

# ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WAR MEMORIAL ANZAC GATHERING – TUESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2017

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Thank you Bill.

I would like to thank the Aboriginal Veterans SA Anzac Day Gathering and particularly Frank Lampard for all you've done for Aboriginal Veterans SA and for asking me to present the Keynote – it is an honour and a privilege.

In the short amount of time I have I would like to acknowledge our Aboriginal Ancestral Warriors from 1788, down the generations, to their contemporaries today, and I would like to debunk some historical facts not with any malice to shame or blame but by reinstating some truths. There have been significant inaccuracies taught by many Australian systems and as contemporary Australians we all have a right, a role and a responsibility to ourselves and to our future generations to correct these profound mistakes where and when we can. Similarly, we only have to look around at our gathering today: have we not come a long way! But I am confident, we all know we still have some way to go together to bring the Frontier Wars out of the shadows of 1788 and into the sunshine for the healing of all Australians. As painful as it is or could be for the human psyche to come to terms with 1788, we need to talk about it so the healing of two cultures can continue.

I would like to refer to this sandwich board [banner]. The Aboriginal Veterans SA understand it was placed here, near the Memorial sometime before last year's gathering commenced and as no one has claimed it, it has remained in our

possession as a significant reminder that we must not forget the Frontier Wars! We think it's also a reminder to tell us our Frontier Warriors always were and always will be our original wartime Warrior's. The Board talks about the Frontier Wars beginning in 1788 through to 1930's. We encourage you to have a read in your own time but it is very graphic in highlighting the NSW's Governor Lachlan MacQuarie's announcement in 1816. It says: *'all Aborigines from Sydney onwards are to be made prisoners of war and if they resist they are to be shot and their bodies hung from trees in the most conspicuous places near where they fall, so as to strike terror into the hearts of surviving natives'*. The board also identifies massacres dating from 1816 – 1928 across NSW; WA; VIC; QLD.

As a Griefologist, I remember about 23 years ago asking myself a question: what makes another human being commit such inhumane atrocities upon another human being and not have the human capacity to see, feel or hear the pain of that victim? I also remember realising I had a responsibility to stop 'demonising' the arrival of 1788 by not asking *'what happened'* and instead asking *'why it happened'*. So as a Griefologist I hope you forgive me, for I always seek out, where possible, the other side to any story and in this context, our modern Australian history.

So, being asked to present the Keynote Speech titled 'Always Warriors', came with its own healthy dose of fear and anxiety! Fear and anxiety because I thought, 'How do I tell the two sides of a 229 year old story knowing 'Always Warriors' had to begin by acknowledging the Frontier Wars without malice, or shame or blame?, How do I tell *'why did it happen'* from a place of truth, justice, compassion and humility?'

It was then the Ancestors reminded me: be still and listen as you write and we will guide you to 'tell the story' of our time being Ancestral Warriors during the Frontier

Wars and know we always were and always will be your Spiritual Ancestors yesterday, today and tomorrow. And so, I share this with you:

For those who have not heard of the term 'Frontier Wars' it occurred in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when 1788 'arrived' causing what many refer to as the invasion/colonisation. When it 'arrived' in Sydney Harbour it brought the First, Second, Third and every fleet thereafter with its European infrastructure as business enterprises, Corporations, government officials and their justice system. The Frontier Wars is what brought our Ancestors into first contact with not just white people but an infrastructure they had never. Similarly, it had an inhumane justice system via the courts, prison and the police or Troopers as they were called back then, to control every aspect of a convict's life.

As a Griefologist, I recognise their suppressed unresolved grief, anger and rage would escalate into grief violence and inhumane atrocities not just when 1788 'arrived' here but against other Indigenous peoples around the world. Inhumane atrocities came in the form of genocide and how this was implemented was to introduce three warfares to reduce the numbers of our Aboriginal ancestors. The first two warfares introduced are outright warfare, that is killings and massacres and germ warfare – small pox and other diseases.

Outright warfare and germ warfare, was endured by many of our ancestral men, women and children who only had boomerangs, spears and nulla-nullas to fight for the rights to their land, families and culture. They lost against well-developed outright warfare because they had mastered the use of weaponry. Our Ancestral Warriors died in unimaginable numbers and endured unimaginable mental, emotional and physical pain and really should become our first category of 'foot soldiers'.

From a place of truth, justice, compassion and humility Bruce Elder an Australian award-winning journalist and author of his book: <sup>1</sup>*Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians in 1788*, goes on to say in his preface: <sup>2</sup>*the massacres of Aboriginal people, painful and shameful as they are, should be as much a part of Australian history as the first fleet, the explorers, the gold rushes and the bush ranges.* I thank you Bruce Elder for opening himself up to be shamed and criticised, praised and congratulated because all Australians have a right, a role and a responsibility to tell the real Australian history and I think, there's no better person than a non-Aboriginal person to open-up a dialogue from the same cultural background, without any fear or favour.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century many Aboriginal people were now looking at the third warfare, called psychological warfare! Psychological warfare is when policies, practices and procedures were written into law. For any Aboriginal Australians who survived the first two warfare's, Bruce Elder describe this period as *'those Aboriginal people who did survive were herded into reserves...'*<sup>3</sup> But this didn't stop our beloved *'old fulla's'* as we affectionately call them, from taking over from their Aboriginal ancestors the *'fight batten'* which was not their traditional lands anymore. In the 18th century four Aboriginal Missions or Reserves were built, for example the first one in SA was Poonindie near Port Lincoln in 1850; the second one is Raukkan on the Coorong built in 1859; Point Pearce on Yorke Peninsula built in 1868 and Koonibba (near Ceduna) built in 1899. Missions were managed by Religious organisations and

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<sup>1</sup> Elder, B. (2003) *Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians in 1788*. New Holland Publishers (Australia) Pty Ltd

<sup>2</sup> Elder, B. (2003) *Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians in 1788*. New Holland Publishers (Australia) Pty Ltd

<sup>3</sup> Elder, B. (2003) *Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians in 1788*. New Holland Publishers (Australia) Pty Ltd

Reserves managed by Government Officials. Around the State of SA, 6 more Missions and Reserves followed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

So, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Australia becomes a Federation! For this generation of Aboriginal soldiers the 'fighting for rights' language becomes different now. It is not just about '*fighting for our Aboriginal land and country*' that the Missions and Reserves were built on, but ironically our beloved 'old fulla's' were called upon between 1914 and 1918 to go off to war to fight WW1 for '*King and Country*'. With pride, we acknowledge WW1 soldiers like Pte Miller Mack from Raukkan, on our flyer for today's gathering! I would like to use this opportunity to recognise a brother of my grandmother, Uncle Ronny Kite, who also served in WW1 at Gallipoli and returned safely to his family. Our Aboriginal WW1 veterans are our second category of soldiers but important to note *all* our Aboriginal WW1 veterans were not included in the Australian census and were not able to vote.

The journey out of WW1, our beloved 'old fulla's' continued to '*fight for their Aboriginal land and country*'. Now it's WW2, between 1939-1945, and some are remembered by Point Pearce resident <sup>4</sup>Mr Alf Hughes: '*during the Second World War many men were con-scrip-ted*' and he '*remembers trucks coming to Point Pearce to collect the men.*' as described in 'Survival in Our Own Land – Aboriginal Experiences in South Australia since 1836'. These are our third category of 'soldiers' but our Aboriginal WW2 veterans were not allowed to be counted in the Australian census and were not allowed to vote.

So, by bringing our past into the present we are physically and emotionally closer to our contemporaries who followed in the footsteps of their Ancestors from the Frontier

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<sup>4</sup> Mattingly, C (1988) Survival in Our Own Land - 'Aboriginal' Experiences in 'South Australia' since 1836 (p124). Australian Scholarly Publishing (Melbourne).

wars. They did their best to stand tall and proud to maintain the fight for the right to their lands, families and culture as did our soldiers from WW1 & 2. Our physicality and emotions are closer to our fourth category of soldiers who signed up to not just protect Australia, as all other Aboriginal Veterans did before them, but I'm confident this fourth category had thoughts of still maintaining the fight for '*always was, always will be Aboriginal land*' in their hearts. Like Mr Steve Dodd who fought in the Korean war in the 1950's, was fortunate enough to also come home to his family and is being acknowledged in our flyer, for today's gathering. But important to note, Mr Dodd on his return to Australia still had no voting rights and was still not allowed to be counted in the Australian census!

So, there we are in the 1960's acknowledging our Aboriginal soldiers who either volunteered or were con-scrip-ted into the Vietnam War between 1962-1975. It is during the Vietnam War that our Australian government gave two significant rights to Aboriginal people: to vote in 1962 and to be counted in the census in 1967 through the Referendum which states: *<sup>5</sup>The 1967 Referendum proposed to include Aboriginal people in the census. And to allow the Commonwealth government to make laws for Aboriginal people.*

The count is taken every five years by the **Australian** Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The first **Australian census** was held in 1911, on the night of 2 April and subsequent **censuses** were held in 1921, 1933, 1947, 1954 and 1961 and so it wasn't until 1966 that Aboriginal people would be counted.

Again, hand on heart, it is not to shame or blame but from an Aboriginal perspective, it really meant it took 55 years to begin counting how many

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/history/australia-1967-referendum#>

Aboriginal people finally survived the three warfare's that were implemented to commit genocide upon a people who were highly evolved spiritually and who had no need for warfare. As much as I am grateful for the Census, it would have been interesting, if we knew how many Aboriginal people lived on this continent before and during 1788 and before the Frontier Wars began, to know what our population 'ended-up' as from the Census count in 1966.

In 1856, voting rights in South Australia was extended to male residents aged 21 and over. For our returning Aboriginal male Vietnam Veterans it took 106 years to finally vote in 1962. Voting rights for Aboriginal females came 68 years after non-Aboriginal women in South Australian who gained the right to 1894. But I say: Who's counting?

Some of our Aboriginal Vietnam Vets might be here today but many Vets aren't, but they will always be in my heart as 'Always was and always will be Warriors' because they've 'grown old and weary' and have gone to be with their Spiritual Ancestors.

Across and down the generations from the Frontier Wars through to the Vietnam war, we always had you as our physical Warriors who are today our Ancestral Spiritual Warriors who fought to the best of their ability so we can all be here today, not standing in the shadows of our Frontier Wars anymore and all the other Australian wars that followed, but in the sunshine with pride with our non-Aboriginal military buddies, friends, colleagues and families.

So, why should we remember them? Simply put they always were and always will be our biological ancestors who literally walked this land, they are family. During the Frontier war's they did the best they could with what they had: boomerangs, spears and nulla-nullas against a military culture, and if I can say: *'we are so very proud of*

*them*'. You became 'Always Warriors' by default knowing you came from a culture that didn't need to be military focussed – Bruce Elders refer to this time as being '6militarily inept' and you were, for all the right and for so many reasons. You lived here for over 60,000 years in harmony with your neighbouring tribes, claiming animals on this continent as your animal totem to maintain the balance with Mother nature. I need to believe you honoured and respected conflict by developing a healthy respect for grief anger and rage and expressed it through grieving ceremonies so it wouldn't escalate into grief violence and inhumane atrocities to permeate the continent. Again, the Griefologist in me needs to say: those Ancestors who perpetrated the Frontier Wars weren't bad people, they were and some would say maybe some of their contemporaries still are, grief stricken human beings who had stopped grieving, many centuries before 1788 'arrived'. Could we as all Australians have a right, a role and a responsibility to find our way back to grieving processes! Because this is where we'll find truth, justice, compassion and humility.

I think Aboriginal Australians were and still are the 'keepers of humanity'. We your descendents will do and become all that we can become today and tomorrow to reclaim back our 'humanity' that's simply misplaced, because of 1788, to reconcile with truth, justice, compassion and humility so the fight that you took to your deaths, whatever wars you all endured, won't go in vain. *Let us never forget you as you have never forgotten us!*

In closing, when I do Kurna welcomes I do the welcome and finish with the following acknowledgement because it's how I still feel and it goes like this: I'd also like to acknowledge my gratitude for the sharing of modern Australia; however I express

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<sup>6</sup> Elder, B. (2003) Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians in 1788 (p294). New Holland Publishers (Australia) Pty Ltd.

my deepest sadness for the cost of this sharing but realizing 'I', but I also hope it's 'we' all have a right, a role and a responsibility to continue walking towards Reconciliation together`. In so doing, we can move forward to a place of equity, justice and in partnership together as all Australians and for our future generations to come together as one nation under our great Southern Cross. And if we look around, I think this is what 'one nation' really looks like!

Thank you and enjoy the rest of your day.

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Aboriginal documentary film maker Edoardo Crismani, is doing a documentary called 'Lest we forget Aboriginal Women' featuring Aboriginal women who were or are in the Military. The film is being made throughout this year, but will be screened in 2018. If you are an Aboriginal woman who would like to tell of your time in the Military or you know someone who is not here today who might like to, please contact Edoardo WHO IS OVER THERE! Edoardo has already filmed myself and Sharen A'Hang.