context and context is always open-ended and shifting, the meaning of a referent remains incomplete and contingent (Pin-Fat, 2000: 665).

This brings us to the relationship between the subject and object and why they are not thought of as in opposition with one another (Dumont, 1998: 219-221; Taket and White, 1993: 869). Because of the constitutive nature of language and the way context determines meaning, it becomes impossible to trace the 'real world' out there beyond its representation. Reality exists in language and it is pointless to speak of any other sort of existence it has. The search for the "transcendental signified", as Derrida puts it, is futile (1967 in Dumont, 1998: 220). The closest thing to truth is representation which is never certain. This bridges the gap between language and reality, reference and referent, subject and object, signifier and signified. It contests the conception of the two as completely distinct entities and instead understands them to be intricately related. It is not a matter of reality being true and representations being false. It is simply that it is meaningless to talk of the truth and falsity of representations in relation to that which they signify because reality exists within the signifier, determined as it is by the interventions involved in the production of a representation.

> Language does refer, it does represent, but only by virtue of constitutive relations of difference and by virtue of it not being able to identify thing said and said thing absolutely, which would be an end to representation, and a restoration of presence (Barnett, 1993: 349).

Referencing is going on, but the process is shown to not be clear cut. This is what makes it representation and not pure presentation.

This way of understanding representation is a critical reading of scientific, Modernist and Structuralist knowledges that has many implications. This is the

main contribution that this thesis will incorporate from Postmodernism and Poststructuralism. It will be taken to argue that all accounts of reality are representations, which play out in human action. For this reason it is important to examine the factors that contribute to the particular formation of any representation to assess its worth and its impact. It is no longer feasible to compare on the basis of access to the real world so things like the values that are at play, and are at stake, become more important.

The pursuit of truth should be approached with an awareness of its limitations and the array of factors involved in its production. It is not just accuracy that makes something true. Its truthfulness is also determined by it making sense in a particular setting. Representations cannot be compared to reality because they are the end of the line in terms of access to it. Representations can only be compared to one another, and within context. They can be assessed by looking at their formation and their ensuing consequences in terms of acts they result in and their effects. Discourse necessarily interacts with the world in a constitutive way. Focus is then shifted to analysing discourse.

Crucially, it means the ideas shaping the canons of European Modernist thought become apparent, as do their effects. Poststructuralism and Postmodernism offer Postcolonial theory a way of examining the Modernist ideas behind colonialism, seeing past their claims of irrefutable truth, and judging these ideas according to their damaging impact. In this thesis, I will draw on these insights as I turn my attention to the Howard Government's *representation* of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. Rather than take it for granted as true, I will explore its preconceptions and conceptual foundations, and engage with this problem representation through consideration of the ideas and viewpoints which it neglects, ultimately assessing it based on its effects.

Checking for usefulness

Poststructuralism and Postmodernism are not without their critics. One reoccurring and particularly serious criticism will be heard here, namely that the theories are not politically useful. A multifaceted debate exists around this issue with positions largely determined by which interpretation of the theories is adopted. The criticism can be partly disarmed by clarifying which interpretation one is working with. More general and more well-founded criticisms of Poststructuralism and Postmodernism as politically ineffective reinforce the need to keep Postcolonial theory close at hand to guide their use.

One strain of the criticism that Postmodernism and Poststructuralism are politically paralysing is based on the argument that the Poststructuralist and/or Postmodernist account of reality and representation amounts to absolute relativism (Graham, 1992: 208). By this it is meant that Postmodernists and/or Poststructuralists arrive at the position that all perspectives and truths are as good as each other and there is no way of judging them. This is reasoned to be an inevitable result of asserting that representations do not mirror reality. If representations cannot mirror reality, then it is concluded that there are no criteria left to rate various representations on. If none of them are the ultimate truth, then they all must be of equal value.

One proponent of this view is Bob Carter who summarises the argument;

> [o]nce notions of transcendental truth (a truth that is good for all times and all places) are abandoned then it would appear that with them disappears the point of critique: the site outside the objects of study from which such objects can be criticised as inadequate, false, irrational, unscientific, unjust and so on (1997: 131).

This is a serious charge. If Poststructuralism and Postmodernism were guilty of offering their proponents no point of critique and only a position of relativism when faced with differing representations and values, this would be extremely problematic. It would conflict with the commitment made in this thesis to a postcolonial oppositionary ethics, and the position taken that partiality is both unavoidable and appropriate.

However, while this criticism might *seem* to mount a compelling case against Postmodernism and/or Poststructuralism, it is judging the theories by Modernist or Structuralist standards, and hence missing the point that the theories try to make. This point is that it is not sufficient to launch a critique on the basis of, falsity, irrationality, unscientificness, and hold that these criteria are themselves free from value and are simply about the real world out there. They are a particular way of rating based on a number of premises and assumptions about what is important and how reality can be accessed. They themselves are not *simply* about the real world, they also incorporate values and make meaning in a certain context-specific way. This point is not fully realised if objective and absolute certainty is yearned for as if it still existed.

It is also a misunderstanding of Postmodernism and Poststructuralism, or at least an understanding contrary to that functioning in this thesis. Whilst these theories may claim that it is not possible to assess competing accounts of reality by comparing them to reality itself, this does not mean there is no way of assessing competing accounts of reality. All it means is that value judgements will be involved in such an assessment. It is only a Modernist or Structuralist position that would have a problem with the involvement of values which are deemed to distract from the truth. A Postmodernist and/or Poststructuralist would understand values to be pivotal and inseparable components of any truth. The tools contributed by Postmodernism and Poststructuralism dissect versions of reality so that the values involved are laid bare. As Agger explains, "it raises an author's deep investments to full view and thus allows readers to enter dialogue with them" (1991: 120). This does crucial work in enabling critique via engagement with those very values, assumptions and political and ethical reasoning. These make for compelling grounds for critique (although less familiar).

Critique, then, is not closed off by the use of Postmodernism or Poststructuralism which in fact provide means with which one can commence critique. A Poststructuralist or Postmodernist method of analysis will not necessarily produce a final verdict on the subject it is turned to but it will bring out into the open the matter for critique. It shows that ways of seeing things are shaped by context and are not true by themselves, as "truth is a thing of this world" and is inherently political (Foucault, 1972 in Dumont, 1998: 224). The "effects of truth" remain crucially important (Foucault, 1989 in Dumont, 1998: 224). They persist despite truth being a compound of reality and values, without universal status. Instead of judging representations on their impartiality, they can be judged on their effects. They can be judged on what they do, because things do matter, and are allowed to.

Outside of the Modernist framework, investing interest no longer distracts but is rather considered an integral part of any analysis. Representations and the wider social discourses of which they are a part have material effects and can be judged on this basis. Making decisions about which effects are preferable involves making value judgments, relating to the context at hand, and this is not just inevitable, but imperative. As Clayton Dumont compellingly argues,

> [p]eople suffer because the privileged representational schemas of the powerful sanction this suffering … [P]ostructuralists do not deny that despair is real … Poststructuralism absolutely does not result in assertions that hunger, lack of housing, unemployment and underemployment, lack of health care, inferior educational opportunities, loss of dignity, and greed do not exist …. Rather, it will assume and accept that paying attention to these social problems is a moral and political choice. Because we deny that the causes, consequences, or importance of social problems are self-evident, we seek to lessen human suffering … by strategic intervention in the always discursive – and thus political – production of reality (1998: 225).

Ensuring usefulness

At the end of the day, Poststructuralism and Postmodernism are only tools, and to ensure that a politically engaged analysis is produced, they are fruitfully supplemented by Postcolonial theory. Quayson and Goldberg describe

postcolonial criticism as "itself an ethical enterprise, pressing its claims in ways that other theories such as those of postmodernism and Poststructuralism do not" (2002: xii). The presence of Postcolonial theory in this thesis will guard against the potential shortcomings of Poststructuralism and Postmodernism, and will keep the theories politically astute. It will make visible at all times the goal of working towards decolonisation through disrupting colonialism's continuation. My rationale for using Poststructuralism and Postmodernism is consistent with the reason for their presence in Postcolonial theory: they are useful. The objective is not to remain faithful to high or pure theory for theory's sake. In line perhaps with some of these theories' key tenets, I will be justifying their application on the basis of what they do for the particular context at hand.

Conclusion

To conclude, Poststructuralism and Postmodernism contribute to Postcolonial theory, and this thesis, another way of understanding knowledge: as power-laden, value-laden, and context specific. This understanding rejects Modernist and Structuralist notions of reality being fully and purely accessible through western intellectual advancements. Instead it appreciates that discourse forms as much as it represents. Representation is seen as a process in which values and human input are inextricably and legitimately involved. Evaluation is then possible, through engagement with informing values and concepts, and exploration of the 'effects of truth'. Poststructuralism and Postmodernism provide grounds for Postcolonial theory to mount a critique against the Western Modernist discourses that underwrote colonialism. They offer grounds outside those presented within the Modernist framework. Colonial discourse, complete with its sense of Europe's entitlement to colonise and reinforcing belief in the superiority of Western knowledge, can be undermined, by judging it according to its injurious premises and harmful effects. Poststructuralism and Postmodernism also impart to Postcolonial theory the importance of discourse, as an opportunity to strike back. Postcolonial theory's uptake of these key

insights of Poststructuralism and Postmodernism makes it a formidable opponent of colonialism and an essential ally for this thesis.

To apply these insights to the Howard Government's Indigenous policy, I will use the *'What's the problem represented to be?'* (WPR) approach developed by political theorist Carol Bacchi. This chapter has gone into sufficient detail on the central ideas of Postmodernism and Poststructuralism at this stage to be ready in the next chapter to introduce Bacchi's helpful synthesis of their key insights. It is these insights which are drawn on by Postcolonial theorists, and the implementation of Bacchi's WPR approach in conjunction with Postcolonial theory's ethic-political drive will enable the smooth application of Postcolonial theory in this thesis. With the injury and injustice of Australia's colonisation very much in mind, the following two sections will apply this Postcolonial theory informed version of Bacchi's approach to Indigenous policy in Australia, and will deconstruct and rethink the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency.

Section 1: Theory

CHAPTER 3: CAROL BACCHI'S *'WHAT'S THE PROBLEM REPRESENTED TO BE?'* APPROACH

The final chapter of this section on theory brings us to Carol Bacchi's *'What's the problem represented to be?'* (WPR) approach. The WPR approach provides a methodology to work with which captures the theoretical positioning of this thesis. It takes those theoretical insights around representation, power and discourse, which Postcolonial theory adopts from Poststructuralism and Postmodernism, and pragmatically applies them to policy analysis.[7] Given the target of analysis in this thesis is the Indigenous policy of the Howard Government, the WPR approach's focus on policy is well suited.

In this chapter I will initially describe the WPR approach. I will then go into the Poststructuralist elements of Bacchi's approach, which overlap with those taken up in Postcolonial theory. Following this, I will position the WPR approach within the public policy field and the critical tradition of which it is a part. This will be followed by discussion of where the WPR approach sits in relation to more conventional public policy analysis. Next, the six steps involved in the WPR approach will be explained. My amalgamated approach will then be presented. Here I bring together Postcolonial theory and the naturally compatible WPR approach.

The WPR approach

The *'What's the problem represented to be?'* (WPR) approach was developed by feminist and critical theorist Carol Bacchi who first outlined the approach in her

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[7] It should be noted that the approach's application is not limited to policy.

book *Women, policy and politics: The construction of policy problems* (1999). She has since published a subsequent book titled *Analysing policy: What's the problem represented to be?* The approach is developed further in this book and presented in a clearer, more student-friendly fashion.[8] Bacchi states that the intent of the approach developed in these books "is to dig deeper than usual into the meaning of policies and into the meaning-making that is part of policy formation" (2009: x). The approach involves breaking down and analysing policy to bring out into the open the values and preconceptions involved in policy creation. It recognises that "[p]olicy documents are significant social mechanisms that can be analysed in their own right (rather than as windows on the reality they claim to represent)" (Shaw, 2010: 205). This level of analysis leads to questioning of the thinking behind policy problems.

Bacchi's WPR approach starts from the premise that every policy, by its very nature, contains within it an implicit 'problem' it sets out to solve (Bacchi, 2009: ix-x, Eggebø, 2010: 298). Singling out the 'problem', making it explicit, and showing that it is in fact what policy is built around, is itself a crucial step (Bacchi, 2009: x). It rests on an appreciation that these 'problems' are themselves "cultural products" (Bacchi, 2009: x); that is, they are particular *representations* of the world. It is understood that "policies are argumentative claims about what the problem is" as "problems do not appear out of nowhere; they are given meaning through discursive politics" (Paterson, 2010: 6,10). Bacchi demonstrates how 'problems' can be read off the solutions that policies put forward (2009: xi,32). The way a policy represents the 'problem(s)' it seeks to fix is understood to reflect particular views and assumptions about the world. Bacchi asserts "policies give shape to 'problems'; they do not address them" (2009: x).

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[8] *Women, Policy and Politics* (1999) was structured around the application of the WPR approach to policies attempting to deal with 'women's' issues and the approach does not stand on its own in this book in quite the same way it does in *Analysing policy* (2009).

The task is then to unpack that problem representation to show the ideas it is based on. Instead of taking that 'problem' for granted, the WPR approach seeks to "problematise" the 'problems' put forward in any given policy. All problem definitions are but one account of the situation, and need to be checked for their effects – what Foucault talks of as the "effects of truth" (1989 in Dumont 1998: 224). The effects of representations include the limitations placed on what can be said, the way subjects are constituted, and ultimately the material effects on the lives of real people (Bacchi, 2009: 15-18). Bacchi summarises:

> [t]he goal of a 'what's the problem represented to be?' approach to policy is to problematise (interrogate) the problematisations in selected government policies, through scrutinising the premises and effects of the problem representations these problematisations contain (2009: xvi).

Highlighting effects, Bacchi insists that problem representations *do matter* (2009: 1,34,46). Bacchi quotes Gilles Deleuze (claimed as an original Poststructuralist) on the importance of being involved in the process of meaning-making rather than just being un-questioning bystanders. The quote reads that we remain

> slaves as long as we *do not control the problems themselves*, so long as we do not possess *a right to the problems*, to a participation in and management of the problems (1994 in Bacchi, 2009: xvi, Bacchi's emphasis).

One of the most attractive features of the approach is that it is relatively easy to use (Coveney, 2010: 521). As Bacchi says, "[i]t is the simplicity of the approach that recommends it for wide application" (2009: xxi). The student or researcher just needs to answer the questions provided to submit a particular policy to critical scrutiny. Bacchi's approach to policy analysis is presented in a way that comes across as commonsense. However, to arrive at this point, complex theoretical ground has been covered. The approach is artfully crafted making difficult concepts refreshingly easy to apply and seamlessly subverting the conventional way of understanding and assessing policy.

Poststructuralist insights

Usefully for this thesis, the theoretical insights in operation within Bacchi's approach are entirely consistent with those Poststructuralist and Postmodernist insights taken up by Postcolonial theory. Bacchi describes her WPR approach to policy analysis as Poststructuralist (2009: vi). According to Bacchi, the "focus on the political dimension of 'problem' creation makes the approach poststructuralist" (2009: 34). Although there are other influences in her work (namely feminist body theory, social construction theory, and Governmentality studies [Bacchi, 2009: 265]), Poststructuralism plays a large role in shaping the approach. In particular, Bacchi references Foucault as an important source.

Representation

In line with Poststructuralist thinking, the relationship between knowledge and reality is understood to not be straightforward. It is accepted that knowledge is a human construct, loaded with values and beliefs about the world and accorded meaning as a result of human involvement (Bacchi, 2009: 32,33). It follows that there are many differing accounts of reality, all with their own values and ideas encoded within. Bacchi points out how Foucault puts an 's' at the end of the word knowledge – talking about *knowledges* rather than knowledge (Bacchi, 2009: 35). This highlights that there will always be multiple knowledges and these will forever be contestable.

The contribution of Poststructuralist thinking identified by Bacchi in regard to policy making is that every policy is an account of reality, and contains within it a representation of what the problem is. Bacchi notes that this does not mean that representation is "opposed to the 'real'". Instead it means that, "representations … are the practices through which things take on meaning and value" (Shapiro, 1998 in Bacchi, 2009: 35). The human element is brought back in with claims of being able to access reality *objectively* thrown out. The sort of 'policy-as-discourse' policy analysis presented by Bacchi echoes Postmodernist

thinking in rejecting the elevation of the policy maker as an objective expert, capable of setting aside their own values in their pursuit of the facts (1999: 18,32). Such a clear distinction between facts and values is challenged (Bacchi, 1999: 49).

Bacchi incorporates a Poststructuralist theoretical grounding by emphasising the discursive processes involved in the formation (rather than simple observation) of policy problems (1999: 47). The 'truth' status of problem problems is questioned (Bacchi, 2009: 43). They are instead understood to be socially produced discourses which can be disputed. Realising this is a breakthrough for policy analysis as it invites the very premises of policies to be challenged, not simply their effectiveness.

Power and discourse

Bacchi directs attention to the particular ways in which issues are framed because she recognises that they hold power *and* are directed by power structures. Bacchi's WPR approach, like Postcolonial theory, has a Poststructuralist conception of power. Power is considered to be a productive force that circulates in social relations rather than simply being a limiting, repressive or coercive thing that only some people have. Sarah Mills helpfully explains that power in this light is thought of "as a relation rather than a single imposition" that "has always been more thoroughly dispersed through-out society than had been realised" (1997 in Edwards, 2003: 102). Bacchi goes into the implications of this conception of power; "[i]f power is *productive* rather than *possessed*, we need to study how it operates and what it produces rather than talking about who holds 'it'" (2009: 38, emphasis in original).

Power is operative within discourses through producing ways of seeing the world and ourselves, and is constructive in this sense (Bacchi, 2009: 37-38). The discourses in place are also a result of the operation of power. On power

and discourse, Bacchi states "it is useful to think about *both* the power *of* discourses to limit the meanings of topics of analysis, *and* the power to *make* and/or to *deploy* discourses" (2009: 236, emphasis in original).

By presenting a particular stand, problem representations are powerful; they transmit power. The exercise of power here delivers valuable rewards in the form of the consequences that flow from the establishment of problem representations, in terms of benefits for some. There is also power in what is not said; "problem representations impose constraints on social vision" and "policy decisions close off the space for normative debate" (Bacchi, 1999: 29,20).

Attention is also brought to how dominant problem representations come to be in place. Power is present here too. Discursive battles are fought with the victorious concepts and conceptual frameworks gaining acceptance, not necessarily on the basis of their validity, or appropriateness. In the policy arena, certain professional expertise is counted (think scientists, medicos, psychologists, economists, academics) and granted greater influence on which problem representation is taken up in policy (Bacchi, 2009: 11). Governments hold the ultimate privilege of determining which problem representation 'sticks' and achieves dominance. They are in a position to sanction (as well as constitute) problem representations via official reports, legislation and policy (Bacchi, 2009: 33).

The WPR approach draws heavily from Poststructuralism (and I would say Postmodernism) in its appreciation that problem representations are contestable human creations, and in its interest in how problem representations got there (the political realm where power resides) and in what problem representations achieve (the products of this power). As Bacchi puts it

> Poststructuralism draws attention to the politics involved in the processes of assigning meaning to key terms. Starting from the premise, just established, that the meaning of concepts and categories is, to an extent, pliable and variable, poststructuralism directs us to

track both the political influences that shape their content and how they function in political debate and political practice (2009: 265).

Conventional policy analysis

Bacchi's approach to policy analysis strays widely from conventional approaches – in particular prevailing positivist approaches (Ronnblom, 2012). Positivism developed in the 18th century as part of the Enlightenment, claiming specifically that the world is perfectly (and only) knowable through the perception of the senses and through empirical science (Uba, 2002: 1-7; Kaboub, 2008: 746). Bacchi outlines the positivist approach to policy associated with Authorized Choice (otherwise known as Comprehensive Rationalism), and also Structured Interaction (also known as Political Rationalism). Bacchi explains, "in this conventional understanding of public policy, governments are seen to be reacting to fixed and identifiable 'problems' that are exogenous (outside) the policy process" (2009: 1). At the centre of these approaches is the certainty that science can reveal all, and that applying scientific methods to social life is entirely appropriate (El-Murr, 2010: 126; Bonner, 2003 in Shaw, 2010: 199). The policy maker is presented as performing a technical, bureaucratic exercise of rationally selecting the best path of action based on scientifically obtained data (Shaw, 2010: 199). Positivist or 'rationalist' approaches to policy remain the norm, seen in the currently popular focus on evidence-based policy (El-Murr, 2010: 126-127; Goodwin, 2012: 33).

Comprehensive Rationalists can be distinguished from Political Rationalists by the extent to which they eschew politics from the process of policy making. Comprehensive Rationalism sees politics, competing interests and citizen discontent as getting in the way of what should be a straightforward administrative, cost-benefit analysis (Bacchi, 2000: 49; Shaw, 2010: 199). In contrast, Political Rationalism sees politics as an integral part of policy-making. It is in favour of a pluralist system in which citizens are involved (not just bureaucracy) and citizens' competing interests and different values are accepted

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(Bacchi, 2009: 32-33; 2000: 49). However, the policy maker is still understood to be a rational agent whose decisions between various values and interests are not based on their own values (these can be left at the door) (Bacchi, 2009: 33,251; 2000: 49). Political Rationalists are also extreme pragmatists, content with incremental change and interested primarily in what is feasible (Bacchi, 2000: 49; 2009: 251-252). At the end of the day, Comprehensive Rationalism and Political Rationalism both see the policy maker as a rational, objective, neutral party who applies scientifically rigorous methods to respond to an already existing problem they have no part in constructing (Bacchi, 2000: 48).

The critical tradition

The rejection of these positivist, rationalist approaches to policy analysis came with the development of more critical approaches from around the 1970s onwards (Goodwin, 2011: 169; Shaw, 2010: 197). These approaches have been loosely labelled Interpretive because they are "based on the presupposition that we live in a social world characterised by the possibility of multiple interpretations" (Yanow, 2000 in Goodwin, 2011: 169; El-Murr, 2010: 127). Poststructuralist thinking has been part of this trend, as has Social Construction theory, which the WPR approach shares some important premises with. The WPR approach has in common with Social Constructionism its appreciation that the way social problems are thought about contains deep conceptual schemas which are a product of social forces (Bacchi, 2009: 2,32-33,252). This means that it is not rationality or objectivity that determines the definition of social problems but socially constructed understandings of the world.

What the WPR approach brings to Social Constructionism is the added interest in the role of policy makers and governments in contributing to the production of social problems (via problem representations in policy), and their privileged and powerful role in doing so (Bacchi, 2009: 2,33). This interest in politics and power is a Poststructuralist twist on Social Constructionism's account. Policy analysis informed by Poststructuralism has come to be termed a policy-as-

discourse approach, as policy is taken to be a form of discourse. The WPR approach can be classified as such.

Bacchi is thus in good company in framing "policy not as a response to existing conditions and problems, but more as a discourse in which both problems and solutions are created" (Goodwin, 1996 in Bacchi, 2000: 48). Bacchi's explanations of her WPR approach are in accord with the calls of other policy-as-discourse analysts to recognise the "meaning *creation* involved in policy design" (Goodwin, 2011: 170, emphasis in original). Like Bacchi, proponents of policy-as-discourse are motivated to demystify the process, to reveal the constraints placed on ways of viewing the situation, and demonstrate that intervention is possible, through participation in meaning making (Bacchi, 2000: 46-49). Bacchi's work is helpfully supported by the writings of fellow analysts of policy-as-discourse and their complementary explorations of the impact of poststructuralist thought on policy analysis.

The innovation of the WPR approach

While conceptually, Bacchi's work may be akin to that of other policy-as-discourse analysts, her WPR approach is nonetheless innovative. This is because there is no set guide on how to go about practically applying the complex theory to policy analysis (Shaw, 2010: 202). Bacchi offers a clear step-by-step approach to this conceptually exciting area. As Susan Goodwin points out, the focus of policy-as-discourse analysis is usually what is turned up, or the "'surprises' unveiled" as a result of studying policy-as-discourse, but authors rarely describe the methods used to get to that point, making it hard to replicate the process (2011: 174). In Goodwin's words,

> Bacchi's elucidation of this approach is an important contribution to the field, as it enables policy researchers using discourse-analysis techniques to be more explicit about the steps they have taken to arrive at what I have called 'moments' of obtaining knowledge (2011: 179).

As Goodwin's comments attest, the WPR approach has been enthusiastically received by academics and has proved a very popular tool to facilitate the analysis of policy-as-discourse (see the publication *Engaging with Carol Bacchi: Strategic interventions and exchanges* [Bletsas and Beasley, 2012]). In Australia, Goodwin and fellow academic Emma Partridge have both aptly demonstrated the usefulness of Bacchi's approach in the analysis of Australian policy, and indeed Indigenous policy (Goodwin, 2011; Partridge, 2014). Their work shows that Bacchi's approach is quite able to stand alone when applied in colonial contexts such as Australia. However, I nonetheless argue that in order to *secure* an analysis guided by the objective of decolonisation, the WPR approach is helpfully supplemented by Postcolonial theory's politico-ethical stance.

The six steps

Having discussed the theoretical basis of the WPR approach, I will now specifically describe the steps involved, starting with an excerpted list of the steps from Bacchi's book (2009).

Step 1: What's the problem represented to be in a specific policy? See what the policy proposes and 'read off' the implied 'problem' from this proposal.

Step 2: What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'? This question involves a form of Foucauldian *archaeology*, identifying underlying conceptual logics and political rationalities in specific policies. Identify key concepts, binaries, and categories. Think beyond national and/or cultural boundaries to address this question.

Step 3: How has this representation of the 'problem' come about? This question involves a form of Foucauldian *genealogy*, focusing on the practices and processes that led to the dominance of this problem representation (or of these problem representations).

Step 4:   What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently? Cross-cultural comparisons and comparisons of problem representations over time (see Question 3) will be useful here, alongside the discourse analysis conducted in Question 2.

Step 5:   What effects are produced by this representation of the problem? Consider three kinds of effects: discursive effects; subjectification effects; lived effects. Include effects due to dividing practices. The following sub-questions will assist here: What is likely to change with this representation of the 'problem'? What is likely to stay the same? Who is likely to benefit from this representation of the problem, who is likely to be harmed? How does the attribution of responsibility for the 'problem' affect those so targeted and the perceptions of the rest of the community about who is to 'blame'?

Step 6:   How/where is this representation of the 'problem' produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced? Consider past and current challenges to this representation of the 'problem'. Consider the discursive resources available for re-problematisation.

(2009: 48)

At the bottom of the list, Bacchi adds the following advice,

> [a]pply this list of questions to your own problem representations. This stage of the analysis requires a form of reflexivity, which involves subjecting the grounding assumptions in one's own problem representations to critical scrutiny (2009: 48).

Whilst this is good advice, there will not be space within this thesis for such additional analysis. However, the fourth question does allow for exploration of an alternative problem representation and the grounding assumptions of my counter-account, and eventually its effects, should be clear.

Question 1

The first question asks what the problem is represented to be in the policy that is being looked at. It is often a case of working backwards from the policy solution to find what is interpreted to be the 'problem' (Bacchi, 2009: 3). In Bacchi's words

> since how you feel about something determines what you suggest doing about it, it is equally true to say that looking at what is proposed as a policy intervention will reveal how the issue is being thought about (2009: 3).

There can also be more than one problem representation within any given policy.

Question 2

The second question that the WPR approach poses looks into the assumptions and preconceptions which underpin the policy's representation of the 'problem'. This question works on the understanding that problem representations draw on background knowledges, deep-seated cultural values, and fundamental world views (Bacchi, 2009: 5). What makes it possible for the 'problem' to be conceived in this way? Bacchi likens this step to a process of Foucauldian *archaeology*, where the purpose is to unearth the deeper meaning of texts (2009: 5,40). Bacchi clarifies that she is not interested in the intentionality of the policy maker. It is not a case of lining up what policy makers "really" think against what they say, and spotting deceit or empty promises (Bacchi, 2009: xix). Instead it is about understanding how it is that those promises make sense and can be made. As Bacchi puts it, "the goal is to understand policies *better than* policy makers" (2009: xix, emphasis in original).

Binaries, key concepts, and categories

Towards this end, Question 2 suggests researchers look for binaries, key concepts and categories, which often help problem representations convey their view while masking the complexity of the matter. Binaries contain two different

traits or things, and place them in an opposite relationship to each other, implying that there is no middle ground or grey area between the two. Examples of binaries are nature/culture, public/private, economic/social (Bacchi, 2009: 7), individual/community, functional/dysfunctional, and dependent/independent. The important feature of binaries is that each side is positioned in a hierarchical relationship, with one valued over the other (Bacchi, 2009: 7). Binaries have been identified by many Post-colonial theorists as an important aspect of colonial discourses (see Chapter 1).

Bacchi also brings attention to key concepts at work in problem representations. She reminds researchers that the content of concepts vary over time, are never set in concrete, and are usually multiple and "hotly contested" (Bacchi, 2009: 8). Examples of concepts are citizenship, freedom, rights, health, work, property, and equality (Bacchi, 2009: 8). Bacchi also points out the role played by categories in problem representations. Examples of categories are 'problem gamblers', 'mainstream Australians', 'welfare dependents', and 'working families'. People categories in particular class together and assume commonality amongst different people, measuring them and enabling them to be treated in certain ways as an entity (Bacchi, 2009: 9). Binaries, key concepts and categories all act as shorthand. These forms of shorthand are a way in to crack open problem representations and interrogate the assumptions within.

Question 3

The third step in the WPR approach asks about the origins of problem representations. This question first appeared in Bacchi's 2009 publication *Analysing policy*. It encourages the researcher to look at the context in which the problem representation emerged. As problem representations do not come out of nowhere, their journey can be traced. Dominant problem representations are products of circumstance and power relations, not "'natural' evolution" (Bacchi, 2009: 10). This question involves a version of Foucauldian *genealogy*,

following the roots of a particular problem representation and the historical turn of events that lead to its success. Bacchi explains "[t]he purpose of Question 3… is to highlight the conditions that allow a particular problem representation to take shape and to assume dominance" (2009: 11). The revelation that the dominant problem representation is not inevitable, and is not the only account available or conceivable, has a "destabilising effect" (Bacchi, 2009: 11). Whilst this step has its uses, Bacchi does add that researchers should use their discretion when deciding if this potentially quite involved stage is necessary for their project (2009: 44).

Question 4

The fourth question in the WPR approach turns to this possibility of there being other ways to represent a situation. Bacchi asks what is left unproblematic in the problem representation under examination. This question brings attention to what is not problematised, and how other issues are actually shut off from consideration (Bacchi, 2009: 12). Looking at the silences within a given problem representation extends on from the recognition of Question 3 that there isn't just one way of representing the situation (and that the dominance of a problem representation does not mean it is right or better). Here other possible interpretations are to be explored, including Foucault's subjugated knowledges (1980 in Bacchi, 2009: 36). From Postcolonial theory's perspective, this stage is an opportunity to consider deviating Indigenous knowledges and viewpoints. Bacchi suggests cross-cultural comparisons (2009: 14) – where they are deemed helpful (2009: 44). The focus in this question on other interpretations brings in the critical dimension of the approach (Bacchi, 2009: 12).

Question 5

The fifth question elaborates the critique. Here Bacchi, in line with Foucault (Bacchi, 2009: 15), asks the researcher to examine the effects of the problem

representation in question. In doing so, the problem representation is evaluated (Bacchi, 2009: 15,40). Bacchi states

> [a] WPR approach to policy analysis starts from the presumption that some problem representations create difficulties (forms of harm) for members of some social groups more so than for members of other groups (2009: 15).

Bacchi outlines three overlapping sorts of effects that ought to be considered: discursive effects, subjectification effects, and lived effects.

Discursive effects

Discursive effects refer to the constraints placed on ways of understanding an issue by a particular problem representation (Bacchi, 2009: 40). This closing off of alternative viewpoints is an effect of problem representations; a discursive effect.

Subjectification effects

Subjectification effects have to do with how a problem representation incites people to feel about themselves and others. Bacchi and Joan Eveline, and Stephanie Paterson, explain "'[p]olicies do not simply "impact" on people; they "create" people', intersecting, creating and contesting existing social relations" (Bacchi and Eveline, 2003 in Paterson, 2010: 4). Bacchi proposes that policies make available certain subject positions which we relate to and take on, sometimes unknowingly (2009: 16). These subject positions define people in particular ways and position them in relation to others. What Foucault describes as 'dividing practices' are often at work here (1982 in Bacchi, 2009: 16,17). 'Dividing practices' are where groups of people are set against other groups (or individuals against themselves), with state approval usually the distinguishing feature. It largely comes down to which party is treated as responsible for the 'problem' (Bacchi, 2009: 17). Postcolonial theorists share this interest in how discourses shape subjects, studying the construction of colonised and colonial

identities through colonial discourses, and the process of 'othering' that is a part of this (Mills, 1997 in Edwards, 2003: 102,103). Bacchi writes

> [e]xamining subjectification effects is challenging. It requires close attention to how the 'problem' is represented in particular policies, how those represented to be 'troublesome' are described, and how those so targeted might absorb, or challenge that message (2009: 42).

It is not a simple case of dominant discourses controlling people's subject positions, because people still have agency and the ability to respond to and interact with the subject positions on offer. It is nonetheless worth examining the frameworks which people have to work with (whether they internalise or re-constitute) and how these frameworks are presented and elicited through policy.

Lived effects

Lived effects are the material consequences that follow from particular constructions of the 'problem' in policy (Bacchi, 2009: 17). Problem representations shape policy directives, as well as closing off other policy responses and constituting subjects, and have real impacts on people's day to day lives (Bacchi, 2009: 43). Alissa El-Murr observes "Bacchi has built upon Foucault's claim that discourse is much like an event, when she argues that discourse creates effects" (2011: 128). Despite the WPR approach's interest in how the world is discursively constructed, it does not conclude that "everything dissolves into language", as talk of representations and discourse might suggest (Bacchi, 2009: 35,xviii). Instead, the approach is keenly aware and deeply concerned about the relationship between discourse and the material world. It is not forgotten that people do have embodied existences; that we exist in the flesh (Bacchi, 2009: 70; Beasley and Bacchi, 2012). It is thus important to think about how the construction of social 'problems' in policy translates to genuine life and death consequences for members of society (Dean, 2006 in Bacchi, 2009: 43).

Importantly, the effects of problem representations are the basis on which they can be *judged*, on whether they are acceptable or damaging. Bacchi is interested in who benefits from a particular problem representation, and who is harmed. Bacchi emphasises the importance of looking at effects, saying

> [b]ecause a WPR approach makes the case that problem representations impact unevenly on different kinds of people, the kind of analysis of effects described here forms a crucial part of the methodology. The overall goal is to be able to say which aspects of a problem representation have deleterious effects for which groups, and hence may need to be rethought (2009: 18).

In this thesis, the effects of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency emerge throughout the four earlier steps, and will be expanded upon in the conclusion.

Question 6

The sixth question focuses on how and where the problem representation has more recently become established, with an eye to interjecting and disrupting its foothold, where appropriate. Bacchi asks how the particular problem representation has spread, and how it has achieved legitimacy (2009: 19). The media usually plays a role (Bacchi, 2009: 19). Looking at how the problem representation is disseminated gives clues about how and where the problem representation might be contested. This step will not be applied in this thesis. Whilst an interesting question, and the whilst the media and public discourse have contributed to the firm footing of the Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency, engagement with this representation would not benefit greatly from answering this question.

The critical element

Bacchi's WPR approach has a normative agenda (Bacchi, 2009: 39,44); Bacchi is interested in stimulating change for the better. The design of the approach, around six questions, is indicative of Bacchi's intent to encourage questioning (Bacchi, 2009: 46). The WPR approach recoils from a position of relativism.

Bacchi rejects the charge that "all we are left with are *competing* conceptions or *definitions* of a 'problem'" (2009: 263, emphasis in original). Rather, Bacchi insists that problem representations be treated critically and be evaluated.

Bacchi's position stands in stark contrast to relativism because it openly objects to those problem representations which cause harm (Bacchi, 2009: 44). She argues that problem representations necessarily intervene in the realities they construct and can be compared according to how helpful these interventions are (Bacchi, 1999: 38). Once it is acknowledged that rating representations involves value judgments and not truth verification, it is feasible to proceed. In fact, to adopt a position of neutrality and suggest that all representations are equal is itself a value judgment (Bacchi, 1999: 10). In the words of Paulo Freire "w]hen we try to be neutral…we support the dominant ideology" (2001 in Ruitenberg, 2009: 278). Crucially for this thesis, Bacchi's WPR approach is a critical approach with a declared interest in upsetting the status quo. Bacchi clearly asserts her revolutionary objective:

> the approach advocates a kind of guerrilla warfare on problem representations judged to have deleterious consequences. It encourages those who wish to contest these problem representations to work carefully within contextual constraints to frame problems in ways that produce effects deemed to be more helpful and less destructive than those produced by problem representations judged to be harmful (2009: 238).

Postcolonial theory and the WPR approach

Bacchi's WPR approach is remarkably well-suited to the project of this thesis. Bacchi's approach neatly synthesises the key Poststructuralist and Postmodernist insights which Postcolonial theorists have found so useful, and applies them to policy analysis. Bacchi offers an easy-to-use methodology to critically deconstruct policy which helpfully directs attention to the constructed nature of policy problems and the importance of unpacking and assessing them.

In the marriage of Postcolonial theory and Bacchi's WPR approach, it is important that Postcolonial theory's presence be felt. Bacchi's WPR approach is unashamedly critical and is imbued with a political bent towards challenging dominant paradigms where they mete out deleterious consequences. However, the approach does not contain Postcolonial theory's politics and its particular focus on colonial relations. It does not capture Postcolonial theory's specific objective of pursuing decolonisation. Postcolonial theory then brings its focus on, and its ethico-political stance in relation to, colonialism when used in conjunction with Bacchi's how-to guide to treating policy as discourse.

Postcolonial theory contributes a familiarity with the colonial tropes and other discursive devices that have upheld colonial regimes. Postcolonial theory adds an alertness to the influence of the colonial environment on the formation of problem representations. A Postcolonial theory informed perspective has much to say about what is left unproblematised in dominant problem representations in colonial settings. In colonial contexts, Postcolonial theory is adept at teasing out the ways in which colonialism manifests and is enabled to carry on. It is not just about detecting traces of colonial thinking. It is also a matter of appreciating that current arrangements are the succession (and continuation) of previous colonial endeavours. This needs to be given due attention. Treating colonialism as a non-issue leaves it unproblematised, leaves it off the agenda, and makes it harder to address. When using the WPR approach, I refer to Postcolonial theory at each stage for its interest in the colonial context.

What a WPR approach informed by Postcolonial theory looks like

To make it easier to see what the WPR approach looks like when used in conjunction with Postcolonial theory, I have attached a couple of additional guiding statements to accompany Bacchi's steps. Each statement encourages reflection on where problem representations sit in relation to colonialism.

What is the problem represented to be, in this colonial context?
A Postcolonial theory inflected WPR approach
Be mindful of the impact of the reverberations of colonialism and its dynamics. Consider how the problem representation interacts with the project of colonialism. Think about whether the project of colonialism is furthered, supported, challenged, halted or reversed through the construction of the problem.
At the end of each question, add 'Bear in mind the colonial context'.

The aim is to harness the useful 'how-to' element of the approach and the extremely helpful theoretical insights it translates, as well as its critical design, while incorporating the particular ethico-political ambition of Postcolonial theory. In the spirit of Bacchi's clear description of her methodology, extra statements have been included to direct focus onto the ongoing nature of colonialism and its contemporary relevance. They are intended to highlight the unavoidable connection between policy and surrounding colonial frameworks: whether policy continues colonialism (actively or through inaction), or attempts to redress it.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the WPR approach provided by Bacchi, explaining its theoretical grounding and its value. I have demonstrated the appropriateness of the WPR approach for this thesis, lining up the key theoretical premises it operates with alongside those that Postcolonial theory draws on. Bacchi's WPR approach and Postcolonial theory both take from the broad field of Poststructuralism an understanding of the nature of power, the workings of power through discourse, and ultimately the importance of how things are represented. Consistent with Postcolonial theory's critical imperative, Bacchi's

approach is critical of discourses that maintain unethical social relations. The policy focus of the WPR approach ties in perfectly as government policy is the target of critique in this thesis. To Bacchi's WPR approach, Postcolonial theory contributes a mindfulness of colonised contexts and their implications. The modified version of the WPR approach which I implement in this thesis, incorporating the ethico-political standpoint of Postcolonial theory, will refine the analysis produced. The next section will start the process of applying this modified version of Bacchi's WPR approach, bringing a critical awareness of the ongoing relevance of colonialism to the exploration of the assumptions, the origins, the silences and the effects of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency.

Section 2: The problem representation

CHAPTER 4: STEP 1 – THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT'S FIRST TERM, 1996-1998

Introduction

The project of critically analysing the Howard Government's Indigenous policy can now begin. In these final two sections of this thesis, the theoretical approach detailed in Section 1 will be applied. Following Bacchi's WPR approach, guided by Postcolonial theory, the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency will be examined. This second section (containing Chapters 4 to 7) will concentrate specifically on exploring the problem representation itself. The first two chapters in this section (Chapters 4 and 5) will carry out the necessary initial work of describing the construction of this problem – during the Howard Government's first and fourth term. Through doing so, they will execute Step 1 of the WPR approach. Step 2 and Step 3 will be carried out in the following two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7). Chapter 6 will unpack the deep-seated assumptions contained within the problem representation while Chapter 7 will investigate the origins of this problem representation. The third section of this thesis will look outside of the problem representation to see what was left out, and will provide an alternative reading of the situation. This third section contains Chapters 8 to 14 and these chapters will be devoted to the larger task of performing Step 4 of the WPR approach. As Postcolonial theory will guide the analysis, each of these steps will be undertaken while *bearing in mind the colonial context*.

Returning to Section 2, in this chapter and the next (Chapter 4 and 5), the development of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency will be charted through its first and its final term. I have chosen to study the first and the final terms because this allows a closer look than would be possible if all four terms were examined. Concentrating on the two framing terms also highlights the connection between the problem formation work that went on in the first term and the high level of policy activity that built on this in the fourth term.

A great deal of policy activity surrounded the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme in particular. The CDEP scheme was an inventive and popular work creation strategy which managed to achieve positive social and economic outcomes (Altman, Gray, and Levitus, 2005; Sanders, 2004; Altman and Sanders, 2008; ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2002: 48-49; Rowse, 2002a: 13,19,72-74,230,231; Arthur, 2002; Smith, 1995: 5-7,12,15). It essentially provided funds (roughly) equivalent[9] to unemployment benefits (plus additional administrative and capital support) to Aboriginal community CDEP organisations, to pay Aboriginal participants to carry out community controlled part-time work. Devised by senior public servant H.C. (Nugget) Coombs, it was introduced by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser's Coalition Government in 1977, as an initiative of the National Employment Strategy for Aboriginals (Rowse, 2002b: 329; Sanders, 1988: 36). Originally it was established only in remote communities, paying Aboriginal community members to undertake "socially important tasks" as an alternative to providing unemployment benefits (Coombs, 1977 in Sanders, 1988: 37) which had recently been extended to remote located Aboriginal people. In 1987 Prime

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[9] 'Top-up' wages were also available in exchange for more hours, which is likely why the 1996 census recorded 16 per cent of female and 17 per cent of male CDEP participants working between 25 to 34 hours per week and 18 per cent of female and 26 per cent of male CDEP participants working over 35 hours per week (Altman, 2001: 127; Altman and Gray, 2000: 10,13).

Minister Bob Hawke's Labor Government extended the scheme to non-remote areas as part of its Aboriginal Employment Development Policy, encouraged by the Miller Report – the report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs, which Coombs sat on and Mick Miller chaired (Miller, 1985; Jordan, 2016c: 87; Sanders, 1993: 5). The understanding was that even in urban and rural areas where labour markets were present, some Aboriginal people "were not able to compete in the open market" (Australian Government, 1987: 5). By 1996, just under a third of the 30,000 community members participating in 268 communities nationwide were non-remote (ATSIC, 1997b: Chap 4). It was at this point in 1996 that the Howard Government began articulating its representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency through its handling of the increasingly popular CDEP scheme, and the scheme suffered as a result.

The effect of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency on the fate of the CDEP scheme in particular demonstrates the relationship between discourse and the 'real' world. It helps explain my interest in the textual output of the Howard Government as well as the actual policy changes, both of which operate as discourse. The influence of this problem representation – expressed through policy and discussion – in fact reaches beyond the Howard Government's time in office. It has stretched out to affect what is considered conceivable (and acceptable), by successive governments, the media, and the public whose endorsement these governments seek. The Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency is of ongoing significance.

The ten texts and policy outputs selected are all linked by the theme of Aboriginal welfare dependency along with interrelated and interdependent themes. The overarching theme of *Aboriginal welfare dependency* and its opposite – Aboriginal *economic independence* – overlap and work together

with other relevant themes. These themes are *a practical approach*, *the goal of sameness*, *working together*, and *the economic as distinct from the social*.

The theme of *a practical approach* refers to the Howard Government's presentation of its approach to Aboriginal affairs as practical, as opposed to the Labor party's approach which it portrayed as politically correct and tied up in rhetoric. The Howard Government presented tackling Aboriginal welfare dependency as a suitably practical policy focus and positioned it as a defining feature of its practical approach. The theme of *the goal of sameness* refers to the Howard Government's aspiration for a particular version of equality, an equality based on identical treatment, and the removal of difference. Reducing Aboriginal welfare dependency and promoting economic independence was presented by the Howard Government as a step towards its goal of sameness for Aboriginal people.

The theme of *working together* (a phrase frequently used by the Howard Government) encapsulates the Howard Government's focus on Indigenous responsibility, and its emphasis on the limits of its own role in Indigenous affairs. Stressing that there was only so much it could do, the Howard Government portrayed Aboriginal welfare recipients as ultimately responsible for their 'welfare dependence'. The final related theme is the theme of *the economic as distinct from the social*. This theme refers to the Howard Government's depiction of economic objectives as independent of, and more important than, social objectives. Taken together, these interwoven themes make up the Howard Government's construction of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. These themes, and their interaction, will be identified and explored in a comments section which comes after a description of each text.

In this chapter, the five key texts from the Howard Government's first term that undergo analysis are: *Press conference, Sydney*, delivered by Prime Minister

John Howard, March 4th 1996; *Ninth annual Joe and Dame Enid Lyons memorial lecture*, given by Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs John Herron, November 15th 1996; *Addressing priorities in Indigenous Affairs*, budget statement released by John Herron, May 12th 1998; *Indigenous assistance program question*, transcript of a parliamentary debate between John Howard and Independent Member of Parliament Pauline Hanson, June 29th 1998; and *Beyond welfare*, party document released by John Herron, September 23rd 1998.

Moving on to the next chapter and the fourth term, the five texts and policy outputs focused on are: *Building on success, CDEP discussion paper*, released by Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations Kevin Andrews, February 21st 2005; the Indigenous Economic Development Strategy, launched by Kevin Andrews, November 9th 2005; *CDEP guidelines for 2006*, launched by Kevin Andrews, March 29th 2006; *Indigenous potential meets economic opportunities* discussion paper, released by Kevin Andrews, November 2006; and finally the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), announced by John Howard and Minister of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Mal Brough, June 21st 2007.

Press conference, Sydney,
by John Howard, Prime Minister, March 4th 1996

This press conference was the first to be held after the Liberal Party had won office two days earlier on March 2nd 1996. One of the journalists at the press conference asked Prime Minister John Howard to comment on Australian attitudes towards racism, in light of the election of Independent Member of Parliament Pauline Hanson (Howard, 1996b: 6). In response, John Howard objected to the use of the term racism (1996b: 6). He said he himself was reluctant to throw that word around, and that he felt it was thrown around too carelessly (Howard, 1996b: 6). He continued that he would not read the electoral success of Pauline Hanson as meaning that there was a racist streak in that community (Howard, 1996b: 6). Howard then moved on to comment on his Government's approach to Indigenous affairs more generally (1996b: 6). He said that the reconciliation process would go on and that it was important for it to go on. Howard elaborated on his approach to reconciliation:

> [i]t is particularly important that the practical expression of reconciliation be found in attending to issues of health and education and employment and housing, particularly health, amongst the Aboriginal community, and if there is to be a shift of emphasis under us as inevitably occurs, it will be towards a greater focus on those things rather than other things that may be seen on a more politically correct agenda (1996b: 6).

Later on in the press conference, Howard was asked again about the significance of Pauline Hanson's election and what this said about the Australian public's view on Aboriginal Affairs (Howard, 1996b: 17). Howard began by conveying his dislike for expressions that "divide us into white and non-white" (1996b: 17). He instead wished to focus on things which unite Australians (Howard, 1996b: 17). Howard then brought up reconciliation saying that he supported reconciliation so long as it was on the basis that we are "all Australians together, united under a common body of law" from which

everybody was "entitled to an equal dispensation of justice" (1996b: 17). He
went on to say

> [m]y view is that we are one nation and we have to find solutions to the deprivation of
> some of our fellow Australians, amongst which the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
> people are obviously the most deprived group. We have to find practical solutions to that
> deprivation (Howard, 1996b: 17).

Howard's comments regarding the importance of equal legal rights likely refer
to the recent acknowledgement of the existence of Aboriginal native title rights
to land. The finding of the High Court Mabo case in 1992 *(Mabo and Others v
State of Queensland [No. 2])* in favour of Eddie Mabo and other Meriam men
(who claimed native rights over the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait under
Australian common law) was enacted in the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) by the
previous Keating Labor Government.[10] Fulfilling its election promise, upon
entering office the Howard Government commenced work on preparing
Amendments to this act, as part of its commitment to serving the "aggregate
interests of all of the Australian people" (Senate, 1996: 3786; Howard, 1996a:
8). In this press conference, Howard referred to the amendments as ensuring the
"workability" of the legislation (1996b: 16).

Comments

Two important themes emerged in this press conference: *a practical approach to
Indigenous affairs* and the theme of *the goal of sameness*.

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[10] Additionally, the *Native Title Act 1993* established procedure through which Native Title and
compensation claims could be made and gave some protection against "future acts" affecting
native title on land with pending Native Title claims (Brennan, Field and Norberry, 1997; *Native
Title Act 1993*). It also contained a significant concession to those hostile to Aboriginal land
rights – it validated past grants of land title (granted after the enactment of the *Racial
Discrimination Act 1975*) that could otherwise be invalided by the existence of Native Title
(Rowse, 1993; Brennan et al, 1997).

A practical approach

Howard asserted that he was interested in "the practical expression of reconciliation" (1996b: 6) which he translated to mean focusing on issues of health, housing, education and employment. He was not so interested in items he considered to be on the politically correct agenda, including land rights and matters of reparation commonly associated with the term reconciliation (Howard, 1996b: 6,17). What Howard was prepared to tackle illustrates the limits of his conception of the problem in Indigenous affairs.

The goal of sameness

Howard made a point of refusing to talk about racism or even different races, making it clear he did not consider racism a problem confronting Indigenous Australia. Howard explained that he wanted to focus on what united everybody. This included an "equal dispensation of justice" before the law (Howard, 1996b: 17). Howard's comments here linked in with his Government's position that native title threatened the principles of fairness and equality as it privileged Indigenous interests (Howard, 1996a: 8). This perspective on native title utilised a concept of formal equality rather than substantive equality, promoting same treatment rather than same outcomes.

The goal of sameness was also articulated through Howard's acknowledgement of the need to remedy the relative deprivation of the Indigenous population as compared to the non-Indigenous population (1996b: 17). Reconciliation was reduced to addressing Indigenous relative deprivation. The pursuit of Indigenous interests and rights was left out of the definition of reconciliation because it did not align with the goal of sameness.

Ninth annual Joe and Dame Enid Lyons memorial lecture

by John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, November 15th 1996

This lecture was delivered by John Herron eight months into his position as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Early on in the piece, Herron identified the need to address Indigenous disadvantage (1996b: 1). He said this was necessary in order for Indigenous people to enjoy full and true equality of opportunity, the same opportunities enjoyed by the wider community (Herron, 1996b: 1,8). The way to do this was to aim towards: "specific, measurable, … achievable outcomes", "practical and realistic frameworks of action", and "demonstrable improvements in … social and economic conditions" (Herron, 1996b: 1,8,5).

Herron announced a new project and offered it as an example of the implementation of his Government's practical approach (1996b: 9). The project was the ATSIC/Army Community Assistance Program and involved bringing the army into remote communities to assist with infrastructure projects, such as upgrades to water supply, roads and housing.

Herron explained that he saw his position as an opportunity to implement "practical, commonsense policies, to do something, to narrow the gap between the living standards and expectations of Indigenous people" (1996b: 2). Herron said funding should be based on need, and priority should be given to remote communities (1996b: 4,5). He broke down Indigenous disadvantage as existing in the four areas of health, housing, education and employment (Herron, 1996b: 8,9,13).

Herron's statements here echo the funding decisions made only months earlier as part of the 1996-1997 budget. Drastic cuts of approximately $470 million over a four year period were made to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) budget (ATSIC, 1998e: Chap 2). Amid these budget cuts, funding for health, housing and employment was "quarantined" and left untouched (Herron, 1996a: 1). The quarantining process was presented by Herron as a positive aspect of the budget cuts, reflecting his Government's commitments to outcomes in the areas of greatest need (1996a: 1,2). Casualties included the Community Training Program, the Development of Industry Strategies, the Community and Youth Support Program, and the Movement to Award Wages Program (Ivanitz, 1999: 3). The CDEP scheme also suffered despite coming under the category of employment – an area that Herron claimed was not being cut. CDEP places ceased to be expanded and capital and recurrent funding were reduced for projects with more than 150 participants (Herron, 1998b: 37).

On the topic of reconciliation, Herron stated that his Government's commitment to the process was an integral part of its commitment "to a fairer and more just society" (1996b: 3). He gave his own understanding of reconciliation, and commented that there were different interpretations which made it difficult (Herron, 1996b: 3). Herron specified that he did not see the signing of a reconciliation document as necessary, and described the process of reconciliation as personal and attitudinal (1996b: 3). He stated that he did see that respecting that Indigenous people have their own cultures was important to reconciliation (Herron, 1996b: 3).

Herron set out three essential elements of reconciliation:

> **First**, there needs to be honest and realistic acknowledgment of the injustices of the past. **Second**, there needs to be a shared commitment to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage and providing equality of opportunity for all Australians. And **third**, there needs to be a

mutual acceptance of the importance of working together in ensuring that our differences

do not prevent us from sharing equally in a common future (1996b: 3, emphasis in original).

On the issue of acknowledging the past, Herron had earlier made the following comment: "[t]hat Indigenous Australians inhabited this country … prior to European settlement is no more and no less than a statement of historical fact" (1996b: 2). He said that if we could apply today's values to the past we would not repeat *some* of the actions carried out by our "non-Indigenous forebears" (Herron, 1996b: 2). Herron listed some of these actions, such as brutality against Indigenous people and seeking to "deny Aborigines access to culture" (1996b, 2).[11] He said that we needed to acknowledge the injustices of the past, learn from them and not repeat them (Herron, 1996b: 2). In the next sentence he said

[e]qually however, we also owe it to our forefathers to recognise that many of their actions

were not necessarily borne out of an evil or malicious intent to inflict harm upon their

fellow men and women (Herron, 1996b: 2).

Herron then went on to say that reconciliation was not about assigning guilt (1996b: 2).[12] He argued instead for "seeking to remedy the deleterious impact of past injustices by working together to overcome Indigenous disadvantage" (Herron, 1996b: 2). According to Herron, a balance needed to be struck between acknowledging past injustices and ensuring equality of opportunity in the future (1996b: 3).

Comparing his Government to the previous Labor Government, Herron said he had decided to break with past practices which had achieved little and had not sufficiently benefited the vast majority of Indigenous Australians (1996b: 1). He described past policies as characterised by "unattainable promises and exaggerated rhetoric" (Herron, 1996b: 2). Native title was listed as one such

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[11] These actions presumably do not include the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families, as Herron elsewhere commented that "a lot of Aboriginal people have benefited by that (policy of removal)" (in Ceresa, 1996: 1).

[12] These comments align with Howard's rejection of "notions of intergenerational guilt", and view that "the balance sheet of Australian history is a very generous and benign one" (in House of Representatives, 1996: 6158).

unrealistic promise the Keating Government failed to fulfill (Herron, 1996b: 12).
Herron contrasted the Keating Government's approach with his own
Government's focus on "specific, measurable, … achievable outcomes" (1996b:
1).

Articulating his Government's position on native title, Herron talked about the
role that reaching a "mutually acceptable solution" would play in advancing
reconciliation (1996b: 3). He also talked about working together and getting the
balance right – something he felt he must have achieved because he had been
criticised by both industry and Indigenous groups (Herron, 1996b: 3). By this
point the Howard Government had released a document outlining changes it
sought to make to the *Native Title Act 1993*, titled *Towards a more workable
Native Title Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1996). Among other things, these
changes limited a native title claimant's right to negotiate on areas claimed,
including areas subject to pastoral lease. The Howard Government presented
these amendments as an alternative to actually legislating the extinguishment of
native title on pastoral leases.[13] A Bill containing these amendments was
introduced to the Lower House on June 27th and, at the time this lecture was
delivered, awaited passage through the Upper House.

Herron talked about delivering Indigenous people greater control of their lives
and their communities (1996b: 2). He said this while voicing doubts over
whether "a small number of spokesmen and women" could represent the
diversity within Indigenous Australia (Herron, 1996b: 1), presumably referring to
ATSIC. Also in relation to ATSIC, Herron brought up his Government's decision
to call in a Special Auditor to investigate the grant processes used by ATSIC to
fund Aboriginal organisations (Herron, 1996b: 5; 1998d).

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[13] The status of native title on pastoral leases had yet to be brought before the High court (ATSI
Social Justice Commissioner, 1999: 3-4; Sheehan and Wensing, 1998: 21,11; ATSIC, 1997a).

This Special Audit was in addition to the fact that an Office of Evaluation and Audit (OEA) already sat within ATSIC (no other independent statutory body had this requirement) (Ivanitz, 1999: 4). Later in 1996, the Federal Court found the Special Audit unconstitutional, and declared that Minister Herron had acted beyond his powers in calling the Audit (Ivanitz, 1999: 4; Herron, 1998d: 2).

In his lecture, Herron defended the Special Audit as providing accountability and performance measurement, concepts that he said "are central to our approach to delivering social justice for Indigenous people" (1996b: 5). Later in the speech, Herron urged Indigenous people to use mainstream programs – services outside the domain of ATSIC.

As one of the four areas of Indigenous disadvantage, Herron stressed the importance of employment to Indigenous well-being. Herron described a "vicious cycle of unemployment, low self-esteem and hopelessness" (1996b: 6). Referring to statistics covering life expectancy, infant mortality, access to utilities and infrastructure, education, and employment, Herron said "Indigenous people do not seem to have done much catching up" (1996b: 7). He linked these statistics to social and economic dislocation and said they represented "suffering", "downright despair", and a "massive waste of human talent" (Herron, 1996b: 7). Herron said the Government was looking for "demonstrable improvements in the social and economic conditions of Indigenous communities in a way that is sensitive to cultural needs and which maximises the opportunities for individuals to attain financial independence" (1996b: 8).

Herron reported that Indigenous community leaders were interested in self-empowerment and self-sufficiency and not dependency (1996b: 10). In line with this, Herron said the aim of the Government was to "promote and encourage Indigenous progress away from handouts and welfare, towards genuine self-empowerment" (1996b: 11). Herron endorsed self-empowerment

as engendering responsibility and independence, saying it "varies from self-determination in that it is a means to an end – ultimately social and economic equality – rather than merely an end in itself" (1996b: 12). Herron talked about the need for Indigenous people to be involved and for it to be a "cooperative approach" as "Governments can only do so much" (1996b: 12,7). Herron concluded the lecture by saying the Government believed in economic independence and self-esteem (1996b: 12). He followed this statement with "[w]e honour pride in Aboriginality and recognise and respect the distinct cultures and traditions of Australia's Indigenous people" (Herron, 1996b: 13).

Comments

In this lecture, the themes of *the goal of sameness* and *a practical approach* appeared again, and for the first time we saw the themes of *welfare dependency (and its opposite – economic independence)*, and *working together (Indigenous responsibility)*.

The goal of sameness

Equality of opportunity was listed as a goal repeatedly throughout the lecture (Herron, 1996b: 1,3,8). Giving Indigenous people the same opportunities was said to prevent difference standing in the way of everybody "sharing equally in a common future" (Herron, 1996b: 3). The use of these concepts and phrases is indicative of an interest in the inclusion of Aboriginal people within broader mainstream Australia, as well as a conflation of equality and *sameness*. The flipside of this interpretation is that difference is not desirable as it could stand in the way of everybody being treated equally. Herron's comments about ATSIC and the benefits of Aboriginal people accessing non-Indigenous, mainstream services (1996b: 1,2,5,9,11) add to the sense that *sameness* was the goal. His comments relating to native title about achieving a balance between the interests of different parties suggest a wish to conceive of all 'stakeholders' as equivalent, none of them requiring special attention (Herron, 1996b: 3)

More than once in the lecture, Herron talked about the need to recognise and respect Indigenous people's unique cultures (1996b: 2,8,12). However, there are indications that this valuing of cultural difference was only to the degree that culture did not interfere with absorption into mainstream life, or equivalent treatment. Considering his deliberate undermining of Indigenous specific programs, Indigenous representation, and land rights, it is not clear what form he felt this respect might take.

A practical approach

Herron constructed a practical approach, that aimed for measurable outcomes, as the appropriate response to Indigenous issues (1996b: 2,8,9). Herron's focus on Indigenous disadvantage – in the four areas of health, housing, education, and employment – was framed as a focus on the practical; on the *real* problems (1996b: 8,9,13). This focus was distinguished from the previous Labor Government's "unattainable promises and exaggerated rhetoric", including commitments it made around Aboriginal land rights (Herron, 1996b: 2,12). The Howard Government's own handling of native title reflected its stance on land rights as a non-priority, and in fact in danger of jeapordising reconciliation.

Herron's view on the past was relevant. Herron reluctantly admitted that some mistakes had been made but considered that these in large part had been well-intentioned (1996b: 2). This limited acknowledgement of past injustices tied in with the version of reconciliation promoted by Herron, that involved no reconciliation document, no apology, no guilt, and instead involved personal attitudinal change and a focus on the future (1996b: 3,2). This amounted to a focus on disadvantage and equality of opportunity, i.e. basic citizenship rights. Herron's position on the past corresponded with his Government's practical approach and its interrelated *goal of sameness*.

Welfare dependency versus economic independence

Employment was the fourth area of disadvantage listed in the lecture and it formed a significant component of Herron's vision for Indigenous people. Herron linked employment to notions of self-sufficiency, self-empowerment, self-esteem, responsibility, and independence (1996b: 6,10,11,12). He also correlated unemployment with their opposites: hopelessness, suffering, despair, and dependence (Herron, 1996b: 6,7). Welfare, disparagingly described as handouts, was presented as the antithesis of, and an obstacle to, self-empowerment (Herron, 1996b: 11).

Working together

Herron spoke a great deal about Indigenous people working together with non-Indigenous people and with the Government (1996b: 2,3,4). He talked of the need for a cooperative approach and said the Government could only do so much (Herron, 1996b: 12,7). Herron's commitment to "promote and encourage Indigenous progress away from handouts and welfare" suggested that responsibility for Aboriginal employment lay largely with Aboriginal people (1996b: 11). The phrase "Indigenous people do not seem to have done much catching up" (Herron, 1996b: 7) positioned Indigenous people as responsible. There was an emphasis on what Indigenous people needed to do to improve the situation, to become self-empowered and responsible (Herron, 1996b: 12), and to reduce their level of disadvantage. Indigenous people were presented as part, at least, of the cause of the problem.

Addressing priorities in Indigenous Affairs
Statement by John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, May 12th 1998

In May 1998, John Herron released a budget statement titled *Addressing priorities in Indigenous Affairs*. This was the first year the Howard Government released such a statement with the budget.

In the 'Overview' section, Herron stated that there was an "unacceptable level of disadvantage suffered by Australia's indigenous people" (1998b: 1). He reiterated that the four key areas of disadvantage were: health, housing, education, and employment (Herron, 1998b: 1,3,6). Given that 15 per cent of the country was owned by Indigenous people, Herron wondered at the levels of Indigenous socio-economic inequality, perhaps making a connection between the two (1998b: 1).

Herron talked about waste and inefficiency when it came to what he described as large sums of money allocated to Indigenous affairs (1998b: 1). He tied this to a lack of accountability and a lack of "rigorous targeting to the areas of greatest need" (Herron, 1998b: 1). Presumably this was a critique of both the previous Labor Government(s) and ATSIC. Herron later talked specifically about the new accountability requirements placed on ATSIC by the Government, including the appointment of a Special Auditor in 1996 (1998b: 5).

Herron made the disclaimer that Indigenous disadvantage would not be fixed overnight (1998b: 1-2). He also pointed out that the spending detailed in the document did not cover mainstream spending, which he said many Aboriginal people would also benefit from (Herron, 1998b: 4). He added that Indigenous

programs were in large part a substitute for mainstream programs (Herron, 1998b: 4).

Starting with the four priority areas, Herron discussed Indigenous specific funding. In the area of employment, Herron said the two main causes of the Indigenous unemployment were "lack of job skills and local employment opportunities" (1998b: 11).

Herron talked about the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme as "particularly important to remote areas with limited job options" (1998b: 11). He said "[p]articipation in CDEP employment aims to provide indigenous people with work skills that are recognised in the mainstream employment market", while he also recognised that

> [i]t has many other benefits at both the community and individual level, including improved social cohesion, improvements in self-esteem, training opportunities, diversion from substance misuse and criminal activity and the ability to increase income levels where CDEPs successfully generate profits (Herron, 1998b: 11).

Herron went on to say "[t]he government maintains a strong commitment to CDEP employment" (1998b: 11). He then mentioned the *Independent review of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme* report (the Spicer Review) headed by Ian Spicer and handed down December 1997. Herron repeated that it recommended "removing non-workers from the scheme and developing strategies to enhance the scheme's ability to achieve unsubsidised employment outcomes" (1998b: 11).

The Howard Government had engaged Ian Spicer (former Chief Executive of the Australian Chamber of Commerce) to undertake the review into the CDEP scheme in mid-1997, after prompting from ATSIC for increased places and funding (ATSIC, 1998e: Chap 4; ATSIC News, 2001b). The Government requested that the review examine the CDEP scheme's "effectiveness in equipping participants to transfer to other employment", and made increased

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funding[14] conditional upon its findings (Spicer, 1997: 15,16,99; ATSIC News, 2001b; ATSIC, 1999a). Although Spicer encouraged a greater emphasis on moving participants into non-CDEP employment, on the whole he commended the scheme, particularly for its crucial role in supporting communities (Spicer, 1997). Spicer found the CDEP scheme to be under-funded (echoing ATSIC's constant complaint [ABC, 1996: 1; ATSIC, 1998b; 1998e: Chap 2]), and advised that the program be expanded (Spicer, 1997: 7,9,100). Against the advice of Spicer and ATSIC, CDEP places were not expanded beyond natural growth in the 1998-1999 budget.

After quoting the Spicer Review, Herron outlined changes made to the CDEP scheme in this budget (1998b: 11-12). From March 1999 onwards, low income CDEP workers were to receive an additional fortnightly payment of $20, to align them with Work for the Dole participants who already received this payment. CDEP participants would also be eligible for the Beneficiary Tax Rebate from July 1998.

In the section detailing all Indigenous programs by portfolio (Appendix 2) (Herron, 1998b: 37), it was added that CDEP participants would also have access to Rent Assistance, Pharmaceutical Allowance, Pensioner Concession Cards, and bereavement payments – basically benefits that came with receiving social security payments. Here it was said the goal was to align CDEP participants more broadly with people on social security payments.

Herron did not mention it, but the extension of these social security entitlements to CDEP workers came about largely as a result of concern expressed both in the Spicer Review, and in a report provided by the Race Discrimination

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[14] Increased funding refers to the gradual expansion of CDEP place numbers (above 'natural growth' of 550 places annually) that had occurred prior to the Howard Government taking office.

Commissioner of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).[15] The concern was that CDEP participants were being treated inconsistently by the Commonwealth and were unjustifiably missing out (ATSIC, 1998b; Sanders, 2001: 48-49). The Race Discrimination Commissioner actually recommended that CDEP participants be reclassified as ordinary *wage earners*, and thus be potentially eligible for the New Start Allowance (Race Discrimination Commissioner, 1997: 43-44). Instead, the decision was made to give CDEP participants Social Security numbers, making them clients of the Social Security system (with CDEP wages continuing to come through CDEP organisations via ATSIC) (Sanders, 2001: 48-49). As a consequence, the Department of Social Security[16] took on an increased role within the CDEP scheme (ATSIC News, 2001b) and CDEP payments were made less like a form of income and more like a social security payment.

Returning to the discussion of spending on employment, Herron referred to the introduction of market arrangements into the delivery of mainstream employment services, through the replacement of the Commonwealth Employment Service and the Department of Social Security with their "corporatised successor" (Vanstone, 1996) – Centrelink. Herron argued that Indigenous people would benefit because the new arrangements would offer them intensive employment assistance places (through contracted employment placement enterprises) (1998b: 12).

The next area of Indigenous spending discussed was "Promoting economic independence". In summary, Herron stated

> [w]e are very aware that dealing with disadvantage in isolation may perpetuate a welfare-dependent lifestyle. Indigenous communities want economic independence – and there are

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[15] A longterm campaign by ATSIC also helped draw attention to the issue (ATSIC, 1998b).

[16] The Department of Social Security was then replaced by the Department of Families and Community Services in 1998, which became the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) in 2006.

special programmes to promote opportunities for indigenous people to achieve economic

independence through enterprise development (1998b: 3).

Herron pledged his Government's commitment "to enhancing opportunities for

indigenous Australians to pursue initiatives that will assist them to achieve

economic independence" (1998b: 12). Herron cited the CDEP scheme as

having the potential to foster business and thus create employment (1998b: 13).

Herron reported that ATSIC's Commercial Development Corporation (CDC)

would be allocated $10 million in the 1998-1999 budget – the first such

allocation since 1993-1994 (1998b: 13). Herron also referred to a proposal to

replace the CDC with Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), outlined in a

discussion paper he released a few months earlier, *Removing the welfare

shackles* (Herron, 1998a; 1998b: 13). The timing of the new funding clearly

related to the Howard Government's intention to create IBA. Unlike the CDC,

the IBA would be a statutory organisation that would sit outside of ATSIC and

advise the Minister directly (ATSIC, 1998c: 22). As well as replacing the CDC, it

was to take on all of ATSIC's other commercially oriented programs, except for

the Indigenous Land Corporation (Herron, 1998a: 4,15-19). The reason given

for creating IBA was that it would separate social and economic goals, which

were said to be in conflict. IBA would concentrate on economic goals, free from

"social considerations" which "can lead to poor business decisions and can

jeopardise the commercial viability of programmes" (Herron, 1998a: 6,15).

Only commercially viable projects would be supported by IBA (Herron, 1998a:

15). The choice of title for the discussion paper – *Removing the welfare shackles*

– is also worth noting.

In the previous budget (1997-1998), it had been announced that one of ATSIC's

business programs – the Community Economic Initiatives Scheme (CEIS) –

would be replaced that July by the Indigenous Business Incentive Program (IBIP)

(which subsequently came under the IBA) (Herron, 1997a; 1997b: 3). The IBIP,

like the CEIS before it, was tasked with providing financial and other support for

Indigenous small businesses (particularly in rural and remote areas) – to get established and stay in business (Herron, 1997b: 3). The new IBIP, however, was to "have a sharper economic focus than the former CEIS" with different eligibility requirements and greater emphasis "placed on the capacity of proposed business ventures to create new and sustainable jobs" (ATSIC, 1997b: Chap 2). The CEIS had created 163 positions within the 1995-1996 financial year (Spicer, 1997: 66), but it was more patient with commercial viability and valued social development and sustainable employment generation as well (ATSIC, 1997b: Chap 4; Spicer, 1997: 76). Again, the replacement of the CEIS with the IBIP, like the replacement of the CDC with IBA, was justified in terms of the need to separate the economic from the social – and prioritise the economic over the social.

One of the other areas of spending Herron discussed was reconciliation. He said the Government "is committed to continuing the reconciliation process as an integral part of our commitment to a fairer Australian society" (Herron, 1998b: 21). He listed the necessary elements of reconciliation as: "working together to ensure that all Australians share equally in a common future; a realistic acknowledgement of our inter-related histories", and "a shared commitment to overcoming indigenous disadvantage, especially through practical programmes to improve health, housing, education and employment opportunities, while respecting and valuing indigenous people and their heritage" (Herron, 1998b: 21). "[R]ealistic acknowledgement of our inter-related histories" was recast elsewhere in the document as "we also believe it is important to acknowledge past injustices, as we have done" (Herron, 1998b: 4).

Herron concluded by talking about Indigenous funding for 'the future'. Here he summarised the Government's policy approach as focusing on socio-economic disadvantage and promoting economic self-sufficiency (Herron, 1998b: 22). He said this approach facilitated "a cooperative partnership in which government

and indigenous people can work together to end inequality in health, in housing and in education and employment, and to end welfare dependence" (Herron, 1998b: 22). He went on to say

> the government fully supports their aim of achieving economic independence. At the same time it recognises the deficiencies that continue to exist in remote communities, and acknowledges that governments at all levels have a responsibility to assist in overcoming these deficiencies (Herron, 1998b: 22).

Herron asserted that the Government's allocation of funding and improvement of service delivery (seeing money is spent on what it was intended for) demonstrated the Government's commitment to overcoming disadvantage (1998b: 22). The future that Herron envisaged for Indigenous people was one where they "enjoy full equality of opportunity" and "can participate fully in Australia's economic, social and cultural life" (1998b: 22).

Comments

The following themes took shape in this budget statement: *a practical approach*; *the goal of sameness*; *working together*; *the binary of welfare dependency and economic independence*; and *the binary of the economic and the social*.

A practical approach

According to this budget statement, what was most in need of attention in Indigenous affairs was socioeconomic disadvantage (Herron, 1998b: 1,22). Indigenous disadvantage was the target of the Howard Government's practical approach. This was broken down into the four areas of health, housing, education and employment (Herron, 1998b: 1,3,6). Framing his Government's practical approach as distinctive, Herron presented both the previous Labor Government, and ATSIC, as having failed to address the areas of greatest need (1998b: 1,5). Herron talked of land rights as almost standing in the way of addressing Indigenous disadvantage with his comment about Indigenous inequality persisting despite Aboriginal communal land ownership (1998b: 1).

Even when Herron discussed reconciliation, he talked about it in terms of overcoming disadvantage (1998b: 21). Herron stated that reconciliation involved "a realistic acknowledgement of our inter-related histories" and that "we … believe it is important to acknowledge past injustices, as we have done" (1998b: 21,4). Whilst these comments suggest a deeper understanding of the situation faced by Indigenous people, the careful, limited and reluctant wording indicate otherwise. The phrase "as we have done" indicates that this was not a promise by the Government to go any further than they already had in acknowledging past injustices. This understanding of the past as a resolved non-issue was necessary in order for a practical approach to be appropriate.

The goal of sameness

The theme of *sameness* was also at play in Herron's unwillingness to promote ATSIC, and his stress on the equivalence of the services it provided. It seemed that Herron was uncomfortable with ATSIC's Indigenous specificity because it meant everybody did not have the same treatment. The removal of ATSIC's commercial programs with the creation of IBA (as well as the replacement of the CEIS with the IBIP), was also indicative of the Howard Government's lack of interest in maintaining an Indigenous representative body or an Indigenous specific agency, and was a step towards the mainstreaming of Indigenous affairs.

The theme of *the goal of sameness* also appeared in discussion of the goal of reconciliation and the goals for 'the future'. Herron talked of sharing "equally in a common future", ending inequality, "full equality of opportunity", and a future where Aboriginal people "can participate fully in Australia's economic, social and cultural life" (1998b: 21,22). The goal was articulated as including Aboriginal people within broader Australia, removing difference perhaps. For the Howard Government, equality was on par with *sameness* (being the same

and being treated the same). The add-on "while respecting and valuing indigenous people and their heritage" (Herron, 1998b: 21), was not supported by the rest of the document.

Working together

Reconciliation was talked about as something that required everybody (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to work together (Herron, 1998b: 21). In relation to the Government's approach for 'the future', Herron talked about having a "cooperative partnership" so that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people could work together (1998b: 22). In stressing the importance of working together, Herron emphasised the role of Indigenous people, and in doing so understated the role of government. The role of the Indigenous sector in maintaining Indigenous disadvantage was also emphasised, by Herron's comment that implied ATSIC failed to adequately target funding to the areas of greatest need.

Welfare dependency versus economic independence, and working together

Addressing welfare dependency and a "welfare-dependent lifestyle" were presented as key Government objectives (Herron, 1998b: 3,22). Economic independence was quickly and repeatedly linked to its negative opposite, welfare dependence (Herron, 1998b: 3,22) – in fact that was the only definition for it offered. The task was to provide opportunities (Herron, 1998b: 3,12,23), to allow Indigenous people to strive towards economic independence. Ultimately, the onus was on Indigenous people to achieve economic independence. The theme of *working together* was present.

Herron connected Aboriginal unemployment with a lack of skills on the part of the unemployed, and a lack of local employment opportunities (1998b: 11). The first cause of unemployment located the deficit or the problem on some level with the individual Aboriginal person who was unemployed, but did not

explore who was responsible for the deficit. This cause was on the supply side of employment. The second cause given was to an extent located on the demand side, but the focus on *local* employment opportunities implied people could gain more employment opportunities if they were prepared to leave their local area. It referred specifically to rural and remote areas, and suggested location was the problem. This construction of the problem was echoed in discussion of the CDEP scheme. Herron described the CDEP scheme as particularly important in remote areas where there were limited job opportunities (1998b: 11). This could be read to imply that unemployment in urban areas was not a result of lack of opportunities – it was a supply side rather than a demand side problem.

Where Herron discussed 'the future', he noted there were deficiencies in remote communities that made promoting Indigenous economic independence difficult (1998b: 22). This was a vague statement, but the impression given was that remoteness was a problem.

The changes to the CDEP scheme meant CDEP participants would be treated more like welfare recipients in terms of the benefits they received and in terms of status (Herron, 1998b: 11-12,37). This made it easier to diminish CDEP participants' status as wage earners and instead group them with welfare recipients. This placement of the CDEP scheme on the welfare side of the welfare/employment divide was significant as welfare usage was increasingly problematised.

The economic versus the social

The discussion of the CDEP scheme leaned towards seeing it in terms of preparing unemployed Indigenous people for unsubsidised employment. When Herron described the purpose of the CDEP scheme, he first talked about how it could provide skills for employment (1998b: 11). He then listed community and

individual benefits of the scheme (Herron, 1998b: 11). It is significant that he added this list of benefits, even though it was mentioned second. Herron also emphasised, and in doing so endorsed, the Spicer Review's recommendation (consistent with the review's objective) that the CDEP scheme be geared more towards getting jobs (1998b: 11). Social objectives were treated as distinct and less important as the CDEP scheme was judged on its performance against the specific economic criterion of leading to mainstream employment.

This theme of *the binary of the economic and the social* was also predominant in the discussion paper – *Removing the welfare shackles* (Herron, 1998a) – which Herron referred to in this budget paper. *Removing the welfare shackles* argued that IBA should be created without social goals as these ought to be separate from economic goals (although the paper had great trouble separating the two even conceptually). The same logic also lay behind replacing the CEIS with the IBIP (ATSIC, 1997b: Chap 2,Chap 4). It is significant that in the area of economic and community development, social considerations and objectives were not treated as priorities.

Indigenous assistance program question

House of Representatives Question without Notice, Parliamentary Debates, June 29th 1998

In June 1998, during Parliament, Independent Member of Parliament Pauline Hanson asked the Prime Minister to justify the provision of low interest rate loans to Indigenous people (on the basis of race) as part of the Indigenous Business Incentive Program (IBIP) (in House of Representatives, 1998). She queried why other groups such as the rural sector and small-business sector were not entitled to such loans.

In response, Howard explained and justified his Government's approach to Indigenous affairs generally. He said the goal was "to encourage indigenous Australians to become economically self-sufficient" (Howard in House of Representatives, 1998: 2). He presented this as a solution to Indigenous welfare dependency. Howard said

> [t]he criticism that is frequently made of indigenous Australians by other Australians in rural areas is that they are forever depending upon welfare handouts and that they get an undue proportion of welfare handouts. I would have thought, as a matter of elementary logic, that one of the ways to change that is to bring in policies that give them personal economic empowerment. That, in fact, has been the policy that Senator John Herron, my Aboriginal affairs minister, has followed from the day that I appointed him to that ministry....I am very proud of the attempts that we have made to give people economic empowerment (in House of Representatives, 1998: 2).

Comments

This succinct summary of the Howard's Government's approach drew on key themes: *the binary of welfare dependency and economic independence*; *the goal of sameness*; and *working together*.

Welfare dependency versus economic Independence, and the goal of sameness

Indigenous welfare dependency was treated as a central concern guiding the direction of Indigenous policy (House of Representatives, 1998: 2). "Personal economic empowerment" (economic independence) was offered by Howard as the answer to Indigenous people "forever depending upon welfare handouts" and "receiving an undue proportion of handouts" (welfare dependency) (in House of Representatives, 1998: 2). Howard spoke to what he imagined were the concerns of his rural constituents and through these concerns (which he made no effort to counter), constructed Indigenous welfare recipients as rorting the system. In this way, Howard portrayed Indigenous welfare dependency as upsetting the balance of fair and equal treatment. The theme of *the goal of sameness* appeared here.

Working together

The wording used by Howard implied that Indigenous people themselves were responsible for being welfare dependent; that *Indigenous people* were "forever depending" and taking more than their due (in House of Representatives, 1998: 2). This implication recurs when Howard says his Government's approach is to *encourage* Indigenous people to become self-sufficient (in House of Representatives, 1998: 2).

The *working together* theme was continued in the phrase "personal economic empowerment" (Howard in House of Representatives, 1998: 2). This phrasing individualised the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, deflecting attention from factors that bear on all members of the group.

Beyond welfare

Party document by John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Affairs, September 23rd 1998

In the lead up to the Federal election on the 3rd of October, 1998, John Herron
released the Liberal Party statement, *Beyond Welfare*. Herron was quoted as
saying that given a second term, the Coalition would maintain its focus on
Indigenous disadvantage and assisting Indigenous Australians to "move beyond
welfare dependency" (1998e: 1). The four areas of health, housing, education
and employment would continue to be targeted (Herron, 1998e: 1). Linking
these areas in, Herron said "[i]mprovements in these key areas are essential if
Indigenous Australians are to escape the permanent welfare dependency Labor
consigned them to" (1998e: 1). He reiterated the connection with welfare
dependency:

> [u]nless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are given the same health, housing,
> education and employment opportunities as others in the community, they and their
> children face a bleak future, continuing to rely on welfare handouts (Herron, 1998e: 1).

Herron described the Labor Party's approach as a failure and said this was
"highlighted by the fact that despite the expenditure of $16 billion, sixty percent
of Indigenous Australians remain dependent on welfare" (1998e: 1).

Reconciliation was briefly discussed. Herron was quoted as saying that as part
of the process, the Coalition would work with the Council for Aboriginal
Reconciliation (CAR) to come up with a "written understanding" that
"recognises the prior occupation of this country by indigenous people and their
place in the Australian community" (1998e: 1). This was a new development;
Herron stated in his *Ninth annual Joe and Dame Enid Lyons memorial lecture*
(1996b: 3) that he did not regard signing a reconciliation document as a
necessary part of reconciliation.

The document went on to discuss the ATSIC/Army project which was presented as a way to address "the basic needs of indigenous people in a practical and effective way" (Herron, 1998e: 1).

On the topic of business development, the document stated "the promotion of indigenous business opportunities is an important part of the Coalition's commitment to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders escape welfare dependency" (Herron, 1998e: 2). The proposal to create Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) put forward in *Removing the welfare shackles* (Herron, 1998a) was raised, and the central argument restated: that social considerations needed to be removed from economic programs (Herron, 1998e: 2). The document also referred to the creation of the Indigenous Business Incentive Program (IBIP), but did not mention that IBIP had replaced ATSIC's Community Economic Initiatives Scheme (CEIS) (Herron, 1998e: 6).

In a section on better outcomes and needs based funding it was declared that the Commonwealth Grants Commission would be approached to develop measures of relative disadvantage to be used to guide Indigenous spending (Herron, 1998e: 3). The document also said program funding would, where possible, be opened up to tender to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

A month earlier the targeting of ATSIC had intensified. Undeterred by the ATSIC Board's vote of no confidence in him (ATSIC, 1998a),[17] Herron issued a General Direction ordering ATSIC to refuse funding to any organisation which did not open its books to the regulatory authorities (1998d).

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[17] The ATSIC board of Commissioners took this action in response to a number of matters including the proposed removal of ATSIC's economic programs with the creation of IBA, the reduction and quarantining of ATSIC's budget 1996 onwards, Herron's handling of the native title issue, and his response to the *Bringing them home* report (ATSIC, 1998a: 1; 1998d: 1). ATSIC Chairperson Gatjil Djerrkura explained that their request for Herron to step down "comes … from our fear of an agenda to undermine the status of Indigenous people and to dismantle ATSIC" (ATSIC, 1998a: 1).

In an attachment to *Beyond Welfare* outlining the Coalition's achievements, the first 'achievement' listed was the Government's calling in of a Special Auditor to investigate ATSIC in 1996 (Herron, 1998e: 3-4).

Another of the areas of achievement mentioned was education. The document related education to welfare dependency, stating "[i]mproved education is one of the keys to assisting people to move from welfare dependency into employment" (Herron, 1998e: 4).

The document went on to list the following as achievements: health funding; a summit on Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system; a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Bill (Cth) (to avoid a repeat of the Hindmarsh Bridge "debacle", which the Howard Government dealt with by creating the *Hindmarsh Island Bridge Act 1997* [Cth] to stop Ngarrindjeri women from gaining protection of Kumurangk under the previous *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Act 1984* [Cth]); agreements with the States and Territories regarding Indigenous housing needs; reform of Aboriginal Legal Services in New South Wales; a $63 million package to address family separation in response to the report *Bringing them home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*; and a separate budget allocation directly to the Torres Strait Islander Regional Authority (not through ATSIC).

The document also boasted successfully passing the *Native Title Amendment Act 1998* (Cth) in July 1998 (after having tabled it in September 1997 – a protracted process, finally accomplished through the cooperation of Independent Senator Brian Harradine). This Act went further than the Howard Government's first amendment bill. The Howard Government withdrew this earlier bill after the High Court, in December 1996, ruled in *The Wik peoples v*

The State of Queensland that statutory leases – including pastoral leases – did not necessarily extinguish native title.[18] Arguably travelling beyond the common law,[19] the *Native Title Amendment Act 1998* legislated for the extinguishment and partial extinguishment of native title rights, by exclusive possession acts (which included some pastoral leases) and non-exclusive possession acts (which included most pastoral leases), respectively, where inconsistent (Keating, 2011; Brennan et al, 1997: 13,61-62; Non-Government members of Parliamentary Joint Committee on Native Title and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Fund [henceforth Non-Government members of PJCNTATSILF], 2000: 220-223). It also validated otherwise invalid "intermediate acts" which failed to comply with the Future Act regime's native title protections (validating instances where governments behaved as if native title was extinguished by pastoral leases), diminished the right to negotiate, and generally expanded the rights of Non-Indigenous title-holders at the expense of the rights of native title claimants and holders (Non-Government members of PJCNTATSILF, 2000: 92,208-217; ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 1999: 5-6,20-22; United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 1999; Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2010). According to Herron, the amendments protected native title rights and ensured "a fair outcome for all interests" (1998e: 7).

Comments

The themes that showed up in this account of the Howard Government's approach to Aboriginal affairs are as familiar as they are revealing: *the binary of*

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[18] Co-existing native title rights were nonetheless found to be subordinate to those of current pastoral lease holders where inconsistency existed between them (ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 1999: 2; Australian Government Solicitor, 1997).

[19] *The Native Title Amendment Act 1998* also stepped outside Australia's obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 1999).

welfare dependency and economic independence; *working together*, *a practical approach*; *the goal of sameness*; and *the binary of the economic and the social*.

Welfare dependency versus economic independence

Welfare dependency was presented as the biggest problem in Indigenous affairs and assisting Indigenous people to move beyond it was presented as the Government's main aim. Indigenous disadvantage in health, housing, education and employment were also defined as problems. However, these problems were overshadowed by the problem of welfare dependency, which they were related back to (Herron, 1998e: 1). Labor's performance in government was judged by the number of Indigenous people on welfare (Herron, 1998e: 1).

When talking about promoting Indigenous business development, Herron explained that it was part of the Government's strategy to help Indigenous Australians escape welfare dependency (1998e: 2). Promoting Indigenous economic development was later listed as an achievement because it helped Indigenous people become self-sufficient and not welfare dependent (Herron, 1998e: 5). The value of education was also couched in terms of how it helped Indigenous people move away from welfare dependency (Herron, 1998e: 4).

Working together

As ever, there was overlap between the theme of welfare dependency and the theme of *working together*. This overlap was most obvious where the document talked of *assisting* Indigenous Australians to move beyond welfare dependency (Herron, 1998e: 1,2,4,5). The word 'assist' implied that the role of Government was simply to facilitate the process and that responsibility for being on welfare sat with the Indigenous welfare recipient. Herron's criticisms of ATSIC, particularly its spending (1998e: 3-5), also highlighted Indigenous responsibility, as the role of the Howard Government in creating the current state of affairs was underplayed and the role of the peak Indigenous body was emphasised.

Economic versus social

The party document restated the argument for creating Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), put forward in *Removing the welfare shackles*: the social could and should be separated from the economic, and social considerations should not be allowed to interfere with the running of commercial ventures (Herron, 1998e: 2). The economic was presented as divisible from, and a greater priority than, the social.

A practical approach

Within *Beyond Welfare*, the Howard Government promoted its approach as practical – as addressing Indigenous people's basic needs in a practical way, with funds allocated on a needs basis (Herron, 1998e: 3). This approach was contrasted to that of the Labor party. The previous Labor Government was criticised on their performance in the four areas of health, housing, education and employment, and was described as not committed to "outcomes" and not having made "real" improvements (Herron, 1998e: 7). The Howard Government's undermining of the native title process through its *Native Title Amendment Act 1998* fit with its dismissal of the Labor Government's 'politically correct' pursuit of land rights, and its exclusion of those rights from its practical approach.

The goal of sameness

Through focusing largely on its commitment to deliver the same basic citizenship entitlements to all Australians (Herron, 1998e: 1), the Howard Government reinforced its framing of Indigenous policy as purely a matter of providing equivalent (not Indigenous specific) services. The extent of the Government's preference for equivalent treatment was communicated in the comment that the *Native Title Amendment Act 1998*, which reduced Indigenous rights, ensured "a fair outcome for all" (Herron, 1998e: 7).

Section 2: The problem representation

CHAPTER 5: STEP 1 – THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT'S FOURTH TERM, 2004-2007

The second and third term, 1998-2004

This chapter jumps over the Howard Government's second and third terms in office (October 3rd 1998 to November 9th 2001, and November 10th 2001 to October 9th 2004), to its fourth term in office. The momentum of policy change in Indigenous affairs sped up in this fourth term, and by skipping the middle two terms, I try to emphasise the reliance of this fourth term policy activity on the initial problem formation work that took place in the first term. I am also able to give the first and fourth terms greater attention by concentrating on these outer terms. Nevertheless, significant relevant policy changes in the area of Indigenous affairs did occur in these middle terms and they need to be run through.

The Howard Government's textual output (effectively what it said and wrote) during the middle two terms worked together with its policy changes to crystallise and refine its definition of welfare dependency as one of the leading problems facing Indigenous Australia. Aboriginal welfare dependency (and its opposite, economic independence) continued to be a predominant theme, supported by the interrelated themes of *a practical approach, the goal of sameness, working together (Indigenous responsibility)*, and *the economic as prioritised over the social*.

Consistent with the first term, the Prime Minister and his various Ministers for Indigenous Affairs (John Herron, followed by Philip Ruddock, and then Amanda Vanstone, under various titles) talked of a handout and a welfare dependency mentality, a culture of dependency, blame, and victimhood, the "socially and

economically debilitating scourge of welfare dependency", and the importance of Indigenous Australians "changing behaviours" and focusing on self-improvement, individual resilience and self reliance (Herron, 1999c: 5; 2000a: 3; 2000b: 4; 2001; Howard, 2000c; Howard in ABC, 2003; Ruddock, 2002a: 6,5; 2002b: 2,3,10; Vanstone, 2004f).

Relatedly, "meaningless symbolic gestures" were sidelined in favour of "true, practical reconciliation", to achieve "real outcomes in health, housing, education and employment" (Vanstone, 2004d; Ruddock, 2002b: 2; 2001: 1; Herron, 1999b; Howard and Vanstone, 2004: 2). Ruddock questioned "why do we always come back to focusing on the words?" (2002a: 2). Minister for Health and Aging Tony Abbott urged that we not dwell on the past (2004).The goal was said to be for Indigenous Australians to have the "same opportunities" and the "same treatment" as other Australians, "for improved economic, social, and cultural participation in Australian society" – with improved access to mainstream programs and services part of that (Vanstone, 2004f; 2004b; 2004d; Shaw, 2004; Ruddock, 2002b: 1,2,4; Howard, 2004: 4,5; Abbott, 2004). *'Working together'* remained a popular euphemism as the Howard Government stressed that "governments and outsiders alone cannot affect the necessary changes" (Howard, 2000c: 8; Ruddock, Vanstone and Martin, 2002; Ruddock, 2002a: 8). Howard stated,

> they ... have responsibilities to themselves and their own communities to address abuses that are occurring in their own communities, to try and break the welfare dependency mentality that exists in their communities. The solution lies really in individual self-fulfilment. ... the solution is in their hands and ... there is nothing to be achieved by saying that it's somebody else's fault because of something that happened a long time ago (2003a).

These themes also played out in the policy changes of these two middle terms. As part of the 1999 budget, the Indigenous Employment Policy was announced, highlighting the Howard Government's focus on Indigenous employment in the private sector. The policy consisted of: the Wage Assistance program subsidising employers to employ Indigenous workers for at least 26 weeks; the CDEP Placement

Incentive financially rewarding CDEP organisations for placing participants in non-CDEP employment; the Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project providing financial support for corporations to develop Indigenous Employment Strategies; the Voluntary Service Foundation facilitating the placement of volunteers in communities seeking assistance (which became the Indigenous Community Volunteers Programme); the Indigenous Small Business Fund providing funds to support Indigenous business development and self-employment, jointly administered with ATSIC; the National Indigenous Cadetship Project funding companies to take on Indigenous university students; the Structured Training and Employment Projects (STEP) program providing funding for the delivery of structured and accredited training; and greater coverage of Job Network (the mainstream, contracted-out employment service), as well as pressure on Job Network organisations to develop Indigenous Employment specialists and Indigenous Services Strategies (Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, 1999; Herron, 1999a; Reith, 1999; Shergold, 2001; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs [HORSCATSIA], 2001). The Indigenous Employment Policy continued into the fourth term with the addition in 2003 of the Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme which provided loans and professional support for Indigenous businesses (Department of Immigration and Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs [DIMIA], 2003b; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations [DEWR], 2005c: 73-82).

A number of aspects of the Australians Working Together welfare reform package[20] (announced in the 2001-2002 Budget) were presented as assisting Indigenous employment, including the creation of new remote servicing Centrelink sites, and the provision of Centrelink Personal Advisors (Commonwealth Government, 2002a; DIMIA, 2001b). One measure in particular was brought under the umbrella of the

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[20] This policy package followed from the Government commissioned report *Participation support for a more equitable society* (the McClure report), released July 2000 by a reference group chaired by Patrick McClure (McClure, 2000).

Indigenous Employment Policy and that was the contracting of CDEP organisations to be Indigenous Employment Centres (DIMIA, 2001a; 2001c; Abbott, 2003). The first Indigenous Employment Centres became operational in April 2002.

In 2000, CDEP places were expanded by 1500 places. This was the first year that places were increased beyond natural growth since the Howard Government took office. These places went only to rural and remote areas, with no increase in oncost funding (ATSIC, 2000: 40; Herron, 2000b: 4). The 2001 report *We can do it!: The needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (HORSCATSIA), recommended that CDEP places be expanded within urban settings also (2001: 114). The Howard Government rejected this recommendation (Commonwealth Government, 2002b: 38). It was not until the 2003-2004 budget that extra places were again allocated, but again only to remote located CDEP organisations, and again additional oncosts were drawn from existing ATSIC funding (Hill, 2003). These additional 1000 places were dedicated to preventing and responding to family violence and substance abuse – as 'Working for Families' places (DIMIA, 2003a; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services [ATSIS], 2004: 135,147). The CDEP scheme generally was referred to as successful and important, offering "meaningful" work (Ruddock, 2000: 4; 2001: 6,7; 2002b: 11). It was also said to be benefiting from a greater focus on mainstream employment outcomes (Ruddock, 2001; DIMIA, 2003c).

Family Income Management Trials were funded in 2001 ($1.9 million) and 2003 ($1.5 million), in Noel Pearson's country, Cape York, Far North Queensland (Ruddock, 2002b: 19,32; Howard, 2003b; DIMIA, 2003d). The voluntary program involved incentives and obligations, and set out to promote Indigenous self-improvement in the area of financial management.

The middle terms also saw the Howard Government move a (limited) Motion of reconciliation through Parliament, in August 1999 (House of Representatives, 1999). Conspicuously absent from the Motion was an apology regarding the past forcible removal of children – a key recommendation of the *Bringing them home* report, ignored along with other crucial components of reparation (HREOC, 1997). The Howard Government then chose not to support or legally enshrine the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's (CAR) reconciliation documents: *Australian declaration towards reconciliation* (2000a) and *Roadmap to reconciliation* (2000b). Due to a "divergence of views" (around self-determination, an apology, a treaty, and constitutional and legislative change), the Howard Government released a revised Declaration (Howard, 2000a), and rejected (Commonwealth Government, 2002c) most of the recommendations made by CAR in its final report at the conclusion of its legislative term, *Reconciliation – Australia's challenge* (CAR, 2000c). The Howard Government explained that it saw the "Commonwealth's role primarily as a practical one" (Commonwealth Government, 2002c: 15). It did commit to fund (inadequately) the Council's (non-statutory and thus less powerful) replacement – Reconciliation Australia (Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee, 2003: 17-22; Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, 2010: 19,34). It also established Reconciliation Place (a public space for reflection on reconciliation) in the Parliamentary Triangle in Canberra (Commonwealth Government, 2002c: 15).

One outcome of CAR's call to action was the decision by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to develop eight 'Whole of Government' trial sites. The aim was to attempt a more "joined up" model of service delivery, integrating different agencies and different levels of government (Indigenous Communities Coordination Taskforce, 2003a; DEWR, 2003: 105). The trials also pioneered the implementation of Shared Responsibility Agreements, between Indigenous communities, State Governments and the Commonwealth. The COAG trials began in 2002, and by 2004, the Howard Government had begun to make Shared Responsibility Agreements the way it did business with Indigenous communities nationwide

(Morgan Disney and Associates, 2007: 8,19; Vanstone, 2004d; 2004e). Under Shared Responsibility Agreements, agreed upon local initiatives would be funded in exchange for Indigenous communities committing to certain behavioural changes (such as increased school attendance) (Indigenous Communities Coordination Taskforce, 2003a; 2003b; Vanstone, 2004d; 2004e; 2004f).[21]

The most significant policy shift to occur during the Howard Government's middle two terms also occurred at the end of the third term – the disbanding of the peak Aboriginal representative body, ATSIC. The Howard Government had always been critical of the Commission and this played out in budget cuts, the movement of economic programs out of ATSIC, and a fixation on ATSIC's accountability (Herron, 1996a; 1996b: 5; 1997a; 1998a; 2000c; 1998d; 1998e). On November 12th 2002, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Phillip Ruddock called a review into ATSIC. The final report came out in November 2003, titled *In the hands of the regions: A new ATSIC*. It recommended that elected regional councillors have greater control (and Government agencies have greater accountability), and that ATSIC continue, in a reformed form (Hannaford, Huggins and Collins, 2003; O'Shane, 2003).

On April 17th 2003, before these recommendations were made, Philip Ruddock announced that ATSIC's administrative funding function would be transferred out of ATSIC, into a new executive service delivery agency – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS) (Ruddock, 2003; Pratt, 2003: 1). As of July 2003, ATSIS was given control of the ATSIC budget and how it would be spent (Pratt and Bennett, 2004; ATSIC News, 2003; DIMIA, 2003c). This occurred without ATSIC's agreement, despite Ruddock and Howard being aware that the legality of the move was dependent on ATSIC's voluntary agreement (leaked Cabinet documents have shown) (Graham, 2004b). On April 2nd 2004, ATSIC launched a legal challenge in

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[21] By 2007, just under 200 Shared Responsibility agreements had been signed (Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project: 2011).

the High Courts against the creation of ATSIS (ATSIC, 2004). Nervous about the strength of ATSIC's case (another leaked Cabinet document has revealed), on April 15th 2004, the Howard Government announced it would introduce legislation to abolish ATSIC in May (Graham, 2004a; 2004b; Howard and Vanstone, 2004).

On May 11th, in its 2004-2005 budget, the Howard Government defunded ATSIC and transferred ATSIC's programs out to its various departments, from July 1st (Vanstone, 2004a; 2004c; Graham, 2004b). On May 27th, The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004 (Cth) (to abolish ATSIC) was presented to the Lower House, and was passed on June 2nd. It was, however, held up in the Upper House by the Labor Party and Minor parties, and on June 16th it was sent to a Senate Inquiry (Norberry and Pratt, 2005: 2,7).

With the Bill still in the Senate, the budget cuts and transferral of programs out of ATSIC went ahead July 1st. This effectively put a stop to ATSIC's legal action, stripping ATSIC of the resources necessary for its court challenge (Graham, 2004b). The transferral process was referred to as 'mainstreaming', and also involved the creation of the Office of Indigenous Policy and Coordination (within the Department of Immigration and Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs [DIMIA]), 22 Indigenous Coordination Centres and a Ministerial Taskforce of ten Ministers (ABC, 2004a; Vanstone, 2004d). A National Indigenous Council, to provide (but one source of) advice to the Ministerial Taskforce, was appointed on November 6th 2004, just after the Howard Government won the next election (Vanstone, 2004h). The Senate Inquiry reported the next year, on March 8th 2005. The report supported the structure of a national *elected* Indigenous representative body, and described the new arrangements as furthering the Government's "assimiliationist agenda" (Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs, 2005: xvi). The recommendations of the report were ignored and the Senate passed the Bill on March 16th 2005 (Vanstone, 2005b).

Defending the abolition of ATSIC, Vanstone reiterated her Government's practical approach, arguing that better services were more important than who represents who (Howard and Vanstone, 2004: 8). She likened the ATSIC representative structure to the South African Apartheid system, standing by her Government's preference for sameness (Vanstone in ABC, 2004a). And despite ATSIC's abolition resulting in less Indigenous involvement in policy development and implementation, she presented it as enabling the Government to "work together with them ... allowing them to take responsibility for their future" (Vanstone, 2004g).

This summary of the middle terms has taken us into the early period of the Howard Government's final fourth term. It again reinforces the causal connection between rhetoric and reality, discourse and material effects, and the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency and the Howard Government's policy. The path to ATSIC's demise was paved by the Howard Government's account of Aboriginal affairs, with serious implications. Indigenous involvement in and assessment of Indigenous policy dropped away, and was not replaced by the advisory role of the National Indigenous Council created in its stead. Of particular interest to this thesis, the CDEP scheme was moved under the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and left vulnerable to the Howard Government's increasingly narrow focus on non-CDEP employment outcomes. ATSIC's view on the objectives of the CDEP scheme had always been broader and more integrated: "[CDEP] is enmeshed with other ATSIC outputs and has always had an impact beyond income and employment status of individuals" (2001: 157). Despite Vanstone's assurances that "CDEP ... will continue as before" (2004d), treacherous times lay ahead for the program. This chapter will now observe what happened next to the CDEP scheme after ATSIC, as part of its examination of the development of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency through its fourth term.

Building on success, CDEP discussion paper
Released by Kevin Andrews, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, February 21st 2005

In February 2005, DEWR released *Building on success, CDEP discussion paper*. This paper canvassed changes to the structure and direction of the CDEP scheme, and offered them to the public for feedback.

In the foreword, Kevin Andrews, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, stated his Government's belief that "Indigenous Australians should have the same opportunities to get as much out of life as other Australians" (DEWR, 2005a: iii). He also said his Government "wants more Indigenous Australians in work so they earn a fair wage, can achieve their potential and help provide a better life for their children" (DEWR, 2005a: iii).

Andrews referred to the transfer of the CDEP scheme from ATSIC to his department (DEWR), as part of "changes occurring in Indigenous affairs" (DEWR, 2005a: iii). He said this move could help the CDEP scheme help raise the living standards of Aboriginal people, "through more jobs and better community projects" (DEWR, 2005a: iii).

Acknowledging that the CDEP scheme had become an important part of Indigenous communities, Andrews went on to say that its success needed to be built on. He stated "Indigenous Australians have been looking for ways to improve the programme to move away from welfare" (DEWR, 2005a: iii).

The discussion paper proper summarised the proposed improvements: the CDEP scheme working closer with Indigenous communities; the CDEP scheme focusing more on non-CDEP jobs, "relevant" community activities, and business development; and the CDEP scheme tapping in to other services (DEWR, 2005a: 1).

The discussion paper described the CDEP scheme as already a blend of three elements: jobs, activities, and business development, with varying emphasis. It acknowledged cultural activities as beneficial and as playing an important role in maintaining culture, and community development activities as activities that some CDEP organisations "had a good track record in providing" (DEWR, 2005a: 8,2,3).

Explaining the need for improvements, the paper stated

> CDEP can do more to help Indigenous Australians become more self-reliant, and to find jobs away from government assistance. In many communities, CDEP has become a destination rather than a stepping stone towards jobs (DEWR, 2005a: 3).

It suggested that the CDEP scheme could actually block employment. It gave the example of a CDEP organisation holding on to their best participants to avoid losing their skills (DEWR, 2005a: 3). It also stressed the need for greater links with employment services, through Job Network and Indigenous Employment Centres, as they were better at achieving employment (DEWR, 2005a: 3,4).

The CDEP scheme was criticised for being too flexible, allowing the scheme's focus to become "blurred" and meaning projects did not always get finished (DEWR, 2005a: 3). It said that a greater focus on jobs would be beneficial, especially in areas where there was a strong labour market. In areas where the labour market was weaker, the paper conceded that more of a focus on activities could "better fit community needs" (DEWR, 2005a: 3). It talked of greater financial *independence* as being a benefit of business development. The paper also raised the need for Australia's growing younger Indigenous population to get "a fair share of jobs" (DEWR, 2005a: 4).

The paper then outlined the proposed changes. CDEP organisation's were encouraged to link in with Shared Responsibility Agreements, to bring them in line with community needs. Other ways the Government linked in with community needs were listed: the mainstreaming of Indigenous programs, the establishment of

Shared Responsibility Agreements themselves, the creation of Indigenous Coordination Centres, and also the Council of Australian Government (COAG) Principles for Delivering Services to Indigenous Australians (DEWR, 2005a: 5-6).

The main change involved distinguishing the elements of employment, business development, and community activities. In a funding agreement, CDEP organisations would be required to identify which stream their activities sat within, and report on activities and results relating to each stream (DEWR, 2005a: 7,9). The streams would be given performance indicators, which "might" include non-CDEP job placements and the "relevance" of community activities to the labour market (DEWR, 2005a: 9,10).

On the employment stream, the paper envisaged more connections between CDEP and government employment services. It also proposed that successful CDEP organisations in strong labour markets become Indigenous Employment Centres and that successful Indigenous Employment Centres expand the employment services they offered (DEWR, 2005a: 7). In the area of community activities, the paper talked about strengthening these activities and tying them in with community needs. A priority was "making sure that community work fits in with local job opportunities and builds skills through work experience" (DEWR, 2005a: 8). It talked about keeping cultural maintenance activities "which benefit communities" (DEWR, 2005a: 8). Enforcing the "no work, no pay" rule was also listed as part of this stream. Under the third stream – business development – the paper discussed identifying activities that a business could be based on, connecting to government business services, and setting up governance structures that would assist business development (DEWR, 2005a: 8).

The paper stated "[r]egardless of where they are, CDEP organisations would be encouraged to think about how to achieve the best long-term results for their participants" (DEWR, 2005a: 7). It reasoned that even in areas with weak labour

markets, there were positions filled by people outside the area which could be filled by locals. The paper added that "some CDEP participants, no matter where they live, may need to build their confidence and skills through community activities before they are ready for work outside CDEP" (DEWR, 2005a: 7).

Another change to funding would be the separation of funds for management fees and funds to support activities (DEWR, 2005a: 11,12). It was argued that this would make the funding process fairer and more transparent (and more like the Work for the Dole funding model) (DEWR, 2005a: 12,16). The paper advised that CDEP organisations could generate more funding through Indigenous Employment Centre fees, employment service fees, and CDEP Placement Incentive payments (payable when CDEP participants were found work) (DEWR, 2005a: 11). It stated that the process for claiming the Employment Placement Incentive would be made easier. It was also indicated that well performing CDEP organisations may have funding periods expanded (DEWR, 2005a: 10).

The paper then listed benefits of CDEP organisations linking up with Job Network, Wage Assistance, structured training, the Indigenous Business Development Programme, and the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (DEWR, 2005a: 13,14). The paper recapped the three proposed directions for CDEP organisations to go in: partner with Job Network; become Indigenous Employment Centres and partner with Job Network and maybe expand employment services; or actually deliver Job Network services. It added "CDEP organisations would also continue to provide community activities" (DEWR, 2005a: 17).

Consultation questions were suggested throughout the document for readers to give feedback on. They asked a number of yes/no answer questions and the questions largely supported the direction of the paper. The paper asked, for example, "[w]hat help might CDEP organisations need to move to this approach?" (DEWR, 2005a: 8).

Consultation sessions were held in around 40 locations during the last week of February and the cut off date for feedback given was March 24th 2005.

On April 22nd 2005, two months after the release of *Building on success, CDEP discussion paper*, a follow up document was released: *Building on success, CDEP – Future directions*. This document confirmed the changes proposed in the earlier document. It also responded to some of the feedback received from over 100 written submissions, and consultation sessions attended by around 2100 people. The paper began by saying that "[o]verall there was strong agreement that CDEP needs to change and most people agreed with the general direction of the changes proposed" (DEWR, 2005b: 2). However, in conclusion, the paper wrote that "a very wide range of views was expressed in feedback to the Discussion Paper" (DEWR, 2005b: 17). The paper's responses to feedback largely reaffirmed the Howard Government's concentration on non-CDEP employment. In response to feedback voicing concern over the readiness of CDEP workers to participate in non-CDEP jobs, the document stated "[w]here a CDEP organisation's participants do not have the skills to take up jobs in the local labour market the CDEP will be asked to make sure their community activities help participants to develop the skills needed" (DEWR, 2005b: 5). Feedback expressing concern about loss of cultural maintenance activities was responded to as follows: "[i]n areas where there is a strong labour market, the primary focus of the CDEP will be on the employment and business development streams" (DEWR, 2005b: 6).

The foreword, again provided by Minister Kevin Andrews, stated

> [m]any submissions recognised that insulation from the job market and business enterprise development creates poverty and welfare dependence. The Australian Government is seeking to challenge the welfare culture in favour of a work and entrepreneurial culture. A key to moving away from welfare is to build workforce participation with policies that support more Indigenous people getting real jobs and owning their own homes and to encourage commercial development along with effective service delivery of education, health and other essential services. At the same time, we recognise that some labour markets are limited and that programmes of community development will remain an integral component of the new approach (DEWR, 2005b: iii).

In a media release titled *CDEP consultation sessions announced* put out on February 11th 2005, Andrews praised the CDEP scheme for becoming "an important part of the social, political and economic fabric of many Indigenous communities over the past 28 years" (2005a: 1). He then said this success needed to be built on with a stronger employment focus. Andrews went on to say

> [g]enuine participation and real outcomes for Indigenous Australians, including in the labour market, is everybody's goal so that individuals, families and communities can fulfil their potential and help their children fulfil their aspirations (2005a: 1).

On March 1st 2005, during a speech entitled *Building on success*, Andrews articulated his Government's views:

> [t]he Australian Government believes a CDEP job and actively participating in your community is better than being on unemployment benefits. But having sustainable, unsubsidised employment or owning an unsubsidised enterprise is even better (2005b: 1).

Andrews went as far to say

> [t]o this extent, CDEPs are part of the answer towards tackling welfare dependency and help create opportunities to allow participants to share in the social and economic well being that come with employment and enterprise development (2005b: 2).

He then added "CDEPs have not always been good at achieving these community, employment and business goals – gaols for which the programme was originally intended" (Andrews, 2005b: 2, sic).

Comments

A number of key themes were present in these documents, both within the changes themselves and the way they were talked about: *the binary of welfare dependency and economic independence, working together (Indigenous responsibility), the binary of the economic and the social*, and *the goal of sameness*.

Welfare dependency versus economic independence

The cause of Aboriginal welfare dependency was talked about as "insulation from the job market", and significantly, the phrase "welfare culture" was used (DEWR,

2005b: iii). The implication appears to have been that shared behavioural habits played a role in Aboriginal welfare usage.

The theme of welfare dependency's defining opposite, economic independence, appeared in the discussion of employment. Employment was described as enabling Indigenous people to "get as much out of life as other Australians" (DEWR, 2005a: iii). Employment meant Indigenous Australians could "earn a fair wage, ... achieve their potential and help provide a better life for their children" (DEWR, 2005a: iii). The changes to the CDEP scheme, helping participants find jobs away from government assistance, were "to help Indigenous Australians become more self-reliant" (DEWR, 2005a: 3). This is the reverse, presumably, of being welfare dependent, or a CDEP participant. The greater non-CDEP employment focus was to "allow participants to share in the social and economic well being that come with employment and enterprise development" (Andrews, 2005b: 2). Indigenous employment was framed as allowing individuals, families and communities to "fulfil their potential and help their children fulfil their aspirations" (Andrews, 2005a: 1).

The CDEP scheme was likened to welfare while welfare use was constructed as a negative state, and employment was attributed a range of positive, non-economic benefits. CDEP was described as "government assistance", and a form of welfare that needed to be moved away from (DEWR, 2005a: iii; 2005b: iii). The CDEP scheme was problematised, as having "become a destination rather than a stepping stone towards jobs" (DEWR, 2005a: 3). For participants to be self-reliant, they needed to gain non-CDEP employment. The language of dependence/independence was also used when business development was described as offering financial independence (DEWR, 2005a: 3). CDEP work was not counted as "genuine participation", a "real outcome" or a "real job" (Andrews, 2005a: 1; DEWR, 2005b: iii). At one point a distinction was made between the CDEP scheme and welfare, in the comment by Andrews that "a CDEP job and actively participating in your community is better than being on unemployment benefits" (2005b: 1). However, following this came

the statement "[b]ut having sustainable, unsubsidised employment or owning an unsubsidised enterprise is even better" (Andrews, 2005b: 1). The CDEP scheme's source of funding was used as a defining feature.

The actual changes to the CDEP scheme also demonstrate a definite preference for non-CDEP employment over CDEP employment. CDEP organisations were to be required to distinguish and report in detail on the streams of employment and business development, as well as community activities. Community activities would be under increased pressure to relate directly to non-CDEP employment. Under the employment stream, CDEP organisations were being asked to link up with Job Network, become Indigenous Employment Centres, and possibly expand the employment services they offered. The emphasis on non-CDEP employment outcomes demonstrates the Government's view that the primary purpose of the CDEP scheme was to secure non-CDEP employment and that any other function was at best secondary.

Working together (Indigenous responsibility)

The concept of Aboriginal welfare dependency utilised by the Howard government (and applied to CDEP participation) implied Indigenous responsibility for Indigenous unemployment. The phrase "welfare culture" (and to a degree the statement linking Aboriginal welfare use to "insulation from the job market") (DEWR, 2005b: iii) captures this attribution of Aboriginal unemployment to (shared) Aboriginal behaviour.

Economic versus social

By prioritising non-CDEP employment and sidelining the importance of contributions to the social world, the papers positioned the economic and the social in a hierarchical dichotomy. The strengths of the CDEP scheme were said in the discussion paper to have been its work experience element, and its weakness that it did not focus enough on jobs (DEWR, 2005a: 3). The changes to the CDEP scheme

placed a much greater emphasis on non-CDEP employment, and actually separated out a community activities stream from employment and business streams. Whilst there was some allowance for community activities to continue to contribute to community development and cultural maintenance, in both documents it was communicated that in strong as well as weak labour markets, community activities needed to be "relevant to the labour market" (DEWR, 2005a: iii,3,7,8,9; 2005b: iii,5,6).

Extracted from the goal of labour market participation, the social, cultural and community development aspects of the CDEP scheme were devalued. Interestingly, however, as noted above, the benefits of employment that were listed were largely social benefits. Employment was said to enable Indigenous Australians to "get the more out of life", "reach their potential", and enjoy "social and economic well being" (DEWR, 2005a: iii). While the economic was treated as more important than the social, in the end its value was defined in relation to the social. The two were not so easy to separate.

The goal of sameness

Gearing the CDEP scheme more towards achieving employment was framed as providing Indigenous people with the same as other Australians. The aim was said to be for Indigenous Australians to have the "same opportunities to get as much out of life as other Australians", to have "their fair-share of jobs", and earn "a fair wage" (DEWR, 2005a: iii,4). The theme of the goal of sameness can also be seen in the proposed changes to CDEP funding agreements. In modelling CDEP funding on the Work for the Dole scheme, the Government pursued similar treatment for CDEP and Work for the Dole participants. The Government also showed its preference for sameness in seeking greater linkage between CDEP and mainstream employment services. According to the Government, this was a positive step enabled by the disbanding of ATSIC and the bringing in of the CDEP scheme within DEWR.

Indigenous Economic Development Strategy
Launched by Kevin Andrews, Minister for Employment and Workplace
Relations, November 9th 2005

In May 2005, confusingly, two separate budget factsheets were put out: one
announcing an *Indigenous Economic Independence Strategy* (Andrews, 2005c); and
the other announcing an *Indigenous Economic Development Strategy* (Andrews,
2005e). Both also had an accompanying media release. The *Indigenous Economic
Independence Strategy* budget factsheet described the strategy it announced as
outlining "a whole-of-government approach to removing the barriers to Indigenous
economic independence" (Andrews, 2005c). The purpose of the strategy was said to
be to formalise and coordinate the Government's strategic direction and direct future
Indigenous policy. The intended outcome was that "more Indigenous Australians
will find ways out of poverty and dependence on welfare" (Andrews, 2005c). In the
accompanying media release, Minister Andrews (2005d) envisioned that the strategy
would establish a policy platform for advancing Indigenous economic development,
which he insisted was vital if Indigenous Australians were "to break the welfare
cycle".

The *Indigenous Economic Development Strategy* budget factsheet (Andrews, 2005e)
put out at the same time stated that the focus of this strategy was improving
Indigenous entrepreneurs' access to mainstream and Indigenous specific business
support. According to the factsheet, the strategy was necessary to avoid duplication
of services that could now be eliminated with the Government's whole-of-
Government approach. This presumably referred to the dismantling of ATSIC and the
incorporation of Indigenous business support programs within DEWR.

The *Indigenous Economic Development Strategy* budget factsheet and media release
(Andrews, 2005e; 2005f) were followed up in November by a strategy document,
unlike the *Indigenous Economic Independence Strategy*. The strategy document was

nonetheless thin on detail and more about policy direction than actual policy, so neither strategy amounted to actual policy.

The strategy document was titled *Achieving Indigenous economic independence: Indigenous Economic Development Strategy, Targeting jobs, business and assets* (DEWR, 2005d) and was launched by Andrews November 9th 2005. A media release for this strategy document included the comment by Minister for Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Amanda Vanstone, that "far too many Indigenous Australians were still dependent on welfare" (Andrews and Vanstone, 2005: 2). She was quoted as saying "[w]e must work together to break through the barriers so that Indigenous Australians can share in Australia's prosperity" (Andrews and Vanstone, 2005: 2). The quote continued; "governments cannot do it alone. This strategy aims to share responsibility with local Indigenous people and the private sector" (Andrews and Vanstone, 2005: 2).

The strategy document itself started off with a foreword from Andrews. According to Andrews, the aim of the strategy was to support Indigenous Australians achieve economic independence (DEWR, 2005d: 2). Andrews defined economic independence as the ability of individuals and communities to "make informed choices about their lives, realise their full potential and have responsibility for managing their own affairs" (DEWR, 2005d: 2). Andrews continued that "responsibility for addressing Indigenous economic development barriers rests with all levels of government in partnership with Indigenous leaders, individuals, communities and the private sector" (DEWR, 2005d: 2).

Minister Amanda Vanstone also contributed a foreword in which she correlated Aboriginal welfare dependency with remoteness, lack of employment opportunities, low education levels and other day to day barriers. Vanstone described her Government's strategy as informed by a "strong private sector philosophy" (DEWR, 2005d: 3).

The document introduced the strategy by saying that a strategic goal was increasing Indigenous economic independence "through reducing dependency on passive welfare and stimulating employment and economic development opportunities" (DEWR, 2005d: 4). The concern was that "[o]ver-reliance on welfare means that Indigenous people cannot benefit from the growth of wealth that engagement in the private sector can provide" (DEWR, 2005d: 4). Economic independence was said to involve individuals having access

> to the full range of economic opportunities and resources, including employment, services and sufficient disposable income in order that they can shape their lives and meet their own needs and those of their dependents (DEWR, 2005d: 4).

Key elements of Indigenous economic independence were said to be "[g]aining a job, owning assets such as a property and building wealth for the next generation" (DEWR, 2005d: 4). This preliminary section concluded by linking economic independence to "foundation issues" (health, housing, education, infrastructure, training and employment), and promised these areas would be worked on through Shared Responsibility Agreements (DEWR, 2005d: 5).

The strategy consisted of twelve mainstream and Indigenous specific initiatives which were briefly outlined in the document. They were classed as either work initiatives or asset and wealth management initiatives.

The work initiatives referred to were: **Local jobs for local people** (planning to match Indigenous people with jobs and training); **Targeted industry strategies** (aiming to link industries with Indigenous communities); **CDEP reforms** presented in *Building on success: CDEP – Future directions* paper (towards making CDEP a "stepping stone" to non-CDEP employment); **Employment service performance** (working on improving employment outcomes with Job Network, Indigenous Specialist Job Network members and Indigenous Employment Centres – and removing Remote

Area Exemptions from activity testing[22]); **Vocational Education and Training linkages**
(consisting of school-based New Apprenticeships, the CDEP Pathways to
Employment Project, the Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme, and provisions for
young CDEP participants to have study and vocational training counted as part of
their CDEP requirements); **Developing enterprise opportunities** (aiming to encourage
Indigenous business development in remote areas, with Economic Development
Officers); **Business leader initiatives** (looking to showcase successful Indigenous
entrepreneurs, link upcoming entrepreneurs with industry experts, business support
and financial training, and set up business hubs); and lastly **General business support**
(already available mainstream and Indigenous specific support).

There were four initiatives described as asset and wealth management initiatives.
These were listed as: **Private sector involvement in home ownership and business
development** (intending to improve Indigenous people's personal and commercial
financial management skills); **Coordinated economic development on land** (seeking
to "realise the full potential" of Indigenous owned land and coordinate Government
efforts towards this end); **Investment rules to improve returns from trusts and
encourage investment of income from land** (potentially looking into pooling funds
held by different bodies that own Indigenous land); and also **Skills to realise
economic outcomes** (aiming to improve the economic and business development
skills of members of Native Title Representative bodies, Land Councils, and
Prescribed Bodies Corporate).

The write-ups of the initiatives were largely brief and imprecise about what stage of
policy development the initiatives were; many were more goals than policies. Case
studies were also listed of programs already in place (for example, the mainstream
Home Ownership program, and Accor hotels and resorts Indigenous Employment
Program).

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[22] The task of removing the exemptions was initiated in 2004 (DEWR, 2005d).

In the closing comments, the document described the strategy as a basis for
collaboration between all levels of government. It also talked about a "renewed
focus on active partnerships with Indigenous people" and the need for a
"cooperative effort" (DEWR, 2005d: 19).

Comments

The main themes present in the strategy document and material relating to the two
strategies, were: *welfare dependency (and economic independence)*; *working
together*; *a practical approach*; and *the goal of sameness*.

Welfare dependency versus economic independence

What comes across clearly is the Howard Government's eagerness to display its
commitment to its particular brand of Indigenous economic development. This was
in the wake of the abolition of ATSIC, the transfer of Indigenous specific programs
under DEWR, and the more distant replacement of ATSIC's various Indigenous
economic development programs.

Indigenous welfare dependency was placed at the centre of the case the Howard
Government made for both strategies. The plan was that *Indigenous Australians*
would "break the welfare cycle" and "find ways out of poverty and dependence on
welfare" (Andrews, 2005d: 1; 2005c: 1). This was necessary because there was an
"over-reliance" on welfare; far too many Indigenous Australians still remained
dependent (DEWR, 2005d: 3,4; Andrews and Vanstone, 2005: 2). Indeed it was
through reducing dependence on welfare (as well as "stimulating employment and
economic development opportunities"), that the Howard Government aimed to
achieve Indigenous economic development (DEWR, 2005d: 4). Welfare dependency
was talked of as if it obstructed economic independence.

On the flipside, economic independence was said to mean Indigenous people "can
shape their lives and meet their own needs and those of their dependents" (DEWR,

2005d: 4). Economic independence for Indigenous people was defined as "[g]aining a job, owning assets such as a property and building wealth for the next generation", and being able to "make informed choices about their lives, realise their full potential and have responsibility for managing their own affairs" (DEWR, 2005d: 4,2). Individual autonomy, personal fulfilment, and the meeting of familial obligations (see also DEWR, 2005c: 15) were all presented as outcomes of employment and economic independence.

Repeated references to the private sector speak to the Howard Government's preference for and belief in market solutions (DEWR, 2005d: 2,3,4). The strategy document talked specifically about the "growth of wealth that engagement in the private sector can provide" (DEWR, 2005d: 4). The work initiatives and asset and wealth management initiatives listed revolved around incorporation into the private sector, through employment, business enterprise or home ownership – in essence, the Howard Government's vision of Indigenous economic independence.

The assertion that the CDEP scheme must be a "stepping stone" towards non-CDEP employment displayed this privileging of private sector employment. It also tied in with the depiction of CDEP participation as a form of welfare ('dependence' on which was given as cause for the strategy).

The notion of welfare dependency was similarly called up with the lifting of Remote Area Exemptions from activity testing. The exemption of remote Aboriginal welfare recipients from activity requirements was treated as relevant to their employment.

Working together
There was an emphasis on the responsibility of Indigenous people, for using welfare, participating in CDEP and failing to be economically independent. The need to "work together", "share responsibility", and have an "active partnership" and a "cooperative effort" was underlined, as "governments cannot do it alone" (Andrews

and Vanstone, 2005: 2; DEWR, 2005d: 19). While the private sector also got a mention (Andrews and Vanstone, 2005: 2; DEWR, 2005d: 2), the inclusion of Indigenous responsibility within discussion of government policy is conspicuous.

The goal of sameness

Another strain within the main strategy document was that Indigenous people needed to have the same as other Australians. This came through in the phrases about Indigenous people sharing "in Australia's prosperity" (Andrews and Vanstone, 2005: 2), and benefitting "from our strong and growing economy" (DEWR, 2005d: 3). The theme of the goal of sameness also came out in what was counted as economic independence: private sector employment, owning private property, and accruing personal wealth – effectively mainstream economic incorporation. The Howard Government's interest in increasing Indigenous home ownership on Indigenous owned land could be interpreted as a push for sameness (of land tenure) with non-Indigenous Australians, who are quoted as having higher rates of home ownership (DEWR, 2005d: 4).

CDEP guidelines for 2006-07
Launched by Kevin Andrews, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, March 29th 2006

At the end of March 2006, Andrews launched *CDEP guidelines for 2006-07*. The document outlined some substantial changes to the CDEP scheme, which were said to "further consolidate" (DEWR, 2006a: 6) the changes confirmed in the *Building on success, CDEP – Future directions* document.

The CDEP scheme was described as designed to provide

> activities which develop participants' skills and improve their employability in order to assist them move into employment outside the CDEP and to meet community needs …. The overall aim is to support Indigenous Australians to achieve economic independence (DEWR, 2006a: 5).

The changes ahead were presented as necessary in order for the CDEP scheme to be "a programme that supports its participants by creating job and business opportunities, building skills and encouraging economic independence" (DEWR, 2006a: 5). In total, thirteen changes were to be made as of July 2006.

There was to be a new (lower) youth rate introduced[23] for CDEP participants 20 years or younger, to encourage them to finish school (DEWR, 2006a: 6,12). This was to apply to participants commencing or recommencing CDEP participation. CDEP organisations would still receive the adult rate with the remaining funds to go towards training for young people. In addition, non-remote youth participants would not be permitted to work extra hours in return for top-up payments, although remote youth participants still could (DEWR, 2006a: 12,24). Non-remote youth participants could nonetheless still seek host employment arrangements (subsidised work placements with employers) and obtain top-up that way.

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[23] The youth rate introduced was equivalent to the independent rate of Youth Allowance.

Another change announced was that the wages of CDEP Activity Supervisors would need to come from Activity Fees and not CDEP Wage Funds.

A third change confirmed that selected high performing CDEP organisations could be rewarded with a one year extension of their funding agreement. As of July 2006, funding would come in the form of a Program Funding Agreement – to enhance accountability, transparency, equity and efficiency (DEWR, 2006a: 12,17,37,38). As part of this Program Funding Agreement, CDEP organisations would have to develop, and keep to, Capacity Building Plans (DEWR, 2006a: 15,37). Funding would become conditional on CDEP organisations demonstrating satisfactory governance, good administration, and good financial management, and having a Board of Directors or Governing Committee with qualified and experienced members and appropriate insurance (DEWR, 2006a: 12,16).

As stated in *Building on success, CDEP discussion paper* (DEWR, 2005a: 8), there would be restrictions placed on what could count as community activities. The goal was to ensure that community work was "aligned with local job opportunities" and built "skills through work experience" (DEWR, 2006a: 8). Community needs did get some mention: "community activities in CDEP must lead to increased skills and improve the opportunities for participants to obtain employment in addition to meeting the needs of the community, wherever possible" (DEWR, 2006a: 6). A Key Performance Indicator was established requiring that community activities have a "relationship to community priorities and wherever possible improve employability skills" (DEWR, 2006a: 13).

Under the Employment and the Business Key Performance Indicators, CDEP organisations would be judged by how many employment placements they achieved, and how many viable businesses they created and progressed, and how many jobs they created in those businesses (DEWR, 2006a: 13,14). Non-CDEP

employment was again stressed when it was stated that CDEP organisations were to "focus on progression of individual participants" – from CDEP to work experience, host employment arrangements, and ideally non-subsidised employment (DEWR, 2006a: 31).

Also as of July 2006, CDEP participants could not participate in the CDEP scheme and at the same time undertake full-time education and receive benefits for this (Austudy, Youth Allowance or ABSTUDY Living Allowance) (DEWR, 2006a: 6,29).

There would also be the additional requirement as of July 2006 that participants in urban or regional areas join with Job Network (DEWR, 2006a: 6-7,19). Job Network requirements would need to be complied with in order to remain on a CDEP wage, including keeping appointments and accepting job offers presented. CDEP participants located in areas without a Job Network Member present would be required to develop participant plans with their CDEP organisation (DEWR, 2006a: 7,11).

A further change was the introduction of a one year time limit for new CDEP participants in urban and regional areas, after which they would no longer be eligible to participate (DEWR, 2006a: 7,29).[24] Also, from July 2006, commencing CDEP participants would have their eligibility checked by a new two-part process, involving signing a Participant Acknowledgement Form and being checked by a CDEP organisation (DEWR, 2006a: 28).

The final change presented tied in with the progressive removal of Remote Area Exemptions from activity testing. The document explained that the exemptions, which recognised the lack of access to employment or training, were now being lifted because of the "increased opportunities for people in remote areas to

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[24] This change had been canvassed in 2001 as part of the Indigenous Employment Policy (DIMIA, 2001c).

participate in work or work-related activities" (DEWR, 2006a: 32). The change to be introduced was that CDEP participation would become an optional recognised activity where remote area activity testing exemptions were removed. Once welfare recipients had registered CDEP participation as an activity as part of their job plan, they would then be subject to penalties, should they not join or not participate (DEWR, 2006a: 32).

The new Pathways to Employment Project was mentioned within the document. The pilot program, operated by select CDEP organisations, aimed to improve participants' employability by analysing their skills needs and connecting them with Vocational Education and Training (DEWR, 2006a: 12).

During a speech at the launch of the *CDEP guidelines for 2006-07* document, Andrews explained "[n]o Australian of goodwill wants to see another generation of indigenous Australians marginalised from the debilitating effects of welfare and acceptance passively of welfare in this country" (2006a: 1). He talked of the need for a "long-term vision of where together in partnership with Indigenous Australians we wish to go" (Andrews, 2006a: 1).

Andrews then placed his Government's focus on economic independence in the context of other, less recent Indigenous policy. He said:

> [t]here's been a whole series of reforms in indigenous affairs over the last 2 or 3 decades in Australia. There's been the land rights movement. There's been a reconciliation movement but one area which regrettably indigenous Australians are still locked out of and that is participating fully in the economic life of this country. And like any other Australian, I believe, that indigenous Australians have the right and indeed deserve the opportunity to participate in the economic life of this country and that's what these reforms, along with the broader reforms that the government is undertaking at the present time in indigenous affairs, is all about (Andrews, 2006a: 2).

Andrews said the following about the CDEP scheme,

> CDEP as a largely indigenous run program is not beyond the kind of reform that opens up
> opportunities for its tens of thousands of participants and the hundreds of communities who seek
> guidance and hope from a more purposeful CDEP (2006a: 2).

Speaking of the changes, he stated "what we want to achieve … is real jobs for indigenous people and real economic outcomes for them and their families" (Andrews, 2006a: 3). Andrews' closing words were that "the pathway to real jobs with real incomes for first Australians will only become clearer, straighter and more purposeful in the future" (2006a: 4).

During a doorstop interview in June 2006, Andrews said that the changes to the CDEP scheme "involve trying to ensure that CDEP leads to a real job and it's not just a form of *indigenous work for the dole for life* which it's been in the past" (2006b, my emphasis).

At a Senate Budget Estimates session in May 2006, Indigenous Employment and Business Group Manager within DEWR, Bob Harvey, was questioned regarding the new guidelines presented in *CDEP guidelines 2006-07*. Asked about the possibility of job creation, Harvey told the Senate

> [w]e are not in the game of running programs that are job creation programs. The government's
> policy is very much about getting people off welfare into jobs, and we will assist that through
> business development opportunities or through industry strategies, which we talked about earlier,
> with the private sector or with other organisations to ensure that there are pathways into jobs (in
> Senate, 2006: 93).

It is clear that publicly funded employment for Indigenous people, such as the CDEP scheme, was not in line with the Howard Government's vision.

Five months later, in a media release promoting the CDEP reforms made earlier in the year, Andrews disparagingly described the CDEP scheme as a "make-work" program:

> Indigenous Australians, many of whom have languished for too long in make-work situations, are
> now beginning to reap the rewards of the Government's CDEP reforms and getting the
> opportunities they deserve to share in the real economy (2006c: 1).

Publicly funded make-work or job creation programs were considered beyond the appropriate role of the government.

Comments

In the policy changes and the surrounding rhetoric, the following themes were present: *the binary of welfare dependency and economic independence*; *working together*; *the binary of the economic and the social*; and *a practical approach*.

Welfare dependency versus economic dependence

Non-CDEP employment – towards "economic independence" – was put up as the goal of the CDEP scheme (DEWR, 2006a: 6,29). Increased measures to encourage and compel CDEP participants off of the CDEP scheme (in particular the 12 month time limit but also the requirement to join Job Network or equivalent), and to encourage and compel CDEP organisations to secure employment for participants (through employment focused Key Performance Indicators and funding agreements), show this concentration on non-CDEP employment. The CDEP scheme was repeatedly talked about as existing to improve the employability of participants (DEWR, 2006a; Andrews 2006a; 2006b). The CDEP scheme was to be made a more "purposeful" pathway to non-CDEP employment, as if this were the only important objective of the program, and what gave it purpose (Andrews, 2006a: 2,4).

A distinction was made between CDEP employment and "real jobs", "real economic outcomes", and the "real economy" (Andrews, 2006a: 3,4; 2006b). The CDEP scheme was presented as only worthwhile to the extent that it furthered participants on their path to non-CDEP employment. CDEP participation was then problematic if it did not quickly result in 'real' work, as indicated by the one year time limit. This distinction was also echoed in the use of the term "make-work" to describe the CDEP scheme, which Harvey made clear the Howard Government was "not in the game of running" (in Senate, 2006: 93). It could also be inferred that job creation

was not considered the solution because lack of jobs was not considered the problem.

Welfare or welfare dependency was not explicitly mentioned in the Guidelines document but in the associated speech Andrews talked about Indigenous Australians being "marginalized from the debilitating effects of welfare and acceptance passively of welfare in this country", and said this prompted the changes (2006a: 1). Here welfare was presented as harmful, passive, and elective.

Working together

The changes to the CDEP scheme show an understanding of the problem as being, to some degree at least, with CDEP participants and CDEP organisations, as this is where the changes were targeted. There appears to have been an underlying presumption that there was work available and that CDEP participants were choosing not to take it because they were too comfortable participating in the CDEP scheme – and that CDEP organisations were allowing this.

The removal of the Remote Area Exemptions from activity testing referred to in the Guidelines document framed unemployment in remote areas as linked to the lack of activity requirements asked of Aboriginal residents. Aboriginal inactivity was portrayed as part of the problem. The solution was to make such activity testing compulsory, and allow CDEP participation to be one of the compulsory activities that welfare recipients in such areas needed to undertake. This added a compulsory and punitive element to CDEP participation, reaffirming the message that Aboriginal people were complicit in their unemployment.

The role of Indigenous people was highlighted in Andrews' comments about the need to work in partnership with Indigenous Australians (2006a: 1). Andrews also talked about the CDEP reforms as designed "to *encourage* participants to use CDEP as a stepping stone to employment" (2006a: 2, my emphasis), and the Guidelines

document spoke of *encouraging* and *supporting* economic independence (DEWR, 2006a: 5). Assigning government policy the relatively inactive role of 'encouraging' and 'supporting' left CDEP participants the more major role of enacting change.

The economic versus the social

The Howard Government's narrow view of the CDEP scheme involved a prioritisation of (non-CDEP) economic gains over social gains, and an unwillingness to connect the two. This was demonstrated by the greater push to gear community activities towards employment outcomes, evident in the introduction of the Key Performance Indicator that checked that community activities "wherever possible improve employability skills" (DEWR, 2006a: 13); and also the separation of employment, business, and community activity streams. Cultural continuation was no longer an objective, and the community development purpose of the CDEP scheme was being written out of the program.

Andrews' distinction between his Government's Indigenous policy and the "Land rights movement" and the "reconciliation movement" (2006a: 2), also relied on a separation of the economic from the social and a prioritisation of the former over the latter. Economic progress was portrayed as an area neglected by these 'movements', sidelining their achievements and suggesting they had no impact on this area. The version of economic independence promoted by the Howard Government was treated as the proper focus of Indigenous policy, and cultural maintenance, community development, and indeed state-funded employment, were not on the agenda.

Practical approach

Andrews' statement distinguishing policy approaches also animated his Government's distinction between its practical approach and what it constructed as symbolic approaches. What was classed as part of this practical approach was shrinking.

Indigenous potential meets economic opportunities
Discussion paper released by Kevin Andrews, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, November 6th 2006

This discussion paper, issued in November 2006, proposed significant further changes to the CDEP scheme, and invited feedback in response. The key change proposed was that the CDEP scheme would cease to be funded in urban and major regional locations from July 2007. In its place, the mainstream job brokerage service, Structured Training and Employment Projects (STEP), would be funded. All Indigenous Employment Centres would also be closed down from this date.

In the foreword, Andrews stated that the changes introduced "a more employer-focused job brokerage approach" (DEWR, 2006b: 1). According to Andrews, the aim was to "increase employment outcomes for Indigenous people and contribute to economic independence so they, like other Australians, can share in the benefits of this country's economic success" (DEWR, 2006b: 1). The paper later elaborated on what was meant by economic independence:

> [t]he Australian Government is committed to achieving economic independence for all Australians so they can make informed choices about their lives. If Indigenous Australians are to genuinely achieve this independence they must be able to earn money and build up their assets and wealth. Indigenous economic independence can be achieved by reducing dependency on passive welfare and boosting employment and business opportunities for individuals and families (DEWR, 2006b: 5).

Past government funding was presented as encouraging "welfare dependency and passivity". To avoid this, it was stated the Howard Government must use its "investment in Indigenous people" in the most effective way (DEWR, 2006b: 5).

The paper asserted that closing down the CDEP scheme in urban and major regional centres would lead to increased employment opportunities and greater economic independence for Indigenous individuals and families (DEWR, 2006b: 7). The reason given for this was that the STEP brokerage service, funded in the CDEP scheme's

place in urban and regional centres, would focus on direct job placement and support, and training towards this. The accompanying closure of Indigenous Employment Centres was justified on the grounds that STEP could more effectively place Indigenous people into *sustainable* employment (DEWR, 2006b: 9). Access to STEP was not guaranteed. However, it was promised that former CDEP participants would be given priority access, and could be referred by Job Network or recruited by a STEP broker. The other mainstream employment services available, including Job Network, were also listed (DEWR, 2006b: 9-11). It was claimed that community work activities similar to those available through the CDEP scheme would still be available through STEP, to those not at the training or employment stage (DEWR, 2006b: 2,8). It was added later that such participants would still be encouraged to improve their job-readiness over time (DEWR, 2006b: 10).

The paper mentioned that host employment arrangements would also be affected. To offset the loss of these employment arrangements, the paper stated the Government would try to negotiate for as many placements as possible to be converted to "real jobs", and offer Wage Assistance (DEWR, 2006b: 9,13).

A list of consultation questions was supplied at the end of the document for consideration. All four assumed acceptance of the major changes to be introduced. Three of the questions centred around transition issues while the first asked if the closure of the CDEP scheme should extend further to other areas (DEWR, 2006b: 15). Consultation sessions, in 37 locations, were organised for November and December, and the deadline for feedback was December 15th 2006 (approximately one month after the discussion paper's release).

On February 17th 2007, *Questions and answers for the outcome of Indigenous potential meets economic opportunity consultation* was released. The document confirmed the changes, and responded to feedback received (from 90 written submissions and over 1300 consultation attendees). It described the Howard

Government's approach as a "work first approach" (DEWR, 2007a: 2). In careful and ambiguous language, it concluded that

> [f]eedback received during the consultation period indicates broad support for improving employment services for Indigenous people. In general, the need for a different approach is accepted, provided the transition is carefully managed (DEWR, 2007a: 3).

This document was less definite about whether former CDEP participants would be given priority access to STEP brokers, saying they may be, "where that is the most appropriate activity for them" (DEWR, 2007a: 7). Confirmation was given that the community activities that would be available through STEP would focus on "pre-employment needs", and that "[t]hese will be structured and lead to employment wherever possible" (DEWR, 2007a: 4).

In a media release put out February 17th 2007, new Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Joe Hockey, asserted that the reforms would replace the CDEP scheme in "strong labour markets with genuine access to real jobs" (2007: 1). Hockey stated clearly "[t]he reforms aim to further reduce welfare dependency among Indigenous Australians" (2007: 1). He reinforced this connection between the CDEP scheme and welfare with the statement "[o]ur only success measure should be if we get someone into a real job – not a position funded by welfare" (Hockey, 2007: 1). The CDEP scheme was described as operating with a "work creation model" in contrast to STEP's emphasis on employer demand (Hockey, 2007: 2). In an associated interview, Hockey elaborated:

> there's risk in everything you do, but the greatest risk is that someone ends up being on welfare for years and years, and in some cases, and in some communities, you can have a low level of unemployment and you can have people stuck, Indigenous Australians, stuck in these sort of programs for even up to 20 years (in ABC, 2007a: 1).

Hockey made the following analogy, "CDEP has become a bit of a cargo net, where people either don't want to get off it or see it as too attractive not to go into it" (in ABC, 2007a: 1). Along this line, he also said

in communities such as those in Sydney, or in Rockhampton, or Ballarat, the CDEP has been far

too generous, in that it has been more of an incentive for people to go onto CDEP than to get into

work (Hockey, in ABC, 2007a: 1).

The closure of the CDEP scheme in urban and major regional centres was presented as addressing this, by removing the incentive altogether.

Even before the changes were due to come into effect on July 1st 2007, more changes to the CDEP scheme were announced. As part of the 2007-2008 budget, three alterations were set out, consistent with the focus on exiting CDEP participants from the program. The Howard Government committed to establishing a rolling compliance program for CDEP participants, and checking eligibility against government data (Australian Government, 2007: 168). As well, an extra incentive payment would be made available for CDEP providers who placed participants in non-CDEP employment for at least 26 weeks. The Howard Government also allocated to convert 825 current CDEP positions (in urban and major regional settings) "into normalised employment arrangements", for participants who had been delivering services on behalf of Federal, State and Territory Governments (Australian Government, 2007: 165).[25]

Another important change that came with the 2007-2008 budget was the acceleration of the removal of Remote Area Exemptions from activity testing. In the 2006 budget, $17.9 million had been allocated over four years for the purpose, and this was increased to $23 million over five years in this budget (Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs [FaCSIA], 2006a; 2007a; Australian Government, 2007: 169).

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[25] The previous 2006-2007 budget allocated for the conversion of 130 full-time equivalent CDEP Health worker positions to "real jobs" (FaCSIA, 2006c).

Comments

The policy decisions and the supporting reasoning outlined in *Indigenous potential meets economic opportunity* and accompanying material, synthesised and progressed the Howard Government's construction of Indigenous affairs, Indigenous unemployment and the CDEP scheme. The following themes were expressed: *the binary of welfare dependency and economic independence*; *working together*; *the binary of the economic and the social*; and *the goal of sameness*.

Welfare dependency versus economic independence

Scrapping the CDEP scheme in strong labour markets was presented as helping to reduce welfare dependency. The connection between the two relied on a conflation of the CDEP scheme and welfare. Hockey repeatedly referred to the CDEP scheme as welfare, tying the two by their source of funding. As Hockey said, "[o]ur only success measure should be if we get someone into a real job – not a position funded by welfare" (2007: 1). He also specifically described the changes to the CDEP scheme as designed to reduce welfare dependency. In proposing the changes to the CDEP scheme, the discussion paper talked about the importance of reducing dependency on passive welfare and connected previous government funding with welfare dependency (DEWR, 2006b: 5).

The classification of the CDEP scheme as problematic welfare was reinforced through the dismissal of the CDEP scheme as a "work creation model" (Hockey, 2007: 2). There was a distinction around what sort of work was valid. This distinction was alive in the use of the term "real jobs" to describe non-CDEP employment (DEWR, 2006b: 9,13; Hockey, 2007: 1). It was also present in the use of the word "normalise" to refer to the conversion of CDEP positions to Government positions, indicating this work would then be made normal and acceptable (Australian Government, 2007: 165). The host employment arrangements organised through the CDEP scheme were not treated with the same disapproval as other CDEP activities (DEWR, 2006b: 9,13; 2007a: 7,8). They were to be protected if possible,

by converting the positions into jobs or subsidising the work through the Wage Assistance program.

The pursuit of economic independence, the other side of the welfare dependency coin, was also given as cause for the changes to the CDEP scheme. Indigenous economic independence was said to allow Indigenous *individuals and families* (the term communities was absent) to share in the benefits of Australia's economic success (DEWR, 2006b: 1). Economic independence for Indigenous people was laid out as earning money, building up assets and wealth, and being able to "make informed choices about their lives" (DEWR, 2006b: 5). Notions of equality and fairness were referenced, alongside the promotion of incorporation into the mainstream economy.

Working together

Not only was the CDEP scheme likened to welfare, but CDEP participants were likened to welfare dependents. Indigenous responsibility was foregrounded. The changes to the CDEP scheme, and the rationale provided, continued down the path of depicting CDEP participants (and CDEP organisations) as part of the problem. The logic running through the scrapping of the CDEP scheme in strong labour markets was that Indigenous people had "genuine *access* to real jobs" (Hockey, 2007: 1, my emphasis). CDEP participation in such areas was then construed as a preference not a need. Hockey described the CDEP scheme as a generous incentive to not work, as an attractive cargo net people did not want to get off (in ABC, 2007a: 1). The motivation of the individual Indigenous CDEP participant was thus brought in as a component relating to their lack of non-CDEP employment, drawing on the concept of welfare dependency. This would be dealt with by removing the CDEP scheme. No allowance was made for any demand side issues, or issues relating to the employability of CDEP participants. That the Howard Government funded the STEP employment service in the place of the CDEP scheme indicates that the solution to (non-CDEP) Aboriginal employment in strong labour markets was conceptualised as

merely being better job placement, and the removal of a more preferable employment alternative (the CDEP scheme). Strengthening the compliance framework for ongoing CDEP participants also treated CDEP participants as the locus of the problem. Similarly, the removal of Remote Area Exemptions from activity testing focused attention on the behaviour of Indigenous welfare recipients (FaCSIA, 2007a; Australian Government, 2007: 168).

The goal of sameness

As well as appearing in the Howard Government's definition of Indigenous economic independence, the theme of the goal of sameness came out through the policy change of replacing Indigenous specific employment services (available through Indigenous Employment Centres) and an Indigenous specific employment program (the CDEP scheme), with the mainstream employment brokerage service – STEP. The message was that different services and different treatment were not only unnecessary but also unhelpful (DEWR, 2006b: 9).

The economic versus the social

The closure of the CDEP scheme in urban and major regional centres, and the rhetoric surrounding it, displayed a singular focus on off-CDEP employment. The "work first" motto encapsulated this (DEWR, 2007a: 2). Non-CDEP employment was put forward as the sole objective of the CDEP scheme which meant another service promoted as better able to achieve this could be presented as a fitting replacement. Any other benefits of the CDEP scheme were not recognised as worth maintaining. There was no acknowledgement of any loss associated with the withdrawal of the CDEP scheme's funding for community activities and for the community organisations that supplied and devised them. The narrowly conceived goal of economic independence was detached from and privileged over any wider and interrelated social (and political) benefits of the CDEP scheme.

Northern Territory Emergency Response

Announced by John Howard, Prime Minister, and Mal Brough, Minister of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, June 21ˢᵗ 2007

Mid 2007, Prime Minister John Howard held a joint press conference with Mal Brough, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and announced that the Commonwealth Government would launch an emergency response in the Northern Territory[26] (Howard and Brough, 2007). The Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) came to be known as 'the Intervention'. According to the Prime Minister, the prompt for this policy response was a report by Pat Anderson and Rex Wilde, co-chairs of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse (Howard and Brough, 2007: 1). The report, titled *Ampe akelyernemane meke mekarle 'Little children are sacred'*, was released on June 15ᵗʰ 2007 and urged that Aboriginal child sexual abuse in the Northern Territory be designated an issue of urgent national significance. Six days later, the Intervention measures were announced. Howard described the situation as a Hobbesian nightmare and declared that it justified an emergency response, like the Hurricane Katrina disaster in the United States of America; "[w]e have our Katrina, here and now" (2007b: 3). The stated goal of the Intervention was to bring "normality" to Northern Territory Indigenous communities (Howard and Brough, 2007: 8).

A media release titled *National emergency response to protect Aboriginal children in the NT* was put out by Brough on the day of the announcement (Brough, 2007c). It listed eleven measures that would be applied in "prescribed" Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory: alcohol restrictions on Northern Territory Aboriginal land; welfare reforms enabling the quarantining of 50 per cent of all

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[26] Such intervention was possible because the Commonwealth Government has full legislative power over Australia's Territories.

income support, family assistance payments and CDEP wages, for those who had been in receipt of payments for two years or more, to reduce discretionary income and substance abuse; linkage of school attendance and income support and family assistance payments so that poor school attendance would result in the quarantining of 50 per cent of parents' income support payments and 100 per cent of parents' family assistance payments; the provision of lunch and breakfast to school children at parents' expense; compulsory health checks for children; the acquisition of prescribed townships through five year leases; an increase in the number of police in prescribed Aboriginal communities; clean up and repair work in communities using Work for the Dole labour; housing improvements alongside reform of community living arrangements in certain communities, partly through the introduction of market based rents and normal tenancy arrangements; prohibition of the possession of X-rated pornography and the compulsory auditing of all publicly funded computers to check for such material; removal of the permit system on common areas, road corridors, and airstrips for prescribed communities on Aboriginal land; and the appointment of managers for all government businesses in prescribed communities to improve governance (Brough, 2007c: 1-2).

In the lead up to the introduction of legislation enacting these measures, the measures were altered and added to. On July 5th, Minister for Health Tony Abbott withdrew the requirement that compulsory health checks be performed on all children in the prescribed areas, and announced instead that the (voluntary) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Health Check program already in place would be continued (Abbott, 2007).

On July 14th Howard issued a media release headed *Welfare payments reform* (Howard, 2007c)*,* in which he announced that income management would be applied *nationwide* to parents of school-age children who were not enrolled at school or who had poor school attendance. This particular policy change was to help prevent "intergenerational welfare dependency" (Howard, 2007c: 6). Income

management would also be applied nationally to the parents of any children considered by child welfare authorities to be at risk of harm or neglect. The initial announcement of the NTER had alluded to this extension of the policy nationwide in such circumstances, but now the extension was confirmed. The planned date for this broader application of income management to come into effect was July 2008 for suspected child neglect cases and 2009 onwards for school attendance and enrolment cases (a later start date of 2010 was given for high school attendance and enrolment cases) (Howard, 2007c: 1,2; Brough, 2007g: 4,5).

It was announced on July 18th in a media release (with attachments) titled *Cape York Welfare Reform Trials to start in 2008* (Brough, 2007d; FaCSIA, 2007b; 2007c), that income management would also be extended to certain residents of four Aboriginal Communities in the Cape York (Hope Vale, Aurukun, Mossman Gorge and Coen). The Cape York Reform Trials would be funded $48 million and would commence in 2008.[27] The reform project was outlaid in a Government commissioned report titled *From hand out to hand up*, produced by the Cape York Institute (2007), founded and directed by Noel Pearson. The report was tabled in Parliament on June 19th, just days prior to the announcement of the Intervention (FaCSIA, 2007b: 1; Brough, 2007b).

The Trials involved imposing compulsory income management as a consequence where family obligations (relating to protecting children from harm and neglect and sending children to school) and tenancy obligations were not being met (Brough, 2007d). Sanctions could also be imposed in cases of domestic violence, alcohol, or drug offences (FaCSIA, 2007b: 1; 2007c: 1). To uphold these requirements and notify Centrelink of breaches, a Family Responsibilities Commission would be set up. The Commission would be made up of community members and be chaired by a senior

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[27] The seed was sown earlier with the funding of the *voluntary* Family Income Management projects in the Cape York in the 2001-2002 budget ($1.19 million), and the 2003-2004 budget ($1.5 million) (Ruddock, 2002b: 19; Howard, 2003b; DIMIA, 2003d). An additional $4.4 million was allocated in the 2004-2005 budget and $16.6 million in the 2006-2007 budget, towards continuing and further extending the program elsewhere (Vanstone, 2004a: 1; FaCSIA, 2006b; Brough, 2007a).

legal officer, and it was proposed that the Commission be established as a statutory body of the Queensland Government.[28] Brough said the trials aimed to "reduce passive welfare and rebuild social norms, particularly as they affect the wellbeing of children" (2007d: 12).

On July 23rd, it was announced that the Northern Territory Emergency Response would also involve scrapping the CDEP scheme in the Northern Territory. A joint media release announcing the changes was released by Minister Mal Brough and Minister Joe Hockey, titled *Jobs and training for Indigenous people in the NT* (Brough and Hockey, 2007).

The removal of the CDEP scheme was presented as delivering participants into "real jobs", training and mainstream employment projects (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 1). Brough said,

> [u]nder the changes, it is expected that some 2000 people will be assisted off CDEP into real work. Others will be given better opportunities for training and participation by being transitioned onto income support, with the normal participation requirements including access to Job Network services, Structured Training and Employment Projects (STEP) or Work for the Dole (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 1).

Brough's figure of 2000 people gaining "real jobs" was roughly a quarter of the total number of CDEP participants in the Northern Territory at the time, estimated to be 7500 (Altman, 2007b: 33).

Brough said the closure of the CDEP scheme would bring a "renewed focus" on helping Indigenous people become work-ready and find work – within and outside of their communities (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 1). The CDEP scheme was described by Brough as "a destination for too many" (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 1).

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[28] This was enacted through the Parliament of Queensland in 2008.

It was announced that a CDEP Transition Payment might be available to current CDEP participants where the income they received from CDEP wages was greater than their income support entitlement (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2). An attached fact sheet, *CDEP in the Northern Territory Emergency Response: Questions and answers*, clarified that this payment would cease June 30th 2008 (DEWR, 2007b: 3).

Also part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, Brough and Hockey announced funding would be provided to *further* fast track the removal of Remote Area Exemptions from activity testing – to reduce passive welfare (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2).

Addressing passive welfare was also given as reason for the closure of the CDEP scheme. In the closing comments of the media release, Brough described the measure as "a key part of normalizing Indigenous communities, providing opportunities to create real economies and job opportunities in Aboriginal townships" (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2).

Another reason given for the closure of the CDEP scheme was that it would facilitate income quarantining. The media release explained that

> CDEP participants moving onto income support will be covered by a single system of quarantining that will apply to welfare payments. This initiative will reduce the flow of cash going to alcohol and drug abuse (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2).

The transfer of CDEP participants onto income support would make it possible to quarantine a portion of their payments (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2; DEWR, 2007b: 3).

On August 7th, a package of five bills was introduced to parliament to enact the NTER measures: Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007 (Cth); Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Bill 2007 (Cth); Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment

Reform) Bill 2007 (Cth); Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill (No. 1) 2007-2008 (Cth); and Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill (No. 2) 2007-2008 (Cth).

The Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007 (henceforth SSOLA Bill 2007) proposed the introduction of income management, to be applied to: all residents of a "declared relevant Northern Territory area"; parents nationally, and their partners, referred by a child protection officer, or whose child failed to meet school enrolment requirements or had unsatisfactory school attendance; and parents referred by "the Queensland Commission" (thus enabling the establishment of the Cape York Welfare Reform Trials).

The Bill set out that in all cases, the individual would have an Income Management Special Account established into which their managed income would be transferred, to be spent only on "priority needs" (SSOLA Bill 2007: 39,11,24-25). The amount to be managed varied. Residents in a relevant Northern Territory area would have 50 per cent quarantined of most welfare payments, including family tax benefit instalment payments, while 100 per cent would be quarantined of welfare payments which were advance or arrears payments, or the lump sum payments of baby bonus and the maternity immunisation allowance (SSOLA Bill 2007: 47-52; Explanatory Memorandum, SSOLA Bill 2007: 29-30; Yeend and Dow, 2007: 11). Where income management would be introduced in child protection or school enrolment and attendance cases, the parent in receipt of income support (and their partner), would generally be subject to 100 per cent diversion of their payment (unless otherwise specified in a legislative instrument by the Minister) (SSOLA Bill 2007: 12-17,52-55; Explanatory Memorandum, SSOLA Bill 2007: 30-31; Yeend and Dow, 2007: 10). For those referred to income management by the Queensland Commission, the percentage of welfare payments that could be diverted could be up to 100 per cent (the exact percentage diverted would be directed by the Queensland Commission)

(SSOLA Bill 2007: 55-58; Explanatory Memorandum, SSOLA Bill 2007: 5,31-32;
Yeend and Dow, 2007: 11).

Giving rationale for the introduction of Income Management in cases of poor school
attendance, the Explanatory Memorandum stated:

> [h]elping to ensure children reach their full potential at school will also help to reduce the risk of
> the potential for these children to become long term unemployed and welfare dependent
> (Explanatory Memorandum, SSOLA Bill 2007: 19).

The Bill also made provisions for the phasing out of the CDEP scheme. This included
setting up the temporary payment of Northern Territory CDEP Transition Payments,
fifty per cent of which would also be quarantined (Explanatory Memorandum,
SSOLA Bill 2007: 49; SSOLA Bill 2007: 104-111,13,48). The Explanatory
Memorandum assured that CDEP participants would "move into real jobs, training or
to *more appropriate* income support including Work for the Dole" (Explanatory
Memorandum, SSOLA Bill 2007: 47, my emphasis).

The two Appropriation Bills (henceforth Appropriation Bill No. 1 2007-2008 and
Appropriation Bill No.2 2007-2008) that came with the package sought to
appropriate funds from the Consolidated Revenue Fund to cover the costs of the first
stage of the NTER. The first Appropriation Bill asked for approximately $502 million,
while the second asked for $85.3 million, coming to $587.3 million in total
(Appropriation Bill No. 1 2007-2008; Appropriation Bill No.2 2007-2008).

Although not announced initially, the Northern Territory National Emergency
Response Bill 2007 (henceforth NTNER Bill 2007) also contained provisions for a
Community Store licensing scheme to be introduced, with the granting of licences
dependent on ability to administer income management and meet certain
operational standards (NTNER Bill 2007: 75,77). Also not initially announced, the
Bill prohibited bail and sentencing authorities from taking customary law or cultural
practice into account when granting bail or sentencing, and specified that the impact

on victims and witnesses be taken into account when considering granting bail (NTNER Bill 2007: 68-69). The Bill also went further than the initial announcement in facilitating external management of Indigenous communities and Community Councils through extending to the Minister the power to dismiss members as well as appoint managers, and to have wide-ranging control of funding, services, assets and governance (NTNER Bill 2007: 54-62; Margarey et al, 2007: 54-58).

The Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Bill 2007 (henceforth FCSIAOLA Bill 2007) expanded on the initial announcement by containing provisions for the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Government to have legal property interests to construction areas on Aboriginal land in which they funded the building or renovation of infrastructure at a cost of over $50,000 (FCSIAOLA Bill 2007: 23-37; Harris-Rimmer et al, 2007: 19). This Bill also introduced changes to the mandate (and power) of the Australian Crime Commission (ACC), changing its brief to include targeting Indigenous violence or child abuse (FCSIAOLA Bill 2007: 13-16; Harris-Rimmer et al, 2007: 17-18).

The package of five Bills comprised some 480 pages and was presented to the Federal Parliament's House of Representatives on August 7th 2007. The Bills were passed through the House of Representatives the same day. The next day, the Bills entered Senate and a Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Standing Committee Inquiry was called. The Committee was given until August 13th to table their findings – only five days. The Committee's report supported the Bills, with some qualifications, as did the Labor Party, who outlined points of opposition[29] in a list of additional comments (Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 2007; ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2008: 212-215). A less supportive Alert Digest was also released on August 13th by the Senate Standing Committee for

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[29] These points included the collapsing of the CDEP program, the lack of consultation, and the suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

the Scrutiny of Bills (2007). On August 17th, the Bills were passed essentially unamended. Authors of the Parliamentary Library Bills Digest remarked that "[t]he quick passage of these Bills has been unusual, if not unprecedented" (Margarey et al, 2007: 6).

During the Senate Hearings, Australian Greens and Australian Democrats Senators (who opposed the Bills) raised the point that despite the package of Bills being prompted by the *Little children are sacred* report, none of the 97 recommendations within the report were taken up (Senate, 2007: 214,220,221,225,227; Margarey et al, 2007: 14-15). Indeed, the report's co-author Pat Anderson commented "not a single action that the Commonwealth has taken so far … corresponds with a single recommendation. There is no relationship between these emergency powers and what's in our report" (in ABC, 2007c: 5). Notably, the first recommendation advised that genuine consultation with Aboriginal people was critical when devising policy concerning Aboriginal people (ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2008: 263,292; Wild and Anderson, 2007: 22; Margarey et al, 2007: 17-18). The authors stated that this was indeed the thrust of their recommendations (Wild and Anderson, 2007: 21). Howard defended the neglect of this recommendation, saying

> I have gone along until now with the notion that … these are matters that are best resolved at a State and Territory level, they're best resolved in discussion with community leaders, that the existing power structures in local Aboriginal communities should be respected … But I have come to the view that that's part of the problem – that we have to reverse 20 or 30 years of allowing these things to be resolved at a local level and we have to accept that the local apparatus has broken down (in Seven Network, 2007).

Another controversial aspect of the proposed legislation was that all of the Bills, bar the Appropriation Bills, suspended the operation of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) (*RD Act 1975*) – specifically Part II which prohibits racial discrimination. The Howard Government also wrote into the Bills that the racial discrimination within counted as 'special measures'. The *RD Act 1975* permits 'special measures' which discriminate on the basis of race with the sole purpose of furthering the

interests of a disadvantaged racial group, acting as necessary positive discrimination (*RD Act 1975*: s8[1]). The appropriateness and the accuracy of the Howard Government's decision to define its measures as 'special measures', however, remains questionable. The determination of 'special measure' status was taken out of the (usual) hands of the courts, and did not follow the definition provided in the *RD Act 1975*, or the international treaty[30] which is the source of the *RD Act 1975* (Margarey et al, 2007: 24,23). And crucially, the highly relevant wishes of the group in question were not established (Margarey et al, 2007: 25). The suspension of the *RD Act 1975* protected the provisions of the Bills from needing to qualify as 'special measures', but it did not protect the Bills from accusations of unfair racial discrimination.

That the proposed legislation unfairly discriminated on the basis of race was a matter of concern for the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills (2007: 10-11,28-29,31). The Committee also expressed concern that the proposed legislation exempted itself from the usual checks and balances: by inappropriately delegating legislative powers; by not sufficiently subjecting the exercise of legislative powers to parliamentary scrutiny; and by making "rights, liberties or obligations unduly dependent upon non-reviewable decisions" (Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills, 2007: 18,21).

On the eve of the presentation of the Bills to Parliament, Brough defended the need for the legislation, saying "[t]here's been a removable from the real economy. It's led to a closed community mentality with greater opportunities for abuse, not less" (in ABC, 2007b).

During a speech at the second reading of the SSOLA Bill 2007, Brough presented the Bill as a natural progression of his Government's approach to welfare: "[o]ver the

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[30] The United Nations *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.*

last decade, the Howard government has moved to tackle the scourge of passive
welfare and to reinforce responsible behaviour through the establishment of our
mutual obligation framework" (2007g: 1). He continued: "[t]he government's aim is
to extend the principle of mutual obligation beyond participation in the workforce to
a range of behaviours" (Brough, 2007g: 9). Brough cited a breakdown of normal
community standards, social norms, and parenting behaviours as the prompt for the
emergency response (2007g: 2,5). Cases of child neglect in the wider society, in
contrast, were described by Brough as "clearly against normal community standards"
(2007g: 1).

Brough stated that the Intervention measures were "practical and targeted responses
to real issues within our society", that would stabilise and normalise the
"dysfunctional" communities concerned (2007g: 9,6; 2007e: 11,12; 2007f: 21).
Brough described the problem the legislation was to address: "[t]he combination of
free money (in relatively large sums), free time and ready access to drugs and
alcohol has created appalling conditions for community members, particularly
children" (2007g: 2). According to Brough, "the provision of welfare has not had the
desired outcome; it has become a trap instead of a pathway" (2007g: 5). He went on
to say that "too many are trapped in an intergenerational cycle of dependency"
(Brough, 2007g: 5).

Talking specifically about the CDEP scheme, Brough stated

> [w]hile CDEP has been a major source of funding for many Northern Territory communities, it
> has not provided a pathway to real employment, and has become another form of welfare
> dependency for many people (2007g: 6).

Communities would thus be better off without it, and because he considered the
program stood in the way of real jobs, he reasoned that more opportunities would
result from its closure.

In another speech outlaying the cause for the Intervention, Brough highlighted the
problem of welfare dependency, linking it to the actions of previous Governments;

> [i]t has been our responsibility, as legislators over the last 30 years, starting with sit down money with Gough Whitlam and land rights under the Fraser Government. Those two single things did more to harm indigenous culture and destroy it than any two other legislative instruments ever put into the Parliament (2007h).

Howard reinforced Brough's message that Indigenous people needed to be part of the mainstream (Howard in Sydney Morning Herald, 2007; Howard, 2007e: 6). In a speech shortly before his Government's election defeat, he stated

> [a]t its core is the need for Aboriginal Australia to join the mainstream economy as the foundation of economic and social progress. This is at the heart of the work the Australian Government is pursuing under the Federal Minister Mal Brough's leadership. The central goal is to address the cancer of passive welfare and to create opportunity through education, employment and home ownership (Howard, 2007d: 4).

In the same speech he extended this point,

> I have never felt comfortable with the dominant paradigm for Indigenous policy – one based on the shame and guilt of non-indigenous Australians, on a repudiation of the Australia I grew up in, on a rights agenda that led ultimately and inexorably towards welfare dependency and on a philosophy of separateness rather than shared destiny (Howard, 2007d: 4).

Aboriginal child abuse and social dysfunction were linked to welfare dependency, disengagement from the mainstream economy and separate development. Sewn together, these problems formed the justification for the NTER measures.

Comments

The drastic changes to Indigenous policy which came as part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, and the justifications presented for the measures, framed the problem in Indigenous affairs in a particular way. While the findings of the *Little children are sacred* report were given as the cause for the Intervention, the Howard Government's response reflected its position on what needed to change. The now familiar themes of *welfare dependency versus economic independence*, *Indigenous responsibility*, *a practical approach*, *the goal of sameness*, and *the economic versus the social* pervaded the introduction of the changes.

Welfare dependency versus economic independence

Welfare dependency was portrayed as implicated in creating the "dysfunctional" environment that the Intervention was to "stabilise" (Brough, 2007e: 11,12; 2007f: 21,18; 2007g: 6,2; 2007h). Welfare was linked to the misuse of drugs and alcohol, and child abuse. The use of the phrase "free money" by Brough to describe welfare payments depicted them as one-sided or not reciprocal, and to an extent undeserved (2007g: 2). This depiction was supported by the inclusion of "free time" as another element in the problematic welfare equation (Brough, 2007g: 2). Brough's description of Aboriginal welfare recipients as "trapped in an intergenerational cycle of dependency" (2007g: 5) suggested welfare dependency was self-perpetuating, contagious and learnt.

Howard's comments positioned "the cancer" of Aboriginal welfare dependency as a central goal in need of addressing and rendered it a case of rights gone too far (2007d: 4). Welfare use, the rights agenda and a lack of personal responsibility, along with the 'separate development' model of which the CDEP scheme and land rights were considered to be a part, were presented as obstructing mainstream economic participation (i.e. economic independence) (Brough and Hockey, 2007; Brough in ABC, 2007b; Brough, 2007h; Howard, 2007d: 4). Exposure to the normalising influence of the mainstream economy was positioned as fundamental – as at the core of "economic and social progress" for Indigenous Australia (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2; Howard, 2007d: 4; Brough in ABC, 2007b). The Howard Government portrayed incorporation into the mainstream economy as having a redemptive and socially transformative effect, of almost greater benefit than the financial betterment it offered.

The Howard Government's income management policy also reflected its attitudes towards welfare and welfare recipients. For its validity, income management relied on a generalisation of the character of welfare recipients. Brough described the

policy as an attempt to "reinforce responsible behaviour" (2007g: 9,1). The behaviour (specifically the spending) of welfare recipients was framed as irresponsible and at fault. The solution was to alter the welfare system to prevent misuse of income.

Given that income management would be applied to all residents of the prescribed Indigenous communities (in receipt of welfare), there was an association made between Aboriginal community members and the inappropriate use of welfare – linked to a breakdown in community standards and child abuse. For the rest of the nation, Brough determined that child abuse was "clearly against normal community standards" (2007g: 1). Where income management would be applied in the Cape York and nationwide in particular circumstances, it would be imposed as a consequence of actions rather than simply on the basis of race. The application of the policy in these scenarios nonetheless reinforced the connection between welfare misuse and problematic behaviour.

The fight against passive welfare was also provided as a reason for the further acceleration of the lifting of Remote Area Exemptions from activity testing. Passive welfare was given explanatory power and was the target of policy attention, rather than remote unemployment itself.

The phasing out of the CDEP scheme across the Northern Territory also heavily referenced the concept of welfare dependency. Brough and Hockey declared that collapsing the CDEP scheme in those remaining more remote parts of the Northern Territory formed "an important part of the Emergency Response by addressing passive welfare" (2007: 2). The argument developed was that CDEP participation was a dead end if participants did not move into non-CDEP employment. Brough referred to the CDEP scheme as "a destination for too many" (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 1). The underlying premise was that CDEP participation was not 'real' work but a form of welfare, and as such, continued participation was a form of welfare

dependency. Brough stated specifically, "CDEP has ... become another form of welfare dependency" (2007g: 6). The classification of the CDEP scheme as welfare was at play in the promises of the Howard Government to convert a portion of CDEP positions into "real jobs" in the public sector. CDEP employment was painted as not genuine, despite the work carried out being recognised as so valuable that it deserved a dedicated Government position.

The Explanatory Memorandum of the Bill enacting the changes asserted that after the CDEP scheme was shut down in the prescribed communities, CDEP participants would "move into real jobs, training or to *more appropriate* income support including Work for the Dole" (Explanatory Memorandum, SSOLA Bill 2007: 49, my emphasis). The CDEP scheme was not only classed as a form of income support, but as less appropriate than Work for the Dole. This was despite the CDEP scheme replicating the workforce model, and manifesting the principles of mutual obligation, through the exchange of labour for income. This community workforce already in place was disbanded, while the Emergency Response was promoted as involving the "marshalling of local workforces" – through Work for the Dole (Howard, 2007b: 4). Why Work for the Dole was preferable to the CDEP scheme was indicated in the comment that replacing the CDEP scheme was part of an effort to normalise Indigenous communities (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2). The cause for rating the CDEP scheme less appropriate can be further gleaned from what distinguished it from Work for the Dole: the CDEP scheme was Indigenous specific, community controlled, paid better, and was popular amongst participants. Claims that closing down the CDEP scheme would "assist" CDEP participants into real work reinforced the message that the CDEP scheme was *too* popular (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 1; Explanatory Memorandum, SSOLA Bill 2007: 49). Such popularity was framed as problematic dependency, on a less appropriate, Indigenous specific form of welfare – the CDEP scheme.

Working together

The Howard Government's articulation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, mobilised in defence of the Intervention, revolved around an understanding of Aboriginal welfare usage as resulting from the actions (or inactions) of Aboriginal welfare users. The policies put forward to address Aboriginal welfare dependency (income quarantining, scrapping the CDEP scheme, and removing remote area activity exemptions) focused on the behaviour of Aboriginal welfare recipients (their irresponsible spending, their dependency on the CDEP scheme, and their lack of activity requirements, respectively). Aboriginal community members were portrayed as the necessary site of change. The problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency sat comfortably within the Howard Government's broader picture of the problem the Intervention was responding to. The context enabling child abuse to occur was attributed to Aboriginal rather than Government deficit, with Aboriginal welfare dependency (not unemployment) cited as part of this context. The problematisation of Aboriginal individuals and communities was conveyed through the reason given for sidestepping consultation and community engagement: "the local apparatus has broken down" (Howard in Seven Network, 2007). Indeed, there was a marked absence of the usual talk of "working together". Indigenous responsibility continued to be emphasised but not through the "working together" phrase, as rhetoric around working in partnership dropped away.

A practical approach

The Howard Government categorised its Intervention as a decidedly practical policy response (Brough, 2007g: 9) to its account of the problem of child abuse in Aboriginal communities. This account allowed "general disempowerment" no causal role, in contrast to the perspective taken by the authors of the *Little children are sacred* report (Wild and Anderson, 2007). Indeed, Howard's comments, and his Government's explicit avoidance of community consultation, treated 'non-practical' issues such as Indigenous rights, agency and autonomy as not only a distraction but an obstacle to Indigenous well-being (in Seven Network, 2007; Howard, 2007d: 4).

Instead, the Intervention concentrated on the 'practical' areas of housing, health, law and order, welfare reform and mainstream employment programs.

The goal of sameness

The Howard Government's push for sameness for Aboriginal citizens was tightly integrated through the case it made for the NT Intervention. The aim of the Intervention was said to be to normalise the relevant communities (Howard and Brough, 2007: 8; Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2; Brough, 2007g: 7,8). The normalizing, behaviour modifying influence of mainstream society was presented as lacking, and as necessary for social improvement and equality. Altering the Aboriginal land tenure systems and removing the permit system were presented as facilitating exposure to this influence. The retraction of Aboriginal land rights also fit within the Howard Government's self-defined pursuit of 'equal' rights – so that everybody has the same. Also in the name of economic normality and parity, the Indigenous, community-run, employment program was replaced with the generic Work for the Dole program (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2). Catering to Indigenous difference was portrayed as at the heart of the problem. The specific curtailing of Indigenous welfare rights through income management in the prescribed Northern Territory communities did not, however, fit so neatly.

The economic versus the social

The replacement of the CDEP scheme with the Work for the Dole program finalised the Howard Government's removal of specific community development objectives from the workfare available to Northern Territory Aboriginal communities. This substitution clinched the Howard Government's demotion of the social below the economic. It also affirmed the Howard Government's conception of the two as being in a one-way causal relationship. During the launch of the Intervention, as before it, economic outcomes were presented as flowing into social outcomes but not the other way around. The two were not treated as enmeshed.

Conclusion

This chapter and the chapter before it have followed the framing of Aboriginal welfare dependency through the first and fourth term of the Howard Government's decade in office. The emergence and development of the Howard Government's definition of the problem have been traced over the ten policy texts and output examined from these two peripheral terms. These chapters have shown the representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency to be entwined with inseparable themes. The binary relationship between the notions of Aboriginal welfare dependency and Aboriginal economic independence has been identified, and interactive relationships have been shown to exist between the theme of Aboriginal welfare dependency and the themes of *working together (Indigenous responsibility), a practical approach, the goal of sameness*, and *the economic as distinct from, and as a greater priority than, the social.*

The problem representation and its themes began to take shape early in the Howard Government's first term. Very quickly, Aboriginal welfare dependency was articulated as a problem and a priority. Coming under the four key areas of disadvantage, tackling welfare dependency formed part of the Howard Government's practical approach to reconciliation. The task was to *encourage* Indigenous people to catch up, move beyond welfare and become economically self-sufficient. Indigenous specific services, representation and rights were presented as holding this up. This message was conveyed through cuts made to ATSIC funding, to some extent excluding the 'practical' areas of health, housing, education and employment; consistent attacks on ATSIC's competency and purpose; the replacement of ATSIC's CEIS and ATSIC's CDC, and their social objectives, with IBIP and IBA respectively, and their purely economic objectives; the dilution of Indigenous land rights through the *Native Title Amendment Act 1998* towards "equal" rights; the reluctance with which the Howard Government committed to producing a written reconciliation document, and its refusal to apologise to the stolen generations; the freezing of the expansion of the CDEP scheme, the

establishment of the Spicer Review to report on the effectiveness of the CDEP scheme in transferring participants to non-CDEP employment, and the choice to align the CDEP scheme with social security rather than classify it as an earned wage. The problem representation was articulated more conspicuously, however, in this first term, through Government speak than through policy. This term stands out as a period in which crucial foundational work was performed, establishing the problem representation and familiarising this way of viewing Indigenous affairs.

The second and third term furthered the construction of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, through textual and policy output. Aboriginal welfare use continued to be portrayed as pathological dependency and the representation's inter-related themes continued to be drawn on and elaborated. Private sector employment and unemployment services were a key focus of the Howard Government's Indigenous policy (through the Indigenous Employment Policy and Australians Working Together measures), while it allowed for only very limited expansion of the CDEP scheme, put forward a half-hearted Motion of reconciliation and a revised version of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR)'s Declaration, introduced Shared Responsibility Agreements, and disbanded ATSIC – the peak Aboriginal representative body which oversaw the delivery of Indigenous specific services.

In the fourth term, the problem representation was expressed through policy most boldly, enabled in part by the Coalition holding the majority of seats in the Upper as well as the Lower House. This term saw the community development aspect of the CDEP scheme steadily phased out, and then the CDEP scheme itself phased out – in non-remote areas and in the Northern Territory as part of the Intervention – in order to tackle Aboriginal welfare dependency, and CDEP dependency. It also saw the introduction of compulsory income management for residents of prescribed Northern Territory Aboriginal communities, and four Cape York Aboriginal Communities (here on the basis of behaviour), to address the irresponsible behaviour

of Aboriginal welfare recipients. Towards these same goals, the package of measures also retracted Aboriginal land rights and undermined community governance and control. Although the policies of the Intervention were a big step from the policies that preceded them, they continued down the path already paved by Government discourse, from the very beginning of the Howard Government's period in office. The Intervention's measures and reasoning followed conceptually from the problem representation initially cultivated in term one.

The description of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency provided in these two chapters completes the first descriptive step of Bacchi's *'What's the problem represented to be?'* approach. Applying the WPR approach in this thesis at this point has helped Government output to be understood as discursively formulating problems to be solved. Using Postcolonial theory as guide has so far directed attention to the Howard Government's representation of Indigenous people, the state of Indigenous affairs, and the role of the state. The task remains to critically analyse the problem representation that has been identified. The next stages of Bacchi's approach awaits. The process has been partially commenced in these last two chapters; through the isolation of key themes. The deconstructive process will go deeper, however, in the following chapters. The next chapter (Chapter 6) will more thoroughly execute Step 2, underlining the assumptions within the problem representation and its related themes. Chapter 7 will delve into the origins of the problem representation, carrying out Step 3 of the approach. This chapter will be the fourth and final chapter in this second section on the problem representation itself. The final section, Section 3, which comprises Chapters 8 to 14, will take on the bigger task of looking at what is missing from this problem representation. In the process a counter position will be proposed.

Section 2: The problem representation

CHAPTER 6: STEP 2 – ASSUMPTIONS

This chapter follows the second step of the Postcolonial theory inflected WPR approach introduced in the previous theory section. This second step directs attention to the presuppositions and conceptual logics on which the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency is based. These underlying assumptions were flagged as they emerged throughout the description of the problem representation in the earlier chapters, so the process has already begun. This chapter turns the focus specifically onto these assumptions and makes explicit the core ideas at play. To begin with, the concept of welfare dependency generally will be unpacked. I will then summarise the assumptions operating within the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, and its related themes.

Assumptions within the concept of welfare dependency

As the previous chapters have shown, the concept of Aboriginal welfare dependency featured large within the Howard Government's textual output and policy developments. The concept of welfare dependency was also at the heart of the Howard Government's explanation of unemployment generally in Australia (Newman, 1999; Commonwealth Government, 2002a; Andrews, 2005g). Howard stated,

> people who get locked into welfare and welfare-dependency all of their lives, they have no initiative to get out and look after themselves and they pass it down from generation to generation (2007a).

Like most users of the term, the Howard Government neglected to provide a clear definition of the phenomenon they referred to. Welfare dependency is indeed widely ill-defined, with a range of meanings associated with the term (Parker, 2004: 29; Engels, 2006: 9; Henman and Perry, 2002: 317; Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 328-329). The concept is nonetheless premised on some key, commonly accepted assumptions. The notion of welfare dependency expands on the bare facts of welfare (that welfare recipients receive income support from the state) to claim that welfare recipients (or at least 'welfare dependent' welfare recipients) are in a relationship of dependency with the state. The term welfare dependency has come to carry the sense that the use of welfare by welfare dependent recipients is distinct from their need for it. They remain on welfare because they are dependent, not because of a lack of employment opportunities or an inability to get work. Within the concept of welfare dependency, welfare is portrayed as optional: an attractive option that is used where it is not necessary, due to a state of dependency (Mead in Ramesh, 2010; Murray, 2003; Parker, 2004: 29-30). Welfare and its use are treated as a source of unemployment rather than a method of alleviating it (Shaver, 2001: 278; Mendes, 2004: 32; O'Connor, 2001: 230).

The welfare recipient

While welfare itself is presented as inviting dependence, the idea that welfare recipients stay on welfare because of their personal dependency involves assumptions about welfare recipients. Welfare recipients are presumed to be reluctant to leave welfare, and to be not trying hard enough to gain employment (Mead in Ramesh, 2010; Mead, 1999; Murray, 1996: 85; Henman, 2002: 82; Humphries, 2004: 221,222; Parker, 2004: 29,30). Welfare use (particularly long term) is depicted as related to recipients' inertia and inactivity. To this extent, welfare recipients are blamed for their own predicament (Henman, 2002: 82; Bessant, 2000: 29; O'Connor, 2001: 222). The cause of unemployment is individualised; the welfare dependent has "fallen into hardship due to his own conduct" (Green, 1996: 21). The behaviour of the individual welfare recipient is

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implicated in their ongoing use of income support (Bletsas, 2007: 70,80; Yeatman, 2000; Henman, 2002: 76; Mendes, 2004: 31). Welfare recipients are presented as not acting in their own best interests: "no longer to be regarded as the best judge of her own needs and prospects" because "welfare dependence erodes the recipient's capacity for freedom and autonomy" (Shaver, 2001: 287).

As Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon put it, "[t]he contention is that poor, dependent people have something more than lack of money wrong with them" (1994: 328). The psychological health, values and character of welfare recipients are drawn in as at fault and requiring attention (Mendes, 2008: 55,135; Raper, 2000). The welfare recipient is pathologised as lacking – in skills, agency, work ethic, self-discipline, mental fortitude, and moral fibre (Bessant, 2000: 25,26; Bessant, Watts, Dalton and Smyth, 2006: 142; Shaver, 2001: 281,287,289). Welfare dependents are portrayed as not sufficiently motivated or strong willed enough to resist the destructive yet addictive provision of 'something for nothing' (Parker, 2004: 30, Bessant, 2000: 26).

Commentary extends to depicting 'welfare dependent' welfare recipients as an underclass (Murray, 1989; 1994; Bessant, 2000: 23; Martin, 2004). Adam Jamrozik conjectures that those in this category are in fact judged to be a *moral* underclass (more than a social underclass), regarded as morally suspect, irresponsible and possessing inferior personality characteristics (2001: 146). Along the same lines, Philip Mendes writes that welfare dependency is associated with a feckless underclass typified by high rates of unemployment, illegitimacy and lawlessness" (2008: 54). Welfare dependency is described as intergenerational, as something that is learnt, resulting from a 'culture of poverty' (Bessant et al, 2006: 142). Welfare dependency is constructed as a problem because of the sort of person it allows recipients to be, and the contaminating effect this has on the community. Jamie Peck makes this point

> [t]he new imperative is to end welfare, not poverty per se, the objective being to correct those individual behavioural dysfunctions – such as moral laxity and inadequate work discipline – which are seen as a cause of poverty (1998: 136).

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Welfare recipients as non-taxpayers

The concept of welfare dependency establishes welfare recipients as a distinct category, distinguished as unemployed, as receiving tax-funded benefits, and as not paying tax. Welfare recipients are separated from the rest of society who are portrayed as funding welfare, and having cause to feel resentful about this (Hartman, 2005: 57; Bessant, 2000: 21; Murray, 1994: 124; Quirk, 2004: 441). Welfare is cast as an excessive, unjustifiable burden on tax payers (Henman, 2002: 73). This is particularly so because those on welfare are considered to be on welfare because they have not sufficiently applied themselves to the task of gaining employment. It is reasoned that because the system is abused at the expense of those who work, it is not only costly but also unfair.

The Government is positioned within this discourse as needing to "promote the moral integrity of the community by ensuring that the community is not exploited" (Bessant, 2000: 20). A wedge is driven between welfare recipients, portrayed as bludging, tax shirking 'job snobs', and the employed, portrayed as hardworking, contributing citizens (Wilson, 2001: 1,3,9). The constructed illegitimacy of the receipt of welfare inflates the sense of injustice taxpayers are expected to feel about their hard earned pay going towards supporting those who do not 'work' (Murray, 1994: 124). Welfare recipients are defined by their welfare use, assumed to be evading their social obligations, and pitted against those portrayed as footing the bill. In the process, the "multiple contributions" of welfare recipients (economic and social) are rendered "invisible" (Cass and Brennan, 2002: 260; Yeatman, 2000).

Pensioners

Particular types of welfare recipients are classed as welfare dependent and a burden on tax payers; old age pensioners are excluded from the category of welfare dependents (Shaver, 2001: 285; Murray, 1996: 83; Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 322). Those no longer considered of working age are presumed to be

legitimate, entitled recipients of welfare – not a burden, and not in an unhealthy state of dependency. The pension is sectioned off as unproblematic (indeed activity requirements for those approaching retirement age have been increasingly relaxed [Henman, 2002: 80]). People with disabilities and lone parents have not been permitted the same exemption from the category of welfare dependents (Eardley, Saunders and Evans, 2000: 5,6; Mendes, 2008: 34-35).

The market

Corresponding with the assumption that the problem sits primarily with the individual welfare recipient is the assumption that the market should not be held accountable for current levels of welfare use. The problem of welfare dependency and unemployment is constructed as with the supply of workers and uptake of work. As it is considered a supply side issue, the demand for workers is portrayed as irrelevant. Any flaws in the economic system are overlooked as the critical gaze is fixed on the behaviour of welfare claimants. The market is presumed to be functioning effectively and is relieved of responsibility. It is assumed that jobs are available to those who choose to accept them (Mead, 2002; Mendes, 2008: 58). Faith in the ability of the market to provide for all is inherent within this reading of the situation (Henman, 2002: 82).

Dependency

The term dependency is obviously at the core of the phrase welfare dependency but a particular definition of dependency is assumed. Within the construct of welfare dependency, being *dependent* is presented as a negative position to be in. Dependency on welfare is presented as akin to an addiction (Mendes, 2004: 32). Notions of dependency associated with drug use and gambling feed in and overlay the use of the term dependency in relation to welfare receipt (Mendes, 2004: 32; Gunders, 2000: 9). The dependency of welfare dependents is presented as entailing a loss of freedom, autonomy and self-respect (Mead,

1999: 15,17). Being dependent on government 'handouts' is considered an undignified, demeaning, dysfunctional and immature state, reflecting on one's ability to take responsibility and look after oneself (Mead, 1999: 14-15). Framed in this way, Yvonne Hartman asks, "who would not wish to assert their independence from the infantilizing nipple of welfare dependency?" (2005: 69).

The dependency of the welfare recipient is contrasted to the independence of the (paid) worker (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 328,329). The ideal of the independent worker is referenced and reinforced: productive, industrious, competent, self-sufficient, autonomous and free – even a more moral citizen (Murray, 1994: 112-118; Mead, 1999: 15-17). The welfare dependent is constructed as the binary opposite – and viewed with disapproval. The pair are positioned in a hierarchy of value. The interdependence and mutual reliance of all humanity are obfuscated (Beasley and Bacchi, 2007: 280). Dependency is defined negatively and applied selectively to welfare claimants, in contrast to a positive understanding of independence reserved for workers.

Passivity

Also contained within the concept of welfare dependency is the idea that welfare receipt is passive. 'Passive welfare' is used as a synonym for welfare dependency. A binary is produced between the 'passive' state of being on welfare and the 'active' state of working. The passivity attributed to welfare dependency is part of what is considered objectionable about it, and the activity of wage labour is promoted as contributing to its virtue (Gunders, 2000: 8; Shaver, 2001: 281; Cortis, Cowling and Meagher, 2008: 23; Fraser and Gordon, 1994). The implication is that welfare recipients lack agency and volition, and live unproductive, inactive lives since they do not earn a wage sufficient to support themselves. Anna Yeatman describes the connection made between welfare dependency and passivity and the implicit valorisation of paid labour:

> Dependency is associated with both passivity and a long-term, self-destructive reliance on unearned economic support, or 'welfare'. It is self-destructive because long-term dependency of this kind for adults is seen as cultivating a particular social psychology that

makes it virtually impossible for individuals to be sufficiently self-regarding to do what is necessary to move off welfare in the direction of self-reliance. Employment, part-time or full-time, is seen as the primary means by which individuals acquire self-esteem, confidence in handling problems, skills, and the regard of others. … Dependency … is defined as incongruent with citizenship, where citizenship is assumed to reside in the kind of active membership of society that self-reliance makes possible through stable patterns of employment (2000).

'Active' wage labour is highly valued, for what it does for the individual and for what it does for the community. It is ascribed a socially integrative role, presented as cultivating a work ethic and self discipline, and treated as definitive and obligatory social participation (Bessant, 2000: 20,22,25; Shaver, 2001; 282,283). Active social participation outside of the workforce is conceptually not registered.

Aboriginal welfare recipients

Aboriginal welfare recipients, like welfare recipients from the wider community, are problematised when described as welfare dependents. Assumptions are made about Aboriginal welfare recipients' character, moral fibre, psychological health, personality, and social and work skills. There is also something distinctive about the application of the concept of welfare dependency to Aboriginal people. The race/culture of the Aboriginal person on welfare is brought in as part of the description of the problematic individual. Because of a claimant's membership of this group, additional assumptions are made about the type of person they are and their responsibility for their position.

Within the concept of Aboriginal welfare dependency (which preceded, and was then entrenched by, the Howard Government), not only are Aboriginal welfare recipients characterised as the locus of the problem, but all Aboriginal people are so characterised, as welfare dependents or potential welfare dependents. Welfare dependency is presented as not simply reflecting on the individual Aboriginal welfare recipient but on Aboriginal people as a race. Jon

Altman and Diane Smith note the wider inferences that are made when Aboriginality and welfare dependency are brought together: "the depiction of Aboriginal people as excessively dependent on welfare, or handouts, often results in negative stereotyping" (1993: 21). Aboriginal welfare recipients are considered to be dependent on welfare due to personal failings and inadequacies assumed to be a feature of the group. Aboriginal communities are portrayed as particularly prone to welfare dependency. Maggie Walter speaks of the racialisation of 'welfare dependency' in Australia (post Howard): "for Indigenous people, these behavioural choices are portrayed as racially aligned selections, with culture wound into the causality" (2010: 131). Research undertaken by Benno Engels, involving examination of Commonwealth parliamentary records between 1986 and 2005, demonstrates that Aboriginal people "remained the single most frequently associated welfare group with this [welfare dependency] label" (2006: 9). As Fraser and Gordon observed in North America (1994: 325-327), the welfare dependent label has racial overtones. In a mutually stigmatizing relationship, welfare dependency is, to a degree at least, actually associated with Aboriginal people, and vice versa. The disparaging aspects of the label of welfare dependency, with its assignment of personal responsibility, interact with the already negative representation of Aboriginal people that exists, tarnishing both categories.

Assumptions within the Howard Government's specific representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency and its related themes

Aboriginal Welfare dependency under Howard

The Howard Government drew on and built on the assumptions already attached to the concept of welfare dependency and Aboriginal welfare dependency. As early as 1996, the Howard Government presented the receipt of welfare by Aboriginal people as problematic, and Herron stated that the aim of his Government was to "promote and encourage Indigenous progress away from handouts and welfare" (1996b: 11). In 1998, Herron wrote anxiously, and

imprecisely, about preventing "a welfare-dependent lifestyle" (1998b: 3). Aboriginal welfare use was described as a way of life rather than a state of unemployment. The title of the discussion paper released around this time, proposing the replacement of ATSIC's Commercial Development Corporation (CDC) with Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), promised to remove "the welfare shackles" (Herron, 1998a). Aboriginal welfare usage was conceived of as a constraining dependency.

Soon after, John Howard openly supported the perception that Aboriginal people were "forever depending upon welfare handouts and ... get an undue proportion of welfare handouts" (in House of Representatives, 1998: 2). In doing so, Howard bolstered the view that Aboriginal welfare usage was unfair. The pre-election party document released by Herron late 1998 featured the title and the message that Aboriginal people needed to move "beyond welfare" (Herron, 1998e). There was an assumption that Aboriginal people's use of welfare was holding them back.

During the middle terms, the Howard Government continued to frame Aboriginal unemployment as Aboriginal welfare dependency, referring to a handout mentality, a welfare dependency mentality, and a "culture of dependency" (Herron, 1999c: 5; 2000a: 3; 2001; Howard, 2000c; Howard in ABC, 2003).

Early on in the fourth term, Kevin Andrews talked about challenging the "welfare culture" among Indigenous people (DEWR, 2005b: iii). Here, again, something was assumed to be wrong with the mentality, and behaviour, of Indigenous welfare recipients, as individuals and as a group. Later in 2005, DEWR described Indigenous people as over-reliant on welfare, suggesting Indigenous welfare recipients were taking more than their due, and that this was preventing these recipients from gaining employment (DEWR, 2005d: 4). In 2006, Andrews spoke of the "debilitating effects of welfare and acceptance

passively of welfare in this country" (2006a: 1). Indigenous welfare use was presented as self-harming, and as chosen passivity.

Aboriginal welfare dependency continued to dominate Government discourse in 2007 and was one of the core reasons given for the Northern Territory Emergency Response measures (Hockey, 2007: 1; Howard, 2007c: 6; 2007d: 4; Brough, 2007g: 2,5,6; 2007f: 17; Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2; Explanatory Memorandum, SSOLA Bill 2007: 19). Brough described welfare as "free money" and declared that "too many [Indigenous people] are trapped in an intergenerational cycle of dependency" (2007g: 2,5). Welfare payments were assumed to be undeserved and unearned and welfare dependency was assumed to be transferable and learnt. Welfare dependency was cited as a source of substance abuse and a breakdown in community standards, and a cause of unemployment (Brough, 2007g: 2,5,6; Brough and Hockey, 2007). At the close of his Prime Ministership, Howard highlighted addressing "the cancer of passive welfare" as one of his Government's key goals in Indigenous affairs (2007d: 4). In this account, Indigenous welfare usage was a self-perpetuating sickness, that spreads.

Across the Howard Government's time in power, since its very first term and up to its last days in office, it represented Aboriginal welfare dependency as a major problem. Aboriginal welfare dependency was assigned responsibility for a whole host of social ills affecting Aboriginal Australians. To an extent, welfare dependency was used as if it were synonymous with welfare receipt. However, this obscured the difference between the terms and the additional meanings implied by the adjunct 'dependency'. Welfare dependency was represented by the Howard Government as an attitude, a mentality, a culture, a learnt behaviour (intergenerational) and a lifestyle. Indeed, it presented Aboriginal welfare dependence as one of the core causes of high Aboriginal unemployment.

Aboriginal welfare dependency within the treatment of the CDEP scheme

The CDEP scheme also came to be represented as part of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. During each of the four terms, the Howard Government did acknowledge benefits of the CDEP scheme beyond non-CDEP employment outcomes (Herron, 1998b; 1998e; Ruddock, 2000: 4; 2001: 6,7; 2002b: 11; DEWR, 2005a: iii; Andrews, 2005a: 1). However, the scheme's worth came to be valued only in terms of its transfer of participants to non-CDEP work. In 1997, the Spicer Review was set this specific criterion on which to evaluate the program, with the expansion of the CDEP scheme made dependent on its findings. Any period of participation had come to be problematised, and would come to be constructed as a form of welfare dependency. Signs of this redefinition of the CDEP scheme were perhaps present in the Howard Government's decision in 1998 to make CDEP participants clients of the social security system rather than opt to class CDEP work as an earned income (Herron, 1998b: 11-12,37).

In the fourth term, CDEP participation was habitually distinguished from 'real' work (DEWR, 2005b: iii; 2006b: 9,13; Andrews, 2006a: 3,4; 2006b; Hockey, 2007: 1; Brough and Hockey, 2007: 1,2; Brough in ABC, 2007b; Brough, 2007g: 6; Explanatory Memorandum, SSOLA Bill 2007: 47). It was dismissed as "government assistance" (DEWR, 2005a: 3), as "indigenous work for the dole for life" (Andrews, 2006b), as a "make-work situation" on which people languish (Andrews, 2006c: 1), and as "funded by welfare" (Hockey, 2007: 1). The restructuring of the CDEP scheme in this term, around the singular objective of exiting participants from the scheme, was presented as a means of addressing Aboriginal welfare dependency (DEWR, 2005a: iii; 2005b: iii; Andrews, 2005b: 2; 2006a: 1). Participants were then moved off the CDEP scheme by closing the scheme in all urban and regional areas and all parts of the Northern Territory – again to tackle welfare dependency (DEWR, 2006b: 5; Hockey, 2007: 1; Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2; Brough, 2007g: 6). The CDEP scheme was accused of actually blocking employment and being a destination rather than a

stepping stone to employment (DEWR, 2005a: 3; 2005d: 9; Andrews, 2006a: 2; Brough and Hockey, 2007: 1). The CDEP scheme was described by Hockey as a welfare program that Indigenous people became stuck on, and as a cargo net which participants did not want to get out of (in ABC, 2007a: 1). Brough stated clearly, "CDEP has become another form of welfare dependency" (2007g: 6).

Economic independence under Howard

Alongside the Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency sat its portrayal of Indigenous economic independence as the solution to, and the outcome of, eradicating welfare dependency. The notion of economic independence was consistently used by the Howard Government to flesh out the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. Economic independence was to bring about an end to welfare dependence and reducing welfare dependence was to bring about economic independence (Herron, 1998a: 4; House of Representatives, 1998: 2; Andrews, 2005c: 1; DEWR, 2005d: 4; 2006b: 5). How this worked was not clarified. What was asserted, however, was that there was a relationship between the two.

The definition provided of Indigenous economic independence was rich in assumptions about the value and meaning of waged labour and mainstream economic participation. Employment was portrayed as crucial to personal fulfilment and self-esteem, and the meeting of familial obligations. Economic independence was described as "[g]aining a job, owning a property, and building one's own wealth for the next generation" (Andrews, 2005c: 1; DEWR, 2005d: 4). The meaning of economic independence was extended to cover meeting the needs of dependents – family relationships were presented as appropriate relations of dependency. Economic independence was characterised as meaning Aboriginal people would be able to "make informed choices about their lives" (DEWR, 2005d: 2; 2006b: 5), and "fulfil their potential and help their children fulfil their aspirations" (Andrews, 2005a: 1).

There are a number of terms which were used interchangeably with economic independence: *economic development, economic empowerment, empowerment, self-empowerment, self-sufficiency*, and *self-reliance* (Herron, 1996b: 10,11,12; 1998a: 4,21; 1998b: 22; 1998e: 4-5; DEWR, 2005a: 3; 2005d; House of Representatives, 1998: 2). The combined use of these terms also contributed to the definition of Indigenous economic independence – as tied up with liberation and as fundamental to self-esteem and dignity (for example see Herron, 1996b: 6,10,11,12). Mainstream employment and/or commercial expansion were cast as necessary for Indigenous economic and social "well being" and "progress", as if they were a stage of development (Andrews, 2005b: 2; Herron, 1996b: 11; Howard, 2007d: 4). Indigenous economic independence from (certain sources of) Government funding was portrayed as involving a more mature and respectable power relationship, in which Indigenous individuals could feel more fully developed.

It was also made clear that this definition of economic independence excluded CDEP employment. From as early as 1998, and before the CDEP scheme came to described outright as a form of welfare dependency, CDEP participation was distinguished from economic independence (Herron, 1998b: 12,13). The changes to the CDEP scheme (the intensification of the focus on transferring participants to non-CDEP employment, and the scrapping of the program in urban and regional areas and the Northern Territory) were framed as encouraging Indigenous economic independence (DEWR, 2005d; 2006a: 5; 2006b: 1,5,7; Brough and Hockey, 2007).

Indigenous responsibility under Howard

Indigenous responsibility was an integral part of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. The concept of welfare dependency invoked by the Howard Government positions the welfare dependent individual as to some extent responsible, for it is their dependency which is preventing them from gaining employment. The language

used by the Howard Government confirmed this behavioural explanation of Aboriginal welfare usage (Herron, 1998b: 3; 1999c: 5; 2000a: 3; Howard, 2000c; 2007d: 4; Howard in ABC, 2003; Andrews, 2005d: 1; 2006a: 1; DEWR, 2005b: iii; Brough, 2007g: 5). The problem was located within Aboriginal welfare recipients; their actions and their mindset.

During its first and fourth term the Howard Government frequently talked of "helping", "assisting", "promoting" and "encouraging" Indigenous people to move beyond welfare dependency, find ways out of poverty and dependence on welfare, and achieve better economic outcomes (Herron, 1996b: 11; 1998a: 4; 1998b: 12,22; 1998e: 1,2,4,5; Andrews, 2005c: 1; DEWR, 2005a: 3; 2006a: 5). The Howard Government depicted Indigenous people as the key actors involved in enacting change and represented its role as simply facilitating the process.

Presumptions of Indigenous responsibility for Indigenous disadvantage were also communicated through the language of "working together", working in a "cooperative partnership", and "sharing responsibility" (Herron, 1996b: 2,3,12; 1998b: 21,22; Andrews and Vanstone, 2005: 2; DEWR, 2005d: 19). Although ostensibly promoting Indigenous involvement and distributing responsibility between government and Indigenous people, the Howard Government, in effect, highlighted the role of Indigenous people and minimised the role of government. Herron stated "Government's can only do so much" (1996b: 7), Howard stressed "the solution is in their hands" (2003a), and Andrews and Vanstone reiterated "governments cannot do it alone" (2005: 2). The Howard Government's prioritisation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency – a problem conceptualised as relating to Indigenous failings – fit into the Government's broader "Indigenous responsibility agenda" (Howard, 2007d: 3).

The targeting of CDEP participants and CDEP organisations as sites of change relied on and supported the view that Indigenous unemployment was a result of

Indigenous deficit and failing. The changes to the CDEP scheme, making it stricter and prompting participants to exit the program (initially via restrictions and incentives), operated on the understanding that the problem lay with Indigenous people. Indigenous people were represented as playing a principal role in their own unemployment, choosing to participate in the CDEP scheme (increasingly defined as welfare) despite having "genuine access to real jobs" (Hockey, 2007: 1). CDEP participants were represented as CDEP dependent and CDEP organisations were represented as allowing such dependency to occur.

The critique of Indigenous actions and actors also lay behind the removal of remote area activity exemptions and the disbanding of ATSIC. It also came through clearly in the Northern Territory Intervention. The euphemistic language of 'working together', however, dropped away with the openly top-down Intervention. Through the NTER, the Howard Government emphasised Indigenous responsibility more explicitly (via policy and rhetoric), and was upfront about bypassing Indigenous involvement.

A practical approach under Howard

The Howard Government's focus on Aboriginal welfare dependency tied in with its declared 'practical approach' to Aboriginal affairs. The Howard Government pronounced its approach "practical" because it was concerned with what it classed as the "fundamentals": health, housing, education and employment (Herron, 1996b: 8,9,13; Howard, 1996b: 6; DEWR, 2005d: 5). Howard talked about the importance of finding the "practical expression of reconciliation" (1996b: 6). This effectively broke down to promising to deliver citizenship entitlements (Herron, 1996b: 8,9,13; 1998b: 1,3,6; 1998e: 1; Ruddock, 2001: 1; 2002b: 26). Aboriginal welfare dependency was defined as a practical issue (the source of one of the four areas of disadvantage: unemployment), and was thus counted as deserving of attention. All that was not seen as practical was conceived of as a distraction and sectioned off as trivial, rhetorical, not 'real', politically correct, or symbolic (Howard, 1996b: 6;

Herron, 1996b: 2). Indeed, the pursuit of a 'politically correct' rights agenda was accused of fostering welfare dependency (Howard, 2007d: 4; Howard and Vanstone, 2004: 8; Vanstone, 2004d; Ruddock, 2002b: 2).

The Howard Government distinguished itself from the "more politically correct agenda" of the previous Labor Government led by Prime Minister Paul Keating: its "exaggerated rhetoric" and its declared interest in Aboriginal rights, particularly land rights (Howard, 1996b: 6; Herron, 1996b: 2). Unlike the Keating Government, the Howard Government expressed outright opposition to the notion of Native Title, and decisively weakened Native Title rights through the introduction of the *Native Title Amendment Act 1998*. Legislative recognition of Indigenous rights to land was characterised by the Howard Government as destructive to Indigenous culture (Brough, 2007h: 7) and directly related to Aboriginal welfare dependency (Howard, 2007d: 4). The Howard Government's dismantling of the peak representative body, ATSIC – another Labor Government initiative, introduced in 1990 by Prime Minister Bob Hawke – was also defended as part of its practical approach and focus on the "priority" areas (Howard and Vanstone, 2004: 8; Herron, 1998b).

Connected was the Howard Government's characterisation of attention to the past as unhelpful. The Howard Government's cautious and restrained acknowledgement of racism in the present and injustice in the past shored up the suitability of a practical approach (Herron, 1996b: 2,3; 1998e: 1,3; Howard, 1996b: 6; 2007d: 4). It was assumed that Australia's beginnings had no bearing on the present, and no bearing on the practical problems of Aboriginal disadvantage and welfare dependency. Ruddock, and Vanstone, spoke of a "culture of blame and victimhood" as preventing progress (Ruddock, 2002a; Vanstone, 2005a). Howard stated "there is nothing to be achieved by saying that it's somebody else's fault because of something that happened a long time ago" (2003a). Indeed, it was conceptually necessary that colonisation be irrelevant and "the balance sheet of Australian history" be "a very generous and

benign one" (Howard in House of Representatives, 1996: 6158). This enabled a practical approach to be appropriate and sufficient.

The goal of sameness under Howard

Extending on from the Howard Government's depiction of the problem as limited to the 'practical' realm was its contention that Aboriginal welfare dependency was an issue of (a lack of) sameness. Aboriginal welfare dependency was conceived of as a problem of Aboriginal people not having the same: the same share of jobs, the same share of Australia's wealth, the same citizenship rights (DEWR, 2005a: iii,4; 2006b: 1; Andrews and Vanstone, 2005: 2; Howard, 2004: 4,5; Herron, 1996b: 1,3). The Howard Government made it clear it was not in favour of regarding Indigenous issues as unique, beyond levels of disadvantage. Howard was only prepared to acknowledge that Indigenous Australians were "the most deprived group" (1996b: 17). Howard stated that he did not want to talk about racism, or race; or terms that "divide us into whites and non-whites" (1996b: 6,17).

Reconciliation, then, for the Howard Government, was about addressing socio-economic difference (partly through targeting Aboriginal welfare dependency). Equality was the purported goal, but a particular version that conflated equality with sameness. Equivalent civil rights entitlements were the focus, and not the protection of specific and distinct Indigenous human rights. Sameness of treatment was favoured as the appropriate method of pursuing the delivery of equivalent entitlements. Although not always entirely consistent, the Howard Government showed a preference throughout its terms for formal equality (meaning same treatment), over substantive equality (meaning different treatment – special measures and accommodation of difference – towards the equal enjoyment of human rights) (Abella in Bacchi, 1996: 61; *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*: s8[1]).

The response of the Howard Government to native title was to treat Aboriginal Native Title Claimants as just another interest group whose interests needed to be balanced with competing lobby groups (Herron, 1996b: 3; Howard, 1998: 1). Framed in this way, Howard argued that recognising native title gave Indigenous people unfair superior rights (1998: 1). Indigenous home ownership (as opposed to communal land ownership) was promoted by the Howard Government as a preferable alternative. The protection of specific Indigenous rights, through different treatment, remained outside the Howard Government's interpretation of equality.

The unrelenting assault on ATSIC by the Howard Government also displayed its aversion to Indigenous difference. The Howard Government objected to tailored Indigenous specific services and what it classed as separate governance (Herron, 1996b: 1,5,9,11; 1998b: 4; Howard, 2004; 4,5; 2007d: 4). The attempts to make the CDEP scheme more like Work for the Dole, and the eventual dismantling of the CDEP scheme to be replaced by Work for the Dole, further demonstrated this resistance to Indigenous difference and Indigenous specific programs. The Intervention itself weakened Indigenous land rights and community governance and also curtailed certain citizenship rights (notably welfare rights) – explicitly towards the goal of addressing Indigenous difference.

Repeatedly, the argument that Aboriginal people should *have* the same, bled into a case for Aboriginal people to *be* the same. Entry into the mainstream economy was encouraged for its life-changing, "normalizing" effects, and posited as necessary for "social progress" (Brough and Hockey, 2007: 2; Howard, 2007d: 4). Economic incorporation was less an option presented and more the Howard Government's chosen pathway for Aboriginal Australia. Most noteworthy were the expected cultural shifts that it was hoped such normalisation would bring. The ideal of sameness within the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency made Aboriginal 'abnormality' a part of the problem of Aboriginal economic disparity.

The economic/social distinction under Howard

The assumption that the economic and social realms could be neatly separated, and that the economic realm was of greater importance, further fleshed out the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. The replacement of ATSIC's Commercial Development Corporation (CDC) with Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) – to remove "the welfare shackles" – was defended as resolving the conflict between economic and social goals, by simply removing social goals from the table (Herron, 1998a: 6). The arguments for redirecting the CDEP scheme away from community development also relied on this distinction and this ranking (DEWR, 2005a: 7,8; 2005b: 5; 2006a: 13). The connection between the social and the economic was downplayed by the Howard Government which treated social concerns as inhibiting economic success. The Howard Government's focus on Aboriginal economic independence itself involved a binary conception of the economic and the social, with the economic prioritised. However, the Howard Government's distinction between the two was continually undermined as it argued that its focus on the economic would deliver social outcomes. The economic and the social could not be so easily separated.

Conclusion

This chapter has continued on from the work started in the previous two chapters, teasing out the assumptions in the Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency. Within the concept of welfare dependency generally, which the Howard Government so heavily drew upon, a number of assumptions have been identified. A key assumption is that the individual welfare recipient is at fault. Flowing on from this assumption is the idea that the use of welfare by welfare dependents is attributable to an array of personal failings including lack of effort, lack of willpower, character flaws, social disorders and weak morals. Welfare recipients are characterised as illegitimate users of public funds, and distinguished from contributing taxpayers

and pensioners. The market is presumed innocent. Paid employment is assumed to be an inherent good, delivering dignity, pride and freedom, and denoting agency, independence and maturity. In contrast, welfare use is loaded with concepts of passivity and dependency and passive dependent welfare recipients are rendered bad citizens. Links made between Aboriginal people and welfare dependency have also been identified, which feed into still extant colonial stereotypes.

This chapter has also looked further into the assumptions within the Howard Government's specific representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency. As foreshadowed in my description of the problem representation, the Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency was infused with assumptions about the curative benefits of mainstream economic participation, about the responsibility Aboriginal people bear for Aboriginal welfare use, about the 'practical' nature of Aboriginal issues, including welfare dependency, about the need for Aboriginal people to be treated, get, and be, the same, and about the distinctness and the greater value of the economic in relation to the social.

Significantly, the assumptions within the Howard Government's construction of Aboriginal welfare use as welfare dependency and its prioritisation of Indigenous economic independence, all pointed to a minimal role for government in Indigenous affairs. Bringing out the assumptions which underlie the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency has performed a crucial step in the critical analysis of this representation, getting to the heart of the claims it makes. In the next chapter, this thesis will go deeper, exploring the origins of the concept of welfare dependency generally, and Aboriginal welfare dependency specifically.

Section 2: The problem representation

CHAPTER 7: STEP 3 – ORIGINS

It is now time to explore the origins of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, to get a better sense of the systems of thought it is a part of and how they gained dominance. The goal is to denaturalise this problem representation by demonstrating that it is anchored to a history which has shaped its development. Like all problem representations, it is contingent (Bacchi, 2009: 10). Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon have undertaken such a genealogical investigation of the concept of dependency and describe their approach in this way:

> [w]e do *not* present a causal analysis. Rather, by contrasting present meanings ... with past meanings, we aim to defamiliarise taken-for-granted beliefs in order to render them susceptible to critique and to illuminate present-day conflicts (1994: 310-311).

With help from Fraser and Gordon, the idea of welfare dependency will be followed through time to observe the context of its construction. This chapter will then focus on the origins of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of *Aboriginal* welfare dependency. Ultimately, it will be shown that the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency as represented by the Howard Government was a product of particular circumstances. As such, it remains open for reconsideration, and open to intervention.

The origins of the concept of welfare dependency generally

Shifting meaning of dependency

The concept of dependency has not always carried the negative connotations it does today. Fraser and Gordon's investigations into the use of the term show that in pre-industrial times, dependency was considered the norm rather than a deviant state (1994: 315). The meaning of the term *dependency* included

economic as well as socio-legal and political senses, and to be independent, in all these senses, was a rare condition. It was not until the 1700s that individuals came to be referred to as independent, due to their ownership of property and lack of need to work (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 313). To work for another was to be in a relation of dependence. No stigma was attached to this (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 313). In fact, the Italian word for employee is still *dipendente*.

The meaning of dependency changed sharply in the industrial era, according to Fraser and Gordon. With the rise of capitalism, workers were still dependent on their employers for work; however, the "hierarchy that had been relatively explicit and visible in the peasant-landlord relation was mystified in the relationship of factory operative to factory owner" (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 319). The unequal and interdependent relationship still existed, as Judith Bessant and Rob Watts describe:

> capitalism is a social and economic system of production based on a radical distinction between a minority of people who own most of the productive wealth (or capital) and the majority of people who have to sell their labour (2007: 27).

However, the adjusted meaning of the term dependency masked this relationship. The independent wage earner – theoretically able to support his dependent family – was defined in opposition to the pauper, who was classed as dependent, on poor relief (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 316). Furthermore, types of work that did not receive a wage were no longer counted as labour, being outside the now differentiated, "seemingly autonomous", official economy (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 318,331-332; Edwards, 2004: 78,87-89).

During this period of industrialisation, the definition of dependency branched out from being an all-purpose term describing social relations (economic, socio-legal, and political all together), to describing various specific and differentiated forms of dependency (dependency on poor relief, political dependency, and socio-legal dependency) (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 315). With the gradual expansion of civil and political rights as industrialisation progressed through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (slavery was officially abolished,

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independence was gained by many colonised countries, and the dependence of women on men had been challenged), the negative associations with dependency were compounded (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 319,323,324). Still inflected with racist and misogynist discourses, the understanding of dependency as a social relation, as structural, and as appropriate had diminished (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 319,323,324). The term took on a stronger individualised moral/psychological meaning (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 319). The pauper was now dependent *and* blameworthy (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 316).

Fraser and Gordon trace the discourse of dependency in the US from pauperism in the 1900s, when the state was replacing the church as the provider of welfare, through to the 1950s when dependency took on a pathological element, influenced by the medical and psychiatry professions. The term *welfare dependency*, with its pejorative connotations, became commonplace during the 1960s, around the same time as public assistance was extended to African American women (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 321-322). According to Fraser and Gordon, the pathological meaning of dependency combined with a resurgence of the discourse of pauperism, to generate the current definition of welfare dependency – as a deviant condition and a reprehensible "behavioural syndrome" (1994: 325-329).

Alternative capitalist views on unemployment – Keynesianism

From the late 1930s to the 1970s, a countervailing force exerted some pressure on the idea that unemployment and poverty were self-made. Following the economic hardship experienced during the Great Depression of the 1930s and the two World Wars, Keynesian economics took hold in Britain (and then in the United States). A rare period of bi-partisanship ensued in Britain. Described as the post-war consensus, it was characterised by shared support of the welfare state, the mixed economy (involving state ownership of utilities), and full employment, as well as economic management towards economic growth

(Kavanagh and Morris, 1989; Harvey, 2005: 10; Rothschild, 2009: 214). Keynesian economics was based on the rebuff to neoclassical economics offered by British economist John Maynard Keynes. Keynes countered the idea that the market system could be left to maintain an equilibrium of demand and supply of employment. Instead he argued that it was necessary for governments to intervene to avoid potentially protracted periods of high unemployment and to maintain capitalism's viability (Cowling and Mitchell, 2003: 211; Mitchell and Muysken, 2004: 6; Povinelli, 2010: 20; Rothschild, 2009: 14). Demand for employment was to be managed with sufficient spending to ensure full employment, with public sector employment a component of this (Catholic Social Services Australia, 2007: 17; Martin, 2004: 9). A key proponent of this approach, economist William Beveridge stated "[t]he ultimate responsibility for seeing that outlay as a whole ... is sufficient to set up a demand for all the labour seeking employment, must be taken by the State" (1944 in Mitchell and Muysken, 2004: 6).

Keynesian thinking was widely adopted as a social democratic package and was a great influence on post-war United States, Canada, Europe, New Zealand and Australia (Kavanagh and Morris, 1989: 6; Rothschild, 2009: 214,217). This was the time (early 1940s) when Australia's social security system took shape, adding unemployment benefits, the Child Endowment, the Widow's Pension, and Hospital and Tuberculosis Benefits to the provisions already in place (Old Age and Sickness Benefits and Maternity Allowance). Unemployment was seen as the consequence of economic forces and accordingly unemployment benefits were considered a right of citizenship rather than a charity (Cook, 2004: 116; Shaver, 2001: 285; Edwards, 2004: 8-9; Hartman, 2005: 61).

The rise of neoliberalism and a different view on unemployment

The welfare state was gradually dismantled in the 1970s and 1980s, in the wake of various global developments.[31] Neoclassical economics saw a resurgence in the form of the political-economic doctrine of neoliberalism, and gained dominance in the West, led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in Britain and President Ronald Reagan in the United States, supported by universities, economists such as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, right wing conservatives, free marketeers, business groups, and corporate-funded think-tanks (Rothschild, 2009: 214-216; Evans, 2004: 2,9; Nicholls, 2010: 67-74; Cahill, 2004).

Neoliberalism (also known as economic rationalism in Australia) has been described by Noam Chomsky as capitalism with the gloves off (1999: 8). As an ideology with a purpose, it can be thought of as promoting the protection of the interests of capital, and endorsing the pursuit of efficiency, competitiveness, flexibility and productivity towards the ultimate goal of economic growth (Nicholls, 2010: 34,43; Hartman, 2005: 59; Hamilton, 1999: 5). Rather than act as the reins, as in the Keynesian view, the state is to facilitate the operations of the market. The appropriate role of government is to be small but big enough to create the conditions for markets to flourish (Gordon, 1991 in Nicholls, 2010; Mendes, 2010: 1). Neoliberalism shares with Liberalism (its still pervasive predecessor) a commitment to individual (economic) freedom, from (too much) state intervention (Hindess, 2009: 2,3).

The pro-business policies adopted by governments endeavouring to perform this facilitative role have typically included financial liberalisation and deregulation, the removal of trade and investment barriers, low corporate taxation, the

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[31] These developments included the economic downturn following the post-war boom, the spike in oil prices with the oil crisis, the reduction in the demand for labour with the mechanisation of industry, the globalisation of production and financial markets, the military expense of the Vietnam War, and the collapse of soviet communism (Cowling and Mitchell, 2003: 212; Nicholls, 2010: 23,65,30; Cook, 2004: 117; Evans, 2004: 9-12; Hartman, 2005: 59).

floating of currencies, the privatisation of state owned assets, and restricted social spending (Pete, 2002 in West and Carrier, 2004: 484; Higgins, 2006: 5; Bacchi and Eveline, 2003: 105).[32] Under neoliberalism, the priority shifted from full employment to keeping inflation low. This was thought to be potentially achievable through cutting public spending and public sector employment, keeping wages (or at least wage pressure) down and the unemployed competitive, and reaching the ideal Non-Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment (NAIRU) (Mitchell and Muysken, 2004: 3,12; Cowling and Mitchell, 2003: 212; Rothschild, 2009: 216; Quirk, 2004: 439; Bell and Mankiw, 2002). Unemployment became "reduced to an instrument in the fight for the preferred price stability" (Rothschild, 2009: 216).

At the core of the doctrine informing such policies is the view that the market is competent, rational and capable of maximising the utility of the individual and the collective, through enabling economic exchange and distributing resources according to where they are most valued (Cahill, 2004: 3; Nicholls, 2010: 15; Clarke, 2005: 50; Mendes, 2010: 1). Market forces are assumed to be "natural, irresistible and benevolent" (Higgins, 2006: 6). Although this model is naturally skewed towards those already in command of capital, illustrated by its design and its active support base, it is claimed that prosperity is shared, through the trickle-down effect; a rising tide lifts all boats (Cahill, 2004; Harvey, 2005: 64-65). In influential Enlightenment economist Adam Smith's metaphor, the market is an invisible hand, helpfully guiding behaviour (Harvey, 2005: 20; Clarke, 2005: 50). Showing its positivist origins, individuals are conceived of as unconstrained economic actors, predictable and self-serving, "autonomous" and "socially decontextualised" (Beasley and Bacchi, 2007: 279; Finlayson, Lyson, Pleasant, Schafft and Torres, 2005 in Nicholls, 2010: 16). As Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher stated "there is no such thing as society", and "it is our duty to look after ourselves" (in Keay, 1987). Asymmetric power relations do not

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[32] Inconsistencies and contradictions are, however, characteristic of the practical implementation of neoliberal theory (Harvey, 2005: 70-81; Nicholls, 2010: 7-8,32).

exist, the playing field is level, and players are limited only by their own initiative (Harvey, 2005: 68,65-66; Mendes, 2010: 1). The failure of individuals to succeed in this environment is not considered a structural problem but a behavioural one (Martin, 2004: 80; Mendes, 2004: 31).

As neoliberal ideology became established within government policy, unemployment benefits came to be regarded with increasing apprehension. Welfare began to be framed as encouraging laziness, inviting abuse, reinforcing a dependency culture, and interfering with the "'natural order' of the market place" (Thatcher, 1993 in Evans, 2004; Regan, 1987; Mendes, 2004: 31; Shaver, 2001: 281; Martin, 2004: 2; Bessant, 2001: 40). Key neoliberal political scientists – and moral conservatives – Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead made substantial contributions to the establishment of these viewpoints from the 1980s onwards (Murray, 1984; Mead, 1986; Hammer, 2004: 215; Sawer, 2000: 3; Cass, 2005a: 98; Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 328). Murray declared the availability of jobs irrelevant to poverty and insisted that the problem is a "contagious" underclass of welfare recipients who choose not to work, and choose to have children out of wedlock, supported by their cultural milieu and the benefits system (1989; 1994).

Similarly, Mead – also worried about unmarried mothers – argued that it is the dysfunctional behaviour of welfare recipients and a "culture of poverty" which is the cause of their unemployment (1999; 2002). Unlike Murray who has suggested "governments get out the way" (1996: 95), Mead has advocated for a "new paternalism", involving increased "administrative oversight through case managers to enforce expectations" – including work requirements (1997; 2002). According to the view that was coalescing, the culture of welfare dependency needed to be curbed because by immunising workers "against the impact of the free market", the welfare state "perverted the very workings of the market" (Cass, 2005a: 98).

Neoliberalism and welfare policies in Australia

Such thinking also took hold in Australia from the Hawke Labor Government onwards (intensifying under the Howard Government) and had a significant influence on Australian welfare policy. The introduction of welfare-to-work programs in the United States in the 1980s and 90s (including the compulsory work activities of the *Personal Responsibility and Work Obligations Reconciliation Act 1996 [US]*) was watched keenly and ultimately served as a model for Australian policy (Cowling, 2004: 2; Cowling and Mitchell, 2003: 212-213). Prime Minister Bob Hawke expressed the view that unemployed people had "a responsibility to undertake some community work" in exchange for welfare, but the community work scheme introduced under his Government was voluntary (1986 in Sawer, 2000: 5). The expanded labour market programs were not, however (Sawer, 2000: 5). Incorporating recommendations from an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report about the importance of an 'active society', the Social Security Review in 1985 began the Active Society reform process, premised on requiring recipients to be actively involved in furthering their employment prospects (Shaver, 2001: 280-281; Sawer, 2000: 5; Carney and Ramia, 2002: 278). The phrase 'reciprocal obligation' began to be used and changes in this direction were continued with subsequent Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating's Working Nation package of 1994 (Carney and Ramia, 2002: 278). This package included case management, the removal of financial disincentives to take on part-time work, further expansion of labour market programs, and a job guarantee for the long term employed (Carney and Ramia, 2002: 278; Shaver, 2001: 281).

With the election of the Howard Government in 1996, the prominence of the term welfare dependency increased dramatically and came to be an integral theme of welfare reform (Engels, 2006: 5,8,9; Shaver, 2001: 281). The discussion paper released by Minister of Family and Community Services Jocelyn Newman entitled *The challenge of welfare dependency in the 21st century* served as the basis for reform and conveyed the Government's stance

on unemployment. The Howard Government proceeded to privatise employment services, replacing the Commonwealth Employment Service with Centrelink and Job Network (Carney and Ramia, 2002: 278). The Howard Government's welfare reforms enforced the principle of 'mutual obligation', requiring recipient's to "give something back" (Howard, 1997 in Sawer, 2000: 5). Obligations were first imposed on Youth Allowance recipients who became required to attend school, education or training (Edwards, 2004: 5). A more conspicuous part of these reforms was the introduction of the Work for the Dole program in which welfare recipients became required to perform community work (not related to employment) *in exchange* for their welfare payments (Shaver, 2001: 285; Sawer, 2000: 5). The McClure Report put forward the case for welfare reform based on a mutual obligation approach. The goal was to achieve a significant reduction in the "disturbing phenomena" of "jobless families" and "job poor communities" (McClure, 2000: 2), and arguably to place downward pressures on wages (Bartlett, 1999 in Yeend, 2004; Edwards, 2004: 11). Hilary Sawer describes the approach of the Howard Government as differing

> greatly to that of the Keating and Hawke Governments, to the extent that the active society goal of assisting unemployed people to gain employment has been partially eclipsed by a focus on the 'obligations' of income support recipients to the community (2000: 4).

The election of the Howard Government saw an entrenchment and an intensification of neoliberal informed welfare policies. However, the path had been paved by preceding Labor Governments, and a movement across the western world towards individualist explanations of poverty and punitive solutions to rising first world unemployment. The concept of welfare dependency utilised by the Howard Government was a product of its times, reflecting capitalist values about the independence of wage labour, and neoliberal convictions that the market should be supreme, that welfare is a dangerous interference, and that poverty is behavioural.

The origins of representing Aboriginal people as welfare dependent

As well as being based on the general narrative of welfare dependency, the construction of Aboriginal people as welfare dependent also has its own history, which can be tracked back to the ancient world.

The backward savage from classical times to the Age of Enlightenment

The concept of the uncivilised savage, prominent in modern European colonial discourse, and still exerting an influence today, has a very long history. Native American scholar Robert Williams (2012) has followed the idea back through time, identifying what can be interpreted as its early templates in Ancient Greece.

In Homer's poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, recorded around 800-600 BC, Williams' notes the savage qualities attributed to tribes of monstrous, primitive peoples. The Cyclops are "lawless folk who ... plant nothing with their hands nor plough ... Neither assemblies for council have they, nor appointed laws" (Homer in Williams, 2012: 13). In Hesoid's poem *Work and Days* of the same period, primitive humanity from an earlier time lived happily, lacking laws, complex social organisation and culture, uncorrupted by the decadence, war-mongering and inequality of the polis. A multi-faceted picture of the savage was developed, and debated, as the Greek Empire established itself as the first "inherently colonial" society (Anderson, 1974 in Williams, 2012: 32).

Into the 5th century BC the concept of the savage was extended to the 'barbarian'. Williams cites Euripides' powerful barbarian murderer and sorceress *Medea*, and Herodotus' *The Histories*, as well the musings of early Western philosophers. Aristotle ranked modes of existence, attributed virtue only to civilised life in the city state, and saw slavery as appropriate for those not naturally disposed to this higher form of living: "it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master" (350 BC in Williams,

2012: 80). Protagoras (in Plato) stated "the worst of those who have been brought up in laws and humanities, would appear to be a just man ... compared ... with the savages" (Plato, between 399-348 BC in Williams, 2012: 71). In contrast and critical of Greek civilization, Socrates promoted primitive, simple, natural living as antidote to his society's insatiable appetite for luxury fed by the constantly expanding state. Each perspective presented the simple life as diametrically opposed to 'modern' civilization.

Williams shows the persistence of the idea of the savage after the Greek Empire had been superseded by the Roman Empire. The lawless, godless, primitive savage from an imagined earlier time in human history, living off the free gifts of nature, continued to be called up and regarded ambivalently – by Roman writers and thinkers (Julius Caesar, Tacitus, Strabo, Pliny the Elder, Virgil, Ovid, Juvenal, Lucian, Lucretius and Cicero).

With the fall of the Roman Empire in the late fifth century AD and the rise of the Christian Church through to the Middle Ages, the more positive depictions of the savage were censored, Williams explains, along with other aspects of pagan classical literature considered inconsistent with Christian teachings. What survived was the irrational and unredeemed bestial wild man of the Bible. This idea was instrumental in the justification of the Crusades from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries.

During the renaissance, the more nuanced classical portrayal of the savage re-emerged to merge with the idea of the godless wild man of the Bible. This merged image was applied to the people of the Canary Islands, said to be "gay and merry", but also "living like animals", without property, religion, law, writing, money, clothing or houses (Boccacio, between 1341-1345, and King Duarte, 1436 in Williams, 2012: 174,176). On this basis, in 1436 Pope Eugenius IV granted Portugal rights to colonise the African continent and Canary Islands, to bring them into "the one fold of the Lord" (in Williams, 2012: 177).

Spain was granted equivalent rights to colonise the simple lawless and godless savages of the New World. The early English Protestant colonial mission in North America in the early seventeenth century was also supported by notions of 'Indians' as savages:

> more brutish then the beasts they hunt, more wild and unmanly then that unmanned wild Country, which they range rather than inhabit; captivated also to Satan's tyranny in foolish pieties, mad impieties, wicked idleness, busy and bloody wickedness (Purchas, 1625 in Williams, 2012: 196).

Williams follows the elaboration of the idea of the savage through the work of seventeenth and eighteenth century Enlightenment thinkers. Dutch Lawyer Hugo Grotius posited that property ownership distinguished civilisation from savagery, as did English political theorists John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. Locke understood property ownership to flow from the mixture of labour with land, through its cultivation and enclosure, and did not believe this mixture had occurred pre-contact in the Americas. Hobbes' vision of uncivilised life in the state of nature has come to be referred to as the Hobbesian nightmare – a term borrowed by Prime Minister Howard to describe life in remote Aboriginal communities (2007b). Hobbes wrote

> there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no Culture of the Earth; ... no commodious Building; ... no Arts; no Letters; no Society; ... And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short (1651 in Williams, 2012: 204).

It was Hobbes' belief that Native Americans lived in this "brutish manner" (1651 in Williams, 2012: 205). Property laws were also important for the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers including Adam Smith, William Robertson, Adam Ferguson, and Lord Kames. Modes of existence were ordered by these thinkers into developmental epochs: hunting, then herding, then farming, then trading. American Indians were thought of as a living model for the scientific observer of an earlier, lower form of society – "the rudest form" (Robertson, 1777 in Williams, 2012: 208). Adam Smith surmised that like all hunters, American Indians were doomed.

This thinking informed the founding fathers of the United States. The probable demise of Native American nations was forecast in 1798 and attributed to "the inevitable consequence of cultivation" (Knox, 1789 in Williams, 2012: 215). President Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1805

> humanity enjoins us to teach them agriculture and the domestic arts; to encourage them to that industry which alone can enable them to maintain their place in existence and to prepare them in time for that state of society which to bodily comforts adds the improvement of mind and morals (in Williams, 2012: 216).

Ian McNiven and Lynette Russell also trace the Enlightenment's view of the savage back to ancient times, "[t]he ancient Greeks spatialized prehistory so that hypothetical primordial peoples of the past had modern counterparts living on the geographical margins of the world" (2005: 25). Significantly for McNiven and Russell, the prominence of the idea of staged progressivism (which developed into the field of anthropology and prehistoric archaeology in the nineteenth century), aligned with periods of intense imperial expansion (2005: 23-24,46).

For Barry Hindess too, ancient imperial Greece and Rome, and early modern imperial Europe, are key sources of the still pervasive Enlightenment attitude that European society has already "been there, done that" (2008). Influential, according to Hindess, was Jose d'Acosta's account of Native Americans in the late 1500s, and his positioning of barbarian society (subdivided into three levels) along a universal history of humanity (Hindess, 2008: 209-211). Enlightenment writer Friedrich von Schiller lectured on universal history in 1789:

> [a] wise hand seems to have preserved these savage tribes until such time as we have progressed sufficiently in our own civilization to make useful application of this discovery, and from this mirror to discover the lost beginning of our race (in Hindess, 2008: 201).

Schiller describes such peoples as a dismal display, like children of different ages, without iron, the plough, or knowledge of property; "here the indolent mind cannot learn even from experience that is repeated daily" (1789 in

Hindess, 2008: 201). The general pervasive idea of uneven development, then, relies on "the conceit that the development of Western Europe ... provides the standard against which the rest of humanity should be measured" and reads difference as failure to advance morally, intellectually and institutionally, and thus share the present with Western society (Hindess, 2008: 206,211).

As Williams, McNiven and Russell, and Hindess all demonstrate, the idea of the uncivilised savage lagging in time has had a long life, rationalising colonial ventures since the creation of the Greek city states. Of particular interest to this thesis is the recurrent casting of hunter-gather modes of existence as inferior, less developed, and out of place in the modern world, as well as the association made between this form of economy and idleness. What came to be a foundational belief of western thought, and a crucial framework through which to perceive and represent "the other", was then already well in place by the time of Australia's colonisation.

Early colonial impressions in Australia

In line with perceptions of 'natives' elsewhere, Australian 'natives' were regarded as savage, primitive, childlike, uncivilised and backward (Attwood, 1992: iii; Russell, 2001: 13; McNiven and Russell, 2005: 8,14,24; Stokes, 2002: 193; Dodson, 2003: 33; Langton, 2003: 81,86; Ginsburg and Myer, 2006: 30; Manderson, 2008: 232-234). Aboriginal people were viewed as representing a place which Europeans had "left behind in order to assume 'civilisation' or enter into modernity" (Attwood, 1992: iv; Beckett, 1988: 6). Like other colonised peoples, Australian Indigenous people were even thought of as inviting their own colonisation, by existing in an apparently less civilised state (McNiven and Russell, 2005: 3). According to Fraser and Gordon (1994), this was a feature of colonial thought. In Australia then as elsewhere, the political dependency to be imposed by colonial powers was projected onto 'the native', justifying colonisation on the basis of their supposedly inherently submissive and dependent nature as a racial group (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 317).

Compared with the reception given to other 'native' populations, Kay Anderson and Colin Perrin point out that Aboriginal Australians were greeted with particular disdain (2008). Aboriginal people encountered were described as "the miserablest People in the world", the "most barbarous inhabitants on the surface of the globe", and the "most sunken of all human beings" (Dampier, 1697, Turnbull, 1805, and Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton, 1848 in Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 974,972,980). Early colonist Daniel Paine wrote in the 1790s that

> [t]he Native Inhabitants are the most irrational and ill formed Human beings on the Face of the Earth destitute in every thought for future Comfort and deriving as yet no benefit from Civilization. They have no Idea of profiting by the Example of our Settlers to sow Corn for a Sure Provision (in Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 975).

Anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor stated that there was likely no people "lower than the known state of" Aboriginal Australians (1865 in Russell, 2001: 13). Similar conclusions were reached by zoologist George Shaw who said that "[t]he wretched natives ... seem less elevated above the inferior animals than in any other part of the known world" (1794 in McNiven and Russell, 2005: 31). Central to these judgements was the perception that Aboriginal people did not cultivate the land and were unproductive (Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 973; Dorsett, 1995). As Ben Kiernan notes, in British views of 'native' Australians, "one theme re-occurred: the absence of agriculture" (2007: 249). Agriculture was used as a measure of civilisation, as it had been from classical times through to the Enlightenment. Indeed, this perception of the land as uncultivated and thus wasted was the basis of the claim that Australia was *Terra Nullius* or uninhabited, a ruling only overturned in 1992 in the Mabo case.

The British inferred from an absence of recognisable land management practices that Aboriginal people had not achieved the crucial separation from nature that distinguished man from beast (Gammage, 2011; Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 973-975,982). Prevailing Enlightenment thinking as well as secularised Christian ontology defined humanity by its elevation from and mastery of nature (Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 965,968). Aboriginal people were judged to have

not conquered nature, in the Lockean sense, and on this basis were considered not fully human (Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 967). Aboriginal people were indeed represented as "living in a state of nature", and as closely related to if not part of the fauna of Australia (Collins, 1798 in Russell, 2001: 2). The writings of botanist Joseph Banks, among others, convey a fixation on the mobile lifestyle of Aboriginal people and the nature of Aboriginal housing – perceived as wretched (Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 972-974,982). Anthropologist Baldwin Spencer summarised this view

> [t]he Australian aborigines are regarded as belonging to one of the most primitive of existing races. They are true savages, living by fishing and hunting, never cultivating the land over which they roam, nor domesticating animals (1901 in Russell, 2001: 45).

Thus European values harking back to antiquity which identified civilisation with cultivation, buildings, and sedentary living, informed the conviction that Aboriginal peoples were a lesser version of humanity.

Colonial conclusions

The objective of converting Aboriginal people to settled agricultural employment and overcoming "their proneness to indolence" and "repugnance to regular work" was one of the reasons given for the establishment of Christian missions and Government reserves on circumscribed tracts of land from the nineteenth century onwards (Governor Hutt, 1842 in Reynolds, 1983: 124; Colonial Secretary, 1836 in Twomey, 2002: 103; Beckett, 1988: 7). Christina Twomey writes, "[a]nxious to combat the vagrancy and moral weakness of the clans under their charge, missionaries and protectors posited fixed residence .... and cultivation of agricultural plots", distinguishing between "useful labour and natural indolence" (2002: 102). The Colonial Secretary, Alexander McLeay, declared in 1836 "every effort should be made to induce a preference for those pursuits which lead within the pale of civilization" (in Twomey, 2002: 102). The failure of efforts to motivate their Aboriginal charges to "change their desultory habits and learn those of settled industry" was treated as a matter of concern (Lord Russell, 1840 in Buchan, 2002: 109; Reynolds, 1983: 125-126; Dorsett, 1995: 42-43; HREOC, 1997: 28). Questions were raised about the capacity of

the Aboriginal mind and character. The response of Aboriginal people to "the crisis brought by Europeans" was rationalised as a reflection of "their own moral weakness" (Twomey, 2002: 98).

Anderson and Perrin argue that the perceived exceptionality of Aboriginal difference, the resistance of Aboriginal people to change, and the general failure of attempts to enact this change, helped nurture the rise of the polygenist concept of race in the 1850s (2008: 985). The idea of race was 'hardening' (Boucher, 2015: 78) and came to be thought about as a source of more permanent, unalterable *biological* differences rather than just a term describing human groupings (Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 970; Dorsett, 1995: 43; van Krieken, 2004: 142). This undermined established beliefs – consistent with the Biblical account – about the unity of humanity (monogenism) (Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 963; Hindess, 2008). Instead of a hierarchy of developmental stages (wherein humans were all physically the same and equally capable of reaching the highest state of human development under the right conditions), a hierarchy of races emerged (with the capacity of 'the darker races' to change contested) (Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 968,970).

Distancing themselves from the Aboriginal population, white invader-settlers denied that Aboriginal people were of the same physical make up as themselves. The study of skulls and the sciences of craniology and phrenology flourished. The 'failure' of Aboriginal people to take up Western ways was explained as due to a "wanting in their minds", and to their possession of the "smallest brains of the whole of mankind" (Colonial Office, 1845, and Nott and Gliddon, 1854 in Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 978,982). A contributor to the *Colonial Literary Journal* in 1844, under the pseudonym Aeneas, linked deficient "moral and intellectual portions" of the brains of Aboriginal people, to their "inferiority as a people, ... their degraded character" and the "inactivity and sluggishness, for which they are noted – being roused from their slothful torpor only by ... passion, or ... hunger" (in Kiernan, 2007: 282). In

anthropologist Edward Tylor's view, Aboriginal children were left behind by the "superior intellect" of the "progressive races" at around aged twelve (1881 in McNiven and Russell, 2005: 68).

Subjected to earlier European classifications of the colonised, Aboriginal people were ranked according to their proximity to nature, mode of existence, and capacity to be civilised, and on this basis were deemed to be the "lowest grade in the human family" (Nott and Glidden, 1854 in Anderson and Perrin, 2008: 982). As Bain Attwood has expressed, "[i]n these discursive practices the construction of the Aboriginal other not only served to legitimate European violence but also in itself constituted a form of violence" (1992: iv).

Amid doubt over the potential for improvement of the Aboriginal race and Aboriginal defiance of the colonial system's attempts to control, modify, Christianise and westernise, the civilising mission continued, and intensified. Missions and reserves performed other functions as well as instructing and supervising those in its charge (Altman and Sanders, 1991: 2), including the removal of Aboriginal people from their land (Wolfe, 1994: 100; Twomey, 2002: 94). Crucially, there was a sense that missions and reserves would be a temporary arrangement. The eventual extinction of the Aboriginal race in the midst of the more vigorous white race was considered inevitable (Wolfe, 1994: 100,106; Russell, 2001: 42; Boucher, 2015: 78-89; Keita, 2014: 9).

With the introduction of Protection Acts between the late 1800s and the early 1900s in all States and Territories, more coercive methods came to be used to effect change. The governable Aboriginal subject was constituted, able to be treated differently on the basis of race (Boucher, 2015: 89-94). Substantial bureaucracies were developed, charged with administering and controlling almost every aspect of Aboriginal lives (Attwood, 1992: v; Long, 1970: 176-183; Stokes, 2002: 202; Tatz, 2011: 92,93). The idea had gained ground of separating Aboriginal children from their families, particularly 'half-caste'

children[33] whose chances of reform were thought to be higher (Anderson and
Perrin, 2008: 979; Beckett, 1988: 9; Twomey, 2002: 111; Buchan, 2002: 117).
The precedent was set by the *Aborigines' Protection Act 1869* (Vic) in Victoria,
which provided for the expulsion of 'half-castes' from reserves and missions
(including children) (Wolfe, 1994: 101; Twomey, 2002: 112). Such powers
were steadily enacted by Protection Acts (and Ordinances) in all States and
Territories (HREOC, 1997; Buchan, 2002: 116; de Plevitz, 2000: 25,29; Foster,
2000a: 16). By not counting 'half castes' as Aboriginal, "a substantial proportion
of the Aboriginal population was officially eliminated" (Wolfe, 1994: 106). In
support of legislation in Western Australia, Chief Protector of Aborigines Henry
Prinsep wrote "unless action is taken, [half-caste children] will grow up to be as
wild, lazy, and dirty, and probably more criminal, than the aborigines hitherto
dealt with" (1904 in Buchan, 2002: 10).

Assimilation of difference

The policy of removing children of mixed descent became a key component of
the Commonwealth's assimilation policy in the early twentieth century, serving
as a way to save the children and deal with the "half-caste menace" (Wolfe,
1994: 101; Altman and Sanders, 1991: 2; Beckett, 1988: 9). Policies of child
removal were pursued up until the 1970s, initially on the basis of a child's
Aboriginal ancestry and later on the basis of neglect. In practice the two were
often regarded as synonymous (HREOC, 1997: 28-34; van Krieken, 2002: 9-10).
These policies constituted deliberate attempts to implement the practice of
eugenics, notably by Auber Neville in Western Australia in the early to mid
1900s, who claimed that Aboriginality could be bred out over time (Moran,
2005: 174-178). Neville's thinking influenced Cecil Cook, Chief Protector of the
Northern Territory (1927-1939), who stated:

> [g]enerally by the fifth and invariably by the sixth generation, all native characteristics of the
> Australian Aborigine are eradicated. The problem of our half-castes will quickly be

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[33] 'Half-caste' was a term applied to people with an Aboriginal and a non-Aboriginal parent,
implying diminished Aboriginality. Related terms are 'full blood', 'quadroon' and 'octoroon'.

eliminated by the complete disappearance of the black race, and the swift submergence of their progeny in the white (in HREOC, 1997: 137).

For key proponent of Australia's assimilation policy Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck, assimilation was about Aboriginal people progressing to live in the superior society "in which, by force of history, they are bound to live" (1952 in Moran, 2005: 17). He described Aboriginal people as "tangled in their own distressed situation like flies on sticky paper", who "could fly if only they could get clear of their surroundings, [and] lift themselves free of their past" (1959 in Moran, 2005: 19). Aboriginal environment and culture were of concern (Beckett, 1988: 10). It was the policy imperative of assimilation that all 'Aborigines' and 'Part-Aborigines'

> attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians (House of Representatives, 1961 in Altman and Sanders, 1991: 3).

Efforts towards the "ultimate absorption" of 'half-castes' included marriage restrictions and the introduction of exemption certificates (or citizenship certificates as they were called in some states) from the 1940s (Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, 1937 in Gardiner-Garden, 1999; Stokes, 2002: 201). These certificates exempted a carefully selected few from being Aboriginal, thereby entitling them to citizenship rights such as being able to live in towns, having some access to social security payments (see below), and freeing them from the Aboriginal protection laws of the state. This came at the price of being forbidden to associate with kin or practice Aboriginal customs. Those granted exemption were required to demonstrate "to the Chief Protector's satisfaction the capacity to survive in the outside world. In other words, they were imbued with capitalist values concerning money, time and work" (Blake, 2001 in Wickes, 2008: 77).

Significantly, it was the lack of these values that distinguished Aboriginal people as a lesser, unfit race in the colonial mindset. Citizenship entitlements available to Aboriginal people were made contingent on conforming with these values and ways of living. Full citizenship was denied because Aboriginal people were not deemed fully civilised. To be civilized was to conform to British economic and social organisation, yet Aboriginal people had failed both to cultivate the land, and to cultivate Aboriginal children, "into a form of civilization recognizable to Europeans" (van Krieken, 2002: 3). Anthony Moran puts it well, "[e]ven when through absorption and assimilation policies governments moved to include Aborigines, the basis of that inclusion was the negation of Aboriginality, biologically and/or culturally" (2005: 4).

The extension of welfare payments

The provision of welfare or social security payments was one such citizenship entitlement from which Aboriginal people were excluded. Bettina Cass traces the history of Aboriginal exclusion and gradual (initially conditional) inclusion into the welfare system (2005a). She explains,

> [c]ivilization constitutes both the criteria for exclusion and the reference point for those on-going projects aimed at the assimilatory (re)shaping of conduct .... Assimilation into the rights of liberal welfare citizenship required the eventual leaching out of evidence of the primitive and the nomadic, through the demonstration of good character, standard of intelligence and social development, implicitly those qualities characteristic of European civilisation. The 'civilising mission' underpinning welfare changes constitutes the framework on which rights so recently won were rapidly subject to destabilisation (Cass, 2005a: 102).

The first form of welfare delivery legislated by the newly formed Federal Government, the *Invalid and Old Age Pension Act 1908* (Cth), explicitly excluded 'Aboriginal natives of Australia'. Again, the Widow's Pension introduced in 1942 excluded 'Aboriginal natives of Australia'. Those Aboriginal people with exemption certificates were however eligible, as were Aboriginal people in states or territories which had not adopted the exemption system who

could demonstrate a standard of character, intelligence and development 'sufficient' to white authorities (Cass, 2005a: 100). The original Maternity Allowance introduced in 1912 excluded 'Aboriginal natives of Australia' but later amendments in 1942 allowed access to exempt Aboriginal women or Aboriginal women who were judged of good character, intelligence and development (if they lived in a state or territory where exemptions were not available) (Cass, 2005a: 101; Gray, 1998 in Murphy, 2000: 76-77). These criteria of good character and levels of intelligence and social development (that is, 'sameness'), were also used to determine the eligibility of Aboriginal people for the Unemployment, Sickness and Special Benefit introduced in 1945 (Cass, 2005a: 100; Gray, 1998 in Murphy, 2000: 77). Aboriginal women were eligible for Child Endowment Payments introduced in 1941 unless they were 'nomadic' (Cass, 2005a: 101).

In 1960, eligibility for the Invalid and Old Age Pension, Unemployment, Sickness and Special Benefit, Widow's Pension, and Maternity Allowance was extended to Aboriginal people who were then only disqualified on the basis on being 'nomadic' or 'primitive' (Cass, 2005a: 101). In 1966 this clause was removed, as was all reference to 'Aboriginal natives' in the *Social Services Act* (Cth). What remained exceptional about the delivery of the welfare entitlements, however, was that Aboriginal welfare payments could be made to third parties (Altman and Sanders, 1991: 3; Beckett, 1988: 9; Haebich, 2004: 13). This meant that in the majority of cases, Aboriginal welfare authorities received the benefit payment and only needed to pass on some fraction of it as an allowance, unless the Aboriginal claimant could prove their ability to 'handle money wisely' (Altman and Sanders, 1991: 4). This helps explain the support the state and territory Aboriginal welfare authorities provided for the extension of Unemployment, Sickness and Special Benefit to Aboriginal people (Altman and Sanders, 1991: 4). Anna Haebich observes "administrators, missionaries and employers accustomed to dipping into Aboriginal moneys viewed ... cash benefits as another source of 'funding'" (2004: 13). One station in the Kimberley

received over $30,000 in pension money between 1960 and 1966, with none of this money passed on to the Aboriginal pensioners (Skyring, 2012: 164). The goal of preparing Aboriginal people for absorption into white society was given as justification for this paternalistic withholding of civil rights (Beckett, 1988: 10).

Negative reactions to the extension of unemployment benefits to Aboriginal people caused the roll out of these benefits to be a protracted process (Sanders, 1985; Haebich, 2004: 13). A directive was put out by the Federal Social Security Minister in 1968 pushing for a prompt end to the third party payment arrangement, and its accompanying abuses (Altman and Sanders, 1991: 211; Skyring, 2012: 163). There was reluctance, however, to count remotely located Aboriginal people as eligible for individual payments of unemployment benefits (Sanders, 1985: 140-144; Altman and Sanders, 1991: 211). It was also around this time that the payment of full wages to Aboriginal workers came to be a pressing issue.

The payments for employment that remote Aboriginal people had received up until then were predominantly for work on farms and stations or work on missions and reserves (Altman et al, 2005: 24). Aboriginal workers were outside general workforce wage awards and conditions, and payment for labour was paid at below award wage levels, frequently through Aboriginal welfare authorities who did not pass on the entire wage, and frequently made up of in-kind payments such as residence of families on cattle stations or rations and food subsidies on missions and reserves (Beckett, 1988: 8; Altman et al, 2005: 24; Rowse, 1998; Skyring, 2012). In 1966, the North Australian Workers Union lodged a successful claim with the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission for the introduction of equal pay of Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industry. The claim for equal wages was successful and came into effect in 1968 (Sanders, 1985: 140).

After their election in 1972, the Labor Government led by Prime Minister
Gough Whitlam entered parliament committed to change and self-
determination for Aboriginal people. It took on the goal of fully dismantling the
separate Aboriginal wage structure that still persisted (particularly through
training wages on missions [Sanders, 1985: 144]), and the goal of extending
unemployment benefit eligibility to remote Aboriginal people (Sanders, 1988:
34). However, there was widespread backlash against the Whitlam
Government's goals, which thwarted their immediate realisation (Sanders, 1988:
34). As Will Sanders explains, "[t]he economies of the remote Aboriginal
communities had, to a large extent, been built on the low cost and income
structures of the welfare authority approach to Aboriginal affairs" and the
"economic marginalisation" of Aboriginal people (1988: 36; 1985: 150). The
budgets of the missions and reserves were limited and the proposed changes
coincided with a sharp rise in unemployment in the 1970s and increased
mechanisation in the pastoral industry (Beckett, 1988: 11). There was concern
about the capacity of remote Australia to fund full wage positions and the poor
substitute that unemployment benefits would provide (Sanders, 1988: 150).
There was also fear that there would be an unemployment benefit epidemic
causing social problems and creating a "positive disincentive to work" (Sanders,
1988: 35; 1985: 144-146). The First Assistant Director General of the
Department of Social Security argued in 1974 that "a number of Aboriginals are
not ready for award wages and indeed a general disinclination to work was
apparent" (in Sanders, 1985: 147). For some it was the demise of the availability
of "cheap black labour" that was cause for concern (Sanders, 1988: 145).

Despite the Whitlam Government's explicit inclusion into the manual for
Unemployment and Sickness Benefit assessors that Aboriginal people living on
settlements or missions not be required to move in order to be eligible for
unemployment benefit, the general resistance within the Department of Social
Security and beyond to extend unemployment payments to remote Aboriginal
people meant that very few claims for benefits by remote Aboriginal people

were successful during its time in power (Sanders, 1985: 143,144,146; 1988: 135). Eligibility was denied in ways such as requiring claimants to have a work history and then not counting below award-wage employment as work (Altman et al, 2005: 26; Sanders, 1988: 147). It was actually under the Coalition Government led by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser that the momentum generated by the Whitlam Government started to see a significant rise in the numbers of remote Aboriginal people qualifying for unemployment benefits (Sanders, 1988: 35; 1985: 155). The official overhauling in 1977 of the historic practice of requiring that claimants have a work history helped the process along (Sanders, 1985: 155,156).

The Fraser Government, concerned by these developments, launched an Interdepartmental Working Party on Aboriginal Employment. The terms of reference provided to the Working Party revealingly included the following objectives: "[t]o examine Aboriginal attitudes towards gaining a livelihood";

> [t]o consider the impact of the payment of unemployment benefits to Aboriginals living as communities; the extent to which payment of these benefits has created unsatisfactory social problems within those communities

and

> [t]o examine the effect on Aboriginal employment of the payment of unemployment benefits to Aboriginals not living in communities where Aboriginals receive such benefits under less stringent conditions than those which apply to the general community (1976 in Sanders, 1985: 152).

Sanders highlights the contrast between the two Governments; "[t]alk was no longer of Aborigines being unjustly excluded from award wages and UB [unemployment benefits]", but of their "receiving UB under 'less stringent conditions'" and of "UB creating 'unsatisfactory social problems'" in remote Aboriginal communities (1985: 152).

Interestingly, the Working Party tried to distance itself from the preconceptions implicit in the terms of reference and made recommendations for increased spending of almost $40 million on Aboriginal employment, training, enterprise

development and the creation of short term and long term employment opportunities (Sanders, 1985: 153). This conflicted with the Fraser Government's intent to cut back public expenditure (Sanders, 1988: 35). The Fraser Government instead opted for another, already canvassed, alternative to the wholesale roll out of unemployment benefits to remote Aboriginal communities – the Community Development Employment Projects scheme, CDEP (Sanders, 1985: 153,154). Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser launched the program as part of the 1977 National Employment Strategy for Aboriginals, referring to the "adverse effects" of and "serious social problems" caused by unemployment benefits (in Sanders, 1985: 154).

In this way, the creation of the CDEP scheme came about as a result of the extension of unemployment benefits to remote Aboriginal people (Altman et al, 2005: 27). The CDEP scheme was in fact a creative response to Indigenous unemployment, which offered community-controlled, publicly-funded employment and promoted political empowerment as well as community development (Altman, 2007b: 33; Rowse, 2001: 38,40). This was by design. Architect of the scheme, senior policy advisor H.C. (Nugget) Coombs, had the following to say

> CDEP is not simply a means of providing employment as a source of a minimum cash income but a training exercise in self-management and increasing independence for the Aboriginal communities involved (1977 in Rowse, 2001: 41).

Indeed, the strident fourth objective of the CDEP scheme was "to maximise the capacity of Aboriginal communities to determine the use of their workforce" (House of Representatives, 1977 in Rowse, 2001: 41). The CDEP scheme thus emerged out of a mixture of concerns: that Aboriginal people were unfit for welfare entitlements and would become welfare dependent; that individual unemployment payments would not suit community needs; that unemployment benefits could disrupt 'traditional lifestyles' and undermine community authority; and that communities desperately needed work done (Sanders, 1985: 145; 1988: 35; 1998: 143).

Continuities

Although sentiments certainly changed with time, there is nonetheless continuity between earlier colonial representations, the reaction against the extension to Aboriginal people of eligibility for citizenship entitlements, and the Howard Government's application of the neoliberal concept of welfare dependency to Aboriginal people. As Cass points out, despite the "apparent movement from welfare rights exclusion to inclusion, ... almost from ... their inception, inclusionary social security rights were attacked by the discourse of welfare dependency" (2005a: 102). After the election of the Howard Government in 1996, use of the term welfare dependency really took hold.

The Howard Government's depiction of Aboriginal people as welfare dependents saw the invigoration of concepts that had lost favour but not lost potency. The granting of social security entitlements to Aboriginal people represented a significant achievement and reflected a mood for change and greater recognition of Aboriginal people's unique rights – which continued in the decades ahead, despite opposition. These decolonising impulses lost ground, however, with the election of the Howard Government. Conservative and neoliberal outlooks intensified, accompanied by congruous older, more negative representations of Aboriginal people (Ginsburg and Myer, 2006: 43).

Melinda Hinkson traces the re-emergence of stereotypes of Aboriginal culture as repugnant, savage and anti-modern and Aboriginal people as impoverished social outcasts (2010: 229).

> Since the mid 1990s we have been witnessing the steady re-ascendance of the negative stereotype. Notions of tradition, culture, community, self-determination that framed attention to remote Aboriginal Australia through the 1970s and 1980s have been steadily displaced by a discourse of failure, suffering, violence (Hinkson, 2010: 229-230).

Indigenous leader Pat Dodson asked the following question, in response to the Howard Government's increased talk of behavioural change, Indigenous responsibility, and absorption into the mainstream economy:

> Has the last three decades – where the language of cultural recognition and self
> determination ... found its way into Australia's public policy lexicon – simply been an
> aberration as the nation prepares to resume its historical trajectory of extinguishing the
> cultural legacy of thousands of generations of human occupation of these lands? (2007).

Walter pins down the Howard Government's rendering of Aboriginal people as
"complicit in their own poverty",

> Indigenous people are seen as first having a culture of poverty, which maintains and
> regenerates poverty by self sustaining practices such as welfare dependency. Second, a
> perception of a poverty of Indigenous culture characterises cultural practices as both
> creating and sustaining Indigenous disadvantage (2009: 7).

The comment by then Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Philip Ruddock, already quoted in the introduction, reflects the linkage made
between Aboriginal people, culture, and economic disadvantage:

> we are starting from a very low base. We're dealing with an indigenous population that had
> little contact with the rest of the world. We are dealing with people who were essentially
> hunter gatherers. They didn't have chariots. I don't think they invented the wheel (in ABC,
> 2000).

The problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency as represented by the Howard
Government, and its interwoven themes, have neoliberal as well as colonial
roots. At the heart of the Howard Government's representation of the problem
of Aboriginal welfare dependency sits a neoliberal construct based on the
capitalist definition of independence. The targeting of the individual accords
with neoliberal conceptions of poverty. The stated goal of the incorporation of
Aboriginal people into the mainstream economy is consistent with capitalist and
neoliberal values and versions of the good life. The endorsement of the
restorative role of the capitalist market economy, and the appropriateness of
market solutions, follows a neoliberal logic.

The Howard Government's neoliberal explanation of the state of Indigenous
affairs calls on colonial representations of Aboriginal people as idle, indolent,
lazy and deficient. The focus on Indigenous responsibility echoes earlier
colonial accounts of Aboriginal inadequacies limiting the integration of

Aboriginal people into the newly introduced economy. The prescriptive nature of inducements to be good economic citizens resonates with the civilizing mission and the ideals of assimilation. The narrow scope of the problem representation is reminiscent of earlier limited policy approaches which went only as far as aspiring to basic citizenship rights for Indigenous people.

In many respects then, there was continuity between the Howard Government's application of the neoliberal concept of welfare dependency to Aboriginal people in Australia and earlier colonial discourses: in the problematisation of Aboriginal people, the linking of Aboriginal disadvantage with Aboriginal traits and behaviour, the focus on economic and social absorption, and broadly the re-enactment of the diversion of responsibility from the colonial project itself.

Conclusion

This chapter has returned to the origins of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. This first involved focusing on the genesis of the concept of welfare dependency itself. The association of independence with wage labour can be linked to industrial capitalism. Wage labour was privileged as a form of independence, and the dependence of workers on their employers was obscured. Dependency lost its social acceptability and being dependent on poor relief became a deviant state indicating personality defects rather than a structural issue. Later, under the post-war consensus, with the aid of Keynesian economics, poverty was reinterpreted as a shortcoming of capitalism – to be managed through full employment and welfare provision. This assessment was revised as neoclassical economics was reasserted through the discourse of neoliberalism. Welfare provision and full employment came to be seen as at odds with a pro-market system, and welfare use came to be associated with individual flaws and a culture of dependency. The shame attached to the term pauper intensified, and was captured in the concept of welfare dependency.

The construct of Aboriginal welfare dependency has its own distinctive origins. Showing the influence of classical scholars, Christian theologians, early modern colonists, and Enlightenment thinkers, from the earliest encounters Europeans classed Aboriginal people as uncivilised savages belonging to an earlier age. Indigenous technology, mode of existence, architecture, and relationship with nature were cited as indicative of a less developed culture, and people. Amid shifting diagnoses of the cause of Aboriginal inferiority, assumptions about European superiority remained relatively constant. Aboriginal reluctance to adopt, and difficulty with, imported economic and social principles, were read as evidence of developmental and even evolutionary retardation. Aboriginal people were judged to be idle, indolent and lazy and responsible for their own failure to thrive in the new economy. Assimilation policy, whilst ostensibly about the inclusion of Aboriginal people within mainstream society, was premised on Aboriginal people changing. Rationales of uplift were given for comprehensive social control. Attempts to extend citizenship rights were hindered by concerns that Aboriginal people were not deserving of or ready for entry into white society.

The Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency can be seen as the meeting of neoliberal and colonial ideas, each with their own story. What comes out through this genealogical process is the compatibility of neoliberal and colonial discursive frameworks. Neoliberal explanations of unemployment as caused by individual welfare dependency sit comfortably with colonial depictions of Aboriginal people as failed economic agents, in the sense of having failed to develop a sophisticated economy, and having failed to 'adapt' to the more advanced economy introduced. Neoliberalism's narrative of self-created poverty fits in with the typically colonial emphasis on Aboriginal deficit. There is concordance then between the neoliberal focus on personal responsibility rather than structural factors, and the colonial focus on the colonial subject, rather than the colonial process itself and

its impact and illegitimacy. Neoliberal discourses are especially loaded in colonised spaces.

This chapter has shown that the Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency was not inevitable and did not evolve naturally. It was contingent on particular circumstances, power relations, and conceptual frameworks. The next step, to be carried out in the following section, is to consider the silences within this problem representation. In the process an alternative reading of the current state of Indigenous affairs will be offered.

Section 3: Alternative reading

CHAPTER 8: STEP 4 – RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF WELFARE DEPENDENCY ITSELF

This thesis has now reached the crucial point of presenting an alternative reading to the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. This section will present what has been left out of this problem representation and what it failed to account for and to problematise. Offering a contrasting view, I join in the process of meaning making. The next seven chapters will then answer the questions included in Step 4 of the *'What's the problem represented to be?'* approach. A Postcolonial mindfulness of the colonial context will continue to guide use of the WPR approach, and will inform consideration of the silences within the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency.

In this first chapter, I will turn my attention to rethinking the construction of the problem of welfare dependency *generally*. After having reflected on the limitations of the concept in the first chapter, I use the following six chapters to give my full focus to the specific application of the concept to Aboriginal people in Australia. In Chapter 9, I will counter the exclusion from the Howard Government's account of Indigenous affairs of the overarching issue of Australia's colonisation – as an issue *in its own right* as well as a key cause of the economic marginalisation of Aboriginal people. In the following chapter (Chapter 10), I will look at the ways in which Aboriginal access to the mainstream economy has been restricted historically. In Chapter 11, I will argue that the ongoing impact of this has been worsened by a lack of sufficient redress in recent times. The last three chapters (Chapters 12-14) will consider another,

less recognised way in which colonisation has affected Aboriginal employment, that is, through the imposition of an alien and unaccommodating economic system. In this way I propose a different way of thinking about the Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency – one in which Aboriginal people are not the only actors.

Lack of jobs neglected

To begin the process of rethinking the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, I will first consider alternative perspectives on welfare use and unemployment in the wider population. There are already substantial flaws and gaps in the concept of welfare dependency itself, even before the concept is applied to Aboriginal welfare recipients. It is, indeed, a contested concept (Bacchi, 2009: 265). The concept of welfare dependency views unemployment as a purely supply-side issue; the unemployed are not supplying themselves for employment. What is glaringly missing is an acknowledgement of the effect of work availability on employment levels. Commentators have pointed out that the Howard Government failed to recognise that a leading factor in unemployment in Australia has been a shortage of jobs (Cowling and Mitchell, 2003: 209; Mendes, 2010: 10; Edwards, 2004: 96; Humphries, 2004: 225; MacDonald, 1997 in Sawer, 2000: 7). As Paul Henman states,

> the primary cause of the consistently high levels of welfare receipt is a lack of jobs. In short, there is little point playing with the supply side of labour if there is low demand (2002: 77).

Causes of job shortages: labour market and demographic changes

The shortage of jobs in Australia can be broadly said to have resulted from a redistribution of employment over the last thirty years. There is first the issue of a decline in the availability of low-skilled jobs. This was acknowledged in 1997 by Education Minister within the Howard Ministry David Kemp: "the particular disadvantages young people face in getting jobs are structural – the low-skilled jobs that young people used to take on leaving schools have gradually

disappeared" (in Bessant, 2000: 28). With the spread of globalisation and Australia's own adoption of neoliberal economic policies involving the deregulation and opening up of Australia's economy to the global market place (as well as the associated reduction in public expenditure), the Australian labour market changed considerably (Bessant, 2000: 18,28; Humphries, 2004: 224,226; McClelland, 2002: 214). Unskilled and semi-skilled jobs diminished (in areas such as manufacturing, agriculture and other traditionally male working class sectors), while high-skilled, professional, knowledge based and service sector jobs increased (Bessant, 2000: 28; Edwards, 2004: 90; Henman and Perry, 2002: 324; Henman, 2002: 77; Mendes, 2008: 93; Hammer, 2004: 217). Technological developments and the mechanisation of many industries have also contributed to the decline in the availability of low-skilled work (Bessant, 2000: 28; McClelland, 2002: 212). There has also been a shift in the type of employment available, from predominantly full-time to increased casual and part-time (Mendes, 2004: 33; McClelland, 2001: 111). Since the mid 1970s, much permanent full-time employment (certain industries have been affected more than others) has been replaced by increasingly insecure, irregular and temporary work arrangements which can often be characterised as underemployment (Shaver, 2001: 286; Bessant, 2000: 16,25; Hartman, 2005: 68).

Changes in household composition have interacted with changes in the labour market (McClelland, 2002: 212). Significantly, there has been an increase in single headed households, with an increase in the number of single women who are sole parents, and an increase in the number of women engaging in paid employment (Mendes, 2008: 93; 2004: 33; Henman and Perry, 2002: 324). There has also been an increase in dual income households, and an increase in jobless households (Henman and Perry, 2002: 327-329). Jobs are changing and are being shared around differently. A leading reason for the increase in unemployment has been a greater proportion of the population

seeking employment than in the past (McClelland, 2001: 111; Henman and Perry, 2002: 322,323). Job growth has not been quick enough to accommodate growth in the percentage of the community seeking work. This partly explains why there was an increase in the uptake of welfare overall during this period compared to the 1970s, despite increases in the employment to population ratio (McClelland, 2001: 111; Mendes, 2004: 33; Henman and Perry, 2002: 315). Increases in welfare use are also attributable to the broadening of the welfare net and policy changes allowing recipients to work part-time (Henman and Perry, 2002: 315,318-321,331; Mendes, 2010: 135). Ultimately, in Sally Cowling and William Mitchell's words, "the Australian economy has failed to generate sufficient employment since 1975 to match the preferences of the labour force" (2003: 209).

Welfare dependency unsubstantiated

The absence of structural causes from the Howard Government's explanation of the relatively higher use of welfare in Australia is a major omission. The role of macro-economic constraints on employment levels, as well as the impact of demographic changes and the extension of welfare entitlements, are entirely neglected. Instead the Howard Government's focus was fixed on problematising the behaviour and mindset of individual welfare recipients. There is, however, a conspicuous lack of evidence to suggest that the values or attitudes of welfare recipients are any different from those in employment (Bessant, 2000: 28; Hammer, 2004: 216; Schneider and Jacoby, 2006). On the contrary, research shows a convergence of views across society towards work and that in the main the unemployed are "miserable rather than content, and would far prefer work to welfare" (Mendes, 2004: 32 citing Argy, 2003; Schneider and Jacoby, 2006). Welfare dependency remains "a term that is both inherently degrading and difficult to substantiate" (Hammer, 2004: 219). The implication that welfare fraud is widespread and that a significant proportion of those receiving benefits are doing so illegitimately is not borne out by statistics which show that in

2005-2006 only 0.04 per cent of recipients were convicted of fraud (Mendes, 2008: 141). In the face of structural unemployment, the targeting, surveillance and demands made of welfare recipients under the Howard Government functioned to unfairly discipline and punish those already bearing the consequences of a changed economy (Mendes, 2008: 140; Humphries, 2004: 226).

Blaming the victim

The concept of welfare dependency places the problem squarely with welfare recipients – the section of society hardest hit by the substantial economic restructuring that has taken place in Australia in recent times. The provision of welfare payments to the unemployed can be seen a method of compensating those "whose involuntary exclusion from the labour market ... explicitly benefits the working majority" (Mendes, 2008: 90). It can be argued that welfare is "the price to be paid for the new globalised arrangements in wealthy countries such as Australia" (Hartman, 2005: 68). It is an, albeit flawed, way of redistributing the wealth generated by global free-market capitalism to those worse off (Henman, 2002: 77). Indeed, the cost of welfare in Australia is relatively small. Sharon Beder points out that Australia's welfare system is one of the most tightly targeted and stingiest; according to Michael Carman Australia was spending $18 billion less than the average OECD member country in 1999 (Beder, 2000: 159-160; Sydney Morning Herald, 1999).

Misleading distinction

Welfare recipients, targeted as the source of the problem, are misrepresented as a completely distinct category from tax-paying citizens. This distinction between tax payers and welfare recipients has been maintained despite the fact that since the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax in July 2000, all Australians are taxpayers (Shaver, 2001: 289; Edwards, 2004: 101; Henman, 2002: 81; Cass and Brennan, 2002: 252). "Most income support recipients are, or have been,

tax payers" and are "in every sense subjected to the taxation regime" (Cass and Brennan, 2002: 251-252). The distinction between welfare recipients and taxpayers, is, as Mendes observes, "artificial, but politically significant" (2004: 32). The constructed social categories of taxpayers and 'non-tax paying' welfare recipients are pitted against each other. The unemployed are presented as a burden and resentment against them is encouraged. To the detriment of social cohesion, the "interdependence of all social classes" is disguised (Hammer, 2004: 217). This divisive construction obscures the myriad of ways in which the unemployed contribute to society, including through caring and volunteer roles (Cass and Brennan, 2002: 260; Yeatman, 2000). The focus remains fixed on the attitudes of individual welfare recipients whose receipt of welfare is presented as illegitimate. Meanwhile, questions about the politico-economic system's failure to provide work are bypassed.

Holistic approach necessary

The welfare system is admittedly imperfect, but for different reasons than those cited by the Howard Government. Mendes rightly points out that "whilst the welfare state has arguably succeeded in relieving financial poverty, it has been less successful in preventing the wider social exclusion of poor and disadvantaged people", and in achieving "greater equality" (2008: 95,91). This is largely because of the limits of its powers. The welfare system is incomplete in that it is unable to influence the wider social and economic policy areas where it would have genuine impact on the availability of work and the ability of jobseekers to gain employment at a living wage (Cowling, 2004: 3).

Whilst there is a crucial role for employment services and welfare payments, they alone cannot tackle the social and economic inequities that exist, "without recourse to employment, education and training, tax, industry or wages policy" (Cass and Brennan, 2002: 249). Bettina Cass and Deborah Brennan explain

individuals and communities are not naturally disadvantaged, their disadvantage is economically, politically and socially constructed by the operations of financial markets,

> labour markets and housing markets and by government economic and public policies.
> These policy/market structural processes create ... vulnerabilities, deprivations and scarcity
> of job opportunities, lack of sufficient physical and social infrastructure

and "reduced access to community services and amenities" (2002: 257).

These are the policy areas which have been progressively neglected and were absent from the narrow framing of the problem of welfare dependency (McClelland, 2002: 214-215). This problem representation fails to recognise the need for integrated and comprehensive social and economic policies to overcome barriers to access. Such a "joined-up policy-making" approach should encompass education, housing, health, industrial relations, trade, industry, employment, social assistance, social insurance, monetary and fiscal policy, and job creation to ensure full employment where private demand is insufficient (Henman, 2002: 78,75; Cowling and Mitchell, 2003: 223-224). Henman convincingly argues that

> important pillars supporting a cohesive welfare state have been removed. Consequently,
> high levels of unemployment and welfare receipt are not indicative of a failed or
> inappropriate welfare system, but of a dismantling of the carefully defined, mutually-
> supporting system of social and economic policies (2002: 75).

The reinstatement and rejuvenation of an integrative social and economic policy model is well within the powers of local policy makers, despite the rhetoric that nation-states are helpless in the face of global economic pressures and have been forced to get on board as globalisation has spread (Henman, 2002: 75; Mendes, 2008: 67-70; Richardson, 1997 in Nicholls, 2010: 22-23). Rather than being compelled, the Keating Government consciously and deliberately elected to open up Australia to the global economy, with all the risks and social costs this decision entailed (Braithwaite, Gatens and Mitchell, 2002: 4; Mendes, 2008: 93; Nicholls, 2010: 97-100).

Broader shifts in the global economy have certainly had a significant influence on the employment landscape in Australia. However, so too have the Australian

economic climate and labour market been shaped by Australia's response to these wider shifts and Australia's incorporation of neoliberal philosophies and strategies. The hands of Australian governments have not been tied. Indeed, Mendes argues that rather than *determining* domestic policy, economic developments globally have had more of a legitimising effect (2008: 68-70). Whilst global pressures to reduce public spending, lower taxes and wages and deregulate the labour market do exist, these influences can be judiciously resisted (as has been successfully demonstrated by a number of Scandinavian countries) towards greater equity, full employment and shared prosperity (Mendes, 2008: 88). Mendes asserts, "the existing welfare state should" (and importantly can) "be defended against neoliberal agendas and forces"; "interventions remain possible" (2008: 86,66).

What of the alternative?

For all the criticisms levelled at the welfare state, or the 'nanny state' as it is sometimes disparagingly called, it is worth considering the alternative. Removing the welfare net altogether does appear to be the ultimate objective of attacks made concerning its provision, its damaging consequences, and its openness to abuse. Were it to be disassembled, it almost goes without saying that the impact on society would be seismic – those unable to access the labour market would be left destitute. Experience has shown that even minor cuts to welfare programs and services lead to greater inequality (Mendes, 2008: 91). Without a welfare net, the gap between the richest and the poorest would grow rapidly, along with the crime rate, leading to the degeneration of general social cohesion (Hammer, 2004: 217). The provision of welfare is accused of creating dependency on government, but in its absence other dependencies would surely develop (Cass and Brennan, 2002: 251; Hammer, 2004: 217). This reality is understood by Fraser and Gordon who state "[a]ll programs of public provision, whether they are called welfare or not, shore up some dependencies and discourage others" (1994: 322). Without government support to fall back

on, individuals could be forced to rely financially on other members of society. It is easy to imagine how such economic dependence could bind individuals, particularly those already vulnerable, into abusive relationships (Mendes, 2008: 57).

The dependency of the worker on their employer would also be intensified, were income support not available. Any diminishment of welfare payments or further restrictions placed on its availability translate to increased bargaining power for employers (Hammer, 2004: 214; Mendes, 2008: 57; Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 322; Shaver, 2001: 286). For all the talk of fostering self-reliance and independence, reduced access to welfare or the removal of welfare altogether would actually work against the self-reliance and independence of the individual (Hammer, 2004: 214). It may increase levels of employment but there is no reason to assume that the employment would be stable or that the working conditions or remuneration would be adequate or sufficient to lift individuals out of poverty (McClelland, 2001: 112). Instead it could exacerbate the issue of the working poor. The widespread phenomenon of working poverty in the United States is an example of the consequences of reduced provision of unemployment benefits (Cortis et al, 2008: 24; Hammer, 2004: 217). Cowling rejects the linking of limited welfare with self-sufficiency,

> [a] policy framework that requires disadvantaged individuals to enter employment will not assure self sufficiency if it underwrites the operation of flexible labour markets and job insecurity; if wages are insufficient to move workers out of poverty; and if the focus on economic participation neglects broader concerns for the well-being of parents and children (2004: 12).

The value of welfare then also lies in its role in protecting workers from the worst kinds of exploitation which can follow when there is no alternative to employment and workers lack the ability to refuse working conditions (Shaver, 2001: 286). Withdrawing or restricting access to social security payments would further the shift of power from workers to employers. Employers and businesses

would be advantaged by the extra competition for work and increased preparedness of workers to accept a below living wage (Mendes, 2008: 57). As a consequence, the rights of workers, including the right of refusal, would be seriously threatened. Conceiving of welfare and welfare recipients as the problem eclipses the vital role played by welfare in keeping recipients out of abject poverty and providing welfare recipients with a degree of independence.

Conclusion

This chapter has been devoted to thinking critically about the concept of welfare dependency itself. I have reconsidered the targeting of welfare recipients as the source of the problem and have directed attention to what is missing from this simplistic analysis. The concept of welfare dependency ignores that critical factor affecting employment levels which is a lack of sufficient jobs. The unemployment situation in Australia can be better understood through appreciating the forces which have impacted on job availability, the nature of work, and the increased competition for available work. These forces have included globalisation, the adoption of neoliberal economic policies, and the increasing mechanisation of industry, as well as demographic changes involving rising numbers of sole-parent families and higher levels of female workforce participation.

I have shown other significant gaps in the construction of welfare dependency. There is in fact a noticeable absence of supporting research or evidence of the existence of the phenomenon of welfare dependency, despite the wide acceptance of the phrase. This perhaps explains the vague terms in which the Howard Government referred to it. I have highlighted how this unsubstantiated concept of welfare dependency unreasonably points the finger at welfare recipients who are already unfairly disadvantaged by recent economic changes. I have argued in this chapter that welfare recipients are misrepresented as distinct from the tax-paying community and that this misrepresentation is

harmfully socially divisive. Acknowledging the structural causes of unemployment in Australia, this chapter has looked at the crucial areas of policy that were neglected by the Howard Government – areas that would make a significant difference to employment levels. Finally, this chapter has considered the dangers inherent in further restricting or removing the welfare state, namely severe financial hardship, the breakdown of social order, and the intensification of disempowering forms of dependency.

An examination of the limitations of and the silences within the idea of welfare dependency has revealed a flawed concept. Focusing on the behaviour of welfare recipients and leaving unproblematised the key causes of unemployment, the problematisation of welfare *dependency* is both highly simplistic and misleading. Bessant affirms the importance of paying attention to the definition of the problem of unemployment. She states

> [p]roblem-setting discourses that construct jobless people as the cause of unemployment misdiagnose the problem, and in doing so generate solutions that do not address the source of large scale unemployment. This has the effect of producing policies that are ineffective because they fail to address the actual causes of the problems they set out to fix (Bessant, 2000: 28).

What can be gleaned, then, from reflecting on the deficits of the problem representation of welfare dependency, is insight into more appropriate understandings of the situation which in turn suggest alternative responses. Cowling's comment neatly demonstrates this:

> [i]n recognising that 'dependency' is not a behavioural dysfunction of individuals but a failure in the conduct of macroeconomic policy, the State can address the problem at its root cause by maintaining full employment and the wage floor (2004: 11).

These insights are critical when reviewing the Howard Government's transplantation of the concept of welfare dependency to the area of Aboriginal affairs.

Section 3: Alternative reading

CHAPTER 9: STEP 4 – RETHINKING ABORIGINAL WELFARE DEPENDENCY
Part 1: Common causes of unemployment, and the missing bigger picture of Australia's colonisation

The previous chapter argued that the concept of welfare dependency generally is dangerous and misleading. This chapter will now argue that it is also dangerous and misleading to attribute Aboriginal unemployment to welfare dependency, for both similar and different reasons. Much of what has been said above, offering a more complete picture of the causes of unemployment, is also pertinent to Aboriginal employment levels. A number of the factors affecting unemployment in the wider community and contributing to higher levels of welfare use, also impact on Aboriginal employment. Common factors, though, have impacted on Aboriginal employment in specific ways. This chapter will first look at causes of current unemployment that are common to the wider community and to Aboriginal society. It will then look beyond the issue of Aboriginal unemployment, to register Australia's colonisation as a problem in and of itself. The chapter will then return to the Howard Government's focus on Aboriginal unemployment and contextualise Aboriginal unemployment within this bigger picture. In the process, I will clarify which aspects of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency I reject entirely (essentially the notion of welfare dependency) and which I seek to reconnect to this colonial context, and for what reasons.

Common causes of Aboriginal unemployment

Job shortages

Like unemployment in the wider community, Aboriginal unemployment has been affected by the inability of the Australian labour market in recent times to provide sufficient employment to meet demand. Peter Saunders stresses the economic origins of Aboriginal unemployment, arguing that "significant progress for indigenous Australians will not be achieved without sweeping economic reform" (2001: 27). As I have explained, the lack of sufficient jobs in Australia has emerged from the interplay between an increasing percentage of the population seeking employment and a changed employment scene. The economic downturn that occurred in the 1970s, which was met with neoclassical and neoliberal economic policy responses involving spending cuts and the opening up and deregulation of the Australian economy, spelt a decline in the areas of work in which Aboriginal people have been typically employed (Beckett, 1988: 11; Turner, 1997: 7).

Loss of low-skilled and rural work

The evaporation of much low-skilled work has particularly affected Aboriginal employment (Dillon and Westbury, 2007: 194; Gregory, 2005: 10-12,17-18). Robert Gregory states, "Indigenous men, unskilled in labour market terms, have been particularly disadvantaged by economy-wide movements against the demand for full-time unskilled labour" (2005: 17). Predominantly sitting in the category of least skilled labour, Aboriginal people and men especially have had their chances of gaining employment drop significantly due to wider macro-economic shifts in Australia.

As part of a general decline in low-skilled employment, there has been a raising of credentials for work which traditionally did not require qualifications, a replacement of jobs with machinery, and a decline in the industries in which Aboriginal people have been commonly employed. The introduction of

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credentials for employment that was previously entry-level has acted to exclude Aboriginal people who would previously have been eligible for such work, contributing to Aboriginal unemployment (Flamsteed and Golding, 2005: 74). Developments in technology have also reduced the demand for labour across the board, including in the manufacturing sector and, crucially for Aboriginal people, in rural and remote agricultural and pastoral industries (Gallagher, 1992: 153; Whitby, 2000; Hollinsworth, 1996: 117).

The pastoral industry had acted as a key source of employment (Gale, 1999: 6-7), but a combination of factors saw this change in the 1970s as the industry restructured. The use of aerial mustering and motorbikes, and the mechanisation of the industry generally, reduced the need for workers (Smith, 2006: 248; Gale, 1999: 7; Skyring, 2012). At the same time, the effects of globalisation began to be felt (Whitby, 2000; Skyring, 2012). Exposure to fierce international competition, the drop in the value of beef, and the merging of companies and concentration of ownership, all impacted on the availability of pastoral work (Whitby, 2000; Martin, 2001a: 11; Smith, 2006: 248). The significant and unexpected diminishment of the pastoral industry coincided with the granting of equal wages to Aboriginal pastoral workers effective 1968 (and the 1966 legislative requirement that Aboriginal pension recipients be paid directly and not through third parties such as station owners) (Beckett, 1988: 11; Martin, 2001a: 11; Sanders, 1985: 140; Skyring, 2012). Cattle station owners responded with mass layoffs of Aboriginal workers and eviction of their families whose residence on the property frequently formed a large part of their payment (Beckett, 1988: 11; Martin, 2001a: 11).

The decline of Australia's pastoral industry has been accompanied by a decline in rural and remote labour markets generally (Reynolds, 2002; Hunter, 2002 in Misko, 2004: 30; Peterson, 2005: 13). There has thus been a reduction in the work available to Aboriginal people located in rural and remote areas on top of

a nationwide faltering of the "industries for which Aborigines had provided cheap labour" (Beckett, 1988: 11). As Rowse summarises, "change in the structure of the economy that reduced the demand for rural and uncredentialled jobs" has left Indigenous Australians' "economically superfluous to an unprecedented degree" (2002a: 230-231).

Because of the position of Aboriginal people in the nation's economy, Aboriginal employment has been particularly sensitive to labour market changes overseen by successive Australian governments. This obviously raises the question of why so many Aboriginal people have resided in the unskilled category. This question will be answered to a large extent in the next two chapters where I examine the historical economic marginalisation of Aboriginal people and the inadequacy of recent attempts by successive governments to redress this situation. Now though, I move on to draw attention to the Howard Government's omission of Australia's colonisation from its portrayal of the state of Indigenous affairs.

The bigger picture in Aboriginal affairs

At this point, I wish to take a step back, widening the scope to see beyond the Howard Government's limited reading of Aboriginal affairs. I now ask what problematic factors in Aboriginal lives the Howard Government left out. Glaringly absent from the Howard Government's account was the impact of colonisation on Indigenous society. This lapse puts the Howard Government's account of Indigenous affairs firmly within the sights of this thesis, guided as it is by Postcolonial theory's decolonising impulse and acute awareness of the persistence of colonialism.

Within the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, economic independence (and a particular version at that)

was held up as the priority. Indigenous economic independence was narrowly defined as "[g]aining a job, owning assets such as property and building wealth for the next generation" (Andrews, 2005c: 1). I am confident that property ownership, here, was not intended to refer to communal ownership of land, and that economic self-sufficiency was not intended to imply living off the land and being independent of the formal economy. The vision was for the absorption of Aboriginal people within the western economic model and within mainstream society, with 'sameness' a stated goal. Welfare dependency – for which Aboriginal people were asked to take responsibility (Howard, 2003a) – was said to explain a whole host of social ills including crime, poor health, poor housing, mortality rates, levels of abuse and "appalling conditions" generally (Herron, 1998a: 4; Herron in Xinhua, 2000: 1; Brough in ABC, 2007b: 3; Brough, 2007c: 2). These social issues were harnessed as justification for the targeting of Aboriginal welfare dependency while incorporation into the mainstream economy was the measure of Indigenous well-being selected (Hunt, 2008: 43; Arabena, 2005: 28; Povinelli, 2010: 22). With Rowse, "I question the emphasis that has been placed on paid employment as the way to actualise Indigenous Australian's social participation and material well-being" (2002a: 231), and I would add general well-being.

The Howard Government was limited in both its ambitions and its diagnosis, in prioritising the goals of private sector employment and 'good' capitalist citizenship, and constructing Aboriginal welfare dependency as standing in the way of their achievement. The problem of welfare dependency was positioned as a major source of social malaise for Aboriginal people and other contributing factors were simply not mentioned. Colonialism, the most obvious causal factor of them all, did not feature. Colonialism was treated as a non-event and was conceded no causal role or explanatory power. Colonialism was not problematised. Indeed, the Howard Government avoided talking about the past, preferring to focus on the future, and when pressed, played down the

relationship of Australia's colonial beginnings to the present day, describing Australia's history as, on balance, "very generous and benign" (Howard in House of Representatives, 1996: 6158). In writing colonialism out of Aboriginal affairs, the Howard Government adopted a strong political stand, a stand inconsistent with the ethical position of Postcolonial theory to which this thesis subscribes. This section of the chapter now puts forward a different ethico-political position, antagonistic to colonialism, keenly aware of its presence in Australia's present, and critical of the Howard Government's implicit colonial whitewash.

Colonialism persists in Australia as an organising structure which maintains non-Indigenous power, privilege and modes of operation. The colonial project has not been resolved and so is ongoing. It encompasses the conditions produced by the colonial approach of usurpation, territorial expropriation and assimilation (after elimination became unrealistic) (Wolfe, 2001), and the actions and policies these conditions enabled and continue to enable. Colonialism has brought utter devastation to Aboriginal society and is ultimately responsible for the predicament of Aboriginal people today. Aboriginal leader Mick Dodson gives some intimation of what the colonial process has involved,

> [t]here is the history, the dispossession, the ruination and the destruction – not only the taking away of our kids, the taking away of our land and the destruction of our language and our culture (2005 in Arabena, 2005: 32).

The Howard Government ignored the elephant in the room in failing to recognise the continuing impact of colonisation. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody argued in 1991 against viewing colonisation as a discrete event

> it is deceptive indeed to assume that 'colonial Australia' ended with the coming of the twentieth century, or that successful British settlement meant the end of 'colonialistic' relations between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. These relations were entrenched not only by acts of dispossession but also by a wide variety of ideas, beliefs, and

economic, legal, political and social structures which institutionalized and perpetuated them (in Murphy, 2000: 11).

However the Howard Government refused to concede what Michael Dillon and Neil Westbury state clearly – that "[t]he continuing disadvantage, both relative and absolute, of many Indigenous citizens in urban and regional Australia attests to the enduring consequences of dispossession" (2007: 4).

The Social Justice Report of 2001 by ATSI Social Justice Commissioner William Jonas expresses concern about the ahistorical frame through which the Howard Government approached Aboriginal affairs. Jonas notes that its focus on practical reconciliation and Aboriginal welfare dependency is "firmly grounded in the present circumstances of the individual and give(s) little attention to the causal factors, or underlying issues ... of Indigenous disadvantage..." stripping

> Indigenous disadvantage of its historical context and admit[ting] no contemporary, ongoing consequences. Consequently, nothing is seen to be particularly distinctive about Indigenous disadvantage or the necessary response to it.... [S]uch an approach is limited. It does not acknowledge the broader fabric of social and economic factors that contribute to the level of Indigenous disadvantage and economic marginalisation such as dispossession, systemic racism, structural inequality and social marginalisation. Colonising processes have left a range of effects on Indigenous populations that are inter-related and continue to contribute to the current context of Indigenous disadvantage (ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2002: 53).

Jonas goes on to say

> the current policy approach ... runs the risk of collapsing the complex issues surrounding Indigenous disadvantage into the category of 'welfare dependency' and of keeping the focus firmly on the individual recipient rather than the broader aspirations of Indigenous peoples (ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2002: 55).

I would also like to quote at length comments made by ATSIC before its abolition, about the narrow focus of the Howard Government on Aboriginal welfare dependency.

> These days there is a fashionable notion that many if not all Indigenous problems can be attributed to 'welfare dependence'. Since 1996 the current Government has placed this

notion at the heart of its rhetoric on Indigenous affairs, with initiatives entitled 'beyond welfare', 'breaking the welfare shackles', etc. There is a great deal about all this that I find troubling.... [T]hose pushing the 'welfare dependency' line are also those who are doing their best to 'revise' Indigenous history, revise away the frontier massacres and the stolen children, the land theft.... Part of our claim on the nation is for acknowledgment of our history and a more inclusive national story. It is a moral and ethical claim. Those undermining our history are undermining our political claims—they know that, that's why they do it.... Those undermining our history are also promoting the view that our problems are all 'practical', and that 'practical Reconciliation'—health, housing education, employment—will fix them. Attention to Indigenous rights, they say, is a distraction.... The catch-all notion of 'welfare dependence' is ... useful. By these means, the debate is simplified and distorted (ATSIC News, 2001a).

As these remarks observe, it is significant that the Howard Government left the colonial context, and implications for Indigenous rights, out of its rendering of Aboriginal affairs.

Looking at the way Aboriginal welfare dependency was represented by the Howard Government, one could be forgiven for not realising that Aboriginal people have been in the state of being colonised for a little over two hundred years (in some cases), without ever gaining independence. Within the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, the plethora of consequences of colonialism are obscured by the focus on Aboriginal unemployment, itself detached from its colonial roots. Missing, then, are other crucial areas relating to Indigenous well-being, including political authority, meaningful community self-governance, sovereignty, autonomy, cultural integrity and cultural survival, land rights, resource ownership, reparation and compensation, freedom from "racial domination", and social justice (McGrath, Armstrong and Marinova, 2006: 4; Short, 2003: 300; Dodson, 2000: 17-18; Mansell, 2004). This broad range of inter-connected areas – all negatively affected by colonialism, all in dire need of attention – failed to make it onto the agenda (Maddison, 2008: 47-49; Stringer, 2007: 27).

The political nature of the "current calamity" in Indigenous Australia was denied by the Howard Government (Mansell, 2004; Bradfield, 2006: 81). It dislocated the contemporary state of affairs in Australia from the political, social and cultural upheaval that resulted from the violent claims to sovereignty made by the British over Aboriginal territory. Stuart Bradfield makes the following apt comment,

> the barriers to real and meaningful negotiation as a principle of Indigenous policy remain as much conceptual as structural. We must not continue to allow new approaches to be denied by what Professor Larissa Behrendt and others have described as a 'psychological terra nullius' ... , a state of mind which refuses to remember that Indigenous people today are the descendants of what many would describe as free, independent, and sovereign nations (2004).

The Howard Government's practical approach and interest in same treatment and same outcomes disregarded the unique status held by Indigenous people as traditional owners wrongfully deprived of their rights to land, resources and autonomy. The resulting lamentable and unquantifiable loss experienced by Aboriginal people over generations was framed out of shot as the Howard Government focused its attention on Aboriginal welfare dependency and Indigenous responsibility.

As Sanders reflects (2006: 6), for the Howard Government's approach to have shown an interest in decolonisation, it would have needed to "admit a far more negative reading of the history of colonial settlement". It would also have needed to "admit a far more complex and historically contextualised view of equality and inequality; between groups as well as individuals, and in political as well as socioeconomic terms", and it would have needed to

> contemplate the idea of the recognition of pre-colonial groups as enduring post-colonial social and political entities... be it in the form of land rights, self-government rights, or ideas of treaty and constitutional recognition (Sanders, 2006: 6).

There were no such gestures towards decolonisation present in the Howard Government approach to Indigenous affairs. As colonisation was not the problem, decolonisation was not relevant.

Reattaching the bigger picture and redefining the problem

Above, I have highlighted the significance of the omission of colonialism from the Howard Government's account of Indigenous affairs. Looking beyond the confines of this limited account, I recalled for consideration the impact of the process of colonisation on Indigenous well-being, and the importance of addressing the permanent state of crisis this has caused. This chapter has argued that there is a bigger picture beyond that depicted by the Howard Government. There are bigger issues at play – underlying issues, root causes, and other casualties – that all lead back to the British colonisation of Australia. High levels of welfare usage are neither the source nor the extent of Indigenous woes. They are, however, part of this bigger picture. Crucially, I reattach the focus of the Howard Government's Indigenous affairs approach – high levels of welfare usage – to this bigger picture of Australia's colonisation.

Alongside the manifold consequences of Australia's colonisation, then, sits what the Howard Government described as Aboriginal welfare dependency. Rather than view high levels of Indigenous welfare use as an example of Aboriginal deficit, high levels of Indigenous welfare use can instead be understood as a consequence of colonialism. In addition to the debilitating effects of the devastation and trauma caused by colonisation, considerable barriers continue to interfere with Aboriginal economic participation, which I go into in the following chapters. Bringing colonialism back into the picture, as an issue in its own right and as a key cause of high levels of Aboriginal welfare use, disrupts the Howard Government's depoliticised and dehistoricised reading. I have argued that it was misleading to present Aboriginal welfare dependency as a

central issue in Indigenous affairs. Adding to this, I contend that the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare use was also misleading in the sense that it did not adequately depict the issue itself. The term welfare dependency ought to be dispensed with. In its place I clarify what I do accept as problematic about Aboriginal unemployment.

What is wrong with high rates of Aboriginal welfare use?

I cannot progress in my argument, operating with the Howard Government's representation of the problem as Aboriginal welfare dependency. It is necessary that this thesis distances itself from the concept. I clarify that I find high levels of Aboriginal welfare use a concern for different reasons than those put forward by the Howard Government. I specify that I do not see high levels of Aboriginal welfare use as problematic because they are indicative of welfare dependency, or even exclusion from the paid workforce. I see them as problematic because they are indicative of poverty and potentially an absence of meaningful activity.

This means that in reattaching the bigger picture of Australia's colonisation, I am not reattaching it to Aboriginal welfare dependency (a problem representation I contest). I am instead reattaching the bigger picture to Aboriginal unemployment and high levels of welfare use – which I do accept as cause for legitimate concern. I operate with a reworked problematisation of high levels of Aboriginal welfare use which leaves out those aspects of the Howard Government's problem representation that I have discounted as unfounded and problematic extrapolations. I reject the portrayal of Aboriginal welfare dependency but grant that the current state of affairs is far from ideal. I thus now address the question of what is wrong with high rates of Aboriginal welfare use, if not welfare dependency? Once I have offered an answer to this question and clarified what I understand to be problematic about high levels of Aboriginal welfare use, I can move on to explore the ways in which colonialism is implicated.

This thesis does not accept the Howard Government's rendition of high Aboriginal welfare use broadly as self-inflicted dependency resulting from lack of motivation, will power, and self-discipline. Chapter 7 demonstrated how the ready adoption of this neoliberal concept of welfare dependency to explain Aboriginal welfare use can be seen as linked to Australia's colonial heritage. That such contemporary accounts of Aboriginal poverty line up so neatly with colonial myths of inherent Aboriginal deficit is cause for concern. This thesis finds problematic the characterisation of Aboriginal welfare recipients as lazy, work-shy, and ultimately responsible for their position outside the mainstream economy, particularly given the longevity of such characterisations. Chapter 8 showed that the concept of welfare dependency itself unfairly directs attention onto welfare recipients and their character and deflects attention from the very real structural causes of unemployment. The concept itself lacks validity, and its application to Aboriginal people, zoning in on the behaviour of individual Aboriginal welfare recipients, is specious.

Brian Butler, ATSIC Commissioner, makes the important point that Aboriginal people "were exposed to the welfare support system as a necessity, not by desire", refuting the implication of the term 'welfare reliance' that welfare use is voluntary (Butler, 2001: 5). Butler also brings attention to the gaps in welfare coverage (2001: 6), as in fact more Indigenous Australians should be receiving social security payments than actually do. This point is echoed by Musharbash who comments in relation to remote Indigenous Australia in particular "[t]he welfare safety net is not yet fully in place" (2000: 73). That said, it is acknowledged in this thesis that widespread welfare use among Aboriginal people is a less than ideal arrangement. I do agree that all is not well with the status quo regarding the economic position of the large majority of Aboriginal people. I do not, however, support the Howard Government's portrayal of Aboriginal welfare use as a form of voluntary dependency.

Welfare use as indicator of Indigenous poverty and lack of meaningful activity

High rates of welfare use within the Aboriginal population are not a positive sign, nor a positive arrangement. This assessment is consistent with Postcolonial theory's decolonising values, recognising that colonialism's impact extends to the scarcity of fulfilling, viable and prosperous modes of existence available to Aboriginal people in Australia. This assessment does not rely on colonial, neoliberal criteria, judging success in the introduced western market economy as the only worthy objective. This assessment is not based on a presumption that welfare is morally perilous, an opportunity to shirk social responsibilities, a threat to the operations of the market, or a sap on the public purse (Martin, 2004: 81; Bessant, 2001: 40). What is concerning about the large proportion of the Indigenous population receiving income support, however, is that it is indicative of the extent of poverty in Aboriginal Australia, and that it is indicative of a potential absence of fulfilling activity for thousands of Indigenous people.

Existing on welfare is not a financially stable position to be in, given the very low rate of income provided to recipients, especially those on unemployment benefits – Newstart Allowance. While the age pension is indexed to rises in the male total average weekly earnings, Newstart is only indexed to changes in the Consumer Price Index and has not been increased in real terms since 1994 (Raper, 2000; Whiteford, 2016). The level of income support paid to recipients is widely regarded as inadequate to cover the cost of living and as prohibitive of social and economic participation, acting as a barrier to the fulfilment of expectations "in the workplace, at home and in the community" (Social Policy Research Centre, 1998 in Raper, 2000; Klapdor, 2013).

It is, needless to say, an infinitely more secure financial position to be in for Indigenous recipients than unemployment *without* benefits which was the

reality for many prior to the extension of eligibility (and then actual provision) to Aboriginal people. Indeed, the grinding poverty that characterised Indigenous life prior to the provision of welfare payments, shows the entrenched nature of Aboriginal economic disadvantage, and that Indigenous poverty cannot be attributed to access to welfare (Peterson, 2005: 10; Martin, 2001a: 10). The continuous nature of both Aboriginal poverty and social devastation show that welfare is not their main cause (Walter and Mooney, 2007: 171; Martin, 2001a: 10). As Lyndon Murphy points out,

> if the intention of welfare was to abate these circumstances, then the issues that need to be redressed were prevalent long before the full participation of Aboriginal people in social welfare legislation (2000: 77).

There is much to be commended about the provision of welfare and its extension to Indigenous people (Arthur, 2002: 1; Smith, 2000: 3). However it can only ever be part of the solution (Misko, 2004: 8,9,35; Cass, 2005a: 95,97). High levels of Indigenous welfare use are worrying because welfare use is reflective of financial stress and economic marginalisation, and because the provision of welfare payments does not address these issues (Walter and Mooney, 2007: 171; Raper, 2000).

An additional concern about the high rates of Aboriginal welfare use is the lack of meaningful activity available to welfare recipients. I exclude Work for the Dole[34] from what I am referring to as meaningful activity due to the disciplinary nature of the program, acting as it does primarily as a disincentive to be on income support and providing no real training or experience of any use (Catholic Social Services Australia, 2007: 4-7; Sawer, 2000: 2,20). Generally then, being on welfare is not an enriching or rewarding experience. It is instead

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[34] The more recent introduction of heavily onerous Work for the Dole requirements for (largely Aboriginal) remote income support recipients following the removal of the CDEP program will be discussed in some detail in the conclusion.

urgent relief. It is not an occupation and it does not add value to recipient's lives.

Having said that, it must be acknowledged that receiving welfare payments by no means precludes performing voluntary, unpaid work (provided time is not taken up fulfilling Work for the Dole requirements). It should not be assumed that being on welfare necessarily means Indigenous welfare recipients are not engaged in any sort of beneficial or useful activity. From national data obtained shortly before the Howard Government took office, Diane Smith and Linda Roach extract a higher voluntary work rate among Indigenous people – and among Indigenous welfare recipients – than among non-Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous welfare recipients, suggesting these Aboriginal welfare recipients have been "'working' part-time for their welfare payments" (1996: 71). A prime example of such work carried out by Aboriginal welfare recipients is domestic labour including caring work; for children, the aged, and those with disabilities or illnesses. Welfare is one of the only ways work within the home receives some financial reward, although whether it is rewarded appropriately is another matter (Cass, 2005a: 96).

Other valuable forms of work Aboriginal people carry out include subsistence and other cultural activities (Smith, 2000: 3). Jon Altman makes a strong case for such customary work to be appreciated for its economic and wider contributions to community life and to the nation generally. According to Altman, "[a] major problem for Indigenous people and policy formulation is that much Indigenous productive activity in remote Australia remains unrecognised and unvalued" (2002: 41). He adds that "[t]he formal recognition of such work and income would alleviate the negative 'welfare dependent' public perception accorded to those whose productive work is in the customary economy" (Altman, 2002: 42).

Where such valuable and fulfilling work is undertaken, a lack of meaningful activity is clearly not an issue. However, meaningful labour and activity, customary or otherwise, is not structured into, connected to, or recognised within the provision of welfare payments. With regard to customary activities, it should also be said that no effort is made to help these activities become more viable and address the various hindrances to their practice such as environmental depletion and competing land usage. As Frances Morphy and Howard Morphy stress, "resources are required to nurture ... culture" (2008: 43). The potential remains for there to be an absence of meaningful activity accompanying the receipt of unemployment benefits.

The welfare system, being only a partial, end of the line, response to unemployment, does not currently generate employment options for those in receipt of welfare. Unlike job creation strategies (creating public sector employment for the unemployed), welfare provision offers payment without offering genuine, worthwhile, work. Of course the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme did offer such work for Indigenous community members to engage in. The work was selected according to community priorities and it was an extremely popular and successful program in many ways (Rowse, 2001: 39,41; Sanders, 2004: 5; Altman and Sanders, 2008: 2,3). Notably, the CDEP scheme also contributed to the pursuit of many broader 'bigger picture' goals including strengthened community governance, increased autonomy, cultural maintenance and general well-being (Rowse, 2001; Arthur, 2002; Povinelli, 2010: 22; Altman et al, 2005: 15-16). Rowse emphasises a particularly important feature of the CDEP scheme:

> I want to promote 'political development' as an essential part of the vocabulary with which
> we discuss CDEP so that we can appreciate CDEP as one of the most significant steps ever
> taken in this country towards Indigenous self determination (2001: 41).

As a result of the Howard Government's targeted attacks on the CDEP scheme which led to its ultimate demise at the hands of the subsequent Labor Government, this innovative and constructive alternative to welfare no longer exists. Because of the impossible and irrelevant criteria set of the program, it failed to impress the Howard Government (Povinelli, 2010: 22; Altman, 2007b: 33; Altman and Sanders, 2008: 4,5; Dockery and Milson, 2007: 45). Unfortunately one drawback of the CDEP scheme, and this would have been a more appropriate and more easily met criticism, had been that the income of participants eventually plateaued (albeit above that of other welfare recipients due to the availability of top-up payments in return for extra hours worked [Altman, 2007b: 33; Altman and Gray, 2000]). There was thus the unresolved issue of its income ceiling (Smith, 1995: 5; Rowse, 2002a: 34). It would also have benefited from incorporation of work at higher skill levels (with training provided to enable workers to participate) (Rowse, 2001: 11; Egan, 2008: 57-58,69-70). Both issues could have been addressed by transforming at least a stream of the scheme to a more formal job creation program. However, even as it was, the CDEP scheme did provide regular, socially beneficial, and frequently culturally appropriate work for Indigenous Australians, which was taken up voluntarily on a massive scale (Smith, 1995: 5-6; Altman et al, 2005: 15-16; Arthur, 2002: 2-5).

Therefore, at the time the Howard Government gained power and began its construction of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, a partial solution to the intractable problem of Aboriginal unemployment, and its associated lack of meaningful activity, was already in place. Now that the CDEP scheme has been shut down, this effective strategy is no longer available to complement a more comprehensive and holistic approach to Aboriginal economic and community development. The twin issues of poverty and an absence of meaningful activity are now especially pertinent, and the ongoing high levels of Aboriginal welfare use are thus of considerable cause for concern.

Acknowledging the significance of these issues, I reattach high rates of Aboriginal welfare use – and not Aboriginal welfare dependency – back to the macro context of Australia's colonisation.

Conclusion

This chapter has begun the task of critically reviewing the Howard Government's application of the concept of welfare dependency to Aboriginal people. It looked initially at those causes of Aboriginal unemployment that have also been common to the general population. Even here though, these broader economic shifts have had more impact on Aboriginal workers because they are more frequently employed in the hardest hit sectors – low-skilled and rural-based employment. The role of economic factors in causing Aboriginal unemployment has been shown then to be a significant omission by the Howard Government. This chapter has also drawn attention to the absence of colonialism from the Howard Government's account of Aboriginal affairs. The detrimental impact of the colonial process on the lives of Aboriginal people cannot be overstated and yet was left out of the Howard Government's reading of the situation. In this chapter, colonialism has been brought back into the picture of Aboriginal affairs, as an issue in its own right. This chapter then began the process of contextualising the Howard Government's main focus – Aboriginal unemployment – in relation to this overarching colonial context.

To prepare for a more thorough exploration of the relevance of colonialism, it became necessary to articulate what it is I am asserting colonialism is relevant *to*, given this thesis' steady rejection of the concept of welfare dependency. I needed to clarify *what* in fact I am recommending be reattached to the bigger picture of Australia's colonisation – and *why*. I specified that I dismiss as extraneous and unhelpful the divisive and moralising framing which set up the Aboriginal recipient as the problem. Pinpointing what I acknowledge as worthy

of concern, I replaced the language of welfare dependency with the language of unemployment and high welfare usage. I stated that the reason I consider high levels of Aboriginal welfare use as cause for concern is that they are indicative of poverty and an absence of meaningful activity. Therefore, the next chapters will further investigate the relationship between high Aboriginal welfare use and colonialism rather than the relationship between 'Aboriginal welfare dependency' (as represented by the Howard Government) and colonialism.

Section 3: Alternative reading

CHAPTER 10: STEP 4 – RETHINKING ABORIGINAL WELFARE DEPENDENCY
Part 2: The relegation of Aboriginal people to the margins of the introduced economy

The next five chapters will visit alternative causes of current high levels of Aboriginal welfare use which were not acknowledged by the Howard Government and which can be linked back to Australia's colonisation. This chapter begins the process by examining the history of economic relations in Australia, and the limits placed on Aboriginal people's participation in the imported economy. This chapter focuses on the relegation of Aboriginal people to the periphery of the economy, when and where contact was made and Aboriginal labour was utilised. It is important, however, to recognise the broader impact of colonialism on Aboriginal unemployment. Aboriginal people's ability to function in the introduced economy has also been compromised by the disruption, dislocation, trauma and loss that are the hallmarks of the colonial process. The deep harm caused by colonisation has contributed to Aboriginal economic disadvantage in complex ways. This chapter, though, will deal specifically with the inaccessibility of the introduced economy as far as Aboriginal people have been concerned. I seek to debunk the assumption implicit in the Howard Government's problem representation that successful and rewarding economic participation is and has been available to Aboriginal people. I instead wish to demonstrate that the exclusion of Aboriginal people from all but the lowest rungs of the economy was written into Australia's colonial history and orchestrated by the policies and treatment of the past.

White Australia has a long history of exploiting Aboriginal labour and positioning Aboriginal workers at the bottom end of the mainstream economy (Young, 2005: 116; Larbalestier, 1988: 19; Stokes, 2002: 181). This arrangement has been to the immense advantage of the nation's economy and has greatly benefited employers and industry generally (Hollinsworth, 1996: 115; Rowley, 1970: 261,283; Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 1-7; Kidd, 2009: 132,134-136). Although land was the primary resource sought by the colonial mission, unpaid and cheap Aboriginal labour proved indispensable to its success (Wolfe, 1994: 93,100,110; Larbalestier, 1988: 23,28; Anthony, 2007b: 5-6). Exploitative economic relations emerged out of the context of the forcible expulsion of Aboriginal people from their land and the violence and subjugation this initiated (Beckett, 1988: 7).

Expulsion, 'letting in', and containment

The process of encroachment onto, and appropriation of, the wide Australian continent was cumulative and protracted, and the Aboriginal experience of colonisation has varied greatly geographically and over time. Frontier violence, however, consistently ensued and was carried out by settlers and colonial authorities (including police), unprovoked as well as in response to Indigenous resistance and 'theft'. While the most blood was shed in those areas where contact was most recent and larger settlements more distant, "homicide, rape, and cruelty have been commonplace over wide areas and long periods" (Rowley, 1970: 7). The attitude was widely held that Australia's First People were vermin to be cleared; a "rural pest" (Rowley, 1970: 15). Reports have survived of Native Police being euphemistically instructed to "disperse kangaroos" (Tatz, 2011: 89,90), and whites shooting "the blacks down like crows" (Dashwood, 1899 in Rose, 1991: 77).

The initial driving off of Indigenous inhabitants to utilise the land for farming was in some settings followed by a process of 'letting in' (at times involving

violent recruitment) (Anthony, 2007b; Gray, 2009: 41), in order to make use of their "inferior but useful" labour (Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 4). Pacifying local Aboriginal groups and safeguarding herds were other objectives of allowing Aboriginal people onto properties (Foster, 1989: 69,74; 2000b: 5,10-11; Larbalestier, 1988: 26). The engagement of Aboriginal labour was most common in the pastoral industry, in areas where labour was in short supply including the less settled parts of South Australia, Queensland, and Western Australia and the Northern Territory, and (briefly) areas vacated of white labour during the goldrush from 1850 (Foster, 2000b: 2; Rowley, 1970; 82-83,168,188).

Aboriginal people were drawn back by the diminishing viability of Indigenous economies resulting from the intrusion of white settlement and practices, the ever increasing threats to their safety from government officials and settlers, and the strong desire to stay with kin on country (Norris, 2010: 39; Anthony, 2007b: 6; Hunter, 2005: 80; Rowley, 1970: 22-23,192). The role of desperation in the development of working relationships was noted by John Beakley, Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland and author of a Commonwealth commissioned report on the condition of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. He commented that given the "the loss of their only other means of subsistence, the tribe may become too dependent upon the station to be able to do anything but yield to circumstances" (Bleakley, 1929 in Larbalestier, 1988: 23). Despite working relationships, relations remained fraught, Aboriginal survival remained extremely precarious and violence at the hands of settlers pervaded life, within employment contexts and beyond (Rowley, 1970: 6,46,68,146,149,155,160,216,257).

The brutal reality of Australia's colonisation created some unease at home in England and partly to appease humanitarian concerns, an approach of segregation and protection gradually spread across the country during the 19th

century and into the 20th century (Beckett, 1988: 7; Twomey, 2002: 95-96; Tatz, 2011: 92-93). The Protection era formalised the role of already established government reserves and Christian missions as providers of 'protection' to their Aboriginal 'flocks', and was an extension of earlier 'charitable' gestures of ration provision (Rowse, 2000: 34; 1998; Beckett, 1988: 7). 'Protection' centred around the removal of Aboriginal people from their land onto highly regulated government settlements and government subsidised missions, ostensibly to safeguard them from colonial violence (Stokes, 2002: 192-193; Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 6-7; Norris, 2010: 119; Beckett, 1988: 7). Aboriginal people were denied freedom of movement, as residence was prohibited near towns, near reserves and in any other area declared prohibited (Norris, 2010: 121; Buchan, 2002: 117; Anthony, 2007a: 44; Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 13; Hollinsworth, 1996: 115; Foster, 2000a: 16-17).

The Protection Acts

Policies of protection and segregation began to take shape during the 1800s in various states (in 1814 in New South Wales, in 1837 in Victoria, in 1850 in South Australia, and in 1844 in Western Australia) and continued with greater legal intensity over into the early 1900s (in Victoria in 1869, in New South Wales in 1909, in Western Australia in 1886, in Queensland in 1897, and in South Australia in 1911 and the Northern Territory in 1910 (with subsequent amendments) (Tatz, 2011: 92; Buchan, 2002: 9-10; Foster, 2000a: 16). Along with protection, the explicitly stated objectives of these statutes was increased control over Aboriginal charges whose status was steadily diminshed (Buchan, 2002: 10; Rowley, 1970: 220,227).

Protection policies attempted to contain the Aboriginal population, and acted as a form of incarceration, akin to that entreated upon asylum inmates, orphanage wards or prisoners (Beckett, 1988: 7,8; Stokes, 2002: 202; Tatz, 2011: 92,93; Foster, 2000a: 21; Rowley, 1970: 2). 'Protection' entailed serious restrictions on

the movements and actions of those Aboriginal people successfully interned, including intrusions into the most intimate aspects of life (de Plevitz, 2000: 30; Buchan, 2002: 117-118; Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 6). Those who managed to eke out an existence in 'native' camps lived with the constant threat of attracting Government attention and the harsh consequences this incurred (Buchan, 2002: 22; Tomlinson: 2001; Anthony, 2007b: 6; Beckett, 1988: 7-8). Only those who could gain Exemption status were able to escape these laws and live amongst white communities.[35] In exchange they had to submit to the conditions of exemption which, for example, forbade association with non-exempted Aboriginal people (de Plevitz, 2000: 29; Wickes, 2008). Government representatives (protectors, reservation supervisors, police) had incredible power, acting simultaneously as "prosecutor, judge and gaoler" (Beckett, 1988: 8). These powers extended to the ability to annul marriages, decide who could marry who, inspect and demolish houses, enforce the segregation of Aboriginal charges from white residential areas including hospitals and schools, disallow movement off reserves, remove children, prohibit the ownership of property or firearms, and punish, for instance, the following crimes: adultery, being cheeky, refusing to give a faecal sample, wasting water, chopping down trees, and being untidy (Hollinsworth, 1996: 115,116; de Plevitz, 2000: 30; Buchan, 2002: 10; Tatz, 2011: 93,94; Ellinghaus, 2003: 187,189,196; Kidd, 2009: 133).

Numerous perfectly legal activities for the rest of Australia's population were made criminal and no right of appeal existed (Stokes, 2002: 194,201; de Plevitz, 2000: 30; Tatz, 2011: 93; Kidd, 2009: 133). The practice of culture, including the speaking of Aboriginal languages, was strongly discouraged and in many

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[35] Provisions for exemption were included in Queensland's *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*, Western Australia's *Aborigines Protection Act 1905* (WA), South Australia's *Aborigines Act Amendment Act 1939* (SA), New South Wales' *Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act 1943* (NSW), and the Commonwealth's *Aboriginals Ordinance 1953* (Cth) for the Northern Territory and *Aboriginals Welfare Ordinance 1954* (Cth) for the Australian Capital Territory.

cases banned outright, and the authority of elders and Aboriginal law was deliberately thwarted (Stokes, 2002: 194; Twomey, 2002: 108; Tatz, 2011: 93; Buchan, 2002: 9; Norris, 2010: 119). Colin Tatz describes the state of affairs during this lengthy period of Australian history,

> [h]ere, indeed, was another universe for inmates who had committed no crimes: a separated, inferior legal class of people, perpetual wards of the state (and church), geographically remote, under special laws that prescribed codes of conduct, administered by officials, priests and policy in secrecy, with visitors unwelcome and required to have both written permission and recent chest x-rays for entry (2011: 94).

The Protection Acts and Aboriginal labour

The Protection Acts and Ordinances, which varied by state and territory, contained specific regulations regarding the working life of Aboriginal wards. These regulations prevented Indigenous people from interacting with the mainstream economy on equal terms and played a crucial role, along with the comprehensiveness of their subjugation, in establishing the nature of economic relations which has echoed into the present. The extreme over-administration of Aboriginal subjects encompassed tight restrictions on their engagement with the labour market (Hollinsworth, 1996: 116). The exclusion of Aboriginal subjects from towns and areas of white residence set clear limits on the extent to which Aboriginal people could participate in the introduced economy (Ellinghaus, 2003: 189,196; Tomlinson, 2001; Buchan, 2002: 10; de Plevitz, 2000: 29-30). Decisions were made for Aboriginal subjects regarding who they could work for and under what conditions (Tatz, 2011: 93; de Plevitz, 2000: 30-35; Stokes, 2002; Kidd, 2012: 172).

First in Victoria, through the *Aborigines' Protection Act 1869*, it was legislated that Aboriginal workers would labour under employment contracts, the vague terms of which were prescribed by the Governor (*Aborigines' Protection Act 1869*: 1; Norris, 2006: 177). Applications for contracts, made to the Board for the Protection of Aborigines, would need only to state: the nature of the work;

the form, quantity and frequency of payment; and the personal details of the employer and worker (Victorian Government, 1871: 338). No minimum standard was established, and inspections were not required. Provisions were also made enabling the board to grant a certificate to an Aboriginal worker (valid for six months) who was "able and willing to earn a living by his own exertions", "authorizing him to enter into a binding contract" (Victorian Government, 1871: 338).

Similarly, there were provisions in the Western Australian *Aborigines Protection Act 1886* (WA) for employers to engage Aboriginal workers through contracts, to be drawn up by a protector (potentially local police) or even a Justice of the Peace (potentially the employer), who could also cancel contracts (Rowley, 1970: 189-191; *Aborigines Protection Act 1886*: 212). Again, the requirements asked of employers were minimal ("substantial, good, and sufficient" rations and medical attendance) and inspections were not mandatory (*Aborigines Protection Act 1886*: 212). Queensland's *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* (Qld) (henceforth *APRSO Act 1897)*, established a permit system for employers of Aboriginal workers, with 'work agreements' – outlining the nature of the work, the remuneration, and the accommodation provided – to be negotiated with employers by local protectors (potentially police), whose approval was necessary for the termination of such contracts (Rowley, 1970: 183-184; de Plevitz, 2000: 34; *APRSO Act 1897*: 6176-6177). Inspections were simply permitted and it was an offence to have an Aboriginal person (or 'half-caste' female) at one's property outside of a work contract (*APRSO Act 1897*: 6177).

Under the *Northern Territory Aboriginals Act 1910* (SA) (henceforth *NTA Act 1910)*, employers were required to have a licence to employ Aboriginal workers, to be obtained from a protector (Rowley, 1970: 219; *NTA Act 1910*: 7-9). Scant detail was included on working conditions. Employers were only to

report after their licence period ceased on the name and remuneration of each Aboriginal employee, and to allow inspections (*NTA Act 1910*: 7-9). South Australian pastoralists lobbied against the inclusion of a contract system within the *Aborigines Act 1911* (SA), partly because this entailed making it an offence to 'harbour' Aboriginal people on one's property outside of a contract, which would include the families of workers (Foster, 2000b: 21-24). The final South Australian Act of 1911 removed reference to contracts and instead included provisions allowing (not requiring) protectors to inspect conditions of employment (Foster, 2000b: 24; *Aborigines Act 1911*: 4,8).

The various Acts and Ordinances provided negligible protection for Aboriginal workers and their families while reinforcing the authority of government officials and employers. As Charles Rowley states, the execution of these laws "would reflect the attitudes of the police and others who now had to administer it" (1970: 184). Loretta de Plevitz considers the impact of this institutionalised circumscription of Aboriginal economic rights,

> [t]o understand ... how Aboriginal people have difficulty in finding work in the mainstream – it is necessary to ... examine how the Protection Acts, enforced by police and government regulation – were predicated on maintaining poor education, passivity and lack of those work skills so admired in the world of work – merit and initiative (2000: 30).

Role of missions and government reserves

Missions and reserves played their part by assigning workers to local farms and pastoral stations, partly for the financial savings it secured but also in response to the clamour for cheap labour (Tatz, 2011: 93; Larbalestier, 1988: 21; Beckett, 1988: 8; Kidd, 2012: 174). Aboriginal workers (including juveniles, in some cases under compulsory apprenticeship arrangements legislated under Protection Acts) were distributed out, commonly as farmhands, drovers, domestic workers and cooks (with a strict gender division to the work) (Foster, 2000a: 21; de Plevitz, 2000: 31; Kidd, 2009: 134; Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 10). The pastoral industry was in turn subsidised by the provision of this labour

which for some time was largely paid for only in rations and residency of relatives (Skyring, 2012: 155; de Plevitz, 2000: 31; Tatz, 2005: 9; Beckett, 1988: 8; Altman et al, 2005: 24; Larbalestier, 1988: 29-30). Rosalind Kidd summarises the attitudes behind the sourcing out of Aboriginal workers gleaned from Queensland Government records and legislation – "[s]end them out to the remote areas that white workers shunned, arrest them and return them if they abscond; do not look too closely at hours and conditions" (2012: 174). Those confined on missions and reserves were mostly required to carry out work around the settlement for meagre rations and token payment for additional work, and in this way support the viability of the reserve system (de Plevitz, 2000: 32,33; Tatz, 2005: 9).

Use of force

A component of coercion was present in many employment situations. Force was exercised most obviously in cases where kidnapping, particularly of children, was used as a method of securing labour (Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 5,10,11; Gray, 2009: 39,41; Anthony, 2007b: 6; Norris, 2010: 40; Rowley, 1970: 180,193). The putting to work of forcibly removed Aboriginal children (members of the stolen generations) as they entered their teenage years was another way of acquiring Aboriginal labour. Aboriginal workers were subjected to violence as a means of preventing them from absconding and compelling them to stay, right up until just before the Equal Wages decision (Kidd, 2009: 135,136; Larbalestier, 1988: 24; Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 10; Skyring, 2012: 161; Rowley, 1970: 193; Norris, 2010: 37). Attempts to escape were met with police searches and, when found, workers could be taken back in chains or handcuffs, have their pay forfeited, be sent away to a settlement such as Palm Island in the case of Queensland residents, or punished in some other way (Kidd, 2009: 135,136; de Plevitz, 2000: 34; Skyring, 2012: 155-156). There are accounts of employers using stock whips and chains on workers, where beatings and physical abuse were used as methods of discipline (Larbalestier,

1988: 24; Kidd, 2009: 136; Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 10). The prevalence of 'rough handling' or 'firmness' (that is, violence towards Aboriginal workers) sullied many working relationships (Kidd, 2009: 136; Rowley, 1970: 17,159,257,262,335; Gray, 2009: 41,43).

Likened to slavery

The degree of compulsion used to secure Aboriginal employment, the poor if not non-existent remuneration and the frequently abhorrent conditions have led many to describe the working arrangements of Aboriginal people up to quite recently as a form of slavery (Evans, 1984 in Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 4; Gray, 2009; de Plevitz, 2000: 28,30). Chief Protector of Western Australia Auber Neville himself referred to Aboriginal workers in his state as working "under a system of semi-slavery" (1925 in Skyring, 2012: 155). There is some debate over the strict applicability of the term slavery to the Australian case (Anthony, 2007a: 36,47; McGrath, 1995: 39-45; Gray, 2009: 37-40). Clearly there are differences between what occurred in Australia and the American slave trade for example. However, parallels with instances of slavery over time do exist and much Aboriginal labour around this period has been classified as indentured (Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 4-5; Gray, 2009: 30,41; Tatz, 2011: 87; de Plevitz, 2000: 30). Bill Thorpe describes Aboriginal labour as a distinct form of slavery – colonised labour – because it was simultaneously desirable and undesirable, "alternately valued as a labour commodity but also devalued, employed and unemployed, paid but mostly unpaid, integrated but mostly marginalised" (1992 in Foster, 2000b: 4-5).

Remuneration

The issue of payment (or lack of) is significant as the benefits gained by employers from the labour exchange far exceeded those received by their Aboriginal workers. The payment of wages to Aboriginal workers was not the norm and wages for Aboriginal workers were only made compulsory in 1933 by

the Commonwealth Government[36] (Anthony, 2007b: 5; Stokes, 2002: 199; Larbalestier, 1988: 29). As Thalia Anthony states, "[w]hen compulsory wages were introduced ... governments failed to enforce their actual payment" (2007b: 5). Also, there were a number of ways around such legislations (Anthony, 2007a: 46; Gray, 2009: 44). For example, the Commonwealth's *Aboriginals Ordinance 1933* (Cth) (applicable to the Northern Territory) was accompanied by regulations which allowed wages to be waived where the dependents of Aboriginal workers were also maintained (Anthony, 2007b: 5,7,11; Larbalestier, 1988: 29). Many dependents were, however, forced to work anyway, carrying out much necessary work, and were falsely represented as non-labourers (Anthony, 2007b: 5-6; Rowley, 1970: 334).

The wage set out for Aboriginal workers in the Commonwealth's *Aboriginals Ordinance 1933* was 5 shillings plus rations, compared to the minimum of 2 pounds 8 shillings due to equivalent white workers (Larbalestier, 1988: 29; Anthony 2007b: 7; Gray, 2009: 44). This minimum wage was undercut by provisions made in the Commonwealth's *Wards' Employment Ordinance 1953* (Cth), purportedly in line with the goal of assimilation (Gray, 2009: 44; Norris, 2010: 128-129). It specified an allowance payable to 'wards-in-training' ('subject to specified conditions') which could be graduated from provided the ward pass a hygiene and English test (Norris, 2010: 128; Hunter, 2005: 81; McCorquodale, 1985: 7). It also set a 'slow, aged or infirm ward' lower pay rate, which thoroughly undermined the basic wage as employers could simply classify Aboriginal workers as slow (Gray, 2009: 45; Norris, 2010: 128; Skyring, 2012: 157). It was not until 1971 that legislation ended the ward status of Aboriginal people in regards to employment in the Northern Territory (Tatz, 2011: 11; Altman et al, 2005: 24; Sanders, 1985: 140). In 1950 in Western Australia, the wage rate for Aboriginal stockmen was set at 1 pound per month

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[36] Wages for Aboriginal workers were first made compulsory in Queensland in 1919 (de Plevitz, 1998: 148; Kidd, 2009: 135).

(and 10 shillings for 'yardmen' and women), while the top award rate for their white colleagues set in 1951 was 10 pounds 8 shillings plus keep (Skyring, 2012: 159,160).

Stark double standards in remuneration were justified by calling on the racial stereotype of Aboriginal people as 'lazy natives' (Norris, 2010: 40; Rowley, 1970: 260). According to lawyer Frank Stevens, employers commonly disparagingly referred to their Aboriginal employees as "lazy, incompetent, dirty, untruthful, alcoholic and of low intellect" (1974 in McGrath, 1995: 44). The accuracy of such claims is cast in doubt by contemporaneous recognition of the superior work carried out by Aboriginal workers (Kidd, 2009: 134,135; Anthony, 2007a: 40-41; Norris, 2010: 37; Gray, 2009: 41; Larbalestier, 1988: 24). In 1956, an employment inspector of pastoral stations in Queensland commented that "white men of markedly less ability and industry receive higher wages and better living conditions than Aboriginals who are better workmen" (in Kidd, 2012: 173).

Some Aboriginal workers in certain areas did already receive cash payments by the time it was legislated that Aboriginal workers be paid wages, notably in the diving industry and industries located around established towns and cities (particularly in the south) (Larbalestier, 1988: 24; Norris, 2010: 90,123; Anthony, 2007a: 41; Gray, 2009: 45; Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 12). However, rations and accommodation, particularly on missions and more rural and remote areas, were frequently the form of remuneration received by Aboriginal workers and, if fortunate, a small amount of cash pocket money (Stringer, 2007: 12; Kidd, 2009: 133-138; Altman et al, 2005: 24; de Plevitz, 2000: 33). There were even Government restrictions on the employment of Aboriginal workers (non-whites) and incentives to not employ Aboriginal workers in certain industries, including sugarcane farming in Queensland, mining in Western Australia, and the national postal service, with such

legislative provisions in the latter two industries only repealed in the 1960s (McCorquodale, 1985: 4-5).

Due to their exclusion from Australia's industrial legislations and coverage under a separate set of laws from the 1860s to beyond the 1950s, Aboriginal workers laboured without the protection or pay other workers received (Norris, 2010: 129). The turning point was the successful claim for equal wages for Aboriginal pastoral workers made in 1968 against the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. The fact that this legislative change resulted in mass sackings rather than better pay attests to the entrenched nature of racist opportunism. Even after the introduction of equal pastoral wages, training wages or allowances continued to be paid on reserves until well into the 1970s; until 1979 in Queensland (Sanders, 1985; Kidd, 2012: 72; Hunter, 2005: 81). In the words of Jon Altman, Matthew Gray and Robert Levitus, "when Aborigines worked, even in market-oriented private enterprise, their participation was not on the same terms, nor considered the same in principle, as that of other workers" (2005: 24).

Stolen wages

The official withholding of wages by Government and employers, when and where Aboriginal workers earned wages, was another way in which Aboriginal people were denied monetary payment for their labour. The wages withheld have come to be known as the 'stolen wages'. The situation arose partly because of the way Aboriginal workers were paid. The specific legislation applying to Aboriginal workers included restrictions on access to income, requiring that wages be paid into virtually inaccessible compulsory savings accounts controlled by protectors (Norris, 2010: 123-124,128-129; Tomlinson, 2001; de Plevitz, 2000: 36-39; Anthony, 2004: 129; Kidd, 2009: 134). Banking controls were in place across Australia and meant that Aboriginal workers rarely

saw much of their earnings (Kidd, 2012: 177; Hunter, 2005: 80; Gray, 2009: 43; Beckett, 1988: 8; Norris, 2006: 177-181).

The 1871 Regulations that followed Victoria's *Aboriginal Protection Act 1869* gave the Board of Protection of Aborigines the power to direct

> all or any part of the money payment payable to the Aboriginal to be made to some local guardian or other person specified in that behalf instead of the aboriginal himself (in Norris, 2010: 96).

In the Northern Territory, it was established in 1913 (and legislated in 1918 and 1933) that a portion of the funds to be paid to Aboriginal workers be diverted into a trust account (Gray, 2009: 42-44). This money was practically inaccessible to the worker and if it was not spent within six years, it was moved into consolidated revenue (Gray, 2009: 42-44).

In Queensland it was set out after the turn of the 20th century, via legislation and pursuant regulations, that pocket money paid by the employer to the worker was to be a specified percentage of the wage, depending on the worker's gender, family status and age (de Plevitz, 2000: 37; Norris, 2010: 124). Deductions were also routinely made from the amount remaining in savings, including income tax and contributions to a welfare fund, variously named (de Plevitz, 2000: 35). Although officially monies from welfare funds and savings accounts were to be expended for the benefit of the Aboriginal worker and their families more generally, this was not adhered to (Norris, 2010: 127,128; Kidd, 2009: 138). Savings accounts of deceased Aboriginal workers were transferred into welfare funds rather than passed onto families and welfare funds were used for general government projects, while interest raised on the large sums amassing was passed on to treasury (Kidd, 2009: 137; de Plevitz, 2000: 36,39). There is evidence of pocket money not being paid *en masse* and savings accounts being depleted through government syphoning as well as fraudulent purchase receipts (Kidd, 2009: 137-139). In 1933, the Queensland Government centralised rural savings accounts into a main account in Brisbane and locked

80 per cent into investment (Kidd, 2012: 175; 2009: 137; de Plevitz, 2000: 38). Aboriginal workers were denied access to even small amounts of their savings (Kidd, 2012: 175; 2009: 133; de Plevitz, 2000: 37).

Another way Aboriginal workers were denied their wages was through the practice of 'booking down'. Wages would be converted to store credit where workers would often be forced to pay grossly inflated prices (300 per cent at one particular cattle station) for basic goods equivalent to rations (Anthony, 2007b: 5,8; Kidd, 2009: 33). The Chief Welfare Officer of Alice Springs from 1955 to 1976, and Superintendent of Welfare before that from 1935, attested to the widespread and unchecked nature of the practice which he described as "open to all kinds of abuse" (Evans, 1982 in Anthony, 2007b: 8).

Booking down was also practised where protectors and employers received Aboriginal people's Invalid and Old age pensions when they were introduced in 1960 (Cass, 2005a: 101; Skyring, 2012: 162). These third parties were able to receive pension payments in lieu of their intended recipients (Anthony, 2007b: 9). Pensions were withheld, made available only as store credit, and used for general purposes (Skyring, 2012: 162-164; Kidd, 2012: 175). One reason given for why pension payments were not passed on was so that "wages paid to native station workers will not show adversely by comparison" (Director Humphreys, 1965 in Skyring, 2012: 164). The ability of employers to withhold pension payments diminished with incoming legislation in 1966, around the same time as the introduction of the equal pastoral wage for Aboriginal workers (Skyring, 2012: 155; Cass, 2005a: 101). Fiona Skyring argues that this coincidence played a key role in the ejection of Aboriginal pastoral workers and their families after equal wages were introduced (2012).

Embezzlement of the incomes of workers (and their dependents) was made possible by serious government mismanagement in the face of countless reports

indicating the scale of abuse. Records of payment and purchase were not inspected but were taken at face value and employers and protectors were able to take advantage of the lack of literacy amongst Aboriginal workers (Kidd, 2009: 137-139; Anthony, 2007b: 7-10). A system of thumbprint verification was introduced in Queensland in 1904 but in the 1940s auditors were still bemoaning the clearly habitual disregard for witnessing procedures and the fact that thumbprints were "so carelessly taken" that they were "useless for verification" – should any efforts actually be made to verify documents (Kidd, 2012: 174; 2009: 137-139).

Despite government knowledge of practices such as booking down, payment remained unsupervised and non-payment went unpunished (Kidd, 2009: 137-139; de Plevitz, 2000: 38; Anthony, 2007b: 8; Tatz, 2005: 10; McCorquodale, 1985: 7). As Tatz states, pastoralists "were involved in schemes which enabled many of them to boast that 'it was more profitable to grow niggers than beef'" (2005: 9). From individual pilfering to top end government misappropriation, monies from savings accounts, pocket money payments and welfare funds were used for unrelated purposes (de Plevitz, 2000: 36-40; Tatz, 2005: 10; Kidd, 2009: 137-139; 2012: 174-175).

Working conditions

Aboriginal people's experience in the workforce has also been marred by the conditions under which they laboured. Rations on stations in less settled regions were frequently substandard (Anthony, 2007a: 46; 2007b: 10; Curthoys and Moore, 1995: 10). Rations usually consisted of flour, meat, sugar, tea, tobacco, clothes and blankets (McCorquodale, 1985: 7; Norris, 2010: 38,88). Where ration scales were set, employers and missions alike did not comply (Tatz, 2005: 10; Kidd, 2009: 135). The standard set was not particularly high – the Commonwealth's *Aboriginals Ordinance 1933* did not even require that rations supplied to Aboriginal workers' dependents be nutritious (Gray, 2009: 43).

Chief Protector Bleakley reported in 1929 that camp dependents (in central and northern Australia) were in a state of semi-starvation (Larbalestier, 1988: 24). Workers suffered too (Peterson, 2005: 10; Rowley, 1970: 210,262). Records of ration provision were falsified while there are reports that offal, bone, weevil-infested goods, and mouldy and discarded scraps were given as rations (Gray, 2009: 44; Tatz, 2005: 10; Rowley, 1970: 263,326,334; Kidd, 2009: 132). Ill-health and high mortality was often attributable to the poor quality and quantity of rations, and lack of clean water (Gray, 2009: 43,44; Rowley, 1970: 162,326,334-335; Kidd, 2012: 173). Queensland Government records reveal the attitude of most employers around the Gulf of Carpentaria in the 1940s was "anything is good enough for a nigger" (in Kidd, 2012: 172).

Again, the poor treatment of Aboriginal workers was partly made possible by the lack of supervision and hands off approach of government (Larbalestier, 1988: 20,23; Anthony, 2007a: 45; Rowley, 1970: 260-270,334). Harsh treatment on stations extended to the overworking of Aboriginal workers, demanding workers (and their dependents) work beyond their physical means (Kidd, 2009: 136,134; Anthony, 2007a: 46; Rowley, 1970: 336). One protector has been quoted as saying "it is a well known fact that Aboriginals working on agreement, work long hours, and with a lot of employers there is no Sunday ... very often their day's work is nearer 16 hours than 8 hours" (in Kidd, 2009: 136). Deborah Bird Rose relays the observation of an Aboriginal historian named Hobbles Danayarri regarding life on stations: "[i]n analysing station life, Hobbles wanted to explain the continuities between the European strategy of killing Aborigines directly and the strategy of working them (often to death)" (1991: 156).

In different parts of Australia, at different points in Australia's recent history, "Aboriginal people worked under conditions of physical and psychological coercion, violence, degradation and sexual abuse" (Gray, 2009: 46). The extent

to which sexual violence was a component of the working lives of Aboriginal families, both on and off missions, is horrifying (Larbalestier, 1988: 25; Kidd, 2009: 134,136; Berndt and Berndt, 1948 in Rose, 2004: 109; Behrendt, 2000: 253-256). Whilst it may not always have been openly acknowledged, as Stephen Gray attests, sexual predation and abuse were widespread (2009: 41). Girls distributed out as domestic workers across Australia were extremely vulnerable, attested to by the high rates of pregnancies that ensued (Haskins, 2004; Huggins, 1987; Kidd, 2009: 134). The limited freedom of movement, and general powerlessness within employment settings, accompanied by the disturbing lack of respect for Aboriginal women and very young girls, worked against their safety. A Northern Territory Patrol Officer reported that "young women are regarded as part of the wages paid to keep [European] men on the stations" (Harney, 1945 in Rose, 2004: 109). One of the underlying causes of the Wave Hill walk off was the treatment of Aboriginal women on the property. As well as protesting about wages, land rights, and mistreatment generally, the strike by Aboriginal men was also provoked by the routine sexual assault of Aboriginal women by white stockmen and bosses (McGrath, 1995: 44,45). In Vincent Lingiari's words "white fella play hell with them" (1968 in McGrath, 1995: 45).

Limited prospects

Participation for Aboriginal people in the introduced economy remained disempowering and financially unrewarding through the policy of Protection and the policy of Assimilation (officially agreed upon in the 1930s), up until the relatively recent repeal of discriminatory legislation (Gray, 2009: 44,45; Beckett, 1988: 10; Norris, 2010: 126-130). Work experiences certainly varied (Larbalestier, 1988: 24; Tatz, 2005: 9; Rose, 1991: 179). However, it was widely understood due to the nature of employment that career paths were not being laid. Ronald and Catherine Berndt, reporting on Aboriginal labour conditions in

the Northern Territory in the 1940s, expressed the sentiment of Aboriginal workers as they saw it,

> their future and that of their children – those few who were still present – was not only strictly circumscribed but seemed to lead nowhere... What was made clear to them was their eventual disappearance as a people and their replacement by others (1987 in Gray, 2009: 44).

Aboriginal stockman Jack Jangari commented on the nature of Indigenous/non-Indigenous work relations on Northern Territory cattle stations,

> [t]hey [Aboriginal people] made Wave Hill rich. They made every station, whatever station there in the territory now, we made all them places rich. And [they] keep us fellows poor (in Rose, 1991: 156).

The sort of labour Aboriginal people were assigned had negligible prospects and the place they were permitted to take within the economy was the lowest available. Henry Reynolds discusses the position envisioned for assimilated Aboriginal workers,

> the race question was, of necessity, also a 'class' question. Policy makers saw assimilation very specifically in terms of absorption in the lower orders. 'Civilisation' itself implied the inculcation of those habits of order, obedience and industry which were thought appropriate for servants and hired labourers (1983: 132).

Apprenticeship schemes, apparently setting out to uplift, prepared Aboriginal workers only for the lowest paid occupations. Peter Read interprets the logic behind the selection of low-skilled work for young Aboriginal wards by the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board in the early twentieth century,

> [i]n choosing a position, the Board assumed that basically blacks were stupid. Its very first report in 1883 stated that black children after training 'would take their places with the industrial classes of the colony' (1981: 14).

Speaking about the preparation of Aboriginal workers for the workforce in Australia sixty years ago and the reception they received, Tatz states "[n]o real training took place and skills were not recognised" (2005: 10).

Even the limited white education some Aboriginal people were given on reserves was considered undesirable by employers, because it enhanced their

sense of their rights and gave them increased confidence to defend them. Kidd reports how "northern pastoralists lobbied strongly that children not be sent to missions for educating as this 'ruined' them for work" (2003). In his report, Bleakley discussed the view held by pastoralists that education made Aboriginal workers "cunning and cheeky" (1929 in Larbalestier, 1988: 24). Bleakley translated cunningness and cheekiness as increased dissatisfaction with conditions which he saw as naturally resulting in a "hopeless outlook" (1929 in Larbalestier, 1988: 24). Bleakley's vision, nonetheless, was that the children of Aboriginal people would remain "the stockmen and servants of the future" (1929 in Larbalestier, 1988: 22). Poor and non-existent training and education limited Aboriginal people's options for participating in the mainstream economic system and kept them as a malleable source of cheap labour (Young, 2005: 117-118; de Plevitz, 2000: 33).

Conclusion

The colonial process in Australia, then, has not seen Aboriginal people welcomed into the introduced economy with open arms. Instead, the exploitation of Aboriginal workers seems to have been largely a condition of their employment and their selection over white employees. Colonial relations overlayed working relations. Jan Larbalestier makes this point, "[t]he use of Aboriginal labour was ... bound up with the position of Aborigines as a colonised people" (1988: 19). The experiences of Aboriginal workers have varied greatly, across time, across Australia, and across individual cases. However, it must be understood that up until recently, on the basis of race and via comprehensive discriminatory legislation nation-wide and its even more discriminatory implementation, Aboriginal workers were denied control over their employment, adequate reward for their labour and the prospect of advancement.

Limits were placed on what work was considered appropriate for Aboriginal people, and the driver of Aboriginal employment was ultimately Aboriginal people's usefulness within the capitalist economy as a cheap or free source of labour (as well as a very competent one). Treatment of Aboriginal workers was guided primarily by the needs of the white community and Government bureaucracy (Young, 2005: 116). In Anthony's words "Aborigines were ... revalued in terms of their 'usefulness' to 'whites'" (2007a: 41). The experience of Aboriginal workers within the newly established economic system was frequently negative and the reality of their exploitation was not lost on them (Pope, 1988 in Norris, 2010: 39; Anthony, 2007a: 46). The appeal and benefits of the new economy would not have been obvious, while the limited position available to Aboriginal people within this introduced system would have been abundantly clear (Reynolds, 1983: 127,132). Australia's "white society was less able than Aboriginal society to assimilate outsiders on terms of equality" (Reynolds, 1982 in Norris, 2010: 36).

Haebich reflects on the sort of worker such a history of "systemic economic deprivation, exclusion and neglect" produces (2004: 3,5). She states,

> [b]y denying generations of Aboriginal people the right to decent and productive work, proper wages, sufficient services, [training, protections and conditions] and adequate welfare, governments laid the basis for an Aboriginal underclass without sufficient land, property, capital, economic skills or employment prospects (Haebich, 2004: 3-4).

Indigenous poverty is not something new but instead has its origins in the lack of value given to Aboriginal labour across generations. As Skyring stresses, Indigenous poverty predates the roll out of equal wages and the extension of welfare rights to Aboriginal people (2012: 165-166).

In order to understand contemporary Aboriginal economic marginalisation, the historic positioning of Aboriginal people on the outer of the introduced economy must be acknowledged. Indeed, as Ann Curthoys and Clive Moore state,

> ex-slave status is 'seared into the consciousness' of Aboriginal ... peoples in Australia, and the position of indigenous Australians as 'colonised labour' is affirmed by the low paid low status work most continue to perform, and their high rates of unemployment and underemployment (1995: 5).

Rather than welfare – and Aboriginal dependence on it – being the cause of Aboriginal poverty, this chapter has shown that Aboriginal poverty was firmly entrenched prior to the roll out of welfare, and was created not by Aboriginal deficit but by colonial will, towards national objectives. The claim that Aboriginal people have been offered free access to participate equally in the mainstream Australian economy does not stand up.

Section 3: Alternative reading

CHAPTER 11: STEP 4 – RETHINKING ABORIGINAL WELFARE DEPENDENCY
Part 3: Recent efforts to redress Aboriginal economic marginalisation inadequate

This chapter makes the point that the lasting impact of the historical relegation of Aboriginal workers to the economic periphery (in those areas within the reach of the introduced economy) has been furthered by insufficient efforts to correct this. The argument is made that Australia's colonisation persists as a determining factor of Aboriginal economic marginalisation into the present in part because not enough has been done to address the economic marginalisation of Aboriginal people in the recent past. Granted, the amount of work involved in undoing the economic side-lining of Aboriginal people has always been tremendous. At the time that unemployment benefits for Aboriginal people were introduced, when restrictions on access to other forms of welfare payment were lifted, when the CDEP scheme was set up, and when equal wages came to be normalised (except on reserves), barriers to participation in the mainstream economy faced by Aboriginal people remained very real. The wind-back of legislative exclusion from social security benefits and industrial protections, although significant, could not unwind the mammoth set back borne by Indigenous people (Sanders, 1998: 143). The enormous debt in Aboriginal life chances within white society was by no means settled.

The legacy of colonialism is hard to quantify. However, it crucially encompasses unequal citizenship entitlements, including limited access to mainstream education, health care, housing, infrastructure and services generally, all of which contribute to unemployment. Fundamentally, historically

and into the present, Aboriginal people have missed out on the resources to enable full and equal participation in white society. Cass draws attention to the failure of the liberal model in Australia to provide Aboriginal people with the complete array of the basic enabling citizenship rights necessary for successful social and economic engagement. She writes first of the importance of "non-discriminatory employment rights and opportunities" and follows this quickly by stressing the need for "[s]ufficient and strong investment in community capacity-building and employment growth, in education, training and community services" which she states "is manifestly a responsibility of government" (Cass, 2005a: 106). Cass asks

> how might it be argued that Indigenous peoples have achieved full social citizenship rights (of which their inclusion in social security legislation is but one dimension) when the indicators of disadvantage and exclusion continue to be evident? (2005a: 97).

She also explains that only different treatment, beyond equal treatment, could have a chance of remedying the backlog of maltreatment (2005a: 97). John Borrows puts it simply, "[y]ou do not make a rich person and a poor person equal by giving them both a hundred dollars" (2005: 7).

The playing field has never been level for Aboriginal people in Australia and a colossal job has lain at the feet of governments to make it possible for Aboriginal people to catch up. In order for Aboriginal people to have a chance at participating successfully in the introduced economy, it is not only a matter of removing barriers to access (ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2002: 60). The legacy of these barriers also needs to be amended through repairing the disparities in enabling citizenship rights that came with these barriers. Jeremy Beckett speaks of the scale of the issue and the scale of response necessary:

> while discriminatory laws could be removed from the statute book in a moment, the task of bringing Aborigines in from the cold where the great majority remained, ha[s] scarcely begun.... [T]he expropriation and marginalization, which are the common outcomes of colonization, have produced a level of poverty and deprivation that is beyond the capacity of the market or the welfare apparatus to remedy. The additional measures that are required make calls upon state resources (1988: 11,14).

The calls made upon state resources are significantly more than the insufficient provisions made so far (ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2002: 60) and these are the focus of this chapter.

Self-determination stopped short

Policies of self-determination were devised under the Whitlam Labor Government (in power between 1972 to 1975), setting out to restore control and decision making power to Aboriginal people and rebuild Aboriginal communities. Prime Minister Gough Whitlam described the approach as designed to reverse "two hundred years of despoliation, injustice and discrimination" and "restore to the Aboriginal people their lost power of self determination in economic, social and political affairs" (1973 in Robbins, 1994: 129). This policy approach, commendable in theory, quickly became more like self-management rather than self-determination (Moreton-Robinson, 2009: 66; Hunt, 2008: 27; Malezer in Senate, 2005a: 50). Self-management can be thought of as more limited to the management and administration of communities and organisations (Moreton-Robinson, 2009: 66). Self-determination can be cast as is interested at last in the bigger picture and making reparations for the damage done to Aboriginal authority systems, autonomy and governance structures. It has been described as concerned about the process as well as the outcome (Dockery and Milson, 2007: 161). It was, however, never followed through.

Whilst steps were made in the right direction, there were major issues with implementation. The failure of governments to put self-determination into practice (Hunt, 2008: 27; Dillon and Westbury, 2007: 193) has been put down to a lack of commitment by Alfred Dockery (2009: 4), while David Martin understands it as proof that "government is inherently incapable of moving beyond its own dominating rationale" (2001a: viii). Diane Smith asserts

at no stage over the last 30 years has any Indigenous community ever been handed real self-determination. Rather the implementation of self-determination by government has

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been more like a *'dump and run'* approach. Some assets and responsibilities have been handed over to community organisations, but at the same time: government and other agencies have withdrawn staff and assistance; there has been very little genuine financial authority devolved to communities; and virtually no sustained attention has been paid to building community financial institutions and capacities (2002: 5-6, my emphasis).

The introduction of the approach effectively resulted in an exodus of church representatives and white officials, replaced by Aboriginal people in no way prepared for the new, highly specialised roles (Martin, 2001a: 10; Egan, 2008: 34). The preceding circumstances are relevant, as Martin explains "Indigenous authority structures ... were eroded or suppressed under the ... authoritarian regimes of the missionaries and superintendents" (2001a: 10). Martin points out that these policy shifts also coincided with the increased availability of alcohol to Aboriginal people, which further undermined positive change (2001a: 10,11). Crucially, appropriate effort was not put in to restore legitimate Indigenous systems of governance before withdrawing the authoritarian systems of white control (Dillon and Westbury, 2007: 9). The governance models applied were not Indigenous but rather mirrored white bureaucratic structures. As Rowse puts it

> [p]eople are being asked to be self-determining within the social forms bequeathed by an era of 'assimilation'. The resources they have to work with, both material and rhetorical, are too far rooted in our shared pasts to justify celebrations of rupture with the bad old days (2002a: 10).

The creation of ATSIC in 1989 as a national Aboriginal representative body was an extension and an example of the approach. ATSIC was not autonomous but worked within the constraints of government directives, objectives and budgets (Moreton-Robinson, 2009: 66; Hunt, 2008: 28). The substantial Indigenous sector created under the philosophy of self-determination (made up of land councils, native title bodies, ATSIC Regional Councils, community government councils, and thousands of organisations administering Indigenous specific services in areas of health, employment, housing, education and so on), carried

out rather than set policies and were ill-equipped and poorly funded to perform even this role (Hunt, 2008: 27-28; Rowse, 2002a: 185,189,221; Smith, 2002: 4,5; Ivanitz, 1999: 2). Borrows states "ATSIC ... experienced great difficulty during their tenure because of excessive governmental political interference" and "under-funding", concluding that "the policy of self-determination fell far short of a deep entrenchment of positive Indigenous difference in Australia" (2005: 8).

Deficiencies of material and technical assistance over a period of extreme flux have been a serious problem, especially "[g]iven the lack of skills and resources base amongst Aboriginal communities" (Fuller and Gleeson, 2004: 188,189). What Tom Calma refers to as "know-how and ... access to relevant government services and resources" were entirely necessary for self-determination's success, and were woefully absent (2006: 5). Rather than self-determination itself being a failure, self-determination failed to be executed. In the meantime, self-determination has been assigned blame for accompanying failures of policy, service delivery, infrastructure establishment and community development (Dodson, 1997 in Ivanitz, 1999: 2; Murphy, 2000: 68; Billings, 2009: 5; Herron, 1996b: 11).

Given the magnitude of the backlog, and the dire need for colonialism's damage to be attended to via an effective form of self-determination, these failures combined have been significant inhibitors of positive change and reconstruction. Not enough has been done to remedy the entrenched nature of Aboriginal economic marginalisation, since the relegation of Aboriginal people to the periphery of the mainstream economy ceased being official government policy. Worthwhile attempts to improve Aboriginal unemployment did emerge amidst official self-determination, including the Hawke Labor Government's Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (1987), the introduction of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, and of course the remarkable CDEP scheme.

However, such initiatives came forth into an environment that was missing the necessary investment to support the significant change involved. More was required to shift the economic exclusion inherited from the past and offer Aboriginal people anything close to substantive equality regarding employment. Throughout the period of rhetorical self-determination and certainly during the Howard years (when such issues worsened), the task of rebuilding, and making it possible for Indigenous Australia to participate successfully in the broader economy by providing Aboriginal people with equal enabling citizenship rights, remained undone.

Government disengagement and dysfunction

Dillon and Westbury describe one of the major issues standing in the way of Aboriginal economic and community development as long-term structural governmental disengagement (2007). They discuss the accumulated detrimental effects of this disengagement and speak of "a failure of governance by governments" (Dillon and Westbury, 2007: 83). Dillon and Westbury write

> we observe over and over that in the Indigenous domain, governments have, particularly in remote regions, failed to create and maintain the institutional frameworks which establish the foundation of the Australian nation state, and which underpin citizenship rights and responsibilities, and often the operation of markets (2007: 5).

The funding model in operation is considered particularly problematic by Dillon and Westbury. They criticise the "overlapping mosaic" of state and federal funding which co-exists with serious under-coverage in many areas (Dillon and Westbury, 2007: 65,77). This is made worse by the multiplicity of disconnected funding agencies and the rigorous and confusing grant process (Dillon and Westbury, 2007: 71,73). Dillon and Westbury observe that while

> the numbers of such programs confuse even consummate Canberra insiders, the real confounding disorientation impacts on each bush community, where accessing resources becomes a labyrinthine voyage through scores of separate programs and a sea of bureaucratic process (2007: 191).

The combined effect is that funding is erratic, unpredictable, and grossly insufficient (Dillon and Westbury, 2007: 37,63,83).

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Michael Ivanitz echoes these criticisms of the under-coverage and duplication characteristic of funding arrangements applied to Indigenous Australia. Along with Dillon and Westbury, he also sees the process of ensuring government accountability as flawed because the focus is not on outcomes (Ivanitz, 1999: 4; Dillon and Westbury, 2007: 71). In Ivanitz's words,

> the only measures of accountability used by government are based on the narrow application of mainstream audit procedures and accounting standards. As such, it is often difficult to get a clear picture of the links between expenditure and outcomes at the community level as other forms of accountability are not taken into consideration (1999: 4).

Smith shares these concerns, highlighting the lack of coordination between different levels of government and government agencies, the inflexibility, complexity and uncertainty of funding arrangements and the dysfunctionality of government generally in the area of Indigenous affairs (2002: 4,5). She says, finally,

> [t]he overwhelming conclusion of previous government reviews and inquiries in Australia, back to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Aboriginal deaths in Custody in 1991, is that there has been a continuing failure of government at all levels to negotiate a comprehensive approach to fiscal policy for Indigenous communities (Smith, 2002: 5).

Inadequate and inaccessible funding has hindered the provision of the full range of desperately needed basic services, infrastructure, and support available to Aboriginal people. Housing, education, training, employment, recreational facilities (or positive infrastructure), drug and alcohol rehabilitation, mental health care and health care generally have all been lacking (Stringer, 2007: 8,9,11; Behrendt, 2006b: 4-7; Behrendt and McCausland, 2008: 2; Arabena, 2005: 51-52; Rowse, 2006: 184; Robbins, 2005: 10). A yearly funding shortfall of $460 million for Indigenous primary health care was reported by the Australian Medical Association in 2006 (in Stringer, 2007: 8). Altman estimated in 2007 that in the Northern Territory alone, a minimum of $4 billion would be required to make some indent in the health, housing, education and employment crisis that exists. He writes that the crisis of Indigenous Australians

in need has been identified "for many years now by many researchers, inquiries, indigenous leaders, and others" and that "[t]his crisis has largely come about because of neglect and resulting poverty" (Altman, 2007a).

Research conducted by John Taylor and Owen Stanley in 2005 found that the children of the predominantly Indigenous region of Thamarrurr in the Northern Territory were afforded 0.47 cents towards their education for every dollar spent on the average Northern Territorian school age child (2005 in Robbins, 2005: 12). They found similar discrepancies across public spending generally in the Thamarrurr area. The Northern Territory generally, home to close to 20 per cent of the nation's Aboriginal population, provides yet another example of flawed funding. The entire Northern Territory receives less commonwealth funding to local government than Geelong due to the per capita basis on which it is granted (Dillon and Westbury, 2007: 188). Ruth McCausland stresses

> [t]he abrogation of responsibility for adequate funding and appropriate policy by all levels of government in the area of Indigenous affairs is the central issue in this debate .... Ample evidence exists to show that governments underspend in the key areas of Indigenous health, education and housing (2005: 42,52).

Andrew Lattas and Barry Morris describe government service delivery as "inefficient and haphazard" and as playing a key role in poor Indigenous living standards (2010: 80). Anangu woman, Makinti Minutjukur, appealed to the public in 2006; "[f]or many years, we are suffering the effects of government strategies of extreme delay in service delivery" (2006: 1). The lack of support for grass-roots programs in Aboriginal communities is frequently raised as a considerable impediment to addressing community needs (Wright, 2009; Minutjukur, 2006: 1). Larissa Behrendt talks of the effects

> of decades, even centuries, of failed government policy and neglect. This neglect has occurred in three ways: the failure to provide basic essential services to Aboriginal communities across the country, the failure to provide adequate infrastructure in those same communities, and the failure to invest in human capital (2006a: 2).

The lack of sufficient positive investment in Indigenous Australia, in human capital, capacity building, governance and community development generally has had serious consequences in terms of Aboriginal people's ability to recover from the exclusionary and disabling policies of the past (Smith, 2007: 12-14; 2002: 2,14-16; Fuller and Gleeson, 2004: 187; Taylor and Stanley, 2005: vii; Hunt, 2008: 28).

Contribution of ongoing discrimination

Another factor impeding Aboriginal employment has been the prevalence of overt discrimination against Aboriginal workers. On top of government failings to make reparations in areas of those enabling citizen rights on which socio-economic development relies, racial discrimination has persisted. Racist views held by employers have continued to be a barrier to Aboriginal employment. Despite the removal of overtly discriminatory legislation affecting Aboriginal workers, the beliefs on which such legislation was founded have lingered on. Colonial stereotypes and the colonial dynamic between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians persist into the present.

Boyd Hunter, in his study of discriminatory exclusion of Aboriginal people from the workforce, emphasises its "deep historical roots" (2005: 80). He writes

> discrimination can be propagated by misunderstandings and ill-founded beliefs about Indigenous workers or actively excluding Indigenous people from important labour market networks. Both of these conditions have been evident since the earliest days of European settlement (Hunter, 2005: 80).

Hunter notes the ineffectiveness of Australian anti-discrimination mechanisms, namely the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. This is largely put down to underreporting, the narrow definition of race applied (which excludes culture) and cases being settled out of court (where no ramifications or changes follow) (de Plevitz, 2000; Hunter, 2005). Based on his research, Hunter found there to be a high likelihood, in both the public and private sector, for "discrimination to explain Indigenous disadvantage in employment" (2005: 90). Discrimination

against Aboriginal workers in Australia is more likely to come in the form of exclusion from employment than in lower wages (Hunter, 2005: 91; CAEPR in HORSCATSIA, 2007: 148).

Research has been carried out by Andre Sammartino, Janine O'Flynn and Stephen Nicholas on attitudes held by Chief Operations Officers (CEOs) and senior managers of Australian based businesses towards Aboriginal people as employees. They concluded that "CEO perceptions of Indigenous workers' human capital go a substantial way in explaining the poor Indigenous employment outcomes in terms of lower demand for Indigenous workers from employers" (Sammartino et al, 2003: 53). The findings of Sammartino et al's study showed CEO's assumed Aboriginal workers to be under-performing, prone to absenteeism, lacking commitment, and to be of a lower quality than the norm (2003: 52,57,58). According to Sammartino et al, "CEO's are using race as a proxy for productivity" (2003: 46). Their report reveals the widespread nature of the undervaluing of Aboriginal workers, and the spread of these attitudes across the full gamete of Australian industries. Sammartino et al go further to say that these imperfect perceptions held by CEO's "both shape and reflect their organisations' employment practices", with "concrete implications for Indigenous Australians in the labour market" (2003: 46).

De Plevitz comments that "[a]n employer's image and opinion of Aboriginal workers tends to be drawn consciously or unconsciously from information propagated by the media" (2000: 47,67) – rarely a positive source of information regarding Aboriginal people (McCausland, 2004; Graham, 2005; Hinkson, 2010). There is a self-fulfilling element to discrimination. As the Canadian Supreme Court has observed, "discrimination is ... reinforced by the very exclusion of the disadvantaged group because the exclusion fosters the belief ... that the exclusion is the result of 'natural' forces" (1987 in de Plevitz, 2000: 45). Here members of the "ingroup" interpret the absence of members of

the "outgroup" as indicating that they are not qualified or capable of performing the job (Craig, 2007: 122). There is also a second way discriminatory assumptions self-perpetuate negative appraisals of Aboriginal workers. This occurs where Aboriginal workers, who do manage to enter the workforce, are judged especially harshly and poor performance is assumed and thus encouraged. Employers with discriminatory views can undervalue and under-train Aboriginal workers, providing no reward, training or incentive to perform good work (Sammartino et al, 2003: 47). Employers' unfounded negative perceptions can be made real as a result of their treatment of Aboriginal workers, seemingly confirming their prejudices.

The view that racial discrimination is an obstacle to Aboriginal employment is held by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous commentators (Behrendt, 2005 in Senate, 2005b: 141-142; Butler, 2001: 5; Manton in Senate, 2005a: 36; Redfern Residents for Reconciliation, 2007: 3,5; Martin, 2001a: 2; 2006: 10; ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2002: 7,46). As I have been told, "the darker you are, you don't get jobs" (Campbell, 2010). This view comes through clearly in the report of the parliamentary inquiry by the Federal Government's House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (HORSCATSIA) – *Indigenous Australians at work: Successful initiatives in Indigenous employment* (HORSCATSIA, 2007: 81,147,150,211). The Queensland Government's submission reflected that "negative and/or prejudiced attitudes and perceptions of employers towards indigenous people are difficult to overcome" (in HORSCATSIA, 2007: 150). Dennis Foley relayed the following anecdote to the inquiry,

> [a] classic example comes from about 10 or 12 years ago. A gentleman from Lakemba who had a panel beating shop won a businessman of the year award. Within a short period of time, a lot of his clients had dried up and his suppliers were starting to be very heavy on the credit because all of a sudden they realised: 'He's a blackfella. We can't give him 30 days credit' (in HORSCATSIA, 2007: 149).

The success of the Moree Aboriginal Employment Strategy (Lewis, 2001) in New South Wales is also illustrative of the impact of employer attitudes towards Aboriginal job applicants on Aboriginal employment. Along with having a thriving economy, the Strategy found that breaking through employer misconceptions and reluctance to employ Aboriginal people was key to improving Aboriginal employment levels (Lewis, 2001: 3). The Strategy makes the proud claim that "stereotypes are now being confronted and faced down" and mindsets among employers and the wider community are shifting (Lewis, 2001: 22,3). Indeed, the Strategy attributes the success of the CDEP scheme to its insulation from employers' negative perceptions of Aboriginal people: "[e]ntrenched racism and discrimination that militated against employment in the local labour market have been important factors in its [CDEP's] growth and spread across Australia" (Lewis, 2001: 33). Relatedly, Anne Daly makes the point "[t]he social security system does not discriminate according to race but employers may do so" (1991 in Rowse, 2002a: 41). These comments speak to the usefulness of creative solutions to Aboriginal employment which factor in such exclusionary discrimination – here social security obviously should stand in as a last resort measure. What they also clearly speak to is the role of employers' perceptions (tied to colonialism) as a factor affecting an Aboriginal person's employment chances beyond their control.

Conclusion

The previous chapter linked current Aboriginal unemployment and the historic relegation of Aboriginal people to the periphery of the introduced economy (where incorporation occurred). This chapter has followed on to argue that the effects of this process of economic marginalisation remain unresolved and ongoing. A mammoth task has awaited the governments which have come to pass (including the Howard Government) since the legal apparatus sectioning off Aboriginal people for unequal treatment in the workforce was dismantled. In order for Aboriginal people to be able to take advantage of any newly available

opportunities, a substantial investment has been required to address the deficit in life chances left by the systemic economic exploitation, discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion that proved such an integral part of Australia's colonisation.

Unfortunately, the challenge has not been met. Legal economic rights have not been accompanied by the enabling citizenship entitlements and the scale of funding and attention necessary for Aboriginal society to rebuild and for Aboriginal people to be able to participate fully and equally in the Australian economy. Despite its worthy restitutive goals, self-determination was not implemented, and self-management, up until the Howard Government took office, did not sufficiently attend to the extreme backlog in resources, community infrastructure (physical and otherwise) and capacity in Aboriginal Australia. This period was then followed by the Howard era where under the policy misnomer of practical reconciliation, Indigenous affairs received massive cuts and was sorely underfunded. As Haebich asserts, "Governments failed to provide resources to relieve the consequential poverty of earlier policies" (2004: 8). Additionally, the ability of Aboriginal people to engage in the Australian economy has been inhibited by residual negative attitudes towards Aboriginal workers, held by employers. This is another way in which the legacy of Aboriginal economic marginalisation lives on. The case made in this chapter, that Aboriginal employment has been further obstructed by inadequate governmental redress as well as the perpetuation of racism in the workplace, gives lie to the Howard Government's intimation that governments have fulfilled their obligations and that responsibility for Aboriginal economic disadvantage sits with Aboriginal people.

In the next three chapters, I will continue to emphasise the relevance of Australia's colonial context to current high levels of Aboriginal welfare use. However, I will change direction somewhat and point to the impact of the

imposition of a foreign and unyielding economic system, and the lack of accommodation of Aboriginal difference in the economic sphere. Conformity to the western economic model and its inherent values has been a prerequisite of engagement with the introduced economy and of economic security generally. The overarching philosophy of self-determination did at least appreciate that self-determination went hand in hand with protecting cultural difference through employment and beyond. The CDEP scheme existed as an expression of this understanding. One of the most decisive acts of the Howard Government was of course to disassemble the CDEP scheme.

I will present the argument that Aboriginal economic disadvantage is partly a result of the response of the Australian nation and economy to Aboriginal difference, in conjunction with the argument of this chapter and the previous chapter, that Aboriginal people have, first and foremost, been denied the opportunity to engage equally in the introduced economy. Although I will be giving attention in the following chapter to the role of cultural difference, I do so with reference to the argument of these last two chapters and I do so echoing Martin's words

> This is not to deny that there are other—and highly significant—structural features of disadvantage ... I have in mind here such factors as active discrimination and exclusion, and the lack of provision of adequate services by governments in education, health, housing and other crucial areas of social infrastructure (2006: 10).

Section 3: Alternative reading

CHAPTER 12: STEP 4 – RETHINKING ABORIGINAL WELFARE DEPENDENCY
Part 4: The impact of colonialism on Aboriginal economies

The next three chapters deliver the final argument of this thesis, about what is missing from the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, to its detriment. Regrettably absent from this problem representation was the cultural incompatibility of the introduced economic system. These chapters make the point that differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous economies, and the implanting of one over the other, have also contributed to Aboriginal economic marginalisation and disadvantage. This is the final point of the critique section and concludes the fourth step of the WPR approach. It follows on from the previous two chapters by adding another way in which the colonial experience has impacted on Aboriginal poverty and opportunities to undertake meaningful activity (or what the Howard Government described as welfare dependency). The previous two chapters countered the Howard Government's representation by arguing that Aboriginal people have been prevented from participating equally in the introduced economy. I now propose that what has also impeded Aboriginal economic security since colonisation has been the lack of culturally appropriate means for Aboriginal people to support themselves.

To begin, this first chapter (Chapter 12) will acknowledge the obvious point that the biggest blow to Indigenous economic security has been the damage done to the Indigenous economies in place at first contact. In the following two chapters (Chapter 13 and 14), the poor cultural fit of the mainstream workplace and workforce will be explored. Two levels of difference will be identified. The first

level, which will be looked at in Chapter 13, is poor fit that could be avoided without making any fundamental changes to the current system. The second level of difference, which will be the focus of Chapter 14, goes deeper and is a little less easy to resolve. This is difference that sits at the heart of the dominant economic system in place. These three chapters will form Part 4, 5 and 6 of this thesis' attempt to rethink Aboriginal welfare dependency and challenge the deflection of responsibility for Aboriginal economic disengagement onto Aboriginal people generally.

Appreciation of the conflicting nature of many aspects of the economic system imposed in Australia invites a re-appraisal of the assignment of responsibility and fault. Indeed, how appropriate is it, given the colonial context, that participation in the dominant economy and Aboriginal economic stability be contingent upon cultural compromise from Aboriginal outsiders? The *implications* of the incompatibility of the economic system that accompanied and drove colonialism will be discussed towards the end of the last chapter, Chapter 14. These last chapters, like those before them, are informed by Postcolonial theory. The lens of Postcolonial theory brings into focus the economic onslaught of colonisation, the cultural conflict that has ensued, and the lingering unbalanced colonial relationship that frames this conflict. Postcolonial theory also reinforces the importance of the way in which matters are represented in colonial contexts.

Economic destruction

The devastating effect of colonialism on Australian Indigenous economies is patently evident, and yet it was left out of the Howard Government's explanation of Aboriginal disadvantage. The disruption caused to Aboriginal economies was not registered and was thus presented as somehow irrelevant to Aboriginal employment. The arrival of the British has severely curtailed the ability of Aboriginal people to support themselves and their families in the

manner that was carried out by countless generations into the far distant past (Fuller and Gleeson, 2004: 181; Norris, 2010: 14,15; Keen, 2004; Butlin, 1993). Using the words of Sir Gerard Brennan, spoken in 1992 as High Court Justice presiding over the Mabo case, colonisation and dispossession "exposed them to deprivation of the religious, cultural and economic sustenance which the land provides" (in Reynolds, 1996: 8).

With colonisation has come the near destruction of Aboriginal means of survival, greatly interfering with economic participation in Indigenous economies. Judith Wright describes the scene;

> [t]he land itself was now disfigured and desecrated, studded with huts, crossed by tracks and fences, eaten thin by strange animals, dirtied and spoiled, and guarded from its owners by terrifying weapons. The all-embracing net of life and spirit which held land, and people, and all things together was in tatters (1981: 27).

Twomey observes, "[t]here is little doubt that protectors and other missionaries ... realized that European occupation had precipitated a profound crisis for its Aboriginal inhabitants" (2002: 97). Acknowledging some of the practical ramifications, missionary George Taplin wrote in South Australia in 1873

> [t]heir country has been occupied, and the game nearly exterminated. The reeds of which they used to build their houses, and the grass on which they used to sleep, have in many cases been made useless to them. The skins with which they used to make rugs, and the bark with which they made canoes, have been almost destroyed (in Jenkin, 1979: 82).

Indigenous economies have suffered through the very presence of Europeans on Aboriginal land, but also through the nature of European land use, the (frequently violent) movement of Aboriginal people off of their land, the wilful and incidental decimation of Aboriginal populations, the damage caused to Aboriginal social structures, and the intentional obstruction of Aboriginal economic practices by missionaries and protectors. William Arthur Lewis's quote applies

> [t]he popular belief that unemployment is due to the absence of development is clearly without foundation. On the contrary, development is itself in a sense the primary cause of (measured) unemployment (1966 in Altman, 1980: 93).

Had history been different and had the sovereignty of Indigenous nations been respected, Aboriginal unemployment would not, in any comparable form, exist.

Aboriginal poverty and unemployment not pre-contact phenomena

What did exist in Australia was a functional economic system with almost universal participation rates that met the material needs of its participants. In the following quote, Donald Thomson remarks at the high level of participation, organisation and diligence that he found characteristic of the lifestyle of the Aboriginal group he observed, and the easy, carefree attitude that came with it.

> The first impression that any stranger must receive in a fully organised group in Eastern Arnhem Land is of industry. He cannot fail to see that everybody, man or woman, works hard, and that the work is well organised and runs smoothly. And he must also be impressed by the fact that ... there is no idleness. Even the young men are engaged fully in hunting and fishing activities and work hard ... Neither men nor women are idle for long, and even in camp as they sit around their fires they may be seen to pick up a basket, a fish net, a spear or other weapon, and work at this as they talk, just as they did when they halted at midday to rest and to cook food. Yet there is no feeling of haste, but rather of method, of system and order. What are the drives, the incentives, which lie behind all this organisation? Why does it move so smoothly, and what induces these people to work hard, so willingly, without any apparent direction, control or authority? (Thomson, 1949 in Peterson, 2005: 9).

Historian Bill Gammage is eager to convey the richness and completeness of the Aboriginal way of life across Australia, achieved through meticulous and intelligent land management, through fire-stick farming and other sophisticated techniques. He writes, "[a]bundance was normal ... It made life comfortable. Like landowning gentry, people had plenty to eat, few hours of work a day, and much time for religion and recreation" (Gammage, 2011: 4).

Gammage relays positive accounts of the Aboriginal way of life given by early colonists. He quotes explorer William Hovell:

> [t]hose are the people we generally call 'miserable wretches', but in my opinion the word is misapplied ... Their only employment is providing their food. They are happy within

themselves; they have their amusements and but little cares; and above all they have their free liberty (1824 in Gammage, 2011: 310).

The remarks of a doctor from 1828 are also cited by Gammage:

the interior tribes consider the whites, as a strange plodding race, for the greater part slaves, obliged to get their living by constant drudgery every day. Whereas, for themselves, their wants being easily supplied, 'they toil not, neither do they spin' (in Gammage, 2011: 310).

A quote cited by Wright is both disturbingly dehumanizing and complimentary. Wright relays the suggestion made by two squatters in 1839 on the question of how to recruit Aboriginal people to work. The pair's suggestion was to

cut off their great toes. They could not then climb the trees for opossums. Two hours so spent or in fishing will supply them with all they want for the day; why then should they vex themselves with the drudgery of labour? They are not fools . . . they are not labourers at all, and for the same reason that any other gentleman is not, viz. that he can live without labour. So also can they, and as comfortably as they wish to live.... they realize the philosophy that Diogenes only dreamt of (1839 in Wright, 1981: 55-56).

Australian explorer Edward John Eyre was impressed with the output of the Aboriginal mode of existence. He wrote

[i]n almost every part of the continent which I have visited, where the presence of Europeans, or their stock, has not limited, or destroyed their original means of subsistence, I have found a native could usually, in three or four hours, procure as much food as would last for the day, and that without fatigue or labour (Eyre, 1845 in Sahlins, 1972: 26).

A missionary in Victoria, Francis Tuckfield, noted how "[p]rior to our coming among them ... every forest ... every valley ... every plain and sheet of water furnished its number of repasts at the proper season" (1837 in Reynolds, 1996: 21). Explorer and Colonial Governor of South Australia George Grey was surprised at the sheer volume of food that Aboriginal people he observed were able to obtain (Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006: 73), and the profound knowledge of country this dependable harvest relied upon; "[t]he Aborigine 'knows exactly what it produces, the proper time at which the several articles are in season, and the readiest means of procuring them'" (1841 in Reynolds, 1996: 22). Grey concludes that "the native lives well" (1846 in Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006: 73). The glowing health and fine spirits of Australia's Indigenous people around first

contact contrasted with that of Europeans at the time and left a lasting impression on many (Wright, 1981: 20; Gammage, 2011: 309-310; Norris, 2010: 13,16). On encountering members of Aboriginal groups in Queensland, explorer Major Sir Thomas Mitchell "commented that their abundant health and exemption from disease, their 'intensity of existence', must be 'far beyond the enjoyments of civilised men'" (1848 in Wright, 1981: 23).

It should be said that there has been some debate around the amount of work involved in pre-contact Aboriginal economies and hunter-gatherer societies generally. Marshall Sahlins famously concluded that hunter-gatherer society was the "original affluent society" (1972), based on historical observations and on three anthropological studies, including one carried out in East Arnhem Land, that suggested that daily work effort to obtain food was something like three to five hours. While Sahlins' contribution helpfully countered the depiction of hunter-gatherers as "miserable wretches" (Suzman, 2004: 202) just "clinging onto life" (Meehan, 1977: 527), it has been criticised for utilising scant and inadequate data (Altman, 1982; 1984; Minge-Klevana, 1980; Johnson, 1975: 301-302; Winterhalder, 1993: 332-333). Altman, among others, has presented fieldwork data, also collected in Arnhem Land, indicating a longer working day was the norm – for Eastern Gunwinggu people at least (Altman, 1982; 1984; 1987; Meehan, 1982; Hawkes and O'Connell, 1981). It has also been pointed out that generalisations across the continent (and across seasons) are very difficult, that reconstruction of a pre-contact working day is highly speculative, and that Sahlins focused too much on hours worked and did not sufficiently account for culture (Altman, 1982: 125,406; 1984: 183-185; Butlin, 1993: 73; Bird-David et al, 1992: 25-28,35,39). That said, there seems to be a residing sense that Sahlins "had a point", as Nurit Bird-David puts it, in rebutting the (very old) assumption that hunter gatherers worked relentlessly (Bird-David et al, 1992: 25,29,34,36; Barnard and Woodburn, 1988: 11; Solway, 2006: 74-75).

Economic historian Noel Butlin describes pre-contact Aboriginal society as having "amply satisfied the wants of the people" and goes on to say,

> Aborigines were the first discoverers and occupiers of the Australian continent, the first to establish functioning societies and economies, and the first to make the large-scale adaptations required to use almost every type of ecological condition in Australia (1993: 2,186)

It can be added that Aboriginal societies *remain* the only groups to have managed this high level of adaptation, enabling optimum utilisation of Australia's environmental conditions. It is well accepted that Aboriginal groups had mastered the art of sustainable land use, ensuring the natural resources met the needs of the group while not over-exploiting the land's capacity (Norris, 2010: 14-15; Gammage, 2011). The same cannot be said about the mode of existence brought to Australia by the British. As a result of the introduction of European land management practices and economic imperatives, the health of Australia's lands and waters has suffered greatly. The ecologically balanced self-sufficiency achieved by Aboriginal economies remains unrivalled (Altman, 1980: 90,91).

It is now coming to be realised that it was not simply good fortune that secured the yields enjoyed by Aboriginal people and their long term viability. Rather these were a result of the wise *management* of land, and direct intervention, through practices including fire-stick farming, forms of animal husbandry, and versions of eco-farming involving plant cultivation (Keen, 2004: 94-96; Reynolds, 1996: 22-23; Norris, 2010: 14-16; Butlin, 1993; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006: xviii). Ian Keen proposes the term hunter-gatherer-*cultivators* (2004: 96) as a more fitting description of Aboriginal subsistence production while Butlin has suggested the term 'resource managers' (1993: 55). Importantly, Australia's Indigenous economies protected Aboriginal people from poverty (in the sense of not having enough) and an absence of meaningful activity, ensuring sustenance and work.

An enmeshed economy

Whilst it can be argued that even capitalist market economies are socially embedded, in the sense used by political economist Karl Polanyi (Polanyi: 1944; 1957; Gemici, 2008; Machado, 2011), it is certainly the case that pre-contact Aboriginal economies were deeply enmeshed within Aboriginal society. Characteristic of Aboriginal economic life was its inter-connectedness with all areas of life (social, political, religious), so that the Aboriginal economic system in place prior to colonisation offered more than simply a means to survival. As Keen says, talking about the Aboriginal economy, "just about all aspects of Aboriginal culture and society had a bearing on this aspect of social life" (2004: 2). Being intricately intertwined with Aboriginal social and cultural worlds, Aboriginal economies served multiple purposes and satisfied more than just material needs. The desire or demand for material goods in Aboriginal economies was lower than demand within the British or European economies. Given the different priorities, there was little that the British brought with them that was considered of any great value to Aboriginal people, and the "chronic weaknesses" of the introduced system were quite apparent (Jenkin, 1979: 46; Norris, 2010: 80; Gammage, 2011: 309-311; Wright, 1981: 18-20). Instead of focusing on the production of surplus and tangible consumables for profit, Aboriginal economies performed other highly valued functions, concerned with the delivery of social welfare, health, housing, social order and stability, religion, recreation, art, insurance, education, and knowledge production (Butlin, 1993 in Norris, 2010: 13-14; Sveiby and Skuthorpe, 2006: xviii).

The remaining hours left in the day after food resources were secured could be devoted to these ends, which again were inter-related (Peterson, 2005: 8,9). Food production itself was inseparable from social and kin relations. The processes of obtaining and distributing food, as well as other goods, was tied up in "the reproduction of social orders rather than simply [being] need-serving activities" (Peterson, 2005: 9). Sahlins insists that each transfer "cannot be

understood in its material terms apart from its social terms" (1972 in Peterson, 2005: 9). Emphasising the important role of gift-giving in Australian Aboriginal economies, Keen contrasts them with European capitalist economies. He writes,

> economies like those of Aboriginal people stand as the antithesis of capitalism in being 'gift economies' as opposed to 'commodity economies'. Goods in gift economies do not become commodities when exchanged, and possessions are not private property; instead, transfers take the form of 'inalienable gifts' that retain their links with the donor even after being given (Keen, 2004: 5).

In this way, the extensive trade links that spanned the continent served the purpose of providing access to varied materials, technologies, medicines, food stuffs, and so on, and back up for "future contingencies" (Altman, 1980: 90), but these ends were not superior to the task of forging and strengthening social relations for their own sake (Norris, 2010: 13,17-18).

Conclusion

Prior to the intrusion of colonisation, the Aboriginal economies operating in Australia functioned effectively. Given the different values and wants of the people it served, these economies delivered a rewarding and fulfilling existence. In a very basic sense, disrupting the economies on which Aboriginal livelihoods were based brought about the original and most devastating form of Aboriginal economic disengagement. Colonialism has dealt a major blow to the ability of Aboriginal people to be gainfully employed, and participate successfully, within Aboriginal economies. Disruption to Indigenous economies – enmeshed within Aboriginal social life – has caused far-reaching repercussions throughout Aboriginal worlds. Had the intricately connected Aboriginal economies that spanned the continent not been overrun and (in many cases) pushed to breaking point, participation in these economies would remain a viable option. Were this option still available in a genuine and comprehensive way across the country, Aboriginal unemployment in the mainstream economy would not pose the threat to Aboriginal economic security and the availability of meaningful

activity that it currently does. This is not recognised within the Howard

Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency.

Section 3: Alternative reading

CHAPTER 13: STEP 4 – RETHINKING ABORIGINAL WELFARE DEPENDENCY
Part 5: First level of incompatibility of the culturally loaded introduced economy – Superficial and extraneous

In the next two chapters a further absence from the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency will be discussed which directly relates to the overriding of Indigenous economies by the introduced economy. These chapters highlight the relevance of the extent to which the economic system the British brought with them to Australia embodied the cultural norms and values of its people. While the entirely functional economic system of Australia's Aboriginal people was steadily upturned, a very different and equally culturally enmeshed economy was established in its place. Like all economies, this economy could not claim to be culturally neutral but instead carried with it the historical and societal influences that produced it. Indeed, the accepted distinction between economic and cultural spheres, absent in Australia pre-contact and in pre-capitalist economic formations generally, is argued by Karl Marx (paraphrased by Judith Butler) to be "the consequence of an operation of abstraction initiated by capital" (Butler, 1998: 42). Unsurprisingly, the version of capitalism imported to Australia presented as alien to Aboriginal observers.

It needs to be said that in discussing the existence of cultural difference, this thesis by no means seeks to pigeonhole or confine in a freeze frame what Aboriginal cultures look like and misleadingly depict them as homogenous, uniform or static. I would instead want to stress the diversity, adaptability and

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fluidity of Aboriginal cultures around Australia. The goal is only to be open to recognise the potential for cultural conflict in Australia and consider its ramifications. The point that will be made is that the introduced economy was a particular, culturally encoded model, quite foreign and unsuited to Aboriginal Australia, and that this has been a factor compounding Aboriginal employment within this model. It should also be stated that non-Indigenous economic cultures within Australia are also not presumed to be singular or homogenous. The dominant economy is not without its cracks. However, whilst the non-Indigenous economy, with its supporting values and priorities, has not secured full subscription from the general population, it remains the pervasive paradigm. It is the firmly established order of the day.

This thesis identifies two levels of ways in which the introduced economy can be culturally incompatible for Aboriginal people, due to its culturally coded nature. The first level will be discussed in this chapter and the second level in the next chapter. The first level involves extraneous aspects of the mainstream economy that can have an unintentionally exclusionary effect, that could be reasonably easily resolved (such as the structure of job interviews). The second consists of features of the mainstream economy that are more structural, inbuilt and fundamental to the design and operations of the economy. Dealing with this level of difference would be a more complicated process. Crucially, the ill-fit of the introduced economy, which will be the focus of both chapters, has not been given due recognition as a genuine impediment to Aboriginal participation.

There are aspects of mainstream employment in Australia, largely superficial or peripheral to the work involved, that can potentially favour some non-Indigenous members of Australian society over Indigenous Australians. There can be features tied up with the employment package or the recruitment process, which are not relevant to the job itself, but which have an exclusionary

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effect. These features can stand in the way of initial or ongoing employment in some instances. The term institutional or systemic discrimination captures such instances where employment (or access to) is set up in such a way that it preferences certain individuals over others. Systemic discrimination in the workplace operates within administrative structures and organisational cultures and is characteristically continuous, difficult to perceive, and "non-conscious" (Craig, 2007: 119-124). This sort of discrimination is not deliberate but rather exists as an inconspicuous component of the requirements and nature of mainstream employment. As Hunter explains, "discrimination is sometimes indirect and unintentional resulting from seemingly neutral rules and regulations that exclude Indigenous people from participation in the labour market" (2005: 79). Such unintentional and unnecessary favouring of members of particular social groups has been described by the United States Supreme Court as working as "built-in headwinds" for those who are not privileged to this treatment (1971 in de Plevitz, 2000: 46). Some subtle, non-essential aspects of work-life can make it harder for Aboriginal people outside of the dominant culture to compete for and carry out available work. Employment in the mainstream economy in Australia can work against the incorporation of Aboriginal people in this way.

Culture of recruitment

Making it through the recruitment stage is obviously crucial for Aboriginal employment, but chances of success can be negatively impacted by recruitment processes not well suited to Aboriginal applicants. The manner in which jobs are advertised can unwittingly work against Aboriginal job-seekers. Methods most convenient and user-friendly for many non-Indigenous job applicants might not necessarily be so convenient for Indigenous applicants. Whilst the internet may seem an effective way of notifying potential job-seekers of positions, it can be considered alienating and impersonal for Aboriginal job-

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seekers. Kate Flamsteed and Barry Golding have found that "moving straight to the technological 'frontier' ... in terms of ... employment facilitation, risks depersonalising and alienating a deep and broad Indigenous hinterland" (2005: 75).

Online job advertisements and applications are increasingly becoming the norm, but more accessible methods are likely to be external advertisements including hard copy advertisements in local newspapers, noticeboards, community organisation publications and Indigenous media, and recommendations from Aboriginal organisations, community members, friends and family (Hunter and Hawke, 2000: 19; HORSCATSIA, 2007: 42-43; Flamsteed and Golding, 2005: 75; GROW Sydney Area Consultative Committee [ACC], 2008: 15-21; Purdie, Frigo, Stone and Dick, 2006: 48). Utilising these methods of reaching and attracting Aboriginal jobseekers would likely have a greater chance of success than relying on the internet. The mediums used by employers to recruit impacts upon the pool of job applicants that is made available (Craig, 2007: 122). Unintentionally, Indigenous job-seekers can be disadvantaged by the way employers share employment information.

Criteria used

The selection criteria produced for vacant positions which job applicants are required to meet can put off or prevent suitable Aboriginal candidates from gaining employment. Selection criteria can be stricter and more specific than the job actually demands (HORSCATSIA, 2007: 43,46; GROW Sydney ACC, 2008: 17-18; Purdie et al, 2006: 13; Craig, 2007: 121). There is commonly an emphasis on specific formal qualifications and work experience despite these not being necessary for the job itself (the rising credentialisation of lower end employment in many industries certainly also plays in here). A State Operations Manager at Mission Australia in the Northern Territory, Jane Lawton, states,

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> I know of several communities that have highly qualified Indigenous people within their communities but do not have exactly what that government department is saying in their selection criteria so therefore they do not get employed (in HORSCATSIA, 2007: 182).

Lawton concludes that "[e]mployers need to ensure that the recruitment process is not more complex than necessary and that the skills and abilities needed accurately reflect the actual needs of the job" (in HORSCATSIA, 2007: 44).

Aboriginal Employment Coordinator at the University of Sydney, Shirley Morgan, points out that transferable skills and experience are not given their due weight at the recruitment stage. Morgan argues that

> if the stated desirables of the job had a little more thought given to them and a little more consideration taken when constructing them it would give Indigenous people more opportunity (in Purdie et al, 2006: 56).

Unique skills that Aboriginal people bring to positions are often not valued accordingly. Highly relevant criteria like knowledge of cultural protocol, community networks, social relations abilities, negotiation skills, experience on the ground, as well as more general and versatile attributes, are often absent from selection criteria (Sullivan in HORSCATSIA, 2007: 188; Andrews in Purdie et al, 2006: 55). Obscure, overly demanding, unnecessarily narrow and culturally loaded job specifications can act as barrier to capable Aboriginal job-seekers accessing employment.

Although it may seem as though selection criteria are racially and culturally neutral, notions of merit actually "reflect the capabilities, beliefs and achievements of the employers, often male, middle-class staff of Anglo-Australian origin" and "can have an adverse impact on applicants from other cultures" (Burton, 1991 and Hunter, 1992 in de Plevitz, 2000: 47). The old adage 'birds of a feather flock together' rings true in employment contexts where employers unthinkingly preference traits, values and qualities they recognise in themselves (Craig, 2007: 120). Notions of merit are subjectively formed and filter through employers' preferences for, and assessments of, sought

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after traits, such as maturity, dependability, manner, commitment, intelligence, cooperativeness, motivation and leadership ability, for example (Burton, 1991 in de Plevitz, 2000: 69). Employers may have a particular image in mind and standards of dress and presentation that are culturally acquired that might be harder for Aboriginal people to meet (Egan, 2008: 24). Criteria not listed can enter into the selection process, such as good health, no criminal record, western social skills, and blending in with the workforce (de Plevitz, 2000: 47; Egan, 2008: 24). Another criterion that Aboriginal people often struggle to meet is having a word of mouth recommendation by virtue of being part of a 'network' (de Plevitz, 2000: 58-60). Job-seekers competing for work greatly benefit from having their name precede them and their competence vouched for, but Aboriginal applicants are less likely to have access to such valuable networks (Hunter and Hawke, 2000: 19; GROW Sydney ACC, 2008: 32).

Behaviour expected

Culturally formed expectations of appropriate behaviour within the interview setting can interfere with the evaluation of Aboriginal applicants. Socio-cultural and linguistic differences can be misread and result in negative impressions. Diana Eades has written extensively in an attempt to bring awareness of these differences and how they play into relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in official contexts such as employment interviews. As Eades relays, "whites often complain that Aboriginal people are shy, ignorant, slow and uncooperative" (2013: 74). To the uninformed, Aboriginal responses and behaviour within such settings can be easily misread as rudeness, insolence, dishonesty, evasion, confusion and ignorance (Eades, 2013: 2,101-102). Martine Powell also attests to the potential for miscommunication in these contexts, because "Indigenous styles of interpersonal interaction differ markedly from the interaction styles of non-Indigenous Australians" (2000: 186).

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To begin with, the question and answer style of finding out information, which job interviews are structured around, is itself a cultural product quite unfamiliar to many Aboriginal people, according to Powell (2000: 187). The favoured and institutionalised method of assessing job candidates relies on the assumption that direct outright questioning of strangers is an appropriate way of accessing information and that information is freely and publicly available (Eades, 2013: 86). In contrast, this method is typically regarded within Aboriginal cultures as intrusive and overbearing (Eades, 2013: 100). Information is something that is to be given and offered, and shared and exchanged, in good time, where a relationship exists (Eades, 2013: 86; Powell, 2000: 188). The building up of rapport is important, which is helped by being courteous and respectful, and adhering to cultural protocols (Powell, 2000: 188). Less direct methods of attaining information are more likely to fit with ways in which Aboriginal people have been socialised. These include open-ended questions and other such methods which involve and invite narration – the more common discursive style within Aboriginal cultures (Powell, 2000: 190).

Eades reflects

> [t]his cultural difference in information seeking strategies is undoubtedly a major factor in the widespread Aboriginal difficulty with interviews, and in the hesitation, silence, and disfluency which typifies much Aboriginal participation in interviews (2013: 113).

Eades elaborates on how this mismatch in interaction styles plays out;

> a common Aboriginal response to inappropriate non-Aboriginal questioning is *I don't know* or *I don't remember*. Often this is not a statement concerning the speaker's knowledge or memory, but is a comment on the communicative strategy, and would translate into Standard English as something like: 'This is not an appropriate way for me to provide information of this nature' (2013: 113-114).

It is possible to see how different modes of communicating can cause confusion. Another consideration is the impact on performance of uncomfortable and unnatural ways of interacting, which Powell draws attention to.

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> The more the interviewer relies on the standard question-and-answer discursive interview style, the greater the cognitive demands and stress he or she places on the interviewee, thereby reducing the interviewee's ability to engage in the interview process (Powell, 2000: 188).

The use of silence by potential Aboriginal employees within an interview setting can be misunderstood. Silence can carry different meanings for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (Auty, 2005: 45-88). Within Aboriginal English conversations, silence is often viewed positively as part of polite, comfortable exchange (Eades, 1993: 4; Powell, 2000: 187,188). Speakers have a chance to think about their answer before responding. However, in an interview context, a lengthy pause would likely be considered an inappropriate response (Powell, 2000: 187). It might be taken as indicating poor social skills and a communication breakdown, or an attempt to ignore the question altogether (Eades, 2013: 114). Interviewers may also expect eye contact from the job applicant, but this form of body language again means different things in different cultural contexts. For the non-Indigenous interviewer it may convey sincerity and honesty but for some Aboriginal people it can be thought of as intimidating and rude (Powell, 2000: 187-188; Eades, 2013: 102).

Another behaviour open to being misread in an interview setting where cultural difference exists is 'gratuitous concurrence'. The term has been applied by Ken Liberman (1977; 1980; 1985) and refers to the practice used by Aboriginal people of agreeing to questions asked in an effort to be congenial and *agree*able, and keep things running smoothly. Liberman describes it as "a common strategy of oppressed peoples", much utilised by Aboriginal people, "who more than most of the world's people choose to avoid confrontation in interaction, even among themselves" (1980: 74). Eades explains further,

> [a] very common strategy for Aborigines being asked a number of questions by a non-Aborigines is to agree, regardless of either their understanding of the question or their belief about the truth or falsity of the proposition being questioned. Their apparent agreement

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often really means something like this: 'I think that if I say "yes" you will see that I am obliging, and socially amenable, and you will think well of me, and things will work out well between us' (2013: 101).

Linguistic differences between speakers of Standard English and Aboriginal English can work against Aboriginal job applicants during job interviews. Aboriginal English can be misinterpreted as poor English rather than a language in itself with its own rules and grammar drawn from Aboriginal languages (Eades, 1993: 2). Inaccurate assessments can be made about Aboriginal job applicants' intelligence, subtle differences in vocabulary and meaning can cause misunderstandings, and unusually formal versions of Standard English can make comprehension difficult for speakers of Aboriginal English (Eades, 1993: 5; Powell, 2000: 187,189).

More generally, the typical mode of assessing job applicants (that is, the interview) is frequently a less than ideal format for Aboriginal candidates. Alternative ways of assessing job candidates can better demonstrate Aboriginal applicant's abilities (Purdie et al, 2006: 13), such as observing applicants at information sharing sessions, informal meetings, and training or skill assessment workshops (Voltz, 2007; GROW Sydney ACC, 2008: 22). In this way, candidates can demonstrate their skills rather than have to describe them (Voltz, 2007). Indigenous Employment Coordinator, Lori Parish, raises the question, "[w]hy are these people with the least resources, experience and opportunity treated as if they should have loads of confidence and be exceptionally self-assured?" (in Purdie et al, 2006: 56).

The typical environment in which interviews are held can also be less suited to Aboriginal job applicants. More open, less formal and less constrictive outdoor settings can impact positively on some Aboriginal people's ability to perform well (HORSCATSIA, 2007: 43; Powell, 2000: 189; GROW Sydney ACC, 2008:

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21). Being the only Aboriginal person in the room can also be intimidating for Aboriginal job applicants (HORSCATSIA, 2007: 43; GROW Sydney ACC, 2008: 22). Having Aboriginal people be part of a selection panel helps here (Purdie et al, 2006: 48). To summarise, in the highly competitive context of seeking employment, the culturally loaded expectations held by non-Indigenous employers, the interview format and the prevailing culture that commonly pervades the interview space can put Aboriginal job applicants outside of this culture at a disadvantage.

Workplace environment

Where Aboriginal people do manage to secure employment, the prevailing culture of the workplace can impact on the social experience of work. Some workplaces are more socially inclusive of Aboriginal workers than others. On this topic, Rowse writes

> [w]ork is one place where Indigenous people feel themselves to be at risk of racial vilification. Indigenous people's 'social inclusion' via the daily workplace depends partly on whether management is aware that workplace social dynamics may in some places invite and in others spurn the Indigenous worker (2002a: 44).

Worklife can be made harder by work environments in which Aboriginal workers feel alienated and on the outer due to their cultural background. This goes to the heart of the success of the CDEP scheme, as it offered a safe and supportive space where Aboriginal workers could feel a sense of belonging (Rowse, 2002a: 44). What appears to make some difference in mainstream employment sites is the use of "industrial relations practices and procedures that facilitate greater cultural diversity within the firm" (Hunter and Hawke, 2000 in Rowse, 2002a: 44). Boyd Hunter and Anne Hawke conclude that the promotion of cultural diversity makes for preferable and qualitatively different work sites for Aboriginal workers (Hunter and Hawke, 2000 in Rowse, 2002a: 44).

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Cultural Awareness

Other factors contributing to the retention of Aboriginal staff include the degree of cultural awareness of non-Indigenous staff (Voltz, 2007; HORSCATSIA, 2007: 97,164; Purdie et al, 2006: 56,65,81,90). This applies to all levels of staff, including co-workers, supervisors, those in charge of human resources, and staff in more senior positions (GROW Sydney ACC, 2008: 7-8,12; Purdie et al, 2006: 96). *Getting it right, Employing Indigenous Australians: Guide for employers* put out by GROW Sydney ACC affirms, "[a]n organisation that is able to work with a contemporary Indigenous culture – and not against it – has greater success in employing and retaining its Indigenous people" (2008: 9). The more that Aboriginal cultures (in all of their expressions) are understood, the greater the chance of cultural fit (GROW Sydney ACC, 2008: 6,28). The need for extensive cross-cultural awareness training in the workplace is critical (Voltz, 2007; GROW Sydney ACC, 2008: 28; Redfern Residents for Reconciliation, 2007; Purdie et al, 2006: 17). Having a sensitive approach to cultural differences within the workplace can make an enormous difference. Being surrounded by better informed staff willing to make adjustments can alleviate feelings of isolation and the feeling of not being understood (Purdie et al, 2006: 55). It can reduce the strain that comes with attempting to fit in and work productively in worksites dominated by non-Aboriginal people – an acquired skill and a potentially taxing task (Redfern Residents for Reconciliation, 2007). Employing more than just one Aboriginal person can also influence the culture of the workplace and alleviate feelings of alienation that can come with "being the only 'black face in a white environment'" (Alice Springs Desert Park in HORSCATSIA, 2007: 148).

Support

The extent to which Aboriginal staff are accommodated and made to feel a valued part of the workforce plays into Aboriginal workers' experience of work (HORSCATSIA, 2007: 91-92; GROW Sydney ACC, 2008: 28). An astute quote

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from an employer is included in the *Getting it right* guide, "[i]t's got nothing to do with being lazy... It's about being given opportunity, training and support" (GROW Sydney ACC, 2008: 9). Mentoring is an effective strategy, as is providing support networks (Lewis, 2001: 27-28; Voltz, 2007; Champion, 2003: 69; Purdie et al, 2006: 17,39,64,85-86; HORSCATSIA, 2007: 36,46,93-98,181,184,214). This is partly because they can provide a channel through which cultural mismatch can be brought up and addressed. Mentors and support networks do not need to be from within the worksite itself and could be a service organised and provided through government (Flamsteed and Golding, 2005: 63). A proactive approach, incorporating such positive induction strategies, can ease the friction that "[t]he introduction of Aboriginal employees to traditionally non-Aboriginal working environments can cause" (Voltz, 2007; Champion, 2003: 69).

Cultural responsibilities

One source of friction can be differing concepts of family and community. Often without realising it, employers can have (culturally informed) expectations of Aboriginal workers that put Aboriginal workers in the uncomfortable position of having to breach cultural obligations to kin and community. Aboriginal worker Leanne Andrews comments, "I think that sometimes there's a lack of understanding about my Indigenous personal life – my family and community commitments and responsibilities" (in Purdie et al, 2006: 55). These commitments include the need to attend funerals, which occur all too frequently due to the lower life expectancy of Aboriginal people (Purdie et al, 2006: 54; de Plevitz, 2000: 57). There are also more to attend because of the wider notion of family and community than that held by most non-Indigenous Australians. These are important occasions, "[n]ot only are funerals a large part of the grieving process but they also provide a major point of connection with the family" (Leary in Purdie et al, 2006: 54). Standard bereavement leave, where it is available, is unlikely to cover the number of

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funerals Aboriginal workers have to attend, and the amount of time needed to participate in funeral rites, sometimes involving travel time (de Plevitz, 2000: 57).

More generally, extended family and cultural activities and responsibilities make demands on workers' time that cannot easily be ignored. This is due to "the central authority of the family" (Flamsteed and Golding, 2005: 82). The pressure of conflicting priorities and loyalties, to employers and to Aboriginal family and community can make the work-life balance so much harder to straddle for Aboriginal people (Lewis, 2001: 27). Greater flexibility and responsiveness in the workplace and more creative human resource management can make it easier for Aboriginal workers to manage competing demands (HORSCATSIA, 2007: 46,152,180,219; Voltz, 2007; Flamsteed and Golding, 2005: 40,61; Purdie et al, 2006: 76). This may involve adjusting leave time arrangements to allow for cultural leave, providing part-time work, setting up job-sharing, and having a number of workers able to perform specific tasks and cover absences, so that workplaces are not so dependent on the individual worker, and workers are not required to fit the nine-to-five, five day working week (Voltz, 2007; HORSCATSIA, 2007: 152-153,180,219). According to Barry Taylor, Managing Director of the Ngarda Foundation in Western Australia, those "who employ Indigenous people need to be aware that they have cultural practices which need to be factored into work force planning and 'it is not really too difficult'" (in HORSCATSIA, 2007: 153).

Conclusion

The recruitment process and the workplace can be less inclusive of Aboriginal workers as a result of reasonably insignificant, non-essential aspects of employment that can be described as forms of systemic discrimination. These aspects can impede the hiring and ongoing employment of Aboriginal people

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but they are fairly easy to address. They are basically superficial to the employment itself and can be altered or avoided where there is the will. Creative, less conventional approaches to recruitment, and understanding, sensitivity, flexibility and support in the workplace can make a substantial difference to making employment accessible and "culturally friendly" for Aboriginal people (Redfern Residents for Reconciliation, 2007). There are also more fundamental aspects of mainstream employment, however, that are less straightforward to adjust, which can work against Aboriginal employment. These are the topic of the last chapter of this thesis.

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This final chapter will look at deeper cultural differences that exist, which can make the economic system transported to Australia ill-suited to First Australians. The nature of employment that comes with market capitalism in Australia, and the values embodied within it, can conflict with Aboriginal values and ways of doing things on a more elemental level than previously discussed. Such deeper cultural differences are naturally more complex and difficult to resolve and work around. This is not cause to lump these differences in the 'too hard basket', as ways to lessen cultural conflict at this level could also be imagined through careful consideration. This chapter will provide an outline of the sorts of deep cultural differences that can exist. The point to be made here is that employment in Australia, where it is available to Aboriginal workers, tends to involve, as prerequisite, varying levels of cultural compromise. The inherent cultural and economic differences at play here can be understood as factors contributing to Indigenous unemployment.

At the centre of this discussion is an appreciation that the economic is cultural. "Economic and cultural values cannot be disentangled", as Natalie McGrath, Rachel Armstrong and Dora Marinova assert, referring to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and economies (2006: 5). The entanglement of culture and economy is particularly relevant to this chapter, given the deeper level of

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difference that will be dealt with. This point is nonetheless relevant to all three of these last chapters.

Each economy is culturally loaded and this means the transplantation of one economic system in the place of another will never be painless. In orthodox Western economic thinking (classical to neoliberal), economies and culture are treated as separate and distinct. Individuals are ahistorically conceived of as *innately* self-interested, autonomous, utility-maximizing actors concerned solely with personal economic gain, and therefore natural born capitalists (Gemici, 2008: 6,20; Rodrigues, 2004). However, as Karl Polanyi observed (1944; 1957), it is only since the 19th Century that the motive of "gain" (separate from social motives) came to be a foundational principle of market economies as they became relatively less (or at least differently) embedded within society compared to 'pre-capitalist' economies. The precise nature of an economy's social integration and the role played by social motivations and objectives is then historically and culturally contingent (Rodrigues, 2004: 193-199; Machado, 2011: 121). Good capitalists are culturally produced, rather than born that way. Within the Howard Government's policy discourse around Aboriginal unemployment, it is taken for granted that the economic model which Aboriginal people are described as disengaged from, is not itself a cultural economy. Instead, the mainstream capitalist economy, with its cultural values and particular sort of social (dis)embeddedness, is treated as generic, outside of culture, and the definition of 'economy'.

This thinking obscures the "basic sociological insight that culture and material conditions are linked and affect each other", and is so pervasive that "much public and academic discussion proceeds without any acknowledgement of this" (Peterson, 2010: 252). Nicolas Peterson sees this as a major failing of Aboriginal policy:

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> [w]hat vitiates so many of the proposals about economic development is that they fail to explicitly address these cultural specificities and ignore the fact that all economic activity – theirs and ours – is cultural (2005: 9).

Economic systems are culturally-based and inevitably differ, and this is very much the case with the imported economy versus Indigenous economies. I will now look at some fundamental points of economic/cultural difference that raise compatibility issues and offer a fuller understanding of the causes of Aboriginal economic disengagement. Following on from this, I will consider the implications of the absences highlighted in this chapter and the two before it, for the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency.

Differing priorities

The market capitalist economy which has developed in Australia since colonisation brings with it values of materialism, wealth accumulation and individualism (Peterson, 1998: 111-112). Participation within it tacitly encourages and expects prioritisation of things and commodities over relationships, surplus and savings over subsistence, the individual and the nuclear family over the wider extended family, and work over family (rather than for family). Internalisation of these values and priorities can cause cultural conflict for Aboriginal people. During the protection and assimilation periods, citizenship for Aboriginal Australians (sanctioned through exemption from ward status) was made explicitly conditional on the uptake of these values (Peterson, 1998: 111-112; Blake, 2001 in Wickes, 2008: 77; Cass, 2005a: 100-105). Peterson highlights that membership of Australian society was dependent on supporting only 'immediate' family (with restrictions placed on relating to extended family beyond the nuclear unit), conforming to the western model of work and adopting the aspirations of perpetual personal material wealth accumulation that this model entails (1998: 111-112).

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Conflicting priorities, economic values and concepts of work and family persist in Aboriginal Australia, and although it is no longer a condition of citizenship, integration within the imported economic system continues to be a condition of economic security. The difficulties this may pose for Aboriginal people will now be elaborated on. The introduced economy in Australia can prove maladapted to Aboriginal life across the continent (in remote, regional and metropolitan locations), in a number of interrelated respects. Whilst Aboriginal cultures vary in their expression across the country and also within individual communities, Martin asserts that there is "a distinctive 'economic' domain of indigenous values and practices" in both "urban and rural communities" (1995: 18). Elements of such an economic domain bear mentioning that can sit at odds with the imported European cultural economy.

Less materialistic

One such element is a tendency towards only superficial engagement with that essential component of capitalist economies – consumerism. Materialistic values tend not to be so fully fledged within Aboriginal society, compared to non-Indigenous society (HORSCATSIA, 2007: 82). The acquisition of durable goods is not broadly the be-all and end-all, or end in itself that it is supposed to be for ideal capitalist citizens (Austin-Broos, 2006: 9). Director of the Institute for Aboriginal Development, Eileen Shaw, talks about differing priorities:

> non-Indigenous lists would start with a house, car, job and that sort of thing. Most of the Indigenous lists started with culture—ceremonies, responsibilities to kin. Further down there was a house. I am not saying that Aboriginal people do not have the right to a house – they do. But what I found was that in their set of values those material things were lower down the list than spiritual and cultural things (in HORSCATSIA, 2007: 151).

When goods are valued, they may not necessarily be valued for the same reasons, in the same way. Material things may be seen as means to help relations. Diane Austin-Broos talks of the Western Arrernte of central Australia as 'reluctant consumers' (coining Peterson's term),

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> [t]here is some acquisition of durable goods, especially vehicles and houses. At the same
> time, one has things like cars and houses in order to service kin. Influence and prestige lie
> in using them to build up networks rather than merely to signal individual prestige ... In fact
> where durable goods are concerned, rapid depreciation can be a sign of a well-used thing
> rather than an abused thing (Austin-Broos, 2006: 9).

In such instances, material objects are "decommodified", as "their values are not determined primarily as commodities within the market system, but in their capacity to sustain and inform social relations" (Martin, 1995: 9).

Influence of poverty and of the nature of Aboriginal economies

The long history of Aboriginal economic marginalisation and poverty certainly has a bearing on this characteristic of being less materialistic (Beckett, 1988: 11; Austin-Broos, 2006: 3,12). Having to make do with very little for prolonged periods has been the common reality for many since contact, and this has undoubtedly contributed to current (relatively) low levels of 'consumer dependency' (Peterson, 1998: 107; 2005: 14). This is, however, not the whole story. Cultural differences are also at play. In part, a lack of reverence for material possessions can be related back to differing attitudes to amassing resources for future use beyond what is needed in the present. Don Fuller and Anne Gleeson underline the prevalence of

> belief in the importance of limits to the exploitation of natural resources and the saving of
> such resources, for the use of future generations, rather than for personal current
> consumption purposes (2004: 183).

They go on to state

> [t]here is therefore direct opposition to the view that resources should be converted to
> monetary units (cash) above that required for current consumption. While concepts of
> investment and saving are regarded as most important they relate to real resources rather
> than transformed products or services. Such attitudes conflict directly with the conventional
> commercial objectives of profit maximisation (Fuller and Gleeson, 2004: 183).

While these comments speak to larger issues of land use and approaches to money, they also apply to the valuing of commercial goods which natural resources and money can be converted to.

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The nature of the pre-colonial Aboriginal economic system which embodied such cultural principles is relevant. As has been stated earlier in the chapter, Aboriginal economies pre-contact were premised on achieving harmony with the natural environment towards long-term sustainability. Aboriginal economies also involved at least some degree of mobility, to avoid placing undue pressure on finite resources and to access seasonal foods, among other things. This lifestyle (and the concomitant beliefs informing it) did not lend itself to the accumulation of wealth and things. Austin-Broos draws connections between the hunter-gatherer economy in place in Australia and the tendency of Aboriginal people (in particular the Arrernte), to redefine things in terms of their ability to strengthen and realise relationships (2006: 10). She understands the inherent mobility of this way of life to have worked against possession accumulation. She also highlights the fundamental importance of familial relationships in these economies; to gaining access to land, resources and knowledge. This can help explain the residing centrality of kin, and the way material objects are drawn within its orbit. Despite the disruption to the viability of Aboriginal economies, the emphasis on relatedness remains. As Austin-Broos writes, "[a]lthough the practice of this relatedness is increasingly distanced from country, nonetheless it is still designed to subordinate portable things to its purposes" (2006: 10).

Security within Aboriginal economies came then from relatedness, rather than individual accumulated savings. In a densely articulated system of connectedness and reciprocity, people were sustained by their relationships with family, not by personal wealth amassed for the future. The circulation of material goods and intangible services actualised relatedness and was a social prerogative as well as a principle of economic organisation. Peterson stresses the importance of kin, economically and socially. He makes a direct link between current sharing practices and Australia's pre-colonial economic system

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– described in fact as a "kinship mode of production" (Peterson, 2005: 11). "[U]niversal systems of kin classification and a strong emphasis on sharing" according to Peterson, work as "mechanisms that ensured people access to the means of production over very wide areas, securing survival when local conditions were poor" (2005: 11). The ethic of sharing, and the concern for relationships over things, can be related back to the economic and social structure of pre-colonial Aboriginal society and the values it expressed. Pre-colonial Aboriginal society is widely accepted to have been characteristically egalitarian (Dillon and Westbury, 2007: 2; Peterson, 1998; 2005; 2010; Austin-Broos, 2006; Martin, 1995; 2006). This entailed the distribution of resources along highly structured kin networks, as a social imperative/obligation. Describing life pre-contact, Wright singles out egalitarianism as a defining feature of Aboriginal society:

> living, as they did by immutable great laws and by consensus within the great net of life which held them, they had no need for ... hierarchy of command, they did not desire possessions beyond those of others, and having no masters, they had no servants. The only rank they recognized was that earned by age and degree of initiation (1981: 22).

Sharing, and preventing individuals from unevenly accruing resources, were foundational to this social order. This required vigilance and was a moral orientation as well as a practical matter.

Sharing practices

The importance of sharing, and ensuring that others do too, in contemporary Aboriginal society, can be understood as echoing the economic and social arrangements of pre-colonial times. Although undoubtedly transformed by Western influences and affected by experiences of poverty, pre-colonial Aboriginal culture persists in obligations around sharing and the way relatedness and social cohesion depend on it. Martin discusses how assertive egalitarianism and the 'anti-surplus' principle (where surplus is shared rather than amassed) continue to be features of Aboriginal society.

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> [Egalitarianism] is realised through the pragmatic and contextual negotiation of equivalent status between individuals in their shared activities. In particular, the potential for resources, both tangible and intangible, to establish enduring hierarchies is watchfully monitored... As Aboriginal people express it here, people should be 'shoulders together', not one higher than the other. Transactions between individuals and groups over time should be equivalent, and perceived imbalances arouse strong feelings (Martin, 1995: 8).

As wealth is shared, power is shared, including the power to give. Relationships are made real and protected while individualism is kept at bay. Personal autonomy is also established in this way through being looked after by another. Gaining and securing access to the resources of others give agency to the receiver who prevents the other from amassing wealth and power (Martin, 1995: 6-7).

Fuller and Gleeson contrast the social prohibitions on personal greed distinctive of current Aboriginal cultures with the values promoted within Western market capitalism.

> Non-Indigenous Australians tend to value a competitive view of the world as a means of achieving desired outcomes. This results in some individuals and organisations in monopolistic or oligopolistic situations achieving wealth and access to resources, far in excess of what may be regarded as a 'normal return' in a classical economic sense. Such values provide the rationale for acceptance of far higher levels of inequality in the distribution of income and wealth than would be acceptable in an Indigenous community... Indigenous Australians often react with embarrassment and pity to Non-Indigenous displays of 'qualities' such as thriftiness and parsimony that are considered vices within their own social group... From either a moral view of the world, or for cultural reasons relating to the principles associated with distribution, obligation and reciprocity, as well as social and political influence, the high levels of individual inequality apparent within Non-Indigenous society would lead to a combative response within an Indigenous community. An individual who behaved in such a socially disruptive manner would invite a groundswell of feeling (Fuller and Gleeson, 2004: 183-184).

Because relatedness is premised on exchange and kept alive by giving, outright refusal of requests has a social price.

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Martin discusses the role of sharing in maintaining relatedness:

> a refusal by a relation to share ... is seen as a denial of relatedness, of one's rights and
> interests in that relatedness, and as a denial of a set of norms and values culturally
> understood and represented as self-evident (1995: 6)

Even the closest of relationships should not be taken for granted or considered beyond the need for such verification (Martin, 1995: 6-7,9; Peterson, 2005: 11-12; Musharbash, 2000: 56). The social universe relies on the circulation of goods and services to confirm and keep relationships continual. Social and economic realms are deeply connected, with social relationships depending on the exchange of goods and services.

The imperative within Aboriginal society to see material wealth shared carries distinct economic cultural values that have not conformed to the push of wider society towards self gain and individualism. The social and economic norm of sharing has proved resistant. Despite efforts to make Aboriginal households nuclear and independent of each other through policies of assimilation as well as broader economic pressures, intertwined and fluid extended family networks of economic and social support have persisted (Beckett, 1988: 10; Musharbash, 2000: 87,57). The redistribution of wealth this involves can be credited with enabling Aboriginal people to endure harsh economic circumstances (Martin, 2001a: 7). The cycle of lending and borrowing provides a system of banking that works as a "key survival strategy", according to Musharbash, "that both relies upon and cements social relations" (2000: 56). Describing Indigenous kin networks as a form of welfare in itself, Julie Finlayson, Anne Daly and Diane Smith write

> these networks represent a central social arrangement, constituting a form of social or
> cultural capital that makes an invaluable contribution to the socioeconomic wellbeing of
> families, their children, and the households in which they live (2000: 43).

The contemporary Indigenous economy has been described as a 'moral economy', because of this key role of sharing – "at the cost of profit maximisation and obvious immediate personal benefit" (Peterson, 2005: 11).

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The Howard Government was aware of the existence of distinct Aboriginal sharing practices but treated them as problematic behaviour in need of modification. With a broad brush, the Howard Government depicted kin-based sharing generally as 'humbugging' (Altman, 2011; Howard, 2007b). Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Peter Shergold, for example, talked critically about Aboriginal workers being "*forced reluctantly* to share their hard-earned pay cheque with the undeserving who lay claim on their efforts" (2006: 5, my emphasis). Indeed the income quarantining that came with the Northern Territory Intervention was offered as a strategy to curb this behaviour which was presented as facilitating substance abuse (Brough, 2007g: 8). Reflecting its own neoliberal-informed cultural perspective, the Howard Government framed sharing as an obstacle to Indigenous economic integration that needed to be removed and a threat to private property that Indigenous people needed to be shielded from (Altman, 2011: 187,194,196; Lattas and Morris, 2010: 81,82). It did not recognise Aboriginal sharing practices as valid components of a complex social/economic system.

Centrality of relatedness

Relatedness comes up again and again as a defining feature of Aboriginal cultures and cultural economies. The importance and the pragmatics of maintaining social relations sit at the heart of characteristic limited materialism, egalitarian tendencies, and sharing habits among Aboriginal people. Economic practices (within and without functioning Aboriginal economies) continue to revolve around family. Aboriginal approaches towards money can only be understood with reference to Aboriginal values, which frequently run counter to those cultivated by neoliberal market economies. The value given to one's place within extended kin networks is so integral that it can be a fundamental component of one's sense of self (Musharbash, 2000: 89). Austin-Broos

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contrasts this source of identity with the typical marker of identity in mainstream society,

> [w]ell-being is seen to derive from this relatedness and 'work', although a significant practice, is not the defining feature of a person.... When two [non-Indigenous] strangers meet, they ask each other what each 'does', rather than, in an Arrernte way, establish their relatedness (2006: 5).

Differing value systems see your connectedness to extended family and your upkeep of these relationships as demonstrating your worth as a person. One's self esteem, sense of morality, place within the social world and economic security can all be tied up with the economic practice of sharing. Peterson reflects on the multi-faceted significance of sharing practices,

> [w]hile sharing is inseparable from the division of labour, the minimisation of risk and the managing of uncertainty, it is also at the heart of the production and reproduction of social relations, egalitarianism and the self. The circulation of goods takes place within the framework of an ethic of generosity... In such social contexts personhood is constituted through relatedness, while at the same time it is associated with an egalitarian autonomy (2005: 11-12).

Family ties and limited moveability

The strength of Indigenous family connections and the reliability of the safety net provided can make the prospect of moving for employment a distressing and perilous option for Indigenous people. There is much risk involved in relocating for a job that naturally may or may not work out, where the steady emotional and economic support of family is not available. Jerry Schwab explains the dilemma,

> [f]or many Indigenous Australians, the social and financial support of kin is a more predictable resource than the labour market, and training and job opportunities are often weighed up in terms of costs and benefits to the participant. Consideration of this support system would be important when attempting to understand patterns of mobility among Indigenous Australians; a job or training program which requires movement away (physically or culturally) from a network of kin is a high-risk economic proposition for many Indigenous people. Attractive salaries, travel and accommodation or guarantees of special

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support and promotion opportunities may not compensate for the loss of social support

many Indigenous people feel when entering a mainstream labour market program (1995 in

Rowse, 2002a: 39).

The "web of wider relations" is dependable whereas the mainstream economy

is not (Musharbash, 2000: 125). The co-related economic and social

embeddedness of individuals within families and communities makes such

decisions fraught.

There are other factors which make leaving hard, related to connections to

family and place. Flamsteed and Golding have found that

[i]n many cases the risks of going away to study, even for a week at a time, are considered

too high: of leaving family when alcohol or domestic violence is a problem; of leaving a

'dry' community – often with a spouse or sibling – for one where alcohol is freely available.

In some cases people simply do not want to leave home (2005: 75).

Widespread profound attachments to country add to the pull of home (Egan,

2008: 55; Austin-Broos, 2005: 2). The personal costs of migration are far-

reaching and substantial (Austin-Broos, 2005: 1), a point recognised by Ted

Egan: "[w]hen you move Aboriginals from their own country you immediately

place them at great risk" (2008: 24). Communities are impacted by the loss of

people power, cultural maintenance comes under greater threat and there are

very real native title implications (HORSCATSIA, 2007: 145).

The deeply rooted nature of much Aboriginal society makes it both unrealistic

and impractical to require Aboriginal people to move to obtain work, or to

obtain the training necessary for work (Musharbash, 2000: 92; HORSCATSIA,

2007: 145; Martin, 2001b: 32-33). Indeed, Musharbash concludes,

the transition out of welfare ... will have to be made locally by individuals undertaking

forms of employment and training needed, and able to be sustained within, their own

communities (2000: 92).

It should be noted that distinctive Indigenous patterns of mobility (revolving

around visiting kin and country) often co-exist with reluctance to relocate to

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other areas on a long-term basis (Peterson, 2010: 255; Martin, 2001b: 32; Musharbash, 2001: 160).

Mobility (or lack of) is only an issue where employment is not available locally. Significant, then, is the limited work (and type of work) available in areas with higher proportions of Aboriginal residents (that is regional, rural and remote areas). Mining companies are one employer which can sometimes provide work closer to home. However, the inherently environmentally detrimental nature of the industry runs contra to conflicting Aboriginal world views about the sanctity of the land. Aboriginal affiliations with country and obligations to protect it make taking work in the industry a difficult cultural choice for Aboriginal job-seekers (McGrath et al, 2006: 6). It is clear that tensions arise from the differing "cultural dispositions of ... Indigenous people and the mine environment", even among those resigned "to obtain whatever benefits are possible in the face of what seems inevitable" (Scambary, 2013: 200; Trigger, 1998 in Scambary, 2013: 190).

Farming is another industry that can potentially enable remote and rurally located Indigenous people to work on country, either working for non-Indigenous farm owners or communally on family run Indigenous owned farms. However, despite the long history of Indigenous involvement in the industry, which is in many areas enmeshed with Indigenous identity, there are incompatibilities (Davis, 2005: 53). Profit-centred, ecologically disruptive, restrictive uses of large tracts of land, supporting only a few and entailing hierarchies of power, can sit at odds with Aboriginal land uses, relationship with country and egalitarian principles (Davis, 2005: 49,53; Young, 2005; Bernadi, 1997: 40). Cultural compromise is a familiar theme in work environments across Australia.

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Competing concepts of work

There are also differing notions of work that complicate Aboriginal employment in the introduced economy. Travelling around country seeing family is itself important work. Speaking generally of the work involved maintaining relations, which encompasses travel, Rowse observes,

> many Aboriginal people's strategies of social reproduction require that they spend a large part of their life in places and engaged in activities that remove them, effectively, from labour markets (2002a: 17-18).

Mainstream employment is not always accommodating of other, cultural, work commitments. Customary activities, which tie in with Aboriginal social life and its obligations, place demands on people's time and location.

In making the following statement, Arnhem land Traditional Owners Donald Gumurdul, Philip Mikginmikginj, and Jacob Nayinggul speak of the pressure from high up to sacrifice cultural work for formal waged work, and the lack of appreciation of the interconnectedness of social and economic life.

> [Minister Tony] Abbott has told central Australian Aborigines in Pitjantjatjara land that spending months on ceremony doesn't work in today's Western culture. He told an Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara meeting that 'if you're going to develop a working culture, you can't have a three month ceremony season and you can't take six weeks off because your cousin has died. I wouldn't imagine that long before white man came a death would have stopped hunting'. He is wrong. Our ceremony is part of our work. That is why we call it 'business'. In our country, in Arnhem Land, ceremony has continued uninterrupted for a very long time (Gumurdul et al, 2006 in Stringer, 2007: 13).

Referring to this quote, Rebecca Stringer comments, "the government ... made clear its position that capitalist business necessarily eclipses Indigenous business" (2007: 13). There is noticeable conflict between the two forms of work, given their competing claims on workers. Fuller and Gleeson add that while participation in social, cultural and ritual life may interfere with maintaining a job, it should not be read as disinterest in community development (2004: 183). As Arrernte people put it (according to Austin-Broos), the two sorts of work sometimes "fight" each other (Austin-Broos, 2006: 3,9).

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Austin-Broos' account of Arrernte senses of work offers insight into how it is not just the type of work that differs but the very concept of work (2006). She differentiates between the mainstream concept of 'working' as in waged labour, and the predominant Arrernte concept of 'working for' where work is done towards, and within, relatedness. Here work cannot be separated from relationships (Austin-Broos, 2006: 5). Work is carried out 'for' others, where there is need, and invites reciprocation (Austin-Broos, 2006: 6). The other half of 'working for' is 'looking after', where the compliance to authority that is involved with 'working for' is recognised through 'looking after'. This exchange is most perfectly expressed within inter-generational kin relationships, between younger and older relations. At essence, it is a relationship. The boss-worker relationship is registered as comparable. The boss, then, should look after the worker in recognition of the work they perform for them, and the relationship they have.

Austin-Broos explains how Arrernte struggle with the non-Indigenous view of working relationships as not having this personal level. She relays an anecdote from the 1920s provided by Hermannsburg (Ntaria) missionary Friedrich Albrecht.

> Years ago, at Hermannsburg, it so happened that men would come to me and tell me they were going to get some dingo scalps *for me.* I would correct them by saying: but you are paid cash for your scalps, so you are *not working for me.* Although accepted, it did not sink in very deeply. After a little more talk this man would come in the same way saying: I am going to get some dingo scalps *for you.* Again I would correct him with the same poor results. Quite obviously my attitude differed widely from his feelings in this matter (Albrecht, 1961 in Austin-Broos, 2006: 11).

Tensions remain and creative attempts by Arrernte to mitigate the impersonality of mainstream employment and training, and to make the exchange more personal, have not generally been embraced by white supervisors. The 'working for' model can be sustained with welfare payments relatively well but runs into

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trouble in kin-free zones such as work and education. Austin-Broos observes, "[t]he consociate relations of the workplace, where the sharing of things and cash is circumscribed, are not the service relations of Western Arrernte relatedness" (2006: 6).

Interestingly, more success has been had where workplaces have been made kin-specific sites when locally connected Indigenous people fill positions of authority (Austin-Broos, 2006: 7). Musharbash (2001) makes similar observations in Yuendumu in nearby Warlpiri country, connecting positive outcomes to accommodation of the 'working for' concept. She explains Warlpiri thinking about the relationship between boss and worker, considered especially important where the work is not satisfying and the worker has little autonomy.

> Walpiri expect something else beyond the actual work. Ideally, there should be a personal
> relationship between boss and worker, where both are tied to each other by reciprocal
> obligations. A boss should look after his or her workers. This issue lies at the heart of many
> misunderstandings between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people in the workplace
> (Musharbash, 2001: 159).

Relatedness again is at the centre of the economic. As Austin-Broos stresses, "[a] cultural account is required to address this history of difference and its continuing transformations" (2006: 13).

Implications

Differing priorities reflect differing cultural values. Cultural mismatch at this deeper level draws attention to the cultural values that engagement within the mainstream economy is premised on. Market capitalist ideals come up against pervasive non-materialism and egalitarianism, and the prioritisation of relatedness – a different worldview. Rowse puts it simply, stating that the people of Maningrida "retain their own ideas about what it is to be a competent person" (2002a: 60). Mainstream employment can, in some instances, sit at odds with meeting cultural obligations and all that is involved with being a

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committed and connected family member working for kin and community on country. Incompatibilities, both superficial and on a deeper level, can make the economic security that flows from employment in the introduced economy more difficult for Aboriginal people to obtain and maintain.

The crux of the matter is pinpointed by McGrath et al when they write "all economies are culturally based supporting particular cultural values. The question is what and whose cultural values should be supported in the development of a sustainable economy" (2006: 10). McGrath et al's questions can only be raised when the culture of economics is granted, a significant step avoided by the Howard Government. The Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency treated the imposed economy as the only valid economy, not recognising the existence or legitimacy of a distinct Aboriginal economic realm. Not only are the ideals attached to the imported Western market capitalist economy promoted, they are unreflexively presented as the unchallengeable norm, in true modernist and colonialist form. The Howard Government distinguished the mainstream economy as real as compared to welfare payments or the CDEP scheme. However, Indigenous livelihoods based on customary activities were not mentioned, nor was the Indigenous moral economy. Alternate Indigenous economic models and values were not registered and the Howard Government was silent about the economic cultural conflict that has followed colonisation. The impact of the imposition of a foreign economy remains highly relevant to contemporary Indigenous economic disengagement, and yet it did not feature in the Howard Government's account.

Responsibility

Incorporating this information can shift the way Aboriginal unemployment and poverty are viewed. Acknowledging that the injury of colonialism has also come in the form of seismic economic upheaval can produce a different reading, in

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which the alien nature of the colonial economy is another obstacle to Aboriginal prosperity and economic engagement. Here again, colonialism is responsible. The differences between the two cultural economies are only of issue because one has been imposed upon the other. Aboriginal difference is only involved in that it interferes with absorption into the economy transplanted through colonisation. If the British had not established a permanent settlement in Australia, or had their approach been to blend into the local economy, Aboriginal economic values and practices would still be vital for economic prosperity. While the source of difference comes from both (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) cultural economies, only one of these cultural economies was minding its own business. Colonialism is accountable for yet another factor contributing to current levels of Aboriginal welfare use.

Thinking of colonialism as the instigator of economic cultural conflict in Australia upsets the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. Shedding light on the contribution of a poorly suited economy, installed as part of the takeover of the continent, makes it even harder to maintain that Aboriginal unemployment is overwhelmingly a result of *Aboriginal* inadequacy. In this light, the strong push from the Howard Government towards sameness and conformity to the mainstream economy is part of the problem. Integrating these additional ways in which Australia's colonisation has impacted Aboriginal chances of economic wellbeing complicates the Howard Government's unsympathetic and attention deflecting portrayal of the problem of Aboriginal unemployment.

It should be noted that not all Australian commentators who identify economic cultural mismatch as an impediment to Aboriginal employment, go on to hold the colonial process responsible. Some commentators draw a connection between Aboriginal cultural difference and Aboriginal responsibility. Peter Sutton is one such commentator. He argues strongly in *The politics of suffering*

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(2009) for the incorporation of Aboriginal cultural difference as a key cause of problems in Aboriginal society. He states "present-day culture, which may contain a number of very old cultural traditions or transformations of them, plays a significant part in the creation of what is called 'Indigenous disadvantage'" (Sutton, 2009: 75). Sutton concludes on this basis that change on the part of Aboriginal people is essential; "cultural redevelopment is necessary if there is to be a radical improvement in people's chances of ending their suffering" (2009: 65).

Whilst I also draw attention to the interplay of the cultures of the coloniser and the colonised, the similarities between our positions ends there.[37] Our positions diverge sharply on the matter of which party is ultimately responsible where cultural difference obstructs seamless incorporation of Aboriginal people into the introduced economy. The bulk of Sutton's argument is that because of "the profound incompatibility between modernisation and cultural traditionalism" (2009: 57), Aboriginal culture needs to change. Sutton moves from seeing Aboriginal cultural difference as a factor related to mainstream economic engagement (as well as other social indicators), to reasoning that the problem is Aboriginal cultural difference itself, and that therefore, deep and dramatic cultural change here is imperative.

Outside of the field of anthropology and the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, cultural difference is often absent from analysis of Aboriginal economic marginalisation. In such analyses, "'problems about work'" are presented as having "nothing in particular to do with culture" (Austin-Broos, 2006: 3). Such authors appear reluctant to cite Aboriginal cultural difference as

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[37] Sutton's fundamentally negative appraisal of Aboriginal culture is another point of difference (among many). However we do share an appreciation of the far-reaching impact of the abandonment by the state (with the demise of the mission model), and also the coinciding increased access to alcohol.

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relevant to Aboriginal unemployment, out of concern perhaps that it will lead to such conclusions. They may fear that to name Aboriginal cultural difference is to point the finger in the direction of Aboriginal society. However, one does not lead to the other. Where cultural difference exists, it is an outcome of the *intersection* of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural frameworks. Cultural conflict involves two cultures, and this conflict came about as a result of the domination of one over the other. To read the poor cultural fit of the imposed economy as the fault of Aboriginal culture for being different, forgets which party initiated the meeting of the cultures and the nature of this meeting. It is a great leap because not only does it neglect the interaction of non-Indigenous culture as a necessary ingredient but crucially the colonial context in which this interaction occurs.

To assign responsibility for cultural conflict to Aboriginal people fails to problematise colonisation and the damage it has caused to Aboriginal cultures. It leaves intact the logic that colonialism has been a natural force of history, that has brought the march of progress towards modernity to Australia. In contrast, the critical approach adopted by this thesis recognises economic cultural conflict to be a consequence of colonialism's imposition, and rejects there being any inherent logic or inescapability to this. Indigenous cultural divergence from mainstream Australia does not, then, translate to Indigenous responsibility. Quite the reverse, responsibility lies within the non-Indigenous camp. This has implications for how such difference should be handled.

Accommodation

Once Aboriginal people who have difficulties fitting in to the imposed system are cleared of blame, and responsibility is seen to sit elsewhere, the focus on Aboriginal society as the site of change becomes questionable. Currently and historically, it is Aboriginal people who are and have been expected to meet the needs of the introduced economy, at whatever cultural and social cost.

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However, it would be fitting to ask for flexibility on the part of the order which (forcefully) introduced conflicting economic ways. Aboriginal cultural difference as it relates to the economic realm could and should be accommodated. Rather than demand cultural compromise from the Indigenous side of the fence, effort could and should be made towards adjusting the terms and nature of economic participation, where and how appropriate, to make it more suitable for Aboriginal people.

This is not to say that Aboriginal people across Australia would all seek or even need greater accommodation of cultural difference. This thesis by no means wishes to demarcate what Aboriginal cultures look like or specify the needs of individual Aboriginal people. The point is to consider what is to be done where difference does exist. To disallow it because it interferes with the smooth incorporation of Aboriginal people within the wider economy adds injury to injury, reinvigorating the colonial relationship. Insisting Aboriginal cultures give way stands by the acts of the past rather than against them. As Martin warns, Aboriginal economic development can become "an unwitting tool for the assimilation of Aboriginal people into mainstream society" (1995: 17). Following the colonial practice of demanding cultural conformity works against the objective of better economic outcomes for Aboriginal people, and the objective of righting colonialism's wrongs.

Sharing the ethico-political stance of Postcolonial theory, this thesis wishes to see the colonial process ruptured not continued. It takes the position that Indigenous cultures should be valued, along with Aboriginal economic wellbeing, and contends that protecting the former can work in conjunction with the latter. What would then mark a shift in thought and practice, would be for provisions to be made to cater for Aboriginal economic difference. The inflexibility of the mainstream economic system interferes with Aboriginal economic engagement, and with Aboriginal human rights, and making

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modifications here would make an overdue and entirely appropriate break with history. The creation of genuine options is key, options that do not require cultural compromise. Culturally appropriate alternatives should be available, within or outside of the mainstream economy, so that the maintenance of distinctive Aboriginal ways of being are not penalised with poverty. For options to be real and viable, alternative means of making a living outside of the mainstream economy would need to be genuinely supported (financially and otherwise).

Obviously, a heavy dose of creativity would be needed to contrive such variations on the dominant economic norm in Australia, but such variations are firmly in the realm of possibility. Variations could take the shape of adjusted forms of conventional employment, and they could take the shape of supported specifically Indigenous economies, as well as the full spectrum in-between. Martin recommends a revised interpretation of economic development, suggesting it be

> understood as a process through which financial and other material resources can be brought to bear on maintaining and enhancing the viability of indigenous societies, rather than as one concerned primarily with developing infrastructure, increasing wealth, and so forth (1995: 20).

Here the emphasis is on reinforcing and not compromising "Indigenous political, social and economic structures" (Martin, 1995: 19).

Of course the CDEP (Community Development Employment Projects) scheme went some distance towards meeting this charter. It offered its Indigenous participants a more "culturally friendly" work option while setting out to bolster the integrity and health (physical, mental, and cultural) of Indigenous communities (Redfern Residents for Reconciliation, 2007). Rowse, in his book reflecting on the importance of choice for Indigenous Australians, positioned the CDEP scheme as an instance of Government directly supporting social diversity and enabling choice. He praised the scheme for its sensitivity to the "cultural

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characteristics of the Indigenous suppliers of labour", and congratulated it as "a substantial *political* achievement – an ongoing concession to the very different social and economic needs of Indigenous Australians" (Rowse, 2002a: 28,69, emphasis in original). The deathly blows to the CDEP scheme struck by the Howard Government can be linked back directly to its representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, and are testament to the real life effects of problem representations.

Conclusion

In this last chapter, the fourth task of the *'What's the problem represented to be?'* approach has been completed. This chapter has considered a final respect in which the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency could be looked at differently. It has joined the previous two chapters in making the point that the Howard Government failed to acknowledge any relationship between current levels of Aboriginal welfare use and the disturbance caused to the Indigenous economies in place prior to colonisation. The tragedy of the displacement of Aboriginal economies, and the security, sustainability, fulfilment, and sociality they reliably offered, was not recognised in the Howard Government's account. The ensuing and ongoing poor fit of the introduced economy in Aboriginal Australia was left out of the Howard Government's rendering of Aboriginal unemployment. The "built in headwinds" of structural discrimination within culturally coded recruitment processes and work environments were not registered (United States Supreme Court, 1971 in de Plevitz, 2000: 46). Additionally, no allowance was made for deeper cultural differences, and the potentially exclusionary effect of conflicting cultural values that sit at the heart of the introduced economy.

These last three chapters, then, have further fleshed out a competing account of the causes of high levels of Aboriginal welfare use. The picture changes

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significantly when cultural difference on both sides is recognised as a factor and colonialism is brought into the foreground as the key actor. The implications of this revised picture have been visited. As responsibility for instigating economic cultural conflict does not lie with Aboriginal people, it follows that the onus should not be on Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture to adjust to fit. Time has already demonstrated this is not an effective route to Aboriginal economic engagement. I argue it is also politically and ethically objectionable.

For the invading culture, which has brought the local economy to the brink of destruction and has pursued cultural absorption on a national scale, to decree (implicitly or explicitly) that the local culture must be the site of change, is more of the same. Colonialism is furthered rather than interrupted, or redressed. It is not only social diversity that is under threat, but also social justice. A fair and reasonable response to the poor fit of the imposed mainstream economy would be to acknowledge and accommodate Aboriginal economic cultural difference. Accommodation requires genuine options. Deeper divergences and more superficial and straightforward differences could all be accommodated, with ingenuity and drive. The mainstream workforce could be adjusted and inventive, culturally adaptive enclaves within the wider economy could be fostered to offer Aboriginal people more suitable work. The work already invested towards these ends in the CDEP scheme could be built on. Crucially, the availability of meaningful options would contribute to restoring Aboriginal autonomy – a grievous casualty of colonialism.

These last three chapters have shown up the relevance of the colonial context to Aboriginal employment in disregarding and displacing Aboriginal economies and giving Aboriginal people little option but to conform to the foreign economy established in their place. Factoring this in produces a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the problem represented by the Howard Government as Aboriginal welfare dependency. Not only are job shortages relevant, and not

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only should Aboriginal unemployment (or more problematically Aboriginal poverty and lack of meaningful activity) be reattached to the larger issue of Australia's colonisation, and not only should the widespread relegation of Aboriginal people to the lowest rungs of the economy, and its ongoing legacy, be taken into account, but also, it should be appreciated that, to make things harder, Aboriginal economic wellbeing has been largely conditional on fitting the culturally loaded mainstream economic mould. Patrick Dodson conveys a wish for things to be different,

> [w]hat we have sought is to have substantial equality so that as human beings there might be a quality of life that we can enjoy in keeping with our own values and societal ways. Lives for our peoples, similar to that of the majority in Australia but lives uniquely ours, not ones that governments wished to impose upon us. Lives where we meet our obligations as citizens but where we are accommodated also as Aborigines. Lives where our human and cultural rights are respected (2000: 11).

CONCLUSION
"Black men! We wish you to be happy"

Over its four terms in office, the Howard Government made clear its view that a key issue in Indigenous affairs was Aboriginal welfare dependency. The Howard Government's distinctive take on Indigenous affairs marked a turning point in Indigenous policy. This thesis approaches this important period in recent political history from the critical perspective of Postcolonial theory. Adopting Postmodernism and Poststructuralism's appreciation of the crucial role of discourse, this thesis treats the Howard Government's discursive framing of Indigenous affairs as highly significant. The way Indigenous matters are represented is understood to be necessarily informed by the values and worldview of the observer. The Howard Government's reading of Indigenous affairs is thus not taken for granted as self-evident. Instead, it is seen as one possible interpretation, imbued with meaning and containing its own normative prescriptions.

Viewed as giving shape to the problem it constructed, the Howard Government's reading of Indigenous affairs has been deconstructed and reconsidered. This process has been directed and facilitated by the implementation of Bacchi's theoretically consistent WPR approach. The Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency has been excavated, and its founding assumptions and origins have been exposed to the light. An alternative account has been offered, from a different perspective, grounded in different beliefs and values. Postcolonial theory's oppositional value-set has oriented and informed both this investigation and this reinterpretation. The findings of this approach, and the divergent reading developed, will be synthesised in this conclusion, and the effects of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency will be reflected on (following the fifth step of the WPR approach). Highlighting that "problem representations matter" (Bacchi, 2007: 13)

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(particularly those authored by governments), and that Australia's problematic colonial status remains unresolved, this thesis attempts to demonstrate that Postcolonial theory and Bacchi's WPR approach provide an unusually powerful means of untangling and revealing the colonial implications of the Howard Government's contribution to the representation of Aboriginal affairs.

A clear picture has been provided in this thesis (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. The concept of welfare dependency itself has been shown to be based on the assumption that welfare recipients are passive, blameworthy, non-contributing individuals in an inherently undignified (and unnecessary) state of dependency. The Howard Government's articulation of the problem of *Aboriginal* welfare dependency further developed this loaded concept. Welfare use by Aboriginal people as a category was presented by the Howard Government as a behavioural issue. The Howard Government expressed alarm about a welfare dependent mentality, culture and way of life amongst Aboriginal welfare recipients. The implicit presumption was that this dependency was preventing Aboriginal welfare recipients from gaining employment.

A particular version of economic independence was prescribed, and aligned with personal liberation, self respect and social progress. CDEP employment was not included in this definition and continued participation within the scheme came to be portrayed by the Howard Government as form of welfare dependency. Attempts were made to separate, and prioritise, the economic over the social, but these were never quite successful. The problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency was framed as a practical matter, fittingly dealt with through the Howard Government's practical approach and focus on the future – which translated to a focus on the extension of citizenship entitlements. This limited approach corresponded with the Howard Government's interest in sameness, same treatment, and the removal of difference, economic and

otherwise. Overall, the Howard Government stressed that it could only do so much, and that Indigenous welfare recipients, and CDEP participants, were largely responsible for the situation they were in. The Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency was then founded on normative judgements about what was wrong in Aboriginal Australia, and what would make it right.

A deeper understanding of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency has been gained in this thesis through a look at its origins (Chapter 7), starting with the origins of the concept of welfare dependency itself. The connection between wage labour and independence on the one hand, and state support and dependence on the other, has been traced back to the emergence of industrial capitalism. The ideal of the model productive capitalist citizen against which welfare users are pejoratively compared emerged out of this period. It was the rise of neoliberal economic discourse around the Western world, however, that reconfigured unemployment into a problem of welfare dependency, in contrast to more sympathetic post-war Keynesian understandings of unemployment as a shortcoming of the market system.

A look at the origins of the Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare recipients specifically as welfare dependent has shown the consistency of neoliberal accounts of poverty with European ideas of the 'other' – as primitive, idle, economically backward and beyond help – dating back to ancient times. The Howard Government's neoliberal focus on individual responsibility linked in with colonial explanations of Aboriginal people's failure to thrive in the introduced economy as due to Aboriginal flaws and inadequacies. There is also concordance between the Howard Government's insistence on Indigenous incorporation within the 'normalising' market economy and earlier state attempts to shape Indigenous subjects to fit the social and economic norms of the introduced society. The Howard Government's

reading was then not a straightforward reflection of the state of Indigenous affairs and the 'world out there', and it did not come out of nowhere. Instead it made sense because of the conceptual logics, values and assumptions on which it was based, and the context in which it emerged.

With a clearer understanding of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency and its core premises and background, this thesis has offered a counter-reading (Chapters 8 to 14). I started this alternative account by interrogating the very notion of welfare dependency, pointing to the structural causes of unemployment in Australia (Chapter 8). In this analysis, the role of the decline in the availability of employment, resulting from Australia's macro-economic policy and economic, technological and demographic shifts, re-enters the picture. These structural explanations are particularly relevant as the areas and levels of work Aboriginal people have most typically been involved in have been worst affected. The locational disadvantage experienced by rural and remote located Aboriginal people has intensified, and there has been a significant drop in the jobs available to low-skilled Aboriginal workers across the country. I have found the individualising concept of welfare dependency generally to be inadequate and misleading as it neglects these structural explanations of unemployment and the role played by the state and the economy.

This thesis has also found the Howard Government's application of the concept of welfare dependency to Aboriginal people specifically to be problematic for additional reasons. In isolating Aboriginal welfare dependency as an issue of central importance in Indigenous affairs, the Howard Government left out the colonisation of Australia – treating it as a non-issue. In contrast, this thesis has positioned the ongoing reality of Australia's colonisation as a problem in and of itself (Chapter 9). I have acknowledged the devastation, distress and disenfranchisement that has resulted from the British occupation of Australia and affected almost every aspect of Indigenous lives. Recognising the

Conclusion

"Black men! We wish you to be happy"

significance of the full gamut of negative consequences of colonisation faced by Indigenous people, I have understood Aboriginal unemployment to be but one of these enduring consequences. I have thus reattached Aboriginal unemployment back to the broader issue and bigger picture of colonisation, reversing the Howard Government's attempt to detach it.

Connecting high levels of welfare use to the macro context of Australia's colonisation pushes back at the Howard Government's depiction of Aboriginal welfare use as the responsibility of individual Aboriginal welfare recipients. Responding directly to the Howard Government's account, this thesis has explored in some detail the ways in which Aboriginal *economic* well-being *specifically* has been impacted by Australia's colonisation. This thesis has linked the current economic position of Aboriginal people generally to the allocation of Aboriginal people historically to the lowest rungs of the introduced economy, where and when Indigenous economic incorporation was pursued (Chapter 10). I have suggested that efforts of subsequent Governments to redress this in many respects brutal history of marginalisation have been insufficient, given the enormity of the task, and that this has contributed substantially to the ongoing impact of this history (Chapter 11).

I have also made the case that colonisation is further implicated in present day Aboriginal economic (dis)engagement because of the economic imposition that it has entailed. I have pointed out that first and foremost, the disruption and destruction of the Indigenous economies in place prior to colonisation have caused the greatest upset to Indigenous economic well-being (Chapter 12). A further factor impacting upon contemporary Aboriginal economic prosperity that I have brought attention to is the poor cultural fit of the particular, culturally-loaded economic system transplanted in Australia over the top of these Indigenous economies. I have outlined reasonably superficial cultural barriers that can make it especially hard for Indigenous workers to gain and keep employment in the mainstream workforce, such as non-conscious

discrimination, behavioural expectations and workplace inflexibility (Chapter 13). I have also proposed that at a deeper level, the structure of the Australian market economy and the individualist and materialist values embedded within it can also present difficulties for Aboriginal workers, where they conflict with contrasting ideas about work, wealth and relatedness, and the relative importance of kin and country (Chapter 14). Bearing in mind the colonial context, I have argued that cultural compromise should not be required of Aboriginal people in exchange for economic security. Instead, efforts should be made to accommodate Aboriginal difference, so as to avoid perpetuating the colonial relationship and process of imposition, and to improve Aboriginal economic outcomes.

It cannot be said that either of these outcomes flowed from the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. It certainly did have effect, however. The Howard Government's isolation of the economic, its assurances of the redemptive role of market incorporation, and its deflection of attention away from the settler-invader state – onto Aboriginal behaviour – produced distinctive discursive, subjective and lived effects. In the discursive sense, the way Indigenous affairs was thought about and talked about in the main, shifted. The Howard Government redefined the terms of the debate. Aboriginal deficit and dysfunction were reinforced as legitimate areas of focus and it became conceptually reasonable for government to simply concentrate on the provision of basic citizenship rights – towards "helping Aboriginal people stand on their own feet" (Herron, 1998c: 5).

The market friendly interpretation of malaise within Aboriginal Australia as self-initiated disengagement from the mainstream economy moved discussion away from the righting of colonial wrongs, and the relevance of these wrongs to Aboriginal unemployment. Market-centred neoliberalism's level playing field credo is particularly harmful in colonised spaces. Walter comments on the

operation of neoliberal logic within the Howard Government's Indigenous policy discourse,

> [d]eeming all Australians now equal, this discourse renders invisible the privilege of those outside the domain of Aboriginality and allows the present-day reverberations of multi-intergenerational individual, family and communal deprivation to be portrayed as whinging self-pity (2010: 131).

Meanwhile, "Indigenous people, by their welfare dependences, are positioned as morally and deliberately complicit in their own poverty" (Walter, 2009: 11). The Howard Government's framing of Aboriginal affairs imposed "constraints on social vision" (Bacchi, 1999: 29), removing colonialism and the actions of the settler state from consideration.

The Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency has had subjective effects, affecting how people think of themselves, how they think of others, and how they think of the relation between themselves and others. Non-Indigenous Australians were encouraged to think of Aboriginal welfare users as welfare dependent and Aboriginal communities as nurturing this dependency – and to feel removed from the problems faced by Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people have had to defend or define themselves against this demoralising representation (ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2002: 54), or incorporate it in some way.

In 2002, William Jonas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Social Justice Commissioner, expressed concern about the Howard Government's focus on Indigenous welfare dependency. He worried that it would "promote intolerance", exacerbate "common myths about Indigenous people receiving special benefits", "transfer community dissatisfaction at the level of outcomes achieved by government to the Indigenous population itself", and "undermine broader community support for reconciliation, among other things" (ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2002: 57). Jonas was right to be concerned as the Howard Government's representation of Aboriginal welfare dependency validated and expanded on negative attitudes towards Aboriginal people held

within the non-Indigenous community (Augoustinos, Tuffin and Rapley, 1999; Marjoribanks and Jordan, 1986). The negative assessment of welfare users' character, mental state and behaviour that comes with the label of welfare dependency gelled well with latent colonial tropes of flawed and undeserving Aboriginal subjects not fit for modern society and too lazy for the modern economy.

A study in 2014 by Beyond Blue, an Australian organisation promoting mental health, found that 37 per cent of respondents felt Aboriginal people were "sometimes a bit lazy" (2014: 2). Recent research by Daphne Habibis, Penny Taylor, Maggie Walter and Catriona Elder found that the large majority of their Aboriginal respondents felt "judged, stereotyped and disregarded" by non-Indigenous Australians (2016). At a time when non-Indigenous Australia was collectively starting an overdue process of working through its derogatory and racist attitudes towards Aboriginal people, the Howard Government enlivened once familiar depictions by constituting Aboriginal people as deficient, as causing their own poverty, and as beyond help. At a time when Australia was making small but discernible steps in the direction of decolonisation, and the state was perhaps beginning to gain some trust from Aboriginal people, the Howard Government told Aboriginal people that they were the problem. Howard stated, Aboriginal people "have responsibilities to themselves ... to try and break the welfare dependency mentality that exists" (2003a).

The Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency and its discursive and subjectification effects generated real life, lived effects. As Bacchi reflects,

> the language of problem representation can lead readers to think that we are dealing only at the level of ideas or impressions, whereas, in point of fact, the ways in which policy 'problems' are represented in public policies translates into real, lived experience (2009: xviii).

The most immediate result of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency was the policy that came with it, and that was made acceptable.

The Howard Government's focus on the 'problem' of Aboriginal welfare dependency saw a blinkered concentration on the economic arena (treated as separable from social goals and community development) and engagement in the market. Indigenous economic independence was prioritised as part of the Howard Government's interest in practical (as opposed to 'symbolic') reconciliation, in pursuit of 'same' outcomes for Indigenous Australians (through same treatment). This took the form of a combination of policy strategies. These included: limited involvement in what was defined as 'symbolic' reconciliation (the need for a reconciliation document was dismissed, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's (CAR) reconciliation documents were not endorsed and no apology was made for the stolen generations); sustained attacks on Indigenous rights, Indigenous representation and Indigenous services culminating in the diluting of native title rights through the *Native Title Amendment Act 1998* and the abolition of ATSIC; more stringently focused business development programs as well as the removal of Indigenous control over these programs; concentration on Indigenous employment in the private sector, pursued in part through financially rewarding the private sector for supporting Indigenous employment; the introduction of Shared Responsibility Agreements in Aboriginal communities – making public services conditional on behavioural change; the promotion of private home ownership partly through changes to communal land tenure; and the initiation of the removal of activity exemptions which allowed remotely located (predominantly Aboriginal) welfare recipients to have their remoteness acknowledged as a barrier to employment.

Additionally, seemingly out of nowhere but actually the logical outcome of its representation of Indigenous affairs, the Howard Government launched the Northern Territory Emergency Response. Welfare payments were quarantined,

land rights were retracted, and community governance was overridden. Although certainly a shock in terms of the extreme character and the unprecedented extent of the policy and legislative changes (requiring the suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*), the Howard Government's actions were intelligible in light of the problem representation it had developed over the years. The top down, coercive nature of the Intervention, with its lack of consultation and disempowering imposition of strategies (some of which, in some form, would likely have been supported by communities – for example alcohol restrictions [Wright, 2009; ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2011a: 67-122; Morphy and Morphy, 2008]), made sense within the Howard Government's discourse of Aboriginal ineptitude and welfare dependency. The problem was with Aboriginal people, and therefore Aboriginal people could not be partners in the process of addressing it.

Key premises on which the case for the NT Intervention was based were already familiar. Aboriginal economic disadvantage was attributable to the inappropriate and pathological use of welfare, and the source of the problem was Aboriginal individuals and society and their separation from the rest of mainstream society. Howard clearly drew on his Government's already established representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency when making the following statement defending the Intervention:

> [a]t its core is the need for Aboriginal Australia to join the mainstream economy as the foundation of economic and social progress. This is at the heart of the work the Australian Government is pursuing... The central goal is to address the cancer of passive welfare and to create opportunity through education, employment and home ownership (2007d: 4).

The other major policy outcome of the representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency was the reorientation of the CDEP scheme, and its closure nationally in urban and regional areas and then in the Northern Territory as part of the Intervention. The Intervention sought to intervene in Aboriginal economic (as well as social) behaviour and CDEP participation was by then sufficiently problematised that the Howard Government was able to

present it as behaviour in need of modification – warranting the program's closure. The radical move of closing the program in these areas was really the natural next step from a Government which had depicted welfare usage as an unhealthy practice in itself, branded the CDEP scheme as welfare, and made every effort to get CDEP participants off the scheme.

Despite initially praising the employment program for its social and community development benefits, the Howard Government soon became less complimentary. The Howard Government criticised the CDEP scheme for not focusing on moving CDEP workers into non-CDEP employment, and started to class CDEP employment as a form of welfare on which its workers were dependent. From the outset the Howard Government discontinued the yearly expansion of the CDEP scheme,[38] and shortly after called a review to investigate the effectiveness of the CDEP scheme at transferring participants to 'other employment'. The Howard Government passed up the opportunity to have the CDEP scheme fully classified as an ordinary earned wage, and instead strengthened the CDEP scheme's classification as a form of social security with the provision of social security numbers to CDEP workers in 1998.[39] The CDEP scheme was brought closer in format to welfare (which was being increasingly problematised) as the objective of the CDEP scheme became the exiting of participants off the scheme, ideally (but not realistically) into non-CDEP jobs. This objective was made clear with the CDEP placement incentive that came with the Indigenous Employment policy (introduced in 1999), available to CDEP organisations which moved CDEP participants into non-CDEP employment. The pressure applied to CDEP organisations from 2001 onwards to act as Indigenous Employment Centres and offer Job Network services was also indicative of this new priority.

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[38] However, additional remote places were granted in 2000 and 2003 (with no increase in oncost funding).

[39] Removing the Department of Social Security's classification of CDEP as a 'Commonwealth funded employment program' was recommended as a way to enable participants to access social security entitlements (Race Discrimination Commissioner, 1997).

With the bringing of the CDEP scheme under DEWR after ATSIC was abolished in 2004, the criticism that the CDEP scheme was an obstructive variety of welfare solidified and the change in focus onto detaching participants from the scheme intensified. CDEP funding became dependent on meeting Key Performance Indicators (related to reaching employment and business development targets, and providing 'relevant' community activities that improved participants' employability). Registration (and compliance) with Job Network became compulsory for non-remote CDEP participants,[40] while remotely based CDEP participants were obliged to develop Participant Plans setting out how they would move into non-CDEP employment. CDEP participation was limited to 12 months in urban and regional areas. It was then confirmed early 2007 that as of July, the CDEP scheme would be dismantled across Australia in urban and regional areas. Mere months later the Howard Government announced that, as part of the Northern Territory Intervention, the CDEP scheme would be closed down in all regions in the Northern Territory.

The Howard Government's "discursive assault" on the CDEP scheme (Altman, 2015d) and its sustained attack on the makeup and distribution of the program, set the course of things to come. The CDEP scheme was successfully reframed as a form of welfare standing in the way of 'real' employment and was gradually wound down by successive Governments. The Labor Government which defeated the Howard Government in November 2007, initially led by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, maintained the rump of the scheme to begin with. Thirty of the CDEP programs dismantled in the Northern Territory under the Intervention were reinstated – albeit in a restructured form (Macklin, 2007; 2008: 32; Macklin and O'Connor, 2008a; Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2008: 15). The Howard Government's earlier decision to shut down the CDEP scheme in urban and

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[40] This requirement applied to CDEP participants in areas where a Job Network Member was based.

major regional centres across Australia, however, was not reversed. In fact, the Rudd Government extended closure of the CDEP scheme to non-remote areas, shutting down remaining regional programs (Macklin and O'Connor, 2008c; 2008d; Macklin in ABC, 2010).

The reprieve given to the CDEP scheme in remote locations in the Northern Territory, and across Australia, was only temporary. The receipt of CDEP wages in those remaining locations was extended to 2010, then later to 2011, 2012, and 2017 (before being cut short to 2015 by the incoming Coalition Government in 2013) (Macklin and O'Connor, 2008c; 2008d; Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a; 2011; 2012; Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet [PM&C], 2015b). From July 2009 onwards, 'grandfathered' CDEP wages were only available to CDEP participants who had joined prior to July 2009 (Macklin and O'Connor, 2008c; Commonwealth of Australia, 2009b). CDEP participation was still available to new participants after 2009, but only in exchange for income support payments, not (more financially rewarding) CDEP wages (Jordan, 2012: 34,38-9; Altman and Gray, 2000: vi; Hunter and Gray, 2012: 11). Sanders points out "new CDEP participants were … no longer seen as employed, which was the central idea of the scheme" (2012: 23).

In the place of the CDEP scheme (and Job Services Australia, Disability Employment Services and the Indigenous Employment Program) – and in order to get rid of the CDEP scheme (Fowkes, 2015: 1) – the Labor Government, led by Prime Minister Julia Gillard, introduced the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) in 2013. This new initiative was applied across remote Australia to unemployed 18 to 49 year olds, of whom around 85 per cent are Indigenous (Fowkes and Sanders, 2015: 2). Previous CDEP employees (who had unsurprisingly not transitioned to 'real' work [Jordan, 2016b]) were brought into this program, but a much larger proportion of the community were caught up in the program than had previously been involved in the CDEP scheme (Fowkes, 2016: 8; National Welfare Rights Network, 2014).

Starting July 2013, participants were required to meet obligations as job seekers including making appointments and attempting to gain employment, as well as perform 16-20 hours of (somewhat flexible) activities (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2012; Fowkes, 2015: 2). All of this was made possible by the removal of Remote Area Activity Exemptions, which was finalised after the Howard Government left office. Difficulty accessing funding and finding sufficient activities, along with high caseloads, demanding IT administrative requirements, and the program's onerous compliance-focused approach, placed substantial obstacles in the way of Providers, resulting in participant disillusionment and disconnection (Fowkes and Sanders, 2015: 12-15,17-18,21-22; 2016; Fowkes, 2015: 4-7; Jobs Australia, 2015: 17; Altman, 2015b).

The shortfalls of this program have been magnified by changes since the Coalition Government led by Tony Abbott took the reins after the September 2013 election, only three months after the RJCP had started. The name of the program changed to the Community Development Programme (CDP), which sounds a lot like CDEP, but that is where the resemblance ends. As Janet Hunt says of the CDP, "there is almost nothing reflecting community development values, principles or practice underpinning it" (2017: 1). The CDP commenced July 2015, effectively transferring a rigid and extreme version of the Work for the Dole program, with stricter compliance measures, to remote Australia. The number of activity hours that participants needed to perform jumped to 25 hours, spread over five days, all year round (with some leave allowances) (Scullion, 2014; 2015b). This is a much larger requirement than that asked of the unemployed in non-remote areas (McQuire, 2014; Jobs Australia, 2015: 12; Fowkes and Sanders, 2016: 7; Fowkes, 2017a: 9).

The expectation that Providers find an extra 10 hours purposeful work, with negligible resources, without exhausting the demand for labour in the area, was

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widely received as unrealistic (Jabour, 2014; James, 2015; Jobs Australia, 2015; Altman, 2015b; Fowkes, 2015: 3; Haughton, 2016: 18). Troublingly, with the increase in mandatory hours in exchange for the same level of income support, the amount received per hour worked dropped significantly below the minimum wage (Jabour, 2014; Fowkes, 2016: 7; Jobs Australia, 2015: 12). A dismayed Northern Territory based community legal centre employee reflects "this is not giving a person an accurate reflection of a real job – it's a distortion and will put people off work" (National Welfare Rights Network, 2014).

Externally driven, the activity requirements are limited, unspecialised and out of step with community and cultural objectives – described by one respondent as "rubbish work" (in Fowkes, 2017a: 6-8; Kral, 2016: 23). Inge Kral observes "pessimism is spreading as people witness the dissipation of localised control and capacity building that have been carefully built up during the past 40 years" (2016: 23). A further change has meant that training – as a long-term skill investment – is no longer counted as an eligible activity and is only supported where it specifically relates to available employment (PM&C, 2015a; 2015b; Fowkes, 2015: 3; Jobs Australia, 2015: 15). Funds for training are now very limited and the $237 million Community Development Fund that had been attached to the RJCP has been closed (with a $25 million small business fund set up in its place) (Fowkes, 2015: 3; 2017a: 2; Scullion, 2014).

Changes have also been made to the structure of funding. Provider payments are now tied to jobseeker participation in Work for the Dole activities, and to the reporting of non-compliance (Jobs Australia, 2015: 15; 2016: 6; Fowkes, 2015: 3). Providers are financially discouraged from "allowing absences", from recommending that jobseekers are not capable of meeting the Work for the Dole requirements, from referring them to other services (unless uptake of those services match Work for the Dole requirements), and from encouraging participants to take leave (Fowkes and Sanders, 2016: 13; Fowkes, 2016: 10-11; 2017: 8). Rates of non-compliance and financial penalties, as well as outright

disengagement, are staggeringly high and rising, further impoverishing Aboriginal individuals and families already struggling to survive on income support (Kral, 2016: 21-23; Fowkes, 2016: 5; 2017a: 3-4; 2017b; Klein, 2017).

The unusually high rate of penalties incurred has been linked to these funding pressures on Providers, as well as the increasingly hard to meet conditions of what is basic income support, the inadequacy of measures assessing impediments to compliance in remote areas (such as disability, mental illness, and household violence), and an acute sense of the unreasonableness of the CDP (Fowkes, 2016: 4-6; 2017a: 9-10; Fowkes and Sanders, 2016; Jobs Australia, 2015: 12-15,21; Kral, 2016: 20-21). In Lisa Fowkes' words,

> [i]ssues of the harshness and rigidity of overall requirements, efficacy of protections for vulnerability and perceived value and legitimacy of the program itself appear to be driving increases in penalties (2016: 6).

There are indications[41] that the current Coalition Government, led by Malcolm Turnbull, intends to further extend the authority and powers of Providers to enact penalties (more immediately and with less checks and balances), and of the Minister to determine the requirements of 'remote income support recipients' (a newly created category) without going through the legislature (Jobs Australia, 2016: 7,9; Haughton, 2016: 3-4,12-13; Jordan, 2016a: 1; Fowkes, 2016: 9-12). In the words of an Aboriginal man from the Kimberley asked by

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[41] Legislation entailing such extensions of power – the Social Security Legislative Amendment (Community Development Program) Bill 2015 [Cth] – was introduced to Parliament in December 2015 but lapsed with the Double Dissolution of the Upper and Lower House on May 9th 2016. The re-elected Coalition Government's Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion has since voiced his Government's "broad" ongoing commitment to the Bill (in Senate, 2017: 35) and in May announced his Government would be developing a new "employment and participation model for remote Australia" (Scullion, 2017). Fowkes (2017c: 1-3) has noted that the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Welfare Reform) Bill 2017 [Cth], which entered Parliament in June 2017, includes a clause that would itself effectively enable the Government to change the way Social Security legislation applies to CDP participants without going through the Legislature.

Fowkes about the successive changes, "[t]hese laws are tightening the rope around people's necks" (in Fowkes, 2015: 7).

The problem to be solved, through the removal and replacement of the CDEP scheme, has continued to be presented as welfare dependency by these successive Labor and Coalition Governments. Aboriginal welfare dependency has remained a cogent concept. Both the Labor Rudd/Gillard Government, and to a greater degree the Coalition Abbott/Turnbull Government, have worried about Aboriginal work ethic (Australian Government, 2008: 5; Scullion, 2015a), Indigenous responsibility (Arbib, Evans and Macklin, 2011; Gillard, 2011; 2012; Abbott, 2015; Shanahan, 2013), and the effects of welfare – described respectively as corrosive by Gillard (ABC, 2011) and poison by Abbott (ABC, 2015). The Rudd/Gillard Government snuffed out the CDEP scheme to "remove disincentives for people to study, train, or take up other work outside CDEP" and to avoid entrenching welfare dependency (Macklin and O'Connor, 2008b; Australian Government, 2008: 5,11; 2010). The Abbott/Turnbull Government presented the CDP as working towards "breaking the cycle of welfare dependency in remote Australia" (PM&C, 2015c; 2017). The CDP was developed in accordance with recommendations made in mining magnate Andrew Forrest's review – *Creating Parity* (the Forrest Review) – which linked Indigenous disadvantage with Aboriginal welfare dependency, poor choices, and the CDEP scheme (Scullion, 2014; 2015c; Forrest, 2014). Welfare usage has continued to be framed as interfering with employment, and CDEP employment has continued to be framed as a form of welfare. The solution has been to instate an unappealing version of the CDEP scheme. This way of thinking has followed a path paved by the Howard Government (many of whose members also make up the Abbott/Turnbull Government). Tony Abbott, longstanding Employment Minister within the Howard Government, himself has commented that before Howard and his rejection of the "noble innocent" (2008a) approach to Indigenous policy, "the reversal of welfarism in remote Aboriginal townships ... would have been considered political suicide" (2008b).

With the CDEP scheme went an imperfect but effective and creative program which travelled a considerable distance towards addressing some of the major impediments to Aboriginal economic fulfilment identified in this thesis. The CDEP scheme offered voluntary, community designed, award wage part-time employment, with extra hours available, delivered through community organisations, whose authority, governance and representative abilities were strengthened as a result. Community development and empowerment were demonstrated achievements of the CDEP scheme (Rowse, 2001: 13,19,72-74,230,231; Arthur, 2002; Foyster, 2011; Altman and Sanders, 2008: 3; Jordan and Altman, 2016: 3-6). These achievements flowed from the involvement of community in decision-making and in the running of the program, from the rewarding projects this involvement often generated, and from the social and political (as well as physical) infrastructure it built.

Along with noteworthy economic and employment outcomes (significantly higher income than income support, enterprise development, non-CDEP employment, and the employment that the CDEP scheme provided), social outcomes were a distinctive and unmistakeable feature of the program (Altman et al, 2005: 10-18; Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, 2011; Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory, 2012; Spicer, 1997; Morphy and Sanders, 2001; Sanders, 2004: 6; 2008; Misko, 2004; Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, 2005). The presence of the CDEP scheme had been associated with increased pride, self-esteem, self-reliance, autonomy, resilience, and social cohesion, as well as more tangible outcomes such as reductions in drug abuse and crime rates (ATSIC, 1997b; 1999b: 56; Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory, 2015; Hunter and Gray, 2012: 16,17; Mooney, 2006; Spicer, 1997: 114-123; Fuller and Howard, 2000).

Positive social outcomes went hand in hand with the other vitally important aspect of the CDEP scheme – that is, its cultural benefits. The CDEP scheme

enabled participants to practice culture; through being flexible enough to allow participants to perform cultural work and meet cultural obligations, and through allowing communities to incorporate customary cultural work into CDEP employment (Hunter and Gray, 2012: 8,10,15,16; Morphy, 2008: 3; Altman et al, 2005: 15-18; Altman and Sanders, 2008: 3; Spicer, 1997; ATSI Social Justice Commissioner, 2002: 48). The scheme showed itself to be highly compatible with cultural (and cultural economy) needs and values. The support and validation that the CDEP scheme gave to culturally distinct forms of work, through the inclusion of productive customary work into CDEP activities, was particularly significant. Rowse praises the scheme, as

> an infringement on the privilege of private investors to define the conditions of material well-being through the market-place. CDEP does more than compensate for the market's failure to provide jobs where Indigenous people live, it also throws into question the power of the market to define the nature and intensity of work (2001: 44).

In this thesis I bring centre stage a number of issues relating to Aboriginal wellbeing and welfare use that stood outside the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. All of these were helped to some extent by the existence of the CDEP scheme. I argue for attention to be given to the damage done to all aspects of Indigenous life as a result of Australia's colonisation, not just to economic security. I stress the bigger picture objectives of political autonomy and authority, empowered governance structures, resource access and management, rights restoration, social justice, psychological healing, and cultural maintenance; all objectives which the CDEP scheme made progress towards. Responding to the Howard Government's narrowly conceived problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, I look specifically at Aboriginal unemployment – recast as indicative of poverty and absence of meaningful activity rather than welfare dependency. Just looking at Aboriginal poverty and lack of meaningful activity, I point out a number of key contributing factors omitted from the Howard Government's account, all linked to the overarching structure of colonialism, and all showing improvement thanks to the availability of the CDEP scheme. I argue for consideration of the

enormous impact on contemporary Aboriginal economic engagement of the widespread relegation of Aboriginal people to the fringes of the introduced economy, further compounded by the inadequacy of efforts made by recent Governments to redress this exploitation, disregard and neglect. The CDEP scheme can be seen as having attempted to ameliorate this common experience of economic marginalisation, constructively targeting the mutually reinforcing goals of individual, community, and economic development and transforming communities in the process. The CDEP scheme also worked around the final issue which I air in this thesis. Directly and indirectly sustaining cultural economies, priorities and practices (and the interplay between them), the CDEP scheme accommodated Aboriginal cultural difference. The same cannot be said for the CDP program, and certainly not for the mainstream economy. As Walter writes, "rational economic man" is "not open to Indigenization" (2010: 123).

Together with Altman, I stress that what is required of Australia, is the provision of opportunity for Aboriginal people

> to negotiate and shape the diverse forms of development to which they aspire, to enjoy choice of economic form to match the diversity and difference of Aboriginal values and norms (2010: 279).

Altman promotes the development of what he terms the hybrid economy; a multi-sectored economy in which the Indigenous customary sector, the market sector, and the state sponsored sector overlap and interact (2005: 124-125). Via a community based and bottom-up approach, in line with local aspirations, Altman argues for the cultivation of the hybrid economy across Australia (2005: 131; 2006: 6; 2010: 277-279). He reasons that the model is applicable "in any situation where there is a complex triangulated relationship between Indigenous Australians, the market, and the state, plurality of values and some form of Indigenous leverage" (Altman, 2010: 277).

Frances Morphy echoes Altman's enthusiasm for the hybrid economic model, referencing the Aboriginal arts industry and the Parks Rangers program as shining examples of what is possible when Indigenous people are able to

"combine a way of life that maintains what they hold to be most important ... with income-generating enterprises" (2008: 6). The CDEP scheme played a pivotal role in sustaining the ranger program and the Aboriginal arts industry. It existed as a manifestation of the hybrid economy; a "midpoint" between the three sectors (Altman, 2015a: 12). The CDEP scheme was by no means the answer to the predicament faced by Aboriginal people, produced in various ways by the live, and long-living, nature of colonialism in Australia. However it had many valuable and positive elements that helped mitigate this legacy. The collapsing of the CDEP scheme was a severe blow (Foyster, 2011; ABC, 2007d; Graham, 2012). The scheme was removed because its non-market outcomes were overlooked. Through the neoliberal lens through which it was viewed, "CDEP failed no matter that it preserved and enhanced local lives" – and livelihoods (Povinelli, 2010: 22). The Howard Government's construction of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency made all the difference.

Appreciating the significance of how things are represented, this thesis has been devoted to understanding, unpacking and engaging with the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency. This process has been guided by Postcolonial theory, key aspects of Postmodernism and Poststructuralism, and Bacchi's *'What's the problem represented to be?'* approach. Critical analysis of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency has been carried out through studying its basis, its baggage, its omissions and its effects, seen in the context of Australia's ongoing colonial status. The conceptual underpinnings of this problem representation translated to a prioritisation of Aboriginal employment in the private sector and a concentration on Aboriginal welfare use – portrayed as welfare abuse, for which Indigenous individuals and society were responsible. The limited view of the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency narrowed attention to correcting the economic behaviour of Aboriginal subjects read as under-performing and under-conforming. The injustice and ongoing injury of

colonialism were decisively moved off the political radar and agenda. Absent was the historical restrictions on Indigenous mainstream economic participation and the contemporary structural impediments that persist. There was no recognition of the impact of the rigid economic mould that Aboriginal people have been required to fit, regardless of what costs this may involve or whatever aspirations Aboriginal people may have "to go their own way" (Stanner, 1958 in Beckett, 2010: 37). Policy options were not explored that factored in the continuing relevance of Australia's colonisation, to Aboriginal economic as well as general prosperity. Policy options already in place that did factor this in were dismantled. The combined effect has been to the great detriment of the Indigenous policy that the Howard Government created, the Indigenous policy of following governments that it influenced, and ultimately the process of decolonisation in Australia.

To close, I would like to juxtapose and contrast a quote from the onset of colonialism in Australia, with three statements from Aboriginal interlocutors in more recent times. The first quote is from an address given by Governor George Gawler in 1838 to a group of local Kaurna people in Adelaide, which was translated into the Kaurna language. The second quote is from John Mawurndjul, a senior Kuninjku man living between Maningrida in the Northern Territory and his homelands, whose thoughts on the good life have been relayed by Altman. The third quote is from an Aboriginal respondent interviewed by Subhabrata Banerjee and Deirdre Tedmanson as part of a research project looking into the barriers blocking Indigenous economic development in Central and Northern Australia. The final quote is from an Aboriginal man living in Bourke, New South Wales, whose comments were included in a paper by Gillian Cowlishaw. The quote from Governor George highlights the connection between the early Australian colonial mentality and the Howard Government's representation of the problem of Aboriginal welfare dependency, in its cultural arrogance and in its dismissal of the obstacles to its proposed solution. The remaining quotes emphasise what this representation misses.

Governor George Gawler:

> Black men! We wish to make you happy. But you cannot be happy unless you imitate good white men. Build huts, wear clothes, work and be useful (1838, in Blacket, 1907: 111).

John Mawurndjul:

> Being able to go to your country and being able to live here too, that's the good life. Sometimes going bush, sometimes living here. The main thing is to have enough food. When you have enough food to eat, that's good. I don't change my thinking, and I think about my grandparents and their country. What makes me happy is when I go back to my home out bush and I can go out hunting and I can live like the old people from olden times. That makes me happy, when I'm in my camp. I can paint, I can drink tea and walk around my camp and the sun goes down. Good, happy. ....When people are themselves, free to be Bininj [Aboriginal] they are happy happy! (in Altman, 2015c).

Aboriginal respondent quoted by Banerjee and Tedmanson:

> It's like some bastard standing over you while you're lying on the ground, saying 'come on, what's wrong with you, get up off the ground, stand on your own two feet'—while he's got his foot on your throat holding you there (in Banerjee and Tedmanson, 2010: 162).

Aboriginal respondent quoted by Cowlishaw:

> They're the ones that's got the problem, 'cause they're trying to change us to fit into their society. Where this country belongs to us, they should be fitting in with us. That's the full story of it. We can't be like the White man, but if they come and try and be like us, then we'd be the winner (in Cowlishaw, 2006: 434).

Following on from this last quote, I would suggest that is worth considering a political and policy imaginary in which we would all be winners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. This thesis is intended as one contribution towards that imaginary.

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