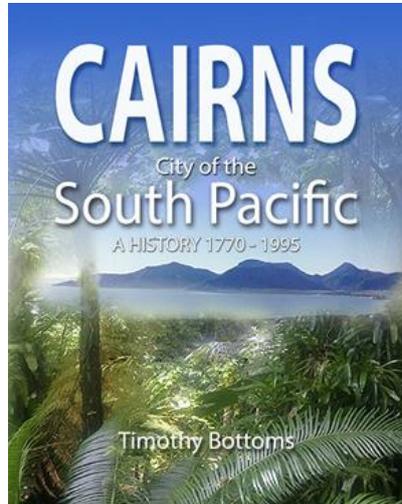


## ***Cairns: 'A Public History'***

***– Academic Introduction: A practical & philosophical approach as to how this work was researched and written.***



### ***Introduction***

This is a public commissioned history, synthesising core approaches taken by many of Queensland's best historians and applying ethnographic research and oral history techniques to the problem of writing an approachable, wide-ranging, inclusive *History of Cairns*.

The core meaning of public history is 'that it is seen, heard, read and interpreted by a popular audience.'<sup>1</sup> It is, as Graeme Davison has acknowledged, the new name for the oldest form of history of all, although the term 'Public History' was not coined until relatively recently (1975) by Robert Kelley of the University of California, Santa Barbara. Kelley felt:

Public History refers to the employment of historians and the historical method outside of academia: in government, private corporations, the media, historical societies and museums, even in private practice. Public historians are at work whenever, in their professional capacity, they are part of the public process. An issue needs to be resolved, a policy must be formed, the use of a resource or the direction of an activity must be more effectively planned – and a historian is called upon to bring in the dimension

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<sup>1</sup> J. Evans, "What is Public History", [www.publichistory.org](http://www.publichistory.org)

of time: this is Public History.<sup>2</sup>

However, there are quite marked differences between the American and British traditions from which most of the theorising about public history comes. American public history generally presumes societal consensus, while in Britain public history is perceived as people's history or social history, and assumes an environment of social conflict and injustice.<sup>3</sup> This re-interpretational approach was, as American historian of the French Revolution, Robert Darnton noted that:

“History from below” became a rallying cry for those who wanted to make contact with the submerged mass of humanity and to rescue the lives of ordinary men and women from oblivion in the past. It spread everywhere in Europe, especially to England, where it reinvigorated a strong tradition of labor [sic] history.<sup>4</sup>

One of those who has been a very successful proponent of this approach, is English social historian, Eric Hobsbawn,<sup>5</sup> who has observed three overlapping senses of 'social history'<sup>6</sup>: firstly those dealing with the poor or lower classes and specifically their social movements; secondly, those dealing with manners and customs (which G.M. Trevelyan called 'history with the politics left out'); and thirdly, social and economic history which throws light 'on the structure and changes in society, and more especially on the relationship between classes and social groups.'<sup>7</sup>

A similar school of thought and practice also operates in Australia. In Queensland, Raymond Evans and Kay Saunders and other academic historians have almost perfected this genre. Race-relations, labour, and women's issues also come within its orbit. Unfortunately the general public often perceive this kind of history as confronting, negative or 'doom and gloom'. In this regard, Geoffrey Bolton wrote that it:

provoked people who were not of their way of thinking to use the rather glib cant phrase about black armband history. To say that one must either be

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Kelley, "Public History: Its Origins, Nature and Prospects", *The Public Historian*, Vol.1, No.1, Fall 1978, p.16, cited in G. Davison, "Paradigms of Public History", J. Rickard & P. Spearitt (eds), *Packaging the Past? Public Histories*, MUP/AHS, Brunswick, 1991, p.5.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* pp.4-10.

<sup>4</sup> R. Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette, Reflections in Cultural History*, Penguin Books Canada, Ontario, 1990, p.195.

<sup>5</sup> E. Hobsbawn, *On History*, Abacus, London, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly Hobsbawn makes no mention of the term 'Public History'. *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, pp.95-96.

triumphalist or black armband is a bit like Oliver Cromwell's statement that, if you should choose matrimony, it should be either celibate or polygamous.<sup>8</sup>

Although regrettable, it is common for specialised academic studies to be stigmatised in this way in the broader community, however, they provide a rich source for understanding past societies, and if integrated into more general histories, such as the following, their interpretations can reach a wider audience.

Another field relevant to this work is Applied History, which according to Davison tries 'to bring the lessons of the past to bear on the shaping of the future.'<sup>9</sup> An historian of modern France, Dan Resnick, considers that there are three single imperatives that applied historians have:

They must address themselves to contemporary issues, bringing to them a historical perspective; they should direct their work to policy-makers and concerned laity in a defined area of debate; and they should draw from their policy analysis a sense of the alternative courses of action that lie before the public. There is little doubt that such labours will improve our understanding of past policy and help us shape our future course more intelligently.<sup>10</sup>

This policy-oriented approach is aimed at improving the decision-making process. However, Applied History becomes even more contentious when it tries to draw positive lessons from the past. Applied historians suggest three general ways in which their 'analysis can inform our understanding of the present' - argument analysis, trend analysis and the discipline of historical context.<sup>11</sup> Elements of this approach have been used in this current work, but not quite in the model-fashion identified. For example, although analogy is used sparingly, it was effective in giving an understanding of the emotional impact of 'the killing-times' of the 1880s, by drawing attention to contemporary (1996) tragedy at Port Arthur and the psychological ramifications for those who survived and grieved. There can be no doubt that the horror for those who experienced these disparate events with their

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<sup>8</sup> G. Bolton, 'Concluding Remarks' in D. McIntyre & K. Welmer (eds), *National Museums Negotiating Histories Conference Proceedings*, National Museum of Australia in association with the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research & the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, Canberra, 2001, p.215.

<sup>9</sup> Davison, *op.cit.*, 1991, p.12.

<sup>10</sup> D.P. Resnick, "Educational Policy and the Applied Historian: Testing, Competency and Standards", *Journal of Social History*, Vol.14, No.4, summer 1981, cited in Davison, *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, pp.12-13.

shared emotional trauma, are analogous but perhaps not on the scale of mourning.<sup>12</sup> Trends in population and associated economic developments are similarly considered in relation to work opportunities and impact on the district and region in general. Again, while this approach was an important factor in “*Cairns: 'A Public History'*,” it was supplementary to the overall approach. While there has been a more determined effort to attempt to place the stories of Cairns in an historical context, but not particularly for making future policy decisions for the district. It may be an outcome, but it was not the intent. Nevertheless, there were enough elements from Applied History to place this work in the field of controversy.

Accepting that Public History is anything done outside the academy on commission for a popular audience, and the diverse growth in the public history sector, it is not surprising that there is now a real need for such (academically-trained) professional public historians. The one bone of contention, that of the delineation between academic and public history, and the identification and application of ethics and academic standards have been broached. Both on the academic level, where public, cultural, social and applied history courses are now being offered with growing interest, and also among professional public historians, whose establishment of the Australian Council of Professional Historians Associations Inc. (1996), with state body affiliations, such as the Professional Historians Association (Qld),<sup>13</sup> has set their adherence to the ‘Code of Ethics and

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<sup>12</sup> It is perplexing that Peter Pierce chose to denigrate and misquote this approach, that I also used in *Djabugay Country- An Aboriginal History of Tropical North Queensland*. A project developed at the request of the elders as an appropriate record, for their community and as a means of telling their story to the world. In Chapter 2, having discussed some half a dozen massacres, I observed that: “An insight into the tragedies suffered by the close-knit Bama family groups can be glimpsed when one considers the psychological ramifications of the 1996 Port Arthur Massacre in Tasmania.” [pp.39-40]. Pierce however, writes this as: “‘the immense tragedy wrought by psychopathic retribution’ (for what?) at Port Arthur in 1996 and the suffering of the Djabugay.” In fact he was misquoting Noel Pearson’s comments from the Preface. Pearson actually wrote: “Remember the immense tragedy wrought by psychopathic retribution at Port Arthur in 1996? And the way this tore into the lives of families, communities and the nation? The Djabugay suffered likewise and were left destitute following the destruction of their economy and the desecration of their religious places.” [p.viii] Having totally misrepresented what was actually written, Pierce then attacks his misquoted version, and then piously states: “Yet the scales are so different, in terms of time, motive, the role of government, that the comparison had perhaps better not been made.” Sir Humphrey Appleby could not have put it better; and nor could it be further from the truth. See P. Pierce, “Djabugay history,” *Panorama, The Canberra Times*, 12 June 1999, p.24.

<sup>13</sup> Formed in 1990 as the Queensland Historians Institute, which changed its name to the Professional Historians Association (Queensland) Inc. in 1996. I was invited to join as an associate in 1991, and after the publication by Allen & Unwin, of *Djabugay Country – An Aboriginal History of Tropical North Queensland* in 1999, my membership was upgraded by the PHA (Qld) to full membership as a Professional Historian.

Professional Standards for Professional Historians in Australia'.<sup>14</sup> Of course this is not necessarily a panacea, as it only applies to those who are members and has yet to be tested. Nevertheless, it is a particularly good starting point.

This work has been a blend of several aspects of some generally identified models for public, cultural, social and applied history: a multi-disciplinary affair, if you like. They were used to help the reader to gain the necessary means to demystify much of the research process and therefore empower them to check its veracity. I would argue that part of this opportunity is for an interested reader to be paid the compliment of having the choice to look at footnotes. For unlike publishers I believe that readers find endnotes extremely intrusive, and therefore tend not to refer to them. The footnotes here are also used in a supplementary or complementary fashion as a second or third strand of relevant information or anecdote. As a public history, it was designed to appeal to a general reading audience, and provide vehicles for the wider dissemination of the various ideas developed by academic history practitioners. However, as Tony Bennett has observed for the field of museology, 'ultimately, the raw materials out of which a national past is made count for less than the rhetorics which shape their discursive fashioning'.<sup>15</sup>

Whatever theoretical perspective is fashionable, the need for easy-to-read, popularly oriented, academically well-researched local and regional histories in Australia persists. In the Cairns region this is particularly noticeable, with cultural heritage interpretation being required, based on historical, environmental, archaeological, anthropological, biological and botanical as well as zoological factors amongst other areas of expertise. This is a void that public history can fill, but possibly with more vigour.

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Australian regional and local histories are often too narrowly focused, amateurish or under the influence of the 'Pioneer Legend', more recently referred to as the 'white-blindfold' view of history.<sup>16</sup> Great strides in historical research and interpretation have occurred over the last thirty years, and this has led to a

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<sup>14</sup> See *Appendix B*, and also <http://www.qld.historians.org.au>

<sup>15</sup> T. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, Routledge, London, 1995. p.145.

<sup>16</sup> For a local example that reflects this, see *Appendix C* of PhD hardcopy – A critique of the first two draft chapters of this work [deposited at Cairns City Library, Mossman, Mareeba, Atherton and JCU (Cairns), & CQU (Rockhampton) Libraries] .

proliferation of excellent, but specialised work,<sup>17</sup> which has not been synthesised into an understandable, regional historiography. The aim of “*Cairns: 'A Public History'*”, is to achieve this and write an integrated and inclusive Australian regional history, using an inter-disciplinary approach, which mirrors the relatively recent trend of inter-disciplinary co-operation at the practical level,<sup>18</sup> and with which public historians frequently come into contact.

The project had its genesis when at the start of 1996, in conjunction with Central Queensland University Press (CQUP), the Cairns City Council was approached to be an investor in the project *A History of Cairns*. CQUP was keen to publish my work and we received a positive response to our proposal, but then two months later the Council advertised for expressions of interest to write and publish a ‘definitive History of Cairns.’<sup>19</sup> I remonstrated with the Mayor and CEO that they had reneged on their agreement. Naturally enough, they had to follow local government regulations requiring an equitable tendering process. Their response was to invite me to tender for the project. Despite my earlier research that provided the groundwork for this project, I doubted that a ‘definitive’ history was realistically achievable, although an interesting, innovative public history might make an important contribution to our understanding of an ever-changing contemporary tropical far North Queensland. It was apparent from their advertisement that they had not really distinguished between the writing, publishing or printing. Therefore, having ascertained how much they planned to spend, I tailored the tender to take these factors into account.

My approach to the research and writing which included: Project Tasks, Specific Outcomes, Methodology (including identified archival repositories and sources and eight possible chapter headings, Quality Assurance and Time-Line) followed by the suggested parameters for publishing, where three publishing (or

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<sup>17</sup> In the diverse fields of: Aboriginal history, race relations, health, mining, labour, and social history et.al.

<sup>18</sup> Over the last five years there has been a shift away from the traditional 100,000-word thesis, where: “Books, CDs, performances, paintings and photography are establishing themselves as academically credible alternatives to the traditional research thesis.” [Richard James Melbourne University lecturer interview “Postgraduate Studies and Career Upgrades”, *Weekend Australian*, 19-20 September 1998, p.30.] Historian Geoff Ginn in his co-authored article with archaeologist Jeanne Harris, demonstrates that co-operation between disciplines can be particularly rewarding. [See G. Ginn & E.J. Harris, “Sherds of Early Brisbane: History, Archaeology and the Convict”, *JRHSQ*, Vol.18, No.2, May 2002, pp.49-67.] These aspects suggest that the practical and innovative solution adopted for this work is a part of contemporary trends.

<sup>19</sup> See *Cairns Post*, 26 June 1996, p.68; *Weekend Australian*, 29-30 June 1996, p.29.

printing) options were identified, plus a generic analysis of the cost structure of book publishing. The brief described 'Cairns' the city and the former Mulgrave Shire (amalgamated in 1995) as encompassing 1,680 square kilometres, abutting Trinity Bay, and surrounding the lower Barron, Russell and Mulgrave Rivers. However, from the beginning I was determined not to be restricted to the greater Cairns geographical boundaries, so that influences that had ramifications for the Cairns region from human activities in the nearby Atherton Tableland and Cape York, and even further a field in the southern capitals, and beyond into the South Seas were also to be taken into consideration. These options and the inclusiveness of my approach were clearly identified. Some 23 organisations and individuals who knew my previous work were approached to identify their interest in the project and to seek their support. However, it was not until April Fool's Day 1997 that the contract was finally signed. One needs to be blessed with good legal advice. This was to be a history for a new Cairns, not parochial, but reflecting its place in the wider scheme of things.

I began my computer data-bases in 1992 and they contain some 50-years of summarised newspapers and magazines, with accompanying pertinent quotations. Other primary sources, such as government and private correspondence, official reports and publications, as well as commercially published works relevant to the Cairns of each era, are recorded there. This material was essential for the first five chapters (1770-1907), and allowed for a solid foundation based on primary sources. Then a variety of secondary sources (but not exclusively) and interpretations (based on primary sources) provided the framework of material for the chapters on the twentieth century. Nevertheless, as I became familiar with the sources, it became apparent that they were really a series of stories, with the perspective of the person writing them at the time (and their accompanying mental baggage – cultural, class, racial, political and gender etcetera). Others too have had this revelation/shock. American historian Robert Darnton, before he entered academia learnt as a young reporter for *The New York Times*: 'that news is not what happened in the immediate past, but rather someone's story about what happened.'<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Darnton, *op.cit.*, 1990, p.xx.

It became apparent after checking a variety of local histories from around Australia,<sup>21</sup> that none of the regional or local histories showed much empathy for the original inhabitants of the districts about which they were written. Although my study of the Djabugay/Yidiny languages was relatively rudimentary, the published linguistic works of R.M.W. Dixon for Yidiny<sup>22</sup> and Michael Quinn's work on the Djabugay,<sup>23</sup> were crucial in gaining an understanding of the indigenous cultures of the Cairns district. My work as research co-ordinator for the Malanbarra Yidinydji at Gordonvale, the Yirrganydji in Cairns, and the Wet Tropics Bama Ranger Training Program, confirmed much of the research in my MA (Qual), and corrected some of it too. Contiguous throughout the past decade was the collegial friendship of my generous colleague and mentor, Rob Hinxman, who shared many an intriguing conversation about Bama life, and forays to the archives, John Oxley and the scrub with exacting re-appraisals. The Djabugay Oral History Program (with 28 interviewees) came out of this and gave an even clearer insight which was to culminate in a documentary film and my book for the elders: *Djabugay Country – An Aboriginal History of Tropical North Queensland*.<sup>24</sup>

It was the process of re-affirming the Aboriginality of the landscape that drew my attention to the antiquity, rich cosmology and ingenious resource use by the future Cairns district's indigenous people. Eric Willmot's *Pemulwuy The Rainbow Warrior* while undoubtedly a fascinating read,<sup>25</sup> unfortunately did not identify sources and it is difficult to judge how much is based on fact and how much on fiction. Whereas R.M.W. Dixon, in his 'Words of Juluji's World',<sup>26</sup> used 'faction'

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<sup>21</sup> See W.A. Bayley, *Border City History of Albury, NSW*, Albury City Council, Albury, 1954; J. Murdoch & H. Parker, *History of Naracoorte*, Naracoorte Chamber of Commerce, Naracoorte [SA], 1963; K. Swan, *A History of Wagga Wagga*, City of Wagga Wagga, 1970; J.Y. Walker, *The History of Bundaberg: A Typical Queensland Agricultural Settlement*, Dryden Press, Sydney, 1977; L. McDonald, *Rockhamptom : History of a City and District*, UQP, St. Lucia, 1981; and of course Collinson and Jones' work, which is discussed later.

<sup>22</sup> *A Grammar of Yidiny*, CUP, Melbourne, 1977 & *Words of Our Country*, UQP, St. Lucia, 1991.

<sup>23</sup> R. Banning, & M. Quinn, *Djabugay Ngirra Gulu*, Cairns, 1989; R. Banning, F. McLeod, & M. Quinn, *Bulurru Storywater*, Cairns, 1990; M. Quinn, *Bama Nganydjin - Our People*, Djabugay Tribal Aboriginal Corporation, Cairns, 1995; M. Quinn, *Djabugay, A Djabugay-English Dictionary*, Education Queensland, Cairns, 1992.

<sup>24</sup> T. Bottoms, *Djabugay Country – An Aboriginal History of Tropical North Queensland*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999.

<sup>25</sup> E. Willmot, *Pemulwuy The Rainbow Warrior*, Bantam Books, Sydney, 1988.

<sup>26</sup> R.M. Dixon, in D.J. Mulvaney & J. Peter White (eds) *Australians to 1788*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, pp.147-165. An extremely good example of North American narrative public history, not long after this, was J.A. Eckroms, *Remembered Drums – A History of the Puget Sound Indian War*, Pioneer Press Books, Walla Walla, Washington, 1989.

(fiction based on fact), but demonstrated that (linguistic) research could be presented in an unorthodox but gripping fashion. Why not history?

If one accepts 40,000 years of Aboriginal occupation, then the last 200 years represents a half a per cent of that timeframe. Stories of the rising seawaters date from 6,000 years ago and 200 years represents 3½ per cent of that timeframe. The approach adopted attempted to compensate to a small extent for this historic discrepancy. How then to create an entertaining and informative coverage of the original inhabitants in a fashion that a majority of people would find interesting?

This is where the role of ethnographic reconstruction or historical 'faction' can demonstrate the humanity of the original inhabitants and enable a glimpse of their intriguing world-view and cultural heritage before European invasion. It is another human perception of the landscape and it needed to be acknowledged and incorporated within the overall coverage. My earlier research established the seasonal activities of the Bama, based upon and regulated by the seasonal changes.<sup>27</sup> The Bama characters in Chapter 1 conform to this, as well as with what is understood to be a part of traditional religion/law, known as *Bulurru*.<sup>28</sup> Confirmation by Bama Elders has enhanced our understanding of this pivotal religious perception that pervaded every aspect of their lives.<sup>29</sup>

An objective of this section was to establish a prior-occupancy, which had and has a validity of its own. The ethnographic reconstruction is a device that enables the reader to take the opportunity to see and engage with the other side of the frontier. While the crafted scenarios of Bama observing European coastal exploration may be fictional, that the Bama watched is not. Based on ethnographic and oral history research over the previous decade, the mechanism or device of ethnographic reconstruction or 'faction' suggested itself as an equitable solution. Other historians have challenged the conventional approaches and the insight gained from their 'what if' hypotheses and opened my mind to a greater series of

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<sup>27</sup> T. Bottoms, "Djarrugan – The Last of the Nesting, A Revisionist Interpretation of Aboriginal-European Relations in the Cairns Rainforest Region Up to 1876", M.A. (Qual), JCU, Cairns, 1990, Chapter 3 "The Bulmba of the Bama" & Chart One: "The Annual Cycle of Activities, Based Upon and Regulated By, Seasonal Changes", p.94.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, Chapter 2 "Bama Bulurru"; T. Bottoms, "Aboriginal Homelands" in G. McDonald & M. Lane, *Securing the Wet Tropics?* Federation Press, Sydney, 2000.

<sup>29</sup> Interviews conducted during the Djabugay Oral History Program (1994) and the Cairns Oral History Project (1990-2002). See also R. Banning, F. McLeod, & M. Quinn, *Bulurru Storywater*, Cairns, 1990; M. Quinn, *Bama Nganydjijin - Our People*, Djabugay Tribal Aboriginal Corporation, Cairns, 1995.

possibilities of perceptions. Eminent historical writers like Philip Zeigler and Barbara Tuchman, and particularly with regard to this current work, linguist Bob Dixon, have used various versions of this approach.

As we have only the reports and logs of the Royal Navy coastal explorations from Cook onwards as an indication of what happened, it was possible to translate what we knew of Bama lifestyles and culture and extrapolate from the differences in perception between them and what was recorded by eighteenth and nineteenth century Englishmen. Frank Woolston in his article, "The Gogo-Yimidji People and the Endeavour",<sup>30</sup> did this more formally in his discussion of the response of the Guugu Yimithirr<sup>31</sup> to Cook's crew catching a dozen turtles and resenting the Bama trying to take their rightful (and moderate) share of at least one of them; after all, in their eyes they were a Guugu Yimithirr marine resource, and they were being extremely hospitable. This was somewhat akin to total strangers arriving on ones doorstep and then generously helping themselves to ones larder. However, one also had to take into account the difficulties associated with cultural factors:<sup>32</sup> 'Mother-in-Law' language and its use can cause misunderstandings,<sup>33</sup> as can the 'Body-Name' aspect, where a deceased person's name is not mentioned for at least a year after their demise. Consequently, others who have a similar name, have to use an alternative for the proscribed period. With the higher death rate after contact, further confusion arose from this practice. 'There are always several sides to every story' and using ethnographic reconstruction served this purpose admirably.

My public history work had led me to organise several Bama oral history programs, and at the start of this work (1997), the Cairns Oral History Project was launched with volunteer helpers as an adjunct to my other research. Following the guidelines suggested by Louise Douglas, Alan Roberts and Ruth Thompson in their *Oral History – A Handbook*,<sup>34</sup> elderly residents of the district were canvassed for

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<sup>30</sup> F.P. Woolston, "The Gogo-Yimidji People and the Endeavour", *Queensland Heritage*, Vol. 2, No.2, May 1970, pp.12-22.

<sup>31</sup> This is the current spelling used by Guugu Yimithirr for themselves.

<sup>32</sup> For example, see B. Rigsby, "Aboriginal People, Spirituality and the Traditional Ownership of Land", *International Journal of Social Economics*, 26:7/8/9:963-973, 1999.

<sup>33</sup> Certainly for the Yidinydji, Dixon has identified two separate 'languages' or styles: "a *Dyalnguy* or 'Mother-in-law' avoidance language, which was used in the presence of certain taboo relatives, and an everyday language, which was used in all other circumstances." Dixon, *A Grammar of Yidiny*, CUP, Melbourne, 1977, p.20. See also 'Mother-in-law language' in Dixon, *Words of Our Country*, UQP, St. Lucia, 1991, pp.17-18.

<sup>34</sup> L. Douglas, A. Roberts, & R. Thompson, *Oral History – A Handbook*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988. This also involved a standard ethical procedure which required release/consent forms.

their interest. Of these, some thirteen transcribed interviews were used. Their words and observations were used in conjunction with other recollections from historical society bulletins and published oral history interviews, particularly *No Place for Snapdragons: Memories of Cairns*,<sup>35</sup> and Vera Bradley's World War Two's rich remembrances.<sup>36</sup> As much as possible these voices from the past were used as Manning Clark had suggested, letting:

the scene speak for itself. All the great stories of mankind are told without any comment at all. Perhaps that is why they have outlived their generation, and said something to men at all times and in all places. If the writer intervenes then he puts the stamp of his own generation on his work.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, oral history has to be used carefully, for, as Hobsbawn has observed: "we shall never make adequate use of oral history until we work out what can go wrong in memory with as much care as we now know what can go wrong in transmitting manuscripts by manual copying."<sup>38</sup> Accepting the limitations of oral history therefore, meant using recollections more for a general emotional response to an event or occurrence, rather than relying on them for exacting factual coverage.

Several levels of interpretation, with associated identification of sources are made available for the reader. The text gives the main flow of ideas and events while the footnotes are intended to elaborate and give further insight to the text. Some aspects that are not mentioned in the text or footnotes have been identified in the chronology. Similarly, captions on many of the historical photographs were designed to supplement the other streams of information. Some, where the topic is not covered in the text, have mini-coverage's which complement the photograph and inform those readers who may possibly want to know more about the topic. Depending on taste, others may choose to skip them.

The maps in the work have been designed to complement the text, with eight specifically intended to aid the reader in understanding the geographical location of places mentioned, and spatially their relationship to other centres. Three maps had been designed previously and identified some of the Bama names and meanings for

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<sup>35</sup> Living History Sub-Committee Oral History Project, International Year of Older Persons, Cairns, 1999. Also J. Cochran, "One House in Malanda: Life Histories of Three Aboriginal Women in Queensland", 14 May 1993, *Historical Society of Cairns*, 305 COC.

<sup>36</sup> V. Bradley, *I didn't know that, Cairns and Districts Tully to Cape York, 1939-1946, Service Personnel and Civilians*, Boolarong Press, Moorooka, 1995.

<sup>37</sup> M. Clark, "Being an historian", *ABC Boyer Lectures*, Sydney, 1976, p.50.

<sup>38</sup> Hobsbawn, *op.cit.*, p.272.

places.<sup>39</sup> Although only a fraction of the original names and associated Storywaters ('Dreamings') are now known, their visual identification nevertheless, re-affirms an original Indigenous perception of the landscape. This reminds readers that there is another manner in which the districts features can be observed. Five other maps were also designed to enlighten readers as to locations mentioned in the text.<sup>40</sup> The remaining 15 maps came from the relevant historical periods in which they appear. Les Pearson who kindly gave permission for its reproduction drew the map of the construction of the Barron Falls Hydro-Electric Scheme. Similarly, graphs have been created to clarify statistical population information through visual presentation. This gives the reader the opportunity to grasp the changes more easily.

It was also in this vein that historical images were chosen to enhance the reader's understanding of respective eras. Photographs and illustrations are the first aspect of a publication that a prospective buyer looks at. Cairns and district is blessed with a particularly large collection of historical photos.<sup>41</sup> Several local 'picture book' history publications are available, but the contextualisation of the images is limited in many instances.<sup>42</sup> The assumption appears to be that the reader knows where the photograph was taken and that it therefore speaks for itself. However, as a relative newcomer of 18-years residence, I had difficulty on occasions in identifying the scenes in their contemporary setting. Therefore, the reader is given clear indications (where possible), so that they can relate the historical image to the present and in turn, be able to gauge the changes over the decades.

The use of chronological narrative gives the opportunity to convey voices of the past while incorporating coverage of an overview of issues, topics or themes. This began with a cultural inclusiveness that recognised the diverse peoples who have inhabited the district over the two and a quarter centuries since Cook paused at Cape Grafton. Other threads that are integrated into each successive chapter include the more traditional economic developments involving transport, labour, business, mining and agriculture. Similarly, local government, health, education and women's issues, as well as natural disasters and the impact of the state and federal

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<sup>39</sup> Maps 2, 3 & 5.

<sup>40</sup> Maps 7, 14, 15, 19 & 21.

<sup>41</sup> Over 10,000.

<sup>42</sup> See J. Murphy, *Cairns and District: Our Heritage In Focus*, John Oxley Library, Brisbane, n.d. [1999]; P. Broughton (ed), *Photographic Memories*, Historical Society of Cairns, 2002, and the *Cairns Post*, "Moments In Time" 10-part booklet series, February –March 2002.

government decision-making process; all became the main threads around which each time-period was developed. This gives an indication of the standard of living and quality of life and enables the reader to build an image of technological and social changes over succeeding eras. Nevertheless, an important adjunct to this approach has been the inclusion of people's humour, which enables each succeeding generation to cope with the vagaries that life throws at them. Humour has been used sparingly, but with the idea that it can convey an insight to the humanity that we all share.

The exposition for the twentieth century had to be somewhat different in order to cover the many aspects of the district's past. Human activity in the region became more varied and complex as the population grew and diversified. The outside world also impinged on the region in more obvious ways. It was thus necessary to cast a catholic and pragmatic eye over national, state and regional histories in order to engage a generally accepted overview that then gave some indication of the milieu within which a local event occurred. To produce an accessible work it had to conform in some fundamental ways with what local people expected it to be.

As mentioned previously, to write a broad, inclusive, insightful history of Cairns it was necessary to draw on the best of what has already been written. Geoffrey Bolton's history of North Queensland remains the only comprehensive coverage of events and happenings in the North and demonstrates an objectivity that belies its 40-odd years since first being published.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, the work of Ross Fitzgerald<sup>44</sup> and Ross Johnston<sup>45</sup> are necessary adjuncts, in that they both give clearer insights into the political machinations in the dominating southern capital.

Other seminal academic works by Noel Loos,<sup>46</sup> Christine Halse,<sup>47</sup> Rosalind Kidd<sup>48</sup> and Cathie May,<sup>49</sup> Kett Kennedy,<sup>50</sup> Doug Hunt,<sup>51</sup> Brian Costar<sup>52</sup> and Noreen

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<sup>43</sup> G.C. Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away- A History of North Queensland to 1920*, ANUP, Canberra, 1972, (first published in 1963).

<sup>44</sup> R. Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland - From the Dreaming to 1915*, Vol.1, UQP, St. Lucia, 1982; *A History of Queensland - From 1915 to the 1980s*, Vol. II, UQP, St. Lucia, 1984.

<sup>45</sup> W.R. Johnston, *The Call of the Land - A history of Queensland to the Present Day*, Jacaranda Press, Milton, 1982.

<sup>46</sup> N. Loos, *Invasion and Resistance*, ANUP, Canberra, 1982, based on his 1976 PhD: "Aboriginal-European Relations in North Queensland, 1861-1897", JCU, Townsville.

<sup>47</sup> C.M. Halse, "The Reverend Ernest Gribble and Race Relations in Northern Australia", PhD, UQ, St. Lucia, 1992.

<sup>48</sup> R.M. Kidd, "Regulating Bodies: administrations and Aborigines in Queensland 1840-1988", PhD Griffith University, June 1994; also R. Kidd, *The Way We Civilise – Aboriginal Affairs the untold story*, UQP, St. Lucia, 1997.

<sup>49</sup> C. May, *Topsawyers: the Chinese in Cairns 1870 to 1920*, Studies in North Queensland History

Kirkman<sup>53</sup> are relevant to this current study. Loos identified many themes relating to rainforest Aborigines, including the *bêche-de-mer* and mining industries. Notwithstanding that he does not deal specifically with the Cairns coastal area (and the associated killing-times), his broader North Queensland insights are still particularly pertinent.<sup>54</sup> Halse gives an excellent insight into Ernest Gribble and race relations, as does Kidd with government control of Indigenous people and May's study of the Chinese in the Cairns region is particularly thorough and invaluable in making current re-assessments. Kennedy's coverage of the North Queensland mining industry and Hunt's analysis of the development of unionism were integral to placing the Cairns occurrences in context, as was Kirkman's coverage of the Palmer and Hodgkinson goldfields. Not to mention the clarifying perspective of Costar's analysis of the 1930s Depression in Queensland.

The work of Queensland's academic historians has been invaluable in contextualising the micro with the macro, that is, the minutiae of local history within the context of state, national or international developments. In many ways this is the approach adopted by Bolton (*A Thousand Miles Away*, 1972), Fitzgerald (*A History of Queensland*, 1982 & 1984) and Johnston (*A Call of the Land*, 1982) in their respective works on North Queensland and Queensland more generally.

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No.6, JCU, Townsville, 1996.

<sup>50</sup> K.H. Kennedy, "The Rise of the Amalgamated Workers' Association", in B.J. Dalton (ed), *Lectures On North Queensland History*, Second Series, History Department, JCU, Townsville, 1975; K.H. Kennedy, " 'They Stumble That Run Fast': In the Wake of the Chilligoe Company", in K.H. Kennedy (ed), *Readings in North Queensland Mining History*, Vol.1, JCU, Townsville, 1980; K.H. Kennedy, "J.S. Reid and the Chilligoe Company", in K.H. Kennedy (ed), *Readings in North Queensland Mining History*, Vol. II, JCU, Townsville, 1982.

<sup>51</sup> D. Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism", in A. Curthoys & A. Markus, *Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Australian Working Class*, Hale & Iremonger, Neutral Bay, 1978; D.W. Hunt, "A History of the Labour Movement in North Queensland: trade unionism, politics and industrial conflict, 1900-1920", PhD, JCU, Townsville, 1979.

<sup>52</sup> B.J. Costar, "Labor, Politics and Unemployment: Queensland During the Great Depression", PhD, UQ, St. Lucia, 1981.

<sup>53</sup> N. Kirkman, "Mining on the Hodgkinson", in K.H.Kennedy (ed), *Readings in North Queensland Mining History*, Vol. II, JCU, Townsville, 1982; N. Kirkman, "The Palmer Gold Field 1873 -1883," Honours, JCU, Townsville, 1984.

<sup>54</sup> It appears that for the purposes of collating research, Loos delineated four areas or 'frontiers': pastoral, mining, rainforest and sea. This approach, along with the use of the generic term 'Aborigines', unfortunately ignores the individuality of local Bama groups who had different landscape and resource orientations. [See N. Loos, *Invasion and Resistance*, ANUP, Canberra, 1982.] Hence the need for a re-evaluation of Aboriginal-European relations for the Cairns rainforest region, based on my earlier research, see Bottoms, "DJARRUGAN - The Last of the Nesting, A Revisionist Interpretation of Aboriginal-European Relations in the Cairns Rainforest Region up to 1876", MA (Qual), JCU, Cairns, 1990.

Social historian Raymond Evans<sup>55</sup> research and interpretations of prostitution, and attitudes and perspectives on the homefront during World War One, including children and social conflict, as well as the treatment of internees, gave fascinating and well-documented insights into those issues in each period. Similarly, although possibly more prolific as a co-author, is the work of Kay Saunders,<sup>56</sup> whose re-assessment of the experience of women on the homefront during war,<sup>57</sup> nineteenth century South Sea Islanders labour<sup>58</sup> and the reality of war time internment,<sup>59</sup> gave a more critical background to events on the local scene. Similarly, Joan Beaumont's excellent coverage of both World Wars,<sup>60</sup> particularly on the homefront, gave a sound academic framework. John Pearn's work on medical and health history was especially useful,<sup>61</sup> and Margaret Spencer's on malaria was crucial to putting the disease into context.<sup>62</sup> These, in conjunction with the works by Douglas Gordon<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> R. Evans, " 'Soiled Doves': Prostitution and Society in Colonial Queensland," *Hecate*, Vol.1, No.2, July 1975; R. Evans, *Loyalty and Disloyalty – Social Conflict on the Queensland Homefront, 1914-18*, Allen & Unwin, 1987; R. Evans, "The Pen And The Sword", in M. Jurgensen & A. Corkhill (eds), *The German Presence in Queensland*, Department of German, University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1987; R. Evans, "The lowest common denominator: loyalism and school children in war-torn Australia 1914-1918", in L. Finch (ed), *Young in a Warm Climate*, Vol. 3, No.2, Queensland Review/UQP, Nathan, 1996; R. Evans, "The Politics of Leprosy, Race, Disease and the Rise of Labor", in J. Scott & K. Saunders, *The World's First Labor Government*, RHSQ, Brisbane, 2001.

<sup>56</sup> K.E. Evans [née Saunders], "Missionary Efforts Towards the Cape York Aborigines, 1886-1910: A Study of Culture Contact", Hons., *UQ*, 1969; K. Evans [née Saunders], "Marie Yamba, Bloomfield and Hope Vale: The Lutheran Missions to the North Queensland Aborigines, 1886-1905", *Queensland Heritage*, Vol. II, No.6, 1972; K. Saunders, "Sir Samuel Griffith and the Writing of the Constitution" in J.M. Macrossan, K. Saunders, S. Berns, C. Sheehan & K. McConnel in *Griffith, the law, and the Australian Constitution*, RHSQ, Brisbane, 1998; J. Scott & K. Saunders, *The World's First Labor Government*, RHSQ, Brisbane, 2001.

<sup>57</sup> K. Saunders, *War on the Homefront – State intervention in Queensland 1938-1948*, UQP, St. Lucia, 1993.

<sup>58</sup> K. Saunders, "Masters and Servants", in A. Curthoys & A. Markus, *Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Australian Working Class*, Hale & Iremonger, Neutral Bay, 1978; K. Saunders, *Workers in Bondage*, UQP, St. Lucia, 1982; K. Saunders, "The Black Scourge" in Evans, Saunders & Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland - A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination*, UQP, St. Lucia, 1993.

<sup>59</sup> K. Saunders, "Enemies of the Empire? The Internment of Germans in Queensland During World War II", in M. Jurgensen & A. Corkhill (eds), *The German Presence in Queensland*, Department of German, UQ, Brisbane, 1987; K. Saunders & H. Taylor, "The Impact of Total War Upon Policing: The Queensland Experience", in M. Finnane (ed), *Policing in Australia Historical Perspectives*, NSWU Press, Kensington, 1987; K. Saunders, "Reassessing the Significance of the Battle of Brisbane", *JRHSQ*, Vol. XV, No.2, May 1993.

<sup>60</sup> J. Beaumont, *Australia's WAR 1914-18*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1995; J. Beaumont, (ed) *Australia's WAR 1939-40*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1996.

<sup>61</sup> J. Pearn, (ed), *Pioneer Medicine in Australia*, Amphion Press, Brisbane, 1988. J. Pearn, (ed), *Outback Medicine, Some Vignettes of Pioneering Medicine*, Amphion Press, Brisbane, 1994. J. Pearn, & P. Carter, (eds), *Bridgeheads of Northern Health*, Amphion Press, Brisbane, 1996.

<sup>62</sup> M. Spencer, *Malaria- The Australian Experience 1843-1991*, The Australian College of Tropical Medicine, Townsville, 1994.

<sup>63</sup> D. Gordon, *Mad Dogs and Englishmen Went Out in the Queensland Sun – Health aspects of the*

and MacLeod and Denoon,<sup>64</sup> were not only fascinating but also well documented. The same might be said of Christine Amiet's article 'An Uphill Battle: The Plight of the Medical Fraternity in north Queensland during the Plague Years 1900-1922,'<sup>65</sup> a gem for the public historian tasked with writing a broad regional history.

Another closely researched work, by Peter Bell on the Mount Mulligan Mining disaster of 1921,<sup>66</sup> again ironed out many inconsistencies that arose from other secondary sources. Public historians, John<sup>67</sup> and Ruth Kerr,<sup>68</sup> have with their consistent and varied research produced numerous publications on Queensland history. John wrote a history of the Mossman district, to the north of Cairns, as well as a history of mining railways that were invaluable for this work. His partner Ruth's work on John Moffat and the North Queensland tin fields filled an important gap in the regions' knowledge.

The work of these historians has been pivotal to this project. In many instances their insights, linked to local circumstances and events have altered the previously established perceptions, particularly with regard to Aborigines of the district, Chinese, South Sea Islanders, Labour and women's issues. For example, the AWA sugar workers' strike of 1911 has been portrayed by Jones as hooliganism, while Morton,<sup>69</sup> in a more objective, but nevertheless negative manner, skewed his interpretation in favour of the sugar farmers.<sup>70</sup> Upon examination of the sequence of events, one finds that both farmers and the mills probably provoked the workers. Understanding the workers' position by scrutinising the local primary sources, and using the macro, supplied in this case by Kay Saunders, Doug Hunt and Kett Kennedy, merely balances our awareness of incidents such as these.

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*settlement of tropical Queensland*, The Bancroft Oration of 1969, Amphion Press, Brisbane, 1990.

<sup>64</sup> R. MacLeod & D. Denoon, (eds) *Health and Healing in Tropical Australia and Papua New Guinea*, JCU, Townsville, 1991.

<sup>65</sup> C. Amiet, "An Uphill Battle: The Plight of the Medical Fraternity in north Queensland during the Plague Years 1900-1922", *JRHSQ*, Vol.16, No 9, February 1998.

<sup>66</sup> P. Bell, "*If Anything, Too Safe*": *The Mount Mulligan Coalmine Disaster of 1921*, Studies in North Queensland History No.2, JCU, Townsville, 1996; P. Bell, *Timber and Iron: Houses in North Queensland Mining Settlements, 1861-1920*, UQP, St. Lucia, 1984.

<sup>67</sup> J. Kerr, *Northern Outpost*, Mossman Central Mill Co. Ltd., Brisbane, 1979; J. Kerr, "North Queensland Mining railways", in K.H. Kennedy (ed), *Readings in North Queensland Mining History*, Vol.1, JCU, Townsville, 1980.

<sup>68</sup> R. Kerr, "John Moffat and the North Queensland Tinfields", in K.H. Kennedy (ed), *North Queensland Mining History*, Vol.1, JCU, Townsville, 1980; R.S. Kerr, "Aborigines & Mining in North Queensland in the 1880s - The Police Commissioner's Dilemma", unpublished article, 1988.

<sup>69</sup> C. Morton, *By Strong Arms*, Mulgrave Central Mill Co., Ltd., Gordonvale, 1995, pp.71-77.

<sup>70</sup> Jones, *Trinity Phoenix*, 1976, Chapter XVII, pp.425-33] Compare this with Chapter 6, Sections 6.5 *Back of Cairns* and 6.6 *Cane & Labour*.

Two specific histories have been written on Cairns and District. J.W. Collinson wrote five monographs between 1939 and 1946,<sup>71</sup> about the first two decades of Cairns (1876-1896) along with at least six articles (1938-1951).<sup>72</sup> Collinson is particularly readable, and because he grew up in Cairns (from 1886), his insights into the attitudes and sentiments of the residents and settlers of the time are especially useful.

While Dorothy Jones' *Trinity Phoenix, A History of Cairns*, published in 1976, utilises Collinson's work, and her research is impressive (if poorly documented), but it leans rather too much on the *Cairns Post* for comfort. Jones' tenacious effort represents the opinions of the conservative elements of generations of British settlers. Unionists, and non-Europeans, especially Aborigines, get a particularly raw deal from her. Jones' work is peppered with negative views of the indigenous inhabitants of the district. She describes the Bama (rainforest Aboriginal people) as 'extremely primitive' who had 'no husbanding of resources and method of storage was naturally out of the question'. Their life she proclaims was an 'eternal struggle to win food' and that the Bama remained 'in an area to deplete the [food] source before moving on.'<sup>73</sup> All of these aspects Jones got wrong.<sup>74</sup> Today it seems incredible that she could write that:

The Trinity Bay tribes were also inveterate cannibals, a fact those researchers familiar with the southern Aboriginal find such difficulty in accepting that they tend to look for some extenuating circumstances of ritual. Ritual had nothing to do with the matter and they had no compunction against taking human life simply for its edible quality, in fact they were

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<sup>71</sup> J.W. Collinson, *Early Days of Cairns*, W.R. Smith & Paterson, Brisbane, 1939; *Tropical Coasts and Tablelands*, W.R. Smith & Paterson, Brisbane, 1941; *More About Cairns - The Second Decade*, Smith & Paterson, Brisbane, 1942; *More About Cairns, 2.Echoes of the Past*, Smith & Paterson, Brisbane, 1945; and *More About Cairns, 3.Recollections of a Varied Life, The Autobiography of Joseph Greetham Eastwood*, Smith & Paterson, Brisbane, 1946.

<sup>72</sup> J.W. Collinson: "Early Days of Cairns, Christie Palmerston", *Cummins & Campbell's Monthly Magazine*, December, 1938; "Early Days of Cairns: The Aborigines", *Cummins & Campbell's Monthly Magazine*, January 1939; "Early Days of Cairns: The Pacific Islanders", *Cummins & Campbell's Monthly Magazine*, July 1939; "The Origins and Growth of the Sugar Industry in the Cairns District", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol.3, No.4, February 1945; "Cardwell, A Gateway to the West", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol.4, No.2, December 1949; "Rise and Decline of Port Douglas", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol.4, No.4, December 1951.

<sup>73</sup> Jones, *Trinity Phoenix*, 1976, p.292.

<sup>74</sup> See T. Bottoms, "DJARRUGAN - The Last of the Nesting, A Revisionist Interpretation of Aboriginal-European Relations in the Cairns Rainforest Region up to 1876", MA (Qual), JCU, Cairns, 1990, Chapter 3 - "The Bulmba of the Bama".

downright irresponsible about it. Human flesh was especially craved among the rain forest Aboriginals whose diet was sadly lacking in protein.<sup>75</sup>

Research has demonstrated that this is completely untrue.<sup>76</sup> One gains the impression that Jones' work is there to justify the actions of the colonial settlers. No doubt to give further credence to the 'pioneering' myth<sup>77</sup> developed by writers through the early to mid-twentieth century which perpetuated the white blind-fold view of history.<sup>78</sup> Bernard Smith has perceived such techniques as 'mechanisms of forgetfulness.'<sup>79</sup>

It was 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.'<sup>80</sup> Hirst's legend or 'Pioneering Myth' celebrates:

courage, enterprise, hard work, and perseverance; it usually applies to the 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.<sup>81</sup>

The pervasiveness of this perspective in local histories still needs to be addressed, reconsidered, hopefully in a more objective and inclusive fashion. Henry Reynolds' race-relations work has been instrumental in this, and he has borne the backlash of what he has termed the white 'blind-fold' view of history, and has acknowledged: "the more radical proponents of the 'Pioneering Myth' still have an undue influence in Australian historiography."<sup>82</sup> Reynolds' figures on Aboriginal

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<sup>75</sup> Jones, *op.cit.* p.293.

<sup>76</sup> See Bottoms, *op.cit.*, pp.82-86; pp.93-142, p.181, and Appendix E, pp.239-248.

<sup>77</sup> Jones encapsulates her eulogistic vision of the 'pioneering spirit' on the concluding page of her work: "The spirit of old Cairns was something marvellous, hard-headed, wrong-headed at times, never banal, never standardized it was what by fair means and foul laid the foundation of what Cairns is today [1976]." Jones, *op.cit.*, 1976, p.480.

<sup>78</sup> H. Reynolds, "From armband to blindfold", *The Australian's Review of Books (ARB)*, March 2001, pp.8-9 & 26.

<sup>79</sup> B. Smith, "The Spectre of Truganini", *ABC Boyer Lectures*, Sydney, 1980, p.17

<sup>80</sup> J.B. Hirst, "The Pioneer Legend", in J. Carroll (ed), *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity*, OUP, Melbourne, 1982, p.14.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, pp.14-15.

<sup>82</sup> H. Reynolds, "From armband to blindfold", *The Australian's Review of Books (ARB)*, March 2001, pp.8-9 & 26.

deaths on the frontier have been seriously questioned by Keith Windshuttle,<sup>83</sup> who has in turn been criticised for not researching material objectively enough.<sup>84</sup> However, his dismissal of Reynolds conservative estimate of 10,000 Aborigines meeting violent deaths in Queensland (1841-1897) as 'inherently implausible' could not be further from the truth.<sup>85</sup> Since Hirst's identification (1982), there has been a plethora of academic publication's to enlighten the Australian public as to a less than romantic past. The research work of this regional history of Cairns, unequivocally substantiates Reynolds broader brush-stroke canvas.

A noteworthy local author, Glenville Pike, follows in a similar tradition to Jones, and is particularly keen on the pioneering myth. He is a more popularly oriented author, but his work lacks documentation and is sprinkled with inaccuracies. A prolific writer,<sup>86</sup> Pike has almost single-handedly kept alive an interest in far North Queensland history and his maps are a valuable contribution to the North's historiography.<sup>87</sup> Clive Morton's work on the sugar industry is also crucial, although identifying his sources and deconstructing his interpretation can sometimes be a little difficult. The adage 'histories are the product of their time' is

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<sup>83</sup> K. Windshuttle, "The Myths of Frontier Massacres in Australian History," 'Part I: The Invention of Massacre Stories', *Quadrant*, October 2000; 'Part II: The Fabrication of the Aboriginal Death Toll', *Quadrant*, November 2000; 'Part III: Massacre Stories and the Policy of Separatism', *Quadrant*, December 2000. The unfortunate aspect of Windshuttle's efforts, is that one is reminded of Bronowski's reference as to how Auschwitz came about: "It was done by arrogance. It was done by dogma. It was done by ignorance. When people believe that they have absolute knowledge, with no test in reality, this is how they behave. This is what men do when they aspire to the knowledge of gods." J. Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man*, BBC, London, 1976, p.186.

<sup>84</sup> Evans and Thorpe give a comprehensive rebuttal of Windshuttle's article. R. Evans & W. Thorpe, "Indigenocide and the Massacre of Aboriginal History", *Overland*, No.163, winter 2001, pp.21-39; See also the editorial by Ian Syson. L. Scheps, "Massacres and Dispossession", *Quadrant*, January-February 2001, pp.5-6. B. Breslin, "Christians and Massacres", *Quadrant*, January-February 2001, p.5. Interestingly, neither Breslin nor Scheps' lucid arguments against Windshuttle's 36 page (over 3 issues) opinions, elicited a response from either Windshuttle or his supporters. In 2011, Robert Ørsted-Jensen, published *Frontier History Revisited - Colonial Queensland and the 'History War'*, luxmundipub@hotmail.com, which effectively refutes Windshuttle's 'arguments'.

<sup>85</sup> See Evans & Thorpe, *op.cit.* The latest re-assessment of the death toll on the Queensland frontier see: Raymond Evans and Robert Ørsted-Jensen, 'I Cannot Say the Numbers that Were Killed', *The Australian Historical Association 33rd Annual Conference. Conflict in History*, St. Lucia, QLD, Australia, (28-28). 7-11 July, 2014. [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2467836](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2467836)

<sup>86</sup> G. Pike, *Pioneers' Country*, Pinevale Publications, Mareeba, 1976; *Queen of the North - A Pictorial History of Cooktown and Cape York Peninsula*, Author, Mareeba, 1979; *The Last Frontier*, Pinevale Publications, Mareeba, 1983; *Conquest of the Ranges*, Pinevale Publications, Mareeba, 1984; *Port of Promise An Illustrated History of Port Douglas North Queensland*, Pinevale Publications, Mareeba, 1986; *The Wilderness Coast*, Pinevale Publications, Mareeba, 1987; and many more.

<sup>87</sup> *Historical Map of Nth. Qld. Cardwell to Cooktown, Cairns and Hinterland*, Glenville Pike, 1976; *Historical Map of North Queensland, Daintree south to Townsville*, Pinevale Publication, 1985; *The Gulf Country, North Queensland, A Guide and Historical Map*, Pinevale Publications, Mareeba, 1986; *Cape York Peninsula, N.Q. A Guide and Historical Map*, Pinevale Publications, Mareeba, 1990; *Map of the Palmer River Goldfield Area*, Pinevale Publications, 1994.

especially pertinent to the works of Collinson, Jones and Pike, and to a lesser extent, to Morton. However, they have all contributed to the building of knowledge, and it is impossible to consider historical research in the Cairns region without referring to their work. Of the four, Collinson and Morton retain the objectivity of the more traditionally well-researched non-academically trained historians. While Jones, and notably Pike, have tended to sensationalise aspects (such as cannibalism amongst indigenous people) to the detriment, not only of their work, but also to the descendants of the non-British people who contributed to the development of this district.

Other local histories were also invaluable in getting 'the lie of the land'. Some needed corroborative primary source evidence, while other authors' works, such as Denise Rapkins, *A Remarkable Achievement - The Cairns Mulgrave Tramway, 1897-1911*,<sup>88</sup> Les Pearson on the Barron Falls Hydro-Electric Scheme,<sup>89</sup> Henry and Elaine Tranter's publications with the Eacham Historical Society, such as *A Bend Too Many – The Story of the Gillies Highway*,<sup>90</sup> and Mary Williams' *The Knob, A History of Yorkeys Knob*<sup>91</sup> and David Connolly's *Chronicles of Mowbray and Port Douglas*,<sup>92</sup> have all made an important contribution in the jigsaw puzzle that is Cairns history. If one accepts 'local' history as 'primarily serving the needs of a particular limited district',<sup>93</sup> then many of the local works have achieved that, but the parameters for the Cairns district have changed dramatically in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and therefore the interpretational subject matter needed to be re-visited.

However, there is another side to local history. 'Everyone's an historian' as public historian, Shirley Fitzgerald acknowledged:

The assumption that history is known – that it is acquired through some process of social osmosis – applies particularly at the local level. We live here. We know it. You don't. And often those with the narrowest of

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<sup>88</sup> Historical Society of Cairns, Cairns, 1997.

<sup>89</sup> L. Pearson, *The Cairns Electric Authority: History of the early electricity Supply industry in the Cairns Region: Part 1*, L.M. Pearson, Brinsmead, 2000 & *The Hydro: The Barron Falls Hydro-Electricity Board, History of the early electricity supply industry in the Cairns Region: Part II*, L.M. Pearson, Brinsmead, 2001.

<sup>90</sup> Published in 1999; also *Malanda – in the Shadow of Bartle Frere*, Eacham Historical Society, Cairns, 1995.

<sup>91</sup> Published by M.T. Williams, Cairns 1987.

<sup>92</sup> *Chronicles of Mowbray and Port Douglas and the Pioneering Saga of the Reynolds and Connolly Families*, D.M. Connolly, Cairns, June, 1984.

<sup>93</sup> *The Concise Macquarie Dictionary*, Doubleday, Sydney, 1982.

imaginations who have led the smallest lives are the most vociferous in declaring their belief that they know all about it.<sup>94</sup>

This may explain why local histories have become the last frontier in the world of academe. It is much less taxing on the spirit to engage in a topic of broader appeal to an appreciative audience, than step on the toes of parochial self-proclaimed proprietors of local history. Thus the professional public historian has to weave a delicate balance between what locals perceive as being important<sup>95</sup> and contextualising their own primary research, placing it within the parameters of accepted contemporary academic research and interpretation. Certainly one cannot downplay the effort required, as Victoria Peel and Deborah Zion remarked: 'the successful integration of the micro and the macro in local history is a serious challenge.'<sup>96</sup>

*Cairns, City of the South Pacific, A History 1770-1995* is the result of my efforts to achieve this end, to produce a popular history available to the general reader at the same time as it meets academic standards. This indeed has been a difficult balance to achieve.

Timothy D.R. Bottoms  
26 July 2002  
(updated October 2015)

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<sup>94</sup> S. Fitzgerald, "History? You must be joking", *Fifth Annual History Council Lecture*, History Council of New South Wales, Darlinghurst, June 2000, p.22. See *Appendix C*.

<sup>95</sup> "[C]ommon to all 'public histories' is an awareness of the need for historians to engage more directly with the community and its contemporary concerns." J. Rickard, "Introduction", in Rickard & Spearitt, *op.cit.*, 1991, p.1. See book *Acknowledgements*, p.ii.

<sup>96</sup> V. Peel & D. Zion, "The Local History Industry", in Rickard & Spearitt, *op.cit.*, 1991, p.212.