

Genocide in Colonial Queensland, Australia,
a Prelude to 'Conspiracy of Silence,
Queensland's frontier killing times' (Allen & Unwin, 2013)

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It is the fashion usually, to speak of these poor people as “aborigines:” the idea meant to be conveyed being that they are a relic, so to speak, of the past, intruders in the path of the white man, and to be improved from the face of the earth accordingly. The argument seems to be, that God never intended them to live long in the land in which He had placed them. Therefore, says the white man, in his superiority of strength and knowledge, away with them, disperse them, shoot and poison them, until there be none remaining; we will utterly destroy them, their wives and their little ones, and all that they have, and we will go in and possess the land.

This is no rhapsody or overstatement, but represents, in words, the actual policy which has been pursued towards the natives of the Australian colonies, and which is being acted upon vigorously in Queensland to-day.

George Carrington *Colonial Adventures and Experiences by a University man*, Bell and Daldy, London, 1871, p.143.

The Queensland frontier had been expanding for 40 years when George Carrington wrote about the treatment of Aboriginal people and it was to last another 40 odd years after his publication in 1871. He was not alone in recognising the mistreatment of Aborigines, nor was his almost ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ approach to ‘teaching the Blacks a lesson’ unusual, for he too had been involved in frontier violence.¹ This apparent contradiction is prevalent in other works and suggests that initially certain frontiersmen (but not all) adopted the violent response, but then the continuing nature of this brutality infringed upon their conscience and caused them to acknowledge the events and decry them.²

¹ Despite Carrington’s concern for Aborigines and reporting of massacres, he, like others, was not beyond killing Aborigines. He tells how, while shepherding he was warned by his dog, he fired into the long grass near to where he had been resting. He ‘fired right into the middle of it, and immediately afterwards a black form bounded into the air and fell...He was not dead...the bullet had passed through him just above the hips, so I shot him through the head.’ G Carrington, *Colonial Adventures*, Bell and Dalby, London, 1871, p.163.

² Robert Ørsted-Jensen examines this aspect in *Frontier History Revisited* at luxmundipub@hotmail.com and forthcoming publication *The Right to Live*.

Thus it appears that there are two distinct patterns of censorship and disclosure throughout the period of colonial Queensland (from 1859). Initially, while the killing was proceeding, perpetrators were trying to shut down the debate and conceal evidence, and whistleblowers – who are far fewer on the ground but often quite determined, despite community censure – were continually trying to open it up. A see-saw interpretive struggle was going on with the State very determinedly on the side of suppression of information. In fact members of the Executive and wealthy land-owners are largely orchestrating it: while elements of the liberal press are trying ‘to get at the truth’, as good journalists should. Later, with the frontier winding down and closing around the 1890s and Federation, however, the denialism becomes far more hegemonic, pervading education, literature, media, religion and politics.³ In short, a new total paradigm of ‘good and peaceful Australia’ was being rapidly forged to shore up a new nationalism. The opposition to this paradigm becomes extremely muted and marginalised. The original smaller conspiracy in effect keeps getting bigger and bigger.⁴

This attitude initially might seem quite perverse, but is quite within the parameters of one of the national Australian traits. Up to the 1970s an unerring silence regarding the convict era and Aborigines pervaded Australia’s understanding of its past. It was only in the 1980s that a popular change in attitude regarding Australia’s convict heritage began with the lead-up to the Bicentenary (1988). What had, for over 150 years been hidden, ‘swept under the carpet’, was starting to be claimed by convict descendants. Australians began to not only acknowledge a convict ancestor, but also to be proud of it; so much so, that at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, some 30 years on, one might be forgiven for thinking that it had ever been considered a ‘birthstain’. Nevertheless, the psychological ramifications remain on the national psyche. Just as previous generations had selective amnesia in relation to the convict era, so too has this approach been applied to violence on the frontier, and the treatment of Aboriginal Australians as it continually moved north and inland in Queensland for over 80 years. Ross Johnston in his 1982 volume, *The Call of the Land – A History of Queensland to the Present Day*, observed:

...with misunderstanding on both sides, and with determination and conviction on the part of the Europeans that the land was theirs for the taking, it was inevitable

³ See T Taylor, *Denialism: History Betrayed*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2008.

⁴ See R Evans, ‘Done and Dusted’, ‘Hidden Queensland’ in *Griffith Review*, Spring 2008, pp.185-198; also R Evans, ‘The country has another past: Queensland and the History Wars’, in F Peters-Little, A Curthoys and J Docker (eds), *Passionate Histories*, ANU E-Press & Aboriginal History Incorporated, Monograph 21, 2010, epress.anu.edu.au/passionate_histories.

that conditions would deteriorate on the frontier, virtually to a situation of a war. But it was a moving frontier as new regions were being opened up, so that, while a more established region would settle down to peace, the frontier, moving further north or inland, would set the scene for a further bout of fighting and killings.⁵

Other researchers have also confirmed this for Queensland, which 'inherited the harsh racist attitudes which had developed on the expanding frontiers during the 1820s and 1830s.'⁶

Although we do have quantitative evidence of killings, we do not have definitive evidence of the whole picture quantitatively. For, as the squatters expanded their 'land-grab' and the frontier continued to move, it becomes extremely difficult to identify numbers. This is particularly the case in the area inland, west of the area between Rockhampton and Townsville. Here only archaeological evidence today hints at the large numbers of people who lived in the region, and where very few live today. This was not because there were not any killings, but because the conspiracy of silence was in play. Tony Roberts' research has identified that many of the squatters in the Gulf and the Northern Territory border region came from the central Queensland area. Some 140 years later, only half a dozen Aboriginal families in Central Queensland lay claim to these their traditional lands.

The internationally-based organisation Genocide Watch, has identified eight stages of genocide. All of these stages can be found in the history of the Australian colonies, and in particular Queensland (see Table 1.1). Tony Taylor from Monash University has defined genocide as:

...about intent; it is about proportion but not necessarily numbers; it is retrospectively applicable. This definition separates genocide from such terms as massacre (general slaughter), mass murder (killing of many individuals), ethnic cleansing (forced expulsion, usually involving brutality and murder) and Holocaust

⁵ W R Johnston, *The Call of the Land – A History of Queensland to the Present Day*, Jacaranda Press, Milton, 1982, p.40.

⁶ A. McGrath (ed), *Contested Ground*, Allen & Unwin, St.Leonards, 1995, p.170; also see H. Reynolds (ed), *Race Relations in North Queensland*, Dept. of History & Politics, JCU, Townsville, 1993 and R. Evans, K. Saunders & K. Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland, A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination*, University of Queensland Press (UQP), St.Lucia, 1993; Although it must be remembered that other Australian colonies behaved in an equally questionable manner, see McGrath; also for a regional study of Gippsland, D. Watson, *Caledonia Australis - Scottish Highlanders on the frontier of Australia*, Vintage, Milsons Point, 1997; See also M. Cannon, *Who Killed the Koories?*, 1990 [for Victoria] and H. Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1995, & L Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, Allen & Unwin, 1996.

(a specific historical event, despite attempts to gain ownership of the proper noun by non-Jewish survivor groups).⁷

Put simply, genocide is ‘the criminal intent to destroy or cripple permanently a human group’,⁸ and as Larissa Behrendt, an Aboriginal scholar has observed: ‘the political posturing and semantic debates do nothing to dispel the feeling Indigenous people have that this is the word that adequately describes our experience as colonized people.’⁹

Table 1.1 Simplified Genocide Watch 8 Stages: an Australian Version

1. Classification	Categories that distinguish people as ‘us and them’ – ‘Great Chain of Being’ then in 19 th century Polygenism (where it was theorised that each ‘race’ of people are descended from more than one ancestral species; this approach links into Dehumanisation).
2. Symbolisation	Identifying classified groups by names or symbols (‘Gins’, ‘niggers’ & ‘piccaninnies’)
3. Dehumanisation	One group denies the humanity of the other group.
4. Organisation	State organised military or para-military units to kill other identified group. Logistical supplies (ammunition, horses etc), and can involve civilian participants (Native Police & settler revenge posses).
5. Polarisation	Extremists drive groups apart, that is ‘keeping-out’. Targetting of whistle-blowers and moderates, intimidating and silencing them.
6. Preparation (& Identification)	Identified ethnic group separated and their property expropriated (Land). Then bureaucratically planned supply of Native Police units for ‘dispersal’, & later segregation into ghettos or concentration camps (reserves & missions).
7. Extermination	Institutionalized pacification: multiple mass killings of identified ethnic group with intention of eliminating them.
8. Denial	Perpetrators instigate mass burial, burning of bodies, cover up evidence and intimidate witnesses at the time of the killing, and the period following, up to the present day creating an artificial ‘peaceful’ settlement of Australia myth.

Australian version distilled from 8 Stages identified by www.genocidewatch.org

NB: These aspects can occur at the same time and not necessarily in the above order.

⁷ T Taylor, *Denial: History Betrayed*, Melbourne University Press (MUP), Carlton, 2008, p.xix.

⁸ Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, Washington, 1944, p.80, cited in A.Dirk Moses, *Genocide and Settler Society in Australian History*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004, p.21.

⁹ L Behrendt, ‘Genocide: The Distance Between Law and Life’, in *Aboriginal History*, (25) 2001, p.132.

The eight suggested aspects¹⁰ that can lead to genocide explain evocatively the process that evolved, beginning in New South Wales and Van Diemens Land (Tasmania) and extended as the European frontier expanded to different parts of the continent. However, in Australia these aspects are not linear nor in any sequence as they happened simultaneously and fed off each other, that is, 'all stages continued throughout the process.'

The first aspect of genocide is *Classification* where 'All cultures have categories to distinguish people into "us and them" by ethnicity, race, religion or nationality', and can be seen in the Australian context where British settlers, because of European technological developments, considered themselves at the apex of human evolution. Obviously, the mindset of colonial Queenslanders was influenced by ideas and concepts developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Great Chain of Being was one such concept, which 'ranked all organic matter in hierarchical order, from the lowest to the highest. When it came to mankind, Europeans were ranked pre-eminent.'¹¹ Aboriginal Australians scraped in on the lowest human rung on this hierarchy. The Great Chain of Being is about *all* creation not just humanity. This was replaced by the new sciences from the eighteenth century in the form of polygenism which saw 'the descent of a [*Homo sapien*] species or race from more than one ancestral species.'¹² Historian, Raymond Evans, notes what a profound effect this functional theory had on Queensland:

For its key effect, in suggesting that white genealogies proceed from a different act of creation to that of non-whites, when translated into social interaction, was to provide 'a rationale for treating some human groups like animals of another species'. Its British, European and American heyday covers the time-span from the 1830s to the 1850s, the period when, in the Queensland region, a convict

¹⁰ www.genocidewatch.org/aboutgenocide/8stages.htm The Australian spelling has been adopted for discussing the eight stages in the Australian context. Definitions for each stage discussed come from this website. See also: S K Baum, *The Psychology of Genocide: Perpetrators, Bystanders, and Rescuers*, Cambridge University Press (CUP), New York, 2008; A Dirk Moses (ed), *Genocide and Settler Society, Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2007; J Semelin, *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007; Taylor, *Denial*, MUP Carlton, 2008.

¹¹ T. Gurry, *The European Occupation*, Heinemann Educational Australia, Richmond, 1984, p.68 - 9; P. Grimshaw, M. Lake, A. Mcgrath & M. Qartly, *Creating A Nation*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1996, pp.79-80; See also R. McGregor, *Imagined Destinies, Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880 - 1939*, MUP, Carlton South, 1997, pp.1 - 8.

¹² *The Concise Macquarie Dictionary*, Doubleday, Lane Cove, 1982.

frontier was ceding to a pastoral one. Of course, polygenism provided a powerful rationale for treating blacks both as vermin and as chattel labour, and for warning against European sexual intermixture and especially inter-marriage with Aborigines, Melanesians or Chinese. But its functional role, in popular or folk racism, extended in Queensland society well into the twentieth century.¹³

The development of the European 'science' of phrenology, which was 'the theory that one's mental powers are indicated by the shape of the skull',¹⁴ played a prominent role 'in fostering the notions that Aboriginal mental powers were limited and their prospects for improvement slight.'¹⁵ This nineteenth century racial thought became a material force in a colony like Queensland which was unusually a tropical white settler colony which was dependent on non-white labour.

Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* published in 1859¹⁶ particularly influenced European thought. By the late 1860s and early 1870s Queenslanders were generally aware of his ideas on evolution, and in particular the Spencerian concept of 'the strong exterminating the weak'.¹⁷ Colonial frontiersmen (but not all) used this aspect to justify the fate of indigenous Australians. The 'doomed race' theory appears to have grown out of a mixture of these racial 'scientific' theories, and 'was a manifestation of ultimate pessimism in Aboriginal abilities.'¹⁸ So much so, that 'regarding the law and its duty towards Aborigines', a prominent colonial lawyer and parliamentarian in 1883 wrote that Aborigines were 'in the same position as those lower animals in whose behalf the law in certain circumstances thinks fit to interpose.'¹⁹

¹³ R Evans, 'The Owl and the Eagle' in *Fighting Words: Writing About Race*, UQP, St Lucia, 1999, p.42. 'Philanthopist' wrote a long diatribe in *The Moreton Bay Courier* (Tuesday 29 May 1860, p.2) which in part stated: 'The sensual and animal part of their being is almost entirely in the ascendant; and they seem only to be "at home" whilst revelling in all that is beastly and obscene.' There are many other examples in nineteenth century Queensland newspapers.

¹⁴ *The Concise Macquarie Dictionary*, 1982.

¹⁵ R. McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, 1997, p.8

¹⁶ C. Darwin, "The Origin of Species - By Means of Natural Selection" in R.M. Hutchins (ed) *Great Books of the Western World - Darwin*, Vol.49., Encyclopaedia Britannica, Chicago, 1952. Similar ideas had been in circulation in the western world for at least a century prior to 1859.

¹⁷ 'It was', the English philosopher, Herbert Spencer 'and not Darwin, who coined the phrase "survival of the fittest," though Darwin came to employ the expression in later editions of *Origin of the Species*.' W Sweet, Spencer, Herbert, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/spencer/>, p.2. R Evans, 'The Owl and the Eagle' in *Fighting Words – Writing About Race*, UQP, St. Lucia, 1999, p.41.

¹⁸ McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, p.18. Nearly 60 years later, the editor of the Cairns newspaper *Northern Affairs*, in June 1931, was still referring to the North Queensland Aborigine as "dying out". p.17.

¹⁹ W.E. Hearn, *The Theory of Legal Duties and Rights: An Introduction to Analytical Jurisprudence*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1883, p.60.

The second aspect of Genocide identification involves *Symbolisation*, where names are crudely given to indigenous Australians, demeaning them as Blacks or niggers and other such epithets. This aspect merges somewhat with the third characteristic of *Dehumanisation*, where 'One group denies the humanity of the other group [and] members of it are equated with animals, vermin, insects or diseases. *Dehumanization* overcomes the normal human revulsion against murder.' This aspect was highlighted in 1875 by part-time journalist and then lawyer (and later judge), Charles Heydon, who was on the ship *Governor Blackall* sent from Sydney to search for the survivors of the wreck *Maria* off the far North Queensland coast near Cardwell. In the *Queensland Votes and Proceedings* he claimed that:

...private persons go out to kill blacks, and call it 'snipe shooting'. Awkward words are always avoided, you will notice 'Shooting a snipe' sounds better than 'murdering a man'. But the blacks were never called men and women and children; 'myalls', and 'niggers', and 'gins', and 'piccaninnies' seem further removed from humanity.²⁰

The fourth facet is where genocide is '*organized*, usually by the state, often using militias to provide deniability of state responsibility...Special army units or militias are often trained and armed.' In this regard the Queensland colonial government *organised* the Native Police which operated from before the colony was established from 1848 to around 1910, an extensive period of 62 years!²¹ Similarly, white revenge posses were privately organised, together with (on occasions) the Native Police, but more generally, independently. Jonathan Richards' research into the operation of this para-military organisation concludes that it: 'operated under the direct control of the colony's most senior administrators – the Executive Council. The governor, in concert with the colonial

²⁰ 'Alleged Outrages Committed on the Aborigines in Queensland by the Native Mounted Police', *Queensland Votes and Proceedings (QV&P)*, Vol 1 1875, p.623. See also *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 February 1874, p.3. Heydon went on to become NSW Attorney General, and later a judge of the Industrial Court (1909). See *ADB Online*.

²¹ There were other earlier military versions of Mounted Police in NSW, but it was the northern NSW, Border Mounted Police who were established in 1848 and operated along the McIntyre River and then the Dawson and Burnett Rivers for 11 years until the new colony of Queensland came into being in December 1859. The new colony incorporated the Native Police into the Queensland Native Police and they were to continue operating for the next 51 years; a total, if one includes their operation under the authority of NSW, of 62 years (1848-1910). There is also a possibility that the force operated on Cape York up until the First World War. Personal communication Jonathan Richards, 27 January 2011. See also J Richards, *The Secret War, A True History of Queensland's Native Police*, St. Lucia, UQP, 2008, pp.8-10.

secretary and other ministers, decided where to deploy the Native Police, who to appoint and which officers to dismiss.²²

The Executive Council knew what was happening and they endorsed it. One only has to read the Parliamentary Debates in 1861, along with the Select Committee on the Native Police Force of the same year to see this. In particular, as historian Robert Ørsted-Jensen has noted, the interviews conducted on the 16 June 1861, and resulting Select Committee 'paper represents the first government of this state taking full responsibility for the force.'²³ The President of the Upper House, Sir M C Connell, who to his credit opposed the Native Police, responded to questioning from the Select Committee:

I think that, if the Native Police are left to pursue a wholesale system of extermination, and keep the blacks from all contact with the whites, that you may protect the lives of the white population, but at a great sacrifice – and I believe an unjust sacrifice – of the lives of the aborigines.²⁴

It was openly acknowledged during this parliamentary 'investigation' that the term 'dispersing' meant 'shooting to kill'.²⁵ The Committee was also made aware of Lt. Bligh's dispersal in the streets of Maryborough and his personal execution of one Black standing up in a boat in the Mary River, as well as Lt. Wheeler's killing spree of a group of middle aged to old men at Logan and Fassifern (Dugandan Scrub). Also young Morriset's killing of at least ten Aborigines near *Manumbar* station in the Burnett were all thoroughly described. As Ørsted-Jensen has observed:

None of these dispersals was in response to killing of whites, and there were no documented killing of livestock in either case.

They knew alright and the Select Committee of 1861 represents the takeover of responsibility and the manner in which it was conducted was virtually a Government licence to the Native Police to kill at their own discretion (discretion was the word used and it simply meant – make sure you are not caught red-handed)!²⁶

The fifth phase is *Polarisation*, where 'Extremists drive the groups apart... [and] hate groups broadcast polarizing propaganda. [While] laws may forbid intermarriage or social

²² Richards, *The Secret War*, 2008, p.216.

²³ Personal communication with Robert Ørsted-Jensen, email 24 March 2011.

²⁴ *QV&P* Vol.1, 1861, p.83, questions (33-35) and response.

²⁵ *QV&P* Vol.1, 1861, p.17, Q35 and p.99, Q53-54.

²⁶ Personal communication with Robert Ørsted-Jensen, email 24 March 2011. See *Frontier History Revisited* at luxmundipub@hotmail.com and forthcoming publication *The Right to Live*.

interaction' and moderates are intimidated and silenced. This aspect in Queensland did not have the drastic result for moderates of being arrested and killed, but did entail responses to newspaper reports attempting to refute allegations of wholesale slaughter. Nevertheless, ostracism and intimidation appear to have been far more prevalent in the small white population of Queensland. The arrogant authoritarian nature of the men in power also enabled them to ignore and dismiss these allegations. Whistle-blowers were often entirely sidelined and forced out of the colony.²⁷ For example, the death of Alfred Davidson, who campaigned from 1861 to 1881 by identifying the brutal treatment of Aboriginal Queenslanders and opposing the importation of South Sea Islander labour trade, was ignored by the Brisbane *Courier*. There was no obituary for him, even though he had been involved in public life for decades as (and probably because he was) the local representative of the London-based Aborigines Protection Society.²⁸

Similarly, the Reverend Duncan McNab who lobbied both the Papacy in Rome, and the Colonial Office in London regarding the treatment of Aboriginal Australians, failed in his attempts to seek justice and died in relative obscurity in Melbourne. There was also Arthur James Vogan who had travelled widely around Queensland as a correspondent for the *Illustrated London News*. He found that after publishing *The Black Police* in 1890, which was a thorough indictment of the Native Police, that his public life was ruined. This he acknowledged on several occasions when asking for help to find a position outside Australia, from the Aborigines Protection Society:

My book 'Black Police' has virtually closed my newspaper life in Australia, I wrote upon the unpleasant subject, out of a sense of duty owed to my fellow countrymen...But it has done me such harm here – this meddling with the pet national sin of Australia that I am forced to seek fresh pastures.²⁹

The sixth aspect is *Preparation*, which in the Queensland context is somewhat in reverse of that identified for the international context. That is, ammunition and firearms, food supplies and horses were arranged, and either Native Police or posses organised to 'patrol'. For example, as Evans has noted: 'In 1870-71, the British War Office approved the sale, for some £5700, of 1000 'Snider rifles ... of the latest pattern' along with bayonets and 500 000 cartridges to the Queensland government, with no questions

²⁷ For a coverage of whistle-blowers, see H Reynolds, *This Whispering In Our Hearts*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1998.

²⁸ Personal communication with Raymond Evans, email 27 February 2011.

²⁹ Vogan to APS, ASS, 18 Dec. 1892, 6.97 cited in Reynolds, *This Whispering In Our Hearts*, 1998, p.137, n.54.

asked.³⁰ This resulted in Aboriginal land being taken, and 'Their property [was]...expropriated...[and] they [were from the 1890s and early 1900s] segregated into ghettos, deported into concentration camps' which the more idealistic termed reserves and missions. The chronic under-funding of these reserves during the twentieth century verged on the criminal.³¹

Then the seventh stage of *Extermination* ensued, which in the Australian context ran parallel with the other identified aspects of genocide. This was when the killers, the officers of the Native Police and in particular settlers, did 'not believe their victims to be fully human [and] When it is sponsored by the state...with the militias to do the killing.' This involved substantial preparation, especially as the State was involved. What then of numbers killed on the Queensland frontier? I cited Raymond Evans' projection for the period 1859 to 1897 where he conservatively concludes that the Native Police were responsible for at least 24,000 Aboriginal deaths.³² However, further research in conjunction with Robert Ørsted-Jensen has led them to an increased conservative projection, including settler's participation, which suggests a minimum of 65,180.³³ Evans and Ørsted-Jensen's cautious approach is convincing and it throws into question the numbers killed across the whole continent in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The curly question here is the use of Aboriginal troopers in the Native Police to do a great deal of the killing. It was understood that the troopers needed to originate a great distance away from where they operated as they then saw their quarry as an enemy. White Sub-Inspectors appear to have kept their troopers in fear of themselves through 'discipline' and flogging,³⁴ and those who tried to escape their detachments were shot or

³⁰ R Evans, *A History of Queensland*, CUP, Melbourne, 2007, p.96.

³¹ See R Evans, 'The Duty We Owe...' *Aborigines and State Control in Queensland, 1915-57*, in Evans, *Fighting Words*, UQP, St. Lucia, 1999; R Kidd, Position Paper, "Profiteering from Poverty: State Policies and Aboriginal Deprivation" in *Queensland Review*, Vol.4, No.1, April 1997, pp.81-86; R Kidd, *The Way We Civilise: Aboriginal Affairs – the untold story*, UQP, St.Lucia, 1997; R Kidd, *Trustees on Trial: Recovering the stolen wages*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2006; R Kidd, *Hard Labour – Stolen Wages, A National Report on Stolen Wages*, ANTaR, 2007, (antar@antar.org.au).

³² R. Evans, 'The country has another past: Queensland and the History Wars', in F Peters-Little, A Curthoys and J Docker (eds), *Passionate Histories*, ANU E-Press & Aboriginal History Incorporated, Monograph 21, 2010 [epress.anu.edu.au/passionate_histories], pp.29-31,

³³ R. Evans & R. Ørsted-Jensen, "I cannot say the numbers that were killed": Assessing Violent Mortality on the Queensland Frontier, 'Conflict in History', Australian Historical Association, UQ, July, 2014, <http://ssm.com/abstract=2467836> p.6.

³⁴ Old Chum gives a detailed account of the operations of the Native Police, and it is apparent he has had close association with the officers of the force. He reports that: 'It is very difficult to manage these boys [the Native troopers]. They must be made to fear you, and [then] they will do anything for you...' *Queenslander*, 27 January 1877, pp.12-13.

'disappeared' which explains to some extent why they participated in the violence. There were examples of troopers warning local people, or deliberately misfiring, and deserting, but there were nevertheless those who were outright killers.³⁵ Further research would help in understanding this aspect, although how many troopers became deranged from their forced involvement in the Native Police may never be answered.

The eighth or last stage is that of *Denial*. That is, silence is denial. It is where:

The perpetrators of genocide...burn the bodies, try to cover up the evidence and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims...[and] They block [or fudge] investigations of the crimes.³⁶

This is what happened in nineteenth century Queensland. The creation of the 'Pioneering Myth' during the 1890s began the blurring of the truth on the frontier, so much so that during the twentieth century the myth about the peaceful settlement of Australia came to be readily accepted. It was historian John Hirst who identified 'The Pioneer Legend' which has come to be called the 'Pioneering Myth'. By calling it this, any confusion with the *Australian Legend* can be avoided, which Hirst acknowledges 'is very different from the one devised by Russel Ward.'³⁷ Hirst's legend or 'Pioneering Myth' celebrates:

...courage, enterprise, hard work, and perseverance; it usually applies to the [white] people who first settled the land, whether as pastoralists or farmers, and not to those employed, although these were never specifically excluded. It is a nationalist legend which deals in an heroic way with the central experience of European settlement in Australia: the taming of the new environment to man's use.³⁸

There is no mention of Aboriginals and their inextricable link to their traditional lands or their violent treatment on the frontier, or their incarceration under authoritarian control on reserves and missions. This control only came to an end with the departure (1986) of the last mandarin director of the Department of Community Services,³⁹ formerly the

³⁵ R Evans, 'A Policy Tending to Extermination' *The Queensland Native Police* (Chapter 4), in Evans, Saunders & Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, UQP, St. Lucia, (1975,1988) 1993, pp.56-59.

³⁶ 8 Stage: www.genocidewatch.org/aboutgenocide/8stages.htm

³⁷ J B Hirst, "The Pioneer Legend", in J. Carroll (ed), *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity*, Oxford University Press (OUP), Melbourne, 1982, p.14.

³⁸ Hirst, *Intruders*, pp.14-15.

³⁹ Patrick Killoran (1964-1986), Cornelius O'Leary (1941-1963), & John W Bleakley (1914-1941).

Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement, and earlier the Department of Native Affairs. It was one of the reasons why Aboriginals today do not like to use the word 'native' – it has connotations of suppression and control that dehumanised them.⁴⁰

The only aspect ignored in genocide patterns is the agency of the targeted group. Aboriginal people fought very hard defensively and on numerous occasions had the incomers on the back foot. There were massacres of whites and occasionally Native Police groups, though these are dwarfed by the hugely violent responses of the dispossessors. This was a very uneven war that in many areas descended into genocide against the unwilling host group.

As historian Tony Taylor succinctly identifies:

A composite picture now begins to emerge of deniers as individuals or groups who, in making false claims, frequently display behaviour and opinions consistent with deep-seated prejudice, including: belief in the wickedness of others, the infallibility of the self and the supremacy of right-minded authority; vindictive attacks on supporters of opposing points of view; obsessive fear, to the point of neuroticism, of attack, while attacking others; stubborn refusal to believe widely accepted rational explanations for past events; defence of their position through actions that, at worst, may include violence, and, at least, may include a vexatious form of litigation; re-emphasis on the strength of their beliefs while rationalising away rebuttals in order to cope with contradictions in their own convictions; and overweening egotism combined with an inability to see themselves as others see them.⁴¹

The conspiracy of silence has continued contemporaneously, sanitised by denying all the independent and corroborated research done by so many.⁴² Anyone reading primary source documents will find a completely different account of our frontier history, as one will also find with Aboriginal and white oral history recollections, for: '...the validity of oral testimony lies in the sheer magnitude and persistence of the 'massacre' narrative in Aboriginal oral tradition relating to country. That such an overwhelming and near-

⁴⁰ In a similar vein, Aboriginal people today tend to refer to themselves as 'Aboriginals' – not Aborigines, which is why I have adopted this approach.

⁴¹ Taylor, *Denial*, 2008, p.xv.

⁴² Over 36 years ago historians began researching and writing about the violence on the Australian frontier. For example: H Reynolds, *Aborigines and Settlers*, 1972; CD Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal People*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1974; R Evans, K Saunders & K Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, UQP, (1975, 1989) 1993; H Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, JCU 1981 (Penguin 1982,1983,1984,1986,1988); AT Yarwood & MJ Knowling, *Race Relations in Australia – A History*, Methuen, North Ryde, 1982.

universal history is some kind of invention defies logic.⁴³ It does indeed, as the 'Pioneering Myth' is a falsehood that casts Australian history as propaganda.

There have been no laurels for Australian historians who have run an intellectual marathon – the 'tall-poppy syndrome' arising from the Convict era has made sure of that. The anti-intellectualism of the same era has also managed to seep its way through to contemporary times, so that the mediocre or worse is tolerated or encouraged, and the integrity of the intellect is disparaged. If we don't bother to inform ourselves and put into action our acknowledgment of our nation having been built on a violent foundation, and allow the 'Pioneering Myth' national-story, whether knowingly or unknowingly, we are propagating the falsehood of a peaceful settlement of the Australian continent.

This form of selective forgetfulness or outright disinformation, amnesia or a conspiracy of silence, still pervades our national character. What is more, it continues to deny Aboriginal Australians their rightful place in the nation's identity. Other countries proudly tout their indigenous people and their cultures, but not so Australia. Why? Could it be that this is the aspect that we as a nation have yet to come to terms with – a stolen land, a decimated people and a series of government systems that autocratically controlled every aspect of Aboriginal life for nearly 90 years,⁴⁴ including stealing wages honestly earned?⁴⁵ It is likely from this sense of shame, guilt and denial (or for that matter, pure ignorance) of what was perpetrated on the colonial frontier that a good part of Australia's 'cultural cringe' emanates. Given this, the other part, not surprisingly seems to come from a sense of cultural inferiority to England. Even in 1890, Archibald Meston was readily acknowledging in the *Queenslander*, that:

⁴³ B Barker, 'Massacre, Frontier Conflict and Australian Archaeology' in *Australian Archaeology*, No.64, June 2007, pp.12-13.

⁴⁴ 1898 to 1986 in the guise of the State Government Department of Native Affairs and its successors. See: R. Kidd. *The Way We Civilise*, St. Lucia, UQP, 1997; R. Kidd, *Hard Labour, Stolen Wages*, ANTaR, 2007, (antar@antar.org.au); T Blake, *A Dumping Ground: A History of the Cherbourg Settlement*, UQP, St. Lucia, 2001; W Thorpe, *Remembering the Forgotten, A History of the Deebing Creek Aboriginal Mission in 1887-1915*, Seaview Press, Henley Beach, 2004; T Bottoms, *Djabugay Country: An Aboriginal History of Tropical North Queensland*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1999 (dealing with Mona Mona Mission); C Halse, *A terribly Wild Man: the Life of the Rev Ernest Gribble*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 2002; P Freier, "'Living with Munpitch' – A History of the Mitchell River Mission," PhD, JCU, Townsville, November 1999, K E Evans, 'Marie Yamba, Bloomfield and Hope Vale: The Lutheran Missions to the North Queensland Aborigines, 1886-1905', *Queensland Heritage*, Vol II, No 6, 1972; D Craig, 'The effect of State policy and Queensland laws on an Aboriginal Reserve: A look at Yarrabah' in *Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies*, No 11, March 1979; J Watson, *Palm Island Through a Long Lens*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2010; and others.

⁴⁵ R Evans & J Scott, 'Fallen Among Thieves' Aboriginal Labour and State Control in Inter-War Queensland', in R Evans, *Fighting Words: Writing About Race*, UQP, St Lucia, 1999; R Kidd, *The Way We Civilise*, UQP, St Lucia, 1997; R Kidd, *Trustees on Trial*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2006; R. Kidd, *Hard Labour, Stolen Wages*, ANTaR, 2007 (antar@antar.org.au).

The records of those unhappy years are unspeakably ghastly in their accounts of murders of white men and slaughter of the blacks. The whites were killed in dozens, the blacks in hundreds. The history of the early blacks can advantageously be consigned to the same speedy and merciful oblivion that ought to hide for ever the convict period of this colony.⁴⁶

This was a man whom a political adversary alleged, had 'on more than one occasion boasted of the number of blacks who had fallen to his rifle.'⁴⁷ How many others experienced this and then realised the horror of the reality, and went on to acknowledge and protest at the continuing slaughter on the moving frontier? From each era there were letters to the newspapers and protests to the government about the massacres or mistreatment of the First Australians.⁴⁸ Their protests were ignored. This aspect of political stone-walling seems to have become a Queensland government trait, regardless of political persuasion.

The generally accepted number for a massacre in other parts of Australia appears to be a tally of five or six,⁴⁹ and I have mapped those clashes that rated this and more Aboriginal deaths and for which there is some form of corroborative evidence. This is a very conservative approach but it demonstrates emphatically via the map which has resulted (see Map 1.1), that large scale killings were numerous. Surely the invaders could have achieved their ends without such a scale of mass killings. The point about my choice is that one cannot argue about the numbers – they are overwhelming, particularly when realised as a diagrammatical delineation. This is not to trivialise the tragic sporadic killings of individuals and small groups, but to give an indication of the veracity of what was at the time referred to as the 'Black Wars' of Queensland which lasted for over 80 years.⁵⁰ The unfortunate aspect about this current coverage is that it can in no way claim to be definitive; there are many more tragic tales to tell than are covered here, elements of which may never be known. While it is imperative to scour the official records, as

⁴⁶ *Queenslander*, 4 October 1890, p.654.

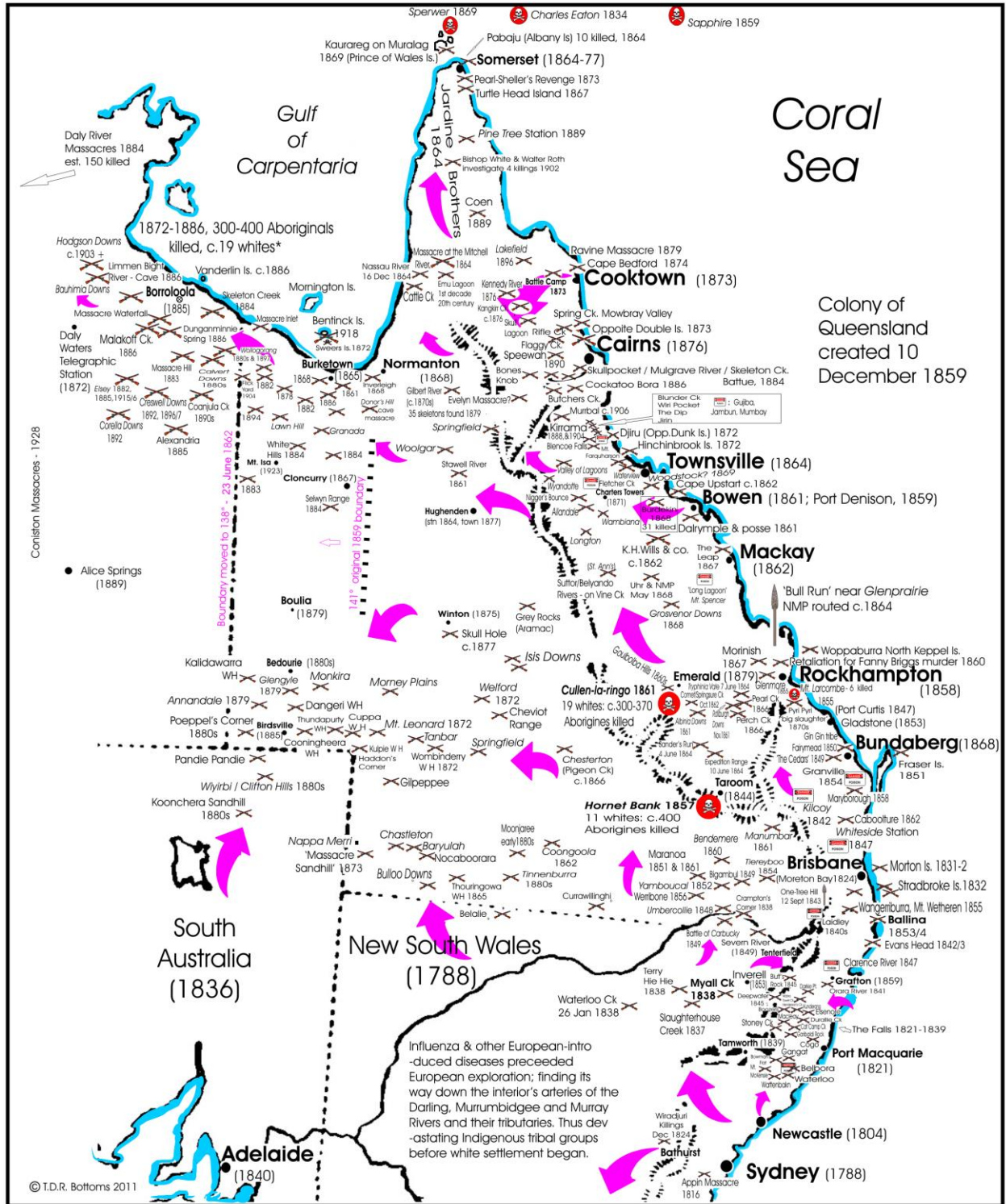
⁴⁷ W. Thorpe, "Archibald Meston and Aboriginal Legislation in Colonial Queensland," in *Historical Studies*, Vol.21, No.82, April 1984, p.62.

⁴⁸ See *Conspiracy of Silence, Queensland killing times*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2013.

⁴⁹ See R Broome, 'The statistics of frontier conflict', in B Attwood & S G Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2003.

⁵⁰ c.1830s to c.1914. See also: A Laurie, 'The Black War in Queensland', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland (JRHSQ)*, Vol.VI, No.1, September 1959.

Some Massacres on the Australian Colonial Frontier



- Massacres of white people (5+)
- Massacres of Aboriginal people (5+)
- Mass killing of Aboriginal people through poisoning
- Taroom (1844) : Year town established

Legend

Map 1.1

- Approximate direction of pastoral expansion
 - See T Roberts, *Frontier Justice*, UQP, 2005.
 - Aboriginal victory in battle
- The approximate limit of the moving frontier can be seen by the grouped location of Native Police Camps. See Jonathan Richards, "A Question of Necessity": The Native Police in Queensland", PhD, Griffith University, 2005, p.351.

Jonathan Richards has done for the Queensland Native Police, one also has to balance these with oral history accounts, letters, diaries, correspondence, folklore and other information gained from other disciplines such as archaeology, anthropology, linguistics and genetics. Winston Churchill corresponded with historian Lewis Namier regarding chapters he had written for his book, *Marlborough, His Life and Times*. He felt that:

One of the most misleading factors in history is the practice of historians to build a story exclusively out of the records which have come down to them. These records are in many cases a very small part of what took place, and to fill in the picture one has to visualize the daily life – the constant discussions between ministers, the friendly dinners, the many days when nothing happened worthy of record, but during which events were nevertheless proceeding.⁵¹

This perspective is particularly pertinent to studying the frontier of nineteenth century Queensland. Unfortunately the official records only tell a fraction of the story, while diaries, private letters and newspaper reports, along with Aboriginal and white oral histories tell a much more fulsome tale. But while many histories and published works written in the nineteenth century do provide a more realistic portrayal of events, they have been glossed over and ignored during the twentieth century.⁵² Nevertheless, even they avoided the true nature of frontier violence. Jonathan Richards has concluded that:

The omission of frontier violence in published histories is inextricably linked to the denial of prior Aboriginal occupancy and ownership of the land. Much of the frontier history written relies too heavily on the works of a small group of men with an interest in perpetrating the stereotyped perceptions ... Many later historians quote their works as if they were accurate accounts based on official records and reliable witnesses. They were not.⁵³

Initially this paper was written as the Introduction to my book *Conspiracy of Silence, Queensland's frontier killing times* (Allen and Unwin, 2013). However, the publishers felt that discussing genocide would turn off potential readers. The difficulties I have experienced over the last 30 years in writing about our Australian indigenous people, particularly the rainforest Bama, demonstrated to me how entrenched the negative view was of our First People. The lack of response to my comprehensive and inclusive

⁵¹ M. Gilbert, *In Search of Churchill*, HarperCollins, London, 1994, p.246.

⁵² For example: W Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*, W Thorne, Brisbane, 1882; A J Vogan, *The Back Police: A Story of Modern Australia*, Hutchinson & Co, London, 1890; *The Way We Civilise; Black and White; The Native Police*, G & J Black (Late W Thorne), Brisbane, 1880; E O Hobkirk, *Queensland historical manuscripts – Vol.2 'Original Reminiscences of South West Queensland'*, NLA MS3460, (1922).

⁵³ J Richards, *The Secret War*, UQP, St. Lucia, 2008, p.6.

Cairns, City of the South Pacific, A History 1770-1995 by the local Council,⁵⁴ who commissioned me to write it (in 1997, admittedly by a previous council), highlighted that there was still an element of locals who wanted to continue with the falsehood of the Pioneering Myth. The Council refused to publish, claiming it was too expensive. It took me a further 16 years to finally achieve publication. So it was not surprising that I felt that Allen and Unwin had a point and that it was more important that a coverage of the extent of massacres across Queensland be readily available and let the reader reach their own conclusion. Feedback from elderly readers suggests that they knew of a massacre locally, and found that *Conspiracy of Silence* was illuminating and soundly researched historical interpretation that confirmed what they originally did not want to believe.

This original genocide introduction, then, is an attempt to interpret the record of what actually happened on the frontier and dispel the conspiracy of silence which has obscured and denied the brutal treatment of Aboriginal Queenslanders. *Conspiracy of Silence, Queensland's frontier killing times*, traces European expansion on Queensland's nineteenth century frontier as it moved from region to region, and identifies a range of the numerous violent incidents that occurred. It is a comprehensive, but not definitive, coverage of what Aboriginal Queenslanders experienced. It puts paid to the furphy that Queensland, and Australia in general, was peacefully settled and challenges us to come to terms with this reality. Defining the orchestration of the 'killing times' as genocide is extremely challenging for contemporary Australians, however, when assessed in relation to the international eight stages, it leaves no doubt, that although the term 'genocide' did not exist then, the actions of the colonial Queensland Government and elements of the settler society were in fact implementing a policy of genocide.⁵⁵

That this policy was then hidden and papered over is particularly pertinent in the context of what we as a nation portray as being a part of our national character – being honest or straightforward. If we are to have any integrity as a nation, let alone as individuals, it is appropriate for us to recognise the unvarnished truth about our past.

This is somewhat problematic in the current political climate (2017) where gulags for refugees are acceptable to both major parties. Yet despite this and our nations parsimonious approach towards our First People, there has been a gradual move in perceptions and a growing acceptance, although grudgingly, of the truth about violence on the frontier.

⁵⁴ This Cairns Regional Council was elected in 2000 until 2008,

⁵⁵ Others have also come to this conclusion, see: H. Baldry, A. McKeon, S. McDougall, "Queensland's Frontier Killing Times – Facing Up To Genocide", QUT Law Review, Volume 15, Issue 1, 2015, pp.92-113.

We would do well to remember that: 'No Australian today is responsible for what happened on our colonial frontier. But we are responsible for not acknowledging what happened. If we do not, our integrity as a nation is flawed...'⁵⁶

⁵⁶ T Bottoms, *Conspiracy of Silence, Queensland's frontier killing times*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2013, p.207.