From Segregated Institution to Self-Managed Community: The Contribution of Community Social Work Practice Towards Aboriginal Self-Management at Lake Tyers/Bung Yarnda Victoria

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Abstract

The central purpose of this thesis was to explore the contribution of community social work practice to a process of planned social change orchestrated by the Victorian Government's Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs during 1970-1971. This process aimed to reconstruct the living conditions of the residential Aboriginal population of Lake Tyers/Bung Yarnda so that the residents became land owners and managers of their physical, economic and social country. The thesis has sought to analyse the planned social change process that included two components - community development and legislation. The study found that legislation provided the necessary conditions to effect the social change sought by the residents, but the Government's grant of communal land title involved management of a corporate organisation, which conferred unexpected accountability standards and demanded new administrative skills of them. The study also found that the transfer of a new social and economic status required different attitudes and standards of behaviour from the residents, Government and the environment. Social change came with a price for all parties but especially the Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers.

The thesis has assessed the engagement of the community social worker, explored the theoretical ideas that guided the community social worker's practice, and analysed the social planning approach used by the Executive of the Ministry.

An autobiographical method was used drawing on primary data from the community social worker's practice records written during the intervention and collected materials. A content analysis of this data, from the perspective of practice ideas then and now, has facilitated the reconstructed account of what happened. Later historical, sociological, psychological, and community social work practice literature concerning the social and economic development of residential Aboriginal populations, was utilised to provide a contemporary contribution to the analysis of the process.

The foundation of the study was the integration of a critical social theoretical approach with the qualitative Indigenous methodology of 'decolonizing methodologies' (Smith 1999). Consequently, the central focus has been the Aboriginal residents', and the
community social worker's cultural constructions of a social reality formed by colonisation and racial structure.

The study found that the process of social change at Lake Tyers in 1970-1971 was primarily agency-controlled by the Ministry's Executive to ensure the Government's goals were realised; and that the process of locality development played a secondary and restricted role. The thesis has argued that past and present community social work practice knowledge has reflected a dominant Western world view. It has suggested that when formulating community development strategies, planners and practitioners have failed to recognise the fundamental importance of Aboriginal social organisation - the primary group relationships of Aboriginal extended kin networks, the under-development of secondary group relationships, and reliance on tertiary relationships with the state.

The national Aboriginal land rights social movement and the organised protest over the future of Lake Tyers have been identified as key factors instigating the process of social change. Specific historical, sociological and psychological concepts have been suggested as crucial to gaining insight into the context that created the seriously under-developed economic conditions of the residents of Lake Tyers in 1970. They include the oppressive nature of the Station regime that ensured the people's livelihood depended on tutelage with the state, stultified individual initiative and squashed leadership, protected residents from experiencing separation of home from work place, limited participation in the market economy, restricted interaction with civil society, and inhibited the formation of a racial community or secondary group to promote social needs and cultural interests.

The thesis has argued the need to conceptualise an Aboriginal approach to community social work in which the process of social change is controlled, negotiated and directed by an Aboriginal executive management; where social policies are shaped by Aboriginal people identifying their needs from their distinctive experience of colonisation and cultural adaptation; and where the engagement of a non-Aboriginal practitioner has been sanctioned by the Aboriginal executive.
Declaration of Authorship

This is to certify that

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD,

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

(iii) the thesis is less than 111,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signature:

Peter Francis Beckett Renkin

Date:
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Glossary

Definitions

1. **Community Work** — 'intervening in communities — the approach, methods and skills used' (Henderson and Thomas 2002:3).

2. **Neighbourhood Work** — community work occurring at a place. It is geographically or locality based.

3. **Community Development** — 'the process of establishing, or re-establishing, structures of human community within which new ways of relating, organising social life and meeting human need become possible' (Ife 2002:2).

4. **Community Organising** — 'a method of intervention whereby individuals, groups and organisations engage in planned action to influence social problems. It is concerned with the enrichment, development, and/or change of social institutions, and involves two major related processes: planning (that is, identifying problem areas, diagnosing causes, and formulating solutions) and organizing (that is, developing the constituencies and devising the strategies to effect action)' (Brager and Specht 1973:27-28).

5. **Community Practices** — community-based activities [top-down, bottom-up and side-to-side partnership] aiming to revitalize civil society and to challenge the power of the state 'that involve the conscious application of principles, strategies and skills to build and maintain a sense of community, both as an end in itself and as a vehicle to achieve social, economic, and political and cultural change'; and includes: community development, community organising, local and neighbourhood development, social action and community action, public advocacy, social movement campaigns and mass mobilisation' (Weeks, Hoatson and Dixon 2003:1-2 and 5).

6. **Community Social Work** — 'a team and agency strategy that comprises: a local role and site in a neighbourhood; a method that seeks to create a variety of networks and groups in a community, and, through doing so, developing new roles and
responsibilities for people that are satisfying to themselves, and of service to others; and a new relationship between professional workers and local residents’ (Henderson and Thomas 1997:8-9).

7. Community - a social unit of society denoting: a geographic population economically and socially interacting in a locality; or, a particular population structured by clear social roles, classes and statuses; or, a group of people who have a sense of solidarity arising from kinship or friendship or ethnicity or gender, or from sharing a common interest/cause. As a unit of social structure, a community has two dimensions: one marked by horizontal/locality-based relationships and the other featuring vertical relationships between local institutions, organizations, networks and people and their counterparts operating beyond locality at regional, national and global levels’ (Warren 1973).

8. Indigenous Rights - the special social, cultural, proprietary and economic rights of the descendants of the original people of Australia who inhabited the land prior to the invasion and colonisation by the British Government. Indigenous rights include: equal citizenship, protection against racial discrimination, common law recognition of customary native land and sea title, and recognition of Indigenous people’s contemporary social organization, culture and heritage. Indigenous rights are enhanced by policies of self-determination and self-management which give priority to overcoming the current disadvantages experienced by Indigenous people, service provision by adequately resourced community-control organizations as well as mainstream bodies – so that justice is experienced (based on the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).

9. Citizenship and Human Rights - the entitlements of members of a sovereign body such as the Commonwealth of Australia, enabling participation in society and access to decision making (Kenny 1994: 19), and including: civil and political rights [e.g. right to free speech, freedom of assembly, and the right to vote], economic, social and cultural rights [e.g. the right to health care, to education, to employment and to adequate social security], and collective rights, that apply only at the level of
communities or societies [egs. economic development and environmental rights] (Ife 2002: 67).

10. Indigenous Sovereignty — relies on the Indigenous peoples’ prior occupation of the Australian land mass and surrounding seas, and refutes the British Crown’s claim to sovereignty from 1788. The claim of Indigenous sovereignty argues that the Indigenous peoples have an inherent moral right to negotiate the terms of Australia’s statehood, and that the terms grant them self-governing powers.

11. Land Rights — refers to the Australian Indigenous people’s claim of common law proprietary rights to land and sea, or native title, arising from their original or prior occupation of Australia. Before the High Court’s decision in Mabo v Queensland (No. 2) (1992) and the Commonwealth’s Native Title Act 1993, Indigenous Australians sought the granting of freehold ownership of existing Crown land by statutory provision (eg. Aboriginal Lands Act 1970 (Victoria)). Reserves and former reserves were particularly targeted while Indigenous people agitated for refutation of the principle of ‘terra nullius’ and common law recognition of customary Indigenous land and sea title and the provision of determinative power to Indigenous peoples to consent to, and benefit from, mining developments on Indigenous owned land. Land rights may also include the right to preserve sacred, cultural and archaeological sites through Commonwealth and State statutes. The creation of ways (legal, organisational and financial) for those Indigenous peoples without legal capacity to hold title to un/alienated land, to facilitate their enjoyment of land by way of ownership or leasehold continues to be a matter of land rights.

12. Social Development — a social policy approach arguing that consideration of economic opportunities and resources is an integral part of social policy. It directs attention to overcoming people’s economic and social disadvantages by promoting social programs that increase their capacity to participate in economic activities (Midgley and Shearden 2000: 435-7).

13. Decolonising Methodologies — a social research approach shaped by an Indigenous world view and experience of invasion and colonisation which forms the basis for
research that pursues Indigenous interests by Indigenous devised methods (Smith 1999).

14. **Bung Yarnda** — The name of the traditional country occupied by its custodians, the Warn-a-ngatte residence group (or band), who spoke the Krauatungalung dialect of the Gunnai language. The missionary, John Bulmer, was advised by Gunnai men that they preferred the site of the Church of England Mission to be located at Bung Yarnda, alongside the area named by the colonists as ‘Lake Tyers’.

15. **Gunnai Language** — Before the invasion by the British, five dialects of the Gunnai language were spoken by Aboriginal people living in the region that was to become known by the colonists as Gippsland. The dialects and the area where speakers of that dialect were found included: Brataualung — to the south west; Braiakaulung — on plains to the west and into the mountains to the north; Brabralung — north from the lakes to the mountains; Tatungalung — the area surrounding, and including, the lakes; and Krauatungulung — east of the river (now known as Tambo) and stretching further east to the river (now known as Snowy), and northwards into the mountains (Clark 1996).

16. **Indigenous People** — a collective term identifying all persons who were the original occupiers of the continent of Australia before the invasion and those persons who descended from the original occupants. In the case of Australia, the Indigenous people are Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. I have capitalised the word following the practice with Maori, one of the Indigenous peoples of New Zealand. The term ‘Indigenous Peoples’, or ‘First Peoples’, is used internationally and is recognised by the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Organisation.

17. **Koorie** (also **Koori** — is the word used generally by Aboriginal people living in south eastern Australia (Victoria and southern New South Wales) to denote their different racial and cultural identification. It distinguishes these people from other Indigenous people such as: Nungas and Murris; and is distinct from a social identity associated with people of a language group eg. Gunnai.
18. Aboriginal Station (or Aboriginal Settlement) — a government residential institution operated on Crown land reserve under statutes that authorised the provision of special programs said to be for the benefit of Aborigines. Non-Aboriginal staff managed the segregated Aboriginal residents under special statutory conditions that denied them basic human rights and approved special powers of supervision.

19. Aboriginal Mission — a church managed Aboriginal residential institution operated at an Aboriginal reserve under licence by the state.

20. Aboriginal Reserve — Crown land reserved by legislation and regulation for the purpose of administering Aboriginal people. Some reserves were not occupied by Aboriginal residents; and some reserves were occupied by Aboriginal residents but not managed by church or government staff.

21. Commonwealth Bodies Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs after the 1967 referendum —
- Council of Aboriginal Affairs (1967-76),
- Office of Aboriginal Affairs (1967-1974),
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs (1972-1990),

22. Today’s nomenclature for Lake Tyers — The term ‘Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station’ was well known to the public of Victoria. After the Station ceased to exist as an institution and as a program an alternative title was adopted by the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. In January 1970 the Ministry chose to use the title ‘Lake Tyers Aboriginal Settlement’, and also ‘Lake Tyers Aboriginal Community’. Today the latter term is commonly used. As well ‘Bung Yarnda’ may be used to denote the place. Generally, the public knows that the property is owned by the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, and that the Trust is responsible for the property and the administration of the residential community.
Abbreviations

1. Central Board Appointed to Watch Over the Interests of Aborigines 1860-1869
2. Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Victoria - 1869-1957 (BPA)
5. Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA)
6. Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (the League)
7. Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI)
8. The Report Upon the Operation of the Aborigines Act 1928 and the Regulations and Orders made thereunder (McLean Report)
9. The Inquiry into the operation of the Aborigines Act 1928 and the Regulations and Orders made thereunder (The Inquiry)
11. Political Parties –
   - Australian Labour Party (ALP)
   - Liberal Party (Liberal)
   - Country Party (CP); and later renamed National Party (National)
12. Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW)
Chronology of Important Dates in the History of Bung Yarnda/Lake Tyers - from a non-Aboriginal perspective

Pre—European invasion – the site is the country of the Warn-a-ngatte horde of speakers of the the Krauatungalung dialect of the Gunna language

June 1860 – Central Board to watch over the interests of the Aborigines was appointed by the Colonial Government of Victoria

Late 1860 – Guardian of Aborigines, Mr W Thomas, visited Gippsland and recommended the establishment of reserves and the appointment of honorary correspondents to the Central Board. A reserve at South Buchan was recommended

June 1861 – Mr John Bulmer travelled to Buchan after his appointment as missionary by the Church of England Missionary Society with the intention of setting a site for a Mission

July 1861 – The Central Board supplied stores to Bulmer’s Mission site at Buchan

Late 1861 – Bulmer abandoned the Buchan site following Gunna people’s advice that Bung Yarnda was a better site. The site alongside Lake Tyers became the Mission

February 1862 – Bulmer with his wife were active issuing government stores, caring for children and providing some schooling. Adult Aborigines had not settled permanently

November 1862 – Central Board requested the Board of Lands and Works to reserve an area of land at Lake Tyers. In May 1863 2000 acres were temporarily reserved

August 1863 – school house was built. Mrs Bulmer took up teaching duties of children. In 1870 the school received State-aid as Lake Tyers Rural School No.11. The school became a State School in 1878

November 1869 – Act established the Board for the Protection of Aborigines

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1878 – St John's church was built by Bulmer and Aboriginal men with Church of England funds

November 1879 – 200 acres temporarily reserved on west side of the lake and additional 2000 acres to north of first reserve area temporarily reserved

December 1886 – Act to provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria 1886 enforcing the removal of people whose forbears include non-Aborigines

1890 – Framlingham Station was closed

September 1905 – Captain Howe appointed by Board as Assistant Manager in charge of works and secular activities with John Bulmer (a priest since 1904) Manager

January 1908 – Captain Howe appointed by Board as Manager and Bulmer as Chaplain only. Ramahyuck Mission, Lake Wellington closed and residents transferred to Lake Tyers

August 1917 – the Board decided all Missions and Stations were to close leaving Lake Tyers the sole Station. The transfer of residents for concentration at Lake Tyers was completed except for Coranderrk residents

1917-1925 – Mr Bruce Ferguson, Manager

1925-1928 – Mr George Baldwin, Manager

January 1929- May 1931 – Captain Newman, Manager

August 1931-June 1945 – Major R Glen Manager. Mr Len Rule, Assistant Manager from July 1935

Mid-1945-mid-1948 – Mr T Milliken, Manager

August 1948-1958 - Mr Len Rule, Manager

1955 – Inquiry into the Operation of the Aborigines Act 1928 and the regulations and orders made thereunder – the McLean Inquiry
1957 - Commissioner McLean made his Report and the Aborigines Welfare Board was created under conditions of the Aborigines Act 1957. The dispersal of families began

1958-1960 – Mr H McDonald, Manager

January 1960-1964 – Mr Tom Miles, Manager

April 1962 – Government announced closure of Lake Tyers Station; April 1963 – Pastor Doug Nichols resigned from the Board and the campaign to save Lake Tyers commenced. The dispersal policy was maintained

July 1964 – Mr Jim Hawkes, Acting Officer-in-Charge

May 1965 – Aborigines (Amendment) Act – altered the composition of the Board and the property of 4000 acres was made a permanent reserve

March 1966 – the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee was appointed by the Board to investigate the rehabilitation and training of residents

April 1966 – rations ceased and resident staff moved away from the Station

December 1966 – the State Government approved the recommendations of the Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee

February 1967 – the Board approved the building of four new houses and the appointment of resident staff members, a Visiting Nurse (Sister Phyllis Hildebrand) in February 1967, and a Farm Manager (Mr John Buchanan) in November 1967. Acting Officers-in-Charge were Mr Frank White January to October 1967, and Mr Alick Jackomos October to December 1967

October 1967- new legislation Aboriginal Affairs Act 1967 replaced the Board with the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs

January 1968-June 1971 – the Ministry was responsible for Lake Tyers; 1968-1969 Mr John Buchanan Acting Officers-in-Charge; from January 1970 to December 1971 Mr Peter Renkin was resident community social worker and officer responsible for Lake Tyers

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December 1970 – *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970* passed

1st July 1971- current – the *Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust* has been responsible for the ownership and management of Lake Tyers. 24th July 1971 the Governor of Victoria handed the title of the land to Mr Charlie Carter at a Ceremony held at Lake Tyers.

March 2004 – Lake Tyers Community Renewal Project – a Ten Year project sponsored by the Victorian Government through the Department of Justice and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

November 2004 – *Aboriginal Lands (Amendment Act) 2004* – empowered the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to appoint an Administrator to operate under conditions of the Act to act as the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust. The tenure of the appointed members of the Committee of Management of the Trust ceased for a specific period.

January 2005 – Administrator appointed by the State Government; and the Administrator selected an Advisory Committee of former members of the Trust’s Committee of Management and residents of Lake Tyers.
Chapter 1: Reflecting on past practice in the light of decolonizing methodologies

To my knowledge, there is at present nothing in the vast literature of social science treaties and textbooks and nothing in the practical or field training of graduate students in social science to prepare them for the realities and complexities of this type of involvement in a real, dynamic, turbulent and at times seemingly chaotic community. And what is more, nothing anywhere in the training of social scientists, teachers or social workers now prepares them to understand, to cope with, or to change the normal chaos of ghetto communities (Kenneth B. Clark 1965:xv).

Clearly, there have been some shifts in the way non-indigenous researchers and academics have positioned themselves and their work in relation to the people for whom the research still counts.....Other researchers have had to clarify their research aims and think more seriously about effective and ethical ways of carrying out research with indigenous peoples. Still others have developed ways of working with indigenous peoples on a variety of projects in an ongoing and mutually beneficial way (Linda Tuhiwai Smith 1999:17).

A memory of arriving at Lake Tyers in January 1970

My first entry into the time and space of the residents living on the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Reserve was on 3rd January 1970. I entered knowing little of the pre-European invasion history of the place BungYamda/Lake Tyers. Today in 2005, not only am I better informed about the pre-invasion country of the Warna-a-ngatte residence group (or band) of the Krauatungalung people – the eastern regional identity (or clan) speaking the Thangquai dialect of the Gunnai language (Pepper and De Araugo 1985; Keen 2004) - but now the foundation of my approach to knowing has altered. Recognition of an Indigenous perspective has nurtured my appreciation of Gunnai traditional heritage, of the impact of colonisation on the Warna-a-ngatte group, their descendants and other Aboriginal people who came to live at Lake Tyers, and the present struggle for justice of the Lake Tyers' residents and shareholders of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust.

I had some understanding of the socio-political situation of the Lake Tyers population and the reserve when I drove from Melbourne that Saturday in 1970. As a University student in 1966, I had listened to a few Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers speaking at
public meetings in Melbourne during the campaign to retain Lake Tyers as an Aboriginal property for the benefit of the Aboriginal residents. The campaign was organised by Aboriginal leaders belonging to the *Victorian Aborigines Advancement League* (the League) and their non-Aboriginal supporters. The protesters and media coverage reported the desire of residents to live at the property, accusations of deliberate government neglect, and pictured evidence of the people's suffering in degrading living conditions.

It was a warm summer afternoon when I steered the car off the Princes Highway southwards into Rules Road. State-owned forest stretched on both sides of this unsurfaced, narrow, winding, corrugated track. Five kilometres on, gateposts marked the entrance to the Aboriginal Reserve of 1,620 hectares (4,000 acres). A cattlegrid separated the two gateposts, each supporting a fence-line demarcating the property's boundary in either direction. The dirt track resumed its way winding through the forest until fenced paddocks appeared, well grassed but interspersed with clumps of bracken. The track straightened and passed through an avenue of tall eucalypts separating the fence-lined pastures until two gateways, each with a cattle grid announced the entrance to the residential settlement. Looking ahead, the main track gradually descended while a dirt track branched off around a sports ground to reach a few isolated small timber cottages, and another side-track led to a meeting hall. On the opposite side of the main track stretched more undulating paddocks with grazing cattle, until a short distance further on, three modern weatherboard houses fronted the road. The track ended at a T intersection. To the right was a prominent rectangular-shaped, stucco-rendered building. Opposite the rectangular building and on the other side of the intersection, an early twentieth century Edwardian timber house stood in a fenced spacious garden setting. Immediately to the left of the intersection was a cemetery surrounded by a line of pine trees and bordered by a white timber fence. Beyond the cemetery there were more buildings, including three houses further distant across more paddocks and overlooking the eastern arm of the lake. In the opposite direction to the west of the intersection, beyond the rectangular building and the Edwardian house, farm sheds of various sizes were clustered on either side of the track. The track then began to descend, passing the prominent timber church with its conspicuous tower and commanding view of a calm, shimmering Lake Tyers. More houses appeared beyond the church. The school, beside the church but partly hidden by
large pine trees, completed the ‘village’. The pastoral tranquillity of that Saturday afternoon evoked a sense of the sublime.

A boy of about nine years of age appeared to be the sole witness of my arrival at the Station in January 1970. He was manoeuvring the front wheel of his bike across the deep ruts criss-crossing the eroded dirt road alongside the cemetery. He knew which house had been allocated to my family and pointed to it.

The next day I recall looking at a sprawling residential settlement surrounded by undulating farm paddocks. The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Reserve stood alone on a headland overlooking the lake on three sides, physically separated from its social environment by an expanse of forest and water. It was apparent that the spatial arrangement of the constructed environment of the former Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station had featured official buildings and staff residences set well apart from the cottages occupied by the Aboriginal residents. The earlier colonising regime’s notions of racial superiority and privilege had been translated into significant differences in the scale and standard of accommodation. The physical distance between the buildings of the rulers (residences of non-Aboriginal staff, school, church, office, community hall and workshops) where formal interactions occurred, and that of the ruled (cottages of the Aboriginal residents) had been used to instil and maintain a social order of managed and economically dependent residents (Attwood 1989b:7). However, the appearance of recently built fully appointed and fenced houses located proximate to official buildings suggested the grip of the old regime had been broken by more egalitarian values. While undertaking the research, I learned that in late 1966 conflict arose between the residents and staff of the Aborigines Welfare Board (the Board) over the location of those new houses (West 2003). Officially, egalitarian physical accommodation standards may have been accepted, but still Board staff ignored the residents’ request about the siting of the houses. Respect of Aboriginal people eluded formal relationships the later sixties.
Introduction to the research

The context for this research is the transfer by the Victorian State Government of freehold land title and corporate responsibilities of land ownership and governance to the Aboriginal residential population of Lake Tyers in 1971. The research analyses an organised process of purposive social change (Warren 1977:9) conducted during 1970 and 1971, a process that involved a community social worker and affected the livelihood and personal wellbeing of the residential Aboriginal population of Lake Tyers in settled rural south eastern Australia (Rowley 1971:vii; Keen 1988). As that community social worker, I recorded the process of community development by noting my practice experiences, observations of the life of the residents, and attempts to interpret and understand interactions, events and activities. Later as a researcher, I have critically reflected on that practice data following further years of practice, and reading of community work practice, historical, sociological and social research literature. The initial research data represented the practice perspective of a non-Aboriginal, male, professional, employed by the State Government. The records were composed from a Western cultural outlook, and with the view that social reality had an objective existence. My recent reflexive research activity however has been moulded by a contrasting epistemology, where the cultural construction of knowledge and meaning has recognised the coloniser-colonised paradigm and an Indigenous worldview (Morrissette, McKenzie & Morrisette 1993), and where social reality 'is created in interaction and through interpretation' (Sarantakos 1993:20). An intrinsic element of the research process has been learning to appreciate the Indigenous perspective and realising how cultural knowledge shapes understanding (Smith 1999).

This research exercise is also concerned with an epistemology of community social work practice – with knowledge building from studying what happened during practice. I have viewed the process of 'planned social change' (Dixon 1989) from two perspectives: i) that of the practitioner at Lake Tyers thirty years ago when records were kept of what happened - a professional act Schon (1983) has conceptualised as 'reflection-in-action' - 'thinking what they are doing while they are doing it'; and ii) as a researcher some thirty years later critically reflecting on those same autobiographical documents. Critical
reflection has been a research tool that has similarity with the professional action of
gaining insight into practice by returning to review the evidence of previous practice.
This act of reviewing Schon (1983) called ‘reflection-on-action’ – where the practitioner
reconsiders the past practice performance, analyses what was done and constructs an
‘intelligence’ (Schon 1987:25) or body of wisdom. In this thesis I have returned to
explore and analyse the original data in order to narrate the past practice event as
historical behaviour. The account has also taken a contemporary view of the episode by
incorporating a critical analytical approach, valuing an Indigenous cultural construction
of knowledge, and benefiting from current historical, social and community social work
practice ideas. The thesis is like a counterpoint relating to a critical dialogue between
‘then and now’ and ‘Western and Indigenous worldviews’.

The process of purposive social change (Warren 1977) was implemented on two levels —
one at a State wide (or societal) level through the enactment of reforming legislation, and
the other at a ‘locality’ or ‘neighbourhood’ level targeting the Lake Tyers residents
through a process of community development (Warren 1977:7-8). Studying what
happened at Lake Tyers has raised theoretical issues pertinent to community social work
practice with Aborigines, and identified matters of policy relating to Aboriginal social
and economic development. It has considered the community organising role played by
the non-Aboriginal community social worker in the social life of Aboriginal people.

**Background to the research**

There are professional reasons for undertaking the research. The body of literature about
community social work in Australia is small compared with other domains of social work
practice. More significantly, published practice literature has barely focussed on
Indigenous Australians (McMahon 1990:11 & 2002) as there are very few published
articles specifically written about community organising with Indigenous Australians
(Tomlinson 1985). McMahon (2002:178) has called the situation ‘social work’s silence
about indigenous Australians’.
This thesis is a personal contribution towards strengthening the process of decolonisation (Smith 1999), and a way of promoting the social movement of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. As a community social worker in 1970-1971, I was observing, deciding, interacting and recording from a position of cultural outsider belonging to an organization with a long history of colonising authority. My comprehension of the social stratification of Australian society was influenced then by ‘writings in the sense of positivistic, survey sociology’ (Wild 1978:119), and my coloniser worldview of the nature of race relations in Australia was ‘essentially descriptive and implicitly functionalist’ (Wild 1978:120). Although a community social worker with some awareness of racism and its impact, I barely questioned the prevailing coloniser epistemology and the assumptions upon which it was constructed. My practice behaviour portrayed an assortment of liberal democratic, humane and coloniser engendered ideological values, and gender and class attitudes (Dixon 1992:10) that had personal, professional and public administration origins. More recently critical social analysis (Sargent 1994) and an Indigenous research approach ‘decolonizing methodologies’ (Smith 1999), have enabled me to differently approach an interpretation of the history, society and the process of social change affecting the people of Lake Tyers. Now this study of an organised social change process has appreciated Indigenous ways of knowing, recognised Aboriginal people’s articulation of the direction in which they wish to progress knowledge building (VicHealth Koori Health Research and Community Development Unit 2000 & 2001), and acknowledged the danger of depending on the sources, nature and extent of Western cultural dominance of social scientific endeavours in relation to Indigenous people (Smith 1999; Walker 2003). Today, Aboriginal people’s interpretation of their historical experience of colonisation, including its traumatic psychological and sociological impact (Koorie Heritage Trust Mission Voices 2004), has an integral role to play in shaping the cultural knowledge of contemporary Australian society.

This study aims to make a contribution to the literature concerned with planned interventions altering the life chances of local groups of Aboriginal people. In particular, the thesis is seen as a way of providing Aboriginal people whose heritage is associated with Lake Tyers with an opportunity to read about a period of their history, and to assist
their understanding of one person's interpretation of the background to the present day's circumstances of the place and its people.

Kevin Gilbert (1973) has challenged non-Aboriginal researchers and consultants when he wrote of those who as workers undertake study grants and research projects, and participate with commissions:

[with] a few glad exceptions, these efforts never get to the core of the Aboriginal soul, for what the Black man says is one thing, what he feels is another and the white interpretation is generally yet another (Gilbert 1973:viii).

I departed Lake Tyers in December 1971 pleased that the outcome of the transfer of the land title had been accomplished. I was quite dissatisfied with the quality of the process of community development, and troubled that I did not adequately understand what had happened. Although in 1972 the transfer of land title to Aboriginal ownership was a reality, the Ministry continued to provide a supportive presence, and the Commonwealth Government promised ongoing resources to further social and economic development, I considered the quality of the engagement of the residents in the process of community development had been flawed. A viable social and organisational infrastructure had still to be established if the residents were to enjoy economic activity, governance and self-management.

The thesis has presented the journey of a practitioner reflecting-on past practice but within the context of a social research exercise. Through the use of critical social analysis (Sargent 1994), the research methodology of ‘decolonizing methodologies’ (Smith 1999), and the ideas and values developed from the practice of planned social change with Aboriginal groups and residential populations, the thesis has represented my understanding of what happened.

**Aims of the research study**

The research asked three major questions:
• What was the contribution of community social work practice knowledge and skills to the process of removing the segregating institutional structure of the former Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station when Aboriginal ownership and self-management were introduced at Bung Yarnda/Lake Tyers in 1970-1971?

• What are the implications of this contribution of community social work practice to contemporary Aboriginal community organising and the political, social and economic development of residential Aboriginal populations in settled rural Australia?

• What are the lessons for the non-Aboriginal community social worker?

In pursuing these research questions, the study aimed to:

• understand the community social work practiced at Lake Tyers between 1970-1971 where a process of community development was a part of the overall social change that resulted in Aboriginal land ownership and self-management opportunities for the residents of Lake Tyers;

• identify the historical context of the episode of social change and appreciate its genesis;

• analyse the colonising race structure in which the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station was set, and relate that structure to the living conditions of the residents prior to 1970 when the practice engagement began, so that the barriers to immediate transfer of self-management are identified and understood;

• document the roles and tasks performed by the community social worker and interactions with the residents of Lake Tyers as they participated in the community development process undertaken to build community capacity, to establish communal self-governance, to improve work operations and economic performance, to promote the self-reliance of families and to secure the life chances of youth;

• identify the social organisation of the residents of Lake Tyers and the type of community existing there in 1970-1971, and assess whether the process of organised change related to, and enhanced the social organization; and

• explore the literature concerning a community social work approach to organised change with Aboriginal people.
Orientation

The property of 1,620 hectares owned by the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust is located three hundred and fifty kilometres east of Melbourne in the region of East Gippsland. Today, vehicle access is via the Princes Highway nineteen kilometres further east of Lakes Entrance. A right turn southwards into Rules Road for another five kilometres reaches the entrance to the Trust’s property clearly demarcated by its archway and sign, and still a further six kilometres from the residential area and cleared farm land. The well formed sealed road was constructed by the former Country Roads Board (now VicRoads) in time for the Vice-Regal ceremony held on 24th July 1971 - when title to the property was handed to Mr Charlie Carter, the first Chairman of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust.

Map 1.1: Map of Victoria showing the location of Lake Tyers


The residential area is set on a headland protruding into Lake Tyers and separating Blackfellows Arm, Nowa Nowa Arm and Toorloo Arm. The ocean is a short distance south across the lake. For many years a sand bar has blocked the lake from entering the
sea. From the property, direct boat access is possible to a holiday township known as **Lake Tyers Beach** located at the lake’s entrance to the ocean. During the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, entry to the Station was via boat access from the Lake Tyers Beach area, departing from Mill Point, Blay’s Jetty, Fisherman’s Landing or Cross’s Landing. In those days, all travellers and suppliers used water transport to and from the Aboriginal Mission, later Station. Until the Princes Highway was constructed, horse drawn coaches travelled by road from Lakes Entrance (then Cunninghame) to Orbost by crossing the sand bar at the entrance of Lake Tyers to the ocean at Lake Tyers Beach. In those days, travellers came from Melbourne by train to Sale or Bairnsdale and then boarded a steamer to cross the lakes to Lakes Entrance. Finally, a horse drawn coach from Lakes Entrance was needed to reach districts further east, including the Aboriginal Station.

**Map 1.2: Map of Lake Tyers showing the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust property**
**Nowa Nowa**, a small timber milling town situated alongside the Princes Highway at the northern end of the Nowa Nowa Arm of Lake Tyers, is fifteen kilometres to the north of the Lake Tyers settlement. It has a small population, is the nearest town with basic retail facilities and where the Lake Tyers children attend primary school.

**Lakes Entrance** is a multi-serviced town at the eastern end of the Gippsland Lakes, located thirty one kilometres from the Aboriginal community of Lake Tyers, west along the Princes Highway. It is port for the largest commercial fishing fleet in Victoria and a popular resort for tourists and holidaymakers. It has health, welfare, police, sporting and retail facilities and services, including a secondary school.

The **Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust** has been situated in the **Shire of East Gippsland** since the mid-1990s. In 1970, the property was located within the jurisdiction of the former Shire of Tambo, with its headquarters at Bruthen. The Shire of East Gippsland’s administrative centre is located at **Bairnsdale**, the major retail centre of the region with a population in excess of 11,000 people. The Shire’s economy relies primarily on tourism, the primary industries of agriculture, horticulture, forestry and fishing, retail services, public and private human services and light industries. Bairnsdale is sixty-six kilometres west from the Lake Tyers Aboriginal community.

The census of the Australian population in 2001 estimated the Victorian Indigenous population to be 25,078 people, or 0.54 percent of the total Victorian population of 4,612,007 persons. The Victorian Indigenous population constituted 6.1 percent of the Australian Indigenous population. 52.1 percent of the Victorian Indigenous population lived in regional Victoria. 1,321 Indigenous persons lived in the Local Government Area of East Gippsland amounting to 1.72 percent of the total population of that Local Government Area. This is the second highest proportion of Indigenous people in a Victorian Local Government Area (the highest being the Mallee LGA). The East Gippsland Indigenous population composed 5.3 percent of the total Victorian Indigenous population (The Victorian Government Indigenous Affairs Report 2004:33-34).
The age structure of the Indigenous Victorian population is younger than that of the non-Indigenous population due to a higher fertility rate, a higher mortality rate and a lower life expectancy. 57 percent of the Victorian Indigenous population is under the age of 25 years compared with 34 per cent of the non-Indigenous population (The Victorian Government Indigenous Affairs Report 2004:33-34).

In January 1970, the youthfulness of the Lake Tyers population was very prominent at 61 percent of the total residential population, and compared with a little more than 7 percent of the total population at sixty or more years of age. I estimated that seventy adults and children permanently lived at Lake Tyers when I conducted a survey by visiting each of the ten households. I found another striking demographic feature concerned the households – the membership of three households spanned three generations, while six households consisted only of nuclear family members (Personal Papers January 1970).

During the course of the process of community development I learned of the importance of the connectedness of each household to an extended family network that included families living at, and beyond, Lake Tyers. The key findings of the survey are covered later in Chapter 7.

**Historical context: country, mission and station**

Initially I sought to learn about the past circumstances of the people who were resident at Lake Tyers in 1970 - the people who were the primary subject of the process of social change. To satisfy this purpose I used historical inquiry believing that exploration of archival documents, research theses, books and journal articles, stories I collected from discussions with residents during 1970-1971, and more recently written oral histories composed by residents and former residents would contribute to that understanding. My inquiry began with the traditional Krauatungalung people of Bung Yarnda at a time before the British invasion. I then moved the focus to their descendants living at the Church of England Mission at Lake Tyers begun in 1861, and the residents from other traditional countries who over time came to reside at the Lake Tyers Mission, later Government Station after 1908. Historical inquiry spanned colonisation of the people in
East Gippsland from first settler incursion up to 1970, explored the nature of the institutional life of the Mission/Station and its impact on the lives of residents, reviewed the immediate events triggering the episode of planned change during 1970-1971, and noted the various public policies operating over that period.

In traditional (pre-European invasion) times, Bung Yarnda was a regular meeting place of speakers of the Gunnai and Bidawal languages (Pepper and de Araugo 1985:118). After 1861, members of the Warn-a-ngatte people whose country was Bung Yarnda, along with other Gunnai regional identities, chose to move to the Church of England Mission at Lake Tyers located on reserved Crown land (Keen 2004:108). Lay missionary John Bulmer had been advised of, and shown, the site by Kun-dhero-billeyman, also known as William Flan’ner (Vanderwal 1994:xiii), or Will Hannon (Pepper with De Araugo 1985:121). Gunnai people chose this country for the Mission because they could maintain religious practice, intra- and inter-group social relations and pursue traditional economic activities. Geographical isolation from settler relations and expanding pastoral and agricultural industries suited the state’s and Bulmer’s purposes - opportunities to proselytise, care, provide sustenance, train and adapt to European life. (Pepper with De Araugo 1985:121; Christie 1979:166; Attwood 1989b:4-6). Officially the state claimed its goals for Missions and Stations were charitable and educative – even self-supporting (Report on the Operation of the Aborigines Act 1928 and the Regulations and Orders made thereunder 1957:4) (McLean Report). However, Christie (1979:163-166) has noted, that after 1860, the government’s policy was primarily one of ‘paternalistic coercion’ – confinement of Aboriginal people to reserve lands, with authority to control their movements. The Mission guaranteed the settlers protection from intercourse with the Gunnai while offering them an available cheaper labour force. Increasingly, the Gunnai’s survival depended on residence at the Mission (Attwood 1989b:7).
Keen has described the impact of European settlement in Gippsland as having:

...quick and devastating effects, radically transforming the lives of Aboriginal people within a few decades. This was the case in Gippsland, the home of Ku(r)nai people, from the 1830s onwards (Keen 2004:2).

Keen went further:

By the 1860s, when anthropological research began, the colonial infrastructure was fully in place in Gippsland, with Sale as the regional centre. The Ku(r)nai population had been decimated by killings and disease, reduced from more than 2000 to less than 200, the majority living at the Lake Tyers Mission (established 1861) and Ramahyuck Mission (1863) (Keen 2004:9).

The missionary Mr (later Reverend) John Bulmer and Church of England Mission staff managed the Mission until 1908. In that year, the State of Victoria replaced the church administration and assumed full responsibility for management of the segregated residential institution. From 1908 and until 1971, the State accepted special statutory responsibility for the people who lived at Lake Tyers. In 1917, the Government selected
the Lake Tyers Station to be its only segregated, managed residential institution in Victoria. This action brought to fruition the long held plan of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines (BPA) to reduce the number of stations and missions, a plan first publicly announced in 1879 (Board for the Protection of Aborigines Annual Report 1879-90 Victorian Parliamentary Papers Vol.3:13). By 1910, legislation allowed the BPA to assist all Aboriginal people, not only people whose parents were wholly of Aboriginal descent. Consequently, eligibility to reside at Lake Tyers was widened. Although Lake Tyers had been ‘home’ continuously for Krauatungalung people speaking a dialect of the Gunnai language, at the discretion of the BPA, it became a residential institution for other Gunnai speaking residential groups as well as Aboriginal people speaking languages from other traditional countries across Victoria and some from inter-state.

Commissioner Charles McLean reminded the Victorian Government in January 1957 which person was eligible to legally reside at the Station when he submitted his Report:

The policy of the Act and Regulations is clearly that residence on a prescribed reserve shall be restricted to full-blood aborigines, and half-castes who are “licensed” by the Board to reside there, such licences being subject to cancellation at any time, and to be restricted to “cases of illness, infirmity, or other necessitous circumstances” (McLean Report 1957:12).

To achieve the plan of having one station, the remaining managed stations were closed at Lake Condah (in 1918) and Coranderrk (in 1924). Aboriginal persons living on these stations (Lake Condah and Coranderrk) and reserves (Elliminyt [at Colac, Western Victoria] and Framlingham) were ordered to transfer their residence to Lake Tyers, depending on whether they met the statutory conditions and wanted to receive government assistance. From 1917 to 1971, the Station retained its identity as an institution accommodating ‘licensed’ Aboriginal residents from any Victorian location. Commissioner McLean (1957) noted that in practice, by 1937, the conditions of eligibility to reside were not administered closely:

I have referred earlier to the rigidity with which the Board formerly observed this policy. In recent years, however, it has been by no means strictly adhered to, and the position has now been reached whereby the Board usually accepts and maintains at Lake Tyers any person of
aboriginal blood who desires to live there, and without the requirement of a licence from the Board (McLean Report 1957:12).

In the sixties residents choosing to reside at the Station required the Board’s approval. By 1970, residence at Lake Tyers was a matter of individual and family choice, and the willingness of householders to accept additional residents. The number of residents was constrained by the number of houses available and their capacity to accommodate.

One hundred and ten years after the foundation of the Mission, the social change executed at Bung Yarnda/Lake Tyers during 1970-1971 saw the final dismantling of that pervasive and destructive institutional vestige of British colonisation - the segregated and coloniser-managed residential Aboriginal station located on reserved Crown land. The planned change episode from the Victorian Government’s perspective was one way of resolving a national dilemma facing all Commonwealth and State administrations: finding a just and feasible political, social and economic alternative to managing Aboriginal populations in segregated institutions located on Reserve Crown land. In 1965, South Australia had initiated the first statutory move towards Aboriginal land ownership and management (Dunstan 1966). But, Victoria was the first Australian Government to assign by statute law freehold land ownership and self-management to a distinct, local Aboriginal population. Chapters Four and Five outline in greater depth the historical and sociological context of the episode of social change at Lake Tyers.

**Historical context: the Aboriginal social movement and the League’s campaign**

The episode of purposive change undertaken by Government at Lake Tyers in 1970 was initiated by a successful political campaign to ‘Save Lake Tyers’ involving concerted ‘social action’ (Checkoway 1995:6). Aboriginal leaders based in Melbourne, conducted the campaign with participants from Lake Tyers and strong non-Aboriginal individual and organisational support (Jackomos, M. 1971; Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985). The campaign began when public attention in April 1963 reported the resignation of Pastor (later Sir) Doug Nicholls, Field Officer of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (the League), from the Board in protest at the Board’s removal of
residents from the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station (Clark 1972). This action was one of many political tactics initiated by Indigenous people in many places across the nation challenging hitherto assumed coloniser dominance. Altogether these efforts constituted the Australian Indigenous rights social movement (Burgmann 2003) and the Aboriginal land rights movement (Lippmann 1981:49). In the 1960s the Indigenous social movement advocated for both civil (for instance: the removal of negatively discriminatory laws, and equal treatment as citizens securing entitlement to receive all the services and utilities non-Aboriginal people obtained - the provision of public housing, access to employment, proper legal process, public health and education), and Indigenous rights such as, common law recognition of customary legal title to traditionally occupied land before British occupation and settlement, the retention by Aborigines of reserved Crown land for their purposes, acceptance of a live cultural identity, preservation and protection of extant and past cultural heritage, and a referendum to alter the Australian Constitution so that it recognised the presence of Indigenous people by counting them as members of the nation, and empowering the Commonwealth Government to provide services and funds to the States for Aboriginal people (Smoke Signals Vol.5 1966; Foley 2000). Nationally, and in Victoria, Aboriginal leaders advocated that as a beginning recognition of ‘land rights’, governments should recognise that Aboriginal people had a right to occupy, manage and own the remaining tracts of Crown land reserved for their benefit since the mid-nineteenth century (Clark 1972:225; Gilbert 1973; Pittock 1975; Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985). (In 1970, the two remaining occupied reserves in Victoria were at Lake Tyers and at Framlingham in Western Victoria).

After 1958 and during the early 1960s, the Lake Tyers residents were pressured by staff of the Board to leave the Station (Clark 1972; Boas 1974; Koorie Heritage Trust 2004). Residents were not consulted about the transition they faced, and there was no training offered to prepare families for town living. Eventually, one resident family and some pensioners refused to leave the Station (Jackomos, M. 1971:7). The desperate situation of the relocated and culturally isolated families, including the plight of families who subsequently had become homeless, was recognised by the League. The League publicly protested about their dislocated situations, and the media revealed the demoralising living conditions of the residents still at Lake Tyers. The political contest over the future of
Lake Tyers erupted publicly in 1963 and continued until 1966. The platform of retaining Lake Tyers for the residents provided those advocating nationally for Indigenous cultural recognition and land rights with a cause celebre upon which to base their fundamental struggle. The battle over Lake Tyers was won in early 1966 when the State Government relented, enabled a majority of the membership of a reconstituted Board to establish a rehabilitation and training program for the residents of Lake Tyers; and announced the Station would not be closed. An account of the historical context of the social change conducted at Lake Tyers is provided in Chapter Four.

Realisation of secure tenure for the residents was upset by the demise of the Board during 1967, and by the time taken to establish its replacement, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs (the Ministry) – authorised by the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Act 1967* (Number 7574). The interest of the residents of Lake Tyers was not accorded a high priority throughout this transitional period. After May 1968, changes at the Station began to be implemented with the appointment of a Director of the Ministry and new staff, former staff houses were allocated to Aboriginal families and the farm's redevelopment began. Eventually, the State Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announced in April 1970, that the Government intended to draft an *Aboriginal Lands Bill* giving freehold title of the Lake Tyers reserved Crown land to the residents. (The same Bill gave similar title to residents of Framlingham reserve).

The *Aboriginal Lands Bill* was introduced into the Legislative Assembly in October, and became an *Act* in December 1970. At a ceremony at Lake Tyers on 24th July 1971, the Governor of Victoria handed a freehold, in fee simple title deed to the Chairman of the newly constituted *Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust*. The ceremonial handover of freehold title was seen as a watershed one for the Indigenous people in Victoria, particularly the residents of Framlingham and Lake Tyers. Although a relatively small area of land was transferred, the transfer of the first freehold Crown land grant by any Australian Government to a legally incorporated local Indigenous land holding body represented a significant departure from previous practices of any government. Chapter Six gives attention to the part played by the process of the enactment of legislation in the episode of social change.
The subject of this thesis, the episode of social change at Lake Tyers, gives particular attention to the process of community development during the period from January 1970 to December 1971. It took the Government and Parliament about ten months, from April 1970 to January 1971, to complete the process of the enactment of the legislation to legally permit the transfer of land ownership and self-management to the residents. Eventually fifteen months (April 1970 to June 1971) were available to plan and prepare for the transformation by way of a 'planned process of community development' (Dixon 1989). Initially however, all parties were uncertain of the time available to conduct the process of community development at Lake Tyers (See Chapter Seven).

**Public policy context: assimilation, integration and self-determination**

In my effort to understand what had happened at Lake Tyers I reviewed public policy, a task complementing historical inquiry. I wanted to appreciate what were past government policies and what was the impact of their implementation on the well being of earlier Aboriginal residents, the parents and grand parents of the present population. In particular, I sought to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the policy of assimilation, the policy which was the target of protest of the Aboriginal social movement and the 'Save Lake Tyers Campaign'. It was important also to appreciate the public policy debates of the Sixties and early Seventies as they composed the substance of values, outcomes and processes guiding the process of social change. I analysed past and current policy offerings in order to understand the causes and effects of the situation with which they were concerned, the ideological values they contained, the intended beneficiaries of policy, the quality and quantity of evidence accumulated to justify policy arguments, and the outcomes each claimed it could produce. I began from a critical position that viewed public policy as a tool of dominant non-Aboriginal interests, that had made the Aboriginal people subaltern and that had intruded into their lives since the British Crown assumed governance of the Port Phillip District of the Colony of New South Wales in 1836.

During the 1960s as a student and citizen, I participated in the public debates concerning the place Aboriginal people should occupy in Australian society. During this period
Aboriginal people conspicuously entered into the dialogue and began to specify their terms. Conflict over Lake Tyers raised major questions about the efficacy of the long-standing policy of assimilation. State and Commonwealth Governments felt the impact of alternative standards set by international bodies — for example, the International Labour Organisation’s Convention 107 in 1957 that recognised the right of Indigenous people to claim ownership of land taken by conquest or stealth (Lippmann 1981:43).


Chesterman and Galligan (1997) argued that the Act to Provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria, 1886 (Victoria) introduced the policy of assimilation in Victoria. For Chesterman and Galligan (1997), the policy illustrated the racial thinking of the time revealing the non-Aboriginal thought processes that continued to dominate race relations until the late-1950s with the emergence of the politically influential Indigenous social movement. Attwood (1989b) has argued the 1886 Act was “more inclusionist” relying less on racial theory and more on:

...a general bourgeois ethos of individualism, economic self-help and moral improvement, and in an allied fear of pauperism (Attwood 1989b:98).

Christie (1979) and Attwood (1989b) have suggested another reason for the 1886 Act and its focus on the ‘half caste’. The BPA wanted to rid the missions/stations of those residents who, for more than a decade, had protested the strict regime of managers and missionaries and their discontent with the BPA’s performance (Christie 1979:194; Attwood 1989b:90-91).

Past government policy formulations have relied on non-Aboriginal racial assumptions derived from the non-Aboriginal concern to describe the characteristics of Aborigines and to explain Aboriginal inequality; and the motivation of dominant non-Aboriginal interests to resolve how Aboriginal people can be assisted by governments to fit into the general Australian society. Markus (1982) has illustrated the diversity of racial categories...
held in the 1930s by scientists, administrators and politicians – the era of the formulation of the policy of assimilation when Aboriginal inferiority was assumed.

The policy of assimilation was officially adopted at a conference of Commonwealth and State administrators of Aboriginal welfare in 1937. The administrators, still believing the population of traditionally oriented people was dying out, raised their major concern - the increasing population of Aboriginal people descended from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents (Markus 1982:96). Anatomist scientists and physical anthropologists were then arguing how physical differences (cranial capacity, cerebral structure and genetic composition) and psychological abilities explained the physical and intellectual inferiority of Aborigines. The scientists also claimed they had evidence that biological assimilation did not contaminate the 'European racial stock', and thus provided the ground upon which the administrators launched the policy of assimilation and programs implementing miscegenation (Markus 1982:90, 96-99). The contrary argument of the anthropologist Elkin, also a party to debates from the 1930s to the 1950s, publicly proposed a policy of cultural assimilation relying on a non-Aboriginal public's 'understanding of Aboriginal languages, social milieu and world of thought', and the ability of Aborigines to adapt to the changed conditions thrust upon them by invasion and settlement (Markus 1982:92-96). Commissioner McLean, in his Report to the Victorian Government (1957), recommended a policy of cultural assimilation; and the Board implemented that policy between 1957 and 1967 (See Chapter Four).

The Victorian Government had clung to assimilation as the way to proceed into the fifties. Although absent from the Native Welfare Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers in 1951, Victoria adopted the statement of assimilation policy:

...ensuring that "all Aborigines will attain the same manner of living.. enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1967:12).

From its inception in 1957, the Board's statutory charter embraced that policy (Report of the Board 30 June 1958:5). During the early 1960s, the momentum of the Indigenous
social movement revealed serious weaknesses in the assimilation policy. The credibility of the assimilation policy was directly challenged by Yolgnu leaders at Yirrkala, by organizations such as the Federal Council of Aboriginal Advancement (later the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders) (FCAATSI), by the success of campaign to retain the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station, and by overseas criticism (Broome 1982:173-177).

In October 1962, Ian Spalding writing in the League’s magazine *Smoke Signals*, distinguished “integration” as an alternative policy:

> The implication of Assimilation is that the minority people will lose part of their separate identity in the process of merging....The essential emphasis in Integration programmes is the recognition that the members of each urban or tribal minority have been nurtured in cultural settings in which kinship obligations, values, amusements, religious ideas and so on differ from traditions of the wider community. The need for individuals to retain those portions of their heritage which are indispensable to their emotional security is respected and allowance made for it (Spalding 1962).

By 1965, the South Australian Attorney General, Mr Don Dunstan, had incorporated the tenets of the new policy approach in legislation that included the right of Indigenous people: to hold reserve land, to determine their future and to live as a cultural group in society (Crux 1965:11). Later in September 1971, the South Australian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Len King, called this policy ‘integration’ and saw it as an alternative to assimilation (Stone 1974:272). In July 1965, the national Conference of Ministers of Aboriginal Welfare agreed to a revision of the assimilation policy according to the principles of ‘integration’.

The Board demonstrated its response to the pressures for reform with its ‘Aboriginal Policies of the Aborigines Welfare Board 1966’ emphasising ‘Aboriginal choice’ in matters affecting Aborigines; and full recognition of Aboriginal customs, beliefs and cultural values (Report of the Board 30th June 1966:6; Tatz 1982:38). The policy statement however retained ‘assimilation’ as its title. The appointment of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee and its subsequent Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee (Tatz Report 1966) was evidence that the revised emphases of
integration’ were being implemented. A new organisational approach to implementing the integration policy was contained in the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Act, 1967. The passage of the legislation was without controversy in Victoria, coming soon after the overwhelming success of the Commonwealth Constitutional Referendum in May 1967 and the electorate’s attitude towards positive promotion of Aboriginal development. The new Constitutional power gave the Commonwealth a special role in Aboriginal affairs, held concurrently with the States, and which allowed Aboriginal people to be counted in the national census. Commonwealth services generally available to other members of the population, for example, social security provisions, had been available to categories of Indigenous people since 1901, but not to residents of Aboriginal Stations (Attwood and Markus 1997:x).

By the late 1960s and early 1970s in Victoria however, the principles of an integration policy were not acceptable to younger Aboriginal leaders at the League who insisted on an Aboriginal executive leading the League; and publicly sought recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and land rights, as well as securing civil rights and cultural identity. Conflict surfaced publicly between the State Government, the Ministry and Aboriginal people over who should determine policy in Aboriginal affairs (Lyons 1983:75; Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985). For these Aboriginal leaders the essence of a policy of self-determination was taking form. Despite their assertion of Aboriginal control however, the Victorian Government had no intention of relinquishing command of the State’s Aboriginal affairs policy or administration to them. This was the political environment in which the Lake Tyers people received land title and self-government.

While Indigenous people strived to obtain the assimilation policy’s proposition of equalisation of citizen rights and entitlements, they overwhelmingly rejected the policy’s expectation of forgoing Aboriginal identity and its denial of recognition of a separate Indigenous cultural group life, lack of opportunity to participate in decision making, and refusal to acknowledge rights to land ownership arising from prior occupation. An alternative policy direction was articulated and advocated as ‘self-determination’ - title to land, an economic base generating self-reliance, political autonomy to decide their place
in society, and control of decision making by their community organizations (McGuinness 1972; Foley 2000). This thesis will argue that the Victorian Government’s policy thrust during the program of purposive change at Lake Tyers between 1970-1971 demonstrated policy principles of ‘integration’, but baulked at implementing ‘self-determination’ (Lyons 1983:75).

From its inception in 1968, the Ministry was guided by the policy of integration and its assumption of racial equality — where the status of equality of all citizens was based on equal responsibility and opportunity (Lyons 1983:75), and where programs of positive discrimination would overcome disadvantage and then terminate (Boas 1974:244-247). Aboriginal organizations and many of the ordinary Aboriginal residents of country towns opposed this policy (Lippmann 1973:139) because its terms of citizenship did not give them a political role in their affairs - holding positions of power, asserting a separate Aboriginal racial and cultural identity, realising Indigenous rights by possessing land, and controlling resources so that they could satisfy their needs (Lyons 1983:75).

The attitudes of politicians towards Aborigines in the thirties were ‘derived from practical experience’ (Markus 1982:102); and so were the attitudes of non-Aboriginal residents of country towns in 1969-1970 (Lippmann 1973: 180-181). Lippmann (1972) considered another sector of society when surveying the racial attitudes of non-Aboriginal residents of four country towns (two in Victoria and two in New South Wales) – at a time when assimilation was being discredited and the policy of integration was coming into vogue. The survey was conducted when a policy of self-determination was also stridently advocated by Aboriginal people and their supporters who did not revert to racial assumptions to explain inequality, but rather attributed Aboriginal inequality to social, economic and political structures that maintained racial prejudice and ignorance to retain ascendency.

For the non-Aboriginal residents, visible ‘low material and social standards’ still indicated the presumed inferiority of an Aboriginal person. These attitudes were reinforced by prejudice, ignorance of a separate cultural identity, and lack of social
contact (Lippmann 1973:182). This attitude was encountered by the residents of Lake Tyers when they engaged with their external social world in 1970-1971.

**Foundational community social work ideas**

The central task of the study is developing an understanding of the episode of purposive social change at Lake Tyers by identifying, clarifying, analysing and assessing the community social work ideas and program. The task is tackled in Chapters Three and Seven. At this point it is important to introduce some key foundational community social work ideas associated with the intervention.

First, the sponsoring body of the intervention was the State Government of Victoria; and the agent of change was the Ministry, its statutory body. The Ministry directed the project and employed the personnel, including a community social work practitioner associated with participants from various walks-of-life, occupations and disciplines, such as nurses, farmers and administrative staff. On this occasion, social workers occupied lead positions in the Ministry – that of Director, Supervising Social Worker and community social worker – with each respectively performing direction, policy formulation, key line management and field roles.

Second, the project at Lake Tyers was an early example of the many community development projects sponsored by State and Federal Governments in the seventies (Weeks, Hoatson & Dixon 2003:66). It was however unique because its target population was an Aboriginal population in settled rural Australia. Government sponsorship of this episode contrasted with the ‘Save Lake Tyers’ campaign where Aboriginal people of the League and at Lake Tyers (the ‘grass-roots’) collaborated with non-Aboriginal supporters to organise protest against the State’s policy and program – an example of community organising ‘social action’ (Checkoway 1995) using ‘direct action’ tactics (Brager & Specht 1973:296).

Third, the process of community development at Lake Tyers illustrated the model of community organising named ‘locality development’ (Rothman 1974), where the residents had a degree of participation in deciding the goals and some opportunity to re-
structuring their livelihood and the re-development of their personal wellbeing. It is an exercise concerned with 'the on-going process of developing self-reliance, both in terms of personal and social group capacities' (Dixon 1989:82), an exercise aiming to facilitate individual psychological growth and family social development and resonating with the remark of Henderson and Thomas (2002):

(community work) is concerned not simply with the system or the individual, but also with role; it is an intervention that helps people to develop and expand the roles which they have been accustomed to taking - or not taking - in life (Henderson & Thomas 2002:22).

Fourth, while the process of social change at Lake Tyers, sanctioned by the Government and directed by the Ministry, was top/down and driven by a hierarchical organization, it can be regarded as an example of what Dixon (1989:82-83) has termed 'planned social change':

the shaping of interests, not of political and economic forces, but of community and informal networks. In this sense 'community' was one means for change and a possible by-product of groups co-operating to cope with progress (Dixon 1989:83).

Fifth, attention has been directed to the horizontal connections of the Lake Tyers residents with their locality, and to their vertical, or extra-community, connections (Brager & Specht 1973:19-20). As change agent, the Ministry was involved in developing the horizontal relationships of the people at Lake Tyers; and between the residents and institutions and people living in the surrounding district. On a State-wide basis the Ministry developed vertical relationships with the residents of Lake Tyers, the various scattered Aboriginal groups, Federal and State Departments, and civil society. The Ministry held a vision of a multi-racial society supporting equality of civil rights and providing the full range of standard essential human services (Boas 1973). I have sociologically viewed the local situation of the population of Lake Tyers as inextricably connected to the structure of the race relations of the larger society and a product of regional, State and national social structures (Warren 1972:161; Cox 1979:227). The residents did not exist as a stand-alone group, isolated and independent from the social environment. The political, economic and social forces of the society were instrumental in forming the race structure that created and maintained Lake Tyers.
In Chapter Seven the study assesses the extent of the community development engagement with the geographic and social hinterland, especially Aboriginal kith and kin networks, and the race structure of East Gippsland. Consideration is given to Mowbray’s contention that typically ‘locality development’ has avoided challenging power arrangements and therefore failed to alter social structure for the benefit of disadvantaged groups (Mowbray 1985a:41-42).

Sixth, acquiring knowledge of the living culture of the residents of Lake Tyers was recognised as a fundamental task for a community social worker. In 1970-1971, it was appreciated that the achievement of planned social change (Dixon 1989) depended upon knowing the residents’ world-view, their norms and mores, their social organization and the stories of their life journeys. It was realised that discovery of the residents’ cultural ways, beliefs and attitudes provided foundational ideas for the actions of goal setting and designing the process of community development. At this time, there was no readily available substantive knowledge of the culture of the residents of Lake Tyers. Barwick’s anthropological contribution was general in relation to Lake Tyers (1963, 1964a, 1964b, and 1966). Consequently, an integral task of daily community work practice became collecting a beginning and working body of knowledge about the people’s culture. This was a most difficult enterprise, as residents were mistrustful and not used to divulging information to a non-Aboriginal staff member.

In 1963, Barwick’s field research however had discerned that there were distinctive social characteristics in the behaviour and bearing of people then living in Melbourne who had originated from Lake Tyers (1963 and 1964a). The source of these features was suggested to be the impact of tutelage exerted by living at the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station. Thus the study was motivated to take a particular direction - to develop an understanding of how, over generations, the residents and their predecessors had adapted their traditional culture to colonisation, including the political economy of East Gippsland. It was expected that such an approach would appreciate the people’s experience of loss of culture as well as their re-construction of culture through adaptation.
Finally, it was a significant political action to grant a Crown land title to two groups of Indigenous people living on the State's two remaining Aboriginal reserves at Lake Tyers and Framlingham. The assignment of property-owner status to these two Aboriginal populations had a societal impact, affected the local 'existing economic and power structures', and in this sense constituted 'fundamental social change' (Dixon 1989:82-83). The Government's response was structural in character with legislation having a State-wide impact, although only two small areas of land were involved, and two small Aboriginal populations directly benefited. The legislation implied that the claim of Indigenous people for proprietary rights to land had been officially noted. The passage of legislation ensured a public airing in Parliament of argument about the entitlement of Aboriginal people to own land and about re-allocating them some of the State's land resources. The termination of the state's tutelage responsibility for the Aboriginal population of Lake Tyers was an act of structural import and a contribution to 'fundamental social change' (Dixon 1989).

**Approach to Research**

The research process has revisited the episode of social change from the perspective of the critical social theory approach of 'decolonizing methodologies' (Smith 1999). This perspective has facilitated learning while reading recently acquired historical, anthropological, sociological social work practice literature, including recently published Indigenous oral histories and people's experience of colonisation.

This research has been written in the tradition of critical social science inquiry (Blaikie 1993: 54; Sarantakos 1993:38-39). Critical sociology has provided an analytical strategy to examine the foundations of Indigenous inequality in Australia, an analytical strategy that 'lays bare the structural, institutional and social foundations....' Anderson (2001:5). Critical social theory attributes the past and present experiences of Indigenous people to subordination under colonialism; and it facilitates understanding that the setting of community social work practice in Australia is a colonised society.
The Maori social scientist, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Smith 1999:21), has viewed colonialism as an expression of imperialism. She noted the economic relationship of the two concepts:

Imperialism was the system of control which secured the markets and capital investments. Colonialism facilitated this expansion by ensuring that there was European control, which necessarily meant securing and subjugating the indigenous populations (Smith 1999:21).

Smith (1999) has emphasised the importance of tracing the effects of imperialism and colonialism at the local level:

There is ... a greater and more immediate need to understand the complex ways in which people were brought within the imperial system, because its impact is still being felt... The reach of imperialism into 'our heads' challenges those who belong to colonized communities to understand how this occurred...(Smith 1999:23).

This study undertakes such a task by examining what happened at a specific locality and people at Lake Tyers. Smith (1999) has valued the contribution of critical social analysis to directing attention to the way research has been another site of cultural dominance.

Australian society has been, and remains, unjust and unfair to too many of its citizens, but especially its 'First Peoples', the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, who have experienced the comprehensive impact of colonialism. Colonial practices have, since the invasion by the British, depended on race and racism to justify and maintain the structures of power in Australian society. Evidence of racial prejudice can been found in interpersonal relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Contemporary Australia finds colonialism pervading an extensive range of dealings between Indigenous people and the institutions of the liberal democratic state, the capitalist market, the private realm and civil society (Dixon 2003:16). Critical social theory has recognized the vital part played by class, power, gender and racial and cultural dominance — the oppression of Indigenous people since the European invasion (Sargent 1994; Smith 1999). The theory's fundamental ideas of how dominance, privilege and power distort consciousness of social reality have heuristic value when explaining the state's retention of the Aboriginal Reserve at Lake Tyers until the start of the 1970s, the
condition of the people of Lake Tyers and the role of the Ministry in orchestrating a process of social change.

Critical theory has utility for all community social workers by offering an 'analytical strategy', a mechanism to examine and interpret how practice with Indigenous people has been performed in the past; and how it is performed today. The exercise of examining practice has a beginning — to understand the sociological foundations of professional practice and how policy and program have been moulded by the political and social structures of colonisation. The examination involves practitioners interpreting their practice interactions with Indigenous people so that the former hear how the practice setting and methods may not be in tune with the life experiences and social world of Indigenous service users. It is most important that community social workers develop a consciousness about why so much of their professional practice with Aboriginal people has been less than effective regardless of whether relationships have been at an individual, family or cultural community level. In their interactions with community social workers Aboriginal people have not been able to fully share in the identification of their troubles, the reasons for them and how they can be resolved (Anderson 1994:42). As a profession, social workers have not been at the forefront of vigorous advocacy of a profound social transformation involving reform of constitution, legislation, official policies and programs (McMahon 2002:176). McMahon (2002) has stated:

Histories of Australian social work (Lawrence 1965; Martin 1990) make no mention of social work with Indigenous people (McMahon 2002:178).

His statement is supported in the literature of planned community social work interventions by community social workers (Downing 1971; Tomlinson 1985). Critical sociology has relevance in analysing the social change episode conducted at Lake Tyers. The historical context started with the first Gippsland capitalist settler pastoralists who established their power in Western social, political and economic institutions. Pursuing profits, backed by the state and not deterred by humanitarians (including some church missionaries), the settlers and their institutions dispossessed Aboriginal people from their country and caused destruction of their society resulting in a radical economic, political and cultural malaise. Ultimately, the institution of Mission/Station on reserved land, (an
idea inspired earlier by the British Colonial Office), served the interests of the vast majority of pastoralists, townsfolk, church and the state. By the 1860s, segregating Gunnai people at the Lake Tyers Anglican Mission located on reserve Crown land enabled management by the state through its agent the church. The mid-nineteenth century settler society argued that Aboriginal people needed protective seclusion, civilising, care and induction into Western cultural and religious ways - except when their labour proved of value. Through the Board for the Protection of Aborigines (BPA), the coloniser's administration of the Gunnai people's livelihood proceeded to deliberately deny Aboriginal aspirations to adapt, stabilise and reconstruct their social organization on their country at Missions/Stations or elsewhere (Attwood 1989b:62-63). Many Aboriginal individuals, families and groups made supreme efforts to adjust to living at the missions/stations and/or in the general society (Attwood 1989b:32ff). They continued to believe that the country they had occupied belonged to them, including the places where missions/stations were located (Attwood 1989b:61-62; Gilbert 1973:9, 40 & 50).

In spite of major societal changes, one hundred years later the reserve at Lake Tyers still existed. Throughout this period, the state had not recognised the generations of Aboriginal people resisting assimilation at a great social, physical and economic cost. The practice of excluding people living under intrusive supervision at Lake Tyers was retained until 1966. By congregating an Aboriginal population at a segregated managed institution, the local economy (especially farmers and timber millers) of East Gippsland and south coast New South Wales was provided with unskilled labourers. For generations at Lake Tyers, the state had effectively limited Aboriginal people's freedom of movement, access to jobs and a living wage, social security pensions and benefits, schooling, skills training, accommodation, health and legal resources, undermined customary and cultural practices, and usurped their opportunities to provide leadership, self-government and social control. Denied civil rights and citizenship the people were forbidden from living as a distinct cultural group in an open society. They had very few opportunities to express themselves culturally, to obtain information, to engage in the social intercourse of civil society, to participate as workers, consumers and neighbours, and to be occupationally and socially mobile like most other Australians. The non-Aboriginal people of East Gippsland presumed superior status, seeing these people not as
Aborigines, but as 'poor whites'. Despite the desire of the dominant society for Aborigines to assimilate, non-Aboriginal people had no wish to share a common destiny with Aboriginal people. The stratified society reinforced the extant strong cultural Aboriginal group consciousness (Barwick 1988); and the group defended its closely bonded kith and kin social networks (Rowse 1993:84). The intergenerational social and psychological effects of colonisation that shaped Aboriginal consciousness and well-being (Atkinson 2002) were ignored by the colonisers, as they encouraged the colonised Aborigines to express self-deprecation, display powerlessness and fuelled a fundamental mistrust of non-Aboriginal people's motivations.

Sociologically, the Aboriginal people of East Gippsland, including residents of Lake Tyers, were unable to establish an autonomous cultural identity as a racial community in the general society (Neuwirth 1969). They were socially excluded with very limited social and economic status, and the state through legislation and administrative practice decided the terms of their cultural group membership. Aborigines did not have the power to compete with other interests and to insist that the needs of their cultural community must be met by the state and civil society. However, in 1963 the political protest - the 'Save Lake Tyers' campaign - undermined this status quo and indicated that terms of the colonial relationship had to be re-negotiated with organised Aboriginal people.

Today, I approach social science research with a critical view of society – one that expects co-operation and conflict to occur between races, classes and powerful groups; one that rejects political outcomes that deprive and disadvantage certain people; one that seeks to discover the causes underlying unequal and oppressive structural relationships experienced by Indigenous people. I value all citizens having opportunities to positively contribute to political, social and economic transactions, and accept that Indigenous descendants have additional intrinsic language, cultural, constitutional, legal, land and sea rights to other Australians. The distinct heritage of Indigenous people is prized, as is the construction of an Indigenous cultural knowledge. In this thesis, each Aboriginal person's life-journey has been seen as a valued story including achievement, resistance, survival, trauma, courage, grief, anger, resentment, deprivation, incarceration, beauty and love. As the study has progressed, my admiration of the Lake Tyers people has been reaffirmed -
the resilience of their kith and kin networks and the enduring tenacity of parents, leaders and household heads. On a daily basis, courage, compassion, determination, frustration and trepidation were displayed at Lake Tyers during the period of the process of social change, as stability was elusive, and residents were challenged to accept the enormity of new, unknown and unexpected responsibilities that were thrust upon them.

**Research as ‘Decolonizing Methodologies’**

The study is underpinned by a particular critical social research approach called ‘decolonizing methodologies’ (Smith 1999), a qualitative methodology concentrating on the decolonisation of the elements of the research enterprise - substantive social theory, epistemology and methods. ‘Decolonizing methodologies’ develops an epistemology where Indigenous people construct knowledge from their cultural experience and where research pursues the purposes and interests of Indigenous researchers, individuals and groups. Smith does not exclude the non-Indigenous researcher, providing Indigenous criteria are satisfied (Smith 1999:178 & 184).

Smith (1999) outlined four culturally appropriate models available to non-Indigenous researchers previously devised by another Maori social researcher, Graham Smith (Smith 1999:175-179). I consider this research undertaking can satisfy the following two models of Graham Smith:

- ‘power sharing model’ where researchers ‘seek the assistance of the community to meaningfully support the development of the research enterprise’
- ‘empowering outcomes model’, which addresses the sorts of questions Maori people want to know and which has beneficial outcomes (Smith 1999:177).

The other two models directly involve Indigenous sponsorship and guidance, and as their research processes are embedded in the long term life of Indigenous people, they are not considered applicable to this study.

For a little more than the last decade, the philosophy of ‘decolonizing methodologies’ has influenced research endeavours conducted by Indigenous and non-Indigenous
researchers. The approach is based upon an Indigenous peoples' world-view - the adoption of the goal of self-determination and its mobilization at local, regional, national and global levels. The approach specifies that Indigenous researchers and their Indigenous subjects set the goals, methods and ethical standards so that the research process and products are congruent with the interests of Indigenous peoples. To realise the ethos of 'decolonizing methodologies', opportunities must be created for Indigenous people to confidently construct their own accounts of their unique spiritual origins, cultural journeys and present situation. This approach aims to develop an Indigenous peoples' knowledge of pre-colonial culture, colonial histories of survival, resistance and recovery and participation in decolonisation processes. Indigenous knowledge building has resulted following the de-construction of invalid Western assertions and conclusions. Indigenous controlled research activity has contributed to healing and transforming processes. Although the negative effects of past Western research have been radically critiqued, Indigenous researchers have used Western scientific theory and research methodology when it:

- validly contributes to Indigenous knowledge building and benefits Indigenous people;
- has their community's legitimation and does not assume Western cultural superiority;
- ensures their participation in direction and process (Smith 1999).

The choice of a qualitative methodology for this study blends with the values and goals of 'decolonizing methodologies'. Ely, quoting Sherman and Webb, has summarized the qualitative research methodology as:

...qualitative implies a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone'...Qualitative research, then, has the aim of understanding experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it (Ely 1991:4-5).

A qualitative methodology has particular relevance for this research undertaking as the focus centres on the community social worker's interpretations of the roles he performed, the events and interactions he experienced and the observations he made while interacting with the Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers and employed by the Ministry. Sarantakos (1993) has written:
[for] the qualitative researcher, social reality does not exist objectively but is created in interaction and through interpretation, of which the researcher is an integral part. The researcher experiences reality through interaction and interpretation. Our world is something we make, not something we discover (Sarantakos 1993:20).

The study is not an ethnographic study. It does not elicit historical memories from Aboriginal people who lived at Lake Tyers or were associated with the process of change over the years 1970-1972, using methods of oral history, questionnaire or interview. Nor does the study rely on the personal accounts of other key players in the episode — such as former Ministry staff and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders of organizations actively involved in the change organised at Lake Tyers.

This present study has aimed to ensure the Lake Tyers people have confidence with the research task and its process. Social researchers, especially non-Aboriginal ones, have ethical responsibilities in the research of topics affecting the interests of Indigenous people. The Indigenous people of concern must be directly involved in the formulation of the research project, giving it approval and monitoring the process and use of outcomes. The Lake Tyers people have been portrayed in this research as actors, not objects or victims. Their heritage has been prized and the strength of their social organisation has been recognised. The principles of ‘decolonizing methodologies’ have been applied to this research’s endeavour, design and methods. In this study, there has been consultation with the Lake Tyers people, in order to share the task of setting the research goals and protocols; to hear how they thought they might benefit, and to decide what written parts of the study they would select to retain for themselves (VicHealth Koori Health Research and Community Development Unit 2000 and 2001; Smith 1999). The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust sanctioned the study and they stated they saw benefit from the research. The thesis, information and collected records — of a historical, family and social development nature — will be made available to the Trust and residents at the conclusion of the thesis process. The research process has incorporated an ongoing accountability to the Trust from its initial approval and the appointment of a Reference Group.

The research plan has envisaged the study being useful to the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, the current residents and workers at Lake Tyers, and to the Aboriginal people as a
residential community. The study should assist improved comprehension of the legislation and how the Trust was organized, why it was shaped in certain ways, whether community development had a positive impact, and how community development can have a current role in facilitating Indigenous social development. This research has presented the unique identity of the descendants of the original occupants.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the research subject, the research questions, and some components of the research undertaking such as philosophical foundations congruent with Western and Indigenous research principles. The important structural features of this episode of planned social change have been briefly identified as they set the conditions of the future livelihood of the Aboriginal people of Lake Tyers. The immediate historical background of the episode has been traced to the British invasion and more than a century of colonisation of the Indigenous occupants.

The foundation of the study is the critical social theoretical approach to social science research and the qualitative methodology of 'decolonizing methodologies' (Smith 1999). This research base prospers the philosophical view that social reality is subjectively created when social intercourse is interpreted. Social reality does not have an objective existence. A critical social research focus on what happened during the episode of social change at Lake Tyers has the capacity to capture the intrinsically conflictual interactions between Government, representing the power of coloniser through its agency the Ministry, and the colonised, the Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers. Furthermore, the critical framework places the race structuring of Australian society at the heart of the research endeavour. By integrating an Indigenous methodology with a critical analysis, both the Indigenous residents’ and the change agent’s cultural constructions of social reality are attributed a place in the research task.

The thesis has studied the practice journey of a community social worker entering the social, economic and political world of a small Aboriginal residential population who had had a unique experience of colonisation, and about whom non-Aboriginal institutions and
people had very little social knowledge. The thesis has related how the worker and the residents met in an unprecedented process of planned social change (Dixon 1989) over a period of two years - one that purported to benefit the people. The thesis has entered an underdeveloped sphere of professional interest in Australia where theorising about community social work interventions with Indigenous groups has hardly begun, and where very few rigorously evaluated studies of interventions have been conducted. Nevertheless, the thesis has explored how this process of social change progressed using the methods of legislation and community development. In the absence of a suitable theory of community social work to guide the research, two frameworks and a model of organised group development have been utilised (see Chapter Three).

Chapters are presented as follows:

- Chapter Two, ‘Research design’ – is concerned with the autobiographical method utilised by the study’s qualitative research design and issues arising - where the data collected in the field by a community social work practitioner some thirty years ago is revisited by the same person now performing the role of researcher. Representational, legitimation and ethical research issues are discussed.

- Chapter Three ‘Towards building Indigenous organising’ – views the status of community organising practice theory of two periods - when the episode of social change occurred, and the current situation. The chapter identifies the theoretical ideas, models and principles of community social work practice available to the practitioner engaged in a social change intervention with an Aboriginal population in 1970. It identifies the particular approaches applied by the Ministry at Lake Tyers, suggests the reasons why the approaches were chosen, and assesses their effectiveness. A review of literature relating to the contribution of community social work to the social development of Aboriginal residential populations is outlined. The chapter introduces the three theoretical approaches that are used in the thesis to analyse the community social work practice data collected during the process of social change between 1970-1971. The three approaches used were: i) an analytic framework of Pruger & Specht (1969) because it provides a set of propositions which give direction to exploring the core questions underlying this episode of social change; ii) a second analytical
framework developed by Henderson & Thomas (2002) because it provides a basis to describing and analysing the major activities of my engagement as a community social worker from its commencement to its conclusion. Henderson and Thomas (2000) proposed a typical process of neighbourhood (or locality) development as covering nine-stages which I apply to tell the Lake Tyers narrative; and iii) a model conceived by Brager & Specht (1973) where the growth pattern in a constituency's group life was viewed as covering four-stages in the process of community organising. This model was selected to act as a template from which to focus on the process of community development at Lake Tyers where the development of the collective or group life of the residents was regarded as a major task. Chapter Three briefly describes each of the three theoretical approaches. While Pruger and Specht's (1969) framework underpins the direction of Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven, the framework of Henderson and Thomas (2000) guides discussion in Chapter Seven, and the contribution of the model of community organising practice of Brager and Specht (1973) is assessed in Chapter Eight. A discussion of a contemporary policy framework for Aboriginal social development, incorporating the goal of self-determination, concludes the chapter.

- Chapter Four, 'What we want is respect' – follows the thrust of the 'analytic framework' of Pruger and Specht (1969) by providing the historical context to the episode of planned social change of 1970-1971. The chapter pursues an understanding of the long struggle for cultural autonomy, economic independence and self-management by the people living at the former Aboriginal Station at Lake Tyers. It relates details of the successful political campaign undertaken from 1963 to 1966 - a Victorian exercise of the national Aboriginal social movement - that established the basis of a secure future for the residents.

- Chapter Five, 'Identity and survival prior to 1970' – continues to utilise Pruger and Specht's (1969) framework by pursuing 'know-why' questions that delve further into the historical and sociological context, especially focusing on the racial and colonising social, economic and political living conditions of the residents of Lake Tyers during the twentieth century. A psychological and sociological assessment is made of the impact of institutionalisation at the Station on the people's personal and
communal development. The residents' readiness for land ownership and self-management is considered.

- Chapter Six, 'The chance to prove ourselves' — starts to consider the 'know-how' questions of Pruger and Specht (1969) by exploring one component of the process of social change that brought land rights and management responsibility to Lake Tyers people — the process of enactment of legislation. This process began in April 1970, operated concurrently with the second component of the process of social change - the process of community development - and inter-related with that second process. The genesis of the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970* and its legislative content is outlined. The issue of the restricted shareholder eligibility is named and its effect on the Aboriginal social organization of Lake Tyers and Gippsland families noted. The chapter concludes with details of the membership of the original Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, the appointment of the first Committee of Management and the beginning of the Trust's operations.

- Chapter Seven, 'The process of community development: transferring land ownership and self-management to an Aboriginal community', continues to explore the 'know-how' questions of Pruger and Specht (1969). It applies the framework of the stages of the process of neighbourhood development proposed by Henderson and Thomas (2002) to describe and analyse the second component of social change — the process of community development - conducted locally at Lake Tyers between January 1970 and December 1971. It describes highlights of the community social worker's activities, such as during the first weeks when concerned with the stage of 'Getting to know the neighbourhood', when a demographic survey of the residential population was conducted. The importance of the Minister's announcement of pending land title transfer in April 1970 is noted, for it gave overall purpose and instilled direction into the process of change. The competence of the Ministry to organise social change using a 'social planning' and 'top-down' approach in conjunction with the 'locality development' approach of the community social worker is assessed. The chapter distinguishes three specific phases in the process of planning and implementing community development based on two factors — 'type of Aboriginal leadership' and 'who controls management', and analyses the three developmental phases. The model
of community organizing devised by Brager and Specht (1973) is used as a tool to understand the communal group development of the residents. The chapter identifies an initial mutuality of the respective goals of Government and residents, and describes how during the course of the process differences emerged between the purposes of government and residents, and between the residents themselves. The program of community development is outlined; and the people's readiness for responsibilities of governance, and social and economic independence is examined.

- Chapter Eight, 'From little things big things grow' – makes a critical assessment of the process of social change at Lake Tyers, identifies a policy framework for Aboriginal social change, and suggests key community organizing practice principles for community work with Aborigines. Finally the chapter recommends a role for the community social worker, including the non-Indigenous worker, in the social development of self-determining Indigenous communities; and emphasises the conduct of a social analysis of the practice setting where 'race', 'colonisation' and 'Aboriginal social organisation' are the critical units of the structural analysis. The strengths and weaknesses of the research methodology and methods are also assessed.
Chapter 2: Research Design

Most research methodologies assume that the researcher is an outsider able to observe without being implicated in the scene. This is related to positivism and notions of objectivity and neutrality. Feminist research and other more critical approaches have made the insider methodology much more acceptable in qualitative research...The critical issue with insider research is the constant need for reflexivity. At a general level insider researchers have to have ways of thinking critically about their processes, their relationships and the quality and richness of their data and analysis. So too do outsiders, but the major difference is that insiders have to live with the consequences of their processes on a day-to-day basis...(Linda Tuhiwai Smith 1999:137).

Introduction

In the previous Chapter I introduced the elements of the qualitative research process that formed the foundation of the thesis - a critical theoretical paradigm, a ‘decolonizing methodology’ (Smith 1999), and an Indigenous epistemology appreciating the Aboriginal viewpoint. In this chapter I introduce the research design, a further element of the qualitative research process that underpins the thesis. The research design, while reflecting the critical paradigm, determines the subject to be studied and decides the strategy of inquiry to be utilised. The design includes the method(s) of data collection to be used, and how the collected material will be analysed (Denzin and Lincoln 1998b:xii-xv).

In this thesis I have studied a single process of planned social change sanctioned by the Government of Victoria between 1970 and 1971; and I have assumed that generalisations may be made based on this single case (Denzin and Lincoln 1998b:xv). The strategy of inquiry starts with the documents written and collected thirty years ago when, as the community social worker, I was employed by the Ministry to manage the process of change occurring at Lake Tyers. The records were written from a particular field position, in the unique social milieu of an extensively colonised Aboriginal residential population, and constitute the primary source of data. As the author, I was a non-Aboriginal, male person, and an active participant in the process of change. As an insider I performed roles
of community social worker and officer-in-charge, initiated action, asserted authority, offered advice and support, and became embroiled in the implementation and the effects the Ministry’s or my decisions. In this thesis as the researcher, I have composed the narrative of what happened during the episode of social change from the records I wrote as the community social work practitioner, and from my memories of that active participation.

My practitioner’s story must be distinguished from the narrative of an impartial participant observer - an ethnographer systematically noting daily observations of behaviour and conversation, who as an outsider returned to his fieldwork records some years later in order to construct what previously happened. Nor does this narrative merely constitute an examination of the past performance of a community social worker based on the documents written by that worker. The thesis has relied on two interpretations of the past practice situation. Firstly, the initial interpretation of happenings was undertaken during engagement in the field of practice when diary notes were written on a daily basis expressing the knowledge and values of practice of that era. Recently, the diaries have been read and reflected upon; and a re-interpretation of what transpired was constructed. This latter construction was based on a contemporary epistemology representing different values and meanings.

The researcher’s task has been integrated with the practitioner’s experience. The autobiographical involvement of the researcher has however introduced a tension into the research exercise. The research design of this qualitative research exercise has relied on an autobiographical method. The author of the documents written three decades ago, recently I assumed the role of researcher, undertook content analysis, used a reflexive approach, gave meaning to the content of the documents, and distinguished between past and present interpretations of the process of social change. As the researcher I have engaged in a process of self-reflection connecting the action of recording practice to the action of writing research (Denzim and Lincoln 1998a:21). This strategy of inquiry has relied on a historical approach to understanding the process of planned social change at Lake Tyers. Analysis and interpretation of historical documents has been a major method of compiling the narrative. A key feature of the research design has been distinguishing
how past and contemporary cultural and intellectual environments shaped the prism through which I, as the worker, interpreted community social work theory and practice with Aboriginal people of Lake Tyers.

The thesis has claimed a research design incorporating both historical and contemporary analytical methods as a valid way to attempt to understand past practice behaviour and to outline approaches relevant to present engagements with social change. The overall purpose has embraced the goal of contributing to the development of community social work practice theory.

Documents as the source of data

The primary source of data has been the documents I wrote as the community social worker while engaged in practice thirty years ago. Some of the entries were made in association with normal social work practice record keeping — reflection-in-action (Schon 1983). Most evenings I set aside time to reflect-on-action (Schon 1983). At the time, the residents and my work colleagues (Ministry staff) were not advised of my private action of record keeping. My purpose was not a research one. This was a strategic exercise of considering my practice and my understanding of the behaviour of the residents enabling me to revise and set work goals and tasks. The notes recorded what I considered had been accomplished; and they included the puzzling technical, relational and epistemological questions for which I sought answers. I did not concentrate on notions of practice theory but sought practical solutions to ‘How do I assist people to help themselves in a political climate where outsiders seem to be imposing what they consider is good for them?’

A research purpose did not crystallise until some years later. Fortunately those personal notes made on-site during or at the end of daily activities were accessible. The notes that became research material were records of observations and involvement concerning a multitude of settings while performing practitioner tasks; and they included leisure time when enjoying residential life as a neighbour. The diary records were invaluable because they concerned daily work tasks, observations of behaviour, conversation with residents — about their visions, family and inter-familial interactions, child care responsibilities, management of money, cooking practices, use of traditional language, retained traditional
beliefs, customs (for example, at funeral services and grave-side burials); and attitudes expressed during social intercourse. The notes recorded questions that arose while reading community social work, historical and sociological texts. In particular, the practice ideas and values of Ross (1967) provided the basis upon which I attempted to understand the role and operations of my role as practitioner in 1970-1971.

The research design wittingly did not include data obtained from interviewing Aboriginal residents and Ministry staff who had lived and worked at Lake Tyers between 1970-1972. The design’s omission of the recollections of their experience of the process of social change at Lake Tyers in the research design excluded a counterpoint, increased a reliance on subjectivity and thus bias. It was intentionally autobiographical.

A second source of primary documents has been used - copies of official records of the Lake Tyers project, including the demographic survey of January 1970, monthly reports written by the worker to senior officers of the Ministry detailing the situation at Lake Tyers and in East Gippsland, minutes of staff meetings, minutes of meetings of the Lake Tyers Council and the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, copies of correspondence and Ministry newsletters. Memory has been reminded, sharpened and corrected by reference to additional documentary sources composed at the time of the project, such as, film, photographs, flyers and posters pinned to notice boards.

A comprehensive content analysis of diaries and field notes was undertaken after I had become familiar with ‘decolonizing methodologies’ (Smith 1999), so that already a significant transformation in my outlook towards an Indigenous worldview had taken place. The content analysis exercise was actioned after I had selected the analytic frameworks of Pruger and Specht (1969) and Henderson and Thomas (2002), and the model of community work practice of Brager and Specht (1973) to order and interpret the data. As a result, the ‘overall goals’ of the process of community development were identified according to Pruger and Specht’s (1969) second set of propositions concerning methods of action to achieve change; issues arising in each of the nine-staged process of community development postulated by Henderson and Thomas (2000) were classified and clustered, such as the issues of credibility and legitimation appearing in the ‘entering the neighbourhood’ stage; and data concerning the development of the residents’
corporate behaviour was collected according to the four stages of the model proposed by Brager and Specht (1973), revealing that overwhelmingly the data related to group behaviour associated with 'Socialisation Groups' and 'Primary Groups' - their first two stages. The content analysis uncovered and interpreted intentions, moods, capabilities, reactions, contributions and attitudes of residents as individuals and family and group members; and of myself as community social worker. A systematic analysis of the diary content enabled the organization of data distinguishing trends, themes, components and phases of the community development process, critical incidents, emergent patterns of the residents' social organization, and leadership role performances; and their meaning was constructed. Content analysis was pursued with the purpose of answering the research questions.

Ely (1991) has written of the qualitative researcher's task of making sense of the previously recorded raw data using the technique of content analysis:

> When the researcher gets right to it, it is an awesome, even frightening responsibility to bow to the fact that 'self-as-instrument' inevitably means one must create ongoing meaning out of the evolving and evolved data, since raw data alone have little value ... Thus, the naturalistic researcher must come to rely on his/her own talents, insights, and trustworthiness and, in the end, go public with the reasoning that engendered the results, while accepting with equanimity that other people may make different meaning from the same data (Ely 1991:86).

Until the current research undertaking, the records remained at home in boxes unsorted and unread. Entries in the diary represented subjectively selected events and topics considered to be of interest from a practice perspective, for example, activities and attitudes of young people, reciprocal exchange of family support, leadership and follower actions, individual and family life histories, categories of family conflict, qualities of relationships - and how the insights gained could be integrated into practice tasks and the overall phases of the community development process. The comments were not written in relation to an organised research purpose.

Other primary historical sources have been used to obtain data. Reading private and public documents was vital in order to begin to understand the historical experience of generations of residents, government policy and practice, how the Lake Tyers Station
developed and what life had been like for residents and staff. A start was made with the
nineteenth century biographical and ethnographic records of missionary John Bulmer
(1887; State Library of Victoria; Vanderval 1994) and A.W. Howitt (Fison & Howitt
1880; Walker M.H. 1971). Then followed reading the file notes of the BPA, the Board,
the Ministry, and the Annual Reports and correspondence of the Church of England
Mission and the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland. The official documents and Annual
Reports of Colonial and State statutory authorities responsible for Aborigines,
Parliamentary Debates, Inquiries and statutes were read at archival repositories located at
the State Library and at Commonwealth and State Governments’ Archives. Reading
autobiographical material written by Aboriginal authors was given the highest priority,
such as Phillip Pepper’s two books about his Gunnai predecessors and life on and off the
Lake Tyers Station (Pepper 1980 & Pepper with De Araugo 1985). Newspaper articles,
professional research papers (demography, employment, health and educational), copies
of radio and television scripts and conference papers written before or during the era of
the episode were valued primary sources.

Secondary sources used included academic theses, books and journal articles. They have
provided additional political, historical and sociological material. I have used secondary
sources as the starting point to supplement a glimpse of pre-colonial Gunnai society
relying on archaeologists, anthropologists, historians and linguists (Keen 2004:14). The
accounts of unique local happenings at Lake Tyers have been related to sources depicting
the sociology of race relations of Aboriginal affairs in Victoria and Australia in the 1960s
and early 1970s. Reading has canvassed early and later settlement of Gippsland and
Victoria, other Missions and Stations, biographies of key decision makers, accounts of
policy development, the evolution of Indigenous civil rights and citizenship, the course of
constitutional recognition and the social movement of Indigenous rights, including land
rights.

Personal autobiographical records were the major data source of my practitioner’s view
of the community development process and of the world of the people of Lake Tyers. The
content recorded was an individual act and contained bias. As a non-Aboriginal person, I
was a cultural outsider attempting to interpret what I was observing and relying on very
different racial, cultural and socio-economic knowledge and experience from that of the residents. For instance, I did not know about the status of, and respect given to Elders. Consequently I was unaware of my failure to recognise and respectfully relate to Elders during meetings; and I did not organise events that gave Elders prominence. Thus, an aspect of the residents' social organization was not given proper attention. The notes I made reported perceptions expressing my cultural ignorance, dominant European-Australian cultural values and interests, and the ideological nature of my professional task of believing that organising a community wide process would benefit them. I presumed I could develop an understanding from observation and conversation but not that I would capture the Aboriginal cultural viewpoint. I subscribed to the view that racial harmony was desirable but my approach to its achievement reflected my class, age, culture, gender, and religious worldview, and therefore could not avoid unintentional bias.

While the records reveal biased cultural judgement and ignorance I consider they also indicated insight and sensitivity of an involved insider. The young people and their parents enjoyed the priority accorded to youth through the activities organised at the Youth Resource Centre. People expressed appreciation of the consistency and fairness of my decision making (Personal Papers 1970-1971). These positive qualities also impacted on relationships and therefore influenced the accuracy of meanings recorded in the diaries. Interpretation from an insider's position over two years also offered advantages. Familiarity of happenings through regular contact and in various known situations strengthened the reliability of observations, and bolstered trust. Thus a longer time was available to participate, observe and record a wider scope and variety of phenomena; and time gave the opportunity to review and refine judgements.

The way I behaved affected situational circumstances and influenced the reactions of residents. In the role of community worker for example, I directly encouraged residents to attend Lake Tyers Council meetings and considered the number attending to be an indicator of interest in the value of communal behaviour. Today I realise the attendance of some people may have been a response to my persuasion, and a desire to please, rather
than an act of willingness to participate. As a community social worker and an involved insider I influenced what happened, and recorded my perception of that happening.

The autobiographical nature of re-entry into the recorded past situations has extended the subjectivity of interpretation. Memory has been involved in the content analysis recalling activities and exchanges, re-capturing the mood of experiences and reconstructing scenes. Reliance on memory has introduced the possibility of reinforcement of a bias that was already contained in the diary content. Recall also provided an opportunity to correct the omission of important data in the diaries and tended to limit bias. I would argue that memory did play a positive role because it was influenced by the later acquisition of an Indigenous epistemology and the knowledge gained from reading recent social research and community work practice ideas. The thesis has illustrated my struggle to decipher how community social work practice relied on a Western view of community that did not fit Aboriginal social organization, and has shown the value of the interplay of recorded data, memory and a content analysis made in the light of a later body of social knowledge, the use of critical social analysis, 'decolonizing methodologies' (Smith 1999), and after reading Aboriginal people's published oral histories and reminiscences that tell of their experiences as colonised persons. Otherwise the records contained errors in perception based on inappropriate cultural expectations of behaviour; and biased interpretations due to my ignorance of the residents' cultural norms and mores, how they saw the world and what they wanted from it (Shyne 1960:114).

The research design has assumed that the depicted interpretation of the narrative of the process of social change would be recognised by other participants in that process. Here the research strategy has raised the issue of representation, including whether the text of the thesis has told a story supported by empirical evidence, and has not been the creation of the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln 1998a:21).

The strategy used has also invited consideration of the issue of legitimation - whether the data recorded by the worker reflected what others present at that time and place would have reported happening (Denzin and Lincoln 1998a:21-22). Subjectivity was a pervasive factor in observation and the recording of subject matter in a work environment that contained uncertainty, could be tense, and was at times hostile. The reliability of the
observations recorded in the diary was influenced by my choice as worker of more
comfortable venues to make contact with people. Some residents would have perceived
me as yet another occupant of a status position of officer-in-charge, administering
government policy and accountable to the Director - rather than as a performer of
community social worker roles assisting them. The issue of legitimation also has
application to the exercise of content analysis. Another researcher would have shaped
their construction of the documents differently due to the absence of memory and the
experience of being an insider. Explanation of events and behaviour for them would not
have a ready reference to the experience of having been there; and they did not have the
opportunity to be reflexive. Inevitably though, a second person would have raised queries
concerning what? why? and how? and had the chance to make different interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

In November 1981, I consulted Mr Reg Blow, then the Director of the Victorian
Aborigines Advancement League, about my interest in researching the episode of social
change at Lake Tyers. He responded positively. In February 1982, following a request,
the Australian Archives advised that I had received approval from the Commonwealth
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to undertake a research project. Consequently, access to
archival records of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs was obtained
(See Attachment C). At Australian Archives during the 1980s many documents were read
relating to the Lake Tyers Mission and Station, but for personal and professional reasons
I did not proceed with a thesis until 2002.

Consistent with the spirit of the ‘decolonizing methodologies’ approach and the ethical
standards of the University of Melbourne, I negotiated a partnership research role in 2002
with the Aboriginal people at Lake Tyers through the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust. In
1970, the Lake Tyers people knew me as a resident community worker employed by the
Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs when social research was not on the agenda. Thereafter, I
had maintained social contact with them. When the research study was proposed in 2002,
with the knowledge of the Chairman of the Trust, I travelled to Lake Tyers to advise
residents and gauge their interest. It was imperative that in this research endeavour I
respected the interests and feelings of the surviving families and individuals who were
the residents of Lake Tyers between 1970-1972. The interests of the descendants of those
people were paramount — as were those of the Trust and the general Aboriginal
community.

My aim was to establish a Reference Group of residents of Lake Tyers and selected
interested Aboriginal leaders — including Gunnai descendants and former residents. I
consulted a number of Aboriginal academics and community leaders conversant with
social research processes about the membership of the Reference Group. Positive
discussions were held. The formation and operation of the Reference Group was finalised
after consultation with, and obtaining the approval of, the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust. I
then invited individuals to join.

Then, I met the Chairman of the Committee of Management of the Lake Tyers
Aboriginal Trust at his home. I explained that I had retained fieldwork notes I had written
while working in 1970-1971, and that the documents described happenings and people. I
mentioned how some years later I had read the official files at Australian Archives with
the special permission of the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I advised
that now I wanted to use both my notes and the archival material as the data for a
research undertaking. I showed people the retained notes, documents, photos and other
material; and I offered to read to them the content. I pointed out that I was using the
fieldwork notes as a historical artefact; and that as part of the research process I would be
re-reading the diaries and drawing on my memory so that I could reflect on, and better
understand, their content. I emphasised I intended to write an honest account but would
be representing their kith and kin, many of whom had died, in various circumstances. I
pointed out that the thesis may not agree with their understanding of those same
happenings and people's involvement. I stressed I was bound by the University’s ethical
standards about disclosure and sensitively protecting their privacy. I recommended the
formation of a Reference Group so that they could monitor the research process and its
product; and safeguard their interests. The Chairman encouraged me to formally write to
the Trust seeking their approval to undertake the research and to propose the Reference
Group. A letter was received; and soon afterwards I was invited to meet with the Committee and to put a proposal to them seeking their approval.

A document was prepared for circulation to the Committee members of the Trust and Lake Tyers residents interested in the research titled “Explanation of Research” (See Attachments A. and B.). Topics covered in discussion with the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust and Reference Group included: the purpose of the research, the research design, the data collected, benefits, who ‘owns’ the research product and future storage of personal and family data collected. I advised that the thesis belonged to the University and published according to The University of Melbourne’s requirements. I offered ways of sharing the study. I agreed to make available copies of extracts of parts of material pertaining to an individual person’s, family’s and Trust’s interests. Members of the Reference Group were given a similar offer. Each member of the Reference Group received and was asked to sign a Letter of Invitation to Participate (See Attachment D.) The signed document indicated a willingness to support, monitor and advise the researcher during the project.

The Committee of the Trust agreed to my use of the retained notes and the purpose of the study. The Committee requested that membership of the Reference Group be confined to Lake Tyers people. I outlined to the Committee how I would safeguard confidentiality, about non-disclosure, and how I would avoid causing harm to personal reputations and distress to the Trust, shareholders, residents, employees, kin and friends, as well as amongst the general Aboriginal community.

Unfortunately, fulfilment of the goal of adopting a participatory decolonizing research model (as outlined in Chapter 2) was not accomplished during the research process. Although I made regular appointments with the members of the Reference Group and travelled more than seven hundred kilometres for each meeting, attendance of Group members was haphazard. Not all members maintained regular involvement throughout the process. Consequently, the aim to engage with the Lake Tyers residents was frustrated. It was a period of social unrest and Government funding arrangements to the Trust were altered. The goal of participatory research - enabling residents to relate this
process of social change to their community-based management responsibilities - was not realised. In retrospect, I understand now this was an unrealistic research goal.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the research design of the thesis has been outlined. An autobiographical method has been claimed as a legitimate strategy to achieve the research goals of this qualitative research exercise. Issues of representation and legitimation have been considered as the researcher has looked over the shoulder of the community social work practitioner to read the notes he wrote about his involvement in a process of social change at Lake Tyers thirty years ago. The researcher had returned to a past life he had lived as that practitioner. In so doing his memory was aroused as he recalled his practice experiences and remembered the situations described in the diary notes. The diary has been the source of interpretation of what had happened then. The subjectivity of a life story has been complemented by the presentation of empirical evidence through the use of additional primary and secondary sources and a historical approach. The specific ethical issues of Indigenous research have been discussed.

The next Chapter considers the status of community social work practice knowledge, especially ideas concerning planned social change involving Aboriginal populations. The chapter outlines how theoretical practice frameworks and models from that body of knowledge have been utilised in order to describe and analyse the episode of social change that occurred with the residents of Lake Tyers in 1970-1971. Key sociological concepts are also introduced to facilitate analysis; and a relevant policy framework is suggested for community social work practice with Aboriginal populations.
Chapter 3: Towards building Indigenous organising of community

Our people call for self-determination but they don’t explain the manner in which their lives should be determined...I’m black. You’re black. I know the problem, you know the problem. Because we live it; we’re part of it. It’s a part of our everyday life...So the time has come when ‘Aboriginal self-determination’ has got to mean something. And that means that we’ve got to start working out ways to meet our own needs, ways to grow for ourselves and to provide ways for the growth of our children...We have to work directly with this psychology, the minds, the emotions, the feelings of people and we have to break those feelings down into areas of self-respect, history, dignity, knowing who you are, knowing what you are, knowing where you are going and going there with pride and strength...We must do this ourselves by re-writing our legends, writing down our needs. We must recognise that we cannot do this alone...(Kevin J. Gilbert 1975:1 & 3).

I want to re-examine some theoretical and political ideas that have proved inadequate in working among peoples who are traumatised by and implicated with colonial structures. The dilemma is that the ideas of the liberals and the Left, valuable and necessary though they are in constructing civil institutions for the normalisation of ordinary life in radically underdeveloped territories, entail new forms of oppression and subjection, new forms of racism. We need to seek new ways of thinking ourselves through the dark passages of the postcolonial state (Marcia Langton 2002:75).

Introduction

In order to comprehend the process of social change at Lake Tyers, and especially the process of community development, this chapter explores two categories of thinking suggested by Pruger and Specht (1969), and succinctly named by Kramer and Specht (1975) as the ‘know-why’ and ‘know how’ propositions. Kramer and Specht (1975) wrote of the theory of community organisation practice:

While practice theory is developed by the same methods and procedures as any other, it is theory of two particular kinds: the first a body of what might be called “know-why” propositions. They constitute foundation knowledge about the structure and function of social systems and
processes. They include descriptions, explanations, and predictions about how social systems operate under various conditions. The second part of practice theory consists of "know-how" propositions, which are prescriptions of how to change systems and conditions. Ideally, this kind of knowledge would include methodological principles that specify goals, incorporate values, and give directions for action...telling the practitioner what types of intervention are most effective under specific conditions (Kramer and Specht 1975:5).

This chapter recognises the underdeveloped status of the development of community social work practice theory (Mattaini 1995b:76). It acknowledges that thinking about community work practice theory concerning Aboriginal people is at its beginning stage. Community social work practice particularly relies on ideas from political, historical, psychological and sociological analysis to identify the causes and effects of the troubles encountered by a population such as the residents of Lake Tyers. This chapter, and Chapters Four and Five, will present key ideas that contribute towards answering the question: How do I understand what is going on here?

The pertinence of Kramer and Specht's (1975) identification of this 'know-why' proposition is connected to the study's choice of critical social analysis and 'decolonizing methodologies' (Smith:1999), and their emphasis on race and colonisation as the necessary ground upon which to build thinking about the context of this episode of community organising. Key sociological concepts that assist unravelling cause and effect are introduced in this chapter and further developed in later Chapters, such as: the Aboriginal extended family and friendship network, primary group relationships, Aboriginal social organization or domain (Keen 1988), primary socialisation in conditions where 'home' and 'workplace' are undifferentiated, and racial community. The concepts assist explanation of the social organization of the people, their motivations, attitudes and behaviour, and depict the environment addressed by the process of social change. The study will suggest that the residents of Lake Tyers learned most of their social roles while socialised in primary relationships of close knit kin forming households and connected to social networks, and in conditions where home and work were not separated. This argument facilitates understanding of the social organization of the Lake Tyers people. Later Chapter Five will appreciate the
The chapter clarifies definitions of 'practice theory', 'practice models' and 'principles of practice' and identifies the status of theoretical knowledge of community social work practice. It introduces the 'know-how' questions (Kramer and Specht 1975), or propositions about methods of action to achieve change (Pruger and Specht 1969), that were the conceptual underpinnings of the community social work practice conducted at Lake Tyers. Thus this chapter sets the bases upon which the thesis in Chapters Six and Seven will tackle the question: How do I understand the actions undertaken here and what effect did they have?

In order to analyse and interpret the practice intervention the study utilises a second analytic framework to that of Pruger & Specht (1969), one developed by Henderson & Thomas (2002); and also uses a model of community organising proposed by Brager and Specht (1973). The chapter describes the frameworks and the model, and their attributes. The application of these analytical tools is evidenced particularly in Chapter Seven; and their veracity is assessed in the concluding Chapter Eight.

Next the chapter surveys the literature about community work with Aboriginal people with the scope of the review covering the period from the sixties to the present. The relatively few texts written about this subject is a reminder of what have been the practice domain interests and priorities of the profession of social work (McMahon 1990 & 2002). The absence of Aboriginal authorship represents the fact that there are few Indigenous qualified social workers, but even fewer engaged in community social work. Without the contribution of Indigenous Australian authorship practice activity depends on Western constructed thinking and gives a culturally skewed view of community work practice interventions. The non-Aboriginal literature is however a very important record (Downing 1969; Tomlinson1985; Mowbray 1985a; Dixon 1989 & 1992; Kenny 1994; Weeks 1994; Gluck 1985; Hollinsworth 1996; Ife 2002; McMahon 2002; and Weeks, Hoatson & Dixon 2003). In Chapter 8 a framework for Indigenous community social work practice is proposed including two approaches that distinguish between the notion
of 'community work with Aborigines', of which the Lake Tyers exercise is an example, and that of 'Aboriginal community organising'.

Drawing on evidence from Lake Tyers in 1970-1971 that will be presented in Chapter Seven, this chapter notes a core feature of Aboriginal social organization - the extended kith and kin network constituting intimate primary group relations and with membership spatially distributed over a wide area or 'beat' (Beckett 1988). The Aboriginal networks of primary relationships extended beyond the local boundaries of Lake Tyers. The thesis proposes the concept of 'Aboriginal community' composed of two characteristics: (i) primary group relationships and (ii) social networks. This notion of 'Aboriginal community' as a distinct social unit challenges a community work technology that has focussed its organization on the sociological concept of 'community' as a secondary group and entity of the social structure of Western urban post-industrial society (Cox, Erlich and Tropman 1979). Community has been conceptualised in the literature as an expression of shared interests or having geographical relevance. The chapter will argue that definitions of 'community' have to be framed to suit the Aboriginal social order of primary group relationships (Cooley, Angell and Carr 1951; Tierney and McMahon 1979), such as the Lake Tyers residential population. The chapter will contend that community organising practice technology is culturally limited to secondary group relations and thus has neglected conceptualising practice where people belong to primary groups and have been primarily socialised in tertiary relationships with the state.

The chapter next briefly considers the sources of community development ideas in the sixties, especially the influence of the practice values of Ross (1967), notes the ideological purpose of proponents of community development, and identifies influences on the Ministry's understanding of community development. The structure of the social change process affecting Lake Tyers is considered with identification of the Ministry's State wide 'social planning' and 'program development and co-ordination' approaches to social change (Taylor & Roberts 1985), and suggests those models had properties dissonant with the community development model conducted at Lake Tyers.

This study will argue that there is a strategic connection between policy and planned community social work. It will argue, as did Professor Stephen Cornell of the Harvard
Project on American Indian Economic Development, that a policy of ‘Indigenous self-determination and self-government’ (Brennan 2004:10) provides a positive context for the practice principles of ‘community work with Aborigines’ and ‘Aboriginal community organising’. This perspective is congruent with Korten (1987), who argued for ‘community-based resource management’ following studies of Asian social development program experience. A policy of social development, one that incorporates economic development (Midgley 1999), is also pertinent, as it incorporates an alternative to the ‘passive welfare dependency’ – and supports the critique of past Aboriginal social policy treatment advocated by Pearson (1999). Earlier, Nanavatty (1993:241) had noted the relevance of this different perception of the nature of social change at grass-roots level in rural India. He pointed to development being conceived ‘as a single unified process involving both social and economic instruments’ (Nanavatty 1993:243).

Today, a number of Aboriginal populations are connected to recently sponsored State and Commonwealth Government ‘spatially based policy activity’, such as Cape York Partnerships in north Queensland (Pearson 1999; Smyth, Reddel & Jones 2005:1). Currently, ‘place-based and joining-up’, or ‘associational governance’, community development enterprises are seen as ways of implementing social policy to resolve disadvantage through ‘social inclusion' technologies (Smyth, Reddel & Jones 2005). Indigenous populations have been included among those identified as disadvantaged. The policy of ‘self-determination and self-government’ (Brennan 2004) safeguards Aboriginal aspiration, identity and governance while ensuring Aboriginal devised ‘strategic engagements’ (Martin 2005:109).

Finally, the chapter concludes with Chart 3.3 that presents a way of understanding the structure of the process of social change as it unfolded at Lake Tyers with the two components: (i) the process of community development, and (ii) the process of enactment of legislation. The subject matter of the components of Chart 3.3 is developed in Chapters Six and Seven. Overall this chapter, by considering ideas relating to ‘know-why’ and ‘know-how’ propositions concerning the episode of social change at Lake Tyers, attempts to contribute to ways of thinking about community social work in relation to other Aboriginal residential populations in rural settled south eastern Australia.

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Terminology of community work

Understanding the status of organised knowledge about community work practice is most important. The planning of organised change at Lake Tyers in 1970 did not rely on a general practice theory of community organisation. While Ross (1967) described his ‘model’ of community organising a cogent ‘practice theory’, Kramer and Specht (1975) did not share Ross’s optimism when they wrote:

At this time, however, development of theory for practice is still primitive. Theoreticians are only beginning to define and test basic concepts like “organization”, “power”, and “participation”. As the practitioner reads different accounts of studies of organizational change and community power structures, he is often working with different definitions, tested with different research methods, based on different modes of how organizations and communities behave (Kramer & Specht 1975:4).

Neither did Taylor and Roberts (1985:xi) ten years later when they noted the ‘rudimentary nature of theory underlying [community practice for social workers] as compared with other social work methods’. More recently, Mattaini (1995a) defined ‘practice theory’ as ‘coherent systems for understanding behavioural and social phenomena’ (Mattaini 1995a:6), and added ‘only quite limited theory has emerged to guide community practice’ (Mattaini1995b:76-77). Currently this is the situation and so this study has not been guided by well-constructed theory.

The study has looked at the notion of ‘practice models’ to guide its contribution to formulating theoretical issues about community social work practice. Models are ‘organized systems of intervention that are designed to be applied in relatively consistent ways across a multiple of cases’ (Mattaini 1995a:9). Admitting that no unifying general practice theory of community organisation existed in 1968, Rothman (1974) suggested a way forward was building practice theory by proposing three models (or types) of community organising practice. He identified – ‘locality development’, ‘social planning’ and ‘social action’ (Rothman 1974:23). Kramer and Specht (1975:7) nominated eight factors upon which models could be determined, and then, based on one of those factors - the ‘character of the action system’ - proposed two models: ‘community development’ and ‘social planning’. Both of these models have been identified as producing the
substance of the body of thinking about the episode of social change at Lake Tyers. Nearly thirty years later, the anthology of case studies *Community Practices in Australia* (Weeks, Hoatson and Dixon 2003) developed two models around another one of those eight factors identified by Kramer and Specht (1975), viz. 'the character of the issues'. Based on this factor, the authors distinguished a 'consensual community practice model' and a 'contextual community practice model' (Weeks, Hoatson & Dixon 2003:25-28). A model of community social work with Aboriginal groups was needed to guide the intervention at Lake Tyers in 1970.

Dixon (1992:9) surveyed five decades of community work literature from the United States, Britain and Australia and, after reviewing the range of claims made about organising social change, Dixon identified the 'approach' of 'praxis-oriented literature' (Dixon 1992:10) that aims:

> ...to focus on the social construction of practice: to acknowledge that while heavily circumscribed by structural arrangements the practitioner can have an impact by adopting certain strategies and avoiding others... working alongside their constituents in a process of empowerment (Dixon 1992:9).

With reference to the 'praxis-oriented approach' and its contribution to theory building Dixon concluded:

> ...in its very strength of specificity lies its weakness: situation specific perspectives need bringing together so that movements can be built, lessons learnt and theory built (Dixon 1992:17).

This study aims to be located within the 'praxis-oriented approach' (Dixon 1992), and hopes to contribute towards theory building by adopting an inductive approach that has been described by Kramer and Specht (1975:4) as 'a process whereby principles are derived from the real world of practice and action'. The approach follows the "know-why" and "know-how" propositions of the analytical framework proposed by Pruger and Specht (1969) - the former concerned with 'foundational knowledge about the structure and function of social systems and processes', and the latter concerning "prescriptions on how to change systems and conditions" (Kramer & Specht 1975:5).
'Principles of practice', based on ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge of practice goals and processes, has been another way writers have constructed their thinking about theoretical issues concerning community social work practice (Morrissette, McKenzie & Morrissette 1993; Gutierrez & Lewis 1994; Weeks 1994). Later in this chapter, the principles of two approaches to community work practice with Aboriginal groups are proposed as a way to building practice theory.

Analysis of the process of community social work at Lake Tyers

The practice ideas and values of Ross (1967) influenced the starting direction of my community social work practice in 1970 (see below), but ultimately no specific model of community development guided the process of community development undertaken. A practice model concerned with a community organising intervention with Aboriginal people has yet to be constructed. Therefore it has been an important research task to identify a theoretical framework or conceptual model with which to analyse the process of community development at Lake Tyers between January 1970 and December 1971. Kramer and Specht (1975:4) distinguished the pathway the research has taken as 'inductive':

A process whereby principles are derived from the real world of practice and action...Thus, the practitioner-social researcher attempts to infer from experience to theory in order to illuminate his practice.. (Kramer & Specht 1975:4-5).

Two analytic frameworks and a model of community organising were selected to ensure coverage of the context, process, content and application of the community organising intervention - those of Pruger and Specht (1969), Brager and Specht (1973) and Henderson and Thomas (2002).

Pruger and Specht (1969) provided an 'analytic scheme' (or 'framework') of the key "know-why" and "know-how" (Kramer & Specht 1975:5) propositions and questions. Their scheme provided a systematic way to approach thinking about the whole process, and it described the key variables and named the assumptions and hypotheses that
underpinned practice actions. The ‘analytical scheme’ asked four major categories of questions:

1) Propositions about the causes of a problem/issue – covering the context and the target(s) of intervention – the “know-why” propositions
   a) what problem or issues are to be tackled?
   b) who are the subjects?

2) Propositions about methods of action to achieve change – covering the vehicle of change – the “know-how” propositions
   a) what are the overall goals?
   b) who selected these goals?
   c) how does the agent of intervention interpret the goals?
   d) how is the change to be effected? what is the change process?
   e) what is expected of the community for change to occur?
   f) what is expected of the change agent?

3) Propositions about intervention outcomes
   a) how is the outcome assessed?
   b) what is regarded as success?
   c) when does intervention end?

4) Propositions of empirical evidence concerning the above propositions
   a) to what extent has data verified the propositions?

(Source: Adapted from Pruger and Specht 1969:124).

Brager and Specht (1973) (see Chart 3.1) proposed a model that conceptualised ‘the organizing enterprise’ and was presented as a ‘table of an action system’. Their model had two interacting components – (i) what the worker does: the technical (or cognitive) and interactional (or relationship) tasks (or methods); and (ii) what are the stages of the organising process experienced by organised constituencies (or groups or communities) as they tackle specific goals. The ‘model of process in community organization’ was described as follows: as the members of the organised group worked over time to accomplish goals, four types of groups sequentially emerged. The formation of a group type represented a stage in the process. At each stage group activity displayed different dominant characteristics that reflected the primary purpose (or social function) of the group at that time. Chart 3.1 under the sub-heading of ‘Stages of Process’ shows the four stages of group development and the four distinct functions each performs (Brager Specht 1973:68-70). Worker tasks related to each of the four stages of group development.
Chart 3.1 Brager & Specht’s Process and tasks in community organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Process</th>
<th>Technical Tasks</th>
<th>Interactional Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialisation Groups: socialisation</td>
<td>Identify and define problems</td>
<td>Identify potential members; motivate and recruit members; educate constituency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary groups: develop affective relations</td>
<td>Link problem identification to goal development</td>
<td>Cultivate social bonds and build group cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation-Development Groups: build organizations</td>
<td>Develop programme objectives and organization structures</td>
<td>Broaden constituency; build a coalition; develop leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Relations; mediate the relations between individuals and institutions</td>
<td>Implement strategy (administration and planning)</td>
<td>Participate in organizations enrichment and change through use of tactics; education, persuasion, bargaining and pressure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Adapted from: Brager and Specht 1973:70)

Brager and Specht (1973) proposed that the tasks performed by the worker related to the behaviour of the group of constituents and to the functioning consistent with the group’s development: viz. initially the constituents formed a ‘socialization group’ whose functioning focussed on recognising the values, expectations and behaviour of the group; then with growth a ‘primary group’ developed, predominantly concerned with the affective relations of its members and the satisfaction of their need for connection with others (Brager & Specht 1973:68-79). The authors proposed a further two stages of group development to complete their scheme. They wrote with reference to the final stage of group development:

A primary goal of community work as a professional process is to increase the capacity of service recipients to use and influence institutional-relations organizations in order to better meet their needs and protect their interests (Brager & Specht 1973:35).

The proposal of Brager and Specht (1973) offered a continuum of communal group development in terms of goals and functions and a method to explore what happened at Lake Tyers. Recently I have viewed the data collected in 1970-1971 using the model of Brager and Specht as a basis from which to understand the hesitant progress of the group.
development of the Lake Tyers residents during the process of community development. My recent analysis has confirmed my assessment as a worker and found that the Lake Tyers residents did not use the Lake Tyers Council as their group or communal voice and their means to express common interest (see Chapters Six and Seven). The presence of a functioning Aboriginal deliberative Council was politically desirable for both the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Ministry. Evidence of a representative, functioning body gave the Minister the parliamentary and public credibility he wished to convey during the process of preparing and enacting the legislation. The Director and Ministry staff also wanted evidence to cite that the process of community development was serving the interests of the residents and that it was preparing them for governance and economic self-sufficiency - achieving the overall goal of the process of change. The final stage of Brager and Specht’s model was the community development goal I had aimed to achieve at the start of 1970. In Chapter Seven, the thesis will argue that the Lake Tyers Council did not develop according to the process of group development proposed by Brager and Specht’s (1973). Evidence supporting the presence of the last two stages of group development - ‘organisation group’ and ‘institutional-relations group’ has not been found (See Chapters Six and Seven). The corporate identity (the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust) created by the Aboriginal Lands Act 1970 represented an example of an ‘institutional-relations organisation’ of Brager and Specht’s (1973) model.

Henderson and Thomas (2002:30) provided a second framework (see Chart 3.2) - a nine-stage ‘process of neighbourhood work’ - that viewed core worker activities and skills associated with the progress of the process. Dixon (1992:12) has classified this framework as an example of ‘micro-practice’ community organising theory building that focuses on the practitioner’s activities. The framework offered a way of obtaining an overview of the whole process at Lake Tyers when the focus was on what the worker did, and the issues that surfaced.
Chart 3.2 Henderson & Thomas 's Nine-stage process of neighbourhood work

1. entering the neighbourhood
2. getting to know the neighbourhood
3. what next? Needs, goals and roles
4. making contacts and bringing people together
5. forming and building organisations
6. helping to clarify ‘goals and priorities
7. keeping the organisation going
8. dealing with friends and enemies
9. leaving and endings
(Source: Henderson and Thomas 2002:30)

The framework offered a sense of dynamism by relating the actions and issues. Worker activities were classified as both relational and analytical tasks as were those of Brager and Specht (1973). During the first stage ‘Entry”, for example, relational tasks at Lake Tyers included: establishing trusting relationships, interacting with every resident, and being available to assist people; while analytical tasks included: calling and holding the Lake Tyers Council meeting, observing and interpreting work practice behaviour and collecting data about the structure of communal life. The framework doe not follow a time-patterned chronological pathway of events and activities.

Community social work and community work with Aboriginal people

There was very little written material about Australian social work practice with Indigenous people to inform the practitioner in 1970, regardless of practice method used. Scott (1981) concluded that the historical record of Australian social work education and practice portrayed a ‘lack of interest in social action’ (Scott 1981:118). This judgement may accurately depict the condition of the Australian social work profession in the middle and later twentieth century nevertheless, but there were some recorded Australian community work activities and case studies of projects, including projects involving Aboriginal people (VCOSS 1960; Liffman 1978; Benn 1981; Tomlinson 1985; Mowbray 1985a & 1985b; Dixon 1989; McMahon 2002; Beilharz 2002).

Australian social work academics teaching and researching social change and community work have analysed and assessed particular government community work programs
(Tierney and McMahon (1979), government policy and program reviews (Bryson & Mowbray (1981), curriculum content of tertiary level courses (Dixon & Hoatson 1999), and trends in the way the state has tackled planned neighbourhood renewal interventions (Hoatson, Dixon & Sloman 1996; Nichols & Wiseman 2003). Weeks, Hoatson & Dixon (2003) have offered a contemporary framework for understanding the scope of Australian community practices and proposed two separate models of community practice distinguishing consensual and contestual strategies (Weeks, Hoatson & Dixon 2003:24). Mowbray (1986 and 1990) has assessed the Northern Territory Government's policy and program content and direction with remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

McMahon (2002), when surveying all the articles on Indigenous policy, practice or research issues appearing in the journal *Australian Social Work* between 1947 and 1997, discovered only sixteen articles of a total of 934 (or 1.71% of all articles on Indigenous Australian issues) — and one, (in 1969) concerned community organization (McMahon 2002:178). McMahon explained:

> Perhaps, working with indigenous peoples was seen in binary terms as either working in a social order model with those considered hopeless or working with a commitment to social change for those who are oppressed (McMahon 2002:178).

Since the late 1960s a small range of journal articles and chapters in books published about the practice of community development with residential Aboriginal populations by non-Aboriginal community social workers have been published (Guinness 1968; Downing 1969 & 1971; Carter 1971; Tomlinson 1974, 1977 & 1985; Mowbray 1986 & 1990; Crawford 1989 & 1994; Wilson 2002; Australian Institute of Family Studies 2003 & 2004). The early influence of overseas thinking on Australian community practitioners and researchers of community organising can be seen with Ross (1967) and Batten (1967), who were both acknowledged in the writing of Guinness (1968:43), Downing (1971:89-90) and Tomlinson (1974:120-121). More recently Hughes (1996) has written a brief critique of the way government undertook social development among the Yolgnu of the Bawinanga Region of the Northern Territory.
Today, published articles by Indigenous Australian social workers (Watson 1988; Lynn, Thorpe, Miles with Cutts, Butcher & Ford 1998; Bessarab 2000; Gilbert 2001) have outlined generic practice principles for social work practice with Indigenous people; but they have not focussed specifically on values and ideas about Indigenous community social work practice. Community development practice handbooks have been published by the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Western Australian Institute of Technology (Gluck 1985), and later by its successor the Curtin University of Technology (Kickett and others 1987). To date, no Indigenous model of community social work practice has been constructed by an Indigenous professional (Weeks, Hoatson & Dixon 2002:3). An Aboriginal (Canadian) model of social work practice presented by Morrisette, McKenzie and Morrisette (1993) is a benchmark that assists the building of an Indigenous Australian model later in the chapter. Gutierrez and Lewis (1994:34) with their eight principles of ‘feminist organizing with women of color’, have demonstrated another way to approach that task – translating the insights from building feminist practice across to practice with Aboriginal people.

Frequently community work with Aborigines has not been directly associated with community social workers (Vallance & Hullick 1975; Willis 1980; Tomlinson 1985), and in the sixties a number of prominent Aboriginal community actions were directed and organised by Aboriginal leadership with their own people and non-Aboriginal supporters – examples being at Yirrkala in 1963 and Dagaragu (Wattie Creek) in 1966 (Tomlinson 1985: 145-146). Churches, such as the Lutheran Church at Ntaria (Hermannsburg) and at Aputula (Finke) (Sommerlad 1973; Albrecht 2002), have played a key role in working with residential Aboriginal groups to achieve social development using community developmental principles. International human development organizations have collaborated with Australian business, while governments and individual professionals have sponsored community development projects - for example, the Institute of Cultural Affairs (of the United States) in 1973 at Oombulgurri in Western Australia and in 1978 at Murrin Bridge in New South Wales (Institute of Cultural Affairs 1975 and 1980). In the early seventies, University Faculties of Law together with professional bodies joined Aboriginal groups to establish Aboriginal Legal Services in Redfern, Sydney and Fitzroy, Melbourne. Community development ideas, values and approaches have been presented
at University seminar series (Gluck 1985; Kickett and others 1987) staff training conferences of State and Commonwealth Government Departmental and human service and health agencies having responsibility for health, welfare and social development programs with Aboriginal populations in towns and administered communities (Sommerlad & Duke 1973; Kelly & Cochrane 1984).

Numerous social actions have been orchestrated, such as the Aboriginal parent driven campaign to retain Northland Secondary College, Victoria that saw Aboriginal initiative join with non-Aboriginal parents and teachers to reinstate a Government secondary school oriented to educating Aboriginal students (Foley 2000). Community planning with Aboriginal groups has received attention in the literature rather than community development interventions. Wolfe-Keddie (1996) has reviewed a number of community development planning projects conducted by Commonwealth and State Departments and statutory bodies with Aboriginal populations in the Kimberley, Western Australia, Katherine, Northern Territory, Yarrabah, Queensland and Lightening Ridge, New South Wales. Wolfe-Keddie (1996:160-165) has provided a valuable 'framework for examining Aboriginal community development planning'. Indigenous land management has been one domain that has extensively utilised community planning and participation values and ideas (Baker, Davies and Young 2001). Cross-cultural approaches to community planning with central Australian Aboriginal groups concerned with land use has been the subject of Walsh and Mitchell's (2002) Planning for Country.

It is important to remember that structural change has often occurred by methods other than planned community work interventions, for example, as a result of reforming legislation giving voting rights to Aboriginal residents of Northern Territory in 1962, and following the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission's decision granting an Award payment of equal wages to Aboriginal cattlemen in 1966 (Albrecht 2002:33-34).

Nowadays there is a stronger interest by the state in a closer relationship with civil society in order to attend to local neighbourhood social and physical infrastructure re-building. A glimpse at the number of current publicly sponsored community work projects shows the inclusion of Aboriginal people. Of significance is that the sources of sponsorship range across a variety of functional departments, not only those with
responsibilities for Aboriginal affairs, as was the case in the sixties and seventies. An example is a specific program development of the Victorian Government since 2001, the *Neighbourhood Renewal Project*, with its focus on spatial disadvantaged communities. The community building project of Wendouree West, Ballarat includes Aboriginal residents among the householders (Nichols & Wiseman 2003), while other projects are confined to Aboriginal groups, for example the Hume and Grampians Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (Nichols & Wiseman 2003:24-25; Klein 2005). The collaboration of Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal groups and organisations with the Queensland Government in *Cape York Partnerships*, and with business corporations and philanthropic organisations in *Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships*, have become noteworthy models of regional and local community actions (Pearson 1999; Smyth, Reddel & Jones 2005). Another program development has been the Australian Government’s *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2003 & 2004) dealing with community and family building interventions with Aboriginal groups and community-based Aboriginal organizations. Partnerships of Indigenous community-based and community controlled organizations with State and Commonwealth Governments, agencies of civil society, and the market sector have become a feature of social development activity (Pearson 1999; Smyth, Reddel & Jones 2005; Martin 2005) involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers, including community social workers, working with Indigenous families, groups and residential populations.

**Social analysis based on ‘race’ and ‘colonisation’**

A necessary starting point for a community social work practitioner working with Aboriginal people is comprehension of the nature of Australian society based on an analysis of ‘race’ and ‘colonisation’; and also an appreciation of an Indigenous perspective about the foundation of the society’s social structure and distribution of power. The treatment of Indigenous people as one class of ‘oppressed minority communities’ too often has failed to address the Indigenous experience of colonisation, how that condition dictates their daily living, and how their predicament leads them to call for Indigenous rights (see for example Solomon 1985:241). Indigenous writers, such
as Morrissette, McKenzie and Morrissette (1993:91-92), have stressed that a key principle in the development of an Aboriginal model of social work practice was 'the development of Aboriginal consciousness about the impact of colonialism'. The motivation here is for the community social worker to understand the structural foundations of subjugation of Aboriginal people through invasion and colonisation, and to discern its ongoing presence in societal structures, as well as identifying the dominant cultural determinants moulding the provision of social work services.

Social stratification according to race has been a foundational source of conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians since the invasion by the British, and colonisation has ensured stratification has embedded political, economic and social power and privilege in the structures of national, State and regional society. Recognition of both race and colonisation are precursors to understanding the structure of the livelihood of Aboriginal people. The organising of strategies of change with Aboriginal groups should proceed only after an analysis of the race structure (Lee & Weeks 1991:220-221; Morrissette, McKenzie & Morrissette 1993:93; Gutierrez & Lewis 1994:29-30). This thesis is an illustration of how appreciating the Aboriginal perspective of the history and culture of Aboriginal society, including past and present experiences of racial domination arising from colonialism, is necessary for sound strategic planning of a process of community development with Aboriginal people (see Chapter Seven).

Community practice strategies can become part of the process of decolonisation when direction is by Indigenous people, when they can construct their own identity, and connect with their history to discover a self-consciousness about the pre-colonial time (when they controlled their society), and about the invasion and thereafter, (when they experienced subjugation and then began to claim civil and Indigenous rights) (Smith 1999:20-25).

In the thesis, critical social theory (Sargent 1994) has been used with the variable 'race' central to the analysis, while class, gender, sexual preference, disability, ethnicity and age are viewed as other necessary variables of the analysis. Tesoriero (1999) has advocated the value of critical theory to social work practice knowledge building:
Critical theory offers a tool for contemporary social work practice where context is a political world of power balances with ongoing political struggles by many to maintain or get control over resources and other groups (Tesoriero 1999:15).

By application of critical social analysis, it can be seen that from 1861 to 1970, identity based on race was used to subjugate the residents of Lake Tyers Mission/Station to dominant settler community group interests, including those of East Gippsland. For example, the BPA allowed local farmers access to the readily available, cheap Aboriginal labour force of the Station in the twenties and also protected local farmers from competition by prohibiting any commercial farming and fishing developments at the Station; and trade unions gave minimal attention to recruiting Aboriginal members or agitating about their deplorable living conditions as seasonal workers (see Chapter Five). For the residents of Lake Tyers race was the dominant factor structuring their living. A social analysis of the race structure of the economic and social life of the residents and their environment was not undertaken at Lake Tyers in early 1970 before the process of social change was planned.

**Culturally constructed community**

A Western oriented community social work practitioner arguably understands the sociological nature of 'community' as:

> ...a mediating structure between the person and the institutional and social structures of the wider society (Kemp 1995:192).

Cox, Erlich and Tropman (1979:3) also located 'community' between the family and society, but not as a product of the state.

> ...not as intimate as the family or as impersonal as with the society — between the individual and his or her church, work group, service club, civic association, recreation center, political organization ...(Cox, Erlich & Tropman 1979:3).

With respect to the Aboriginal people of Lake Tyers in 1970, this study questions that a social entity called 'community' existed for the residents on a vertical continuum.
between the Aboriginal family and society. It is suggested that for many years the Aboriginal residents at the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station had been socialised in two types of relationships: (i) primary group relationships of family, and (ii) tertiary relationships (Tropman, Erlich and Cox, 1977:4) with the public sector, represented by the BPA, the Board and their officers. The state and not a community directly and meaningly related to the Aboriginal person and their kith and kin.

The Lake Tyers residents in 1970 were still predominantly socialised by, and confined to the primary group relationships of their nuclear and extended families. While the non-Aboriginal population expressed their living in primary, secondary and tertiary relationships, the Lake Tyers people were not socialised in the secondary relationships of civil society: neighbourhood, school, church, work, shops, recreation, leisure, racial and ethnic membership, nor did they have tertiary relationships expressed as citizenship roles when they had dealings with the state (Tropman, Erlich and Cox 1977:4). The study in Chapter Seven has noted that the social world of the Lake Tyers residents was composed of primary relationships, of families portraying characteristics similar to those reported by Barwick (1988) and Beckett (1988). The social organisation of the Aboriginal people of Lake Tyers in 1970 had three substantial cultural sources, (i) their retained and adapted traditional customs, (ii) ways learned from the coloniser society, especially from itinerant rural working life (Barwick 1988:27 & 29-32), and (iii) tactics and strategies to survive the segregated and managed Station life. Generational experiences had not upset the strength of intimate primary relations of family and the unity of many families sharing common cultural heritage. The 'beats' of the extended family network (Beckett 1988:131) constituted the scope of the outreach of primary relationships connecting individuals and families to relatives living beyond the Station. The strength of family had enabled survival of a unique racial experience of colonisation and the experience of the Station regime by providing a capacity to be adaptive while struggling with a marginal and tenuous economic existence. Barwick wrote in 1971 of the family of 'Victorian Aborigines'- and the description had relevance to the people of Lake Tyers:

Each person's circle of kin, known throughout life, is his main source of security, companionship, and economic and emotional support...Few dark people today are so completely absorbed in the larger society that their
earlier identification and association with their natal membership groups is no longer meaningful to them. Most still marry within their own local groups, and prefer to live in the known territory of the home region, since ‘you know where you are with your own people and you’ve got your own relatives around you so you don’t get lonely’. The regional population to which each adult belongs is usually the ‘reference group’ whose opinions and expectations shape individual conduct. Strong emotions enforce allegiance to the group’s ways and beliefs, and to the People from whom the person learns these. Gossip and public reproach provide shaming and hurtful punishment for the disloyal or deviant....No matter what their habits and their self-identification, local whites are not likely to let them forget their origins (Barwick 1988:28-29).

Western sociologists have conceptualised ‘community’ as a social entity - a feature of the social structure and existing as a secondary group beyond the intimate face-to-face association of primary group relations of the family (Edgar 1980:68). Tropman, Erlich and Cox (1977) explained the origin of the social phenomenon of ‘community’ as the product of the burgeoning industrialisation of the capitalist economy that saw the geographic separation of workplace from the privacy of the home, and thus the development of many different social relationships compared to home-based intimate family roles, norms and mores. A growing urbanisation further distanced and segmented interactions away from the primary relationships of the family at home. ‘Community’ has grown from the multitude of secondary relationship groups found in civil society (Cox, Erlich & Tropman 1979:4) and formed to express, maintain and promote its members’ social, religious, political, cultural or economic interests. The enjoyment of member social interaction is an important product of the process of achieving the end goal – the members’ interests (Tropman, Erlich and Cox 1977:9).

By the early seventies, the non-Aboriginal people of East Gippsland were well suited to the separation of ‘work’ and ‘home’ (Edgar 1980:209-210). In contrast until 1966, living at Lake Tyers featured continual attempts by non-Aboriginal government officers to administer the residents through tertiary relationships. The residents’ lives were fraught with intrusion and control, where their home, work, economic sustenance (through rations and free supplies), health and welfare services, schooling and religion were integrated with and provided on site by the regime. During Station days there was very limited differentiation of ‘home’ and ‘work’ and little need for secondary group
relationships. Chapter Five will describe the Station life experience of the residents and of the seasonal employment opportunities away from the Station. When families went peasea and bean harvesting, the integration of ‘home’ and ‘work’ continued. The strength of primary group relationships was foremost, and interaction with secondary groups and the market was minimal. Children seldom went to school, families lived together on the farms, town living was distant and social contact with neighbours and shops was brief.

When the social change project commenced at Lake Tyers in 1970 it was anticipated that a ‘geographic community’ (Lee 1986) or ‘community as locality’ (Ife 2002:82) would co-exist with ‘community as relationship’ (Kenny 1994:35-36) or ‘community of shared values, norms and traditions (Cox 1979), and that both types of community would complement each other. As a community social worker I expected to find a latent community upon which to build a greater capacity to be self-managing through a planned process of community development. Lake Tyers was a residential population sharing a common geographical space for their daily living (accommodation, work and schooling) and distant from the nearest town (Cox 1979: 224-226), and I expected the residents as neighbours would be motivated to begin to identify common interests and work together to realise them. As the residents also shared a racial heritage and an experience of surviving colonisation, I thought those factors would have also produced a spirit of solidarity. I held a non-Aboriginal belief that, in contrast to Western individualism, an Aboriginal group communalism would be found at Lake Tyers. Subsequently I have learned that a superficial understanding of Aboriginal family structure, social organization and the impact of the institutional Station life seriously impaired the analysis of community (Personal Papers May 1970). Soon after arriving at Lake Tyers I found that small ‘communities of interest’ (Lee 1986) existed as some residents played competitive basketball in district competitions, and a few adult women had joined outside interest groups such as a Red Cross Branch and an Anglican Mother’s Union Group (Personal Papers January 1970).

The Western concept of ‘community’ has been assumed to be relevant to Aboriginal residential populations in all parts of Australia (Smith 1989; Peters-Little 2000), and ideological and political factors have played a part in sustaining the popularity and
maintenance of this assumption (Smith 1989:4-7 & 2004), including its application to the Lake Tyers situation (see below). Peters-Little (2000), a descendant of Uralarai and Kamilaroi peoples of north west New South Wales, explored with her kinsfolk who were former residents of Missions and reserves the meaning they give to ‘Aboriginal community’. Peters-Little (2000) recognised that the existence and designation of an ‘Aboriginal community’ could be the result of factors external to Aboriginal social organization such as, legislation, government policy and the official purpose of public administrators. Regardless of the imposed conditions and negative experiences spanning decades however, she found that her kin viewed their life at Missions as ‘an integral part of Aboriginal people’s heritage’ and ‘fundamental to Aboriginality’ (Peters-Little 2000:4). Peters-Little noted her kin’s nostalgia for those days when ‘proper values’ were kept, and explained:

...that their memories of their ability to resist is more significant than the oppression they endured (Peters-Little 2000:6).

A ‘community as relationships’ (Kenny 1994) was evident to Peters-Little (2000). She has also commented on a mistaken view about Aboriginal residential populations:

The concept of community invokes notions of an idealised unity of purpose and action among some social groups who are perceived to share a common culture. To some extent, ‘community’ and ‘culture’ are treated as synonymous, rather than as principles operating at different levels of social realities. Indigenous culture is therefore seen to define Indigenous community. This, of course, is not so (Peters-Little 2000:3).

Peters-Little recognised that too often non-Aborigines assumed a ‘community as geography’ existed where an Aboriginal population resided at one locality, such as a reserve or former Station. The meaningful intimate relationships of the Lake Tyers residents were with other kith and kin in primary group relationships, and thus the existence of a ‘community’ as defined above was foreign to their experience. During those years, the extended family networks of the Lake Tyers residents did not extensively nor regularly engage in secondary group relationships as a ‘community of interest’ with other Aboriginal networks of families and friends of East Gippsland beyond the Station, in order to enjoy organised social activities, such as dances, sporting teams and cultural
cereonies. Nor did they organise to advocate for political advantage and civil rights as a racial community (Neuwirth 1969).

The research exercise initially sought understanding of the existence and nature of a community at Lake Tyers in 1970 from the perspective of Warren (1972) whose sociological view of 'community' was developed in later twentieth century industrial urban capitalist American society. He argued that the local geographic community was a social unit consisting of local groups, organisations and institutions:

[a] combination of social units and systems which perform the major social functions having locality relevance (Warren 1972: 9).

A community was not isolated and self-sufficient but structurally connected beyond locality to extra-local social, economic and political bodies. A community's social identity at the local level was formed by horizontal relationships between local people, groups and organisations interacting with each other. Vertical systemic connections too linked local groups, organizations and institutions to an extensive array of economic, cultural, religious, racial, ethnic, human service and political bodies, located regionally, nationally and internationally. Warren (1972: 9-11) argued that the local community was organised on a daily basis around five major functions having locality relevance: (i) production-distribution-consumption of goods and services to which access is desirable; (ii) socialisation by social units such as family and school, (and one could add racial-cultural community), that transmit knowledge, values and behaviour patterns; (iii) social control by social units such as family, church, courts, school and police (and one could add racial-cultural community); (iv) social participation opportunities provided by formal groups (church, sporting teams, voluntary interest bodies, and trade unions) and informal groups (family and friends); and (v) mutual support offered by primary/informal groups (family, neighbours, and friends). Arguably, the world of the residential population at Lake Tyers in 1970 did not constitute a local community according to Warren's conception of a local community performing five functions and with vertical relationships with an external world. Socially and economically excluded over generations by the race structure created by colonisation, Aboriginal people were unable to benefit from, and participate in the five major horizontal patterns of daily living.
conceived by Warren (1972:9-11) that composed the Bairnsdale-Orbost district's local horizontal community (see Chapter Five).

Ideaology, community and community development

Smith (2004) has highlighted how ideology and political purpose of government were behind the choice of the 'self-managing community model' for remote Aboriginal population centres. Smith has referred to a number of studies of remote populations conducted in the 1970s and 1980s and wrote of their conclusions:

They suggest that community is a concept that could have been chosen and consciously used in Australian Aboriginal policy by white authorities to state what they think should happen or were determined would happen on Aboriginal settlements (Smith 2004:5).

Although critical of how the 'self-managing community model' was instituted – how it was a facade behind which bureaucratic administration continued to operate – Smith (2004) argued for the adoption of 'a modified community model' that 'would aim to find a better balance between government responsibility and accountability, and local community control, responsibility and accountability (Smith 2004:9). Smith (2004) has argued that officialdom in the Northern Territory during the sixties adopted the ideologically constructed 'self-managing Aboriginal community' as a term with general application to all communities because administrators wanted to project both a culturally homogeneous population and a population having a self-managing capacity. Officials overlooked differences in the characteristics of residential populations, and they did not identify whether a 'geographic community', or a 'community as relationship', or any other type of community existed. To suit the purpose of government and administration every settled Aboriginal population was assumed to be a 'community as relationship' (Smith 2004:6). Each Aboriginal community was provided with a 'self-managing community model' program that was to build Aboriginal community infrastructure in the form of an incorporated, self-managed Aboriginal organisation administering and delivering services to the residents of the locality. The presence of an Aboriginal organisation enabled government and church mission to transfer control and responsibility to the community management of residents. The political goal of the new
policy was promoted as the implementation of the principle of self-determination, and the ‘self-managing community model’ was imposed on an idealised type of community, the ‘community as relationship’ (Smith 2004:5-8).

The notion of ‘Aboriginal community’ is not ideologically free either. Peters-Little (2000:13-14) has argued that the Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments and public administrators from 1970 constructed a particular Aboriginal social identity in order to achieve their aim of grant making and service delivery to certain populations. Barwick (1964b) also inferred specific qualities of the Aboriginal social order at Lake Tyers when making remarks in reference to ‘Aborigines’ generally with her comment:

...their communities of kin and long-time friends are a vital source of security and reassurance, of undemanding acceptance (Barwick 1964b:3).

Barwick (1964b) wrote of the ‘community at Lake Tyers’ as if she was describing it in reality. She was referring to an Aboriginal ‘community as relationship’ (Kenny 1994) in the mid sixties.

Comparable official behaviour occurred in Victoria in 1970 to ensure public support of the plan for Lake Tyers, when the Victorian Government portrayed a positive picture of an adequately operating social order at Lake Tyers. Thus, in his second reading speech on the Aboriginal Lands Bill on 28th October 1970, the Victorian Minister spoke of the leaders at Lake Tyers accepting responsibility, and of a Lake Tyers Council that ‘plays a major role in policy making decisions’ (Smoke Signals December 1970:15-20). The Aboriginal population of Lake Tyers was idealised and depicted as a ‘community as relationship’ for political and administrative purposes. The Government and the Ministry, with the intention of maximising positive support for the Bill in the parliament and from the public, portrayed the Lake Tyers people as a united cultural group being emancipated by the offer of land ownership and responding to the chance to be self-governing. My experience with the Lake Tyers Council and leaders during 1970-1971 does not corroborate the Minister’s depiction of an operational Lake Tyers Council.

In retrospect, it can be argued that at Lake Tyers, to varying degrees, four types of community were visible: (i) a ‘geographic community’, the residents sharing living at one
place and expressing a common interest about their place, (ii) 'community as relationship', the residents expressing their shared history, experience and aspirations and the social base underpinning an Aboriginal social order, (iii) 'community of interest' consisting of a few discrete groups of residents pursuing their enjoyment of sporting, youth and women's activities, and (iv) a 'culturally constructed and idealised community' projected by the Government, Director, Ministry staff, social scientists and human service professional workers. Another social phenomenon was present at Lake Tyers.

**Aboriginal community as Aboriginal social organization**

The Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers created their own social organization of primary group relationships within the orbit of the Station regime, but their domain of family networks was not enclosed by the Station's boundaries nor confined to tertiary relations.

This social organization was the 'Aboriginal community' of Lake Tyers composed of two characteristics: (i) primary group relationships, and (ii) extended social networks of the family and friends. The Aboriginal family of Lake Tyers was very different to that of the typical Australian non-Aboriginal family, described as a 'modified extended family' (Sussman 1971) and 'detached nuclear family' (Edgar 1980:113), and the Aboriginal community of Lake Tyers exhibited significant different features to other types of community found among other Australians.

As a community social worker at Lake Tyers I did not appreciate the presence and nature the residents' social organisation. My position as government officer trapped me too often in tertiary relationships with the residents. The research has however attempted to discern the presence of a dynamic adaptive Aboriginal social order or 'domain' (Keen 1988:10-11) as an expression of the relative autonomy of the Lake Tyers residents where the residents created, resisted, nurtured and adjusted their cultural activities and social life to suit their own purposes - a voluntary activity of a distinctive cultural life, an adaptation from traditional cultural forms but also a social world that had adopted selected customs, institutions and norms of Western capitalist liberal democratic society while experiencing its race structure and the Station regime. It has sought to discover the impact of the Station on their lives while they lived under supervision and in the racially discriminating
East Gippsland environment (see Chapters Four and Five). The survey of the population of Lake Tyers conducted in January 1970 (see Chapter Seven) found the Aboriginal households and their geographically spread extended family networks were the core of Aboriginal social organization at Lake Tyers. A relatively autonomously social organization existed separate from any incursion by managing and supervising government officers and the turmoil and hardships they experienced (Stanner 1966:66-67). As a community social worker I learned that to varying degrees over recent years a number of the residents had interacted as individuals, and continued to interact with taxi drivers, school teachers, shop keepers, farmers, police, saw millers, and officers from a variety of departments of municipal, State, and Commonwealth Governments. A few of the older men had lived and worked in Melbourne during and after the Second World War. A number of the males of all ages had been detained in gaols and youth correction centres; and residents had been boxers, played in local district sporting teams, and competed at running competitions throughout the State (Personal Papers 1970-1971). The life stories of the residents of Lake Tyers starkly tell of the barriers faced to building their own cohesive social community (Pepper 1981).

Many non-Aboriginal Australians have failed to understand the ‘dynamic adaptation’ of Indigenous people. Indigenous Australians have constructed their own social organisation and lived according to ways determined by their own social structure of relationships and roles, arising from their norms and mores (Langton 1981:16-22) and emanating from their own cultural construction of experience, motivations, aspirations, resources and opportunities. Recently, Langton (2002) emphasised the significance of this profound error in thinking, with its impact on policy and practice as follows:

Most of all, the Left refuses to understand that there is an Aboriginal jurisdiction, that Aboriginal society has its own hierarchies, and that people like myself have a status that in no way derives from Australian society but from my Aboriginal cultural inheritance (Langton 2002:76).

For many years, non-Indigenous consciousness, informed by anthropologists and key policy advisers, including Dr. H. Coombs, held that autonomous Aboriginal cultural communities were confined to remote ‘traditionally oriented’ communities (Rowse 2000:
87-89). This view prevailed in the sixties despite Barwick's ethnographic research findings about the vibrant cultural ways of the Aboriginal people of Melbourne in the early 1960s (Barwick 1963, 1964a & 1988). This thesis contends that the Ministry failed to understand and therefore integrate its social change purpose with 'Aboriginal social organisation'.

The race relations situation of East Gippsland and south coast New South Wales offered limited accommodation, employment and school opportunities for Aboriginal people in the sixties (Felton 1966a; Castle & Hagan 1978). The Station regime represented the state as legal guardian of the Aboriginal residents, at a relatively closed institution intent on licensing entry, managing the consumption of rations and supplies, and controlling exit to permanent on-going economic and social interactions with the environment (see Chapters Four and Five). Together, regime and the external environment undermined the formation of a racial community in the region (Neuwirth 1969; Wild 1978). In the late sixties the residents of Lake Tyers and regional Aboriginal residents had not organised themselves into a cultural group or racial community to express their needs and interests and to object to the way they were being discriminated against. Their very low social status and powerlessness in relation to mainstream society meant that if they made any public declaration of their interests, they were derided and disregarded.

From a Western view the identity of the Lake Tyers people was still defined by a statute reflecting non-Aboriginal views, rather than as a collective identity formed for political and social purposes. The Aboriginal population consisted of an informal network of primary groups — extended families — and a people not powerful enough to compete with other groups to maintain, nurture and promote their shared interests and resources. These extended family networks expressed themselves communally, for example, when travelling long distances to funerals of kin, or when sponsoring social dances held in community halls. From a Western perspective this informal collective activity was not valued because it differed from formal secondary organization. Yet this collective activity provided nurture of members and sustained cultural heritage and Aboriginal identity. For the Lake Tyers people, this informally expressed, loosely formed collective identity, determined the terms of group membership, organised mutual support and offered
assistance to members. The people however did not form a secondary organisation that could successfully lobby for public funds and assets, and compete in the public arena to gain recognition of their cultural identity and raise their social status. Furthermore at Lake Tyers, the Anglican parish with its resources and external connections did not become a secondary organisational base from which the people as members learned about participation, and about the roles of office bearers.

The Lake Tyers Aboriginal people contrasted with the Aboriginal members of the League in Melbourne (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985) who had formed a formal secondary organization, and enjoyed a sense of solidarity. With non-Aboriginal supporters, the League’s members had marshalled resources to take social action to save Lake Tyers and frustrate the Government’s intention. Pierson (1977 & 1982), Howard (1981 & 1982), and Kinnane (2003) have also evidenced the formation and growth of Aboriginal racial communities as secondary organizations in Adelaide and Perth after the post-First World War.

Aboriginal communal interests of East Gippsland were threatened by the state, the market and groups belonging to civil society, but the Aboriginal people were not able to express a collective identity by forming a racial community (Neuwirth 1969:149). In contrast to the League, they failed to organise and protect their interests as did the League by taking political and social action concerning Black Power and Land Rights. In urban areas Aboriginal people were organising themselves like other religious, age, gender, racial, ethnic, union, sporting and service clubs. Without the communal power to protect and project their racial interests, and because their living concentrated on basic survival, Aboriginal people of Lake Tyers and East Gippsland did not alter the attitudes of the rest of society. Non-Aborigines remained ignorant of the tightly knit Aboriginal kith and kin social groups built on extended family networks.

The sociological reality for Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers in 1970 meant that without a racial community in East Gippsland there was no secondary group or mediating structure between the resident, family and the state or tertiary institutions of society. Moreover, the secondary group structure of the district - the normal arena for community organising - was unsympathetic on racial lines to the needs and interests of the Lake
Tyers people. From 1968, the Ministry devised race relations programs (Boas 1971) but did not work from a structural sociological framework, and without the knowledge of an Aboriginal social organisation, the Ministry launched the community development process at Lake Tyers.

**Advocacy of community development**

What were the external and internal factors influencing the Ministry's introduction of the idea of community development at Lake Tyers in 1970. Before 1970 external factors were promoting community development, including advocacy by Aboriginal leaders and the residents of Lake Tyers, recommendations by social researchers including overseas academics, demonstration of international experience, support by reformers of social policy and welfare practice and need for an alternative to answer the dissatisfaction with outcomes of past policy and program expressed by politicians, bureaucrats and the electorate.

Pastor Doug Nicholls and the League, Lake Tyers' residents, professionals, Aboriginal rights and human service organizations proposed a notion of “community development” to the McLean *Inquiry* in 1956 (see Chapter Four). The League’s policy for Lake Tyers was that it should:

...obtain independence and to regain their self-respect...the people should be helped to form co-operatives and community development schemes operated and controlled by their own elected members (*Smoke Signals* July 1960:33).

Australian social anthropologist Ruth Fink, (1964:147) in 1962 advocated the relevance of guided social change by the community development method citing Canadian Aboriginal experience on the grounds of its ‘community group’ approach. In 1962, Barwick, a Canadian born social anthropologist, began researching the Aboriginal people living in Melbourne. At the height of the political controversy concerning the future of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station she submitted written advice to the State Minister responsible for Aboriginal welfare (Barwick 1964b) and argued that the Victorian Government should adopt an alternative to the forced removal of families and closure of
the Station, namely to listen to the Aboriginal residents' preferred ambition to stay and develop the farm property (Barwick 1964b). Barwick (1964b) proposed that the Government should resource a community development project that utilised local leadership, formed a self-governing body, select skilled workers to assist with the organising of vocational skills training, adult education and physical improvement schemes, and investigate employment opportunities. Barwick (1964b) argued that Aboriginal social networks were a positive expression of cultural identity and should be incorporated into development projects. She envisaged that as Aborigines experienced self-reliance and cultural identity they could choose how and when to engage in the wider society (Barwick 1964b). She cited the success of the technology of community development in Canada and the USA was evidenced by the encouragement of self-management; providing education, leadership, business and job skills training; employment in building houses and roads; undertaking small business ventures; and the use of non-resident advisers. In this Barwick (1964b) incorporated the notion of 'action anthropology' as identified by Professor Sol Tax of the University of Chicago (Barwick 1964b:2-3).

The practice of community development was moulded initially by Western liberal democratic methods of knowledge acquisition, framed in colonial settings of North American and British imperialism and inevitably tainted by their ideological values and political goals. Mayo (1975) has argued that community development was a well-tried politically inspired social instrument used by those holding power to coopt minorities into mainstream life in order to constrain opposition to dominant majority interests. She recounted historical studies of the post-American Civil War and how governments traded self-help participatory programs in return for the votes of deprived African-Americans (former slaves); and how the British colonisers in India and the African colonies during the inter-war period offered integration into colonial society through leadership training, mass education, agricultural development and welfare programs. Community development was an insurance policy to keep control through maintaining law and order. It was a tool to assimilate minorities into the mainstream society's workforce and social structure, rather than a method of social change associated with transferring power to
national independence movements, or enabling racial minorities to be self-determining citizens with a capacity to form their own communities (Mowbray 1985a:53).

A number of social workers in the sixties were strongly motivated to try an alternative method of intervention to individual, couple and family casework and counselling and to avoid dependency on social workers and welfare services. For them, casework and counselling models of practice had not altered the conditions of disadvantage and distress experienced by many of their clients. Another form of intervention, community development, promised hope as it brought people together, encouraged self-help, provided resources of education and information, and encouraged participation in decision making. Through organised action by disadvantaged people at the grassroots, those in more powerful positions could be confronted, policy and program reform demanded and the people involved in resolving their issues. Community practice approaches of empowerment and people development were framed (Liffman 1978; Benn 1981; Dixon 1989 & 1992; Weeks 2000:127-129).

When the Lake Tyers episode began, a variety of interests were promoting the relevance of community development as beneficial to Aboriginal advancement. These interests included Aboriginal leadership arguing for a policy of cultural pluralism in order to secure the recognition and maintenance of Aboriginal identity and groups; disgruntled practitioners, agency executives and policy activists seeking an alternative social intervention technology to change unequal conditions and unjust structures; and those in positions of power, prepared to accede to emerging new demands by the adoption of a locality community approach to changing conditions, but retaining stability and control by ensuring containment of the extent of change (Mowbray 1985a).

**Community development and the Ministry**

When the Ministry commenced operating in 1968, it had at least two main proposals to consider concerning how to effect social development at Lake Tyers — to continue implementation of the Board’s plan (see below), or to try a new alternative. Community development ideas were germinating in Victoria during the sixties (Scott 1981:30-31), favoured as an alternative to welfare as individualised casework and championed by
those believing in the better results arising from the participation of service users in solving social developmental troubles (Dixon 1992:11). By the end of the sixties, community approaches tried in the United States and the United Kingdom were inspiring Australians wanting to tackle structural disadvantage and inequality (Dixon 1989:85).

The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) had proposed an alternative to locality community development in its submission to the McLean’s Inquiry in 1956. In 1966, the Report of the Board’s Lake Tyers and Planning and Action Committee incorporated ideas from the VCOSS submission when it recommended a five year program of re-afforestation, the extension of cattle and agricultural projects to provide employment and training, the building of a social centre and residential care for needy persons (see Chapter Four). This proposal envisaged a large-scale development program responsible to a Minister, managed by a Project Committee consisting of representatives of the Board, the League and community groups, and staffed from Treasury funds (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee November 1966:16). The Board and Government promptly approved the recommended program and started its implementation (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30th June 1967:9) but the demise of the Board in December 1967 halted the introduction of the new plan for Lake Tyers (Report of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs 30 June 1969:16).

In 1968, the Ministry chose not to implement the Board’s 1966 plan proposed by the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee. Seriously soured relations between the Ministry and the League emerged during 1969. The emerging Aboriginal voice holding executive positions at the League was advocating Aboriginal control of Aboriginal affairs, and in 1969 after the Ministry temporarily stopped a Commonwealth grant payment to the League (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985:88-95), a close working relationship became impossible. The Ministry chose to organise the change at Lake Tyers using its own departmental resources of staff and finance and be in control of its direction.

There were external factors influencing the Ministry’s actions influences. In the early sixties in the Northern Territory, rejection of the policy of assimilation by traditional communities was growing, for example, the Aboriginal wage justice campaign organised
by the Northern Australian Worker’s Union for Aboriginal cattlemen, the stirrings of the Gurindji at Dagaragu (Tomlinson 1985:146), and Aboriginal community self-management was promoted at church mission Aboriginal communities at Yirrakala, Alice Springs; and Hermannsburg (Tomlinson 1985:145; Albrecht 2002:33). Aboriginal people with the missions were pioneering Aboriginal governance and new services, objecting to mining projects and petitioning the Government for land rights protection. The social worker-clergyman Downing (1969) expressed the values of community work when proposing a development project for Aboriginal people of the Alice Springs area:

Community organization is the process of accepting a community at whatever stage of development and assisting it to develop towards its chosen goals. Skilled workers stimulate a community’s thinking and help to broaden its knowledge and experience. They help the community to choose its own goals from those possible, and to utilise its own potential and the resources of the wider society in achieving those goals (Downing 1969:27).

Mr Worthy, Director of the Ministry, had worked in Darwin as a Welfare Officer for the Northern Territory Administration during this transitional period in Aboriginal affairs.

Ideas of community development however were not new to the Ministry, for Mr Phillip Boas was appointed Supervising Social Worker of the Ministry in 1968 and he had been a social worker employed by the Board between 1963 and 1966. Between 1964 and 1966, Boas, one of four social workers employed by the Board, was involved in a community development activity involving the local citizens’ Committee of Warrnambool and District and the resident descendants of the Kirrae and Gunditj-mara clans living at the Framlingham Reserve. Boas consulted the residents and involved them in decision making, learned about their history and treatment by governments and officials, supported self-help dairy farming ventures, facilitated grants to install septic tanks, electricity and water supplies and recommended that the Board guarantee their security of tenure. The residents positively responded to this community development strategy (Barwick 1981:209-210).
Ministry's approach to social change including community development

From its inception in 1968 and into the early seventies, the Ministry led by Mr Worthy (Director) and Mr Boas (Supervising Social Worker and later Assistant Director), planned a State-wide approach to social change (Aborigines Advancement League Newsletter, July 1969:2, 10-11; Boas, 1974). The Ministry’s organisational goal was predominantly ‘integrative’, rather than ‘psychotherapeutic’ or ‘environmental-change’ (Brager & Specht 1973:46-48), with objectives designed to enhance the Government’s role in Aboriginal affairs through the Ministry’s successful extension of available services to Aboriginal people and the electorates’ acceptance of their equality and entitlement to human rights. An objective of the ‘integrative’ goal also included avoiding protest and conflict by establishing cordial relations with constituents (Brager & Specht 1973:47). This was an objective of the Ministry. In the Ministry’s Annual Report 1971-72, Worthy wrote:

The greatest single threat is the development of the idea that Aborigines should “run their own affairs”. Housing, education and employment programmes have been introduced as a means of providing the opportunity to acquire skills leading to the acquisition of resources. In turn, these resources will allow Aboriginal people to be independent, and the need for a special department administering Aboriginal affairs will no longer exist. The policies of the Ministry have been developed with this objective. The model and the methods used are soundly based on professional social work principles...When the majority of Aboriginal people have achieved educational and economic parity with others in the community...retaining a special department running their affairs will be ludicrous. The few who...still need a special services will be assisted by the Commonwealth and State-administered community services.... (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Annual Report for the year ended 30th June 1972:5-6).

Boas (1973) conceived the Ministry’s approach as a social planning vision called ‘Broad Spectrum Social Intervention Programmes’ (Boas 1973:10). It was aimed to target race relations as the Ministry redressed Aboriginal inequality by extending the access of Aboriginal people to mainstream services and expanding the scope of service coverage (health, accommodation, employment, education, income support, cultural and sporting) through collaboration with service providers (Boas 1973 & 1974). The race relations plan focused on changing the attitudes and behaviour of individuals and institutions of the
dominant society towards Aboriginal people of all ages across the State - government
departments, professional bodies, employers, real estate agents, schools, police, courts
and hospitals (Boas 1973:12). Boas noted that the approach was influenced by 'the
experience of community work for social change in other areas of the world' and
acknowledged the authors 'Batten (1967) and Cox, Erlich, Tropman and Rothman
(1974)' (Boas 1973:10). He claimed the policy exemplified comprehensive, cross-
sectoral 'social planning' (Rothman 1974:24). Rothman had described the 'social
planning' approach as:

...a technical process of problem solving with regard to substantive social
problems...Rational, deliberately planned, and controlled change...
Community participation may vary from much to very little... requires
expert planners...the concern here is with establishing, arranging, and
delivering goods and services to people who need them. Building
community capacity or fostering radical or fundamental social change
does not play a central part (Rothman 1974:24).

Broad Spectrum Social Intervention Programmes' exemplified features of two models of
community social work practice addressed by Taylor and Roberts (1985) - 'social
planning' and 'program development and coordination'. 'Social planning' was described
as using formal structure and process, relying on research and technical skills, having
comprehensive and systematic activities that will produce a plan, and pursuing outcomes
that are rational (Taylor & Roberts 1985:7). Certainly, the Ministry's approach undertook
demographic research itself, sponsored educational research projects, monitored worker
practice and program inputs and outputs (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Annual Report
for the year ended 30th June 1971). The Ministry's approach incorporated two planning
principles of the 'social planning model' discussed by Rothman and Zald (1985:137-139)
- people-oriented 'transactive planning', and 'political advocacy'. These two principles
were seen as developments of the sixties by Rothman and Zald (1985:138). 'Transactive
planning' was demonstrated by the regular consultations organised on a regional basis
across the State with Aboriginal people (Boas 1971:25-26). 'Advocacy planning' - the
provision of information and the sponsoring of educative groups - was demonstrated by
the Ministry's use of media releases, invitations to journalists to investigate situations,
live-television interviews of staff, newsletters distributed to Aboriginal households and
groups as well as media, schools and departments - public occasions used to protect and promote the equality of Aboriginal people (Boas 1971:30). Here the planner took a side 'in the direction of normative support for social justice' (Rothman & Zald 1985:138).

Kurzman (1985) demarcated the 'program development and coordination model' as distinct from the 'social planning model', despite their similarities. The former model better reflected the Ministry's approach of 'Broad Spectrum Social Intervention Programmes', and suited the personal style of Mr Worthy, the Director, who firmly controlled Victoria's Aboriginal affairs policy and administration (Lyons 1983:72). Taylor and Roberts (1985) have summarised Kurzman's (1985) model as:

Change is conceived as a process that engages the full range of political and organizational interests that may revolve around a particular problem, issue, or decision. While selected community representatives may be invited to participate, and neighbourhoods or special populations may be surveyed, or may even collectively petition such organizations, the professional worker's primary allegiances are to the service agencies, sponsors, funding sources, and political systems of the community (Taylor & Roberts 1985:8).

The Ministry's locally held consultations with regional Aboriginal residents illustrated 'transactive planning', and were an innovative and positive outreach to the scattered Aboriginal people whose opinions had been ignored by politicians and administrators. The consultations were also a political tactic by the Ministry to attract the attention of Aboriginal people as the League's Aboriginal leaders were not invited participants. The consultations were an aspect of a Government policy of 'integration', and a form of cultural pluralism with Aboriginal people as a unique cultural group belonging to society on an equal basis - but not the active promotion of 'self-determination' and sharing power (Lyons 1983:75). Melbourne-based 'Black Power' Aboriginal leaders of the League and like-minded advocates of 'Aboriginal control' had to watch in frustration as the Ministry engaged with their people and sought to extend its influence and direction over 'their affairs'. Aboriginal leaders striving for unity amongst their people felt they were deliberately displaced (McGuinness 1970:7; 1972-73:61; Lyons 1983:75).
From 1968 until 1974 the Ministry administered a State-wide ‘social planning’ approach, and concurrently at Lake Tyers after 1970 the Ministry sponsored a community development project. Neither the Director nor senior Melbourne office staff (Ministry executive) indicated explicitly what community work approach they expected to be introduced at Lake Tyers (Personal Papers January 1970). The community development approach undertaken at Lake Tyers however did exemplify the common features associated with the model of community development: ‘outside assistance’, ‘improvement in the social and economic conditions of the target population, ‘reliance on the population’s initiative’ and ‘local citizen participation in goal determination’ (Ross 1967:8; Rothman 1974:23). Another characteristic of the model was evident in the Ministry’s approach - it was geared towards changing ‘values, motivation, attitudes, and aspirations’, rather than changing the social structure due to its ideological bias in favour of ‘citizen involvement, consensus, localism, and gradualism’ (Khinduka 1979:357). In Chapter Seven the study will describe the tension between the Ministry’s process of social change across the State (top-down, large-scale ‘social planning’ by ‘experts’) and its organisation of ‘locality development’ activity at Lake Tyers. From the viewpoint of the Ministry’s Executive (Worthy and Boas) the granting of land rights and self-management at Lake Tyers (and Framlingham) was important politically for the Government, nationally innovative and a strategy of significance for the Ministry, but community development at Lake Tyers was the means to an end. The Executive did not view it as a program introducing ‘fundamental change’ (Dixon 1989:83) aiming to overtly alter the power relations of the race structure in the State, but rather was a move towards granting opportunities for self-management to two selected small Aboriginal residential groups (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Annual Report for the year ended 30th June 1972:6). The Ministry’s vision saw Aboriginal people as respected equals, expressing independence and self-direction, but within the existing political order.

Worthy (1973a and 1973b) revealed what he termed the ‘social engineering’ program orchestrated at Lake Tyers when giving a paper at the 45th ANZAAS Congress two years after the transfer of land title. He argued that a two-pronged attack was mounted – from above – changing attitudes of government, media and public; and from below - performing technical and interactional tasks at Lake Tyers. It involved ‘two basic
requirements’ - need and resources as finance, skill and know how (Worthy 1973b:2-3).

`Need' he detailed as the people’s problems of social isolation, personal and communal depression, and economic, psychological and social dependency. He said he had guaranteed adequate financial resources, but he admitted ‘skill and know how’ of staff was limited by the ‘very little previous experience in Australia which would provide background to the changes that were planned’. He based the intervention at Lake Tyers on social work principles: ‘self-determination, working at their pace, having short term attainable goals, as well as long term goals’ and support. Worthy believed that when ‘the Aboriginal people become directly involved in their own destiny’ and ‘are treated responsibly they will, in time, react accordingly’ (Worthy 1973b:2-4 & 7). Worthy perceived that the ‘material’ of social change was the Aboriginal people of Lake Tyers - their attitudes to responsibility, self-reliance, self-image and acquisitiveness, their passive acceptance of white domination, and their economic circumstances of dependency and not having to experience being self-supporting (Worthy 1973b:3).

How were these ideas translated into the community development process at Lake Tyers? On 5th January 1970 at my first staff meeting at Lake Tyers, the Director advised that I was the senior officer responsible for ‘what goes on at Lake Tyers - the office, the farm and civic life’, and to apply ‘community social work methods’. I was told I was expected ‘to know why things happen'. The farmer, community secretary and administrative clerk were responsible for ‘how things will get done’. I was told my first priority was to physically establish the Ministry’s office and introduce work according administrative routines that serviced the residents’ interests and ensured accountability. The initial discussion of community social work issues was not theoretical but was directed at the practical task level - addressing dependency of individuals on staff by, for example, stopping staff from acting as a personal banker and extending credit on request; tackling worker motivation and behaviour; and working with the Lake Tyers Council (Personal Papers January 1970).

Chapter Seven will examine the process of community development at Lake Tyers and its relationship to the State-wide component of change involving enactment of reforming legislation. The thesis argues that the political objective of land title transfer and self-
management took supremacy over designing a process that was attuned to the resident's social organisation and cultural readiness to perform responsibilities. The pace of the legislative agenda and the consequent title handover event took precedence over the needs of residents who were coping with changes and facing an organised future thrust upon them. Chapter Seven will assess the community development program's capacity to handle the change and the retrospective realisation of the cultural clash in values, beliefs and ideas.

Worker knowledge of community development

One of my first introductions to 'community development' happened in 1966 when I attended a workshop led by Dr Ned Iceton, a qualified medical practitioner who became a lecturer at the University of New England's Department of University Extension (Adult Education). Iceton was attracted to non-directive human interaction and democratic values. The content focussed on the quality of non-Aboriginal professional interpersonal relationships with Aboriginal clients in a cross-cultural health setting, and it was the first time I had heard discussion of values and practical ideas about relating to, and working with Aboriginal people. Iceton gained some prominence (Kamien 1978:48), and promoted the values and ideas of community development among Aboriginal people at two national conferences in 1968, one organised by the Aboriginal Affairs Department (ABSchol) of the National Union of Australian University Students in 1968 (Roper, 1969), and the other by the Australian Council of Social Service. He published an article in *The Australian Journal of Social Issues* in February 1970 (Iceton 1970).

The beliefs, values and ideas of 'community organization theory' of Ross (1967), and the 'general principles of community development' identified by Batten (1967) influenced my community social work at Lake Tyers in 1970. Ross (1967) and Batten (1967) emphasised process goals and the preference they had for finding consensus between contending parties. The community work practice promoted by Alinsky (1946) was also known then to community workers with its promotion of both outcome and process goals and the use of confrontation tactics. Rothman (1974) has integrated elements of the contribution of Ross into his 'model of locality development', and that of Alinsky into his
model of ‘social action’ to form two of his three models of community organization (Rothman 1974:26-27).

Ross (1967) argued that his theory as encompassing all community work activities and defined community organization as:

A process by which a community identifies its needs or objectives, orders (or ranks) these needs or objectives, develops the confidence and will to work at these needs or objectives, finds the resources (internal and/or external) to deal with these needs or objectives, takes action in respect to them, and in so doing extends and develops cooperative and collaborative attitudes and practices in the community (Ross 1967:40).

Ross’s approach emphasised non-directive worker roles of guide, enabler and expert (Henderson and Thomas 2000:95). Both Batten (1967) and Ross (1967) assumed the existence of entities called communities, or that communities could be formed in order to achieve a common purpose, and they did not take account of the political and economic reality where populations failed to form communities because of contesting interests and structural inequalities in wealth and opportunities based on class, race, ethnicity and gender.

The influence of Ross at the beginning of 1970 can be illustrated as follows:

On my arrival at Lake Tyers the Director advised me that a Lake Tyers Council existed consisting of all adult residents. Here was an opportunity to practice the principles of Ross, for example, ‘assumption 3’, see below. Mr Worthy led me to understand that the Council had started to perform a limited governance role and that it was a body representative of the residents. I assumed that this meeting of residents offered a key way to hearing the residents as a group express what they wanted for the future of Lake Tyers, believing that the ‘assumptions regarding method’ outlined by Ross had a universal validity and could guide my practice.

The ‘assumptions regarding method’ (Ross 1967) were:

1. We assume communities of people can develop capacity to deal with their own problems
2. We assume people want to change and can change
3. We assume that people should participate in making, adjusting, or controlling the major changes taking place in their communities
4. We assume that changes in community living that are self-imposed have a meaning and a permanence that imposed changes do not have.
5. We assume that a "holistic approach" can deal successfully with problems with which a "fragmented approach" cannot cope.
6. We assume that democracy requires co-operative participation and action in the affairs of the community, and that people must learn the skills which make this possible.
7. We assume that frequently communities of people need help in organizing to deal with their needs (Ross 1967:86-93).

Over time I became increasingly aware that the principles represented ideals and were untried in a situation such as at Lake Tyers; and that I had to construct my own practice guidelines, learning by trial and error. Ross assumed worker impartiality, but as a community social worker engaged by a government department, often I acted from a position of authority; and I knew residents perceived one of my roles as a Ministry administrator.

My everyday practice at Lake Tyers operated in a setting of many unfamiliar social encounters where I made decisions and took actions without the benefit of a 'how to do it' training manual or relevant practice principles. Those decisions and actions explicitly or implicitly reflected the Ministry's and/or my own assumptions about the process of community development, about the nature of the society in which the community organising occurred, about the political, economic, cultural and social status of the residents and other parties directly and indirectly involved in the action, and about the genesis of the social issues tackled by the organised change process.

Dixon (1992:10) has attributed the popularity of the approach of Ross in the sixties to its claim to solve social problems by democratic means without disturbing social structures—and that this was a reason for its favoured treatment by Australian governments.

**Aboriginal social organisation, Aboriginal community and the process of community social work at Lake Tyers**

Kemp's (1995) 'community' (see above) is a secondary group belonging to civil society and it is the customary target of community organising. In Western society, community organising has addressed the social world of secondary relationships, and its technology
has involved the organization of secondary groups to build civil society or challenge the way the state is operating. There is no evidence that the Ministry’s executive, knowing of the presence of family networks as primary groups at Lake Tyers, sought an alternative developmental approach. The executive presumed that a traditional Western notion of community work involvement with community as secondary relationships was relevant and applicable to the Lake Tyers population. At its commencement in 1970, the community development exercise presumed that at least a latent ‘community’ and an underdeveloped form of communal entity of secondary relationships existed and that it could be developed by a process relating to the individual Aboriginal families with their intra- and inter-family primary relationships. The Ministry executive decided to sponsor a community development intervention in 1970 without any explicit direction that the intervention be designed in relation to a residential population of extended family networks socialised in primary group relations and with very little experience of secondary groups. Chapter Seven will describe the process of community development and notes that it did not design its strategy at Lake Tyers using the notion of ‘Aboriginal community’. The Ministry believed that a neighbourhood would emerge ‘if people are treated responsibly they will, in time, react accordingly’ (Worthy 1973b:7) implying a view that in the future a ‘geographical community’ and a ‘community as relationships’ would coexist at Lake Tyers.

Peters-Little (2000) has recognised that Aboriginal residential groups require a community development process that affords an adequate time for the group members to work at becoming these types of communities by having opportunities to deliberate and define their communal boundaries and interests. She argued:

The use of the term community without Aboriginal consultation, self-analysis and definition has in fact acted as a barrier to their own self-determination, setting communities up for administrative failure, thus denying Aboriginal people the opportunity to work through the development process, with professional support, and in their own time (Peters-Little 2000:14).

Chapter Seven will suggest that the residents displayed a limited capacity to act collectively (Personal Papers January-December 1970) during 1970-1971 for two
reasons: (i) insufficient time was available for the process of community development to institute an effective dialogue and consultation with the Lake Tyers Council, but fundamentally, (ii) the failure of the Ministry to recognise the presence of an Aboriginal social organization. The residents were not encouraged to build an alternative mode of communication that represented their domain and enabled them to express their views about community and membership, and to view the process of community development as an opportunity for them to express their Aboriginal identity. Activities were organised to engender pride in family, house and communal life. A garden competition was held in May 1970, photographs were taken of residents at work, school and playing sport, and the photographs were placed on the Community Noticeboard (Personal Papers April-May 1970). The Lake Tyers Council did not express an interest in sponsoring more of these activities (see Chapter Seven).

Lee and Weeks (1991:223) identified a crucial issue with reference to the women’s movement and community organising theory that has relevance for community social work with Aboriginal people. They remarked that community organising theorists have assumed that ‘community organizing takes place only in the public sphere’ (Lee & Weeks 1991: 223). They counter-argued that the personal, the family and the everyday life of women were venues for organising action when tackling issues of equality, personal consciousness, family life (partner relationships, domestic violence, patterns of child care, domestic work) and education (Lee & Weeks1991:224). Building on this approach it is suggested that a focus of community social work with Aboriginal people should directly relate to the primary relations of nuclear families, households of more than one generation of kin, and of families with extended kin networks that cover ‘beats’ (Beckett 1988) – the sphere of the personal and everyday intimate life of Aboriginal families and their members.

The study suggests that this contemporary practice knowledge could be used to guide organising change with Aboriginal residential groups thoroughly familiar with primary relationships but unused to secondary relationships. For the community social worker – Indigenous or otherwise – there is purpose in the goal of assisting nuclear and extended family networks to develop secondary group relationships, and assisting in the formation
of a vibrant racial community. Enabling Indigenous people to capably manage secondary and tertiary relationships is central to Indigenous communal capacity building, self-determination and community control because it leads to the acquisition of power (Morrissette, McKenzie & Morrissette 1993:98 & Yu 1996:171-172). The accumulation of power depends on personal and social development through education, training and employment and facilitates a de-colonising engagement with the state, the market and civil society in a post-industrial, globalised international environment.

Nevertheless, there is increasing evidence of Aboriginal direct service agencies practicing community work with Aborigines. A model of community organization has been practiced by Aboriginal owned and controlled legal and health services, since their establishment in the early 1970s in Sydney and Melbourne, what Taylor (1985:179) has called the 'community liaison model of community work practice'. The services have outreached to Aboriginal families and social networks, and through interactions with Aboriginal people's primary groups, connections have been made to service agencies as secondary groups (Nathan 1980). The services were created to meet the needs of Aboriginal people used to primary relationships because mainstream health and legal services, as secondary relations groups, were not able to deal with many Aboriginal people, who therefore avoided them.

The Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council is one illustration of Aboriginal women’s organising (Woods, Wanatjura, Colin, Mick, Lynch & Ward 2000). Formed in 1980, the Council’s origin and purpose have been outlined:

During consultations over land rights the women felt that their needs were not Being addressed, so they established their own organisation...delivering services to communities...[including] health, cultural and community services to more than 6000 men, women and children... (Woods, Wanatjara, Colin, Mick, Lynch, & Ward 2000:92-93).

The Council’s approach has involved two elements: an ‘action research’ model and ‘malparara way’ –‘two workers working together on a project, one of whom is a non-Anangu woman employed for her specific professional skills, and the other a senior Anangu women’ (Woods, Wanatjura, Colin, Mick, Lynch & Ward 2000:93-94). This
illustration of community work with Aboriginal people belonging to primary groups offers a direction for practice and how interactions with secondary groups can be developed.

**Organisation of the study**

The thesis has viewed the whole process of social change concerning Lake Tyers as consisting of two components. The two components operated separately and concurrently - one on a societal or State-wide level, and the other locally at Lake Tyers. There were occasions when they interacted. They have been called - the process of enactment of legislation and the process of community development (see Chart 3.3. below). Chapter 6 describes and analyses 'Component 2 - the process of enactment of legislation' - and explains how reform of statutory law played a major role in achieving the social development of Lake Tyers by a grant of Crown land and the creation of a Trust.
Chart 3.3 Components of the process of social change Lake Tyers 1970–1971

Component 1. Process of community development – targeting primarily the residents of Lake Tyers
a) prepare the residents as
   (i) land owners
   (ii) managers
   (iii) a cohesive community
   (iv) stronger families
   (v) productive workers
   (vi) supported young people
   (vii) proud of Aboriginal identity
b) preparation of people and institutions of the East Gippsland region for the social change at Lake Tyers

Component 2. Process of enactment of legislation – targeting political processes and the public opinion of society
a) transfer of Crown land title to a communal Aboriginal title
b) creation of an incorporated organisation to hold title and represent the collective interests of the Aboriginal shareholders
c) participation of residents in framing the legislation
d) public relations campaign – State-wide and locally in East Gippsland

Chapter Seven examines the first component – ‘the process of community development’. The Chart 7.2 found at the start of Chapter Seven facilitates understanding the sequence of the process by highlighting key ‘phases’ in the goals and structure of development; and ‘periods’ of time that distinguish the type of leadership provided. The ‘first phase’ for instance, covers the period January to April 1970 - from my arrival at Lake Tyers up until the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announced the promise of land title. This ‘phase’ was a time of general social development. The ‘second phase’ starts in April 1970 following the Minister’s announcement and concludes in June 1971 when the State’s statutory control of Lake Tyers ends. This ‘phase’ sees the start of ‘planned social change’ (Dixon 1989), when with new specific end-goals and guaranteed resources, planning a process of development seemed possible. The ‘second phase’ has two ‘periods of leadership’, the first from April to December 1970 when one man was elected by the Lake Tyers Council to be leader. Agitated senior residents later however petitioned the Ministry’s Director, and a ‘leadership group’ including the Chairman was elected by the Council. From
December 1970, the 'leadership group' prevailed until the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust replaced the Government on 1st July 1971.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the study's core ideas have been outlined. Reliance on beginning theoretical knowledge of community social work practice with Aboriginal communities is highlighted. The field of Aboriginal affairs in south eastern Australia has attracted few research interests whether historical, sociological or community social work practice. Nevertheless directions for new policy initiatives and practice interventions have been suggested. The next Chapter introduces a historical account of actions, people, ideas and values that formed the background to the episode of social change at Lake Tyers.
Chapter 4 ‘What we want is respect’.

But there has probably been more public controversy about this one station than about all the other stations and settlements in Australia and it has acquired a kind of symbolic significance which could perpetuate controversy – and its own existence as an institution – indefinitely (Jeremy Long 1970:14).

Introduction

Mr Charlie Carter was called the ‘unofficial leader’ of the Lake Tyers people by a reporter of the Age in late September 1966. Carter was quoted as saying:

- An Aborigine knows how to respect Aborigines. But the board doesn’t respect us and that is why we don’t respect them. What we want is respect. We don’t want to be treated as dirt. We don’t want to be treated as children either (Age 1 October 1966:5).

Carter’s requirement that his people be respected, was eloquent and incisive. His call for proper treatment seemed without bitterness. A citizen does expect respect from a statutory body. Carter stridently pinpointed the sort of racist behaviour he had received from the Aborigines Welfare Board (the Board) – as an individual and as a member of an Indigenous cultural group – despite its mandate to represent the state’s special relationship with Aboriginal people. The Board had denied Station residents full citizenship. Expressions of indignation and anger would have been understandable given the suffering he and his people had experienced.

The vignette of Carter has captured the mood of a leading Lake Tyers person prepared to speak publicly some years prior to the beginning of the process of community development undertaken with the Aboriginal people of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station in January 1970.

The study of the process of social change at Lake Tyers has been mindful of the ‘analytical scheme’ of Pruger and Specht (1969) - devised with the aim of systematically organising community work practice knowledge. Their framework consisted of a number of categories of core questions relating to propositions (assumptions and hypotheses) that
firstly explored the genesis of the situation in which the community social worker was engaged. Building on the answers to those first questions, another set of questions were asked relating to goals, methods and planning decisions that constitute the grist of the implemented process of social change (Pruger & Specht 1969:124). This chapter has illustrated how, as a researcher, I pursued the first category of questions relating to the crucial initial task expected of the practitioner - to adequately comprehend: 'what is going on here?' so that s/he can inform 'why and how this situation arose'. As a community social worker arriving at Lake Tyers in January 1970 this 'know-why' question about causation was my constant companion.

Carter’s attitude has triggered a point of entry for historical and sociological analyses of the cause(s) of the political and social controversy of 1963 concerning the closure of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station and of what eventually transpired there as specific social reform in July 1971. Why was Carter, an Aboriginal man from East Gippsland, reported in a Melbourne newspaper with national circulation? What did he say he wanted? How should his words be interpreted? What motivated him to express those critical attitudes? Was he representing other residents in any organised way?

At Lake Tyers in January 1970 I was advised by the Director that my role as a community social worker was to devise a community development plan, and to establish an efficient administration that could implement the plan in the interests of the residents. At that time I was told, the Ministry’s goals were to assist each resident person and family to develop greater self-reliance in their social and economic life, and to facilitate the residents to act as a socially cohesive, economically viable, self-sufficient communal group. Attention to the workers’ job performances was given high priority (Personal Papers January 1970). I was a newcomer encountering a very different world. No written background analysis of the social organization or leadership was provided. I relied on verbal briefings and task setting. My immediate task was to make sense of the daily happenings and of the social milieu in which I found myself (Personal Papers January 1970). Fundamentally, I wanted to understand why the Government was still managing these Aboriginal people in 1970.
'Reflection-in-action' (Schon 1983) was a way to describe my practice. I had no alternative but to learn on-the-job about the past and present by observing behaviour; asking questions of residents and responding to their requests; consulting Ministry colleagues and visiting external service providers; making administrative decisions, watching responses; giving individual advice; reading on-site Ministry file notes and reports; and grabbing scarce minutes to search the few handy historical, sociological, and anthropological books and journal articles. The immediacy of involvement made difficult the setting aside of time to systematically accumulate knowledge. Tentative understandings were reached, plans of action hatched; implementation started, mistakes went unrecognised or revisions were attempted. Daily work proceeded.

Recently as a researcher, I have set aside time to more thoroughly interpret the past experience of the Lake Tyers people and to better understand how their situation and the protest campaign of the sixties initiated the process of community development conducted in 1970-1971. Pruger and Specht's 'analytic scheme' sits comfortably with the historical approach I have adopted. They acknowledge that the variables selected to explain a situation reflect assumptions about the cause and effect of behaviour. They recognise that the particular explanation then constitutes the logic underpinning the formulation of policy and program decisions — the nature of the analysis becomes embodied in the construction of the reform. Issues of historical method and of writing Aboriginal history were reviewed (Barwick 1982; Attwood 1989b; Griffiths 1989) as I turned more seriously to historiography to understand what happened in the past to the Aboriginal residents at Lake Tyers and how they acted in their own interests. My perspective has been influenced by Attwood's outlook:

This involves not only looking at the diverse ways Europeans determined Aborigines — ideological, economic, social, cultural and political — but also the Aborigines' responses, for they were not merely acted upon by these productive forces and relations but were themselves historical agents. They made themselves as well as being made (Attwood 1989b:149-150).

This chapter will note that the origin of the controversy was structural and related to the colonisation of Indigenous Australians. From the early 1950s the residents of Lake Tyers
were formally requesting secure occupation of the Crown land reserve at Lake Tyers. Individual leaders and groups of Lake Tyers people repeatedly expressed this ambition to government and its agencies. From the treatment meted out to them and their forbears, residents knew that permanent tenure was not guaranteed and that without this security they remained at the whim of politics and bureaucracy. The chapter will traverse key early and more recent historical background leading to the transfer of land to the residents in 1971. It will describe the decisions made by the influential McLean Report of 1957, the impact on Lake Tyers residents of the Board’s implementation of its assimilation policy after 1958, and the concerted protest against closure of the Station orchestrated by Pastor Doug Nicholls from 1963 with Aboriginal leaders of Melbourne and Lake Tyers and non-Aboriginal supporters. The chapter will argue that through the ‘Save Lake Tyers’ campaign, the cause of the residents of Lake Tyers became one of a number of nation-wide actions during the 1960s expressed by a more strident social movement of Indigenous people to secure their civic and traditional rights. The chapter will note how Government struggled to maintain control of the direction of the social development of the residents as interested parties searched for an alternative future for Lake Tyers. Then finally, the chapter will show how the decision to introduce an Aboriginal Lands Bill to secure land ownership became possible with the formation of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs (the Ministry) and the adoption of a revised policy approach of ‘integration’. For Government and public administration, a new way was kindled by a sense of policy insight and confidence in the ubiquity of the technology of community development.

Land Ownership –the enduring ambition

Repeatedly, colonial and Australian governments failed to accept that Indigenous people had not relinquished their country to the British Crown (Rowley 1978:13). Governments did not heed the request of Indigenous people for the return of Crown land reserved to Indigenous residents. The denial of their fundamental interest in farming, residing on and caring for their country has given generations of Indigenous people grounds to be puzzled, resentful and angry (Barwick 1972). Archival records frequently reveal evidence from letters written by Aboriginal people to the BPA or Ministers of the Crown during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, requesting land grants for farming for
individual and communal purposes on their country (Broome 1982: 70; Pepper with De Araugo 1985:179 & 232). For example:

...on 11th June 1860, Mr Collin and Mrs Nora Hood wrote to the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines applying for a grant of land near Hexham. Hexham was within the tribal country of Mr and Mrs Hood (Critchett 1998:86).

Barwick (1972) wrote of the Aboriginal ‘pioneers’ who settled at the stations - Coranderrk (adjacent to Healesville) from 1863 and, after 1883, Cumeragunga (northern bank of the Murray River, southern Riverina district of New South Wales). She contrasted the original coloniser’s purpose for making land reservations with the reason why Aboriginal people wanted land, as follows:

In fact the land reserves were initially allotted as hunting grounds where dependents might subsist while able-bodied natives supported themselves by working settlers…….The Aborigines themselves were more sanguine; they had explicitly petitioned for land to farm, as compensation for their occupied tribal territories. They expected secure tenure, but received only a permissive occupancy of Crown lands...(Barwick 1972:15-16).

From its foundation by William Cooper in Melbourne in 1935, the platform of the Australian Aborigines’ League included “Full access to reserves and the granting of land” (Markus 1988:47-48). The claim of a right to occupy country had not dissipated. In 1970, Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers told me that Queen Victoria had promised their predecessors they could occupy the Crown reserve land (Private Papers 1970). Generally, Aboriginal people believed reserves were rightfully theirs (Gilbert 1973:17).

However, it was not until December 1970, when the Aboriginal Lands Bill successfully completed its passage through the Victorian Parliament, that the Aboriginal aspirations were realised. The Government of Premier Henry Bolte, (later Sir), sponsored the Bill with positive support from the Opposition Australian Labour Party and the Country Party. The sole parliamentarian opposing the Bill was Bruce Evans, M.L.A. for Gippsland East and member of the Country Party.

For many non-Aboriginal Victorians, the proposed legislation recognising a type of land
rights, represented a significant policy turn around. In contrast, Stewart Murray - a Victorian delegate to the National Tribal Council for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and employee of the League - responded to the announcement of a land grant by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

This is only a pittance for the land that has been lost to my people. We need more land in other areas throughout the State to help the 5000 remaining aboriginals" (Sun 11 April 1970:3).

The Minister claimed credit for consulting Aborigines and then making the decision. Ironically, earlier in 1956 -1957, Pastor Doug Nicholls and Lake Tyers leaders had recommended a way forward through co-operative self-management and land ownership of the reserve. A few years later in 1963, the same Government had been dismissive of such ideas and the Minister accused Nicholls of being used by the Communists (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985:73).

It is important to note that while Lake Tyers residents in 1970-1971 spoke of their spiritual connection to the reserve (Private Papers) I did not hear them make references to a traditional cosmology that nurtured their selfhood and social identity - as did, for example, Yami Lester, a Yankunytjatjara man of northern South Australia, who recently wrote:

The land is like a book – full of stories that explain how people, animals, rock holes, the hills and different plants and trees came into being. Relationship with the land is part of Aboriginal people’s lives, it holds people together and provides for every need. Culture, language, and the religious system that controls everyday life – all come from the land (Lester 1995:2).

Anthropologist Ian Keen (2004) has referred to the little information held today about traditional Gunnai cultural life:

Early reports mention residence groups of 30, 100 and 200 people in the 1840s and 1850s...We do not know how many residence groups there were within each country group’s area or how they were clustered (Keen 2004:108).
The rapid settlement of Gippsland and subsequent impact of colonisation had distanced the Gunnai descendants at Lake Tyers in 1970 from the cosmology that underpinned the practices of their forbears.

**Action to secure their place**

From its foundation, residents of Lake Tyers have striven to direct and/or participate in the development of the Mission/Station. Their actions have included: contesting decisions of legislators, administrators, missionaries and managers, taking strike action, advising the press, churches, political and humanitarian groups of their grievances and organising meetings with Ministers and parliamentarians to voice their complaints. Actions were brave because assertiveness and agitation could be costly to individual and family — fine, corporal punishment, banishment, reduced rations, loss of work and refusal of re-entry (Barwick 1966; Christie 1979; Pepper & De Araugo 1985:250).

On 28th January 1952, the *Age* reported Laurie Moffatt, a resident and spokesperson for Lake Tyers people, saying:

> We do not want to see Lake Tyers finally sold to the white man in the same way as Ramahyuck, Condah, Ebenezer Mission and Coranderrk reserves have been sold. All these have been hostels for the Aborigines in my life time and have been sold to the white man to cultivate (Age 28 January 1952:4).

Again, on 1st January 1956 Laurie Moffatt, also a representative of the Melbourne-based Australian Aborigines’ League, travelled from Lake Tyers to the Melbourne office of the Editor of the *Sun* newspaper, to hand him a letter requesting the chance for his people to run the farm at Lake Tyers. Moffatt was quoted saying:

> It’s just wonderful farming land… We want to make the settlement into a co-operative. We don’t want Government aid — and the pity that goes with it (Clark 1972:223).

In late December 1955, the Victorian Government established an *Inquiry upon the operation of the Aborigines Act, 1928 and the Regulations and Orders made thereunder* (the Inquiry). Another opportunity was available to the Lake Tyers people to express their
aspiration and for others interested in their future to express their views. The Inquiry conducted by Charles McLean, a retired Victorian Stipendiary Magistrate, did not have the powers of a Royal Commission.

The McLean Inquiry

Race relations, especially in a number of the State’s provincial cities and larger country towns, including those in East Gippsland, had reached crisis point after years of public denial of the presence of Aboriginal people. In these areas, the Aboriginal population was young, increasing in size and conspicuously disadvantaged. Government Departments, employers, and professional practitioners had neglected to provide health, housing, legal and welfare services and employment opportunities to Aboriginal individuals and families. Their needs, visibly evident as poverty, left many Aboriginal families ill, despairing and demoralised. The conditions stirred humanitarian impulse and self-interested fears for personal safety and public health. The demand for government action emanated from a broad spectrum of interests — from branches of the Liberal Party (the Party of the Government), provincial towns, as well as Melbourne-based Aboriginal and community organizations (Barwick 1964a:23; Lyons 1983:61).

The situation at the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station was another reason for the Inquiry. Non-Aboriginal anxieties listed in the submission of the Lakes Entrance Police Station to the Inquiry included: fears of crime and violence due to intoxication, threats to health due to poor hygiene practice, a lack of respect for property — all contributing to a lowering of the general standard of living (AAV, B408, Item 4, Board of Inquiry into the Aborigines Act 1928).

McLean visited Lake Tyers on the 27th June 1956 and he sought he views of present and former Station Managers. He was told that the Aboriginal men had no ability to be farmers and that they had had no experience in organising co-operatives (AAV, B408, Item 6, Board of Inquiry into the Aborigines Act 1928). The residents used the visit of Mclean to voice their concerns. A letter was handed to the Inquiry signed by Clifford Pepper and seven other Lake Tyers residents. This referred to the conflicting attitudes
between government and ‘the descendants of the aboriginal people’. It said:

The retention of the reserve has been blamed for making our people lazy. If some do not make much effort we believe it is because of the way the “Board for the Protection of Aborigines” has from the first, administered the reserve that were set aside for our people....From our point of view, the Board’s policy has been a dismal failure, and we think it is now time to prevent further suffering and confusion” (AAV, B408, Item 6, Board of Inquiry into Aborigines Act 1928).

The petition sought opportunity to organise a co-operative enterprise that would enable them to be self-supporting through growing various crops, milling timber and poultry farming; and a factory for young people to make baskets, handbags and handicrafts.

The Australian Aborigines’ League also made an extensive submission to the Inquiry. In reference to the future of Lake Tyers, the League made three proposals:

...to set aside a portion ..as a holiday resort where our people may relax and enjoy themselves.

...to set aside a portion as a unique tourist attraction...a building to be formed as if it were a mammoth Aboriginal Mimi (dwelling), and this MONUMENT to the Aboriginal race could house Aboriginal treasures ancient and modern

...to press for a conference between the Government and the natives of Lake Tyers. We have had several discussions with them and we have been informed of a new plan they wish to present to the Government (AAV, B408, Item 6, Board of Inquiry into Aborigines Act 1928).

A high priority on the Australian Aborigines’ League’s platform was Aboriginal ownership and self-management of reserve lands. It therefore opposed the closure of Lake Tyers station; and it recommended a community development approach that emphasised vocational training and education.

Articulate Aboriginal voices were supported by organizations who made substantial submissions, such as the Victorian Council of Social Service, the Victorian Aboriginal Group, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and the Council for Aboriginal Rights (Victoria) (AAV, B408, Item 6, Board of Inquiry into Aborigines Act 1928).
1928). The former argued for the re-development of the Station based on the principle of resourcing people for independent living, revitalising industries and establishing a vocational training centre for all Aborigines in Victoria. The latter promoted the more radical recommendations of Pastor Doug Nicholls, its Vice-President, stating that the land should be given to the Aboriginal community and managed by an Aboriginal committee (AAV, B408, Item 6, Board of Inquiry into Aborigines Act 1928).

When McLean met separately with Nicholls on 8th March 1956, Nicholls advocated the following points with regard to the future of Lake Tyers: appointment of an Aboriginal Manager, appointment of a qualified Aboriginal nurse and Matron, formation of an elected Council of five to seven members, including women, to assist the Manager and all workers to receive Award wages (AAV, B408, Item 6, Board of Inquiry into Aborigines Act 1928).

During the Inquiry, McLean relied on the advice of those holding public office or persons prominent in civil society – almost wholly non-Aboriginal individuals, especially police and civic leaders. He also explored the approach of public administration in New South Wales to help him comprehend the social, political and economic situation he saw.

Usually the veracity of the idea of race went unquestioned by informants as they expressed a broad mixture of biological, psychological and cultural presumptions to underpin their understanding of the situation of Aborigines (AAV, B408, Board of Inquiry into Aborigines act 1928). Aboriginal inferiority/European superiority was used to explain differences in behaviour with some non-Aboriginal beliefs relying on ‘Social Darwinism’ to underpin their attitude based on the thinking of social theorist Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Spencer had adapted Charles Darwin’s evolutionary law of ‘survival of the biological fittest’ (Origin of Species, 1859) to explain perceived differences in the levels of the social and economic development of human groups. These attitudes influenced the public’s justification of the retention of the Station at Lake Tyers, although in his Report, McLean revealed that his understanding was not shaped by social evolutionary theory:
As to their mental capacity, most authorities now agree that there is no innate racial inferiority of intelligence in the aborigine. In any case, there is a preponderance of white blood among those in Victoria... (McLean Report 1957:8).

and

I think the view must be accepted that this is rather the product of existing conditions than of any strictly biological disability, and that, basically, they have the capacity to live and maintain themselves and their families according to the general standards of the Victorian community (McLean Report 1957:9).

The McLean Report

The McLean Report of 1957 provided the substance of Aboriginal affairs policy in Victoria for the next ten years, the basis of the Government's approach at Lake Tyers and reflected generally the attitudes of non-Aboriginal Victorians. The Report recommended extension of coverage of government responsibility to include all people of Aboriginal descent wherever they resided in the State and thus removed previous racialist notions of the significance of degrees of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal blood. McLean emphatically concluded that the policy of assimilation was the best approach for the State to take:

....it cannot be doubted, that the only ultimate solution of the “aboriginal problem”, as it now exists in this State, lies in the social, cultural, and economic integration of the remainder of the race into the general community (Report on the operation of the Aborigines Act 1928 and the Regulations and Orders made thereunder 1957:4 [McLean Report]).

McLean's adoption of the assimilation policy concurred with its adoption by the Native Welfare Conference of Ministers of the Commonwealth and States in 1951 (Lyons 1983:64).

For McLean, assimilation policy principles were to be applied at Lake Tyers, where he envisaged a 'two-fold purpose' would guide the future of the Station and its population:

....of facilitating the absorption into the community of those of its residents who are fitted to be so absorbed, and of providing for those who are not (McLean Report 1957:15).
In doing so, he rejected the submissions of the Lake Tyers residents, Aboriginal organisations and community groups who had argued for secure tenure and participation of the people in the development of the property at Lake Tyers. The Report held the view that management of Aborigines was necessary; and operations of the Station staff were not criticised. No reason was given why the Station was retained in the overall administration of Victoria’s Aboriginal affairs. McLean concluded:

The conditions at Lake Tyers can only be described as unsatisfactory, though for this no blame can be attributed to the management. Theirs is a particularly frustrating and discouraging task. While conducting what is...a benevolent institution, they are also engaged in running an extensive farming undertaking (McLean Report 1957:13).

McLean did not question the Government’s acceptance of responsibility for the very few identified direct descendants of traditional people who chose to reside at the Station; and the residents who were ‘aged, sick, infirm, or otherwise necessitous’. For the balance:

...there should be an administrative revival of the efforts made by the Board at that time to encourage or force the half-castes on the station to stand on their own feet, and accept their responsibilities in the community (McLean Report 1957:14).

McLean concluded that the residents’ request for separate development of the Station would frustrate the process of absorption. He predicted Aboriginal self-governance would attract the district’s ‘transients’ to live at the Station; and dismissed the idea of management by an Aboriginal committee co-operating with the manager, as follows:

Previous experiments in this direction, however, have entirely failed, owing to favouritism arising from family relationships and other factors, and to the special antipathy of the residents to the exercise of any semblance of authority by one of their own race” (McLean Report 1957:13).

In relation to the future of Lake Tyers station the Report made a number of significant recommendations:

(i) retention of Lake Tyers as a wholly managed station but directed to the purpose of achieving the policy of assimilation.
provision of accommodation for categories of people: (i) those 'who are aged, sick, infirm or otherwise necessitous', that is, those who cannot be assimilated; (ii) those who were 'full blood' (sic) who chose to reside there, and (iii) initially 'able-bodied half-castes and their families' (sic), who then would be encouraged to re-locate into the community.

reduction in the area of reserved land from its existing size of 4000 acres to 'about 200 acres', with the balance sold or leased.

provision of a program of encouragement of individuals and individual families to be self reliant and capable of living elsewhere; and if this failed to force removal by adopting a firm approach.

re-introduction of a strictly administered entry and departure using a licensing method to ensure control of numbers residing and those working, and the maintenance of good discipline (McLean Report 1957:13)

The purpose of the Station as a residential institution for those people deemed unable to live independently in the general society was unchanged; but the significantly restricted coverage of residence was a major recommendation. By depicting a new future away from Lake Tyers for the majority of residents, McLean envisaged a smaller reserve property was needed for the reduced number of residents and the farm would not be required.

McLean expected most Lake Tyers residents would be assimilated into a world where racially prejudiced attitudes acted as an impediment to the employment of Aborigines and to their acceptance as town residents (McLean Report 1957:11). Ultimately however, he 'blamed the victim'. Aboriginal values and motivations expressed by individuals, families and social groups were the major difficulties to achieving assimilation (McLean Report 1957:9). He saw 'strong family ties' as frustrating its achievement (McLean Report 1957:11). Therefore the practice of individual family assimilation was desirable, as it would weaken communal bonds. A scattered method of accommodating families in towns would facilitate assimilation (McLean Report 1957:16-17). McLean showed little insight into the fundamental structural barriers - the effects of colonisation - and he placed his faith in good human relations by government staff, service club members.
and voluntary neighbourliness offering close, friendly supervision (McLean Report 1957: 18). With non-Aborigines exercising a 'duty of care' to assist Aborigines, McLean envisaged that assimilation would be achieved by extending the provision of housing, health, education, and employment services to Aboriginal people as individuals and as individual families. He believed that Aboriginal people would be attracted to forsake past group behaviour patterns and abandon a separate existence as they started to enjoy the benefits of living as equals in mainstream society.

In retrospect, McLean's Report did facilitate significant change in Aboriginal affairs. It recommended a newly constituted statutory authority (the Aborigines Welfare Board) to administer Aboriginal advancement via the policy of assimilation to all Aborigines residing in Victoria. Administration of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station was no longer to be the pivotal responsibility of the new Board. With regard to the future development of Lake Tyers, the Report did not assist the new Board by adding detail to its broad proposals by adopting specific ideas advocated by submissions viz. an adult education scheme that prepared residents for self-reliance, the cessation of rations, the introduction of Award wages, a new job skills training scheme, or a statement of the required competence of staff to manage the new program.

The intellectual horizon of Australian public administrative practice in the late 1950s in relation to the social and economic development of Indigenous people seemed unaffected by the pre and post World War Two experience of the British Colonial Office and its Pacific Island, African and Asian colonies (Rowley 1965:4). Submissions to the McLean Inquiry did not draw on the extensive use of economic and social developmental programs of colonial governments or the United Nations. Yet colonial governments had been sponsoring community development projects to co-opt critical nationalist leaders and to socially integrate under-developed populations into their colonial societies (Mayo 1975:130). Australian practice did not connect its role with the Indigenous people within Australia to its work in Papua New Guinea (Rowley 1965). Australian administrators had learned little from the way New Zealand, USA and Canada were administrating developmental programs for their Indigenous peoples (Pittock 1965). Social development
experience overseas did not influence plans for Lake Tyers.

**Implementation of the McLean Report**

The *McLean Report*'s recommendations became the foundation of new Victorian legislation — the *Aborigines Act 1957*, Number 6086 — proclaimed on 30th July 1957. The Board replaced the BPA as the Government's mode of public administration in Aboriginal affairs. However, the new unit remained a division of the Chief Secretary's Department, with the Chief Secretary (or his delegate, initially another Minister), as Chairman. The *McLean Report*'s recommendation of assimilation was adopted as the Board's policy, including those recommendations concerning Lake Tyers.

The first *Annual Report* of the Board in 1958 named five major areas for implementation: housing, education, health, employment and public re-education. Lake Tyers was not listed (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1958: 5). The same *Annual Report* confirmed that the Station would be retained, but for the purpose of meeting the goal of assimilation with the farm retained to provide food and training to prospective farmers:

> In order that they and their families may be assimilated into the general community, it will be the aim of the Board to encourage and assist those able-bodied residents who are capable of work and becoming self-supporting to leave the Station when alternative accommodation in country towns is available....[and] reasonable opportunities of employment are offering....The Station will thus gradually become a settlement for the care of aged and infirm aborigines (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1958:11).

This first *Annual Report* revealed that the Board was concerned that residents received free housing, food, clothing and medical attention — a practice undermining self-reliance; and that it knew of the residents' strong emotional connection to the land:

> It is the birthplace of a very large percentage of the Gippsland aboriginal population and they look upon it as their original home. Many outside the Station have relatives living in it and to them it has a strong sentimental attachment (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1958:11).
Dispersal of individuals and families was a common experience for all Victorian Aboriginal people during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Teenage youths — girls as domestic servants — were boarded out to work for non-Aboriginal employers, children were placed at orphanages and Industrial Schools (Christie 1979:196; Pepper with De Araugo 1985: 219 & 236). On a far larger scale, the Act to Provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria 1886 and accompanying Regulations, required the missionaries and managers to enforce the process of assimilation by dispersing particular Aboriginal families from the missions/stations based on a test of 'degree of racial descent'. The Act redefined 'Aborigine' according to according to the particular beliefs of colonisers; and fewer people were the responsibility of the public purse (Attwood 1989b:101). An Aboriginal person under the age of thirty five years with a European parent or grandparent was required to leave the mission/station (Christie 1979:197). This Act had a devastating effect on the Aboriginal social networks of residents and on the economies of families at the Lake Tyers Mission. Pepper and De Araugo (1985) judged that all residents felt 'extreme pressure'. Two families living at Lake Tyers, Pepper's forebears, and a further fifteen people classified as 'half-caste', were compelled to leave:

As originally proposed they would be given until the last day of 1889 to find jobs and accommodation outside the reserve. The cottages they had built for themselves on the stations, their gardens, their clothes and blankets, all belonged to the government. For years they had been encouraged and coerced to live on land reserved for Aborigines: now they must leave before the end of 1889 Bulmer reported that 'all the half-castes have left the station now...' (Pepper and De Araugo1985:193).

Parents were separated from their children. Family and social structure and the economic activities of Lake Tyers were seriously disturbed as leaders and essential labour force workers were compelled to leave. To further compound the situation for people no longer living at stations/missions, the economy of Victoria experienced a serious depression during the early 1890s (Broome 1982:82; Pepper with De Araugo 1985:208-210). Over the next decades, the BPA's ideological position was challenged by the harsh reality of
observable destitution and suffering. Humanitarian parliamentarians (such as John Murray, Member for Warrnambool) and citizens initiated political opposition and forced the Government in 1910 to amend legislation so that government assistance was made available to needy Aboriginal people not residing on missions/stations (Barwick 1981; Critchett 1980; Pepper with De Araugo 1985).

Dislocation and instability further compounded the experience of Aboriginal families and their social organisation at missions/stations when the BPA decided to close selected missions and stations, starting with Framlingham in 1890. (The reserved Crown land was retained). From 1890 to 1924 relocation of people undermined community structures and family networks. Official decisions compelled individuals and families to decide their future habitat – go where the BPA directed to another mission/station, beyond their country and with or without kin; or, stay-put, resist official direction and face harassment; or, find an alternative locality and try to become self-sufficient. The influx of families entering Lake Tyers began in 1904 with the gradual closure of the Ramahyuck Mission. Ramahyuck was located about one hundred kilometres west of Lake Tyers and located on country of Gunnai descendants speaking the Braiakaulung dialect. The Mission's closure was finalised in 1908. This decision brought yet another set of difficulties for the host population of Lake Tyers, who were expected to integrate with the new residents; and the migrants had to adjust to the new environment (Christie 1979:204). The process of closure of mission/station was completed in 1917 when the BPA chose Lake Tyers to become the sole operating station. The process of closure was met with defiant resistance from Aboriginal residents on reserves and their non-Aboriginal supporters (Barwick 1981; Critchett 1982:37-48). Consequently, the thrust of closure was slowed but not thwarted. The Government's responsibility for Victorian Aborigines – that is those deemed deserving of most public assistance – concentrated on the residents of Lake Tyers from 1917 until 1957.

Dispersal by the Aborigines Welfare Board

Rowley (1971) has noted that the forced movement of Aboriginal families as particularly
a Victorian way of acting. Rowley wrote:

In Victoria, ...the administrative idea of assimilation, in the last decade has involved the notion that families of Aboriginal descent should be pressured out from 'segregated' situations...to move into the house in town (Rowley 1971:20-21).

In 1957, the Board did not have staff available to start to implement its plan of relocating families from the Station at Lake Tyers. The Board had been advised by the McLean Report to invite voluntary human service organisations to contribute (McLean Report 1957:16). By 1955, the Association of Apex Clubs of Australia was captivated by a vision of racial harmony made possible through assimilation (AAV, B408, Items 8 & 9 Board of Inquiry into Aborigines Act 1928). The Clubs wanted to resolve the troubles encountered by 'the dark people' living in eastern and southern States. A National Service Scheme called 'Aboriginal Welfare' was devised. The Scheme was adopted as the Apex Clubs' service program for two years from August 1955. The Scheme was the substance of a submission to the McLean Inquiry in 1956 (AAV, B408, Items 8 & 9, Board of Inquiry into Aborigines Act 1928). The National Service Scheme proposed a carefully designed plan for individual Aboriginal families to facilitate their satisfactory entry into rural towns - covering employment, accommodation, schooling and personal support. In his Report, McLean related that a Lake Tyers family had been sponsored by the Morwell Apex Club, found employment with local government, housed by the Housing Commission of Victoria (HCV), and provided rent and food for the first two weeks. Although it was admitted that within a month the family returned to the Station, Mclean and Apex were not deterred. The man was said to be 'poor material'. The Report claimed the lack of success was due to the man's preference for life at the Station (McLean Report 1957:14).

The motivation of the Apex Club leaders to redress the situation of Aborigines was shared by a number of individuals, human rights, charitable and welfare groups organised by non-Aboriginal interests. During the 1950s their numbers increased (Barwick 1964a:24). McLean saw the value of assistance by civil society complementing that given by Board staff. In March 1961, the Government appointed Arthur Holden to be a member
of the Board. Holden was the former National President of Apex Clubs, a member of the Morwell Apex Club, the author of the National Service Scheme, and a resident of Morwell Gippsland. Already actively associated with sponsoring the Apex Scheme in the La Trobe Valley and nationally, now he was guaranteed a prominence in the Board’s work with families. He was directly associated with the dispersal of families from Lake Tyers (Boas 1973:50 & 181-182; AAV, B408, Items 8 & 9 Board of Inquiry into Aborigines Act 1928; McLean Report 1957:16 and Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1961:3).

From the start, Board members were not unanimous about the plan to remove people from Lake Tyers. Professor Donald Thomson, anthropologist member of the Board, wrote to the responsible Minister and Board Chairman in June 1958 after visiting Lake Tyers advising his opposition to the plan to relocate residents (Minutes Aborigines Welfare Board 11 June 1958; West 2003:5). In 1964, Professor Thomson and Dr Jannette Finney, nominated by the Minister for Health, opposed closing the Station (Minutes Aborigines Welfare Board November 1964). The key opponent to closure and removal, Pastor Doug Nicholls, had already resigned from the Board in early 1963.

The Board first met in August 1957. The Superintendent did not commence until April 1958. The Station situation was not given immediate attention. The staff situation there was not conducive to arranging relocation. Len Rule, Station Manager for twenty three years, was preparing to retire. (He retired on 30th September 1958 and his replacement, H. McDonald, did not take office until January 1959). Anyway, the Board had decided to concentrate on a more pressing political issue, the housing needs of families, especially those at Robinvale and Mooroopna. During the following financial year (1958-59) the Board formulated its strategy for Lake Tyers as follows:

- Regulations under the 1957 Act were gazetted authorising staff to control the entry and departure of persons by instituting a permit system (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1959:4 & 10)

- the area of the reserve would not be reduced nor parts leased
• men capable of working and becoming self-supporting would be encouraged to go to houses that would be made available to them

• families judged capable would be trained in preparation for re-location - the process reckoned to be like a slum clearance project

• eventually the Station would accommodate only aged and infirm Aborigines

• an improved farming operation - pasture, stock and equipment - would produce supplies for the people and be a training resource - but it was not expected to be fully self-supporting

• attention to facilities at, and services to, the Station - a more nutritious ration scale, a regular fortnightly visit by a municipal Infant Welfare Sister, a monthly doctor's visit, surveys of incidence of tuberculosis and round worm, replacement of the Station's hospital by the Bairnsdale Hospital for a confinement or serious illness

• renovation of the cottages and installation of a stove and cupboard by a tradesman and a group of Aboriginal workers, who would be given on-the-job training

• planning - the provision to each cottage: the supply of electricity and water and the construction of a laundry-bathroom; improvement in school teaching methods; the establishment of a pre-school program involving mothers and adult education with the provision of a library and films; and the provision of opportunities for sport, youth and adult social activities (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1959:8 & 10).

How many Station residents were subject to the relocation program? One hundred and ninety eight people (eighty seven adults and one hundred and eleven children) lived at the Station in thirty three cottages on 30th June 1958 (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1958:11). Table 4.1: Population of Lake Tyers Station 30 June 1958-1966 shows the official total population of Lake Tyers at 30th June for each year from
1958 to 1966.

Table 4.1 *Population of Lake Tyers Station 30th June 1958 to 1966*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Total Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The population declined each successive year from 1958 to 1965 but increased in 1966. The overall fall in population between 1958 and 1965 was one hundred and fifty eight persons (one hundred and ninety eight persons to forty persons). The years 1958-1959 (forty two persons - seventeen adults and twenty five children) and 1962-1963 (thirty nine persons – thirteen adults and twenty six children) saw the highest number of departures.

Chart 4.1 gives a line graph presentation of the total population changes 1958 to 1966.
In the three year period 1963-65, the decline amounted to fifty three percent of the total population decline (eighty three persons). Data contained in Table 4.2: Families Exiting Lake Tyers Station 1958-1966 has suggested that the overall decline in population was not due to the relocation policy alone. There were at least three reasons for the fall in population. First, the re-introduction of the licence system in August 1958 may explain the first peak. People were not able to enter/leave the Station as they had been (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1959:10). This action was the result of McLean's recommendation to re-introduce control of who resided at the Station (McLean Report 1957:21). For decades, families had regularly moved to/from the Station for seasonal work (McLean Report 1957:13). Although leaving and returning had to be formally negotiated with the staff at Lake Tyers, no strict licensing scheme operated (McLean
Second, there were other pull and push factors associated with people’s movements to and from the Station. One primary reason was the attraction of earning income via seasonal work in the district:

Only time our mob was allowed money was outside when they got a permit to go off and work outside doing the season’s work. In later years that happened and a lot of the families came off Lake Tyers during the bean picking season and the peas and the winter-time they go back to Lake Tyers. They might come out for a couple of months or more (Uncle Albert Mullet, Mission Voices, 2004).

Freedom from a manager’s control accompanied the seasonal work excursion. Other families left to live with relatives elsewhere, or to get a job in another part of the State. A return to the Station was triggered by end of harvesting season, loss of work, rent and other debts, or difficulty coping with responsibilities and therefore facing investigations and supervisory interventions by government officials, including police. The lure to return, especially during winter months, was the availability of free government assistance – accommodation, rations, schooling, medical service and some payment for work. After the 1939-1945 War increasingly families sought a better life in alternative environments - Melbourne (Barwick 1963 & 1964a:27); Jackson’s Track (Mullett 1989; Tonkin with Landon 2000) or parts of Gippsland (Pepper 1980; Mullett 1989). These venues offered the advantages of income, accommodation, access to services and opportunities to relate with their own people together with escape from the Station staff’s demeaning lack of civility, supervisory control, invasion of privacy, deprivation and geographical isolation.

The third reason was associated with the second peak in the population decline - the Board’s relocation project. Philip Felton, Superintendent of the Board, recorded details about the families exiting the Station between February 1958 and August 1966 - the year the relocation project ceased (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee November 1966:107-111). Felton’s data noted which families were relocated into Board and HCV houses, and which ones left for alternative reasons: ‘work’, ‘family’ or ‘conduct’. I have presumed his designation of ‘rehoused family’ was relocation; and that an Apex Club assisted some. Felton’s data does not inform what was meant by ‘family
reasons'. Therefore 'family reasons' may cover a voluntary family departure, or one made by a family in protest to the pressure tactics and intimidation of Board staff.

According to Felton's statistics summarised in Table 4.2, altogether thirty nine families left the Station between 1958 and 1966, totalling two hundred and fourteen persons - seventy adults and one hundred and thirty seven children. There is a considerable discrepancy between Felton's total number who left (two hundred and fourteen persons) and the figure of one hundred and fifty eight persons in the official statistics shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.2 Families Exiting Lake Tyers Station 1958 – 1966 showing Reasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of Families</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Re-housing</th>
<th>Conduct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table constructed from data compiled by Felton (1966b) and Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee 1966:107-111

Table 4.2 showed that three families moved away from the Station in calendar year 1958. Felton notes that one family went to Lakes Entrance and two families went to Bega, New South Wales. Two families left for work. No family moved to a Board or HCV house. In June 1959, one family was expelled from the Station for conduct reasons. In 1959 the Board had started to purchase blocks of land at different Gippsland locations and the first dispersed family had moved to one of these sites in West Gippsland.

Reduction of housing stock at Lake Tyers was a way to realise the future plan for the Station. In its Annual Report for the year ended June 1959 the Board announced that its housing program would be resourced by transporting the Station’s cottages to satisfy the unmet accommodation needs of Aboriginal people in East Gippsland, especially those
working in timber mills at Nowa Nowa and Orbost. In March 1963, two families were rehoused in newly constructed houses at Moe in the La Trobe Valley under the Board's 'dispersal' project. Eight families were moved for 'family reasons', five for 'work' and one family was expelled. In contrast, between March 1963 and August 1966, there were thirteen families rehoused, four families left for 'family reasons' and one for 'work' (Felton 1966b).

Officers of the League lobbied the Board from its inception recommending the creation of a co-operative at Lake Tyers (Minutes Aborigines Welfare Board 14 October 1959). In February 1962, the Superintendent advised the Board that at least seven Lake Tyers families were reluctant to leave the Station (Minutes Aborigines Welfare Board 6 February 1962). In September 1962, the Board met at Lake Tyers. With assistance from the Council for Aboriginal Rights, the residents presented Board members with a petition requesting the Station become a co-operative. The resignation of Nicholls from the Board in March 1963, the wide media coverage throughout the period of conflict and the intervention of the Chief Secretary to retain the reserve by legislation in March 1965, did not deter the Board from working towards its goal of relocating families. Ultimately, Lake Tyers was saved by the direct action of Nicholls with the League and a diverse supporter base including the Labour Opposition in the Parliament.

The 'Save Lake Tyers' Campaign

Aboriginal leader, Doug Nicholls, (Field Officer of the Australian Aborigines League and later of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League), in 1963, headed the Lake Tyers Campaign Committee demanding that the Station be retained and managed by Aboriginal people. Nicholls, born at Cumeragunga Station in southern New South Wales, had served his apprenticeship as an Indigenous community organiser alongside his mentor William Cooper (also from Cumeragunga), the founder of the Australian Aborigines League in 1932 (Markus 1988:47; Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985:27). Cooper with Nicholls and other Aboriginal leaders, in 1937 organised a petition signed by Aborigines from across the nation proposing direct political representation in the Federal Parliament. It was presented to the Commonwealth Government for transmission to the
King. Cooper with interstate Aboriginal leaders including Nicholls, organised the successful Aborigines' Day of Mourning on 26th January 1938 at Sydney Cove. With a number of national Aboriginal leaders of independent interstate Aboriginal organizations, between the World Wars, Nicholls organised social action requesting equality of civil rights and return of reserve land to Aboriginal people (Burgmann 2003:52). After the Second World War Nicholls, with Melbourne-based Aboriginal leaders, Bill and Eric Onus, continued involvement in many community actions in Victoria and in other States seeking civil rights for Aboriginal people, demonstrating their distinctive cultural identity and urging that they be represented on decision-making bodies. Nicholls had given his public support to the submission of Laurie Moffatt and the Lake Tyers people seeking secure tenure and management of Lake Tyers to the McLean Inquiry in January 1956 (Clark 1972:169). He gave national scope to his community actions in February 1958, when he and other non-Aborigines and Aborigines founded the national Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines (later Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders) (FCAATSI). Nicholls was well respected by, and mixed socially with, a broad cross-section of influential non-Aboriginal people, not only those who were actively demanding justice for his people. Initially, he had become widely known as a star Australian Rules footballer, professional sprinter and boxer, but as Pastor of the Church of Christ Aboriginal Mission in Fitzroy he was able to extend his contacts with both Aborigines and non-Aborigines. His public activities meant he was privy to the past and present practices of the Government at Lake Tyers. He heard the stories of former and remaining residents of Lake Tyers when he met them at his church in Fitzroy, as an Advancement League Field Officer, at places like Jackson's Track in West Gippsland (Tonkin and Landon 2000; Mullett 1989:4) and when he made visits to the Station (Jackomos and Fowell 1991:23). Nicholl’s public persona and advocacy skills were pivotal in saving the land at Lake Tyers. On resigning as a member of the Board in April 1963 in protest at the Government's official announcement of Station closure, Nicholls said:

The settlement should be retained and developed along cooperative lines. Assimilation in a forced manner will destroy my people's social structure and kill them as a people (Herald 25 March 1963:5).
He understood what confronted the Lake Tyers' people:

I've seen what happens when our people are put off their land – pushed into the white community – before they're ready...It destroys them. They become social misfits: not wanted by the whites, unable to return to security-caught both ways (Clark 1972:218).

The Lake Tyers Campaign Committee was auspiced by the League and 'largely orchestrated' by Nicholls (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985: 69). The front page of the brochures published in 1963 and 1965 by the Committee pictured the protest march of forty six Lake Tyers residents and supporters in Melbourne on 22nd May 1963. Led by Nicholls walking beside the Lake Tyers leader Laurie Moffatt, the photo showed the marchers meeting Mr Clive Stoneham, Victorian Labour Opposition Leader. They presented their petition to him at Parliament House:

The undersigned residents of Lake Tyers have NO wish to move off Lake Tyers Reserve and we ask the State Government of Victoria to retain it, and the land to be used in the best interest as we think fit (The Lake Tyers Campaign Committee 1965).

The measure of the Committee's success was evidenced by the fact that it convinced the Labour Party Opposition, academics, students, churches, unions and human rights groups that the assimilation policy of closure of Lake Tyers by dispersal of families was fundamentally flawed; and that there was an alternative approach available. Committed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals and groups together agitated for change. One example of the organised activities was the Forum on 'Minorities' held in Melbourne on July 1965 sponsored by the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations Association of Australia and addressed by Pauline Pickford, a non-Aboriginal woman. Her paper was titled "The Victorian Aborigines" and she spoke of the situation at Lake Tyers:

My own experience shows ample evidence that the Aborigines are anxious to develop Lake Tyers along community lines, have worked long enough on white farmers' properties for farming to hold no mysteries, they have the necessary practical knowledge and the imagination to make such a project work. Only the mechanical and technical 'know how' is missing (Pickford 1965:6).

The Lake Tyers Campaign Committee publicly promoted alternative policy ideas and
values about Aboriginal identity, competence and aspiration to possess land in a campaign pamphlet, dated August 1963, titled "Why Retain Lake Tyers For The Aborigines?" The assimilation policies of the States and Commonwealth were compared with international statements, including those recognising Indigenous land rights. The demands of the Lake Tyers people were listed as:

- absolute retention of the reserve for the benefit of the Aboriginal people
- full inquiry into Board policy and management of Lake Tyers
- abolition of restrictive regulations
- award wages and social services paid directly to persons
- elected representatives of the residents to participate in management and eventual control by the people within three to five years
- opportunity to develop community projects
- adequate financial support for projects by government
- standard housing and modern facilities
- adequate and regular transport

(Lake Tyers Campaign Committee August 1963:3).

The local claim of returning the reserve land to the Lake Tyers people was represented as part of a worldwide social movement of Indigenous people (Edgar 1980:318). The 1963 campaign pamphlet argued that retention of reserves was an international matter and referred to the treaty rights existing in U.S.A., Canada and New Zealand. It stated that Convention 107 (The Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention 1957) of the International Labour Office was clearly at odds with the policy of assimilation; and that Commonwealth and State Governments had not ratified this Convention because of recognition it gave to tribal land rights. Finally, the pamphlet pin-pointed faults in the Government's statements and answered with countering facts and argument — for instance: it disputed the Government's claim that Aboriginal community development was apartheid (The Lake Tyers Campaign Committee August 1963).

A 1965 pamphlet titled "The Dispossessed" attacked Government spokesmen and Board
behaviour in terms of 'broken promises', 'deception', and 'coercion not choice'. It detailed living conditions at the station and outlined residents' wishes by citing a petition signed by sixty adults. The pamphlet detailed evidence of the failure of the rehousing scheme:

Thirteen families have been rehoused off Lake Tyers. Three families have been permitted to return. Five other families have made application to return and have been refused. Some have left their new homes and now "double up" with relatives and friends. Two families have been subject to petitions by white neighbours because of their failure to maintain required hygienic standards. These families have been distressed and humiliated. Past policies of the Board have failed to equip them to handle town-housing, budgeting, employment, social situations, etc. Against their desires they have been coerced into launching out into white society with dire consequences for each family (The Lake Tyers Campaign Committee 1965).

The Victorian protest was given an international perspective in 1963 when Nicholls appealed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations about the alienation of reserve lands by Australian Governments, and requested action for breach of international standards (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985:71).

Unperturbed, the Board continued to publicly defend its closure policy and it continued its practice of pressuring residents to relocate from Lake Tyers. The Board admitted that the training to be self-supporting objective had not been achieved because of 'staff difficulties' (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1963:17). No explanation was provided. Nor was any commitment made to rectify this crucial deficit. Obviously the Board was resolved to close the Station and in defiance of criticism of the living conditions at Lake Tyers, announced it would not further improve facilities (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1964:10) believing the expense was wasteful. Deliberate neglect and deprivation might deter people from staying. Meanwhile, attention began to focus on the circumstances of more than one hundred Aboriginal families living in East Gippsland. Many of them were unhoused or lived in sub-standard accommodation that should have been condemned by local government authorities. Three cottages were moved from Lake Tyers Station and erected at Nowa Nowa in 1961. In 1962 eight houses
were built at Orbost; and by 1964, two houses had been built at Bruthen and one at Lucknow (East Bairnsdale) to begin housing these families.

The Board’s interest in Lake Tyers was waning as it realized the enormity of the task of providing adequate accommodation, health, education, and employment services throughout the State. In its 1964 Annual Report the Board informed that it had explored the plan of constructing an elderly persons’ facility in Bairnsdale. Giving effect to this plan would mean relinquishing the need for a Station (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1964:10). In the face of such a resolute Board, the strength, skills and determination of the Lake Tyers Campaign Committee was formidable - plus backing from the Station’s current and former residents, continuing media exposure, and the persistent demands of supporters.

**Assimilation regardless of cost**

The contest over the future of the Lake Tyers people became one of a number of political ‘test cases’ of the veracity of the assimilation policy. That policy faced serious scrutiny when Aborigines demanded to communally manage the reserve land, organised themselves beyond the control of government officers, and agitated for access to all the human rights and services available to other citizens. From 1963, the Lake Tyers protest campaign undermined confidence in the policy; and it motivated politicians, public servants, social scientists, human service practitioners and humane citizens to search for an alternative policy approach.

Organised protest was very different to earlier efforts of letter writing and petitions by residents in the 1950s. First, this time Indigenous Victorians led the campaign and asserted their claim for a rightful place in society, emphasising that they must be treated as equals. They demonstrated they were capable participants in shaping an alternative policy through the leadership roles they performed at the League and nationally in FCAATSI (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985:55-68). Second, a ‘self-determination’ policy was taking shape. Increasingly during the 1960s, Indigenous people voiced Indigenous rights to land, common law and identity and went beyond equal access
to civil rights (Burgmann 2003:67). Burgmann has noted that, in doing this, the thrust of
the Aboriginal social movement transferred from the courts to politics (Burgmann
2003:71). Third, by the mid-1960s, the emerging presence of ethnic minorities joined
with this new Aboriginal identity to challenge the cultural majority’s dominance and
view of who composed society. As with Aborigines, adherence to the goal of assimilation
of new arrivals prevailed (Encel 1981:8 & 145), but a consciousness of the changing
ethnic and racial composition of the total Australian population was growing (Martin
1978: 33; Cox 1983:342). The ethnic group development of larger southern European
immigrant populations, particularly in Melbourne, revealed distinct social identities along
cultural lines. Leaders of these ethnic groups pointed to their own special needs and
interests, to economic and social disadvantages, to being excluded from decision-making
opportunities and rejected the expectation that ‘to get on’ they had to be assimilated
(Martin 1978:34). Academics and service providers started to express their support of
ethnic and Indigenous peoples’ advocacy of self-determination (Throssell 1968:183). The
Australian Council of Social Service selected the topic “Ethnic Minorities in Australia –
The Welfare of Aborigines and Migrants” for its 5th National Conference in 1968
(Throssell 1968). The general experience of cultural diversity influenced the mood of
tolerance towards Aboriginal people and added weight to their claims (Lippmann 1973).
Fourth, with a changing political climate, politicians saw political advantage in
advocating for Aborigines. On 9th December 1964, Clyde Holding, (Australian Labour
Party) Member for Richmond argued in the Legislative Assembly:

....it was essential to retain Lake Tyers as the last area in Victoria the
Aboriginal people could genuinely feel they owned.......The retention and
improvement of Lake Tyers should not be seen as mutually exclusive of
the present policy of rehousing Aboriginal families in country areas. It
should be used to encourage responsibility, self respect, independence and
decision-making by the Aboriginal residents themselves” (Age 9
December 1964: 8)

Finally, print media coverage of the campaign was compelling. Readers saw photos
confirming the protesters’ claims and heard first hand of the experience of denial of basic
resources. The sub-standard living conditions were unacceptable to other citizens, and
clearly outweighed defensive arguments of Ministers, Board members and those
prejudiced against Aborigines. All Melbourne daily papers (*Sun, Herald* and *Age*) had special articles on the situation of Aborigines across the nation and in Victoria regularly after 1963. For example, the Sun newspaper sent a reporter to travel around the State and from 3rd to 9th April 1965 ran a series of articles (entitled "The Other People") over six consecutive days describing the living conditions at Lake Tyers and other centres of Aboriginal population. The general public began to realise that essentially Aboriginal people were not to blame for their circumstances; and furthermore could not be compelled to be ‘absorbed’ on non-Aboriginal terms while breaches of human rights were happening.

The failure of the Board's practice was exemplified in the press. In February 1964, the *Herald* told a story of successful integration of three former Lake Tyers’ families living in the rural towns of Stawell, Horsham and Ararat since May 1963 (*Herald* 1 February 1964:25). A little more than twelve months later, the *Sun* reported conversation with the man who had been relocated to Stawell. Now he was back at Lake Tyers declaring the Government would have to use force to evict him from the Station (*Sun* 3 April 1965:26). In fact two of those three arrangements failed, and by 1969 those two families had resumed residence at Lake Tyers. Each of the three families had received assistance from townsfolk, including members of the Apex Clubs of the respective towns, and Staff of the Board.

Helen Brotherton has written of the experience as a primary school-aged child when her family was re-located to Ararat from Lake Tyers in 1963 (Brotherton 1997). A truck came to pick them up against their wishes. No house was ready for occupation on their arrival. Her father began to drink alcohol heavily because of the extreme stress he suffered with his family (Brotherton 1997:113). Aunty Eileen Harrison, Helen Brotherton’s sister, has described the same rehousing experience in 1963:

> Everybody was talking about what was going to happen to the families, whether we had to move off or stay on or go bush or something. So my family were the first to ask to be, you know, leave. My mother didn’t want to leave at all…I think my mother was a bit beside herself to know that she had this huge house, it had three bedrooms in it, bathroom, toilet. When we got there there wasn’t - there were only mattresses there, we
didn't have any blankets or sheets and my father didn't have a job... We'd go to school and then we'd have all these kids ... calling us names, you know, Abo and Nigger... and I said to mum I can't go back to that school... so I ended up staying home to help mum to look after the rest of my siblings... the police was always around, because my dad was always having friends in to drink, party and mum started to get into the drink herself... It was getting that bad I think I ended up leaving... (Aunty Eileen Harrison Mission Voices 2004).

The situation of those remaining at Lake Tyers continued to receive the media's attention.

Resident Mr Charlie Carter was quoted:

I'm staying here and my people are staying with me. Even if they close the settlement, I'm staying. We will live in a tent. You can't make a go of it in white men's towns. I tried it at Bega, but when the crop-picking was finished I had to come back. The white man has not made me fit for anything else (Sun 3 April 1965:26).

A telling remark by Mrs Phyllis Carter, his wife, was recorded in the same article:

You can't talk to white people. They don't understand (Sun 3 April 1965:26).

The Board's will prevailed regardless: the relocation of families continued during 1965 as their goal appeared achievable with only eleven families to place (Yeates Private Papers March 1965).

The relocation program peaked between 1963 and 1965. Table 4.2 shows that from 1958 to 1966 thirty nine families moved from the Station. Seven families moved to Bega, south coast New South Wales, for work reasons. Of the families who were part of the rehousing project, twelve became tenants of the Aborigines Welfare Board and three became tenants of the Housing Commission of Victoria. But by 1966, at least seven of these families had returned to Lake Tyers (Tatz 1966:107-111; Boas 1973:373).

Boas (1973) has questioned the honesty of the Board in its 1963 Annual Report (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1963: 9 & 18). It reported that rehoused families were coping well; and criticised those who alleged 'forced assimilation'. As a social worker employed by the Board, Boas was in contact with three of the families
during their relocation beyond the Station; and his contact continued for about a further seven years. Boas has written:

The outcome for all three families was some kind of failure. Every family suffered marital crises and difficulties in coping with their children, with the neighbours, with employment and with the neighbourhood in which they were placed. All three stated openly in discussion with me that they had not wanted to come to the towns in which the houses had been built BEFORE they were approached to move, and all three stated that they had been virtually told by a responsible member of the Board that they could expect no further real help if they were not willing to move out of their sub-standard dwellings into a new and well serviced home in a country town provided, at their request, by the Board. The assurances that the welfare staff would assist during the moving-in and adjustment period were met in substance for the first month or so – after which they felt hopelessly isolated and alone, even though in all three instances there were local service people who really did their best to help. In the case of all three they ran up taxi bills travelling to each other or to relatives in distant areas....(Boas 1973:230).

By the time of the 1965 Annual Report, the Board denigrated the re-housed families:

...as displaced persons, unsuited for the new environment in which they suddenly find themselves. Many of the families are unable or not ready, without help, to make use of community health facilities available and which it is assumed they will use....(Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June1965:5).

The Board found itself in the midst of political turbulence. The Government found itself defending the Board and having to demonstrate its sensitivity to criticisms. It introduced the Aborigines (Amendment) Act and on 18th May 1965 the Lake Tyers land was declared a ‘permanent’ reserve. The Minister knew later amending legislation could revoke the ‘permanent reserve’ status. The action however did not satisfy the critics.

The Board was still convinced that the ‘problem’ they faced was the result of segregation of people at an isolated location and the regime of welfare dependency there. The Board in May 1965 announced a plan to complement the process of rehousing individual families by developing a site geographically proximate to town, with access to human services and jobs and where families could be trained for town living. The plan would
also be available to other Gippsland families. The Board proposed to establish the ‘Gippsland Settlement’ (also referred to as ‘the Transit Village’ and ‘Housing Centre’) at Morwell in the LaTrobe Valley. The settlement would accommodate two older couples, a few single persons and several families. They would undertake training whilst being supervised by Board staff. The curricula included: for the women, domestic and home craft training; and for the men trade and hobby work (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1965:12-13; Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1966:9-11).

The Shire of Morwell reacted negatively due to opposition from Aboriginal people, the League, other community organizations and especially the Morwell Protest Committee, by refusing to grant the Board a permit to build the Centre (Smoke Signals September 1965:23; Lippmann 1973:147-148; and Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board, 30 June 1966:9-11). Once again the Board’s plan was frustrated.

An alternative

Aboriginal leaders had repeatedly advocated communal Aboriginal self-management and possession of land. A Canadian social anthropologist studying in Australia, Diane Barwick, played an influential role in promoting an alternative to closure of the Station. In 1961 and 1962 she completed fieldwork for a University doctorate studying the Melbourne Aboriginal community (Barwick 1963). Her participant-observer and historical research methods brought her in contact with Aboriginal people. The quality of her scholarship produced new up-to-date cultural data that humanised Aboriginal people and led interested non-Aborigines to respect an extant vibrant Aboriginal society (Barwick 1963 & 1964a). Barwick made her research material available to the Lake Tyers campaign, the League, the Board’s Superintendent and social work staff, politicians such as Clyde Holding, journalists, professionals and supporters of Aboriginal rights. She submitted proposals to the Government and the Board in which she argued for the retention of the Lake Tyers reserve land for the benefit of the residents, and the provision of a community development program (Barwick 1964b & 1966).

An unnamed ‘Special Correspondent’ wrote two leading articles for the Age newspaper in March 1965 at the height of the controversy (Age 17 March 1965:2 & 18 March
1965:2). The content revealed an in-depth analysis of legislation, policy, practice methods, administrative behaviour and most importantly, the role of Aboriginal interests – and identified their relevance to the future of Lake Tyers. The first article was a constructive analysis of Victoria’s Aboriginal policy dilemma but placed in a national context. It suggested Victorians had continued to ignore the presence, needs and expressed wishes of Aboriginal citizens, especially those of Lake Tyers; and illustrated how both the Minister and the Board depicted Aborigines as ‘poor and depressed whites’, thereby denying that Victorian Aborigines possessed a vibrant culture and social organization. Readers were told:

However, qualified anthropologists have found a strong kinship system among a people which expressly wishes to identify itself as Aboriginal (Age 17 March 1965:2).

The author declared that citizenship implied acceptance of a person’s cultural identity. This was a direct attack on assimilation. The article proceeded to remind readers that Aboriginal mistrust of governments and statutory bodies existed because they had experienced a long history of broken promises, unpredictability and deliberate deception. It argued that influential Board officials made decisions without training, specialist social knowledge and in the absence of communication with Aborigines. The writer outlined the Board’s policies towards Lake Tyers and gave reasons why the practice of dispersal was flawed, and imposed extra negative consequences on the already damaged and confused residents. The writer quoted the perception of Professor Donald Thomson, that dispersal was deliberately breaking up communities and separating them from each other. The structure of the Board and the qualifications of its members were described, their incapacities noted and their decision making procedures outlined. The author identified the source of the government’s advice regarding Lake Tyers, a Board Sub-Committee (*The Lake Tyers Sub-Committee*) of three men (J (Harry) Davey, a retired Housing Commissioner who became Chairman of the Board in 1965, Arthur Holden, a chartered accountant from Morwell, Gippsland and Don Howe, a farmer from Mooroopna, Goulburn Valley). Created in August 1964 with the task of formulating policy, the Sub-Committee’s mode of behaviour was described as:
...to meet prior to A.W.B. meetings and to regulate its agendas. It has acted in the name of the Board, without reference to it: for example, it ordered the demolition of three Lake Tyers houses (Age 17 March 1965:2).

The second article (Age 18 March 1965:2) canvassed policy options for Lake Tyers as: a) assimilation by dispersal – the Board’s current program; b) segregation of the station with charitable handouts and no incentives – the previous Board for Protection’s way since 1917; and c) a third and advocated option: ‘the communal or community development approach’ incorporating ideas of ‘self-help’, ‘training for independence’ and ‘communal enterprise’ (Age 18 March 1965:2).

This new policy relied on the growing body of international social development experience with Indigenous peoples in New Zealand, Canada and U.S.A (Barwick 1964b; Pittock 1965). The essential differences in the new policy proposed were: a) its unit of action – not the individual but the social group or extended kin network; b) allowing the people to decide how they would relate to the mainstream society; c) retaining cultural identity; and d) developing qualities of community development that engender a sense of security and give rise to communal initiative and the capacity to be self-determining (Age 18 March 1965:2).

Philip Felton, Superintendent of the Board proposed a new approach he called ‘open village’ on 20th October 1964. His plan contained features of equipping residents for responsibility and choice, self-respect, eventual independence and participation in decision-making. The Lake Tyers Sub-Committee received the proposal but the Board rejected it at its next meeting (Age 18 March 1965:2).

Groundswell

Station residents and former residents living in Gippsland participated in a number of national and Statewide conferences sponsored during the 1960s by FCAATSI, the League
and churches. There they mixed with national and State Indigenous leaders and heard their arguments. They were:

- Mr Gene Mobourne and Mr Cedric Parsons representing Lake Tyers at the Easter 1964, annual FCAA Conference held in Canberra (Clark 1972:38);
- Mr Charlie Carter (Lake Tyers) and Mr Laurie Moffatt (LaTrobe Valley) representing the Lake Tyers campaign spoke at the Easter 1965, annual FCAATSI Conference in Canberra (Taffe 2005:195);
- Mr Charlie Carter (Lake Tyers) and Mr Cedric Parsons (LaTrobe Valley) were present at the Third Aboriginal Congress held in Melbourne during 1966 (*Smoke Signals* October 1966:11);
- Mr Foster Moffatt attended the all-Aboriginal Conference convened by the Commonwealth Government in Canberra in March 1969 (*Aborigines Advancement League Victoria Newsletter* April 1969:4; & 1985:88, 121);
- Mr Charlie Carter attended the National Aboriginal Seminar in Sydney in 1969 (*Aborigines Advancement League Victoria Newsletter* September 1969:7); and
- Mr Con Edwards was a member of the Board; the Synod of the Gippsland Anglican Diocese, and represented the Diocese at meetings of the Australian Council of Churches (Personal Papers 1970).

During the 50s and 60s in Victoria, in their fight to secure equality of treatment Indigenous leaders had sought to politically influence Aboriginal affairs by acquiring the financial support and organising resources of sympathetic non-Aboriginal individuals (Burgmann 2003:52). The establishment and growth of the League in Victoria was evidence of this collaboration. Then traditional communities in Northern Australia - the Yolgnu at Yirrkala from 1963 and the Gurindji at Wattie Creek from 1966 - challenged government arrangements with mining and pastoral corporations and the status quo that legal positions relied upon (Foley 2000). In 1968, Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industry were granted equal pay for equal work. Tertiary students led by Charles Perkins, in 1965, held a well-publicised protest bus ride to confront people of rural north western
New South Wales with their prejudiced racist practices (Burgmann 2003:56).

By the latter end of the decade, Aboriginal men and women from many different locations and circumstances across the country were demanding an influential political role in advancing their interests at local, state and national levels — that is action but under their control (Foley 2000; Burgmann 2003). Younger Indigenous members of FCAATSI and the League in Victoria organised themselves and wrested self-determining key organisational positions from the previously dominant non-Aboriginal members (Pittock 1975:44). Eventually they won organisational control of executive management from non-Aboriginal members. Overseas models and experiences were motivators, especially from U.S. where African Americans advocated ‘Black Power’, and the U.K. where race riots of racial minorities became part of daily media coverage. The visit to the League in March 1969 of Dr Roosevelt Brown, a Caribbean Black Power activist, heightened unrest between the younger Aboriginal leaders and Doug Nicholls (Pittock 1975:22-23). In opposition to overt moves for autonomy, Nicholls tendered his resignation from the League later that year (Foley 2000:79). ‘Aboriginalisation’ of staff positions followed: Bruce McGuinness asserted his prominence, initially as Secretary of the League’s Aboriginal Branch, and then as Director of the League from late 1969. He was editor of The Koorier newspaper and has been described as:

Trenchant, witty, often verging on libellous, the paper covered items of interest to Aborigines in a style which would have been unthinkable ten years before” (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985:88).

‘Koorie control of Koorie affairs’ became a unifying rallying slogan for many Aborigines in south east Australia as they directed attention to the political and structural issues effecting their position in society, rather than maintaining the existing roles of welfare and public education. Under its new Indigenous leadership, the League publicly criticised the way the recently created Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was structured, by advocating a totally elected Aboriginal membership for the statutory Advisory body (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985:86). Internal organisational repercussions followed for the League — argument between Aboriginal members and dwindling non-Aboriginal membership. By October 1969 very strained relationships erupted between
the League and the State Government, when the Director of the Ministry deferred paying two Commonwealth grants to the League. A number of Aboriginal leaders perceived this action as Government interference in their domestic business and could not be justified as a lack of confidence in the League's executive functioning. In the next years and throughout the episode of transfer of land title and self-management to the Lake Tyers people, the relationship between the League and the State Government was hostile (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985:99).

The United Nations provided a platform for Indigenous people to voice their protests. Within a turbulent international context attentive to the abuse of human rights and Indigenous rights, by the later 1960s the Commonwealth and State Governments contended with radical traditional and urban-based Indigenous voices demanding recognition of the issue of sovereignty and rebuttal of 'terra nullius' as the legal principle undergirding property rights (Burgmann 2003:68). At the end of the 1960s Indigenous leaders knew assimilation would not recognise the rights emanating from prior occupation that had been lost through the processes of invasion and colonisation. They wanted communal rights to land, sea, customary law and culture to be safeguarded, and control of decision-making to make this happen. For Indigenous people and their supporters, the success of the national Referendum of 1967 seemed to offer the possibility of a different arrangement of power relations (Foley, 2002).

De-stabilisation

The Board showed it had no intention of admitting defeat after it had failed in September 1965 to obtain municipal permission to establish a Transit Housing Settlement at Morwell. Without consultation and preparation, the residents still residing at Lake Tyers faced destitution in April 1966, when the free rations and clothing 'hand-out' scheme ceased (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1966:11). The Board made an arrangement with the Nowa Nowa general store proprietor to make three visits each week to the station to sell basic commodities to the residents. The Board's resident Acting Manager went to live at Bairnsdale. (The Manager and Matron had been removed to Melbourne in late 1964 (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1965:11). The
Acting Manager made irregular daytime visits to the Station. A former Manager of the Station, living close-by, had oversight of the farm assisted by an employed male resident (Mr Charlie Carter). Often during the day no staff were present, nor in the evenings and at weekends. Consequently, residents had no phone communication with the outside world and relied on the Station’s vehicle for transport (West 2003:10). No other male or female adult residents were employed. Yet the Board contracted non-Aboriginal men to do fencing, fern slashing and wood cutting jobs (West 2003). The Board had abandoned the people’s welfare.

Without the presence of staff at the Station the population increased to sixty one persons by October 1966 (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee 1966:83). Now the population was composed of three sections a) those who had refused to be relocated, headed by their spokesperson Mr Charlie Carter; b) some of the rehoused families who had been permitted to return to the station; and c) former resident families who had arrived recently from Bega, New South Wales and admitted themselves. Other individuals and families waited for Board permission to live at the Station. One of these was Mr Laurie Moffatt, the long time leader who had marched with Pastor Nicholls. The Board refused Moffatt’s application for a permit to re-enter the Station. On a Saturday morning in December 1966, Moffatt with a group of four other men, all former Aboriginal residents and one a member of the Board, protested at the Station demanding the installation of Aboriginal management there (AAV Box 12 Item 100 Visits 1961-1967).

The critical attacks on the Government’s administration scored telling blows. The Aborigines (Amendment) Act 1965 recognised the power of the League by allowing it to nominate a member to the Board. This change in the composition of the Board enabled a majority of members to break the dominance of the Board’s Lake Tyers Sub-Committee (Messrs. Davey, Holden and Howe). Lobbyists opposing the Board’s practice now had an avenue of influence through the League nominee. Dr Colin Tatz, the nominee of the Aborigines Advancement League, was the new Board member appointed from late 1965. He was the Director, Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs at Monash University.
With the prior knowledge of the Minister (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee 1966:1), in February 1966, Tatz circulated a proposed way forward for Lake Tyers involving a coalition of the League, community organisations and the Board. The Board adopted the Tatz proposal at its meeting on March, 1966. A *Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee (Tatz Committee)* was formed to investigate 'a rehabilitation and training scheme at Lake Tyers', with Tatz as Convenor. Apart from Mr Con Edwards (a Board member and former Aboriginal resident of the Station then living in Newborough, Gippsland), no resident from Lake Tyers was a member of the *Tatz Committee* (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee November 1966).

The Committee published its Report in November 1966; and at a Special Board meeting on 9th December 1966, the Board approved the Report in principle and recommended implementation of Stage 1. A *Lake Tyers Project Committee* was appointed by the Board to monitor progress in March 1967, again without a member from the Lake Tyers Station (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1967:10).

While the Committee was engaged in its task, in August 1966 Board member Professor Donald Thomson visited the Station at the invitation of the residents. He reported his visit to the Board and the Minister. Alarmed by Thomson's assessment of near starvation and misery, the Board in early September 1966 sent Alan West, Senior Welfare Officer (a social worker) to reside at the Station for a month (later extended to January 1967) to attend to personal needs and to recommend what should be done (West 2003:11-12). Thomson received media prominence in September 1966 when he addressed a public meeting at the University of Melbourne and criticized the Board's policy towards Lake Tyers as:

"...grim and heartbreaking" and "a policy of extermination of the aboriginal" (Sun 27 September 1966:2) West 2003:6 & 9-11).

The Minister visited the Station in September 1966, having received a petition from the residents. They sought employment and the replacement of non-Aboriginal contractors employed at the Station. The Minister responded with a number of promises, including
the construction of houses (Age 1 October 1966:5).

Once again media hurried to the Station to see the situation. Mr Charlie Carter, now called "the un-official leader of the aboriginals", was reported to have said:

Exterminate us? I don't think they care enough to do that....; and he said to the journalist .. that the aboriginals of the settlement had lost all confidence in the Aborigines Welfare Board and wanted it replaced (Sun 28 September 1966:32).

Professor Thomson's judgements were confirmed by a reporter who wrote after a visit to the Station in November 1966:

Now, in spite of its physical beauty, it is a nest of nasty squalor, in which from 30 to 60 remnants of the ancient people live out their lives in dirt, sickness and sullen despair, mercifully hidden from the world (Age 26th November 1966:5).

Reform in Sight

A member of the Board's Lake Tyers Sub-Committee attacked the feasibility of the Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee before its adoption by the Board on 9th December 1966. Holden said:

With the best expert knowledge and hard work, Lake Tyers aboriginal reserve would support not more than four families as farmers. He announced his retirement (Sun 2 December 1966:22).

Generally, the Report was received favourably and press comment was positive. The Bairnsdale Advertiser's lead article read:

A further significant step to develop Lake Tyers Aboriginal Reserve...It would seem in view of events in the Latrobe Valley that the State Government has taken the only course of action in accepting recommendations from the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee (Bairnsdale Advertiser 20 March 1967:1).

The Report was based on eighteen oral and sixteen written submissions; and forty seven Aborigines (mostly residents) were consulted. The Report's Stage 1 was to be undertaken in 1967-68 by the Board with community organisations and the residents.
Recommendations included: a) an Aboriginal Council; b) appointment of staff: Project Supervisor, Farm Supervisor and Nursing Sister; c) improvement of the farm; d) a farm training scheme; e) a short employment scheme; f) a spot timber mill; g) a vegetable growing project; h) renovation of five existing homes for pensioners; i) build eight new houses; j) extra-curricular tutorial classes for students; k) a play centre for children and mothers; l) establishment of adult education classes for residents and neighbouring ‘white’ communities; m) development of recreation facilities; and n) restoration of the church (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee 1966:ii-iii). Financial and activity responsibility for each of the listed tasks was designated between the three parties – Board, residents and community organisations (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee November 1966:ii-iii).

During 1966, Board member Dr (later Professor) Colin Tatz augmented a comprehensive review of Board policy with two other members of the Board and the Superintendent. The Policy Sub-Committee completed its task in later 1966 and published a booklet: ‘Aboriginal Policies of the Aborigines Welfare Board’. A changed philosophy underpinned the policy – termed ‘integration’ (Burgmann 2003:46). Certainly the Board’s policy had altered. Aboriginal choice was emphasised and Aboriginal culture was recognised in the new policy statement:

(1)...It does infer, however, that understanding of Aboriginal choice in matters affecting them is considered primary and should be given full consideration (2) Aboriginal customs, cultural values, beliefs, manner and place of living are given full recognition (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1967:12).

Tatz has written that he was mindful of a desirable policy approach for Lake Tyers while working on the overall policy review:

‘Manner and place of living’ was included deliberately to stop the Board’s determination to close the Lake Tyers reserve and sell it for development as a tourist mecca (Tatz 1982:38).

The new policy regarding ‘Reserves’ read:

Therefore, where Aborigines are still associated with land with which they
have strong cultural, religious and historical association, their right of possession should be established...In Victoria there are two such groups of Aborigines who have close association with reserves; the western district people in relation to Framlingham and the Gippsland Aborigines in relation to Lake Tyers...the retention of these two reserves is affirmed...(Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1967:17).

Neither the recommendations of the Tat: Committee, nor the statement of the new Board policy concerning ‘Reserves’, mentioned transferring landownership or full powers of governance to the Lake Tyers people. The Committee sought a Lake Tyers Council of residents, but the implementation of Stage One was to be by the Board, community organisations and the residents. The Council was to be elected:

...with power and status to make decisions affecting their affairs and to enter into discussion on the implementation of the proposals recommended (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee November 1966:10).

The Tat: Committee did not recommend independent self-management to the residents.

Implementation of the Board’s new plan had barely begun when in later 1967, the Government decided to terminate the Board’s existence. The failure of the Board on many fronts, including Lake Tyers, made it a political liability for the Government and dispensable (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985:79-80).

The Sun newspaper in February 1967 reported that there had been little progress at Lake Tyers. On behalf of the residents, Mr Charlie Carter complained that the Minister’s promises of the previous year were not fulfilled. He said the consultation conducted by Board staff with residents regarding the selection of sites of the houses to be built, was unacceptable. The residents had been guaranteed employment with the contractors building the houses. This had not happened (Sun 2 February 1967:2). A University of Melbourne student delegation auspiced by the Aboriginal Affairs Department of the National Union of Australian University Students (ABSCOL), met with residents in January 1967. The delegation reported to the Minister that the residents believed they had been treated disrespectfully by the Board staff. The delegation advised that they saw no
During 1967, Board staff (Frank White and later Alick Jackomos) were temporarily placed at the Station by the Board until permanent positions were filled. The Farm Manager and resident Nursing Sister positions were advertised. Sister Phyllis Hildebrandt was appointed in February. Although the appointment of a Farm Manager was upset when the Public Service Board rejected the Board’s recommendation, by November, a Farm Manager (John Buchanan) was in residence. Soon afterwards in October 1967, the Government introduced new legislation to reform the structure and powers of the State’s administration of Aboriginal affairs. The implementation of Stage 1 of the Lake Tyers Plan had barely started, when under new legislation, the Board was replaced by the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs in November 1967 (Aboriginal Affairs Act 1967, No. 7574).

Conclusion

The chapter has exemplified my initial task as a researcher - to understand the political and social reasons for the State Government’s decision to conduct an episode of social change at Lake Tyers in 1970.

My analysis suggests that a unique combination of critical factors was associated with the Government’s decision to sponsor an episode of social change. Following the logic of its assimilation policy, the Board was close to completing its goal of removing families from the Station to towns, despite their long expressed aspiration to live at the property and work the farm. The shift in Government policy towards Lake Tyers did not occur by chance. Crucial knowledge and value underpinnings of policy changed in the electorate with the realization that Indigenous people were competent and wanted to hold responsibility for determining their livelihood. New thinking was nurtured by the burgeoning Indigenous social movement’s claims for civil and Indigenous rights. This ground swell questioned the validity of the policy assumption that the colonizer must act alone for the benefit of the colonized. A foremost factor was the resoluteness of a few Lake Tyers Aboriginal people aiming to achieve their goal of self-determination by
refusing to be removed from the reserve despite the penalties imposed for non-compliance. Without the formation of a coalition with a broadly based amalgam of influential Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations to lead and support, the Lake Tyers people's cause had no chance of success. Linked to a very competent campaign - financially well resourced, effectively utilizing all media outlets and under the influence of the powerful, popular and clever Aboriginal leader (Pastor Doug Nicholls) – victory was possible. The competently run campaign engendered public trust in Aboriginal ability and an abhorrence of the degrading living conditions A growing body of social research knowledge informed the public about the extant cultural integrity and the adaptable viable social organization of Indigenous people in southern and eastern Australia - as well as First Nation Peoples overseas. An increasing awareness of the effective ways of organising community change was also a factor. There was increasing pressure on Australian Governments to avoid international criticism and to meet agreed standards concerning Indigenous human rights longer as failure to conform now endangered diplomatic and trading relationships. Finally, all of the above factors facilitated crucial changes in the composition of the Board. A new capable member (Dr Colin Tatz) became instrumental in altering the balance of power as the new dynamics saw voting alliances form a majority who favoured a new set of cultural values, revised policy goals and programmatic approaches. The experience of unravelling the genesis of this complex situation has taught a lesson for social planners and community organisers - the grounds for effective social change are no accident of chance.

The next Chapter continues the research task of compiling an understanding of the life stories of the residents living at Lake Tyers in 1970. This research task mirrored the necessary task I began as the community social worker in 1970-1971 - learning about the residents' past experiences to facilitate the relational and analytical purposes of the process of community development. The Chapter considers the past conditions of life of the residents at the Aboriginal Station and in their surrounding world from 1917 to the late 1960s, in order to understand the psychological and structural impact of the environment on the people, and to establish the people's readiness to assume ownership and management responsibilities. In Chapter Six, I continue to use contemporary
historical and social knowledge to assist me to appreciate the situation of the residents in 1970.
Chapter 5. Identity and survival prior to 1970

Most Aboriginals have a strong attachment to a specific home place: the region surrounding the reserves where the forebears were settled last century, which was usually part of their ancestral tribal territory. The members of each regional population are linked by lifelong acquaintance, shared experience, and explicit obligations of duty and loyalty. Regional affiliation, economic interdependence and interhousehold migration are the bases of group solidarity. Aboriginal communities have, from their own resources, evolved techniques of dealing with their problems of poverty and prejudice (Diane Barwick 1978:196).

While Aboriginal people did not passively accommodate new and imposed, introduced and artificial boundaries, it is clear that missions, reserves and pastoral stations have become Aboriginal communities which are now an integral part of Aboriginal people's heritage and are fundamental to Aboriginality (Frances Peters-Little 2000:4).

Trauma may be transmitted across generations in a number of ways. Sociological and psychological conditions are established by the systems and structures that triggered the original trauma in previous generations; these become entrenched in societies and become cultural norms. The transgenerational psychic impacts and imprints on individuals, families and communities through parenting and communal conditions must also be considered (Judy Atkinson 2002:81).

Introduction

My aim in this chapter is to continue the search for answers to the 'know-why' questions (Kramer and Specht 1975) initially posed by me as the community social worker beginning to engage in an episode of social change in 1970 at Lake Tyers. The practitioner's questions: 'What is going on here?' and 'Why did this situation arise?' continued to perplex me long after I departed Lake Tyers. The study has been used as the mechanism to find strategic analytic concepts and frameworks that make it possible to understand the residents' past experience of their environment and how it affected their
living and capacity to deal with the process of social change in 1970-1971.

In this chapter, sociological, psychological and historical ideas are explored. Attention is focussed on the period prior to 1968 on the practices of the BPA and the Board at the Lake Tyers Station; on the pattern of race relations (particularly of East Gippsland) and how structures affected peoples’ living conditions; their personal and group growth, their experience of accumulated intergenerational trauma (Atkinson 2002) and the people’s agency with the external world. The search also explores the presence of an Aboriginal domain (Keen 1988:10) at the Station and amongst kith and kin residing in the Station’s hinterland (Barwick 1978: Peters-Little 2000). The analysis is organised around four major features drawn from the research of Rowley (1971). The research was undertaken during the sixties and gave close attention to the living conditions of Aboriginal people living on Stations, reserves and fringe-dwelling situations in rural settled south east and southern Australia. The importance Rowse (1998) gave to the guardianship role of the state as it exercised the management of rationing has been integrated with the major features of Rowley.

'Knowing-why’ and the stages of the process of community development

For a practitioner in 1970, there were very little Aboriginal demographic data available. The first Commonwealth population census counting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, a product of the 1967 Referendum, was scheduled for 1971. There was a scarcity of conceptual tools available to facilitate analysis from anthropological, sociological, historical and community social work practice sources. I read available literature referring to the past and present Lake Tyers, but the perspective was often of antiquity and paternalistic (Massola 1969), or a recitation of accounts from official documents representing the BPA’s or Board’s or Government’s viewpoint (Pictorial Standard, Bairnsdale 12 August1966-20 January 1967). I was geographically isolated from exchanges with the few human service workers in the region and colleagues of the Ministry.
Conscious of former Station staff's invasion of privacy and misuse of personal information, I did not want to be perceived as prying into their personal affairs, although I knew talking with the residents about their life stories was most important. My tactic was to make appropriate informal inquiry even though the goal was relationship building. This was not conspicuous research activity. The recent search for later acquired knowledge, has enabled me to better appreciate the attitudes, interests and behaviour expressed by residents during the episode, and to analyse the social situation and the capacity of the residents - as individuals, families, households and a communal group - to participate in the process of community development in 1970-1971.

‘Entry’ (Henderson and Thomas 2002) was on the 5th January 1970. One of my initial community worker imperatives was to prepare a plan that would guide the Ministry's program of the social and economic development at Lake Tyers (see Chapter 7 for the plan). On that first day, the Director indicated he wanted to be advised as soon as possible 'why things happen as they do' (Personal Papers January 1970). He expected me to prepare a plan covering the philosophy and direction of the process of community development at Lake Tyers. The work roles and duties of Ministry staff depended on the plan (Personal Papers January 1970). From day one, worker activities included aspects of the first, second, third, fourth and fifth stages of the process of Henderson and Thomas (2002:30) — (i) 'entry', (ii) 'getting to know the neighbourhood', (iii) 'what next? Needs, goals and roles', (iv) 'making contacts and bringing people together' and (v) 'forming and building organisations'. I had joined an episode of change that had commenced in 1969.

The first category of questions of the 'analytical scheme' of Pruger and Specht (1969) the 'know-why' questions concerning causation of the situation of the constituents represent the study's search for understanding. At the start of my work at Lake Tyers however, I set about discovering the answers 'on-the job' (Personal Papers January 1970). The questions concerned: (a) the people: Who lived in the ten houses? Were householders related to each other and to other household members? What pre-invasion 'country' origins were present? (b) the economy of the residents: What income did the residents
(men, women and youth) of the Station earn? What occupations did they fill? How was the work organised? What job learning and training opportunities did they have? What goods and services could they afford from their own income resources? What goods and services were provided to individuals and families from external sources? (c) individual experiences of employment and social life: What were the people's opportunities and experiences of work, handling money and shopping, organising their day's/week's work, leading a work gang, running a business enterprises or administering services? (d) the political organization of the Station: What decision making powers did the residents have concerning policy and administration of work place and residence? What formal mechanism existed for communication between residents and staff? Did staff meet with representative Aboriginal spokespeople? Did the residents elect the representatives? Who were leaders – men, women or older people? What functions did leaders perform – social control, disputes between families, negotiation with Ministry? How did the Station staff establish and maintain authority? and (e) the Aboriginal domain (Keen 1988:10): What Aboriginal social group organisation existed? What roles did leaders perform – family and group? Was kinship the foundation of social life? What functions did the family provide? (Personal Papers January 1970). The results of my search for knowledge are recounted in this and later chapters.

When I arrived at Lake Tyers in 1970, I sought to understand the former Station and its legacy as I believed this would assist me to comprehend the individual and communal aspirations, motivations, behaviour and capabilities of the residents as individuals, family members and as a social group. Initially, I believed that the Station had been a closed society detaining the residents from interacting in the external social and economic world. Soon I learned that the Station had not been an entirely closed institution where entry, residence and exit were strictly administered by BPA/Board staff, and concluded that the nature of the Station was different to a walled prison or a locked psychiatric asylum (Personal Papers January- May 1970).

My informants were residents of Lake Tyers, Mr Alick Jackomos and other Ministry colleagues, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people living in the district. From them I
heard stories of: successful football and cricket teams in district competitions, men joining boxing troupes and enlisting for war service (First and Second World Wars), people working in Fitzroy during the forties and fifties and attending Pastor Doug Nicholls's Gore Street church, individuals placed in State institutions (youth correction centres, tuberculous sanatorium, prisons, hospitals, intellectually disabled and child welfare institutions), Station households taking in overnight boarders unbeknown to staff, individuals and families working off the Station from November to March annually, and of families who had left the Station preferring to live with relatives or to find jobs in towns (Personal Papers January-May 1970).

In January 1970, I wondered whether a sociological framework would assist my understanding of the residents' personal and social behaviour in relation to the nature of the Station. I had some familiarity with the concept of asylum as a 'total institution' Erving Goffman (1961):

A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life (Goffman 1961:xiii).

After commencing community work practice at Lake Tyers I found the data I accumulated had resonance with some of Goffman's institutional characteristics but that the Aboriginal experience of colonisation at the Station was intrinsically different to that of an inmate of an asylum (psychiatric hospital or prison). Long (1970:6) claimed that the Station at Lake Tyers he visited in 1965 was a 'total institution' (Goffman 1961) and justified the assertion by referring to the restricted interactions of residents with the external society and the formality of the structured relationship separating a few supervisory staff from many residents. Recently Rowse (1993) criticised Long (1970) and Rowley (1971) for applying Goffman's idea of 'total institution' to describe the nature of Aboriginal stations and reserves in settled Australia by the later 1960s. Rowley and Long did accurately note some behaviour of resident populations that displayed common institutional characteristics, but the structures of the two institutions, asylum and Station,
were significantly different. I could not conclude that the Lake Tyers Station was a 'total institution'. Rowse (1993:27-28) claimed that Rowley and Long were proponents of assimilation and therefore they failed to recognise the importance of the land to reserve residents, and they omitted considering how the reserve/station enabled the nurture of an independent cultural heritage (Rowse 1993:31-35). I decided not to pursue Goffman’s concept (Personal Papers 1970-1971).

The books of Long (1970) and Rowley (1970 & 1971), published during the Lake Tyers episode, extended my understanding of details of the recent situation of Lake Tyers and of Aboriginal affairs policy and practice in other States before the seventies. Recently, I have revisited Rowley’s argument about the influence of the reserve or station on the behaviour of Aboriginal residents. In this chapter I argue that the Station and the Station’s environment practiced the politics of race relations and encouraged the loss of traditional culture through assimilation and acculturation. Both profoundly affected the behaviour of the Aboriginal people of Lake Tyers.

**The Station, its environment and impact on the residents**

Rowley’s research project ‘Aborigines in Australian Society’, sponsored by the Social Science Research Council of Australia from 1964 (Rowley 1970:v), included the study of Aboriginal people living in rural settled Australia and the long-lasting organised environment in which many were placed by legislation and administrative rule (Rowley 1971). For the purpose of this study, Rowley’s work was chosen to provide a basis for analysis because his study coincided with the era of the Lake Tyers episode and completed during the mid to later sixties. Rowley did not follow a specific theoretical approach (Wild 1978) but as I read his work I identified four core features about the nature of the life experienced at reserves and Stations, including Lake Tyers (to which he refers sixteen times), and their surrounding political, economic and social world. The four core features were:

1) subjection to special legislation that limited human rights and exclusion from
eligibility to participate in society, and the object of racial prejudice and discriminatory rejection

ii) lack of economic opportunity with work maintaining the institution or outside seasonal employment without industrial regulation

iii) restricted budget expenditure on housing, food, education, employment training and health; producing conditions of overcrowding in dilapidated buildings without hygienic facilities; prevalence of morbidity and mortality - particularly infants and children, malnutrition, under and unemployment, destitution and early school leaving prevailed

iv) recipients of dominant paternalistic control by officials without special training qualifications holding extraordinary regulatory and disciplinary powers resulting in punitive, stressful, mistrusting and dehumanising relationships; and conditioned adjustment to a regime that discouraged enterprise; rewarded dependency on, and obedience to, officials who planned, decided and denigrated; and disrespected privacy - countered by a passive-aggressive defiance and an ingenuous avoidance of conflict; growing into adulthood in the midst of stress, grief, trauma and misery (based on Rowley 1971).

From the vantage point of today's knowledge, each of the four core features has been related to the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station to assist understanding the situation of the segregated and supervised population, their relationships with Station management and the external environment in January 1970. The core features were: i) subject to special legislation, ii) lack of economic opportunity, iii) restricted budget expenditure, and iv) conditioned to paternalistic control.

I have chosen to complement Rowley's contribution by drawing on Rowse (1998). Rowse highlighted the central role played by the assimilation policy in Central Australia in the introduction of the cash economy and the cessation of the practice of rationing (food, clothing and blankets). The transition introduced by the termination of the powerful colonial role of managing consumption through rationing took place at Lake Tyers in 1966, concluding the fundamental arrangement of the social relationship of non-
Aborigines and Aborigines. The meaning of this event in 1966 has been central to understanding what happened at Lake Tyers in 1970-1971. The impact of this action has been incorporated into the discussion of the four core features derived from Rowley. Rowse (1998) wrote:

Assimilation...was an effort to undermine two powerful structures: the stubbornly surviving bases of Aboriginal solidarity and identity and the colonial mechanisms of tutelary domination and protection...The material practice that bound the two structures together was ...the most enduring practice of colonial government - rationing. Assimilation's greatest triumph was to put an end to rationing by shifting the basis of Aboriginal subsistence from rations to cash (wages and welfare payments) (Rowse 1998:80).

Two years after rationing ceased in 1966, the Ministry at Lake Tyers in 1968 began to implement a radically different social development program that forsook a staff guardianship role of managing consumption and replaced it with cash (wages, income security payments, rent), a labour contract between wage earners and the Ministry, and staff performing roles of information provider, adviser, enabler and supporter of responsible self-reliance.

'Subject to special legislation'

Until 1967, Parliament, the BPA Board and the Station Manager had power to decide who was 'Aboriginal', the residential location and movement of Aboriginal people throughout the State, and the composition of the population at Lake Tyers. These powers had endured for generations denying Aborigines human rights afforded to non-Aboriginal citizens.

At its foundation as a Mission in 1861, the bands of Gunnai regional groups chose whether to reside with the missionary, to participate in church organised activities at the Mission or secure a livelihood working away for employers (Attwood 1989b:5-6). Initially the onus was on missionary John Bulmer to attract the Aborigines to settle, but
Although he paid wages, he found competition difficult with external income-earning opportunities for stockmen, farm labourers and hop pickers. By the 1880s, the influx of non-Aboriginal population brought closer settlement and the interests of the settler-coloniser society were asserted with greater effect through the increasing use of statutory power and exclusion based on class and racial social norms. Settlers' fears of unruly behaviour could be allayed by recourse to a court Order that placed individuals at Missions and Stations, and the power of the state was relayed through police officers directing persons to go to a Mission or Station. The BPA increasingly regulated individual movements between Missions and Stations, employment contracts and use of other public institutions for placement of individuals (Christie 1979:180; Attwood 1989b:31 & 118). An example of the use of regulation affecting who resided at the Station:

One family living at Lake Tyers in 1970 traced the arrival of their paternal forebears from the Lake Condah Mission to an Order-in-Council issued by the BPA in March 1900. Mr Ernest and Mrs Maggie Mobourne were directed to leave Lake Condah Mission in Western Victoria and go to Lake Tyers Mission because they challenged the manager's decisions and methods. Later in 1914, another Order was used to remove Mrs Mobourne to Lake Tyers. Mr and Mrs Mobourne died at Lake Tyers a few years later (Critchett (1998:148-180).

The Protection Law Amendment Act 1886 (discussed in Chapter 1) demonstrated how non-Aboriginal colonisers used their political dominance to legislatively determine who was an Aboriginal person, who was entitled to reside at Lake Tyers or other Missions and Stations (Attwood 1989b), and who was an ineligible resident compelled to leave Missions/Stations and fend for themselves. The law seriously depleted the Lake Tyers Station of its workforce, and the expelled individuals and families faced economic hardship in an unsupportive world (Christie 1979:201-203; Pepper & De Araugo 1985:193-197).

The BPA's decision to close individual Missions/Stations, implemented between 1890 and 1924, was another action flaunting non-Aboriginal dominance, and was an
experience of impotence for the Aboriginal families subjected to a process of relocation, and economic and social disruption. The following were closed: in 1890, Framlingham (Western District); in 1904, Lake Hindmarsh/Ebenezer (Wimmera); in 1908, Ramahyuck/Lake Wellington (East Gippsland); in 1918, Lake Condah (Western Victoria); and in 1924, Coranderrk (Central Victoria). The people sent to Lake Tyers from Ramahyuck included other Gunnai regional groups. Two of the ten household heads living at Lake Tyers in January 1970 were born at Ramahyuck and had been forced to migrate with their families. For instance:

The family of Mr William and Mrs Eliza Edwards, who came from Ebenezer Mission, refused to leave Ramahyuck when it closed in 1908. It took an Order-in-Council in 1910 to break the family's resolve; and they were compelled to move to Lake Tyers (Pepper & De Araugo 1985:233-234).

Map 5.1 Location of Victorian Aboriginal Missions Stations and Reserves 1860-1971

Source: Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne 2004
The paternal forebear of a family network living in the East Gippsland region in January 1970, provided another example of the impact of BPA rule. Mr Collin Hood came to Lake Tyers after the closure of Ramahyuck. He originated from Framlingham, leaving there in 1890 when that Station was closed (Critchett 1998:103).

Pepper and De Araugo (1985) in *The Kurnai of Gippsland*, entitle their Chapter 30 ‘A Concentration Camp under the Concentration Plan 1917-1926’. The chapter described the new policy of the BPA in 1917 - the closure of the remaining existing Victorian Stations (Lake Condah and Coranderrk) and the concentration of their residents at Lake Tyers (Pepper and De Araugo 1985:242). Remaining Aboriginal residents of reserves, such as Framlingham, were expected to move to Lake Tyers (Critchett 1980:63). This decision, and the way it was implemented, clearly illustrated the powerlessness of Aboriginal people to determine where they wished to live. The carrot of receiving Government rations and other forms of free assistance was pitted against connection to country, independent association with social networks and the risky finding job opportunities. Powerlessness was also experienced by the residents of Lake Tyers Station. Originally the Lake Tyers Mission consisted of mainly Gunnai people predominantly from three regional groups (Krauatungalung, Tatungalung and Brabralung), but then after 1908 with the closure of the Ramahyuck Mission, residents from the other Gunnai regional groups (Braiakaulung and Brataualung) came to Lake Tyers (See Map 5.2). Once again in 1917, the original Lake Tyers residents and Gunnai groups were forced to accept the immigration of a number of Aborigines from other ancestral territories speaking other languages, with the result that Gunnai people were no longer in a majority at the Station. Those compelled to move protested over the closure of their Station, often refused to go, but eventually were forcibly removed (Pepper and De Araugo 1985:242-243). The original Gunnai residents bore the brunt of the BPA’s failure to plan for the influx of population by not building sufficient new accommodation stock (Pepper and De Araugo 1985:243:244).
The rapid growth of the Lake Tyers population shown in Table 5.1 illustrates the scale of the 'concentration' operation and the degree of adjustment expected of the people, both the migrants and the existing residents.

Table 5.1 Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station Population 1917-1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pepper and De Araugo 1985:2.
The attitude of the Government and the BPA was a fundamental reason for their failure to deal with the peoples' pressing accommodation needs. In 1928 the BPA expressed its view:

The Board has a peculiar problem to deal with, in that the natives are of very low moral and intellectual order, and the standards which apply to the white population cannot be applied fairly to the aborigines (AAV Series B356 Item 102 1920-1929).

After 1917, residents of Lake Tyers were either people recognised as 'full bloods' or others holding an entry licence after being assessed to be in 'necessitous circumstances' and therefore requiring the protection of the state. The licence was subject to cancellation at the discretion of the Manager/BPA/Board (Regulations 1 & 32 Aborigines Act 1928). It was not until the Aborigines Act 1957 that statute law embraced all people of Aboriginal descent and ceased dividing Aboriginal identity by racist 'degrees of blood'. After 1957, the residents of Lake Tyers were still granted entitlement to state protection, provided with rations and not expected to survive outside. Residence was at a cost as it required submission to a mistrusted and loathed authority and to managed consumption through rationing (Rowse 1998:82). From 1917 to 1937, residence at the Station had required approval by way of a licence from the BPA. Licensing lapsed for administrative reasons in 1937 (AAV Series B408 Item 1955-1956), but the Mclean Report recommended its re-instatement. The Board's Annual Report for 1958/59 stated:

A system of admission to the settlement by permits has been instituted and is operating successfully. Aborigines wishing to move there are required to apply to the Board for a permit. The system enables the Board to exercise control over the entry of people into the Station (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1959:10).

The Board re-instated licensing and reinforced the authority of rationing in 1958. People entering without an entry permit were regarded as illegally trespassing and liable for the punishment of loss of rations. Administration of licensing and rations stopped when staff moved away from the Station in April 1966.
Regardless of officialdom and prejudice, Lake Tyers retained its intrinsically Aboriginal social world and became the spiritual home of those connected to the place by birth or family heritage regardless of ancestral origin. It symbolised a shared Aboriginal identity and it was where communal ceremonies were held – family events, dances, weddings, funerals and burials (Aunty Ivy Marks Mission Voices 2004).

For many, perhaps a majority of Victorian Aborigines, their communities of kin and long-time friends are a vital source of security and reassurance, of undemanding acceptance (Barwick 1964b:3).

By the end of the 1960s, the monopoly of power held by the Government and the Board was broken. The successful ‘Save Lake Tyers Campaign’ and the influential Aboriginal social movement (see Chapter 3) ensured Aborigines in Victoria were protected from movement by arbitrary decree. In principle, the electorate accepted Aboriginal entitlement to basic human rights, but the matter of Indigenous rights – always underlying the position of the Lake Tyers residents - remained contestable.

‘Lack of economic opportunity’

Until 1968, a resident of the Station was denied opportunity to participate as a producer and consumer, proprietor or labourer in the market economy of East Gippsland. Residents at the Station were ineligible for Award wages and most social service payments but they were not expected to earn an adequate income because rations were supposed to satisfy individual or family needs. A resident’s economic experience was controlled by the power of legislation, the BPA or the Board and the Manager until 1966 – then there was a vacuum until the reign of the Ministry. An ‘Aboriginal economy’ of hunting and fishing (Fisk 1985:1) had not significantly contributed to a Lake Tyers family’s total economy for many years.

When Government became the provider of care to approved residents at Lake Tyers it unilaterally established the conditions of that residence – free accommodation, food
rations, clothing, blankets and medical attention in return for a reasonable amount of work (if deemed able-bodied) and good behaviour (Regulations 29, 32-34, 35-37 Aborigines Act 1928). Over the decades, except for short but notable periods, the arrangement meant they lived on their land under imposed conditions that did not enable them to earn sufficient income based on an hourly rate. It gave no guaranteed opportunity to earn income from seasonal work away from the Station or limited entertainment of tourists for a charge and it forbade commercial fishing at the lake (Pepper & De Araugo 1985:243). Unrest occurred whenever Station management unilaterally altered this arrangement, for example in 1923, when outside seasonal work was forbidden, men left the Station (Pepper & De Araugo 1985:246). Efforts by residents to have some control of their economic livelihood frequently were frustrated:

Although Lake Tyers station was given a new appearance....the rules which bound the Aborigines were just the same. Their lives were full of frustrations and despair, as they appealed again and again to the Board (Pepper & De Araugo 1985:243 & 246).

In 1925 for the first time, with the appointment of a competent farmer as Manager, Mr George Baldwin, the BPA adopted the goal of an economically self-supporting Station based on the farm production. The BPA provided capital to clear land, cultivated pasture and grew peas; and the vegetable garden was expanded for domestic consumption. The harvested crop was sold at market, the proceeds paid into the Aborigines Board Produce Fund, from which wages were paid and made available for expenditure on the Station's development (Barwick 1966:35). This market success caused opposition from local pea growers, who then approached Mr (later Sir) Albert Lind, member for East Gippsland in the State Parliament and a member of the BPA. At the BPA meeting on 29th September 1926, although Mr Baldwin attended and represented the Lake Tyers workers' interests, the commercial sale of peas was forbidden. Baldwin had reminded the BPA that the growers benefited from a government subsidy when Aborigines harvested peas and beans for them (Pepper & De Araugo 1985:247) and argued:

...that pea growing not only served to employ the men and could be profitable to them, but it had strongly "enhanced the morale of the natives
to see land which they had cleared at once used for crops” (Barwick 1966:35).

This BPA decision revealed reliance on maintaining the authority of its regime through managing rations in preference to a goal of a self-supporting Station. An opportunity to encourage Aboriginal workers to develop work practices in a labour contract environment was forgone and resident enterprise went unrewarded. Similarly, other actions to improve their standard of living and secure some financial independence from the state were repeatedly nullified by the BPA. In 1926, a craftsman was forbidden to directly sell artefacts, while opportunities for concert performers were limited when the visits of tourists were reduced (Pepper & De Araugo 1985:248). Later in the 1930s residents were stopped from keeping domestic fowls, and they were discouraged from fencing and keeping a home garden (Barwick 1966:35). During the depression years, worker’s wages were lowered to reduce BPA budget outlays. In 1935 the men agitated for a basic wage; and went on strike when their claim was refused. The BPA responded by threatening agitators with imprisonment and banishing some from the Station on the recommendation of the Manager. Family dislocation resulted. All residents were told if they wanted to work away then they could not expect to return (Barwick 1966:36).

Sometimes public attention did focus on the situation at Lake Tyers. In August 1934, an article in the *Australian Women’s Weekly* called for an inquiry and reported:

> Caring for the aborigines at Lake Tyers means practically no provision is made for training, for employment in industry or agriculture, and there is little or no attempt to make the station self-supporting (Worthy 1973:2).

Some months later in April 1935, following complaints from residents about the BPA’s administration, members of the Victorian Council of Churches made a two-day visit to the Station. The Secretary of the Council reported to the BPA that the complaints could not be substantiated, noting that:

> We are considering a race which because they are removed but a generation from the most primitive conditions, cannot be judged by
standards which should prevail among a people with centuries of moral and religious training behind them (AAV Series B356 Item 82 1935).

The church visitors had not detected the growing unrest of the workers about low wages and the BPA's refusal to allow families to leave for seasonal work. The judgements of respected churchmen reinforced the prevailing attitudes of the electorate. In this climate, the call from Australian Women's Weekly had no impact. Opportunities to move to better wages and living conditions were accepted. Thirty seven Lake Tyers men enlisted for Army service at the start of the Second World War and twenty six passed the medical test (Pepper & De Araugo 1985:256). Other residents went to Melbourne to work now with the encouragement of Government (Clark 1972; Tonkin & Landon 2000:59). The outbreak of war was the time when a small number of individuals and families, mainly former residents of Lake Tyers, shifted to Jackson's Track, West Gippsland. They lived there until the early 1960s, enjoying economic and social independence, living as a social and cultural community, exercising decision making about livelihood at a chosen standard of living, and without the supervision of the Manager and the prying intrusive Matron (Tonkin & Landon 2000).

During and after the War, a number of Melbourne-based organizations with non-Aboriginal members regularly protested to the Government about the plight of the residents of Lake Tyers (Barwick1964a). The McLean Inquiry received their submissions in 1956, and heard manager Rule report that the paid Station work force in June 1956 consisted of twenty two men and ten women employed as follows:

Men's jobs: Milkers (2), Butcher (1), Sanitation Workers (2), Wood Carters (2), Vegetable Gardeners (2), Fencers (6), Wood Cutters (4), Stable Attendant (1), General Duties (1); and the women's jobs: Hospital Day Nurse (2), Hospital Night Nurse (2), Maids (6), Cleaners (2). No job skills training classes were offered (AAV Series B408 Item 1 1955-1956).

The occupations illustrate the work goal of Lake Tyers in 1956 was merely maintenance of the Station, and without a concern for commercial knowledge or occupational skills
There were four outstanding changes that impacted on the livelihood of people residing at Lake Tyers during the turbulent period of the 1960s: (a) the availability of Commonwealth benefits and pensions, (b) the cessation of rations and supplies, (c) the removal of staff, and (d) the reduction in income earning opportunities. At the start of the sixties, residence qualified a child and an adult to receive rations according to a Health Department allocation and other assistance. In return, able-bodied men were required to work thirty two hours per week for a token sum of between fifteen and forty shillings (Equal Wages for Aborigines Committee FCAATSI 1963). Note: Seasonal been'pea pickers earned about six pounds a day in 1956 (McLean Report 1957:13). Dependency on the state was the norm; and the state was under no obligation to provide an adequate standard of living. Seasonal work off the Station provided a preferred alternative income, and the Board encouraged this from 1964 (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1964:9). In contrast, by the end of the 1960s for the first time ever, each household had started to rely on the income of a breadwinner employed on Award wages at Lake Tyers, or of a pensioner.

The first change concerned (a) availability of Commonwealth benefits and pensions. Aborigines living at the Station in 1957 were maintained by the State were not entitled to receive Commonwealth pensions or benefits except mothers who received the Maternity Allowance. In May 1958, Mr Philip Felton, Superintendent of the Board, had begun agitating for reform on the principle of equal treatment of Aborigines as entitled citizens, and rejecting the practice of defining non-eligibility due to ‘race’ (AAV Series B357 12 Items 50-51 1958-1965). Amendment of the exclusionary provisions of the Commonwealth Social Services Consolidation Act in 1959 (Chesterman & Galligan 1997:164) enabled the payment of all social security pensions and benefits to residents of Aboriginal reserves, such as Lake Tyers. The Commonwealth Constitution forbade special laws for Aborigines in the States and Commonwealth administrators had interpreted this to mean they had no power to legislate for residents who were living because of their race at an institution (Station). Already, Victorian Aborigines not
resident on the Station were in receipt of all of these payments. Child Endowment payments started in October 1959.

Maternity Allowance payments were made directly to the Board and not the mothers at Lake Tyers, as the Board believed mothers would not handle money wisely. The Board through its staff, adopted a ‘trustee’ role to act in the mothers’ interests by assisting with an application, keeping an individual record of the cheque received and of cash payments made to the mother, holding the balance in the office safe and making cash available on demand. This administrative approach was extended to all pensions and benefits, after February 1960. Because the Board received all cheque payments at Lake Tyers staff had a guaranteed way of extracting a cost-of-living charge levied on each pensioner or beneficiary, a charge to defray the cost of the ‘free’ supplies of rations, rent and other services. Two thirds of each pension, benefit, or allowance was retained by the Board. It was a practice used by other State institutions. The Board argued it was consistent with the practice of paying some remuneration (rather than an Award rate) to men and women working at Lake Tyers, and was seen as a nominal figure for subsidized residence.

The second change, (b) the cessation of rations and supplies, occurred in April 1966, when the Board ceased providing rations. Until the first pension day in April 1966 anyone licensed to reside at Lake Tyers expected the State to supply them with food, clothing, mattresses, blankets and items to deal with housekeeping. Resident Board staff had been responsible for ordering and storing and controlled distributing these supplies according to a Board-approved schedule. During 1958-59 the Health Department’s representative on the Board had revised the regimen of nutritious food issued to children and adults.

Local contracts have been entered into for purchase of vegetables and fruit to supplement the Station produce and for a regular and continuous supply of butter and eggs (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1959:9).

Using the Board's clothing scale, staff distributed clothing and household items (eg.
mattresses, blankets and sheets) twice yearly (West 2003:17). As late as 1970, parcels of second hand clothing were sent - free delivery via the Victorian Railways to Nowa Nowa railway station - by charitable agencies and Pentridge Gaol (Personal Papers 1970). Accommodation, electricity and firewood were made available to each household at no cost. The Medical Officer, a Bairnsdale general practitioner, made a monthly visit to the Station at the Board's expense, and Station staff (unqualified) were responsible for diagnosing minor health matters, deciding when to call the doctor and administering medicines to children and adults. The Board organised and afforded membership of a hospital insurance fund for each family. The Health Department issued rail vouchers to people travelling to Melbourne for hospital treatment and the Social Welfare Department gave travel vouchers to parents when they visited offspring at child and youth centres in Melbourne, or elsewhere.

The Board called this arrangement of care 'a hand-out system'. It claimed it fully recognised its charity was a significant cause of the people's 'demoralization', yet in 1965, the Board stated that any reform was 'not practicable' (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1965:12). Despite this, in April 1966, the Board decided to stop the practice without consulting the residents, and arranged with the proprietor of the Nowa Nowa general store to run a shop at the Station, enabling residents to purchase basic commodities (not vegetables) on a cash basis for a short period in the early evening on a three day per week basis (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1966:11; West 2003:10). The power given Station staff through the administration of consumption, a cornerstone of the state's role as guardian of the residents, had ended without preparation of the residents to use the cash economy or find work as the expected means of economic survival.

The third change, (c) the removal of staff, coincided the cessation of rations and supplies in April 1966. The radical alteration to each resident's economy was externally and arbitrarily imposed without forewarning, consultation, training, and without sufficient time for residents to prepare. After many years of oversight, direction and dependency, now there was no staff member to inform people of their entitlement to Commonwealth
and State income security assistance, to answer questions, and to assist with obtaining, completing and despatching forms, or to assist adults and young people obtain employment in the district. Responsibility for a family’s financial management was compelled. Furthermore, there was no private or public phone accessible to a resident wanting to act independently and no vehicle for transporting workers and shoppers. In September 1966, Alan West, the social worker sent by the Board to reside at Lake Tyers as Acting Officer-in-Charge of the Station, stated after three months:

Considerable attention was given to ensuring that all residents received their full social service entitlements. At the end of my stay the average weekly income had risen by $1.39 per person.... A 26% increase in total income... (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee 1966:85).

A most striking institutional characteristic of Lake Tyers was the peoples’ socialisation in conditions where they had minimal experience of the cash economy. A person was sheltered from the usual roles and secondary relationship tasks of a self-reliant consumer dealing with a retail trader. Without exposure to responsibility for handling financial transactions of buying goods and services, people did not have the chance to adequately learn how to judge ‘what was a fair price for a commodity’ or ‘what was reasonable quality of a product or service? or ‘how to negotiate a transaction to suit their interest’. Familiarity with the relationship between household expenditure and income coming from wages or income security payments, experience of budgeting, saving and using a bank account was not required by someone living at the Station. In 1970, when accompanying mothers shopping for high school uniforms, I learned that a number of the women did not know where to look on items of clothing for the tags that indicate size (Personal Papers 1970).

West commented on the effect of the arbitrary introduction of a cash economy and the withdrawal of staff:

The Aboriginal residents, without preparation for these abrupt changes – the removal of resident staff and the cessation of the handout system –
became more anxious and vulnerable than ever, a situation that was exacerbated by a sudden increase in the station population during 1966 (West 2003:11).

With no one to administer entry a number of people returned of their own volition. West calculated the per capita weekly income on 5th October 1966 was four dollars sixty cents for the whole population of sixty one persons (twenty adults, three young adults, twenty school and eighteen pre-school age children). He calculated the total weekly income of all resident families, including wages and social service payments, was two hundred and eighty three dollars and ninety six cents. The social services component amounted to two hundred and forty one dollars and ninety six cents or eighty five per cent of the total income received (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee 1966:82-83). West (1966) advised the Board that there was a shortage of twenty two mattresses in the homes and a shortage of blankets. The closed Station store had supplies of these essential goods but without staff the residents had no access.

By September 1966, the Board had created destitution from the cessation of rationing, forcing people to learn to live on an alternative income source in an unfamiliar retail situation in order to purchase needed goods, providing no transport to get to and from shops and to access jobs, and removing staff relied on to manage Station affairs and giving individual advice (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee 1966:85).

The final important change, (d) reduction in income earning opportunities, concerned cessation of the requirement of male and female ‘able-bodied’ adults to work thirty two hours per week for a less-than-Award level wage (Equal Wages for Aborigines Committee FCAATSI 1963). Most adult people had been engaged on the basis that work was ‘owed’ to the Board in return for the licence to reside and ‘free’ rations, board and other services. Jobs covered the Board’s administrative needs, the operation of the farm and the residential life including: farm labouring (milking cows, slaughtering stock for meat, spraying blackberries and ferns, planting and cutting hay, fencing, beef cattle care); town service labouring (cutting and supplying firewood, rubbish removal, grass cutting);
domestic and hospital aide. Employment at the Station had never related to business principles or labour market conditions viz. farm expenditure did not relate to farm income, farm and town employment was not dependent on output quality and quantity, work placement was not based on occupational skills, training, job descriptions and work contracts with Award wages. However in April 1966, the Board ceased general employment and began to pay only one male as a Farm Labourer. There was no income inflow into some households.

Each of these four crucial events undermined established livelihood relationships and a reason why they chose to live at Lake Tyers. Suddenly residents were precipitated into a social and economic world that expected them to have sufficient ability to interact with the state, the market economy and civil society, to acquire a regular and sufficient disposable income per household, to possess adequate socialisation skills of secondary group relationships and to have a knowledge of normative role expectations in order to be self-reliant.

'Restricted budget expenditure'

The BPA and the Board neglected to provide standard services at Lake Tyers (a) basic accommodation, (b) employment, (c) education, (d) welfare and (e) health services at the Station between 1917 and 1966. The BPA/Board perceived protection of the residents by maintaining minimal conditions as sufficient performance of its 'duty of care' to the residents. The well being of the residents did not motivate lobbying State Treasury for extra funds to spend at the Station, nor were other departments (except the State Education and Health Departments) and local government expected to provide special services (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and action Committee 1966).

(a) Accommodation. At all times, staff houses were adequate in size and all had standard appointments. In contrast, each weatherboard cottage built for new residents at Lake Tyers in the 1920s had a kitchen/sitting room, two bedrooms and an external toilet. No cottage had a bathroom, or laundry as there was no internal reticulated water service and
each household relied on an outside tap attached to a rainwater tank. Candles provided light at night and the kitchen stove gave heating. The size of cottages failed to give credence to cultural values concerning privacy or separate sleeping arrangements for single males, single females and nuclear families. By 1958, thirty three cottages had survived but still all were without electric power, internal water supply, a bathroom or a laundry. In 1960, fourteen cottages were renovated and electricity was supplied to each. Street lighting was installed for the first time. At this time, a number of empty cottages were removed to Nowa Nowa to provide accommodation for Aboriginal people working at the timber mills. When social worker West, reported in October 1966 to the Board, there were still nine cottages occupied by families and individuals. Many of the windows were broken and boarded up to keep out the weather (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee November 1966:84 & 87).

In 1966 households still used external toilet pans (emptied daily). Built in 1922, a communal bath and shower house, using bore water (if the bore worked), was located nearly one kilometre away from the cottages at the lakeside. The building was constructed on medical advice in the twenties to enable washing in hot and cold water to avoid scabies (Pepper and de Araugo 1985:245), but the facility was available for use two days a week only. Householders preferred to wash children and clothes in tubs (often made out of kerosene tins) outside their dwellings. Cooking was still done on a small fire stove (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee November 1966:105). In 1967-1968 an extra bedroom, laundry, bathroom and internally reticulated water supply were added to three of the remaining cottages and external septic tank toilets were constructed. For the residents, a commensurate standard of accommodation with the staff and outside people was then achieved.

(b) Employment. The Board, after 1958, began to implement the policy of assimilation by removing residents to accommodation and work beyond the Station. The ability of the residents to secure and hold jobs was one significant indicator of the success of the removal program, yet the Board failed to invest in planning and introducing preparatory job training skills programs. The McLean Report (1957) had not assigned importance to
employment preparation programs and believed there were jobs available in adjacent sawmills for Station workers to go to (McLean Report 1957:14). The Board admitted inaction at the Station but no explanation was given:

It was hardly expected in the past that aborigines resident on the station would make good outside. They were given no realistic training for future employment and there was no development of work skills or encouragement of better education. The Board set out to change this system and to introduce a positive programme of training, so that those families who chose would move out equipped to earn a living and able to take their place in the wider community. For various reasons that objective has not been achieved (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1963:17).

By 1966, Philip Felton, the Superintendent of the Board, displayed more interest in the Aboriginal labour market situation when he cited information regarding employment data about Aboriginal men and women aged fifteen years and over in the East Gippsland region (Felton 1966a).

Table 5.2 summarises the data provided. Felton (1966a) highlighted the following issues regarding the employment situation in 1966 in East Gippsland:

- there were no trade qualified Aboriginal men or women
- there were only two persons in training – a male apprentice and a female nursing aide
- the majority of semi-skilled men were mill hands
- Victorian Railways was the major government employer of unskilled men on a regular basis. No man was employed by local government
- the unskilled casual itinerant occupation group mostly pickers - was the largest employment category for both men and women and amounted to sixty per cent of the total number employed
- the unskilled casual itinerant occupation group - mostly pickers - was the largest employment category for both men and women and amounted to sixty per cent of the total number employed
- half the women of working age were employed in unpaid home duties the
unemployed men were mostly itinerant and more than fifty per cent were aged between fifteen and thirty years. None of these were in receipt of Unemployment Benefits.

- Unskilled casual picking work of women was undertaken by single mothers, wives and younger women

In reference to East Gippsland Felton stated:

The main employment fields are in the sawmills in the Orbost district and in picking beans in the Bairnsdale-Bruthen area. There is much unemployment from May to November when a drift out of the district occurs (Sharp and Tatz 1966:87).

Table 5.2 Employment of Aboriginal Men and Women East Gippsland April 1966

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Collar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradesman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Aide</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Operator</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck Driver</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw Mill Hand</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builders Labourer</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other State Depts.</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Work</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital Domestic</td>
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<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual/Itinerant</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Employed:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensioners</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployeds</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Duties</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Sharp and Tatz 1966:92-94
Later, Felton (1966a) commented further on Aboriginal workers and their seasonal mobility:

In about November each year, some Gippsland Aborigines move across to Bega (N.S.W.) where they pick vegetables until late December, returning then to Bairnsdale area for bean picking which lasts until about May. Also in late December many N.S.W. South Coast Aborigines move to Bairnsdale, but return to their home State at the end of April (Sharp and Tatz 1966:89).

Apart from working at the Station, the employment experience of the resident adult men, women and children at Lake Tyers in 1966, was predominantly vegetable picking alongside other Aboriginal people from other locations. Mr Albert Mullet, a Lake Tyers resident in his youth, wrote of the social and working life of those associated with bean and pea picking at farms adjoining the Mitchell River in the Bairnsdale district. He captured how the people integrated their economic activities with their communal life, used inventive building skills, adopted industrious and competitive work practices, relied on resourceful and co-operative family functioning, separated gender roles and shared leisure time. The vibrant and adaptive social organization of the bean and pea harvest settings during the years until the later 1960s, contrasted sharply with the efforts of Board staff to organise work and community life at Lake Tyers. Mullett wrote:

The pickers lived on the river banks in humpies made from material obtained from the rubbish tips...Everyone had to carry something back to the camp site because it became part of our furniture – material for building a bed or a cupboard or something to put the food in...The single blokes used to build a wind break out of willows and bushes...Most of them camped under the bridge...They couldn’t camp with families...If any one was going to the shop they would buy for different families...All the families looking after each other...Women were the backbone of our camps – washing, shopping and cooking... When women married and started having families, we used to put all the kids in the boxes and the suitcases in the bean paddocks with umbrellas over them... We would start picking around 4.00 a.m. and pick till two or three in the afternoon, when the heat was at its peak....and then come back around 5.30 or 6 o’clock and pick until 9.00p.m....When you get 200 pickers in the paddock...Everyone would be talking and laughing and joking and people
would be telling stories — but they would still be picking (Mullett in Jackomos and Fowell 1991:24-29).

The seasonal nature of picking had advantages, as pickers chose when and how hard to work. While payment was on a piecework basis the industrious worker earned a sizable income. Overall, a worker had considerable control over his/her work and living. However, this employment was not permanent and there were few alternatives for unskilled workers outside the three month harvest period. In addition the pickers work setting on farms was separated from socializing with town populations and use of town facilities. With the introduction of mechanized harvesting in the late 1960s, Aboriginal workers were displaced and no longer required and so an avenue of employment used by Lake Tyers and other Aborigines for decades disappeared (Castle and Hagan 1978:164).

Work placement and skills training for Aboriginal men and women, including those of Lake Tyers, came within the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES). It was not until 1970 that the Ministry began to work in association with the CES, particularly in relation to Lake Tyers.

(c) Education. Labour market and schooling issues were inextricably connected. Fisk (1985) wrote:

Aborigines suffer high unemployment mainly because of disadvantages of education, skills, experience and location (Fisk 1985:108).

An Aboriginal person in East Gippsland with a low school achievement record and a history of intermittent employment found securing work extremely difficult, together with few job vacancies and the hesitant attitude of employers. Education and employment factors impacted on each other. In February 1967, there were two hundred and forty three secondary school (High and Technical) Aboriginal students in Victoria, of whom in East Gippsland there were nineteen students at High schools — ten in Year 7 and one in Year 11, and three at Technical schools — one in Year 8 (Felton 1969:13). East Gippsland's
proportion of the State’s secondary students amounted to nine percent. The entry of Aboriginal children into the secondary schooling stream had just begun.

As a practitioner, I became familiar with the education experience of resident household heads and adult people who had resided at Lake Tyers before 1970. Philip Moss (1978) undertook a small study of the formal schooling experience of two East Gippsland families in 1978. I have summarised the findings of Moss (1978:10-21):

The two parents of each family had lived at Lake Tyers Station and attended the Special School during their childhood between 1935 and 1950. The Lake Tyers School was their sole experience of formal education. Later as young adults, each couple had married and moved away from the station. They lived with their children in two different small East Gippsland towns at the time of the study. One husband/father had reached Grade Five level at the age of fifteen years after ten years at school. His wife reached Grade Five at age thirteen years after nine years at school. Both the father and mother of the other family completed seven years of school and reached Grade Three. He was ten and she was twelve years old when they finished schooling. Three of the four adults had left school before reaching the statutory school leaving age. Their ability to obtain employment as unskilled labourers was greatly restricted. The situation of these adult spouses and parents typified the educational experience of Lake Tyers residents of similar age in 1970.

From interviews with adults, Moss learned how schooling was interrupted regularly when the whole family left the Station to go picking in New South Wales or locally, with children working with parents in the paddocks. On their return to Lake Tyers, a family would take up residence in an empty house – not necessarily the one in which they had resided previously. It was the Board’s responsibility to provide furniture and bedding to the returned occupants. School was perceived as separate from family and schooling was not yet considered an avenue to personal, family or communal advancement; teachers and parents did not meet to discuss a child’s educational progress (Moss 1978:22).

By the early 1960s, two Lake Tyers youths who had attended Bairnsdale Technical School and boarded at a town hostel during the week, went on to complete apprenticeships. One returned from gaol to Lake Tyers as an adult to live with his family.
during 1970 (Personal Papers 1970). The other was in full time employment in Melbourne, his family having left the Station to live in the La Trobe Valley as part of the Board’s 1960s family dispersal program (Personal Papers 1970). A significant attitude change towards school was indicated at Lake Tyers when a mother acknowledged in April 1968:

There’s nothing here for a young boy with brains. My son goes to Orbost Tech. I don’t know what he’s going to do when he finishes. He’ll probably have to go somewhere else, where he can get better work. I don’t like the idea of children going away, not all the time, or right away – they only get out of control then. But it’s really their only chance (Age 4 April 1968:4).

Early in my engagement, I discovered that many of the adults at Lake Tyers, especially men, could barely read or write.

(d) Health. There were occasions when the sickness of people at Lake Tyers reached epidemic proportions (AAV Series B314 Item 7 Minutes March and April 1930). The BPA preferred to use local treatment provided by qualified or unqualified staff at the Station. In March 1930, a meeting of the BPA heard of thirty three cases of measles and eighty cases of influenza. In that month five children under four years, including two from one family, died of influenza; and another child died of meningitis. In the following month a further three deaths occurred. The BPA responded to the epidemic and deaths by converting the community hall into a hospital. The appropriateness of this special medical and health services was questioned at a BPA meeting, but the Manager preferred to cope using existing staff skills (the contracted visiting Medical Officer from Bairnsdale assisted by two untrained resident Aboriginal ‘Nurses’ and Station staff) and local facilities. The BPA accepted this arrangement (AAV Series B314 Item 7 Minutes March and April 1930; Pepper & De Araugo 1985:252). During July and August 1939, two hundred cases of influenza were reported by the manager, including two deaths - one from influenza and one from meningitis. The Medical Officer’s monthly report to the BPA however concluded ‘general health excellent’ for the month of July 1939. In July 1940, the Medical Officer noted Bairnsdale hospital’s resistance to admitting Aborigines
from Lake Tyers as patients (AAV Series B357 Box 4 Item 36 Medical Officer 1922-1954). Between 1940 and 1942, forty five persons died, fifteen from an epidemic of tuberculosis. Despite the acute situation by March 1944, the BPA, Station staff, the Medical Officer, various hospitals (Bairnsdale, Sale and Greenvale) and Government Ministers had not decided a Government action plan (AAV Series B357 Box 4 Item 36 Medical Officer 1922-1954; Pepper & De Araugo 1985:257).

The public neglect of the resident’s chronic health status was not mentioned in the McLean Report in 1957. Visiting health professionals made special reports to the Health Department and the Board in 1966, each report revealing a very serious situation (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee November 1966:100-106). The District Health Officer in July 1966 reported:

- that three deaths had occurred in the past few months including a five year old child of pneumonia and a baby from malnutrition
- that many of the primary school children suffered from impetigo and colds, some severely
- that indicators of the physical development of the children showed poorer results than those of non-Aboriginal children of the same age
- that the houses were not fitted with a bath, sink or hand basin because they had no internal running water, had a rudimentary fire stove, were in a filthy damp condition and giving off an offensive smell
- that the houses had no food storage facilities, nor were there any vegetable gardens
- that the distant communal bath house was cold, bare and without privacy and an operating water supply
- that some of the food in the shop was uncovered while flies were present and there was evidence of insect infestation of stored food.

He recommended:

- an immediate inspection by the school medical team and twice yearly
thereafter

- the provision of milk and multi-vitamins to the school children
- attention be given to the sub-standard houses that do not comply with the Uniform Building Regulations
- the medical officer visits fortnightly and the Board employs a resident nurse supplied with a residence, phone and equipped treatment centre (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee 1966:104).

The Superintendent School Medical Inspector reported in August 1966 after an examination of all primary school and pre-school had been undertaken. He found:

- the children were shorter in stature and lighter in weight than non-Aboriginal children
- one child presented signs of anaemia
- there were no indications of specific vitamin or protein deficiency but the income available to parents with large families suggested the adequacy of their diet was borderline
- a number of children were infested with pediculosis capitis and skin infections and a high number had upper respiratory tract infection – all of which were communicable
- a constant threat came from pneumonia in the young children, three of whom had died in the last few years (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee November 1966:100-106).

This Report concurred with the July 1966 recommendations of the District Health Officer. It emphasised attention to environmental health conditions - water supply and accommodation, the necessity of bathing, the prompt arrangement of health education of the mothers by two School Sisters, and the authorisation of the medical officer to use poliomyelitis vaccine. Research into the reasons for the high incidence of respiratory infection was also proposed.
After the Board had received the above two critical Reports, in October 1966, Sister Doreen Tait, a double certificate nurse, was engaged on a contract by the Board to live at Lake Tyers and provide daily medical treatment (AAV Series B408 Item 107 1966-1967). West’s residence at the Station (previously discussed) coincided with that of Sister Tait. However, her assignment by the Board made no specification about how she should jointly work with social worker West. Sister Tait operated a clinical service in a small Treatment Room adjacent to her accommodation at the Station. She reported to the Board in February 1967 (AAV Series B408 Item 107 1966-1967) commenting on the less than acceptable standard of her building and equipment; and requested the Board approve moving the clinic to a refitted dispensary within the administrative block so that she had access to equipment needed for the majority of procedures that related to ‘infected sores, boils, impetigo, ringworm and dangers of cross infection’ (AAV Series B408 Item 7 1966-1967). The move would have enabled the visiting Medical and Dental Officers to have more space at the Treatment Room once it was supplied with a telephone, cupboard, sterilizer, fly wire screened window, running water and a sink (AAV Series B408 Item 107 1966-1967). The dispensary was located in the administrative block when I arrived at Lake Tyers in January 1970 (Personal Papers 1970).

Altogether, the Health Department officers and Sister Tait had stated:

- that medical treatment continued to be afforded by the Board
- a Bairnsdale general practitioner was organised to make a monthly visit to the station
- any serious illnesses and injuries required a one hour trip to the Bairnsdale hospital
- no Board staff was readily on hand to transport people during the day or night;
- there was no access to a public phone to call an ambulance or consult a doctor;
- an unqualified woman, who had been Matron for many years at the Station and now lived near by, was paid by the Board to act as a nurse when she made
Deteriorating living conditions at the Station directly contributed to the declining health situation. Each of the three health assessments was completed after the Board’s action in April 1966 when it terminated rations and work, and removed the availability of Board staff to administer health care. The assessments appreciated that the physical environment — overcrowded and unheated accommodation, deficient sanitation and drainage, poorly accessible water supply for washing and drinking - and inadequate diet and unsatisfactory hygienic practices, contributed to disease and illness. Reporting as staff of government agencies meant the content was not made public although the political furore was receiving media attention. Serious concern about the state of health of the people of Lake Tyers contributed to the recommendation of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee in November 1966 that a qualified resident nurse be appointed (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee 1966:15). The Board adopted the proposal and Sister Phyllis Hildebrand was permanently appointed in February 1967. She lived and worked at the settlement until late 1969 and then became one of two Visiting Nurses working for the Ministry with Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers and throughout East Gippsland (Personal Papers 1970).

‘Conditioned to paternalistic control’

The Station regime was domineering and intrusive. Successive Managers and staff of the Station monopolised administrative decision making and intimidated men and women by threatening punishment when they failed to comply. Punishment took the form of physical force or deprivation by withdrawing of rations and supplies.

I heard that at least one adult male resident, when a young person, was beaten as a punishment for challenging the Station Manager's disciplinarian methods. I discovered a number of wooden truncheons under the front counter of the office. I was told that a former Station Manager used them in the 1950s. A former Victorian public servant, who
visited the Station for another State Department told me that fears of physical assault had led former Station staff to keep firearms close at hand. I was told that those staff regularly reminded residents of this fact. Another informant told me that staff were issued with revolvers up until 1942 (Personal Papers, July 1970).

Resident participation in the administration of Station affairs was not forbidden. Regulation 22(4) of the Aborigines Act 1928 permitted the formation of an elected advisory committee of Station residents. From January 1929 to May 1931, Manager Captain Newman used this power to form an advisory group (Barwick 1966:2) and a ‘Native Court’ (Pepper & De Araugo 1985:251). These were the only occasions when the residents were given opportunity to participate in decision making or administer social control at Lake Tyers until the Lake Tyers Council was formed by the Ministry in 1968. One Manager’s reason for not encouraging participation in Station governance was given by Mr Len Rule to the McLean Inquiry at Lake Tyers on 27th June 1956:

A Station Committee is impracticable. Has been tried. Members will not take action against relatives (AAV Series B408 Item1 1955-1956).

McLean repeated this advice in his Report and commented on management’s powerlessness to discipline misbehaviour (McLean Report 1957:13). ‘Community participation in governance’ was not named as a goal in any of the Board’s Annual Reports between 1958 and 1967.

A psychological effect of the long lasting condition of being ruled at the Station was observed by Tonkin while working alongside men from Lake Tyers at Jackson’s Track. Tonkin (Tonkin & Landon 2000) noted a trait of Station men:

They seemed always to be thinking about what ‘master’ could do to them (Tonkin & Landon 2000:172).

Tonkin’s observation suggested men were reluctant to take action for fear of criticism
and ridicule — showing a preference for direction and the security of conformity. Many incidents between residents and Managers were reported in BPA Minutes and other sources, such as Pepper & De Araugo (1980 & 1985). The remarks and actions by more forthright Aboriginal adults attracted the attention of Managers and staff who then perceived this behaviour as disrespectful and challenging their command. It may have been an objection to an unjust decision as it was in October 1927, when Mr Laurie Moffatt and others organised a strike when objecting to a BPA decision to dismiss the Assistant Manager. The Assistant Manager was criticised for relating in too friendly a way with workers. The strike organisers were punished (Pepper & De Araugo 1985:250).

The caning of two youths by Major Ronald Glen, Manager in 1935, was reported in the Melbourne Argus newspaper when a Baptist Church leader informed the public after being advised by residents (Argus 16 October 1935). One writer at the time judged that the “adroit handling of the scandal” by the Chief Secretary, as the responsible Minister, “minimised political damage” (Australian Archives & the Public Record Office of Victoria 1993: 109-111). Regulations empowering a Manager did not include corporal punishment and certainly excluded the physical abuse of minors. Local police investigated the incident but no legal action was taken (Bairnsdale Advertiser 18 October 1935).

In 1946, Manager Mr Tom Milliken wrote the following case note to the BPA after punishing a resident. The tenor of his relationship with Aboriginal people is illustrated:

Six months (expulsion). Full blood, 53 years, married. Insolence to Manager, malingering and incorrigible laziness. A menace to maintenance of discipline: incited men to “strike” over reduced sugar ration as a result of railway cuts and Xmas holidays (Australian Archives & the Public Record Office of Victoria 1993:112).

Pepper (1980) wrote how Manager Mr Len Rule reacted when one man returned late from harvesting. Rule ordered the man from the Station and fired gunshots over his head to frighten him. Nevertheless, the man continued to enter the Station undetected at night.
to provide money for his family (Pepper 1980:104). Uncle Albert Mullett (2004) talked of Manager Glen in the 1930s having control and laying down the rules that the people either obeyed or faced punishment (Koorie Heritage Trust Mission Voices August 2004).

The late Aunty Ivy Marks (2004) told of how Mrs Rule, the unqualified Matron at Lake Tyers, used to inspect her house twice a week:

...we had to scrub floors, keep the house clean, ...if.. no one had done their floors and cleaned their houses up, they'd get reprimanded ..[by Matron] ...and she'd tell the manager whose house was dirty (Koorie Heritage Trust Mission Voices August 2004).

West (2003) described the attitude of residents toward resident Board staff:

These three people....had long lost the respect and confidence of the people...Attitudes of superiority and censoriousness marked their relationship...The matron, in particular, was well known for her rudeness and unhelpfulness...(West 2003:16).

Another former resident, Aunty Eileen Harrison (2004), reminisced about how a Matron treated her:

Every morning I had to go up to the dispensary and I had to get my ears cleaned because I had a problem with my ear... One day she said to my mother that I didn't have a problem with my hearing, she said I was just too lazy to hear and then a couple of months later on they sent an ear specialist down to look at me and he found out that I was born with an infected ear drum. Mrs Miles, she was a bit shocked about it, ..and she apologised to my mother, but I think that's one of those things that I'd never really forgotten about...(Koorie Heritage Trust Mission Voices August 2004).

Judy Atkinson (2002) has written of the experience of colonised Indigenous people in Australia - of infant deaths and serious illness, of the frequency of death, and of racial and cultural denigration. For individuals, families and groups, stress and trauma were transmitted over successive generations without opportunities to grieve or be renewed by
a sense of hope. Atkinson reported the argument Connie Hunt, an American Indian psychologist, presented at a conference in 1992 (Atkinson 2002) when Hunt spoke of four 'layers of trauma': i) historical trauma – the socio-political impact of colonisation; ii) kin-group or communal trauma – massacres, diseases, removal to reserves and residential schools; iii) extended-family trauma – distress of other unhealed layers of trauma in homicides, domestic violence, rape, child physical and sexual abuse and neglect, and alcohol and drug abuse; iv) individual trauma – suicide and suicide attempts, mental illness, and victimising experiences (Atkinson 2002:82). Hunt’s framework of trauma has enabled appreciation of how the experience of colonisation, shaped by the Station over three generations, psychologically affected the lives of the people of Lake Tyers, as individuals, families and a racial group. Glimpses of these personal and communal journeys have been captured in Chapters 3 and 4, revealing reasons why the Aboriginal domain at Lake Tyers by January 1970 had features of significant underdevelopment in terms of personal self-esteem, social relationships, education, employment, health, economic self-reliance, leadership and self-governance. The Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) and the Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (1997) include data presented by former Lake Tyers residents.

Conclusion

In answering the 'know-why' questions, Chapters 3 and 4 have shown that, despite the severe impact of colonisation over decades, memorable life experiences of courage and defiance always nurtured pride in Indigenous heritage. At Lake Tyers by 1966, connection to the widely spread protest organised by the League led to the resolve of a handful of residents to resist moving despite their diminished numbers. Soon afterwards, the Tatz Committee recommended a new future for the residents. By the end of 1967, the State Government looked for an alternative policy and administrator, and under new legislation the Ministry replaced the Board which had proved itself incapable of
implementing the policy of assimilation at Lake Tyers - a policy found to be flawed. As the League had not been consulted about the intended changes, the Government's action was viewed with suspicion by the League's leaders (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985:80). Furthermore, a number of non-Aboriginal supporters of Aboriginal rights doubted the Government's integrity (Report of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs 30th June 1973:4-5). Yet the Victorian electorate's mood for social change in Aboriginal affairs had been demonstrated earlier in the year by its very positive 'Yes' vote in the Referendum. The consequent entry, in 1968, of the Commonwealth's Council of Aboriginal Affairs and its administrative arm, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, introduced new political resolve and financial resources into Indigenous affairs across the nation. By 1968, change at Lake Tyers was anticipated but it was unclear who would sponsor it and accept responsibility for leadership - the residents of Lake Tyers, the League, the Ministry, or as proposed by the Tatz Committee, a coalition of government agency, League and not-for-profit social justice/community service bodies? The new Director of the Ministry, Mr Worthy, gave the answer — it would be the Ministry on its own.

In this chapter, I have continued to re-construct the past experience of the residents of Lake Tyers, the people with whom I engaged in January 1970. I have extended the initial body of knowledge I gained as a practitioner in order to better appreciate the capabilities of the residents and the factors that influenced their development. I have added to the evidence collected when I was working at Lake Tyers, the data that informed the planning decisions about the process of community development. After reading Rowley (1971), Long (1970) and Rowse (1998), I discerned four major features representing the critical life circumstances affecting Aboriginal residents living at Lake Tyers. A summary of learning about the people of Lake Tyers before 1970 included:

- the negative impact on Gunnai social organisation of the concentration of Aboriginal residents from other Stations and Missions at Lake Tyers after 1917; followed by the ongoing struggle of residents to construct their social organisation at the Station in the
oppressive conditions of the Station and its environment

- the narrowly circumscribed economic activities available to Station workers and the few openings other than seasonal employment in the rural economy, prolonged an unskilled labour supply, and discouraged men and women to find permanent alternative work beyond the Station. By the end of the sixties mechanisation had replaced the labour demand for even seasonal vegetable harvesting work. Without past opportunities to be skilled in farming operations and financial management at the Station, the workers were ill-equipped to run an enterprise, especially one that would compete in the market and meet the economic needs of ten households in July 1971. The regime at the Station existed because the state believed some Aborigines needed to be protected and the price of protection was subjection to managed consumption – rationing.

- geographical distance socially isolated Lake Tyers people and restricted their social relations with non-Aborigines in civil society. The environment's racial discrimination went unchallenged without social interaction between people. Interrupted schooling was conducted in social isolation and achieved little more than basic literacy and numeracy skills. All of these factors reinforced the people's exclusion from participation in the market economy and civil society. Child rearing in this segregated environment did not require socialisation of children and young people beyond the strength of Aboriginal primary relationships of kith and kin. (Tropman, Erlich & Cox 1977:3). On the Station or while seasonally working, primary group relationships prevailed, and the residents' social world had no reason to differentiate between the roles and norms relevant to home and to work. Conditions conducive to the formation of 'racial community' (Neuwirth 1969) had not developed in East Gippsland before the seventies, and given the exclusion of Aborigines from relationships with non-Aborigines, no 'intercultural social field' (Martin 2005) existed where Aboriginal people had the organisational capacity and power to negotiate their position in society.
• the concentration of many Aboriginal people at the distant and segregated Lake Tyers reduced demand on the State’s resources and put the Station regime ‘out of sight’ of the public gaze so that neglect and deficiencies in the government’s provision of services to them kept the deteriorating conditions of the people ‘out of mind’ too. The residents’ pleas for help went unheeded without accessible public information to the few interested non-Aboriginal parties. The public’s ignorance made sustained advocacy for reform very difficult and defence easy for Ministers, the BPA and the Board.

• the effect of a stinting allocation of public funds meant facilities at the Station for the large sized families and the growing Aboriginal population was grossly inadequate. Residents were housed in overcrowded, sub-standard accommodation facilities without a supply of reticulated water, sanitation and drainage. Residents experienced interrupted primary level schooling. Residents were susceptible to epidemics of infectious diseases, chronic illnesses, high infant death rates, and psychiatric disorders. With only basic numeracy and literacy skills and no employment skills training, the general labour market was inaccessible. Overall, dependency on the provision of rations and government charity for services was psychologically and socially debilitating. There was no experience of wage earning and employment contracts and little reason to learn how to handle more complex cash transactions and appreciate the value of money through shopping, budgeting, saving and banking

• the officials, although they espoused assimilation and its emphasis on individual self-reliance, administered according to values that taught dependency and compliance, all contrary to the work ethic of a capitalist society. Segregation at the Station counteracted efforts to assimilate. The existence of values of the Aboriginal social order – family allegiance, sharing of goods and reciprocating services – may have been recognised by staff, but they were seen as alien to assimilation. These Aboriginal norms were not considered of value and worthy of incorporation into Station practices. The BPA/the Board and their staff worked against Aboriginal people’s continuing nurture and protection of their separate group identity at the
Station and beyond. Despite this oppressive environment and the limited opportunities to have agency, the residents of the Station and their kith and kin living away from the Station, developed their own social world and prized heritage, cared for each other, sought solutions to the threats encountered, retained a cultural identity, refused to be assimilated and did not submit to authority

- residents could be arbitrarily moved and had no guarantee of secure tenure while subject to the decree of legislation, the dictate of public administration, the whim of Manager and a regime that assumed the state must play a guardianship role with the residents. Racial superiority flaunted by Station staff through constant supervision, regular intrusion, rationing and frequent personal denigration, undermined self-confidence and rewarded compliance. Dependence on the decisions of staff sapped the will and frustrated expression of individuality, personal energy and social autonomy. The residents' typical experience of oppression, insecurity, destitution, deprivation of rights and grief due to the death of a loved family member brought psychological stress and trauma to individuals and affected communal and family structures. Damage was felt by each successive generation of the resident population. However, by the 1960s, neither the Government nor the Board could manage the changed social and political forces linking the local people to the national Aboriginal rights social movement represented by the League in Melbourne and to the heightened goodwill of the general public. By the 1960s, the general public was beginning to realise their own safety was at risk if governments did not invest in the social development of Aboriginal residents, particularly those at Lake Tyers

- the Aboriginal children were not considered capable of education beyond basic numeracy, literacy, reading and practical handcraft training. Therefore post-primary and adult education resources were not offered. Consequently, the residents were seriously ill-prepared for self-governance, management of a farm and township, land ownership and administering an incorporated organization

- the population at Lake Tyers fluctuated throughout the sixties. All of the residents in
January 1970 had recently returned and re-settled at the Station, but no one family had resided continuously throughout the sixties. All of the adults had tasted Station life previously as young people, but never before had this particular configuration of families lived there together. The ‘geographic community’ present at Lake Tyers in January 1970 was a relatively new neighbourhood that had still to develop familiarity and solidarity. Of the many Aborigines who had ever resided at Lake Tyers, those present on the 1st January 1968 were beneficiaries of membership of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust in July 1971.

The next chapter outlines the legislation that enabled the transfer of land title to the Lake Tyers residents and created the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust. The chapter presents the first of the two components of the process of social change, the process of enactment of legislation reform of statutory law to enable transfer of land title and management responsibility. It reviews the thinking upon which the legislation was based and it considers the political reactions of Aboriginal people – the residents who became members of the Trust, and the former residents who were denied membership. The role of the Member for East Gippsland in the State Parliament is noted. The chapter indicates how the residents while engaging in the second component of the process of social change, the process of community development, also participated in legislative reform process. Recognition of the importance of the issue of definition of membership of the Trust and its significance for the Trust in relation to the Aboriginal social organization of Gippsland is outlined.
Chapter 6. "The chance to prove ourselves"

This is our land and we are proud of it. After all, you white fellows weren't the first to discover Australia – we were here first (Charlie Carter Identity October 1971:8).

We have fought for this with bitter experiences but the winds of change are blowing. Now we have the chance to prove ourselves by working for our own destiny (Doug Nicholls Identity October 1971:8).

Introduction

From the Government's perspective social change at Lake Tyers was executed by two processes: (i) the process enacting legislation, and (ii) the process of community development (see Chart 6.1).

Chart 6.1 Lake Tyers - Components of the process of social change 1970 – 1971

Component 1. Process of community development – targeting primarily the residents of Lake Tyers

(a) preparation of the residents as
   (i) land owners
   (ii) managers
   (iii) a cohesive community
   (iv) stronger families
   (v) productive workers
   (vi) supported young people
   (vii) proud of Aboriginal identity
(b) preparation of people and institutions of the East Gippsland region

Component 2. Process of enactment of legislation - targeting political processes and public opinion

(a) transfer of Crown land title to a communal Aboriginal title
(b) creation of an incorporated organisation to hold title and represent the collective interests of Aboriginal shareholders
(c) participation of residents in framing the legislation
(d) public relations campaign – State-wide and locally in East Gippsland
This chapter will illustrate how the first component, reform of statutory law played a major role in achieving social development at Lake Tyers. The chapter starts with the Minister's promise of land title, views the responses of residents, tracks the passage of the legislation through the Parliament, details conditions of the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970* and the establishment of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, and notes the Trust's membership. Criticisms of the Act are covered — as voiced by the local parliamentarian, and by some former Station residents who contested the Trust's exclusive and narrow membership conditions. The chapter will consider how the controversy over the eligibility terms of Trust membership and its restricted membership affected the process of community development in 1970-71 and influenced the long-term viability of the Trust. Finally, the chapter will describe how the Trust was established and began its operational life; and it lists the Trust's initial major responsibilities.

**Fundamental social change – granting communal land title to Aboriginal groups**

The decision to grant Crown land to two groups of Indigenous Victorians was a major policy reform in Victorian Aboriginal affairs. The decision was legitimating Aboriginal occupation of reserve land for the first time and therefore reversing Government decisions made repeatedly over many decades since the foundation of the Colony of Victoria. On the surface to most non-Aborigines the decision would have appeared to be a matter of local interest for the respective populations in the Warrnambool and Bairnsdale districts, especially the Aboriginal residents of Framlingham and Lake Tyers. The apparently ordinary decision however went to the heart of a fundamental and unresolved issue about the status of the Indigenous rights of Aboriginal Australians. The decision risked fuelling the political contest over sovereignty claims and the terms of original settlement. It risked arousing the fears of every electorate's landowners; industries, especially farming and mining interests; larger corporations and rural local governments. This was a political decision that relied on containment of anxieties so that it remained a matter of local Aboriginal social development at Lake Tyers and Framlingham.

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‘Fundamental structural change’ (Dixon 1989:83) was envisaged when the Government announced that land title would be transferred to the residents of Lake Tyers and Framlingham reserves in April 1970. Amendments to two existing statutes were required - the Land Act 1958 and the Aboriginal Affairs Act 1967; and a new Act - the Aboriginal Lands Act 1970 – had to be drafted. The two existing statutes were the last of an unbroken line of legislation that set the pattern of the colonisation of Aborigines from the foundation of the Colony of Victoria in the 1860s, beginning with the Section 9, Lands Act 1862 and An Act establishing the "Central Board to Watch Over the Interests of Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria" 1860. In his second reading speech concerning the Aboriginal Lands Bill in the Legislative Assembly on 28th October 1970, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs recognised the right of Aborigines “as descendants of the original inhabitants” to be granted Crown land (Smoke Signals December 1970:15). Explanation for the pending statute made no mention of an intention to recognise a prior occupation, or sovereign, Indigenous right to land ownership. There was no mention of compensation for dispossession of traditional lands either. This was the decision of a Government now facing a sizeable public of Aborigines and non-Aborigines who had rejected the aspect of the policy of assimilation that forced the removal of Aboriginal occupants from the State’s reserves at Lake Tyers and Framlingham. The decision however did strike at fundamental issues of colonisation – the right of Indigenous groups to hold a communal land title and bestowing trust in Indigenous people to competently manage property. It was a ‘decolonising’ action by a State and of national significance, contributing to the restructuring of relationships between Aborigines and non-Aborigines, regionally in East Gippsland and the Western District, the State and the nation.

Although primarily triggered by the successful political campaign regarding Lake Tyers, the Aboriginal Lands Act 1970 also encompassed the Aboriginal people living at the Framlingham Reserve in western Victoria. With the political focus on the Lake Tyers campaign the interests of the residents and family networks interested in the future of Framlingham were barely named. The long unresolved struggle of the Framlingham people to retain the reserve land for their use by refusing to leave has been told by Critchett (1980) and Barwick (1981). The Government also used the Aboriginal Lands
Act to end those people’s uncertain tenure. A former critic of Government, such as the Methodist Conference of Victoria and Tasmania, was sufficiently satisfied by the legislation and resolved:

That conference believes the Government’s Lands Act 1970 is correct in principle in being “designed to provide a basis on which Aboriginal people may regain a rightful place in our multi-racial society” ... and commends the Government and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs for their enlightened policy (Methodist Conference of Victoria & Tasmania Proceedings and Resolutions 1971).

In order to achieve its social reform goal at Lake Tyers and Framlingham, in 1970 the State Government decided to transfer land title from the Crown to specified residents and transfer management and other functions from the Ministry to those residents. The Aboriginal Lands Act 1970 established legally incorporated organizations – the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust and the Framlingham Aboriginal Trust – in which to vest the land title and to perform the management and operational functions.

The legal status of residents of Lake Tyers in 1970

The Aboriginal Affairs Act 1967 repealed clause 11(d) of the Aborigines Act 1958 that had given authority for Regulations to be made ... providing for the control of aboriginal reserves and aborigines and other persons thereon, including the maintenance of discipline and good order thereon, the issue of permits to reside thereon and the exclusion or removal there from of persons not authorized to enter thereon. The Ministry had general powers obtained from the 1967 Act (see clause 42 (c) and (d) referring to development or management of aboriginal reserves, and conditions regulating entry of aborigines to training and other institutions on aboriginal reserves) but no regulations existed giving resident Ministry staff special legal powers of management or discipline. The legal status of the Crown land as a reserve however had not altered in 1967 and all fixtures to the land still belonged to the Crown. Staff had responsibility as public servants to care and maintain the property of the Crown, and for the administration of Government policies and programs. The residents occupied Crown land as approved tenants. Legally, the nature of the state’s special social responsibility to the people resident at Lake Tyers
was unclear. The *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970* removed any remaining residual special conditions of legal status applying to the Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers.

**The promise of land ownership and self-management**

At the opening of the Lionel Rose Hostel and Aboriginal Community Centre, Morwell, on 10th April, 1970 the Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Ray Meagher, announced that immediately he would present a Bill to the State Cabinet that would propose transferring the legal ownership of the two remaining permanent Crown land reserves for Aborigines in Victoria – at Lake Tyers and at Framlingham in Western Victoria – to the Aboriginal people living at those places (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Press Release 10 April 1970).

The Minister informed that the Bill would enable title to pass from the Crown to an all-Aboriginal Trust legally incorporated in Victoria. He added, he expected the Lake Tyers people would have an economic and self-sufficient community in the next few years; and that if the people asked, the government would be ready to assist (Sun 11 April 1970:3).

The Minister's Press Release advised that full details of the proposal had still to be worked out after consultation with the State's Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Council and Aboriginal people generally, to ensure the legislation was acceptable to them. He offered the future Trust the professional and technical services of the Ministry so that the land could be developed to fulfil its economic potential (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Press Release 10 April 1970).

Neither Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers, nor Ministry staff members based at the Station, were privy to this new policy direction that offered a new destiny for the Aboriginal people. Reactions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal voices to the plan were contradictory. Amongst Aboriginal people the news kindled an atmosphere of optimism and uncertainty. Sceptical comment was heard from many non-Aborigines. Both Lake Tyers and Gippsland Aboriginal people made perceptive comments. Some residents cautiously assessed the chances of success for the proposal, knowing that it placed the
onus of outcome on their shoulders. For instance, a forty four year old male Lake Tyers resident stated:

We’ll all have to pull together now to make this work (Personal Papers April 1970).

Two other male residents said:

This is good but we’ll still need a lot of help and advice for some time (Personal Papers April 1970).

A journalist visited Lake Tyers a few days after the announcement to canvas what residents were thinking about the proposed changes to ownership and management. His article captured uncertainty and self-deprecation, as well as an air of satisfaction and optimism. He reported Mr Ron Edwards saying:

If the whites leave here, I’m going too...We haven’t got it up here. The scheme won’t work (Herald 13 April 1970:4).

Mrs Agnes Bull told the reporter:

The blacks can never run this place. They’re hopeless (Herald 13 April 1970:4).

In contrast, the journalist noted Mr Fred Johnson’s positive comment:

Once we get hold of this land, we should hang onto it. We are all keen on farming (Herald 13 April 1970:4).

Resident, Mr Watson Pepper, expressed a pragmatic view when he told another reporter:

Aboriginals at Lake Tyers would now improve their homes and develop the land because it belonged to them. Previously we didn’t feel like making many improvements because the land was owned by the government and we had no rights to the 4000 acres at Lake Tyers (Sun 11 April 1970:3).

Another two former residents of the Station welcomed the policy change, adding with irony, that Aborigines had been requesting ownership for a long time. One of them, a twenty five year old man thought:

It’s about time they woke up to themselves. This is what we want (Personal Papers April 1970).
The other, a forty-four year old woman considered:

I’m glad we have a place of our own, at last (Personal Papers April 1970).

The Minister’s Press Release emphasised a number of times that the new policy of land rights had resulted from consultation with Aboriginal people:

...that had revealed the acknowledgement of land rights was a fundamental issue in any real Aboriginal advancement (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Press Release 10 April 1970).

**Legislating for communal interest**

The Minister’s announcement raised two important matters for the Government: a) How does the Crown transfer reserve land to a group of Aboriginal people? and, b) What type of appropriate institution has legal authority to represent the corporate or group, as well as individual, interests of the residential population?

Did institutional precedents exist to assist the Government? What thinking was available to the Victorian Government as it set about fulfilling its promise to the Lake Tyers people?

Mr Reg Worthy, Director of the Ministry, was conversant with the action already taken by the South Australian Government - the one Australian precedent concerning a grant of land title. He had attended the annual Standing Committee of Officers and of Ministers of the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council since his appointment (Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council Proceedings of Standing Committee of Officers 1970-1971). In the South Australian case, property rights to Crown reserve land were transferred to Aborigines by legislation in South Australia in 1966. The *Aboriginal Lands Trust Act* established an Aborigines Land Trust Board into which could be vested all the titles of the State’s remaining Aboriginal reserves - those unoccupied, occupied but non-staffed, and managed. The Trust Board was given power to hold the titles in trust for all of the State’s Aboriginal people with the authority to develop, sell, lease or mortgage land, to make loans and to provide technical assistance subject to Ministerial approval. The Board’s membership was to be wholly Aboriginal persons. Each reserve’s population was
empowered to elect their own Reserve Council to govern the business of each reserve. A Council had the power to decide if, and when, it wanted the Crown to transfer its land title to the Trust Board. The South Australian Government chose to legally constitute the Reserve Councils and give them powers by a second Act — *Aboriginal Affairs Act Amendment Act 1966-67*. A Council’s powers included: control of entry and therefore residence, and conducting a business on the reserve without being required to register as a company or society (Dunstan 1966:317-320; Rowley 1971:410-413). The South Australian experience offered a model for those planning and then drafting the Victorian legislation. At a staff meeting in Melbourne on 17th April 1970, Mr Worthy informed Ministry staff that, to that date, the South Australian Trust had received only title to unoccupied reserves; and as managed reserves still operated as the responsibility of the Government, he did not see a model there for Victoria (Personal Papers April 1970).

The South Australian Act incorporated features of current thinking. At a conference in August 1967 at Monash University, the social researcher Charles Rowley spoke about the existence of the strong group identity of Aboriginal people and how that social organisation should be sustained as an Aboriginal asset, particularly after the termination of Aboriginal missions and reserves (Rowley 1969:351). He acknowledged the contribution of Margaret Valadian, an Aboriginal social worker, who argued for the creation of ‘grass roots’ organisations where Aboriginal members make decisions and appoint leaders to represent communities. Rowley connected Valadian’s idea to his knowledge of Australia’s administrative practice in Papua-New Guinea. He framed the notion of a formally structured Aboriginal community organisation with a legal personality achieved through incorporation that provided the Aboriginal social group with a decision-making mechanism, a venue for the nurture of leadership and a publicly recognised administrative structure with which to represent their communal interests as they engage in society (Rowley 1969:351-352; Rowse 1993: 25). Rowley (1971) explained his idea:

Instead of a disappearing liability, as in ‘assimilation’, the Aboriginal group is re-cited in policy as an asset, to be endowed, by its own efforts, with enduring legal personality. The fringe group is the raw material for a corporation in perpetuity (Rowley 1971: 425).
In February 1968, Dr Colin Tatz, Director of the Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs, Monash University and a member of the Board, delivered a paper entitled 'Sociology and Gippsland Aborigines' at a Sociological Association of Australia and New Zealand conference. In the paper he suggested that legal incorporation of Aboriginal communities may be a way to secure Aboriginal rights. He stated:

At Lake Tyers I propose trying this as an experiment.... In the end, too, this legal incorporation must be accompanied by a grant of land title. In Victoria we have gone as far as declaring Lake Tyers a permanent Aboriginal reserve...But ownership of the buildings, homes, land, timber and cattle still vests in the Crown. Aborigines cannot be expected to labour with zest where there is insecurity of tenure (Tatz 1968:12).

The idea that an incorporated organisation best represented Aboriginal interests was voiced yet again. Interestingly, the Board's Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee (1966), a Committee chaired by Tatz some few years earlier, did not mention either an incorporated organisation or land rights as appropriate for Lake Tyers. Towards the end of the 1960s, the Victorian Government had a reservoir of ideas to draw upon when drafting the legislation.

Announcement of the goal of transferring land title and self-management

The Minister made his announcement on Friday 10th April 1970. At Morwell I listened to his speech having had no forewarning of the Government's new policy (Personal Papers April 1970). At the time, I was very excited by, and strongly supported, the Government's decision to recognise land rights and self-management. For me, the situation was a groundbreaking moment in the history of Lake Tyers. It was annoying however not knowing about the new policy in advance. The new situation established a clear purpose, but no pre-planning and preparation had occurred in relation to Lake Tyers (Personal Papers April 1970). Many questions came to mind for my role needed to be revised. How did the Ministry intend proceeding? What were the timelines available? Did the Director expect the residents to have input into the details framing the legislation? How could I give leadership to staff when I had no knowledge of the Director's intentions? I wanted to secure the community development principle of introducing
immediate and direct consultation with Lake Tyers residents so that the legislation reflected their interests. I hoped I could demonstrate to the residents that the Ministry/Government's intentions were genuine (Personal Papers 1970).

This event marked the start of my learning that this process of social change was under the control of the Government. The Government's political agenda of legislative reform would take precedence over the social development program and the readiness of the residents to assume the transferred responsibilities but the achievement of social development was vital to the success of the process of social change. I realised that the next actions taken by the Ministry would reveal whether the residents' goals possessed sufficient mutuality with those of the Government, and whether they were willing to work co-operatively to achieve them.

Henderson and Thomas (2002:30) explicitly stated that their nine-staged process of neighbourhood development was not 'a simple sequential or linear one'. The way change at Lake Tyers proceeded fitted that understanding, for although by April 1970 I was not satisfied that I had dealt adequately with the interactional and analytical tasks of the first stage 'entry' and the second stage of 'getting to know the neighbourhood', the Minister's announcement precipitated my community social work activity towards the third stage, 'what next? Needs, goals and roles'.

Beginning the process of enactment of legislation

I received a phone call from Mr Worthy, the Director, on Sunday 12th April. He said he planned to meet with the Lake Tyers residents on Wednesday 15th to inform them of the details of the Government's intentions and how they would be consulted about the legislation (Personal Papers April 1970). On Monday morning, I met residents and advised them that Mr Worthy would attend a special meeting of the Lake Tyers Council on Wednesday 15th April; and I encouraged them to be ready to list what they wanted to ask or tell him, suggesting they seek regular and genuine consultation. I prepared a notice of the planned Council meeting and pinned it on the 'community noticeboard' (Personal Papers April 1970).
The Government required a political structure with which it could communicate and consult with the Lake Tyers people. A number of thoughts came to my mind as I prepared for the meeting: the Lake Tyers Council existed, but was the Council an effective political mechanism for the residents to make decisions and represent their wishes, a facility that suited their way of communicating with the Ministry, or did the residents have an alternative method of relaying their views to the Ministry — that is, one of their own making? I did not know of an alternative method for the residents to relay their views to the Ministry — that is, one of their own making? Would the residents be ready to formulate their collective position?

No formal self-governing political structure, such as a committee or council of residents, existed when the Ministry began operation in January 1968. The Lake Tyers Council was constituted at a meeting of residents called by Mr Reg Worthy, Director of Aboriginal Affairs, on 21st March 1968. The formation of a Council had not been requested by the residents. Following this meeting, the Director suggested a letter be written to the Minister by the two women residents selected to be co-secretaries, asking him to recognise its formation and saying:

....mostly we want to help to get the things we need, ...We would like to have a say in our affairs and needs....If we were to have a meeting weekly, and keep writing to the Minister, it would help us to help ourselves. He'd know we were keen to do something for ourselves (Age 4 April 1968:4).

The Council had met occasionally after March 1968 until December 1969, and then, following my arrival in January 1970, it met regularly until the formation of the Trust on 1st July 1971. Membership of the Council was available to all residents and attendance was voluntary. It was an unincorporated advisory body. Until the end of 1969, Ministry staff, (the Farm Manager Mr John Buchanan or the Project Supervisor, Mr Vern Davies), chaired the Council in a non-voting capacity. By April 1970, I had had three months experience of working with the Council, but its functioning depended on the organising efforts of Ministry staff. Staff chaired and called the meetings, prepared the agenda, participated in proceedings, wrote and circulated the minutes. Between January and April most eligible adult residents had attended the meetings at least once. The residents had
not indicated that they perceived the Council as a means to formulating their collective voice and that it was the mechanism to convey their opinion to the Ministry. At that stage, the Council did not appear to be attached to the social organisation of the residents. (Personal Papers April 1970).

Initially the Council meeting held on 15th April was chaired by Mr Worthy. He promptly nominated Mr Charles Carter as Chairman of the Council. No member opposed the nomination; and then Mr Worthy asked for nominations for the position of Deputy Chairman. Mr Carter nominated his first cousin Mr Fred Johnson who was unopposed. Mr Carter took the chair and then invited Mr Worthy to outline the Minister’s proposal. He advised that an Act of Parliament was required to transfer the land as a freehold title to Aboriginal owners and that the legislation would reflect what residents of Lake Tyers wanted in relation to two matters: i) “Which Aboriginal people should own Lake Tyers? Do you want only existing residents of Lake Tyers to own the property?” or, Do you want former Aboriginal residents who once lived at Lake Tyers, as well as yourselves, to be owners? and ii) “In what way did people want to use the land? Did the people want to divide the property into blocks of land with blocks allocated to each family or to individuals? or, Did the people want to hold a communal title and work the property altogether as one block? In relation to i) Mr Carter replied that the residents wanted to be the sole owners. No-one else made further comment (Lake Tyers Council Minutes 15th April 1970 with Personal Papers April 1970); and regarding ii) the few speakers favoured joint ownership and everyone sharing the whole property (Personal Papers 1970). Despite the seriousness of the subject matter, responses were made ‘on-the-spot’, and there was no time given for further discussion with final decisions made at later Council meeting.

Opportunities to make input into the legislation were available to the Lake Tyers residents via the Lake Tyers Council until the Aboriginal Lands Bill was debated in the Parliament in late October 1970 as it was scheduled to meet twice per month between April and October 1970. At later meetings of the Lake Tyers Council very few queries were raised subsequently and the residents made no further suggestions about content. There were occasions when Council meetings were postponed due to the work commitments of the farm workers (eg. shearing), the absence of the Chairman, or when
the residents were too disturbed by conflict between individuals and/or families. Over the April-October period, the Director attended three Council meetings – on 15th April, 28th June and 29th September 1970 (Personal Papers 1970). At the latter two meetings Mr Worthy reported progress on the drafting of the Bill, and discussed planning for the future. The residents asked few questions about the content of the Bill.

Mr Carter, the Council Chairman, preferred to speak directly to Mr Worthy rather than myself (Personal Papers 1970). On a number of occasions, when conflict between Mr Carter and myself could not be resolved, I encouraged Mr Carter to speak directly with Mr Worthy by using my office phone. I would absent myself from the office during these conversations. To maximise communication with the Director, I gauged that arranging an alternative mode of consultation was advisable, and so special discussions in Melbourne were organised between the Director and Mr Carter, (as Council Chairman), and between the Director and other male and female residents including Mr Carter. On 3rd September 1970, Messrs. Charlie Carter, Joe Wandin and Murray Bull and Mesdames Hilda Fenton and Elvie Bull met Mr Worthy in Melbourne; and on 5th October 1970, Mr Carter, alone, met with Mr Worthy in Melbourne. The next week at Lake Tyers, Mr Carter met Mr Worthy, Mr Boas, the Ministry’s Assistant Director, and an officer of the Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs. After the Bill was tabled, on 2nd November 1970, Mr Carter met at Lake Tyers to discuss the Bill’s content with Mr Worthy, Mr David Bornstein, ALP Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Mr Bruce Evans, MLA for East Gippsland. Again, on 6th November 1970, Mr Carter and Mr Ron Edwards met Mr Worthy in Melbourne (Personal Papers 1970). These were opportunities for leaders to learn about the legislation and to express their viewpoints.

In preparation for the visit to Melbourne on 3rd September, I prepared a list of more than twenty questions which I thought the residents might wish to raise with the Director. The list was circulated to residents and discussed at a meeting of the Lake Tyers Council on 26th August. The questions included:

1. What are the details of the new legislation which affects us at Lake Tyers?
2. Is the title to be common ownership or individual ownership?
3. Who will own the houses?
4. Who will build more houses for people wanting to live at Lake Tyers?
5. Will more people be able to live at Lake Tyers?
6. What vehicles, buildings, equipment and stock will be passed to the Lake Tyers people?
7. How will we earn our income when we own Lake Tyers? Who will pay us wages? Will we get the same amount?
8. Will the Ministry assist with any finance?
9. Who will maintain and repair houses and buildings?
10. Who will pay for maintenance and repairs?
11. Who will pay the community's telephone bills, Shire rates, electricity accounts?
12. Who will be shareholders?
13. How much will each shareholder own?
14. What sort of business or farm organization will the Lake Tyers Trust be – a co-operative? a company?
15. Will white staff remain at Lake Tyers? Which ones? What will their jobs be?
16. Will Ministry staff rent houses from the Trust?
17. Will the Ministry rent office space at the office block?
18. Who will keep the accounts of the Trust - a Ministry officer or an outside accountant?
19. Should we employ a solicitor to look after our interests?

(Personal Papers August 1970).

The Council agreed that I send the list to the Director before the meeting. I placed a notice on the Community Noticeboard so that everyone was informed

viz. "Delegation of Lake Tyers Council to talk with the Director....Programme includes: Discussion with Director 2pm Thursday, Eating out at a restaurant, going to the pictures and staying overnight at the 'Victoria'.(Personal Papers August 1970).

I did not attend these special meetings and I do not recall specific briefings afterwards, verbally or in writing, by the Director or the Lake Tyers men. Exclusion from the
meetings was acceptable to me as a practice protocol – the principle of confidentiality was practiced in order to facilitate trusting relationships and encourage openness between the Aboriginal leaders and the Director. I found the absence of communication feedback from either the Director or the Aboriginal leaders disconcerting and it introduced uncertainty into my role. Despite this inhibition, throughout the process, I chose not to become an intermediary between the residents and the Director. I encouraged them to speak directly to the Director rather than allow me to negotiate on their behalf. The Director wanted to be the Ministry’s negotiator anyway.

The contested clauses of the Bill

Two clauses of the Bill became contentious. They were debated in the Parliament, the target of public protest by a group of former Lake Tyers residents and used by the local parliamentarian in his attempt to undermine public confidence in the decision of the Government to transfer the land title. The first issue related to Section 11 of the Bill. Mr. Evans MLA, Member for Gippsland East concentrated his antagonism towards unconditional land transfer to Aborigines by suggesting the Lake Tyers people were so irresponsible and incapable that they would sell the property and/or their shares to get spending money. His agitation led other Aboriginal people and a few of their non-Aboriginal supporters to express fear that the Trust, or its members, could not be trusted as custodians of the property for all Aborigines. During the debates the Government replied that the Bill offered sufficient protection. However, amending legislation was eventually acceded to by the Government and passed in November 1971 - Aboriginal Lands (Amendment) Act – in order to safeguard these concerns by tightening the existing restrictions on the power of the Trust or its members to dispose of shares or property. The Government yielded to political pressure after the Trust had existed for some months even though there was no evidence of an offer to sell land or share.

The second issue concerned Section 3, the criteria establishing membership of the Trust - an issue upsetting many of the Aboriginal persons who found themselves without eligibility and therefore excluded from connection to their spiritual home in spite of their previous residence at the Station, their participation in ‘Saving Lake Tyers’ and their kith
and kin bonds with the residents. They believed their exclusion represented a failure by Government to recognise the existing Aboriginal social organisation. This matter is discussed further below - and ramifications of the decision are discussed in a later chapter.

The *Aboriginal Lands Bill* was presented to the Legislative Assembly in October 1970. Mr Bruce Evans, Country Party Whip and member for Gippsland East in the Legislative Assembly, was the sole opponent in the Victorian Parliament to land transfer to Aborigines at Lake Tyers. During the Assembly debate in November he expressed his lack of confidence in the Lake Tyers residents' commitment to owning their country, stating:

> If they are approached by a person who may say, 'You are getting only a pittance out of this farm. Tomorrow I can put a cheque for $10,000 into the hand of each of you' I suggest this will be a business proposition to be considered .....and there is no doubt that eventually it would be sold so that these people would obtain their share of the proceeds (Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Debates, Session 1970-71:1768-1777).

Evans was an experienced Bairnsdale farmer but also an avowed believer in assimilation. Later in a parliamentary debate in 1974, Evans proclaimed:

> I have previously stated in the House that we must embark on a programme of assimilating the Aboriginal people into the community. There are no half-way measures (Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Debates, Session 1974:1845).

A month before the handover ceremony in July 1971, Evans attempted to undermine confidence in the appropriateness of the land grant by claiming the land transfer was a deliberate Government 'confidence trick' to enable private developers to get access to the property; and he denigrated the residents of Lake Tyers. He issued a press statement that was reported in the Melbourne press.

> One third of the adult trust members are pensioners. The rest include those who have failed to respond to previous Government efforts to get them to move out into the community....All but four of the adults are extremely sick people (Herald 28 June1971:5).

Another paper quoted from the same press statement:
Further, with at the most four exceptions, all the adults are heavily addicted to drink (Age 29 June 1971:11).

On 6th August 1971 the Age informed its readers that the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust had taken legal action suing Mr Evans and the Age for unspecified damages for an alleged libel. Some months later the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust decided not to pursue their legal action.

Mr Evans was well aware of the strongly felt disappointment expressed by many Aboriginal residents of East Gippsland at being excluded from membership. Local Aboriginal leaders spoke publicly. Mr Bill Tregonning, the elected East Gippsland Aboriginal member of the State Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Council, a former resident of the Station, told the press that he feared the land would be sold by the Trust (Sun 1 July 1971:4). Mr Phillip Pepper, a Gunnai descendant, former resident and a regular participant in League and FCAATSI meetings during the 1960s (Jackomos, A 1981:153), wrote a letter to the Editor of the Bairnsdale Advertiser, passionately explaining:

I believe that the keeping in trust of the Lake Tyers Settlement for all time must be my main goal. I owe it to my father, his mates and those white people of the past who helped in some way the cause of the aboriginal people. We are frightened that this piece of territory, which is a part of the aboriginal heritage and sacred to us will be lost if the Government goes head with its plan (Bairnsdale Advertiser 12 July 1971:1).

Pepper was genuinely frustrated by the exclusive terms of membership of the Trust. People who had participated in protests against closure some years ago were ineligible. Pepper had had years of farming experience; and he had applied to the Board to farm a part of the Station in the sixties. Pepper (1980) wrote:

...when they gave over Tyers they built a brick wall between them and the outside. Some of those white fellas didn’t have enough brains to give themselves a headache, they wouldn’t listen to the people (Pepper 1980:112).

The Bill did cater for persons who wanted to raise objections to the proposed conditions of membership. Section 4 required that a copy of the register of people eligible for membership be displayed on a noticeboard at the Station and exhibited there for two months. This requirement was satisfied. An article in the Bairnsdale Advertiser on 2nd
February 1971 stated this information and that ownership could not be completed until the time had elapsed (Bairnsdale Advertiser 2 February 1971:2). Any persons who felt aggrieved by exclusion could object to the Minister. Later in July 1971, the Minister, Mr Meagher, wrote an ‘Open Letter’ to the Bairnsdale Advertiser reminding Mr Evans and the aggrieved Aborigines that previously they had had opportunity to discuss the contents of the proposed legislation at specially organised consultations; and through their elected East Gippsland representative on the State’s Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Council (Bairnsdale Advertiser 19 July 1971:1).

Over the weeks leading up to the ceremony, a protest demonstration of ‘about one hundred and twenty Gippsland Aborigines’ marched in Melbourne to present a petition to the Governor signed by two hundred and thirteen Gippsland Aborigines, requesting that the ceremony be postponed. The petitioners believed the Trust would sell the land and claimed the land should belong to all Aborigines (Sun 20 July 1971:4). The State ALP Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs publicly supported the petitioners saying that the restrictive membership of the Trust had caused deep divisions among Aboriginal people in Gippsland (Sun 22 July 1971:17). The political manoeuvres did not deter the Government.

The matter of disposal of land was one that heightened anxiety for the excluded Gippsland Aborigines and non-Aboriginal persons who supported them. Section 11.3 had introduced special conditions to protect the interests of all Aboriginal people. In response to the ongoing local public protest, amending legislation – the Aboriginal Lands (Amendment) Act - was passed on 23rd November 1971. This was to allay fears that the Trust members could not be trusted to retain such a valuable asset, although, already a Special Notice of a General Meeting of the Trust had to be given to shareholders; and a unanimous decision of the Trust membership was required of at least all sixteen adults. One negative vote prevented the sale of land. With the amendment the onus was placed on the person dealing with a Trust member, or a Committee member or a representative of the Trust to enquire of the bona fides of the party offering to sell. Now, no individual could act independently or wilfully or whilst manipulated by an outsider. The Government acted quite swiftly to make the amendments for it had been accused of a
cynical 'washing its hands' of responsibility for the people. It aimed to show it was sensitive to securing the future interests of the people.

Each of the three political parties in the Victorian Parliament supported the passage of the Bill, including the Country Party of Mr Evans. Both the Opposition Australian Labour Party and the Country Party spokesmen criticised the restrictive provision of eligibility to become a member of the Trust. The Opposition's Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr David Bornstein M.L.A., argued for a widening of the criteria so that any person born at the Station, those whose childhood was spent there, those who had worked there and descendants of each of these categories, could share membership (Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Debates, Session 1970-71:1419-1421 & 1762-1774). Bornstein was advocating the attitude of a number of prominent former residents and other Aborigines whose kin had lived at Lake Tyers.

In his second reading speech in the Legislative Assembly, the Minister acknowledged that he knew of the Aborigines who had lived at the station wanting to be included on the Register. He answered their claim for membership by saying they had:

...expressed a wish to move into the general community for social, economic or other reasons. In order to meet their requirements, provision was made for housing grants. These grants allowed those who elected to move to obtain substantial equity in a home of their own choice in the community (Smoke Signals December 1970:16).

The matter of entitlement to Trust membership was acknowledged by the Ministry to be a very sensitive social and political matter (Personal Papers April 1970). On the morning of 15th April 1970 at Lake Tyers at least three alternatives were canvassed in the discussions I had with Mr Worthy prior to the Lake Tyers Council meeting. The alternatives were:

i) many Aboriginal people had lived on the Station at some time in their lives. One reason for their departure was that in the late 1950s/1960s they were forced by the Board to leave as part of the dispersal program. Most did not willingly go. Then the Board refused requests for permission to return. Previous residence and a request to return should entitle membership;
ii) Lake Tyers was the spiritual home of persons associated over many years with the Station - former and current residents and their kin. They should be given a chance to determine the future of Lake Tyers together with current residents by being invited to apply for membership. This could attract capable Aboriginal people interested in making a contribution to the future of the place;

iii) guided by community development principles (such as those of Ross (1967) referred to in Chapter Three), resident individuals and families would be motivated to commit themselves on a long term basis to building their own neighbourhood. As their daily economic existence and security related to tenure at Lake Tyers, these residents would want the opportunity to build their collective self-consciousness and identity. Of all the people who had survived the degradation of the past, they were the ones who had defied the Board, chosen to live there and now had most to gain from committing themselves to maximise success. It was presumed that the adult resident at Lake Tyers in 1970, especially household heads with families, would want to continue to live there after the title transfer.

The Director and I discussed the administrative requirements of these alternatives viz. discovering the names of all eligible people for entry in a register, checking the bona fides of each person, the procedure of registering expressions of interest ..(Personal Papers 1970). Regardless of the content of our discussion, I understand the Director arrived at Lake Tyers with a clear course of action already determined. He told me that the Ministry would welcome leadership from the residents and not from “imported personnel”; and he said he believed Mr Carter was the person to be the “Community Supervisor” (Personal Papers 15 April 1970).

The Bill introduced by the Minister in the Parliament in October 1970 reflected the decision made at the Lake Tyers Council meeting on 15th April, and therefore put the residents in conflict with their a number of relatives and friends. The residents' decision at the meeting concurred with the position already determined by the Ministry of restricting membership and to invest in those who enjoyed the benefits of residence.
In hindsight, I consider the choice of a restricted membership may have excluded valuable skilled Aboriginal persons who may have been willing to participate in the period of preparation for self-management and after the transfer. As a community social worker, it meant that I confined the process of community development to the residents and this approach may have excluded positive contributions in preparation for the handover, or thereafter. The Act did allow Trust members to elect onto the Committee of Management persons of their choice, including strongly committed and skilled Aboriginal person who were ineligible for membership of the Trust. The Trust members did not avail themselves of this opportunity when the first Committee of Management was appointed in July 1971.

In Section 3, the Bill specified eligibility conditions of membership of the Trust. The names of eligible persons were listed on a register. Eligibility was prescribed by Section 3 (1) to include persons:

(b) in the case of the Lake Tyers reserve - became resident on the reserve after 1st January, 1968 but before 1st October, 1970 with the approval of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Council (whether granted before or after they became resident); or (c) are children born before the commencement of the Act whose mothers were persons of a class referred to in paragraph (b).

Section 3 (3) gave the Minister the option to exclude from eligibility any one who had left the Station after 1st January 1968 after receiving a Ministry 'Housing Grant' to purchase a house outside the property but had then returned to live at the Station. Two families had received a Housing Grant and moved away from Lake Tyers after January 1968 but then returned and took up residence. The Lake Tyers Council had approved their membership of the Trust and the Minister did not use this power. Three infants were born to eligible members after 1st January 1968 and before 1st October 1970, the period specified, and so became members too. Another family was resident at the start of the period in January but departed a short time later. They were also included as members by decision of the Lake Tyers Council. There were other individuals and families who resided at Lake Tyers at some time within the period. The Council however did not act to approve their membership.

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The Bill gave special authority to the Lake Tyers Council in relation to determining membership of the Trust. By naming the Lake Tyers Council in the Bill, the Government was indicating how important it was to demonstrate to the Opposition Parties in the Parliament and to the public that it had a channel of communication with the residents; and furthermore, that it respected them by acting on the Council's advice. The Government publicised how the Ministry's approach at Lake Tyers differed qualitatively from that of the former Board and that it had the support of the residents who so recently had vehemently opposed it. The Bill was presented as in accord with the will of the people, and not an imposition on them.

In my view, the Bill assigned an unwarranted importance to the Council. The Council had not become a significant communal decision making body during 1968-1969 before I arrived, nor in 1970-1971 while I was present. The Council did play an important role when it decided the core interests of the residents when negotiating the legislation; and it was the only communal forum available.

Section 3 (1) (b) affirmed the decision by the Council in favour of the two families who had received Housing Grants. I believe Mr Worthy saw maintaining a positive relationship with the Chairman, Mr Carter and retaining his active involvement, was crucial to the success of the change venture at Lake Tyers. Each of the Council approved families included an adult sibling of Mr Carter. Another family (mother and two daughters) who obtained membership - under Section 3 (1) (c) was a sister of Mr Carter. By enabling membership to each of these families, Mr Worthy was acknowledging Mr Carter's stature as a leader and fostering his prominence amongst his own family network and also promoting his importance to the other residents. Other Lake Tyers families were not as successful as the Carter family in seeking to have their relatives admitted as residents and subsequently as Trust members.

Other Sections of the Bill

Section 9 established the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust as an incorporated body, a legal entity consisting of the persons listed on the published register and authorised the Crown
to grant the land title in fee simple to the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust. Section 9 subsections (4) and (5) provided unique features to the land title recognising the importance of the lake water frontage to the Aboriginal people by giving an irrevocable perpetual lease enabling an unfettered use and occupation of the water frontage. This clause obtained privacy for the residents too, as it meant no unauthorised person was entitled to enter the property from the lakeside.

Sections 10 and 11 detailed the ‘Nature and Powers’ of the Trust. The Government intended that the Trust have a similar legal nature to any corporate body: capacity to contract, to sue and be sued, perpetual succession, buy, lease or sell real and personal property, borrow, invest, employ staff, appoint officers, distribute a dividend and hold a bank account. A member of the Trust or its Committee could not receive a loan. The power to lease enabled the Trust to lease a house to an employee of the Trust, whether Aborigine or non-Aborigine. Tenancy did not give a right to be elected to the Trust’s Committee of Management.

Section 12 determined that the value of the estate of the Trust would be divided into shares, with each member holding a parcel of shares. Each adult received one thousand shares; and each minor received five hundred shares. Altogether sixty two thousand shares were issued. The value of each share was $6.52. The estimated value of the estate subject to the Crown grant, including land and fixtures such as houses, shearing shed, hall, reticulated water scheme and office block, was $404,550. A share was personal property and transferable to others (eg. by will) or sold.

Some non-Aboriginal people were anxious that the Trust might not remain in Aboriginal control after a period of time because shareholders would sell to get cash. Section 14 prescribed how a share transfer could occur and safeguarding Aboriginal ownership. It stipulated to whom a share might be transferred: i) the Trust; ii) another member; iii) the Crown - Commonwealth or the State; and iv) specified kin of the member.

The Committee of Management was elected under provisions of Section 15; and also staggered periods of election were specified. Section 15.4 enabled non-members to be elected to the Committee. Section 16 gave the Committee power to act for the Trust.
Section 17 concerned the Seal of the Trust — when it is used and where it is kept. Section 18 outlined the Trust’s responsibilities for keeping financial accounts of transactions; and the making of annual reports — Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss statements. Sections 19 and 20 were concerned with the appointment and duties of the auditor. Section 21 specified how the Trust could distribute profits.

Section 22.1 authorised the Minister to call the first general meeting of the Trust. Thereafter, Section 22.2 gave the Secretary power to call general meetings. The first General Meeting of the Trust was held at Lake Tyers on 2nd July 1971. Other sub-clauses of Section 22 specified the requirements for calling a general meeting and the annual meeting. Section 23 specified that a member could vote if present at a general meeting. Normally each member had one vote regardless of the number of shares s/he held. Section 23.4 provided the usual protection afforded by a quorum at a general meeting — in this case set at fifty percent of the adult persons entitled to vote — at least sixteen adults. This was a substantial check on manipulation from any origin.

Section 24 listed the responsibilities of the Minister and the Trust — for the keeping of records and reports and times when those records and reports must be supplied to the Minister. Section 25 listed contraventions and named the penalties incurred by officers of the Trust. Section 26 empowered the Minister to make grants and loans to the Trust. Section 27 gave complaining or aggrieved members access to the Supreme Court of Victoria or a Judge, to hear allegations of the Trust contravening the Act, or of failing to conduct its business properly.

Handover ceremony

On the afternoon of Saturday 24th July 1971 at Lake Tyers, a most significant event occurred in the history of the colonization of the Indigenous people of Australia. On this occasion, the Governor of Victoria presented Mr Charlie Carter, the newly elected Chairman of the Committee of Management of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, with the title deeds of the property of one thousand five hundred and ten hectares. Mr Carter, a
descendant of the Gunnai people and the Krauatungalung regional identity, the original occupants of Bung Yarnda, stated at the ceremony:

This is our land, and this day is what I have fought for (Bairnsdale Advertiser 26 July 1971:1).

Pastor Doug Nicholls, then Senior Vice-President of the League, affirmed Carter's opinion:

This is the biggest thing in the history of the Aboriginal people of Australia...It will have a big impact on the other Australian States (Jackomos, M 1971:8).

Mr Bruce McGuinness (Director of the League) and a number of Aboriginal leaders disagreed and dismissed this land grant as a token gesture. They claimed land title and full compensation for dispossession of all land taken and for destruction of the cultural heritage of the Aboriginal people of Victoria (Victorian Aborigines Advancement League 1985:97). Earlier however, Mr McGuinness had written in an Aboriginal newsletter during the passage of the Aboriginal Lands Bill:

...rather than double talk, it is possibly the most valuable piece of legislature regarding Aborigines that has ever been introduced. We now have in Victoria a precedent set for the land rights dispute. The Victorian Government has at last, through the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, returned sections of land back to the original owners (Origin 20 November 1970:8).

The official journal of the League, Smoke Signals claimed:

The Victorian Government's decision to recognise fully the right of aborigines to the ownership of the land in two small reserves is a triumph for the Aborigines Advancement League, which led the fight on behalf of Aboriginal people for Land Rights justice in respect to the reserves (Smoke Signals December 1970:13).

The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust

The Act created the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust as a body corporate. The land was vested in the Trust as the owner of an unconditional, freehold, fee simple title. Ninety one members of the Trust were listed as registered shareholders and each held a beneficial
interest in the land. The Trust was given authority to manage the land and the operation of residential life (Keon-Cohen & Morse 1984:84). The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust began operating as a legal entity on the 1st July 1971 – the day of the commencement of the Aborigines Land Act 1970.

On that day, there were ninety two persons listed on the Register. One woman had died a short time beforehand. Therefore, at its inauguration, the Trust had ninety one members – of whom thirty five were adults and fifty six were classified as minors under twenty one years. Of these ninety one shareholders, eighty seven lived at the Lake Tyers property on the 1st July 1971 as one family of shareholders lived in the district adjacent to Lake Tyers.

Table 6.1: Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust members showing age and gender at 1 July 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age – in years</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total Persons</th>
<th>Age cohort as % of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - -9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - -14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - -20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Papers, July 1971

Table 6.1 above shows the age and gender composition of the shareholder-members of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust on 1st July 1971. Fifty six (62%) members of the Trust were under the age of twenty one years and legally minors. There were thirty five adult members – twenty one men and fourteen women. These adults were eligible to vote at general meetings of the Trust; and were eligible to stand for election to the Committee of Management of the Trust.
The first general meeting of Trust members was held on Friday 2\textsuperscript{nd} July 1971 in order to elect the Committee of Management of seven persons and appoint an auditor. No woman was nominated for election to the Committee. Eight men were nominated — six Aborigines and two non-Aborigines. One man nominated, a member of the Trust but not a resident of Lake Tyers, was not elected. The five members elected to the Committee were: Messrs Charlie Carter, Fred Johnson, Wattie Pepper, Phillip Fenton and Ron Edwards. I was one of the non-Aboriginal men elected. The other man, Mr Ern Lloyd, was expecting to be appointed accountant of the Trust at the first meeting of the Committee. At that first meeting, the following Committee appointments were made: Mr Carter, Chairman of the Trust, Mr Johnson, Deputy Chairman and Mr Lloyd accountant and also Secretary of the Trust. The appointment of non-Aboriginal persons was in accordance with Section 15 (a) of the Act with election lasting until the second annual general meeting of the Trust.

\textbf{Responsibilities of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust}

After its election on 2\textsuperscript{nd} July, 1971 the Committee of Management of the Trust became responsible for all matters concerning property ownership and management previously conducted by the Crown via the Ministry. Immediately, the Trust was having to perform the roles of: landowner, ratepayer of the Shire of Tambo, landlord, commercial farm business operator, employer, administrator, executive policymaker, provider of residential services, representative of the interests of shareholders and residents to all three levels of government, the market and civil society and responsible for the coordination of education, health and welfare and other services provided to residents at Lake Tyers.

On the 24\textsuperscript{th} July 1971, the Government granted the Trust ownership of buildings, livestock, vehicles and equipment. Since 1967, the Government had re-equipped and extended the farm’s facilities, built new houses, refurbished and re-modelled older houses and public utilities, and provided an eleven-seater passenger bus, a public telephone, public toilets and a furnished office.
From the outset, the Committee continued to employ the work force employed by the Ministry – farming (beef cattle, sheep and pigs), spot milling and providing settlement public utilities and services to householders and residents of the township. Trust employees, assisted by Ministry staff (Farm Manager and Community Secretary), were engaged to ensure the farm, the utilities and the services operated. The Trust retained lines of command as if no change had occurred. It was too soon for the Trust to face the administrative issues of how it would organise who was ‘officer-in-charge’, or (for example) who would handle ‘emergency calls’ to fix faults after work hours or at weekends.

The transformation of ownership and management meant that the Trust had to ensure it had a pool of employees with sufficient technical and trade knowledge and skills to run the utilities and services. No continuing training plan of workers had been prepared. Initially, all administrative matters of the Trust (egs. payroll, accounts, banking, collecting rent) continued to be performed by Ministry staff. It was anticipated that the Trust would assume responsibility for all of these tasks as soon as possible.

The capacity of the Trust to offer employment to all residents wanting work was an issue that had been considered by residents, the public and the Ministry before the handover. Table 6.1 above shows the potential total labour force of Trust members aged between fifteen and fifty nine years was forty five members (twenty six males and nineteen females). The actual labour force (part and fulltime work) totalled sixteen persons. Adjustments included: three men and one woman receiving the Invalid Pension, six secondary students, two youths placed at a Youth Training Centre, three persons receiving a Widow’s Pension, eleven persons not seeking paid work (mothers at home and three older teenagers not registered as unemployed), and three persons receiving an Unemployment Benefit. The number of dependent residents exceeded fifty percent (the children under fifteen years and those not in paid work or receiving a pension or benefit). Special education grants from the Commonwealth Government and a Melbourne-based voluntary agency bolstered income sources from early 1970. (See Chapter Six) Neither membership of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust nor residence guaranteed a job with the
Trust as it did not have sufficient job positions to offer. The Trust generated income from the farm, a small spot milling business and rent from tenanted accommodation.

The Trust had acquired fifteen houses and a unit of two adjoining flats from the Crown. As landlord, the Trust began to rent houses to twelve Aboriginal households and three Ministry staff families, and flats to two single Aboriginal persons. The first general meeting of Trust members decided to arrange a tenancy agreement with each household, to set the rent level and to make payment arrangements. The Trust accepted responsibility for maintenance of the housing stock providing the properties were not wilfully damaged (Minutes General Meeting Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust 2 July 1971:1-2 with Personal Papers July 1971).

The Trust inherited public utilities essential to the public health and hygiene of the residential population. It had responsibility to provide services and maintain in operating order: the reticulated water system consisting of a general underground concrete storage, roof water tanks at each house and a centrally located, electrically driven, motor pump used to force water to an elevated water tank perched on a tower (nearly a kilometre away) so that water would be distributed under pressure to each house and a number of buildings; the septic tank sewerage scheme; a pump house erected alongside a bore in a paddock to the north of the residential area that pumped bore water to troughs scattered around the paddocks for watering stock; and the roads. Provision of the domestic rubbish removal service using Trust vehicles and equipment was another service to organise. The cost of the infrastructure and the provision of these services had to be borne by the Trust. Householders could be charged rates to defray a proportion of costs but the Trust looked to grants from Governments to afford the cost of public utilities.

Another utility, electricity, was supplied for each house, church, hall, farm buildings (e.g. the shearing shed, barns, vehicle garages, workshops), water pumps and street lighting. Household use of power had been handled by individual house coin metres and this could continue, but now the Trust had the cost of the other ‘civic services’ to meet. When operated by the Ministry, payment arrangements were made between the State Electricity Commission of Victoria and the Ministry – two State Government bodies. The Trust
now had to establish a new business relationship with the Commission. A similar change in relationship occurred between the Trust and the Post Master-General’s Department concerning payment for telephone services to the Trust’s office and to houses (former staff houses).

In December 1971, the last remnant of the Aboriginal Station and a symbol of colonisation, resident Ministry staff, departed. My family and I left the Trust’s property to take up residence in Bairnsdale. I continued to be a member of the Trust’s Committee of Management and a Ministry staff member available to assist and advise the residents.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has focussed attention on the first of the two components of the episode of social change - the process of enacting the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970* - and it has illustrated how legislative reform was a necessary condition of the granting of title to Crown land to two groups of Aboriginal people in Victoria. The enactment of new legislation was required to firstly dismantle a residual feature of colonisation - Crown land used for Aboriginal reserves; and secondly to enable two Aboriginal groups to hold a communal land title by the creation of a new legal entity, an Aboriginal Trust. Social change at Lake Tyers and Framlingham could not be realised without statutory reform of this remnant foundational coloniser program that was devised to meet outdated policy goals. One institutional form of the coloniser’s self-imposed burden of responsibility for the colonised Indigenous people was removed by the legislation and replaced by another statutory arrangement assumed to have organisational viability, relevance to the resident’s social organization, and the capacity to make a significant contribution to realising the policy goal of integration in Victoria.

By granting the Lake Tyers residents ownership of the land and legal authority to manage the property, the Government anticipated:

- possession of the land claimed to be rightfully theirs would foster individual and communal pride in their identity and heritage, and lay the foundation for the growth of a viable geographic community
• security of tenure of accommodation for each family would provide the stability upon which families would strengthen their relationships and feel sufficiently confident to relate to the wider society

• economic livelihood would be derived from the asset now communally owned. The farm and the forest would initially provide income to many resident households and additional revenue could be generated in the future from the development of business activities (e.g. tourism) – with the possibility of the Trust making a trading surplus that could be distributed as dividends to shareholders.

The Aboriginal Lands Act 1970 embodied an ideological assumption that transformation of the status of the population of Lake Tyers would result when the Aboriginal people were given responsibility as workers, shareholders, landowner, ratepayer and manager of an incorporated organization. The Act created the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust on the presumption that the residents were a sufficiently skilled and cohesive enough group to operate the Trust. The Government made additional external resources of finance and ‘expert’ advice available from the 1st July 1971, and promised continuation of the arrangement. With empirical operational success demonstrated by the Trust and its members over time, it was anticipated that the non-Aboriginal stigma projected onto residents would evaporate and be replaced by a healthy respect; and concurrently that the Aboriginal residents would be developing positive self-esteem. The following chapter will assess the wisdom of this reckoning.

In the case of the Lake Tyers episode social change was necessarily political requiring reforming legislation and the involvement of parliament. Chapter Four has recounted how the Government was forced by Aboriginal political action to alter policy and commit itself to a different future for the residents of Lake Tyers. The agents of social change, the Ministry including the community social worker, operated at both political and social developmental levels. Responsibility for this component of the episode of social change rested with its sponsor the Government, while the Ministry gave direction at State wide and local levels. The Minister and the Ministry’s Director managed the political ramifications of the proposed reforming legislation at the local level of East Gippsland.
As the Ministry's community social worker, locally I was also a player in the politics of change. I had to gauge who locally had a positive or negative interest in the outcome and advise the Director; and I was involved publicly in explaining details of the proposed law and promoting the advantages it conferred to the Lake Tyers residents. I had to decide what political role was appropriate for me.

Discernment of role was especially pertinent in relation to the aggrieved former Lake Tyers residents many of whom lived in Bairnsdale and district. The exclusive terms of membership of the Trust and exclusion from the benefits of the land grant raised genuine issues about equity of entitlement and denial of opportunity to contribute to the viable future of Lake Tyers, a place to which they had great affection. I found myself wanting to consult with them about the Bill's contents and to offer to assist them to represent their views to the Director. When the local parliamentarian who was opposing the legislation per se, aligned himself with the Aboriginal protesters I made a judgement not to meet with them (Personal Papers 1970). The divisiveness introduced into the local Aboriginal social networks diminished the total Aboriginal population's enjoyment of the change, and depleted local support of the fledgling Trust.

The two social change processes, enactment of law and community development, shared a common purpose. The process of community development secured opportunities for the residents to influence the drafting of the content of the new legislation. In this way a vertical dimension was introduced into the planned change linking the 'top' decision makers with the 'grass roots' constituents in the political process. The residents directly advised Government to legally transfer a communal property title to them, and to exclude non-residents from membership of the Trust. The legislation reflected their advice and demonstrated that Government was trustworthy on this occasion. The drafting of the Bill was concerned with other complex issues that were not discussed with residents - such as, how the Trust would be a legal entity and an organization holding the title, protecting the communal interests of the residents, representing the people in the public arena and operating as a business for their benefit. As community social worker at the time, and today, I consider this was a serious omission.
The next Chapter introduces the second component of the process of social change – the process of community development and relates how its purpose - preparing the residents for ownership and management responsibilities - was realised. The second major category of questions of the 'analytic scheme' of Pruger and Specht (1969), the 'know-how' questions, guide the development of the chapter, as does the framework proposed by Henderson and Thomas (2002:30) that describes and analyses each of the stages of the process of neighbourhood development. The stage 'getting to know the neighbourhood' saw information collected by means of a demographic survey in order to tackle the question: Who are the people? The Chapter reports the results of the survey of the residential population of Lake Tyers undertaken during the first weeks of the engagement in January 1970. The model of group organization development proposed by Brager and Specht (1973) is used to study particularly the way the residents approached governance. The chapter introduces an overview of the process of community development that depicts social development according to three phases in the direction of change and four periods of Aboriginal leadership. The account of the process concludes in December 1971 after the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust had been operating for six months and when the community social worker ceased to reside at Lake Tyers.
Chapter 7. The process of community development: transferring land ownership and self-management to an Aboriginal community

The alternative, in line with the Aborigines' own preferences, would be some form of community development...Such a scheme would utilise, rather than futilely oppose, the Aborigines' well-developed community ties...moreover, a written guarantee securing the land to the Aborigines is a prerequisite. This agreement should be of such character that it cannot be broken, as so often in the past...A five year plan for improving facilities and living conditions at the reserve, providing vocational training and employment opportunities at normal wage rates, eliminating the special assistance and special restrictions of the present system, and developing favourable attitudes towards and acceptance of responsibility may be readily drawn up once the fundamental principle of community development is accepted (Diane Barwick 1964b:1-3).

The concept of community invokes notions of an idealised unity of purpose and action among social groups who are perceived to share a common culture. To some extent, 'community' and 'culture' are treated as synonymous, rather than as principles operating at different levels of social realities. Indigenous culture is therefore seen to define Indigenous community. This, of course, is not so (Frances Peters-Little 2000:3).

It is possible that the self-managing community model of service delivery was chosen because authorities in Australia in the early 1970s believed that it was the best model to enable Aboriginal people to develop settlements/towns and services that had a better fit in terms of the culture they wished to retain and the environment in which they wished to live (W Barry Smith 2004:5)

Introduction

In Chapter Five, the study considered how the Victorian Government executed a process of enacting legislation culminating in the Aboriginal Lands Act 1970 (the Act), after having secured the positive support of the Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers and Framlingham, Aboriginal people generally, and the Parliament. This process was identified as Component 2 of the episode of social change at Lake Tyers (see Chart 7.1 below). By this statute the residents, through their membership of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, became landowners and responsible for the management of property,
business affairs, residential living and relationships with the external environment. This response of Government to recognise an Aboriginal claim to re-gain control of land lost to the British Crown was an action of ‘fundamental social change’ (Dixon 1989) as it concerned the issue of Indigenous sovereignty. It was also a radical policy move to entrust an incorporated Aboriginal managed organization with the power of governance on behalf of residential populations at Lake Tyers and Framlingham. The Government’s pursuit of social change however did not directly confront Aboriginal disadvantage caused by the race structure of the State and especially in the region of East Gippsland.

Chapter Five examined one aspect of the process of social change at Lake Tyers, the establishment of an infrastructure for governance that would enable the residents to institutionally handle their new status and its accompanying responsibilities. Through The Act the Government aimed to set the conditions considered necessary to achieve a new social and economic status for the residents of Lake Tyers:

i) the transfer of land title,
ii) the revocation of the state’s guardianship power,
iii) the creation of an incorporated organisation (the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust) as a legal entity holding the communal land title and having executive management and administrative powers in order to protect and develop the interests of the shareholders - an organisation with authority to operate as a commercial enterprise and to receive government grants;
iv) the definition of who was eligible to be an initial shareholder and a member of the Trust,
v) the specification of who could buy a share and become a new shareholder and Trust member, and 
vi) the terms of eligibility for election to membership of the Committee of Management of the incorporated organization, terms that allowed non-Trust members to participate in the governance of the Trust.

The first two conditions were congruent with the longstanding expressed Aboriginal aspirations (Lake Tyers Campaign Committee August 1963:3). The establishment of a corporate structure having statutory obligations, operational responsibilities, and
administrative accountability for the provision of services to the residents, and governed by a Committee of Management, introduced a complexity into the function of self-management that the residents had not envisaged (Personal Papers December 1970). *The Act* was no simple handover of property to the residents with their social organization and local leadership. It revealed that the Government had a contingency plan with a built-in safeguard – the opportunity for shareholders to elect non-shareholders (Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal) to the Committee of Management. At the first General Meeting of the members of the Trust in July 1971, the Director recommended that the members elect two non-Aboriginal persons to the Committee of Management, and the members obliged.

The goal of a changed social and economic status for the Lake Tyers people involved a transaction between the Government and the Aboriginal population of Victoria – particularly the residents of Lake Tyers. The Government devised the terms of the transaction without holding direct negotiations with the residents. The transaction was a conditional return of Aboriginal land to Aboriginal people where the residents as the new landowners were expected to perform a range of new responsibilities based on the normative standards of the dominant non-Aboriginal society. Realisation of the new status depended on the residents performing many new roles - individual, family, communal and institutional, and requiring the possession of a level of social and technical knowledge and interpersonal skills not expected of them previously. The Government’s terms of transfer of land title assumed that the residents would be willing to adapt their aspirations and would be motivated to acquire the capacity of responsible owners and managers. The Government’s goal of a culturally, socially and economically self-reliant Aboriginal citizenry demanded a rapid and radical transformation of the family and social organization of the residents, required a Ministry with the competence to mount an effective process of training, support and assistance, and an inclusive economic and social environment willing to accept the residents as fellow citizens. The Ministry chose a process of community development as the primary means of enabling the residents to prepare for the new situation, a process that would occur in a race-structured environment that had until now significantly contributed to the social and economic disadvantages of the residents, and brought them psychological trauma and low self-esteem (see Chapter Four).
This chapter has turned its attention to Component 1 of the overall process of social change, the process of community development commencing at Lake Tyers in January 1970 and ending in December 1971. (See Chart 7.1). The Chart also identified the targets and the goals of each process. It is important to note that between April and December 1970, both Components operated concurrently and inter-related to each other.

Chart 7.1 Lake Tyers - Components of the process of social change 1970 —1971

Component 1. Process of community development — targeting primarily the residents of Lake Tyers
(a) preparation of the residents as
   (i) land owners
   (ii) managers
   (iii) a cohesive community
   (iv) stronger families
   (v) productive workers
   (vi) supported young people
   (vii) proud of Aboriginal identity
(b) preparation of people and institutions of the East Gippsland region

Component 2. Process of enactment of legislation - targeting political processes and public opinion
(a) transfer of Crown land title to a communal Aboriginal title
(b) creation of an incorporated organisation to hold title and represent the collective interests of Aboriginal shareholders
(c) participation of residents in framing the legislation
(d) public relations campaign – State-wide and locally in East Gippsland

While the process of enacting legislation established the necessary conditions for the achievement of the goal, the process of community development was selected as the major way to achieve the sufficient conditions — the standards of behaviour and competent performance expected of the residents, the Ministry and the environment in 1970-1971. (See Appendix 7.1: The sufficient conditions).

This chapter has viewed what happened at Lake Tyers from two lenses — then and now. Thirty years later different normative expectations prevailed with the increasing influence of Indigenous knowledge and values, and the results of evaluative research into the practice technology of planning and implementing social development programs with
Aboriginal populations. A fundamental difference between the two eras has been the normative change that today expects Aboriginal people to directly participate in planning and implementation processes, to hold the power to make the effective decisions affecting their communities and their relationships with non-Aborigines.

The desired social change at Lake Tyers required the satisfaction of both the necessary and sufficient conditions. From the outset the Government's position was vulnerable. The residents may not have aspired to the overall complex outcome that had been set and rejected the normative standards associated with what Government wanted. During the course of the process the residents may have withdrawn and ceased collaborating with the Ministry. The Ministry's reputation was at risk pioneering a process of community development that used an unproven technology, and launching it in a sceptical non-Aboriginal East Gippsland environment (Personal Papers Interview October 1977).

The account of the process of social change has represented a construction from a particular cultural perspective - that of a non-Aboriginal professional community social worker employed by the Ministry, and from knowledge referenced at two time periods. Cultural construction pervades what was originally recorded, as well as the researcher's reflective exercise.

Obtaining ownership of Crown Aboriginal Reserve land was a special victory for the Lake Tyers residents and it represented a success for the Indigenous rights social movement. The State Government of Victoria viewed the passage of the Act as a political achievement and the resolution of a decade-long troublesome public issue. Government, bureaucracy and interests vested in assimilation policy goals were compelled to acknowledge the emergent power of organised Aboriginal people with institutional and personal non-Aboriginal support. The Government was pushed and pulled toward a policy of integration as the way to develop race relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people participated in the formal celebrations held at Lake Tyers on 24th July 1971 when the Governor of Victoria handed the title deeds of the property to the Chairman of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust; and nationally sympathetic members of the general public celebrated with them.
The chapter has presented 'what happened' descriptively and analytically. The nine-staged process of neighbourhood work of Henderson and Thomas (2002), (see page 63, Chapter Three), has provided a framework for the narrative and included 'Phases' (see page 225) distinguishing changes in the goals during the process of community development (See 'A' below). The 'propositions about methods of action to achieve change' of Pruger and Specht (1969) - the 'know-how' questions of Kramer and Specht (1975) outlined at pages 59-60 of Chapter Three - have shaped the critical analysis interpretation of the goals and content of the process. (See 'B' below). Finally, in section 'C', some significant practice issues arising from the episode have been considered from a contemporary community social work practice perspective.

**A. An historical overview of the process of community development at Lake Tyers from January 1970 to December 1971**

A detailed outline of what happened over the two years of the process of community development at Lake Tyers has been provided in Appendix 7.2.

‘Pre-entry’

Before my arrival, symbolic and visible vestiges of the former Station regime were demolished, such as the old bathhouse. The residents occupied specific houses as tenants, (including former staff houses); and thirteen adult resident men were employed to do farm and town service work, and upgrade the old houses at Lake Tyers. Income was guaranteed to households. The previously locked boundary gates were permanently opened, allowing the residents and visitors movement to and fro, and facilitating ownership of vehicles. Visitors became the responsibility of the resident host. A subsidised weekly rent was levied, the farm re-equipped, town facilities were improved (eg. roads re-formed). The former Board's positions of resident Farm Manager and Visiting Nurse were retained; and the staff of the Special Primary School resumed residence at Lake Tyers (Personal Papers January 1970).

Change during 1968 included the creation of the Lake Tyers Council. The Director sought the Council's permission to hold a Boys' Adventure Camp at Lake Tyers in January 1969 for fifty Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adolescents. The Camp was held
with resident youth participating; and residents gave talks about Aboriginal culture, played the gum leaf and demonstrated traditional artefact making skills (Reports of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs 30 June 1968 and 30th June 1969). A second Boys' Adventure Camp was held in January 1970 (Personal Papers January 1970), and started on the day of my arrival. The Director and Supervising Social Worker (the Executive) participated.

'Entering the neighbourhood' - PHASE 1

The physical environment of Lake Tyers I entered in January 1970 resembled a small rural township. Map 7.1 Lake Tyers - location of houses, buildings and facilities January 1970 shows the spatial arrangement of the residences, public buildings, office, farm equipment and vehicle garages, workshop facilities, sports ground and immediately surrounding paddocks.

In January 1970, I learned I was assigned to manage a social development program with five colleagues, all but one had started before me. Prior to my arrival, the Director in November 1969 revised the staff organization with the 'Farm Manager' becoming the 'Community Secretary' (responsible for financial administration, ordering supplies, payroll, building construction and maintenance, roads, public utilities, non-farm vehicles and equipment) and the 'Assistant Farm Manager' becoming the 'Farmer'. A new position of 'Social Worker' included 'officer-in-charge' duties at Lake Tyers, and was accountable to the 'Project Supervisor' located in Bairnsdale, who was responsible for the Ministry's work in Gippsland including Lake Tyers. The social worker was expected to:

...convey to the people over a period of time the philosophy for the change which is taking place on Lake Tyers (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs “Lake Tyers Farm and Community” 19 November 1969 with Personal Papers 1970).

The 'Community Secretary', 'Farmer', 'Visiting Nurse' (located in Lakes Entrance and servicing all Aboriginal households of East Gippsland), and the 'House Keeping Adviser' (a part-time position) were directly accountable to the 'Social Worker'. The 'Clerical Assistant' reported to the 'Community Secretary'
(Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs "Lake Tyers Farm and Community" 19 November 1969 with Personal Papers 1970). The employed Aboriginal residents were responsible to the 'Farmer' and the 'Community Secretary'. The non-Aboriginal Ministry staff were Victorian public servants while the Aboriginal workers were employed under conditions of the 

Aboriginal Affairs Act 1967.

Map 7.1 Lake Tyers – location of houses, buildings and facilities January 1970

Chart 7.2 (below) shows the staff organization at Lake Tyers at January 1970 and their relationship to the Ministry's Executive staff located in Melbourne. The 'Project Supervisor' resigned in April 1970 and the position lapsed. Not one of the staff had had previous experience working with an Aboriginal residential population.
The Director told me on the first morning, that I was to undertake the overall planning and organisation of the operation of the social development program and to run an administration that served the residents. The immediate priority however was to establish the Ministry’s clerical procedures (invoices, accounts paid, payroll, inventories of equipment and stores, job duties statements), arrange the physical arrangements of the general office, and create a filing system that could record decisions made and account for tasks actioned (Personal Papers January 1970).

With the Housekeeping Adviser and the Visiting Nurse, I was to ensure welfare and health advice and support was provided to individuals and families. Residents were assisted to learn how to confidently function using their own skills. Group and individual methods of learning were utilised. Altogether, I was responsible for managing the project at Lake Tyers, leading both staff and workers, and building a community development team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 7.2 Lake Tyers - Ministry staff organisation at January 1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Melbourne Office</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Social Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bairnsdale Office</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lake Tyers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Social Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Secretary Farmer Visiting Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Assistant House Keeping Adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I expected the Executive to recognise the very important task of establishing my mandate with the residents. Although members of the Executive and the Project Supervisor were at Lake Tyers participating in the Boys’ Adventure Camp, no arrangements were made to attend to this foundational community development task (Personal Papers January 1970).
An initial task was to learn about the farm and residential services workers' capacities, practice standards and productivity. I presumed that positive feedback from both the workers and the staff would indicate a work force motivated to the success of Lake Tyers as a farming enterprise. I was interested in the following questions: Who selected the members of the work gangs? Was the organisation of work gangs according to personal interest or possession of work skills and a record of good application or preference for kin? Who selected the foremen? Was the choice of foremen recognition of leadership ability or age or kinship? (Personal Papers January 1970). I also wanted to assess the role performances of staff as supervisors and trainers, and judge how appropriately each contributed to the social development program.

In my report to the Director after the first three weeks, I noted that the farm workers 'have a good work approach', 'do not require supervision to see the job finished', and are 'ready to grow in understanding farm operations' (Personal Papers January 1970). However, I wrote that 'the same situation does not exist with the residential services workers'. The difference in worker attitudes and outputs was attributed to different methods of supervision and their interest in farming (Personal Papers January 1970). I learned that no staff member held a qualification as an adult educator or technical instructor, and that no one had experience in workplace instruction with Aboriginal workers. I found that the workers organised the work gang membership according to worker interests. Kinship was only one factor in the composition of gangs; and the choice of foremen related to seniority and leadership abilities (Personal Papers January 1970).

On arrival, I had little knowledge of the cultural ways of the residents and a vague awareness of their past experience of the Station regime (Personal Papers January 1970). I was surprised that Mr Worthy did not recommend that I spend time developing my awareness of the people's culture and recent history by talking with Aboriginal leaders of the League in Melbourne, or senior Aboriginal people residing in Gippsland (Personal Papers January 1970), or meeting persons with anthropological or sociological information concerning Aboriginal people living in Gippsland. No one suggested referring to the Ministry's archival material and files, or meeting with Mr Philip Felton, Senior Research Officer (the former Superintendent of the Board). On the occasions
when he visited East Gippsland, Mr Alick Jackomos, a non-Aboriginal Ministry colleague, introduced me to Aboriginal people, and informed about history, family connections and country origins. Jackomos was known to many Lake Tyers people because as a youth he had frequently without approval visited the Station with Aboriginal friends and lived 'underground' (Jackomos and Fowell 1991:36). He had been the Board's Acting Officer-in-Charge of the Station for a few months until December 1967 (Personal Papers January 1970). Throughout my time at Lake Tyers I sought to appreciate the people's histories and heritage; and I struggled to understand the social organisation of the residents, and how the Ministry could relate its development work to their world (Personal Papers January 1970-June 1971).

I recall I went to Lake Tyers wanting to establish my credibility with the residents — as a worker, but also as a neighbour. I knew first impressions of my personal characteristics were critical and aimed to be seen as a humane, approachable, fair-minded person who could relate to, respect, and show interest in them as persons. I sought to be recognised as a capable community social worker with a capacity to assist them to improve their situation at Lake Tyers by nurturing their personal and group strengths and building their confidence in, and sense of, Aboriginality. I had many opportunities for formal and casual interactions with the residents with whom I was living on a permanent daily basis (Personal Papers January 1970).

Throughout my engagement, I found some relationships developed trust, but others remained bland or mistrustful. Interactions could be unpredictable, potentially explosive and tense with someone intoxicated, for it was then that my position re-kindled a sense of subservience and I could face expressions of hostility or irritation. Situational examples include, when insisting on the payment of a bus fare (Personal Papers February 1970); when conveying a phone message to a parent from a high school teacher regarding the behaviour of a son and accusations were made of interference in personal and family troubles (Personal Papers August 1970).
‘Making contacts and bringing people together’ - PHASE 1

At Lake Tyers in 1970, I assumed my practice would be underpinned by the principles derived from the community organization ideas and values of Ross (1967), and the cultural knowledge gained from the social anthropologist Barwick (1964a). Today, I appreciate the complexity of planning social change with a residential Aboriginal population such that of Lake Tyers, and the need to develop community social work principles based on practice research.

In those first months I was bombarded by numerous requests for advice and assistance from individuals, household heads and parents, orienting to the rhythms of the working and social life of the residents, co-ordinating staff's activities and representing the Ministry in its external relations. I met people in as many settings as possible – the street, the work place, the office, their homes, and at meetings. I attempted to understand new sights, sounds, emotions and energies. My outsider's Western cultural experience of rational discussion and task-oriented activity contrasted with many of their ways. Yet a fundamental tension pervaded our racially structured relationships. I aimed to provide consistent, helpful, firm and fair action to individuals while finding an appropriate way to balance social development objectives and organisational pressures (Personal Papers January February and March 1970).

‘What next? Needs, goals and roles’ - The initial strategic plan - PHASE 1

Within the first weeks the Director asked me to prepare a strategic plan for the process of community development, to indicate to each staff member at Lake Tyers the overall direction and method of the social development; and to inform the Executive. This work assignment thrust me into all three stages at the one time - ‘entry’, ‘getting to know the neighbourhood’, and ‘what next? Needs, goals and roles’ (Henderson and Thomas 2002). In the case of this process, the worker roles did not happen sequentially and have a linear development.

The task of preparing a strategic plan without insisting on the participation of the residents indicated the Director's approach of directing the social development. I had not
anticipated a dominant Ministry’s agenda, and it contravened my understanding of Ross’s ‘community development values’ (Personal Papers January 1970).

The Executive did not provide an outline of their preferred social development plan or indicate the role to be played by the residents at Lake Tyers – in the short, medium or long term. The Executive did not suggest a role for the Lake Tyers Council as a central feature of introducing participatory governance. The Ministry’s focus of social development was twofold - in the work place where the male workers were given opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to be productive as they learned skills and had opportunities to farm and provide residential services; and in family and communal living, where people were encouraged to be self-reliant, stabilise their functioning and utilise the private professional and public community services available to all citizens (Personal Papers January 1970).

In the first months no resident approached me to tell me what s/he considered was ‘best for Lake Tyers’. Nor did anyone express impatience with the pace of change, or complain that they were still ‘in the dark’ about the destiny of Lake Tyers.

I completed an outline of the Ministry’s social development goals at Lake Tyers by the end of January 1970, following discussion with the Director, the Supervising Social Worker and locally based staff; and after brief talks with some of the senior men and women (Personal Papers January 1970). Two goals were listed as follows:

*Goal (1) promoting the economic and social development of the residents, their families and the people as a whole; and Goal (2) informing the regional environment about developments at Lake Tyers* (adapted from Personal Papers January 1970). (for full the outline see Appendix 7.3 Lake Tyers – Strategic development plan January 1970).

At the second Lake Tyers Council meeting at the end of January I advised the Council that I had prepared the initial strategic plan. I outlined the goals and hoped discussion with the Council members would follow - but there was minimal comment (Personal Papers January 1970). Today I realise this expectation was unrealistic.
'Getting to know the neighbourhood' – PHASE 1

The residents formed the constituency with whom I was engaging. As I knew little about them I was keen to talk about their aspirations and how they wanted to achieve them; and about their past and present life at Lake Tyers. I wanted also to complete a key aspect of the planning task – determining the type of community structure present.

Learning occurred in an ad hoc manner through interaction and observation. My social work education had not included training in methods of data collection while practicing in the community domain and my skills of observation, interpreting and recording were rudimentary.

To my surprise, I learned the Ministry did not possess an up-to-date written record of all the permanent residents and household members. Taking a census would meet that need, but I felt a sense of trepidation about doing a survey during the first weeks, given my uncertainty about having a work mandate from the residents, and being sensitive that my request for information might be perceived as intrusive and prying - a repeat of intrusive routines practiced by former Station staff. During the first week Mr Worthy requested I undertake a population census, and report the data and make observations after three weeks (Personal Papers January 1970). The survey was used as an opportunity to meet residents at their house and away from an office setting, visit each household to introduce myself and to explain why I had come to Lake Tyers. I explained to each person why I was asking the questions and stressed that their participation was voluntary. In spite of my sensitivity about the method of approach, no one refused to talk with me.

The information I wanted included: How many people lived at Lake Tyers? Who lived in each of the ten households? What was the age and gender of the occupants of each household? and, Was each person receiving the income security payment s/he was entitled to receive?

In retrospect, I realise I did not involve the Lake Tyers Council in the activity, giving reasons why I wished to conduct a survey and asking their permission; nor did I share the information afterwards with the Council. Today, I view this as an important missed
opportunity to establish my credibility, demonstrate a joint engagement with them, and to involve residents in the collecting exercise.

The survey's findings are presented in Appendix 7.4 as Table 7.1. Lake Tyers - Population — showing age and gender at January 1970. The total Lake Tyers Aboriginal residential population was seventy persons - thirty five males and thirty five females. It was an extremely youthful population with more than sixty one percent under twenty one years of age. Many of these attended primary and secondary schools. Just over seven percent of the total population were older people (five persons sixty years and over).

Who lived at Lake Tyers - the households in January

The survey in January 1970 recorded the regular resident members of each household, and noted their age, gender and kin relationships. The results are shown as Table 7.2. Lake Tyers - Size and composition of households January 1970 in Appendix 7.4.

The Aboriginal population lived in ten separate house units. Household characteristics were:

- six households consisted of nuclear family members only (families of procreation) of one or both parent(s) and their dependent children
- three households included three generations of 'close relatives' as members — an older parent(s), adult offspring and grand child(ren)
- nine households had parents as principals or household heads
- twelve persons — a family of parents and their children — was the largest number of persons in a household.

Accommodation space

The survey revealed the accommodation situation. The house occupancy rate was seven — the average number of persons per household - and suggested additional accommodation was desirable for the large families who experienced overcrowding. The situation of single adult persons wishing to live alone, and couples without children, was not adequately satisfied. (Personal Papers January 1970). Three types of accommodation
existed in January 1970 — three small, refurbished cottages built in the twenties, three renovated former staff houses, and four recently constructed timber houses with three bedrooms, living room, kitchen, a combined bathroom/laundry and internal septic tank toilet. Certainly, house size made no allowance for any family visitors.

The survey data and the everyday encounters and observations provided a profile of the resident population, the names and ages of members of each household, the adequacy of household accommodation, which children went to pre-school, primary and secondary schools, who was employed, unemployed, in receipt of income security benefits, and who undertook home duties. All of this information would contribute to a community planning exercise. There was much to learn about the way the families maintained their economic and social existence, especially the nature of their communal social life.

The survey was undertaken during weekdays when usually visitors were not present. Later, I realised that the omission of visitors from the survey hid an important feature of the life of every household at Lake Tyers. Reasons for visitors included: personal or family crises, family support, renewal of racial group bonding, leisure activities, social relaxation with relatives and friends, and maintaining an association with their Aboriginal 'homeland', their birth place or the birth place of parents and grandparents. Similarly, permanent residents of Lake Tyers visited and stayed with relatives and friends, sometimes remaining absent from Lake Tyers for days and weeks.

'Making contacts and bringing people together' - Capacity building - economic activities, adult education and skills training - PHASE 1 to PHASE 3

The Tatz Committee in 1966 had named farm workers, unemployed men and women, school students, mothers and pre-schoolers and adults as targets for skills training and education classes at Lake Tyers (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee 1966:ii –iii). After 1968, the Ministry had shown no interest in adopting of the Report's formal training recommendations, although the Director was aware of their limited schooling, work and social skills (Interview October 1977 Personal Papers). The Ministry had had nearly two years to investigate whether there were any schemes or projects in operation with respect to Aboriginal people who had minimal literacy, limited
educational achievement, no governance experience, and employment histories as unskilled rural labourers. During the first months, no scheme was recommended to me for consideration at Lake Tyers other than on-the-job training. Certainly, the Tatz Committee had not cited evidence of a proven worker training Australian scheme (Tatz 1966:47). From a recent cursory investigation of the literature concerning skills training for Aboriginal people in the Sixties, I learned that few pre- and special employment projects were offered in Victoria and other Australian States and Territories for the Aboriginal work force (Sharp and Tatz 1966; Dunn and Tatz 1969; Roper 1969). Lessons learned from the Ministry’s Adult Education Officer working with Swan Hill and district’s Aboriginal people were not promoted for introduction at Lake Tyers.

The Director stated he expected the residents to eventually operate the farm as a self-supporting business venture producing wool and beef (Traralgon Journal and Record 9 June 1969:2)). The product of work-revenue from farm production—still went directly into the Ministry’s coffers rather into a local account. The learning opportunity offered by the experience of setting-up a separate farm budget, receiving revenue and paying for costs was not taken. The workers saw the farming business remain a Ministry operation, and were not given the chance to appreciate how their livelihood would depend on the farm’s profitability. Information about the cost of residential services borne by the Ministry was not shared with residents.

The learning opportunities offered to the seven farm and six residential service workers were the responsibility of the Farmer, and the Community Secretary assisted by a contracted retired carpenter. Tasks relating to farm work included: pasture improvement and husbandry of sheep and beef cattle; and residential and public utility services work involving rubbish clearance, fire wood supplies and road maintenance, house repairs and maintenance of drains, water supply and septic tanks. Male pensioners were employed on casual rates by the Ministry to restore the graves with headstones in the cemetery; and to feed the hens and collect the eggs.

Staff assessed each worker’s strengths as well as areas for skill improvement based on information known about their school attainment, job history, age, physical health and any experience as a foreman. No member of the work force had had schooling beyond
Year 9 at secondary school, and most had only basic literacy and numeracy skills. Improvement in worker productivity was promoted with two workers placed in foremen positions of responsibility, and on-the-job-training provided.

The overall workplace goals were: preparing the work force to be independent of supervision – setting daily work task, accepting personal responsibility for the completion of work tasks at an acceptable standard within an allocated time; and for foremen - accepting responsibility for on-the-job supervision of operations from start to finish.

Each Monday morning, the Farmer and the Community Secretary met the foremen of each of the work gangs to plan a week’s activities. The Farmer had designed a chart showing an annual work plan indicating seasonal tasks and scheduling the tasks to be completed over the year covering pasture cultivation, husbandry, cropping, maintenance of machinery and equipment. At the start of each week he displayed a chart showing the ‘Weekly Work Target’ – for example, a week beginning in March 1970 read: ‘sheep to be yarded and checked for fly strike’, ‘posts to be put in and aligned on boundary of paddock no. 9’, ‘part of paddock no. 9 to be harrowed ready for sowing down in mid-March’ etc. (Personal Papers March 1970). After April, with the Chairman as ‘trainee Farm Manager’, the Farmer had developed a method he called ‘situational planning’ – a planning process of sharing the planning role, discussing targets and priorities, providing information, asking questions, looking at alternatives and expecting the trainee Farm Manager to make decisions that then became the work targets and committed the work gang (Personal Papers November 1970). In June 1970, sheep were shorn by the workers in the new shearing shed, training having been provided by films, demonstrations and workplace practice. The Farmer and the trainee Farm Manager shared an office, and together with the other farm workers they travelled to stock and wool sales and discussed matters with Stock and Station agents, and State Agriculture Department Advisers (Personal Papers October-November 1970).

During the first months of my engagement the Director was very keen to hear how workers had improved their application, continued to show an interest in management functions, and accepted greater responsibility for output.
Knowing how to maximise the generation of income from the property and other business enterprises served the long-term interests of the residents. The Director suggested to the residents at a Lake Tyers Council meeting in January 1970 that he would consider supporting the opening of a shop at Lake Tyers. The proposal included the shop opening for a few hours each day and selling soft drinks, cigarettes, confectionary, food for snack meals and basic cooking items. The Council meeting voted in favour of a small shop and agreed that a woman expressing interest should operate it with her husband’s support. The Community Secretary and I met with the woman and her husband, and after considerable planning and preparation the shop opened in July 1970 (Personal Papers July 1970).

In August 1970, the residential services team prepared and submitted a tender bid to paint the Nowa Nowa Public Hall. The tender was successful and works were satisfactorily completed the following month (Personal Papers September 1970). Another small business was considered when, in October 1970, the Community Secretary and the Chairman of the Lake Tyers Council began to prepare a proposal for a spot-mill in the Lake Tyers forest employing three men. After consultation with the Senior Forester of the Nowa Nowa office of the Forestry Commission, a submission went to the Director and was approved with initial capital assistance to buy equipment provided by the Ministry. Thereafter the project was expected to operate independently with technical and marketing advice provided by the Community Secretary. (Personal Papers October 1970). The project was in operation in February 1971 (Personal Papers February 1971).

There were times when workers recalled farming activities for which they claimed to possess skills and interest. An equipped dairy lay idle but the farm retained a number of milking cows. When individual men said they wanted to milk cows and use the dairy the matter was discussed at a Council meeting. Attempts at making a start collapsed when the nominated men did not regularly attend duties. Residents had had past experience at cultivating vegetables and a request was made to set an area aside for a garden. An area was made available and the ground ploughed, but the gardening did not begin.

Between January 1970 and June 1971, learning opportunities were offered to various groups of residents as well workers. Educational and training opportunities were offered
to women, men, parents and persons using community services, drivers of vehicles, unemployed persons accessing employment services, students and their parents learning about occupations and employment opportunities, and individuals wanting to possess basic literacy and numeracy skills.

The Visiting Nurse organised a Women's Health Group for Aboriginal women, including others living in the district. Women selected topics for group activities, adult education principles were used, and activities aimed to increase knowledge, skill and confidence by providing information, practical training and different social interactions. For instance, at the invitation of the Sister of the Infant Welfare Centre based at Lakes Entrance mothers of infants began to attend the Centre at Lakes Entrance (Personal Papers May-June 1970);

Additional income from educational grants led parents of students buying cars, often regardless of the owner being an unlicensed driver. No employed Aboriginal worker at Lake Tyers in January 1970 had a current driver's licence. Thus they were ineligible to drive the Ministry owned vehicles on public roads. A driving school at Lakes Entrance was engaged to provide driving lessons to all interested adult residents. From June 1970, a number of men and women completed courses, passed tests and obtained licences. As a result, in late 1970 a part-time employment position as a driver became available to a resident of Lake Tyers (Personal Papers June and November 1970).

State and Commonwealth Government services concerned with employment training and job finding were invited to meet residents. On a number of occasions staff of the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) visited Lake Tyers, met workers, unemployed young adults and teenagers who had ceased attending school, and encouraged them to use the CES to assist them to find a job beyond Lake Tyers. In August an officer from the Apprenticeship Commission visited Lake Tyers and spoke with young men and women (Personal Papers July and August 1970).

The Aboriginal Employment Section of the Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Service was invited to meet parents and their secondary student children at Lake Tyers. They met over two days in October 1970 to plan a 'Family Week' for the parents
and their secondary student children. The excursion was held in late November 1970 when the parents and students of three families were accommodated in Melbourne for five days, introduced to the work sites of a number of occupations that had been nominated by the students. Two eligible families chose not to attend (Personal Papers October-November 1970).

After canvassing people's positive interest, in October 1970 a 'Basic Education Course' (reading, writing and numeracy) was arranged for adults on a weekly basis in the evenings at the Primary School. Three adults participated. The Ministry contracted a teacher to provide the classes (Personal Papers September-October 1970).

After the first three months of working at Lake Tyers I considered that workers still depended on staff for planning and direction. Worker reliability and productivity varied considerably, with some individuals absent from work regularly, especially when alcohol was available to workers during working hours on the fortnight that pension cheques were received. It was noticeable that the general physical health of some workers restricted their capacity to work a five day week and an eight hour day (Personal Papers March 1970).

'Making contacts and bringing people together' - Capacity building - a Creative Youth Resource Centre - PHASE 1 to PHASE 3

The survey in January 1970 indicated forty percent of the total population between five and fourteen years (the compulsory school attendance age range), and over sixty one percent aged under twenty one years. As I talked with the young people I learned that they were interested in recreation, leisure, school success and mixing with peers (Personal Papers January-February 1970). I indicated to the youth that I was available for personal advice and information. Encouragement was given to secondary students and parents to attend a "Careers Night" evening at Bairnsdale High School. All students and a few parents attended (Personal Papers March 1970).

I considered opening a 'Creative Leisure Centre' – a place for school age children and older teenagers to socialise, to enjoy recreational activities and to complete homework assignments or school studies. Young people, the Head Teacher of the Primary School
and parents positively responded and the Centre commenced using two schoolrooms in the early evening hours from seven to eight thirty on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. The Head Teacher and I shared responsibility as leaders. Young people listened to records, danced, sketched, painted, and played games. Sometimes films were shown. To inaugurate the opening, I delivered a typed letter addressed to each young person, inviting her/him to the Centre on 31st March. Older male adolescents who had left school showed no interest. Parents were invited to attend and sometimes dropped by to observe activities. No young person used the facility to do school homework; and no person chose to confide in me a matter of personal or general concern. During school vacations, activities, such as a beach picnic, were arranged with young people. The Centre remained open from March 1970 to December 1971.

‘What next? Needs, goals and roles’ — re-visited — PHASE 2

The Minister's announcement in April 1970 offered the residents a future direction, and gave the staff a specific purpose. However, the Minister's promise immediately raised goal and process oriented questions - whether this promised new development would bind the residents and Ministry in a shared purpose and process; or whether it would reveal differences between the aspirations of the residents and the ambition of the Government as the Ministry set about preparing the residents to perform new responsibilities of landowner and manager.

In the months following the Minister's promise of land title, the Ministry extended the cultivated area, constructed dams, built a shearing shed and stockyards, and purchased stock, machinery and equipment with the aim of transferring a well stocked and equipped farm to the residents when they received the land title.

Overall outcome goal, overall process goals and objectives and strategies — PHASE 2

Two days after the Minister's announcement I received a phone call from the Director. He outlined the plan, starting with the advice that no Ministry staff would be withdrawn immediately from Lake Tyers. The Director came to Lake Tyers on 15th April 1970 and met separately with staff but did not table a detailed plan. Then he met the Lake Tyers Council, described the Ministry’s goals, but did not ask whether they matched the goals
of the residents. There was no mention of the Ministry negotiating any differences in
goals, or of changes to the existing process.

The meeting of the Lake Tyers Council was chaired by Mr Worthy. At the outset without
forewarning, he invited the Council to elect a Chairman and he immediately made a
recommendation. Members of the Council were invited to nominate another candidate
but refrained without commenting. Mr Worthy presumed silence meant acceptance and
proceeded with his agenda (Personal Papers April 1970). He suggested the creation of a
Deputy Chairman position, and the Chairman nominated his first cousin, another senior
male household head. Again there was no comment from the other members.

The procedure used to appoint the Chairman and Deputy Chairman achieved the purpose
Mr Worthy had set himself; and I consider the appointments would have pleased the
Chairman and his family supporters. Some months later, senior residents began to voice
their unhappiness with the procedure used for the Chairman’s election (Personal Papers
September 1970). The matter had become a major issue for a majority of adult residents
because they had become dissatisfied with the Chairman’s performance. They asked me
why did the Director nominate the Chairman and appoint him so hastily in April. They
said the Council setting had been unsuitable for them to openly discuss their views about
who was best suited to be leader (Personal Papers September-November 1970).

Immediately after that Council meeting, Mr Worthy advised me of the Ministry’s
strategic goal - that it would continue to ‘hold the initiative’; and that the new Chairman
of the Lake Tyers Council was to be given the role of ‘Community Supervisor’ and be
trained as a ‘Farm Manager’. Mr Worthy provided no written outline of this proposed
appointment and its duties, nor advice about how staff should relate to the occupant of the
new position. The Chairman’s new position in the work force had not been conveyed to
the Council members at the meeting. I was led to understand that the Chairman had been
advised (Personal Papers April 1970).

At the Council meeting the Director did not suggest a partnership approach with the
formation of a ‘project committee’ of representatives of the Lake Tyers Council and staff
of the Ministry. Neither was there discussion about how a gradual transfer of decision
making powers to the Council could be introduced. The Director did not take the opportunity to develop further a shared basis for community capacity building. It seemed that the Director aimed to personally direct the social development of Lake Tyers and that the process of community development would be delegated to local staff. The residents of Lake Tyers were not offered a participatory role in this structure.

This particular Council meeting was a watershed event because of the crucial decisions made - the appointment of the Chairman of the Council, the creation of the position of Community Supervisor with the Chairman filling it, the decision to limit membership of the proposed incorporated organization to current residents and thus to exclude former residents from membership, and the decision to opt for a communal land title. The last two decisions became core content of the legislation. Crucial also was the process used by the Director at the Council meeting as it established the foundations of the process of community development. Infrastructure was created that had ramifications for the remainder of the process of social change. The Director’s method of introducing change without a well-considered community and leadership analysis involving local staff and residents, and a subsequent lack of detailed planning, made the organising of ‘grass-roots’ community work very difficult.

Once the Government’s purpose for the future of Lake Tyers was clarified, I could gauge the extent of mutuality existing between the goals of residents and those of the Ministry. For me, discerning the degree of mutuality was a necessary starting point upon which to build the process of community development. I realised that both parties were aware of the political stakes involved. The residents knew that the media would publicise their complaints if they were dissatisfied, and they knew the Victorian Government had much political investment in achieving a successful outcome at Lake Tyers (Personal Papers April 1970). The Government knew its credibility depended on a positive resident voice.

It was with trepidation I sensed the enormity of the tasks facing both the residents and the Ministry. My colleague, the Community Secretary, shared my concerns, and we sought to have in-depth discussion with the Director about constructing a planning approach that dealt with matters of goals, content and process of the immediate transitional stage, but also when the ownership-self-management stage was begun. We wanted to review the
practice of the Ministry, discuss the capabilities of the residents, and more carefully
design a community building program (Personal Papers April 1970).

Over the next month, for working purposes, I prepared a strategic plan of the process of
community development. Chart 7.3 Plan of the process of community development at
Lake Tyers April 1970 to June 1971 (see Appendix 7.5) (Personal Papers April-May
1970).

A fundamental anxiety remained about the purpose and the process being undertaken at
Lake Tyers. In the following months, the Executive was asked by Lake Tyers staff to
provide a comprehensive plan and process of the envisaged development. No
documentation was provided. In a planning situation that lacked specificity of issues,
tasks and time frame, it was extremely difficult to discuss the plan’s goals and its
implementation with the Council Chairman and members of the Council (Personal Papers
May 1970).

‘Getting to know the neighbourhood’ and ‘dealing with friends and enemies’
PHASE 1 and PHASE 2

To the non-Aboriginal East Gippsland environment, the situation at Lake Tyers was
perplexing. Local district people were aware that Lake Tyers was to be re-developed after
the Government’s approval of the recommendations of the Tatz Committee in late 1966;
and they knew the Ministry, from 1968, had made a firm commitment. The editors of the
district’s newspaper, the Bairnsdale Advertiser, positively reported the re-development of
Lake Tyers, and regularly covered Aboriginal affairs issues of local interest. The editors
had been members of the Bairnsdale Aboriginal Affairs Committee, a district group
assisting the Lake Tyers residents during the 1960s (Personal Papers Interview October
1977). After the Government’s announcement of self-management at Lake Tyers in April
1970, a tone of incredulity entered into the conversations I had with a number of service
providers. One Bairnsdale general medical practitioner called me ‘an idealistic social
ecologist’, and claimed the goal of self-management could not be achieved (Personal
Papers July 1970). The District School Medical Officer, Infant Welfare Sisters, police,
Principals of Orbost and a Bairnsdale schools, and a funeral undertaker all queried the
wisdom of the policy being pursued by the Ministry (Personal Papers July 1970). The Ministry's Visiting Nurses working throughout East Gippsland confirmed that they heard similar beliefs expressed:

‘ doctors are critical of the Ministry expecting Koories to be responsible for their own health, as are staff of hospitals at Bairnsdale and Orbost ’ (Personal Paper July 1970).

Interactions were organised between residents and personnel representing statutory authorities, such as police and the School Truancy Officer. Members of the Lake Tyers Council in August 1970, encouraged by myself, discussed inviting senior police officers stationed at Lakes Entrance to a Council meeting. The residents had accepted they were responsible to call police when house property was being wilfully damaged, or when someone was physically assaulting another. Residents wondered why the police did not promptly respond to their calls (Personal Papers August 1970). The Victorian Education Department questioned the existence of the Lake Tyers Special School and asked the Ministry whether enrolment at the Nowa Nowa Primary School would be preferred. I advised the Chairman of the Council of the issue saying it was a matter for the residents to decide. Soon afterwards, he advised me that parents wanted their children to attend the Nowa Nowa school with other district Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. A decision to close the Lake Tyers school was confirmed by the Department in September 1970. In October, the Chairman and I met with the Nowa Nowa School Council and Principal to discuss arrangements for the transfer of equipment at the close of the school year (Personal Papers September-October 1970). In December 1970, the School Truancy Officer met with members of the Council (Personal Papers December 1970).

The task of advocating the entitlement of residents to receive and enjoy services and resources led Ministry staff to undertake a public education task throughout East Gippsland. The early Seventies was a time when non-Aboriginal residents of towns such as Bairnsdale were challenged to share their neighbourhood with Aboriginal families. Non-Aboriginal primary and secondary school teachers teaching classes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students had additional responsibilities relating meaningfully to the Aboriginal students about study methods, preparing curricula that was culturally sensitive, and regularly meeting the Aboriginal parents who received special educational
assistance. In the courts, the prosecuting police officer more carefully prepared statements as now solicitors represented Aboriginal clients in court and contested their statements. Ministry staff reminded non-Aboriginal staff of hospitals, shops, and professional and government services about issues of entitlement to accommodation, schooling, health and welfare services, and proper police treatment. Those staff were advised to relate directly with Aboriginal people as patients, customers, clients and service users.

‘Forming and building organizations’ - PHASE I to PHASE 3

Residents had had no prior experience of participation in the functions of administration and self-governance at Lake Tyers. During the ‘Save Lake Tyers’ campaign of the Sixties, no individual resident spoke as an appointed advocate of a collective view. No formal organisation of Station residents existed. From time to time, men and women were interviewed by the media, but they spoke as individuals only. One articulate man was recognised by journalists as the residents' ‘unofficial leader’ (Age 1 October 1966:5) as he was outspoken in his criticism of the Board and Government. It was this man in April 1970 who was nominated by the Director to be Chairman of the Lake Tyers Trust.

No committee of residents existed when the Director first met the residents of Lake Tyers in June 1968. On that occasion Mr Worthy suggested the creation of the Lake Tyers Council. The Ministry needed a collective unit to communicate with the residents as one body – a meeting where the Ministry could address everyone, and also hear their viewpoints expressed. The Ministry, however, had not deliberately nurtured the development of the Council (Personal Papers January-March 1970). A few of the adult residents had had experience of participating in a voluntary organisation in the wider society. Given their minimal experience of socialisation as members of secondary or voluntary groups, I realised early in 1970 that the residents would require a gradual and supportive introduction to aspects of administration and governance functions (Personal Papers March 1970).

Following the Minister’s promise, the Ministry had a greater incentive to promote the growth of the Lake Tyers Council. Politically the Ministry, as the agent of the
Government, needed a body for communication and interaction with the residents that the electorate judged was credible. I expected the Ministry would encourage the growth of this body so that it could play an integral role in the strengthening of the group life of the residents. Based on Western approaches to community social work, I believed the Council had the potential to facilitate awareness of common interests and a sense of group identity, to motivate the desire to advocate common interests, and to realise the value of appointing leaders to negotiate and represent the outcomes they sought (Personal Papers April-May 1970). I welcomed the existence of a Council where people met together, used meeting procedures, gained confidence in expressing individual views, found they could make decisions, and discovered that the Ministry (and other organisations) respected those group decisions and positively responded to them. Over time, I hoped the Council would be accepted and owned by the residents as their representative voice (Personal Papers January 1970).

I had begun holding two Council meetings each month, and this practice continued until June 1971 when the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust started. A Council meeting was the one time when family members had an opportunity to assemble at one place to talk to each other and discuss matters. Residents received information about the Ministry’s plans, about matters that concerned their tenure and security at Lake Tyers, and received progress reports of the legislation’s preparation. It tended to be a venue where residents made individual requests to the Ministry to provide amenities, purchase recreation equipment, and repair their homes. The concerns of residents were matters of everyday living rather than issues of common interest about a collective future (Personal Papers January 1970-June 1971).

In the fifteen months between April 1970 and June 1971 the Council met thirty times; and the Director attended seven of these meetings. He attended when he wanted to raise important agenda items, such as the legislative matters in April 1970, when the ‘leadership team’ was appointed in December 1970, prior to the handover of land title in June 1971 when he outlined how the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust would operate; and to discuss the agenda and activities for the handover ceremony in July (Personal Papers January 1970-June 1971).
The number of participants at Council meetings fluctuated but peaked when the Director attended. Most adults were present at meetings, but two households were rarely represented (Personal Papers January 1970-June 1971).

‘leaving and endings’ - PHASE 3

Following the appointment of the Trust's inaugural Committee of Management on the 1st July 1971, while people continued with their usual activities, my work concentrated on establishing the administrative functions of the new Trust, and prepared for the title handover ceremony. With many visitors, the residents celebrated the occasion; and the nation's media gave wide coverage of the ceremony. The Lake Tyers people were owners of property and responsible for management, but they were assisted and advised by Ministry staff about farming, residential services and administration.

By the end of the year 1971 no staff resided at Lake Tyers. As the community social worker I travelled daily to assist the Trust and relate to residents. In September 1971, the Committee of Management resolved to appoint a General Farm Manager and advertised the position nationally. The Manager took up residence in January 1972. My assignment ended that same month and I was replaced by another non-resident social worker.

B. A contemporary critique of the process of community development from a community social work perspective

(i) shared work and living space as a practice setting

In the small geographic space of Lake Tyers it was not possible to separate the happenings of workplace from residential living. Decisions made at the workplace could produce tension or bonding between staff and workers that were then transmitted by the men to their family members. Workplace and neighbourhood relationships were interrelated. One negative instance was the shooting of a family’s dog by the Farmer after dogs had attacked and killed sheep (Personal Papers February 1970). Changes in staff roles also affected how residents related to staff. Residents were upset when I assumed the welfare role previously provided by the Community Secretary (previously Farm Manager) and the Housekeeping Adviser (his wife) since 1967. The Community Secretary was reluctant to cease welfare involvement too. When I stopped the practice of
advancing cash on request during one weekend frustrated residents criticised me as an unhelpful person (Personal Papers January-July 1970). Distinguishing my roles as officer-in-charge, community social worker, family support worker and neighbour was difficult for me and for residents. Thus tension or conflict arising in one of my roles could later be transferred to another interaction (Personal Papers May 1970). Nevertheless, in the late afternoon three days a week, resident Aboriginal and staff gathered as neighbours outside the administrative building to await the Nowa Nowa general store keeper opening the shop. This was a chance, with my wife, to relate in an informal setting (Personal Papers January 1970).

(ii) 'how is the change to be effected? what is the change process'

the congruency of large-scale social change and locality development

The episode of social change at Lake Tyers was one of a range of social programs the Ministry administered to fulfil the Government's new policy of 'integration' viz. overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage by equalising access to opportunities and resources in a culturally plural society that recognised Aboriginal heritage. One member of the Executive called this large-scale social change 'Broad Spectrum Social Planning', and attributed its inspiration to 'Batten (1962), Goodenough (1963), Cox, Erlich, Rothman and Tropman (1970) and many others' (Boas 1973:10). I have identified two types of community social work approaches used by the Ministry - 'social planning' and 'program development and coordination' (Taylor & Roberts 1985). Across Victoria, the Ministry applied both approaches by a 'top-down', 'dominant government agency' (Wolfe-Keddie 1996) method of administration emphasising program management that:

...regards community development planning as a way of rationalizing, coordinating and delivering services to places, and to people in those places, more efficiently..(Wolfe-Keddie 1996:165).

The Director's relationship with the residents and staff at Lake Tyers was formed by this method of intervention, but it conflicted with the 'locality community development' approach (Rothman 1974) practiced at Lake Tyers. Reliance on Executive direction thwarted the encouragement of resident initiative. The immediacy of decision-making did not respect the usual pace and style of resident decision-making. It allowed too little time
to soliciting what concerned the residents. The aftermath of resident dissatisfaction with the process and the outcome of meetings was not appreciated by the Executive and remained unresolved throughout the process (Personal Papers April and September 1970).

(iii) ‘how is the change to be effected? what is the change process?’ the Executive’s understanding of community work practice at Lake Tyers

The Director, claimed that ‘professional social work principles were the bases of the social intervention programme’ (Worthy 1973a:1) begun at Lake Tyers in January 1970, and he named the principles as ‘equal rights, opportunities and corresponding responsibilities as other citizens’ (Worthy 1973a:1). Mr Worthy believed that the intervention at Lake Tyers demonstrated principles of community development, namely, ‘consultation with and decision making by Aborigines’ (Worthy 1973a:1), where ‘Aboriginal people became directly involved in their own destiny’ (Worthy 1973a:2). I have viewed these as cosmetic appreciations of general social work principles and values of community development (Boas 1973:16 and 23), because I contend they were not thoroughly operationalised in the process of social change at Lake Tyers.

By June 1969, Mr Worthy had decided that the way to achieve the policy goal of a new economic and social status for the residents of Lake Tyers was by granting the residents land title and giving them opportunities to be self-managing. He had unsuccessfully proposed this idea to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at that time (Personal Papers Interview October 1977). Although unable to execute his total plan, Mr Worthy proceeded to create the position and appoint a community social worker. He was aware of the very difficult situation facing the residents (Personal Papers Interview October 1977) and intentionally chose a locally based community social worker to deal with the whole residential population and their overall situation, rather than a worker providing an individualised casework service to persons and families. He also wanted a local program manager leading the staff from an understanding of community, family and personal development (Personal Papers January 1970).
The Executive had had little experience of working with a local Aboriginal population where shared participation in decision-making was effectively practiced and they did not decide that Lake Tyers was an appropriate setting to trial it. The residents were not invited to participate in my appointment and so engage in the change process from the outset. Mr Worthy expected the staff, relying on the Ministry’s statutory authority, to competently manage the people’s development of social and technical work skills, personal self-esteem, and responsibility for work place, family and residential life performances.

The approach introduced by the Executive resembled a ‘community care’ model of community work (Popple 1995:55) or ‘developmental casework’ - the first position on ‘the community development continuum’ (Jackson, Mitchell and Wright 1989:4). By being practical and relevant to individual and family requests, individual and family assistance was no longer seen as an end in itself, and the worker was a means to achieving the social development objectives of the residents as a whole group. Regular group meetings of residents arranged to discuss matters of common interest and to kindle a better sense of solidarity were not highlighted.

(iv) ‘how is the change to be effected? ‘agency control’ - the first General Meeting of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust

Laying the foundation of the Trust’s infrastructure was a crucial task. The State Government made a grant of $40,000 to ensure financial viability; and the residents employed by the Ministry at Lake Tyers immediately became employees of the Trust. The Act specified the procedure for the initial General Meeting of shareholders - the election of a Committee of Management and the appointment of the Trust’s auditor and accountant. The procedure used by the Director at the first meeting was scrutinised later in the Parliament by Mr Evans MLA, the Member for Gippsland East when he assumed the role of representing the interests of the disaffected former Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers (Victoria Parliamentary Debates Legislative Assembly 20 October 1971:1685-1696).

Mr Worthy wanted to secure a competent initial Committee of Management membership. He chose to chair the first General Meeting, and he suggested that the Committee would
benefit by having two non-shareholder members contributing additional knowledge and skill. An all male Committee of Management took office. Five Aboriginal resident shareholders were elected from seven nominees; and on the recommendation of the Director, a Bairnsdale accountant and myself were appointed by shareholders. The elected Committee members included three senior residents, two young adults, and two non-Aborigines. No resident publicly commented about the procedure used. Each of the three senior residents had been members of the ‘leadership group’. The election result meant that no resident family network held the balance of power. The first elected Chairman of the Trust was the former Lake Tyers Council Chairman.

Over the next weeks activities concentrated on preparing for the handover ceremony and establishing the administrative procedures of the new Trust. The residents and many others celebrated the occasion; and the nation’s media gave wide coverage of the ceremony — and then the Lake Tyers people resumed their normal living. They were owners of the property and responsible for management but initially they had the Ministry staff to assist and advise them — about farming, residential services and administration. By the end of the year 1971 no staff resided at Lake Tyers, and the community social worker was the sole staff member still relating to the Trust. In September 1971 the Committee of Management resolved to appoint a Farm Manager and advertised the position nationally. The newly appointed General Farm Manager took up residence in January 1972. The community social work assignment ended at Lake Tyers soon afterwards.

(v) ‘how does the agent of intervention interpret the goals?’ the opportunity to engage in ‘locality development’ with the residents

A formidable obstacle existed during the first months of 1970 - the destiny of Lake Tyers remained a residential environment managed by the Ministry until the Government indicated a definite future plan.

In April 1970, Mr Worthy asked the Minister to re-consider a land title proposal. This time political sanction was obtained; and with the Government’s public commitment the Ministry became responsible for designing and implementing a process of social change
at Lake Tyers incorporating the two components outlined in Chart 7.1 (see above). The first 'Phase' of the process of social change ended, one based on social development objectives but without a clear purpose and a time frame. Now a specific agenda existed with end goals clarified. I have argued that the situation required the preparation of a comprehensive and detailed plan by the Director according to the known principles of community development. The Director however applied 'social planning' and 'program development and coordination' approaches (Taylor and Roberts 1985), using the 'dominant government agency' (Wolfe-Keddie 1996) method.

After April 1970, the process of enacting legislation (see Component 2 – Chart 7.1) was pursued by Government and Ministry, and completed by December 1970 (see Chapter Five) when the necessary conditions for the transfer of ownership and management were established. Thereafter, the Ministry also executed Component 1 – the process of community development (see Chart 7.1), but without effectively sponsoring a model of locality development (Rothman 1974) because of the Director's personal style of 'perfunctory consultation' (Wolfe-Keddie 1996) and the Ministry's 'dominant government agency' (Wolfe-Keddie 1996) method. Consequently, conflict emerged between the Executive's way of intervening and the 'locality development' approach I was conducting. I have argued that the realisation of the sufficient conditions of the social change were not maximised throughout the period because the program progressed contrary to the community development practice principles of the day (Ross 1967; Downing 1969; Rothman 1974). The Director did not adequately comprehend how an intervention occurring in an 'intercultural social field' (Martin 2005) required working closely with the residents as a cultural group, and seeking to achieve a 'strategic engagement' (Martin 2005) between the residents and the Ministry. The residents' aspirations – regarding both process and outcome – and their social organization should have been intentionally considered a part of the process. The Ministry gave superficial opportunities to the residents for participation in decision-making procedures, and their social organization was under-valued. Towards the end of 1970, a few senior residents mentioned these procedural deficiencies and implied preference for a 'strategic engagement' approach.
The Director introduced two major developments involving the local leader in new training work place and management roles of 'Community Supervisor' and 'Chairman of the Lake Tyers Council'. No document outlining these new leadership roles was available for circulation afterwards. An infrastructure to support the trainee leader during the transitional period was not instituted. Alternatives were not canvassed with the residents, such as, the formation of a Council-appointed local committee of residents to monitor and revise developments, and including the Community Supervisor/Chairman and representatives of the Executive and local staff. The planning undertaken by the Executive was inadequate in a number of ways - no thorough community analysis exercise with the staff, and no detailed strategic planning to cover the transitional period. Communication by the executive about key staff roles was verbal, rushed and vague. Consequently, the action during the transitional period often depended on the local staff's interpretation of what the Director had said; and using their initiative.

(vi)  ‘what is expected of the community for change to occur’ the opportunity to integrate the residents' cultural ways and social organization into the process of community development

Important foundational deficiencies in the process included Mr Worthy's personal style exuding confidence in the validity of Western ways, his lack of interest in exploring how to sensitively relate developmental goals to Aboriginal cultural ways and social organization, and his extraction of immediate, on-the-spot decisions about 'what will be done' from the residents. Wolfe-Keddie (1996:164) has referred to this behaviour as 'operational planning'. Mr Worthy failed to effectively respect how the residents customarily made communal decisions and that they needed time to do so. Members knew an openly expressed personal view at a Council meeting could result in reprisal and physical assault, used to assert individual status or prevailing attitude. Time was required for residents to deal with peer and family pressures.

Mr Worthy did not ask the residents to state their form of leadership structure before nominating one person as his preferred leader. His action affected internal communal politics at Lake Tyers, because his choice strengthened the influence of one family network and intensified the existing conflict between that network and other family groupings (Personal Papers February 1970). I interpreted the Director's assignment of the
position of Chairman of the Lake Tyers Council and Community Supervisor to the man he considered the local leader was an act of cooption. Hasenfeld (1979) has described cooption as:

Cooptation strategies are employed when involvement and its rewards are likely to give those who might otherwise oppose a program a greater appreciation for why it is needed and what it is intended to accomplish. Their involvement may not only nullify potential opposition, but may actually increase support (Hasenfeld 1979:151).

Certainly the man selected was the current ‘strong’ man of Lake Tyers and his fighting ability and use of the fist intimidated others. He had courageously confronted the Board and refused to be re-moved in the mid-Sixties, and he had demonstrated an ability to be an outspoken advocate of his people when speaking to the press during the protest campaign. Mr Worthy needed to have the man’s support, wanted to encourage him to commit himself to working with the Ministry, but needed to secure the backing of the residents. Mr Worthy’s culturally shaped view of leadership characteristics framed his choice and he presumed the appointment would cement everyone’s commitment to the social change process.

After April 1970, the Executive’s ‘top-down’ approach at Lake Tyers was not significantly altered until the formation of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust in July 1971. The residents remained an administered population. The community social worker and staff were able to operate a constrained process of community development. This situation may have been quite different if the Community Supervisor/Chairman (Chairman) had the capacity to play a more effective role as leader of the residents. The Chairman, for instance, did not request staff to meet with the Lake Tyers Council or suggest residents contribute to planning. The residents’ visions, values, interests and social organization could then have been integrated into planning the transition. Preparing for change could have been on their terms, at their pace, and according to their style of decision making. Adopting an alternative approach would have enhanced the introduction to the experience of governance – an extremely difficult task anyway.
The role performance of the appointed leader, as Community Supervisor and Chairman, became a pivotal issue for development at Lake Tyers in the months after his appointment in April. At the workplace and in community affairs staff recognised his status and his leadership abilities. The residents looked to him for leadership, and he made every effort to succeed as he enjoyed the status. The responsibilities assigned him however went well beyond his work and social experience, skills and knowledge. The situation in which he was placed required considerable resources of psychological and physical strength, as he was structurally placed 'meat-in-the-sandwich' between his people and the Ministry. He wanted to achieve his vision of autonomy and self-governance and increasingly found the Ministry were devising a contrary future for Lake Tyers. His vision for Lake Tyers was not congruent with the projected incorporated organization running economic and social affairs. By mid-1970, the Chairman wanted to terminate the Ministry's administration at Lake Tyers - but most other residents strongly disputed this attitude. The Chairman had no reason to trust non-Aboriginal administrators. He had confidence in his capabilities to lead communal life and the workplace. He was annoyed by the presence of staff, but preferred to retain the Farmer. Increasingly, his vocal general criticism of staff was not welcomed by a number of senior residents. The lack of mutuality between the Chairman's and the Ministry's ideas of process and outcome, and the frustrations that resulted, often led to strained interpersonal relationships between the Chairman and staff. The situation was compounded by his inappropriate use of vehicles for personal benefit, which was strongly criticised by residents; and resulted in further conflict with staff. His heavy drinking affected his work productivity, judgement and health, and led to a number of police prosecutions and terms in gaol. The Chairman's absences away from Lake Tyers created a vacuum in leadership and hindered the developmental process at crucial periods for both staff and residents. His absence was noticeable at Lake Tyers Council meetings, in community affairs and at the workplace. By July 1970 senior residents were expressing a lack of confidence in his
ability to represent their interests (Personal Papers July 1970). He turned to Mr Worthy for support and it was provided. As community social worker I facilitated telephone communication between the two men, and encouraged the Chairman to travel to Melbourne to talk with the Director on a number of occasions. The fighting supremacy of the Chairman was challenged by younger men successfully at the end of 1970.

The Chairman assumed that the property’s farm and forest could provide an immediate livelihood for all families. His comment seriously troubled Ministry staff at Lake Tyers, as they believed that the property was incapable of earning a surplus on the scale Mr Worthy had suggested in April, and certainly would not satisfy the Chairman’s vision of feeding, clothing and housing the existing population of ten households (Personal Papers April and May 1970).

This matter still remained an issue for clarification when the delegation of residents met with the Director in Melbourne on 3rd September 1970 to discuss plans for the future and the details of the legislation. I listed the farm’s capacity to support the population as an item for discussion by the delegates. I wanted the delegates to understand the economic reality, so that they would start to consider the necessity of finding alternative sources of employment and other small business activities (Personal Papers September 1970). When outside advisers were invited to speak to workers staff raised the matter so workers would hear the answer. The raising of pending difficulties seemed to irritate the Chairman, as he seemed to interpret the staff's comments as reflecting attitudes of lack of faith in the residents’ ability, and an indication of a reluctance to relinquish control (Personal Papers July 1970). For some other residents, discussion about these matters reinforced their fears about the future and comments were made to me about their wish for the Ministry to continue to manage Lake Tyers (Personal Papers June-November 1970). A growing awareness about what was entailed in transferring responsibilities led most senior residents to lose confidence in the Chairman’s view of self-sufficiency and his assumption that the residents did not need the support of non-Aborigines. His erratic performance lost him support as Chairman (Personal Papers September-November 1970).

No one else aspired to fill the Chairman’s position during his absences. By November 1970, some senior men and women petitioned the Director for a change in the structure of
leadership and proposed the appointment of a 'leadership team'. The Director responded by promptly calling a meeting of the Lake Tyers Council in early December 1970; and a 'leadership team' was elected. The 'team' retained the Chairman and he retained the title, but the position had lost its influence; and the position of 'Community Supervisor' lapsed. The 'leadership team' remained in place until the Trust was installed in July 1971.

By early December 1970, unlike the Chairman, the majority of senior residents wanted staff to remain at Lake Tyers to administer the operation and to provide stability. The residents believed staff offered an external authority constraining the anti-social behaviour of some individual residents. They appeared to prefer being an administered community.

C. Contemporary community social work practice issues arising from the process of community development at Lake Tyers

The chapter next considers important issues for contemporary community social work practice arising from the process of community development.

(i) the race structure of society and the relationship of the Aboriginal people of Lake Tyers with the sponsoring agency and the community social worker

The practice setting of this community social work intervention was a former Station located in a race-structured environment where colonisation retained a pervasive presence influencing the way residents perceived their interpersonal and institutional relationships. The process of social change at Lake Tyers from January 1970 to June 1971 occurred under conditions governed by statute law. The property at Lake Tyers was still permanently reserved Crown land, and the Ministry had statutory powers to manage both the property and the residents of Lake Tyers through the delivery of special services under conditions of the Aboriginal Affairs Act 1967, Clause 26 (1)(c)(g)(i)(q) and Clause 42 (c) and (d). Legally a residual tutelage relationship between the state and the residents did not end until 30 June 1971. The statutory conditions ultimately empowered staff and assigned them their status in relation to the residents. The residents of Lake Tyers still experienced an institutional setting organised by public administrators.
A sense of demoralising tutelage (Rowse 1998:86-87) and race structure were imprinted in relationships in spite of staff member's personal qualities, and the regime's physical and normative changes. In February 1970 for instance, I was walking to visit a householder, when a male pensioner with whom I had had no conversation for days, shouted across the road:

This is my home. I won't be pushed around by a white man (Personal Papers February 1970).

The status position of a Ministry worker was structured as an unequal power relationship and it was a status position resented by many residents.

One ingredient of the process of community development at Lake Tyers was enabling the movement from the tertiary relationship of tutelary, where the worker represented the state and its guardianship function, to a secondary relationship where the community social worker facilitated the residents to deal directly with external institutions and obtain their entitlements. At Lake Tyers, the objective was offering an alternative to the debilitating tertiary relationship by deliberately introducing humane conditions of socialisation via a community social work service - that is, a form of secondary group relationship - to residents as individuals and families, and to their fledgling and emerging 'geographical community' (Cox 1979) meeting as the Lake Tyers Council.

However, the 'top-down' and 'dominant government agency' (Wolfe-Keddie 1996) structure of the organised change sponsored by the Ministry's executive and demonstrated by the Director's style, too often reinforced the older tertiary relationship and the power imbalance between the representative of the state and the residents. The development of a 'grass-roots' exercise at Lake Tyers of wanting to achieve 'bottom-up' contributions to decision making and sharing power, conflicted with and was frustrated by, the hierarchical, 'top-down' approach.

Today, while the statutory conditions and statuses no longer apply, the colonising race structured relationships continue. The relationships of Government Department with Aboriginal organizations and residential populations remain governed by 'dominant agency' and 'top-down' approaches which reinforce old tertiary relationships.
mutuality of goals and process - resident expectations of a livelihood and autonomy

During the course of the episode of social change, issues concerning purpose and process worried a number of residents, including the Chairman of the Lake Tyers Council. Initially, congruency of outcome expectations seemed a feature of the process, but the period of transition brought unanticipated pressures when people were expected to be self-reliant. The senior woman resident who sought to become the proprietor of the small shop, when feeling the demands of a day's business, emotionally told me:

We didn’t ask you to come to change things. We were doing all right before you came to change this place (Personal Papers July 1970).

Infrequently residents discussed their vision for the future of Lake Tyers, but a radical difference existed between the residents' vision and the outcome constructed by the Ministry. A future envisaged for Lake Tyers was outlined in 1963 by forty six Lake Tyers residents who signed a petition during the ‘Save Lake Tyers' campaign stating they sought: retention of the reserve, secure tenure of accommodation, improved housing and town living conditions, employment at the reserve on full Award wages, training to cope independently in the external environment, opportunity to farm the land and undertake community projects so that the community was economically self-supporting, provision of transport, a well constructed road to overcome isolation, participation in management by electing representatives during a transition period, and adequate financial support by government (Lake Tyers Campaign Committee August 1963:3). Pepper (1980:105) listed what a number of residents wanted in 1966 when they met The Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee: a small on site hospital, transport, farm training for the young men by the older men, a public telephone, commercial fishing, timber milling and vegetable growing, and a road to the highway.

After the Minister’s announcement of land title in April 1970, the prospect revealed a variety of resident attitudes although generally it was welcomed. One resident talked of their interest in farming (Herald 13 April 1970:4), another senior resident saw the new future as having ‘to pull together' and affecting their social organisation (Personal Papers
April 1970). Others doubted their capacity to cope without ongoing close external support and assistance (Herald 13 April 1970:4).

By April 1970, the Ministry had satisfied a number of the above listed requests by physical improvements and re-developing the farm. It had not clarified with the residents ‘the facts’ about the capacity of the farm to be a self-supporting economic venture able to provide a livelihood for all residents. Staff were aware that a number of residents including the Chairman assumed that an adequate income could be derived from farming once they had responsibility for ownership and self-management.

The Director in 1969 had publicly stated his objective of developing Lake Tyers to be ‘self-supporting’ (*Traralgon Journal* 9 June 1969:2). He knew of the advice the Board had been given by specialist agriculture and forestry experts regarding the capacity of farming and forest ventures to economically support the resident population, and about the abilities workers required to successfully operate the property. About a year later, Mr Worthy later re-stated the idea in the limited sense of operating the farm as a viable commercial business venture (Personal Papers April 1970), but not at a level of profitability that supported the livelihood of all families. Based on this advice, in the future the employment of the current seven men employed by the Ministry as permanent farm workers would not be feasible; and the income to employ the other six men providing residential services had to be found from alternative income generating sources. Mr Worthy had told staff that he estimated at best six families could live from the proceeds of farming production (Personal Papers April 1970). After transfer of ownership, he said further farm expansion would rely on government grants and loans, or banks to provide capital loans to clear more land, fence, purchase stock, renovate old and prepare new pasture, and buy machinery (Personal Papers April 1970). (See Appendix 7.8 *Expert advice available to the Ministry*). The expert advice contrasted with the understanding of the Chairman. To him, ‘living off the land’ by farming made sense and he talked of using his people’s existing knowledge and skills. In July 1970, the Chairman informed a Commonwealth Employment Service officer that he believed the Lake Tyers property would provide jobs for many workers; and he considered his people could now operate the property without the assistance of Ministry staff (Personal Papers July 1970).
The goal of achieving an effective ‘strategic engagement’ (Martin 2005) between Aboriginal groups and other parties should ensure that contracts and agreements are based on conditions of realism and honesty, so that Aboriginal interests are not disadvantaged.

(iii) mandate of the community social worker

Possessing a mandate to enter the constituents’ world is a foundational component for the sponsors of social change, but especially community social workers beginning a locality development intervention (Henderson & Thomas 2002:44-48).

The Ministry certainly had a general mandate from the electorate as the Government’s change agent to offer social development at Lake Tyers. However, I consider the Director gave insufficient attention to establishing my mandate as the community social worker (Personal Papers January 1970). The Tatz Committee’s Report (1966) was sensitive to the issue of credibility. It drew attention to the procedure of appointment of an ‘Overall Supervisor’, and recommended that the residents either choose or confirm the appointment (Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee 1966: 6). The Report (1966) emphasised the importance of worker credibility by proposing that after appointment the Supervisor:

...spend four to six months with Aborigines in the area to obtain their confidence, their views and their interests in various vocational training schemes (Report of the Planning and Action Committee 1966:10).

No resident participated in my selection process. It was a process repeating previous appointments of public servants. On the first day at Lake Tyers the Director had not arranged a time for me to meet with Aboriginal residents or their representatives (Personal Papers January 1970). I have learned since that in November 1969, Mr Worthy instructed Lake Tyers staff not to discuss my community development role with residents before I arrived; and that he wanted residents ‘to move into the new situation in an unobtrusive way’ (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs “Lake Tyers Farm and Community” 19 November 1969 with Personal Papers 1970). The restriction placed on staff probably meant the residents had no advanced or clear idea of community development or my role.
It was three weeks before Mr Worthy introduced me to residents at a Lake Tyers Council meeting. He described my work as:

'here to do the sort of job that the Director wants to be done’...to get to know you, to talk not just about problems, about the whole community, how people get on at school... (Personal Papers 21 January 1970).

Being depicted as the Director’s representative at Lake Tyers may have given status to my position, but it gave no indication of what were the community work tasks I would action, such as encouraging the residents to meet together regularly to discuss what people want for Lake Tyers, and working with them to achieve objectives (Personal Papers 21 January 1970).

The establishment of a clear mandate for the community social worker, one that is congruent with the constituency’s wishes, is a foundational condition of the start of a process of locality development.

(iv) collecting information for community analysis and strategic planning purpose - the survey in January 1970

Today I realise ethical research standards would not approve the conduct of an Aboriginal population survey without first discussing its purpose and then obtaining the residents’ approval. Today’s standards of working with Indigenous people contrast with my practice behaviour during the second week of January 1970. I collected demographic and social information on the assumption that it would facilitate the Ministry’s community social work tasks of knowing who lived in each household, community analysis and strategic planning. I did not seek permission of the residents, or engage the residents in the task so that they could appreciate its value. At the time, the survey satisfied both administrative and social planning purposes by providing aggregate demographic data but it was not referred to the residents for approval and for choice of method of data collection.

(v) Aboriginal community analysis

As a community social worker I had a strategic analytical task of community analysis - establishing whether the target of social change, the constituency, formed a ‘community’;
and if so - what type of community. I wanted also to describe the community's characteristics, such as, its degree of cohesiveness, its experience in making a contribution to collective decision-making, and the presence of leadership. Henderson and Thomas (2002:7) remarked that one aim of the community analysis is to ascertain whether a community has the capacity to effect the change goals. An analysis is a forerunner to the exercise of community planning, and is usually undertaken at an early stage of a process of community development. In 1970, I intended to conduct a community analysis initially using the demographic and social data collected in the survey.

At Lake Tyers I assumed I would find two types of community, a ‘community as relationship’ (Kenny 1994) - a people bonded by shared Aboriginality, culture and historical experience, and a ‘geographic community’ (Lee 1986) - where people identified and shared interests arising from living in the same spatial area. I did find under-developed semblances of both, but not a cohesive community. Today, I realise how my practice at Lake Tyers assumed a Western approach to understanding communal social structure — where community was perceived as a unit of social structure existing between the family and the wider society (Kemp 1995). The customary construction of community in Western sociological thought was that it consisted of a secondary relationship group (Cox, Erlich and Tropman 1979).

Based on these Western concepts, the evidence I collected through discussions with residents and observations and particularly as a participant observer of the performance of the Lake Tyers Council led me to conclude that community barely existed. Although clearly a cultural outsider, I was baffled; and the task of community analysis remained incomplete at the end of the episode in December 1971.

While reading data I found that, contrary to my assumption in 1970, the particular configuration of resident families living at Lake Tyers then was a relatively recent phenomenon. During this study I have learned that no family living at Lake Tyers in January 1970 had resided permanently and continuously at the Lake Tyers Station during the Sixties. In Chapter 3, I recounted how five resident families were involved in the Board’s dispersal program during the 1960s. Eventually each had returned to the Station
when their accommodation and employment situation had broken down. At some stage
during the 1960s, members of the other five households had left Lake Tyers. Each of the
ten households living at Lake Tyers in January 1970 had returned recently. I did not take
into account the factor of the relative newness of the residential population in my attempt
at community analysis.

Now I appreciate that my Western construction of community meant I did not consider
cultural social phenomena about an Aboriginal social organization as integral to the
community analysis. The analytic task I should have been concerned with in 1970 was
identifying the Aboriginal community, or social structure, found in the unique primary
group life. A search for an Aboriginal community structure at Lake Tyers should have
started with households and their nuclear families, and then connected those families with
the extended family networks found at Lake Tyers and beyond its borders. Today I
understand how my analysis was confined to my own culturally shaped concepts of
household, nuclear family and kin relationships. Consequently, the observations I made
then concerning visitors and kin related households, and the talks with people about their
everyday family life and inter-family activities, were not moulded in appropriate cultural
interpretations. The data was available, but I did not perceive it according to Aboriginal
social meanings and thought forms. Inevitably, the process of community development
was seriously weakened by this approach, as it meant the residents' social world was
unable to be integrated into the process of change.

For the research, I set myself the objective of analysing the community structure and
understanding the residents' social organization by reorganising and reinterpreting the
practice records of 1970-1971. I looked for data illustrating the social organization of the
people in 1970 including: common ancestral country of origin, household membership of
kin networks, shared racial and personal histories, neighbourliness and mutual help
(levels of care and direct assistance), leadership and authority, social control, and values
and mores about loyalty and priorities between kin (viz. relatives expecting special
standards of reciprocal behaviour and not having the same expectations of unrelated
neighbours).
At Lake Tyers in 1970-1971, I had not appreciated how the residents defined 'family', and my understanding relied on an Anglo-Celt Australian cognate definitions of 'grandparent', 'brother/sister', 'cousin', 'aunt/uncle' and 'wife/husband' (Personal Papers January 1970). I was applying Edgar's (1980) description:

...in Australia, we trace descent *bilaterally* through males and females, with both paternal and maternal kin groups being equally important to the child. We term both father's and mother's siblings 'aunts' and 'uncles', their children our 'cousins'.. (Edgar 1980:111).

Later during the study, I noted Pepper's method of tracing his family lineage — through his and his wife's father and mother and their predecessors, siblings and offspring (Pepper 1980). I wanted to learn and use the social meanings Aboriginal people gave to their world (Bessarab 2000:88). Anderson's definition of the typical Aboriginal family reached beyond the immediate members of a household to others with whom they have social obligations:

Koorie society is based on an extended kinship system. Hence, the concept of family extends to include all relatives — and it is possible to know even with distant relatives how you are related (Anderson 1988:26).

Haebich (2000) concurred with Anderson, describing the Aboriginal family as:

Overlapping circles of extended family lie at the heart of the lives of most Aboriginal Australians. Networks of family relationships determine day-to-day activities and shape the course of destinies. From an early age Aboriginal Australians learn who belongs to whom, where they come from and how they should behave across a wide universe of kin These are highly valued and integral components of Aboriginal cultural knowledge (Haebich 2000:13).

Barwick (1963) researched the Melbourne Aboriginal population, including a representation of Gippsland people during 1961-1962, and detected shared and different features between the Melbourne and Lake Tyers populations. Barwick's observations of norms, structures, and folkways offered concepts and ideas from which culturally significant social features of Lake Tyers could be discerned. Barwick defined a 'Melbourne Aboriginal household' as:
...a group of relatives who share a common dwelling and all its facilities and are subject to some control by the prior tenants or principals, whether or not they pool their funds for rent and or food (Barwick 1963:305).

Barwick’s definition of household was:

...segments of bilateral extended families including cognates and affines and rarely and temporarily are there non-relatives present (Barwick 1963:306).

At Lake Tyers, an analysis of the collected data revealed each household incorporated both the biological family of procreation and kin relatives, with members bonded by social expectations of responsibility for those dependent members who were young, old, sick and disabled. There was a strong consistency between the social data collected at Lake Tyers and that of Barwick (1963), Beckett (1988), Anderson (1988) and Haebich (2000).

For the study, guided by the comment of Anderson (1988:26) that ‘Koories identify with their tribal ancestry, and this is a significant part of self-perception’, I sought information about the language area and regional origins of both household heads. I wondered if these aspects of heritage were the bases of social bonding between particular people. The quest began with the questions:

- Were any residents descendants of the original people who had occupied Bung Yarnda? Which residents were descendants of other regional groups of people speaking the Gunnai language – Brabiralung, Tatungalung, Bratauolung or Braiakaulung?
- If ‘yes’, did the Lake Tyers property hold special meaning for them, so that they claimed status as custodians of their country?
- Did other residents from other countries acknowledge this special claim and attribute a special status to it?
- Did descendants of other country and language groups living at Lake Tyers revere Lake Tyers as a place of special significance?

I found no household heads with both parents of Gunnai origin. Five of the ten households included household heads with at least one Gunnai forbear – either through
their father or mother. Three persons, through their father, could trace a continuous Gunnai lineage. For two residents, Gunnai relationships could be traced through their mothers. The general picture was of household heads originating from a range of different language areas – Gunnai, Maap, Ngarigu, Wergaia, Woiwurrung, Ngarrindjeri, Wembawemba and Dhauwurd Wurrung. While I was at Lake Tyers between 1970 and 1971, I made no observation or record of evidence from anyone at Lake Tyers or elsewhere, indicating that a Gunnai connection, in itself, was a source of social prominence and prestige, or that someone had responsibility for the country of Bung Yarnda. I collected no information suggesting traditional attachments or loyalties affected marriage, leadership or working arrangements, nor that the selection of a communal leader indicated the designated role of customary custodian of Bung Yarnda country.

I found that descendants of nineteenth century migrations and past traditional cultural affiliations were evident at Lake Tyers in 1970. The fathers of two male household heads at Lake Tyers, both members of the first generation of residents, were speakers of Bidawal/Maap and Ngarigu languages of the Monaro Tableland, Delegate and Wallaga Lake districts of New South Wales (Fesl 1985) (see Map 1.3). Fesl (1985) also noted an in-migration of Aboriginal people from further east between the 1870s and 1890s. Keen (2004:8) noted that Gunnai speakers of the Krauatungalung dialect were culturally closer to Bidawal/Maap speakers, participating with them in initiation ceremonies and subscribing to similar gender totemism (Keen 2004:141).

One factor of social organization that I had learned in 1970-1971 was the special bonds between residents who were descendents of forbears from the same Mission/ Station or region of origin. In its 1961 Annual Report, the Board acknowledged the population's different regional origins:

It is not clear whether the original inhabitants of Lake Tyers formed to a tribal unit, ...(however) some of the families now represented at Lake Tyers today did not have their origins there but, because of marriages with the original Lake Tyers families, strong ties have been built and reinforced (Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board 30 June 1961:9-10).

Historical records show that the marriage of a Gunnai descendant and a partner from a different country of origin and language groups was common at Lake Tyers from at least
the late nineteenth century onwards. In 1970, there were also married couples who originated from different Missions and Stations – for example, in relation to one married couple, a partner was born at Coranderrk and her parents originated from Lake Condah; while her partner was born at Ebenezer Mission, Lake Hindmarsh, his country of origin. At Lake Tyers in 1970, places of origin of first and second generation residents were the Missions and Stations at Coranderrk, Lake Condah, Ramahyuck, Cumeragunja and Lake Hindmarsh, as well as Lake Tyers. By different pathways, and usually in the company of parents, most individuals of first and second generations had come to the Lake Tyers Station in the first decade of the twentieth century or the 1920s and 1930s; and most household heads had found partners and formed their families at Lake Tyers. In all households, an older member had an association with Lake Tyers at least dating back to the 1920s or 1930s.

I have revisited the population survey conducted in January 1970 to learn about the extent of kin and country of origin connectedness in order to appreciate its contribution to social organisation. Chart 7.5 shows First and second generation kin connections between households at Lake Tyers in January 1970.

The chart shows that each household had kin in at least one other household. First generation kin connections were:

- the heads of Household I were the parents of the male head of Household F
- the woman head of Household I was the aunt of the male head of Household D.
- the heads of Household I were the grandparents of the children living at Households A and F
- the man living at Household A was the uncle of the head of Household B.
- the head of Household J was the mother of the woman household head at Household C, the grandmother of the woman head of Household D and the aunty of the woman head of Household E.

Second generation kin ties existed too:
- sisters were female heads of Households F and H

Third generation kin connections extended the connectedness of households:
• a grandson whose mother was household head at Household C, lived with his grandmother and uncles in Household J
• some households were connected through the marriage of third generation members viz. a man (from Household J) married a woman (from Household I) resulting in extension of kin relationships to Households C, D and F.

In January 1970, I was aware that Household A had kin connections with five other households, but I was not informed of all of the kin relationships. Now I know that Households D and F each had kin connections with four other households, and that two households had one kin connection each.

During the time I was working at Lake Tyers I learned that kin provided conspicuous support and welfare care to other kin (Personal Papers 1970). Examples of this were:

• primary school aged children moving to stay with grandmother when parents were regularly absent overnight from home and not providing normal daily parenting duties such as, meals, lunch and clean clothes for school
• two young adult brothers boarded with grandmother and uncles
• a brother’s wife caring for his sister’s infant child when the mother was ill
• an adult woman caring for a cousin’s infant when the child’s mother was absent
• an adult daughter, her offspring and partner returning to her parents’ home at Lake Tyers when the birth of her child was imminent.

Non-relative or neighbourly support and care were evident too. For example: a teenage student boy lived with an unrelated family of a peer when his mother was absent from home and not providing him personal care and support.

Women were most significant providers of material assistance and care to kin, especially of their infant and primary school aged grand children, nieces and nephews. Parents often gave emotional and practical support to their daughters and families. From my conversations with the older women of Lake Tyers I was advised of local norms regarding the help they gave to a sick aunt or adult cousin: some one would shop and cook for a sick person’s family of working man and children (Personal Papers July 1970). Men, however, provided different types of support to relatives. On a number of
occasions, a male household head approached me requesting a job in the work force or
the building of a house at Lake Tyers for an unemployed and homeless visiting male
relative (Personal Papers March 1970).

The setting gave residents opportunity to organise their social life knowing there was
additional family support available. The residents observed a hierarchy of loyalties: first
priority was given to immediate household and family interests, followed by loyalty to
extended kin living at Lake Tyers, and then to the wider kinship network living beyond
Lake Tyers. Household heads consistently extended board and personal support in times
of need to adult offspring and close relatives. Kinship was also a factor in the
membership of leisure groups of school age primary and secondary students. Siblings and
cousins of similar age often played together exclusively.

Furthermore, the importance of kin connections was not confined to personal and social
support, but was evident in the election of leaders. Thus, at the Lake Tyers Council
meeting in April 1970, after the appointment of the Chairperson, the new Chairman was
invited by the Director to nominate a Deputy and he nominated his first cousin.

The behaviour of Ministry staff could affect the relationships between families. The
election of the two males as leaders of the Council directly implicated the Director in
improving the status and influence of one family network and aroused the anxieties of a
number of residents from other families who saw the action as advantaging the network.
In February 1970, a resident advised me that Lake Tyers was split between a family
network and the other families (Personal Papers February 1970). The Council
appointments contributed to the ongoing conflict between family groups. I did not
become aware of the ramifications of the Director’s action until the end of the year when
the ‘leadership team’ was appointed (Personal Papers December 1970).

Kinship was not the only factor of social organization, particularly for teenage young
people. For older teenagers, age and gender were important factors in the formation of
peer groups as unrelated boys and girls of similar age mixed socially together, and one
teenage girl boarded with the unrelated family of her peer girl friend, rather than with her parents. Shared interests were another factor contributing to community formation.

Unrelated adult and young men played in the Lake Tyers team in the Lakes Entrance Basketball Association’s competition, and unrelated adult women belonged to the Red Cross Branch of Lake Tyers (Personal Papers 1970).

The field research of Aboriginal populations in settled rural Australia by Beckett (1988), Barwick (1988) and Keen (1988) has reported similar behavioural patterns to those I have described as present at Lake Tyers in 1970-1971. They recognised that social cohesion was based on the high significance of kin relationships, the importance of shared locality of origin and the adaptation of practices from traditional cultural ways in order to survive in a legally discriminating, socially excluding and economically unrewarding environment. Based on her study in 1963 of Aborigines living in Melbourne (including former Lake Tyers residents) Barwick wrote:

For Aborigines the basic subcultural ties are those of locality and family. They identify or place one another not by asking ‘What work do you do? but rather ‘Which place do you come from?, 'Which family is yours?’(Barwick 1988:27).
Chart 7.5 Lake Tyers - First and second generation kin connections between households January 1970


Today I understand that the social organization consisted of nuclear and cross-generational families who formed separate households at Lake Tyers in 1970-1971. As well, it included the kin connected households who formed kin related networks of close reciprocating relationships. Each of these different family networks found at Lake Tyers had extended kinship ties beyond the borders of Lake Tyers to related families in Gippsland, south coast New South Wales and other parts of Victoria. Each network was
the primary group with which people identified and to which they gave their loyalty. At
Lake Tyers, non-kin related households were not closely bonded to other unrelated
households and there was no overall social organization that established a cohesive
Aboriginal neighbourhood. Beckett (1988) wrote about the Aboriginal social organisation
of another Aboriginal population in rural settled south eastern Australia, but his insight
resonated with my understanding of the Aboriginal community of Lake Tyers:

...throughout the southern half of Australia — [Aborigines] share a
common culture, but they are not organised in any overall way. Even local
communities rarely engage in any joint enterprise; the nuclear family is
the largest group functioning regularly. This low level of organization is
possible because Aboriginal society is very much dependent upon
European society, particularly as regards the economy and the
maintenance of law and order. The norms of Aboriginal society govern
interpersonal rather than intergroup relations, and are mostly concerned
with casual, short term types of interaction. In the absence of any wider
coordinating principle, face-to-face relations are of primary importance
among Aborigines, and local communities are only saved from isolation
by the direct contacts their members make in the course of moving about
the countryside. Mobility is consequently of considerable social
importance...Usually being known means having kin who will receive
him and act as sponsors in the local community (Beckett 1988:118-119).

Furthermore, no secondary group organization existed transcending the connected
households and kin networks at Lake Tyers in 1970-1971. It was a special Aboriginal
community reflecting a people with low self-esteem due to racially driven deprivation of
opportunities, negatively discriminated against in Gippsland, denied of a collective self-
determination at the former Station, dependent on external support and an intrusive,
deprecatory management, reluctant to risk taking initiative, and extensively reliant on
socialisation from primary group relations. The Ministry after April 1970 had introduced
further stress by pointing the residents towards a social and economic existence that
required effective handling of relationships with civil society, the market and the state. It
was a special Aboriginal community with a social order of people with strong family
connections to extended kin and friendship networks, people who had refused to discard
Aboriginal identity, and who had adapted their social organization and customs to meet
the challenges of the coloniser's environment.
The definition of the Aboriginal social order at Lake Tyers was not accomplished in 1970-1971. It should have been a vital task for engaging in effective community development. As a community social worker today, I realise even more the value of making time to hear the residents' stories of growing up with loved parents, family members, peers and Elders, and of survival and resistance, as they all help to depict the social order (Peters-Little (2000) and the stories of Aunty Ivy Marks, Aunty Eileen Harrison and Uncle Albert Mullett (2004)). The full engagement of Aboriginal people in processes that determine their future and how to reach their visions is foundational to 'Aboriginal community organising' and to 'community work with Aborigines'. The importance of local Aboriginal populations defining their social boundaries and goals has been recognised by Peters-Little (2000).

The Ministry did not understand how Aboriginal social organisation was vital for the purpose of planning the process of community development, or how it was relevant to the Act. The Director believed he was applying a community development principle - transferring responsibility to the people 'directly involved in their own destiny' (Worthy 1973b:2). The Act, however, excluded kin who regarded themselves as involved in the social change process because of their long association with the place and their very strong interest in its future destiny. Their close association with Lake Tyers shaped their Aboriginal heritage and identity, and their kith and kin relationships gave them membership of the Aboriginal social organisation of Lake Tyers. Therefore they believed they were entitled to participate and benefit from the land ownership arrangement. A direct political consequence of the Ministry's decision to restrict the list of shareholders to existing residents was of concern to both the general public and the excluded Aboriginal people. They were supported in the parliamentary debates by both the Australian Labour Party and the Country Party member for East Gippsland but without success (Smoke Signals December 1970:18; and Evans undated). Furthermore, their exclusion may have deterred competent interested Aboriginal people from committing their support to the Trust from its inception, including a role in governance.
An important task of the community social worker involves the collection of social and economic data in order to describe and analyse the situation of the constituents. While engaged in the intervention at Lake Tyers in 1970, I collected data about sources of family disposable income.

Coping with household expenses was a major issue for families with an above average number of children, and where expenses included hire purchase payments for consumer durables (e.g., refrigerators, washing machines and television sets). Parents, especially mothers, regularly sought staff advice regarding how to handle money matters (Personal Papers January 1970-June 1971). Consequently, the Visiting Nurse and the Housekeeping Adviser included household budgeting, budget shopping and buying nutritious food in the family education and support activities they offered as part of community individual and group work activities.

The families had been compelled to make a rapid adjustment in handling money between 1966 and 1970. Chapters Three and Four have described the transition that occurred - from (i) a limited retail experience required of family members at the Station living on allocated rations, other free supplies, and a small wage, (ii) a short but traumatic period of no wage income and beginning to receive income security payments, to finally (iii) the situation of regular disposable income on a worker's Award wage, or pensions and benefits. In the early months of 1970 a significant additional income flowed into households from educational grants. (See Appendix 7.8 Student education grants and additional family income). That inflow of additional educational grants made an important contribution to the position of households in relation to the poverty line. (See Appendix 7.9 Adequacy of family disposable income and a 'poverty line' comparison at May 1970).

In January 1970, the sources of household income were: (i) transfer payments - State parent allowances and Commonwealth social security payments, (ii) wages from employment by the Ministry at Lake Tyers, and (iii) other special allowances available to the family.
Aborigines and pensioners, beneficiaries and sole parents, such as rent subsidy, education grants, legal aid and hospital benefits. (See Table 7.3). Five household heads received social security income (widow, age, or invalid pensions). The remaining five households had a male head who was a full-time employed wage earner.

Table 7.3 Lake Tyers - Sources of household income May 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Wage Earners</th>
<th>Pensioners or Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Child Endowment</th>
<th>Commonwealth Secondary Grant</th>
<th>AEISF Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Age, Invalid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Widow Unemp.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Widow Invalid</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Invalid Unemp.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Age with Spouse</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Widow Invalid</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Papers January 1970

The market economy had not been an extra source of income from economic enterprises operating at Lake Tyers, nor for individuals employed outside. A few households marginally supplemented their food supply by hunting in the surrounding forest and from lake fishing. Governments (State and Commonwealth) remained the sole source of income for the population.

At Lake Tyers in 1970 the weekly wages bill of four hundred and twenty seven dollars exceeded the social services income total of two hundred and fifty seven dollars (Personal Papers January 1970). Table 7.4 (below) shows the Commonwealth social service payments received by eligible residents of Lake Tyers at January 1970. Twelve persons (seventeen percent of the population of Lake Tyers) received social security pensions or benefits in January 1970, while eight parents received Child Endowment payments (Personal Papers January 1970). Whereas in 1966 Unemployment Benefit was the predominant income security payment received, by 1970 it was paid to two young
adults only; and in 1970, a Victorian Government income benefit - ‘Family Assistance’ - was paid by the State Social Welfare Department to single parents with dependent children. In January 1970, one parent at Lake Tyers received this payment.

The Ministry subsidized the cost of providing services to households in January 1970 - examples were: free bus rides, rent not charged at full cost, purchase of farm meat at reduced cost, and no charge to defray the total cost of street lighting, the reticulated water supply, cut and delivered firewood, and maintenance of roads and sceptic tanks. The residents were expected to pay the full cost of household electricity and hospital and medical benefits.

A public telephone was installed after March 1968, and thus for the first time access to a phone was available for personal use, and in private without the direct involvement of staff. Although the Ministry held a Lake Tyers post office agency licence, residents preferred to collect mail at the Nowa Nowa Post Office and bank agency. The Ministry wanted to retain subsidisation of costs, but the items that would be included was not clarified.

At Lake Tyers in 1970, as long as workers maintained attendance at work and retained good health, no one lived in conditions of abject poverty compared. The low rate of the Agricultural and Pastoral Workers Award wage for unskilled workers, the levels of pension and benefit rates and the number of dependent children were all key factors contributing to standard of living based on household income. The regular ebb and flow of visitors meant that a household’s income was often seriously stretched. Apart from occasional casual employment assisting a family, job opportunities were not provided to women by the Ministry at Lake Tyers.
Table 7.4. Lake Tyers - Commonwealth social service payments - January 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Service Payment</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Endowment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Papers, January 1970

Outside employment of women, particularly young adult women, was another potential avenue to increasing personal or household income, but transport was required. Specialist services, such as dental treatment, were unaffordable and frequently not used. The Ministry did not provide a free dental service as had the Board, and a trip to the Dental Hospital in Melbourne became a time consuming and costly option involving transport and board expenses.

(vii) understanding leadership in its cultural setting

The Director was unconvinced by the argument that it was necessary to know about the heritage of the residents in order to integrate cultural ways, and especially kinship, into the planning and implementation of community development (Personal Papers January and November 1970). The Ministry’s Executive nominally acknowledged the idea of a distinct Aboriginal culture in Victoria and included ‘cultural pluralism’ as a feature of the Government’s policy statement (Boas 1979:53), but it did not explore how cultural ways could be incorporated into its ‘broad-spectrum intervention programmes’ (Boas 1974: 252-255). The program at Lake Tyers in 1970-1971 was no exception to this treatment of Aboriginal culture.
The Ministry understood the situation of Lake Tyers only from the perspective of Western cultural thought forms and did not appreciate the aspirations, values, social patterns and kin relationships of the residents. My community planning activity in early 1970 was aware of, but did not insist on, an approach that consulted residents about their cultural ways and social institutions with the aim of integrating those ways into the community development process.

The Ministry’s approach reflected little understanding of the social reality of a race structured society, and it was unaware that its activity took place in an ‘inter-cultural social field’ (Martin 2005). This Ministry behaviour was evidenced on 15th April 1970, when prior to attending the Lake Tyers Council meeting and following the Minister’s public announcement of land transfer, the Director asked me who was the leader of the residents. Our impromptu ‘corridor’ discussion held without forewarning, considered whether there was ‘one leader’, and canvassed the leadership qualities of a number of men and women (Personal Papers April 1970). This conversation between cultural outsiders considered who had represented the residents during the ‘Save Lake Tyers Campaign’, who was respected by, and popular with the residents, and who possessed leadership skills and experience. We did not consider asking the residents to decide, recognising that their social world defined the characteristics of leadership, how they appointed their own people to positions of leadership, and whether one or a number of people performed leadership roles (Personal Papers April 1970).

Moriarty (1983) has remarked how Aboriginal people handle the issue of representing others, as follows:

Aborigines do not speak for others. One individual cannot be asked: What does everyone want? The answer is ‘may be’. One person can only speak for himself. In traditional society each person was assigned particular functions or relationships to perform. Mission and reserve living failed to assign the tasks and so today gaps exist. Protracted consultation with all persons is necessary (Penney and Moriarty 1983:109).

The leader selected by the Director to be Chairman of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust was co-opted to serve the Ministry’s interest in effecting social change at Lake Tyers. Later the residents stated their unhappiness with the process and decision. They also had
been co-opted by the Director at that meeting. Lippmann (1973) has attempted to describe how Aboriginal people experience events such as this:

Seeing themselves always on the outside, Aborigines were convinced that whites in general knew how to manipulate these institutions for their own benefit, while they themselves constantly experienced rejection. Lack of social knowledge has also the effect of making aims unreal: the dividing line between what is feasible and an unfeasible scheme is blurred, and attempting the impossible adds to frustration and to the conviction that the cards are stacked against the coloured person (Lippmann, 1973:192).

In May 1970, the Chairman of the Council, (also the Community Supervisor in the workplace), the Deputy Chairman (also the town services Foreman) met with the Farmer, Community Secretary and myself to discuss work targets, training needs and other worker matters (Personal Papers May 1970). At the meeting, the Chairman spoke of the difficulties he experienced as leader:

If I criticize staff at Council meetings I am unpopular with other residents. Now I am not getting anywhere with my people where as in the past I did (Personal Papers May 1970).

Following a meeting of the Lake Tyers Council he said:

Tyers people do not all pull together and help each other. I can't get through to them. I've been trying to for years. I don't want to job them. If they have a go at me, in the end I will knock them down (Personal Papers, May 1970).

At a later meeting in July 1970, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, met with me to discuss leadership (Personal Papers July 1970). The Chairman had been voicing criticism of the Director and staff and disagreed with the 'transitional arrangement' being implemented by the Ministry. I emphasised that the Ministry had not yet handed over responsibilities for the property and the community's well being to the Chairman and the Lake Tyers Council, and would not be doing so until the Aboriginal Lands Act was approved by Parliament. The Chairman, frustrated by the 'transitional stage', was increasingly 'caught' in a situation of compromising his ambition and having to work according to the Ministry's time frame.

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By July the Chairman’s performance was being criticised by other senior residents (Personal Papers July 1970). The Chairman criticised the behaviour of those residents accusing them of not giving him the support they had previously when the Board and its staff were regarded as ‘the enemy’. The situation had become more complex with the ‘enemy’ now not as easily identifiable. In this situation the various resident families had different psychological, social and economic investments in the promised future. The requirements of leadership had altered and support for the Chairman varied depending on his ability to give ‘good’ leadership according to the situation at hand. Some of the successful past ways of achieving prowess and influence were now less appropriate. Other residents increasingly expected demonstration of social and personal skills necessary to deal with the new circumstances. Consideration of the common interests of all residents rather than those of the immediate nuclear family/household and extended kin’s interests had become increasingly important (Personal Papers July-August-September 1970).

The predicament of the Chairman became more difficult over time. After the July 1970 Lake Tyers Council meeting, the Chairman advised me that there was dissension among households because people wanted to review details of the legislation concerning communal property title. Although the Chairman confirmed this was his preference, other senior residents were now favouring sub-division of the property into individual titles to facilitate family blocks. This issue was a major discussion point of the Council delegation to Melbourne in September, but communal title was retained as a condition of the legislation. By November 1970 a majority of senior residents petitioned the Director to alter the leadership structure, as they no longer tolerated the Chairman’s claim of a special prominence with favours from the Director (Personal Papers October 1970).

The method of appointment of the Chairman had reflected a Western view of leader as a popular and forceful personality in public, and able to represent the group to which he/she belonged. In fact the Council was a creation of the Ministry and not an appropriate venue for choice of leader. The Chairman was in a very vulnerable position as he had not been authorised a decision making power by the residents. From today’s vantage point, the Ministry should have facilitated a culturally appropriate form of leadership to be
appointed to assist in the process of social change (Rowse 2001:104). The residents' request for a 'leadership team' indicated that this was their way and not the representative leadership of an individual. Their action indicated Aboriginal self-determination at Lake Tyers was to be built on a group or collective decision making base. Unfortunately in 1970 the Ministry did not have the capability to assist the residents build a collective decision making infrastructure (Rowse 1998:92).

Conclusion

This chapter has traversed the two-year period of the community development intervention, describing and analysing how the Executive, residents, community social worker and local staff were engaged in social and economic development. By encouraging the residents to build their capacity to be responsible landowners, farmers, parents, students, and managers of the residential area, the process of community development aimed to prepare the residents to sufficiently fulfil their own, and general society's, normative expectations. The process of community development offered resources for learning new skills in a supportive situation. It concurrently inter-related with the process of enacting legislation.

The quality of the Ministry's performance as sponsor of the process was one of the sufficient conditions needed to satisfy the Government's goal of establishing a new social and economic status for the residents. The crucial elements of the quality of the process of community development depended on the community social worker and staff at the local level, and the centrally located Director and Executive. Ministry role performances were seen as foundational to kindling and maintaining positive resident motivation to acquire additional skills and knowledge, and adapt their social organisation.

The motivation of the residents to embrace the goal of the proposed social change was vital. The chapter has evidenced the willingness of the residents to learn new skills, to risk new social encounters and to access new opportunities and resources in preparation for the planned outcome. At no stage did the residents waiver in their desire to become landowners. Senior residents did express divergent attitudes about the style of leadership and management they preferred. For the first months after the Minister's announcement,
the appointed Council Chairman considered the residents were ready for management. A majority of senior resident men and women however expressed caution about the prospect of becoming independent of support, and they took united action in November 1970 to oppose the Chairman. They were not confident of their capacity to be a self-reliant group; and rejected the Chairman’s desire to assume an early management role by dismissing staff because they consider he had not displayed the necessary qualities to be their leader - despite his cooption by the Director. They took action to install a team leadership with continuing close staff support until the Trust was established. The action of the senior residents demonstrated how they could adapt their social organization to better satisfy a communal interest. The residents learned that they could effectively express an attitude and negotiate with the Director. By November 1970, residents were starting to organise mutual interests, and the formation of a ‘geographical community’ and a ‘community of interest’ at Lake Tyers was emerging.

The process of local community development was multi-faceted in its use of methods and skills of staff. Methods included: adult health education, group work, ‘community care’ (Jackson, Mitchell and Wright 1989; Popple 1995), work-based training, centre-based youth work, public advocacy, public education, and community liaison. The substantial limitation of the community social work practiced was its inability to translate its methodology to integrate with the residents’ social organization and cultural ways. A significant ‘cultural match’ (Dodson 2005) was not accomplished because the expectations of the residents were not satisfactorily known and built into the process.

The Ministry achieved its outcome goal by July 1971 — the transfer of land title, the creation of an infrastructure for self-management, and residents willing to make plans work. The Ministry’s management of a successful public relations campaign had facilitated both processes of social change. The television and print media reported positive resident viewpoints of a broad mutuality of outcome and an effective process of community development. The climate of public confidence secured the necessary conditions for change.

The Chapter has argued however that the Ministry’s execution of the process of community development failed to maximise the preparation of the residents for their new...
situation. The content of the legislation, and the procedure of the Director when consulting the residents offended former residents and members of some of the extended family kin networks of Lake Tyers residents. They were excluded from the initial shareholding and membership of the Trust, and believed that therefore they had no opportunity to participate in the governance of the Trust, and to receive the benefits of membership. The Chapter has concluded that the Executive’s capacity to direct the process of social change was qualitatively deficient — in the way it structured the process of community development, and then the way it participated in the process with the residents. The Executive’s ‘top-down’ approach to social change conflicted with staff’s ‘grass-roots’ community development approach at Lake Tyers. The flaws in the Ministry’s competence particularly emerged after the Minister’s public announcement in April 1970.

There were reasons for the flaws:

(i) Achieving the Government’s political goal at Lake Tyers was paramount and dictated the actions of the Ministry throughout the episode

(ii) The Director promoted the merits of the principles of community development but did not seriously implement them, especially when directly relating to residents. His initial instructions to me explicitly excluded sharing decision making with the residents, and at no stage did he discuss how the experience of resident governance should be introduced. He did not discuss ‘locality development’ (Rothman 1974) issues when we met in Melbourne or at Lake Tyers

(iii) The executive had had little community development practice experience and appeared to have limited knowledge of practice ideas. The executive for instance, did not engage with me in a community analysis and no comprehensive planning exercise was held during the transitional period - from the time of the announcement to the transfer of title

(iv) The Chairman was coopted by the Director to collaborate with the Ministry’s goals. Although there was an initial broad mutuality between residents and the
Ministry about the outcome of the social change, the executive did not take the residents into its confidence by sharing decision making about the process of planning, implementing and monitoring the progress of the plan. Insufficient time was given to informing the residents about the proposed legal and institutional arrangements. The residents required more time to realise the ramifications of decisions on their social relations with their extended kin and friends living away from Lake Tyers, on future economic life and the extent to which the farm could support the residential population’s livelihood, and regarding the responsibilities they would be expected to perform.

(v) Staff were not given a strategic involvement in the planning of the process and the outcome. No infrastructure was established where the staff and the executive monitored the process of community development during that transitional period. The executive had too brief communication with the staff.

(vi) The executive were not well grounded in sociological thinking and did not appreciate the value of social analysis and the social organization of the residents of Lake Tyers. A better comprehension of the impact of the former Station regime and the social structure of East Gippsland on the residents’ life would have been of considerable value; for instance, the extent to which the tutelage relationship still existed – both perceived and actual - under the Ministry’s administration. The establishment of an advisory committee by the Ministry would have been most valuable, one consisting of a social anthropologist such as Diane Barwick, someone with practice experience in community work, and residents who could inform about family and social life.

(vii) The lack of interest in the Aboriginal cultural ways of the Lake Tyers residents and their kith and kin, and the failure to explore how to engage with the people’s social organization had serious political and social consequences for the process of community development. Two visible negative results were: the impact of the clause in the legislation excluding persons interested in the future of Lake Tyers, and the appointment of a man as Chairman without effective consultation with
residents, and without appreciating that a leadership structure existed at Lake Tyers and needed to be taken into consideration when the appointment was made

(ix) The Director's adoption of a 'dominant agency' (Wolfe-Keddie 1996) method of interaction with the residents, and the Ministry's top-down social planning approach undervalued the abilities of the residents and denied them the opportunity to be involved in community planning and management. It also meant that the executive did not coordinate its actions with those of the staff. A potential strength of the process of social change — the executive working closely with the staff — did not materialise.

The Ministry's execution of the social change was a product of the early seventies. Government departments generally were inexperienced in conducting community change programs with Aboriginal groups and residential populations. The Ministry's engagement of Commonwealth, State and municipal government programs and services with the residents of Lake Tyers was enterprising. The staff were not qualified as adult educators or job trainers but no special courses were encouraged or provided. Knowledge of community development practice was slight, as was knowledge of the heritage, cultural ways and social organization of the residents of Lake Tyers. Given the innovative nature of the action taken by the Ministry, it was a time well suited to take an explorative approach that involved the participation of residents with the Ministry, where parties learned from, and began to trust each other. The executive however, practiced a 'top-down' social planning approach and this approach reinforced the dominance of the coloniser, and failed to recognise the importance of, and therefore give close attention to, issues arising at the 'grass-roots'. It nullified a 'bottom-up' contribution from the residents that could have been integrated into the social development program, a contribution that included their aspirations, values and social organization. By maintaining Western thought forms rather than learning about Aboriginal social institutions and decision making procedures, the Ministry clung to Western concepts of leadership, family and community.

A third sufficient condition to achieving the outcome of a new status for the people of Lake Tyers — the willingness of the social and economic environment of East Gippsland
to accept the residents and other Aboriginal people into their social world – was given some attention by the process of community development, and the Ministry through its State-wide 'Broad Spectrum Social Change Programme'. Provision of accommodation and schooling resources were given particular attention. A significant change in the attitudes, behaviour, opportunities and resources of the environment that would result in a change in the residents' status was unrealisable within a period of two years.

The objectives set for the process of community development were not wholly achieved and the realisation of the sufficient conditions for the achievement of social change was not maximised. The 'grass-roots' program of development had stabilised the living conditions of the Lake Tyers households and enabled residents to gain greater confidence in their capacity to be more self-reliant. In July 1971 they preferred to retain continuing supportive resources rather than launch into full self-management as they began the new challenge of operating the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust.
Chapter 8  "From little things big things grow"

It took 100 years to create the dependency situation, and it has taken 100 weeks since the symbolic handover of the Station, to demonstrate that, given the opportunity for responsibility, the Aboriginal people are capable of responding. Time alone will tell exactly how much more time is needed to complete this process of social engineering (M.R. Worthy 1973b:8).

The handover of Lake Tyers was too soon. They had white people working there and then they handed it over so they left a manager there who was supposed to instruct the people on how to run the place. Whether he did that or whether he didn’t do it the right way is two things because the people didn’t want him there so of course when the ministry [sic] went out of existence and the department took over, the white manager left but the people knew nothing. They had this beautiful, expensive equipment but they couldn’t use it (Molly Dyer in Kevin Gilbert 1977:228).

With the perspective of time this granting of title will be seen in its true light as a most cynical exercise. After all, who would criticise a government for granting Aborigines title to land, something the people themselves had demanded for a number of years?.....so it was decided to cut the millstone free and in this way to disclaim any future responsibility for events at Lake Tyers (Alan West in Phillip Pepper 1980:4).

...but this is the story of something much more, how power and privilege cannot move a people, we know where they stand and stand in their law. From little things big things grow.... (Kev Carmody and Paul Kelly).

Introduction

The thesis has described how the Government of Victoria politically responded to the claims of a victorious Aboriginal protest campaign concerning the destiny of the Aboriginal reserve at Lake Tyers/Bung Yarnda, and the population residing there, and how, through its agency the Ministry, planned a process of purposive social change (Warren 1977) over the period 1970-1971. The thesis has outlined the terms of legislation that from 1st July 1971 set the necessary conditions for achieving the Government’s planned social change. The Government’s guardianship function that had been instituted by statute was terminated, and the Government shaped a new relationship with the residents of Lake Tyers by granting ongoing finance, offering staff support, and establishing an infrastructure (an incorporated body known as the Lake Tyers
Aboriginal Trust) to perform executive and administrative functions, and to hold the communal land title. The Trust was expected to govern on behalf of the Aboriginal shareholders and residents and behave organisationally according to the normal standards of corporate life.

While, in July 1971, a statute had provided the necessary conditions for establishing Aboriginal land ownership and self-management, the overall purpose of the social change at Lake Tyers depended on whether the sufficient conditions had been adequately realised at that time by the key parties (the residents, the Ministry and the social and economic environment, particularly of East Gippsland). As well, it depended on whether each of the parties would continue to work towards achieving that purpose. The social change goal also depended on whether the new corporate entity – the Trust - contained the attributes required to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the resident shareholders, and the social and economic environment.

Community social work ideas channelled through a process of community development formed the opportunities and resources offered to the residents of Lake Tyers in order to fulfil the sufficient conditions for change. The process of community development aimed to prepare the residents for the new role tasks and responsibilities assigned to them by the Act, and the societal norms expected of them as self-reliant citizens. The process also aimed to prepare the social and economic institutions and people of the surrounding region to adapt to and facilitate the residents' changed status. Chapter Six has critically assessed the Ministry's capacity to mount the episode of social change, and how well it planned and implemented the process of community development at Lake Tyers over a period of eighteen months – January 1970 to June 1971.

It is important to remember that the study was not an evaluation of the success of the process of social change or of the process of community development, but rather, it was an exploration of what constituted this episode and how community social work practice contributed to those processes. In the light of that experience and present day knowledge, I have suggested contemporary community social work ideas that might make a
contribution to achieving the social change desired by today's Aboriginal residential populations. The thesis has encompassed:

- a search for the factors that linked the Aboriginal land rights social movement's protest over the future of Lake Tyers to the longstanding claim of the residents of Lake Tyers for self-governing power; the outcome of their joint protest following a collaborative social action (Rothman 1974) organised by the League; the demise of the Government's policy of assimilation that represented the social, economic and political goals of dominant colonising interests; and the political decision of Government to alter the direction of policy so that the residents obtained secure tenure while their economic and social development was facilitated.

- a historical and sociological analysis of the context that created the seriously under-developed economic conditions of the residents of Lake Tyers in 1970; key sociological and psychological concepts that gave insight into the unique cultural adaptations of the residents as they relied on the primary group socialisation of their geographically spread extended kin networks; the race structure of East Gippsland society that significantly limited the human rights, resources and opportunities available to Aboriginal people; the oppressive nature of the Station regime that ensured the people's livelihood depended on tutelage and tertiary relationships with the state, and stultified individual initiative and squashed leadership; and concepts which enabled analysis of the residents' unique social organisation and understanding of their unfamiliarity with an extensive separation of home from workplace, secondary group/community formation, participation in the market economy, ability to interact with civil society in order to benefit their race and cultural interests, and to assume the new responsibilities offered by the new social change conditions; and

- a critical analysis and interpretation of the structure and implementation of the planned social change from the perspective of the community social worker engaged to organise the process of community development with the residents of Lake Tyers.
and their hinterland, drawing on the theory of community social work practice at the time of the intervention and from a contemporary perspective.

Reflecting on the research design

As its primary research method, the thesis has used historical analysis of the autobiographical data collected from the field of community social work practice and applied a reflexive approach to the interpretation of this data. In addition, I have drawn into this analysis: a) two theoretical frameworks and a model proposed by community social work practice theorists; b) the public Aboriginal affairs policies implemented during the time period of the process of social change; and c) historical and sociological ideas organised according to the 'decolonization methodology'. The design has exemplified a distinct methodology producing a descriptive narrative of the political and social conditions that led to significant social change, an outline of what happened during the process of community development, and a critical analysis of the methods of action used to effect that change. I would argue that this research design has drawn out a number of the critical theoretical issues of relevance to community social work practitioners working with Aboriginal populations.

The methodology enabled analysis of field data from the vantage of different theoretical approaches to community social work practice theory. The 'know-why' and the 'know-how' propositions of Pruger and Specht (1969) offered a framework from which to use critical social theory and highlight the centrality of racial analysis; and the framework featured the political and social change as a product of Aboriginal agency. By focusing on the stages in the process of community development, the framework of Henderson and Thomas (2000) provided a way of capturing the dynamic nature of the episode at Lake Tyers; and it pinpointed where methods of action faltered or failed, particularly because practice was not informed by knowledge of cultural norms and social organization. Finally, the attempt to relate the field data to the model of community organizing proposed by Brager and Specht (1973) revealed the inappropriateness of this construct of a process of constituent group development for this particular Aboriginal residential
My practice materials could have been studied by another researcher using a different qualitative research methodology; and similar or different findings may have been reported.

Upon reflection, I appreciate that the research design could have been strengthened by the inclusion of contemporary data obtained from interviews of people who were residents of Lake Tyers and experienced the process of social change in 1970-1971. A comparison could have then been made between their judgements and views and my interpretations. The presentation of these resident voices could have more clearly revealed the importance of how different cultural standpoints and unequal positions of status and power of the parties led to different interpretations of the episode. It should be noted that only six of the original thirty eight adult shareholders were alive in 2005 to be interviewed.

**The contribution of community social work practice knowledge and skills to the process of social change**

The nature of the decision to change the living conditions of the residents of Lake Tyers was unprecedented in Australia. The change envisaged a transformation of individual, family and group motivations, aspirations and social organization following the removal of institutional care at the Aboriginal reserve and the provision of communal Aboriginal self-management of a privately owned property supported by government resources and other forms of external assistance. The change was not guided by a manual written by an expert person whether social scientist, manager of an institution or community social work practitioner. No Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal person had knowledge of how to orchestrate a step-by-step process of development.

The opportunity to deploy this community social work intervention was dependent on particular political and social factors. In the mid-sixties, the previously expressed request of the Lake Tyers residents to be permitted to live at the property coalesced with the
organised social action of articulate Aboriginal leaders insisting on the retention of Aboriginal reserves and self-determining decision making in Aboriginal affairs. The demands of Aboriginal groups formed a further coalition with the ideological beliefs of intellectuals, community work practitioners and social justice groups who advocated Aboriginal self-help initiatives and supported the utilisation of community development work programs. Professional social workers positioned at the Executive echelon of the Ministry from 1968 supported the Aboriginal rejection of the policy of assimilation and embraced notions of social planning and community development to shape the Ministry's policy of integration. By April 1970 the Director had convinced the Minister of the political value of satisfying aspects of the Aboriginal social movement's and the Lake Tyers residents' claims for country and self-government. The desire for a new direction and a willingness to innovate was mutually shared by influential Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups, politicians, and public servants who were professional social workers. This was a very significant phase in the race relations of Victoria.

To most Victorians the decision to grant Crown land to Aboriginal people and expect them to be self-reliant would have appeared to be a matter of local interest for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations of the Warrnambool and Bairnsdale districts, but especially for the Aboriginal residents of the Framlingham and Lake Tyers Aboriginal Reserves. However, this apparently ordinary decision went to the heart of a fundamental and unresolved issue about the Indigenous rights of Aboriginal Australians. The decision risked fuelling the political and constitutional conflicts of sovereignty claims and the terms of original settlement. The action enabling Aboriginal land ownership therefore also contained an element of fundamental social change for it addressed the principle underpinning the foundation of the colonised and race structured Australian society.

(i) **Conflicting approaches to community development at Lake Tyers**

The Ministry's Executive organised the process of social change from two vantage points – at the central executive level where they directed a 'top-down' approach; and in the
field using a local community social worker using a ‘bottom-up’ approach. This method of conducting social change had the advantage of dealing with the two dimensions of change affecting Lake Tyers – the vertical dimension handled by the executive linking locality to regional, State and national politics, and to social and economic interests, institutions and resources; and the horizontal dimension where the local worker organised the capacity building of the local community of Lake Tyers and its relationships with the immediate local environment (Warren 1973; Brager and Specht 1973:19-20).

The thesis has described how the process of social change at Lake Tyers secured an outcome via two components – legislative reform and community development. The concurrent engagement of these two components saw the enactment of legislation component primarily relating to the vertical dimension, and the community development component operating at the local horizontal dimension.

In the previous Chapter I argued that from the perspective of an involved locally based community social worker the benefits of this two-pronged structured social change process were not maximised. The willingness of the Executive to innovate and operate energetically at the vertical dimension was not replicated at the horizontal dimension. As a result, the locality community development process began without thorough foundational work being undertaken by the Executive. There was no starting activity to establish what was known about the Lake Tyers residents and their aspirations. No initial community analysis was made of the residents’ social and cultural group organization, leadership and strengths. An in-depth community planning exercise was not undertaken to provide a strategic forward plan to guide development. A major flaw in the process of social change was the Executive’s overwhelming attention to a State-wide unitary, ‘top-down’, ‘social planning’ and ‘program development and coordination’ approach (Taylor and Roberts 1985). The process of social change at Lake Tyers required an appropriately balanced duality of approaches – the large-scale ‘social planning’ and the ‘locality development’, the ‘top-down’ and the ‘bottom-up’. The two approaches needed a coordinated well-devised plan whose implementation was closely monitored.
The Ministry in 1968 started the process of social change after a brief communication with Lake Tyers and Gippsland Aboriginal people. The Ministry held minimal knowledge of the peoples' aspirations, values, social organization and cultural ways, possessed an imprecise assessment of the people's work skills and income earning ability, and did not analyse their capacity to undertake self-management of their living conditions. A bold program of social change was proposed by the Ministry but without attention to detailed planning. This was a political and social risk.

(ii) an assessment of the contribution of the Director to the process of community development

Tierney (1965) clarified how 'higher value' and 'technical' normative values underpin the practice goals of the social work profession. Tierney (1965:29) remarked how professional 'higher value norms' — the 'expressions of ultimate ends, goals or purposes of social action', have tended to remain relatively constant over time (Tierney 1965:32). Reference to the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) 'Code of Ethics' (2000) reveals, however, significant changes in professional norms in relation to practice with Indigenous people since the episode of social change at Lake Tyers in 1970-1971. The Value (3.2) 'Social Justice' makes specific reference to a practice Principle that concerns Indigenous people (3.2.1 g). It reads:

Social workers recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the indigenous people of Australia. They acknowledge the historical disadvantage suffered by indigenous people and the implications of this for social work practice.

I have suggested that in the Sixties and Seventies the 'technical norms' of the profession — 'the methods and theories of social work and general notions of what constitutes desirable practice', (Tierney 1965:29) were at an early formative stage in relation to Aboriginal populations. Due to the emergence of a more prominent political Aboriginal presence in the Australian society, professional normative values were compelled to make a fundamental change.
I have illustrated that the practice principles of community development have not been fixed absolutes, but that they have slowly responded to racism, Indigenous social organization, culture and the policy of self-determination. The development of ‘technical norms’ does not occur in a vacuum, but requires attention to ‘the social worker’s modes of inquiry, his[her] basic premises for action, his[her] approach to practice innovation, and then to examine the sanctioned involved’ (Tierney 1965:35). I have argued that an Indigenous approach to extending practice knowledge in Aboriginal affairs should subscribe to the values promoted by ‘decolonizing methodologies’ (Smith 1999). The thesis has suggested that the status of contemporary ‘technical norms’ of community social work practice with Aboriginal populations remains under-developed. In Aboriginal affairs urgent attention to the ‘higher and technical values’ of practice is needed if they are to produce just outcomes. This is an area for practice research.

The practice principle of ‘Aboriginal participation in decision making’, for instance, can demonstrate various outcomes depending on the quality of the method of participation. The Director claimed he was practicing social work principles. It has been noted that the Director introduced the practice principle of ‘Aboriginal participation’ by holding regular meetings with Aboriginal people on a regional basis. The meetings were called ‘consultations’ (Boas 1971:25). The Director’s management style displayed at those meetings, and the same style was exhibited with the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Council, was ‘agency control’ in order to achieve an ‘agency agenda’ (Wolfe-Keddie 1996:163, 165). The style ensured situations were managed and resulted according to the interests of the Ministry. The Director described his method in these processes and at Lake Tyers as ‘consultative’ (Worthy 1973b) and implied that the residents were actively participating, found the procedure satisfactory and the result of the discussion agreeable. It has been argued in this thesis that the meeting process and outcomes at Lake Tyers did not attain effective participatory discussions; and that a number of residents confirmed this when later they expressed dissatisfaction. The Director’s method was ‘perfunctory consultation’ (Wolfe-Keddie 1996:163), and contrasted with an ‘effective consultation’ which examined options and also the pros and cons of options. The Director in his decision making practice with the residents of Lake Tyers demonstrated ‘operational
planning' that 'deals with what will be done' Wolfe-Keddie (1996:164). His 'operational planning' aimed to manage the 'what the planning decision is about' and 'who participates most influentially in making it'. Two other qualitative alternatives available to the Director were (i) 'strategic planning' that 'considers the range of options and alternatives, and makes choices'; and (ii) 'normative planning' that considers 'what ought to be done' according to 'social attitudes, values and aspirations'. Each of the three consultative arrangements can be productive but the one that substantively betters the quality of life deals 'with the power relationship between Aboriginal people and the rest of society' is decision making at the normative level (Wolfe-Keddie 1996:165). The Director used the least productive method of consultation, and taken together with his personal style, effective consultation was inhibited.

Previously, the thesis has assessed the Executive's performance and indicated that it lacked attention to detailed community planning, produced no written strategy for the fifteen month period of transition (April 1970-June 1971), and did not organise a systematic monitoring of the social change process at Lake Tyers. From the Director's stance of 'operational planning' and 'perfunctory consultation' he claimed that the intervention process moved at a pace that suited the residents (Worthy 1971:3), but from a stance of 'strategic' or 'normative' planning using 'effective consultation' the evidence points to the pace being managed by the Ministry to achieve the Government's political objective.

The process of change was paradoxical. The direct involvement of the Director at the local level was both potentially and actually a positive action connecting the Executive to the residents at the grassroots and to the local staff. The prompt attendance of the Director to the Lake Tyers Council meeting in April 1970 was welcomed by the residents, and the idea of seeking suggestions for the drafting of the conditions of the proposed legislation was sound. The Director's direct involvement however produced outcomes that too often disrupted and interfered with the process of local community development because of the practice of perfunctory consultation, the insensitivity to culture and social organization, and because each visit was not accompanied by
careful pre-planning, a de-briefing and reflective analysis with staff, and an adequately co-ordinated follow-up. Under these conditions, being poorly informed made the management of a locally relevant strategic plan of community development difficult with regard to staff and residents, especially the Chairman/Community Supervisor. The approach suggested that the Director regarded the role of the community social worker at Lake Tyers as a superintendent of operations.

(iii) the inter-relationship of the process of community development and the process of legislative enactment

The previous Chapter argued that the Act established the necessary conditions to fulfil the goals of social change at Lake Tyers, and that the process of community development had a limited involvement with the process of enactment of legislation when it assisted the residents to suggest what to incorporate as clauses in the Act. The residents of Lake Tyers were not invited by the Executive to consider the content of all of the clauses of the Act except those in relation to communal title and the specification of who could hold shares.

Furthermore, staff at Lake Tyers recommended to the Executive that residents should be fully informed about the nature of the proposed incorporated company (the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust), and that they should be in a position to understand the practical everyday effects of the prospective changes to their lives prior to the parliamentary debate. The time prior to the Bill going before Parliament was seen by the staff as a crucial opportunity to indicate to the residents what different duties and responsibilities they (and staff) would be undertaking. Staff members were not briefed about the draft clauses of the legislation either, and so they felt frustrated that they could not adequately inform and prepare the residents for the future (Personal Papers 1970). A greater integration of the two processes - of enactment and community development - did not eventuate.

The limited interaction of the process of community development with the framing of legislation was illustrative of the Ministry Executive's concentration on both the
Government's political agenda, and their failure to recognise the importance of a closer engagement with the social organisation of the Lake Tyers people. It was also illustrative of the Ministry's failure to understand that closer planning of the future of Lake Tyers would have benefited the residents and their community of kith and kin at Lake Tyers and those living in places other than Lake Tyers. The Executive was implementing a policy of integration not a policy of self-determination. The Director did not include the residents as active participants in deciding both the means and the ends of the change process. The Executive assumed it knew what was best for the residents and saw no reason to relinquish a centrally directed dominant control of the social development (Wolfe-Keddie 1996:165). The Ministry's approach was characteristic of a large-scale social planning and program delivery model of organising social change (Taylor and Roberts 1985).

(iv) theoretical considerations of community social work

I have argued that there was no general theory available to guide community social work practice with an Aboriginal residential population at Lake Tyers in 1970. During the Sixties however, the community organization practice theory of Ross (1967) was considered a generic practice theory for working with population groups considered socially and economically 'under-developed', and a technology for use with Aboriginal groups. It was reckoned that Ross's method of community development secured the preferences of the Aboriginal people, was culturally relevant as a whole-of-community-wide approach, and was concerned with self-respect, morale and the outcomes desired by Aboriginal people.

The Executive did not adopt the principles of locality community development of Ross (1967) as its rationale for social change at Lake Tyers; and it introduced the residents to only the beginning functions of governance and administration. The Director, however, did rely on a belief espoused by proponents of community development such as Ross, that engaging people in self-help motivates them to accept responsibility for their development, and generates in them the desire to find answers to their local troubles.
This simplistic version of community development seemed to offer the Ministry answers that the Board had refused to accept in the Sixties. The Ministry expected the residents to accept job skills training and educational opportunities, and to adapt their social and economic life to the offered new opportunities.

The practice ideas of Ross and the research findings of social anthropologist Barwick (1963) gave legitimacy to the community development practiced at Lake Tyers, and are reflected in the following practice assumptions I recorded at the beginning of my engagement:

- recognising the residents as a distinct cultural group with traditional, spiritual and emotional attachment to Lake Tyers
- believing the residents had formed a community
- targeting all the residents as members of the one cultural—community group would demonstrate a recognition of their social organisation
- relating to the residents as individuals and families would establish trusting relationships, secure a mandate for my work; and the trust would be transmitted to dealings with the group
- believing the residents wanted to improve their communal and personal situations after a life experience of racism causing deprivation and powerlessness, new opportunities and resources would inspire them to dedicate themselves to a community building process, and seek further occupational and general skills training so that they could enhance their capacity to be economically self-supporting.
- meeting regularly with the group membership as a Lake Tyers Council would enable the residents to become familiar with meeting proceedings, gain confidence in expressing individual and collective needs, and lead to them specifying how they wanted to advance their social and economic life (based on Personal Papers January 1970).

Ross (1967) emphasised that community development was a process. Hewett and
Wiseman (2000:155) have argued differently - that social action strategies are about both means and ends - that there is a dual nature to social change work. Hewett and Wiseman (2000) also have emphasised:

The key starting point is to be clear about the relationships between goals and means (Hewett and Wiseman 2000:157).

The thesis has shown that the social change at Lake Tyers involved both outcome and process. Community social worker roles at Lake Tyers were concerned with process (examples: motivating personal and family self-help; and meeting regularly with the residents to engender a group identity; and program examples: workplace skills training, running a women's health group, and utilising the programs of the Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Service), and outcome (examples: arranging for the residents to have input into the framing of the details of legislation to ensure it reflected their aspirations, and promoting attitude and behaviour changes in the race structured environment). Based on the evidence of this study, I would argue that social change interventions involving Aborigines should consider both outcome and process.

Significantly, the practice principles of Ross (1967:112-115), in spite of their assumption of universality and his proximity to the Northern American Civil Rights Movement, did not offer the community social worker with a satisfactory framework of principles that addressed the impact of past tutelary socialisation, the racial structure and inter-cultural situation of Lake Tyers. Analytical and technical knowledge and skills were required to work toward the development of a cohesive and self-reliant community organisation. Practical guidance was needed using appropriate educational and relational methods. The objective at Lake Tyers was orchestrating the transformation of a population's psychological, social and economic institutional conditioning at a former Station regime to a very different situation where the norms governing living concerned personal and family self-reliance, and communal self-management. The environment's racial structure remained prejudiced and shaped social interactions. A non-Aboriginal staff member was likely to be perceived as more powerful and to be treated with suspicion. At meetings of the Council, people appeared to be passive, listening and not criticising staff.
behaviour contrasted with animated and verbal direct interpersonal encounters. The desirable process and outcome at Lake Tyers required a relevant theoretical framework of practice that related to the experience of working with an Aboriginal population living in settled rural south eastern Australia, and recognising their social organisation, cultural heritage and historical experience of colonisation and racism.

The reluctance of the Executive to acquire cultural knowledge — that is, of the Aboriginal culture of the residents of Lake Tyers — and more fully appreciate the culture of colonisation and its psychological and sociological impact, severely inhibited the effectiveness of the community social worker roles; and it intensified the practice experience of a daily round of trial and error. The social world of Lake Tyers was an inter-cultural situation where many of the practice assumptions required translation from Western cultural thought forms into Aboriginal ones. A paucity of knowledge about Aboriginal social organization, kith and kin networks and leadership meant I was ill equipped to carry out the cultural translation of practice assumptions into relevant analytical and technical actions. I was furthermore, unprepared for interpreting the culturally different ways of communication at group meetings. What did people’s silence at meetings suggest? Can a person speak on behalf of another person or for their family or for the whole group? Some time elapsed before I realised that a person may not express an opinion because s/he was intimidated by a post-meeting verbal accusation or physical reprisal by another person. At meetings I learned that the residents did not ask questions when they did not understand; and few openly criticised another person or the Ministry.

Community planning relies on analytical and technical skills but these were less than effective when confronted by lack of cultural knowledge. It was not until later reflection and further reading that I recognised I had been relating to an 'Aboriginal community' - a number of discrete Aboriginal extended family networks connecting households at Lake Tyers to families in other locations. The residential population consisted of a number of extended families living together and sharing space with each other but not yet a 'geographical community' (Cox 1979) or a 'community of relationship' (Kenny 311)
1994). My practice assumptions relied on Western sociological concepts of family, and community as a secondary group. Nevertheless, analytical skills were extensively used in situations of common social human experience — for instance, the recognition of the need for a youth activities centre and the support of students.

Until I undertook the present research study I did not recognise in 1970 the role played by ideology - how ideological practice beliefs about what was good for the residents were projected into the process of community development. For instance, I believed that the Lake Tyers Council, although not the creation of the residents, would suit what I presumed was a homogenous group bonded by kinship, culture and heritage. I failed to appreciate that the Council was a construct of Western community social work practice.

(v) a community social work model and planned change with an Aboriginal population

In Chapter Two, it was noted that 'the model of process in community organization' proposed by Brager and Specht (1973) was used to analyse the organised growth and development of the group life of the Lake Tyers residents - from a beginning as the Lake Tyers Council to a conclusion as the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust. The model proposed a theory of the development of a constituency's group life through four stages and identified four types of constituent groups associated with each stage. The authors' admitted that the evolution of a group's life did not inevitably follow their model's stages of development (Brager and Specht 1973:72). Furthermore, the source of the authors' evidence, the disadvantaged urban groups and neighbourhoods of the United States of America (Brager and Specht 1973:13-14), was very different from the nature of the Aboriginal population of Lake Tyers as residents of a former Station.

After a few months of observation of residential life, conversations with residents and attendance at Lake Tyers Council meetings, I realised that my initial assumptions about the group structure and functioning of the Lake Tyers people were mistaken. The assumptions were firstly, that the residents in 1970 formed a cohesive group
‘naturally’ relating to each other because of their Aboriginality, common history of colonisation and experience of living at the former Station, and shared residential space; and secondly, that as the residents had relatively recently engaged in a protest campaign, they would be articulate about the goals they wanted for Lake Tyers, ready to name what they wanted to achieve and how they planned to achieve them. I was told that the social organization of Lake Tyers included a division between at least two ‘camps’ or family blocks (Personal Papers February 1970). I observed that some families had infrequent social interaction with some other families (Personal Papers June 1970), and I noticed that at meetings no one advocated a log of claims for negotiation with the Ministry (Personal Papers January-February 1970). A homogeneous community and a well-organised lobby with plans for the future were not features of Lake Tyers. Throughout 1970-1971 I remained perplexed and unable to see a constructive purpose for the Council.

From my analysis in this context I have concluded that the situation of group life at Lake Tyers did not progress as the model proposed. The meetings of the Lake Tyers Council did resemble a ‘Socialisation Group’ of constituents, but the development towards the formation of a ‘Primary Group’ seemed to founder, especially after the Minister’s announcement in April 1970. With a known outcome, the promise of land ownership and self-management, I had expected noticeable changes in group cohesion, identification and commitment. Instead I found it was very difficult to bring:

..the perspectives of theory, strategy and ideology to bear on the group’s efforts, thus providing it with purpose and direction (Brager and Specht 1973:133).

I did not know how to assist the residents to progress toward:

..the development of affective relationships and sense of belonging among the participants (Brager and Specht 1973:117).

There were two fundamental reasons why the process of group development at Lake Tyers diverged from the model’s pathway. The first reason concerned the unique sociological nature of this Aboriginal population. A community social work
theoretical model needed to be relevant and devised in relation to their culture and social organization. The second reason related to flaws in the community development process instigated by the Ministry - and referred to already.

Sociological concepts of primary and secondary group structure and relationships have helped explain why the group life did founder at the model’s Primary Group stage. The Aboriginal social organisation consisted of primary groups – the families. The pattern of organised group development of Brager and Specht’s model relied on progression from primary to secondary group formation. The usefulness of a secondary group life and how to achieve it – the experience of forming and maintaining a racial community to prosper their interests - was not known to Lake Tyers residents. Furthermore, the process of community development was significantly upset by the Director’s style portrayed especially at the April Lake Tyers Council meeting, the Ministry’s dominant agency approach (Wolfe-Keddie 1996), the Director’s cooption of the Chairman as community leader, and the executive’s failure to relate to the process of social change to the residents’ social organisation.

My idealistic strategic plan prepared in April 1970 (see Chapter 6) and constructed from a Western cultural perspective of community social work envisaged the Lake Tyers Council becoming a body similar to Brager and Specht’s ‘Organisation-Development Group’ (Brager and Specht 1973:155), where ‘program planning and implementation and the development of organisational structure’ are the technical tasks of the worker. The evolution of this stage of organised group development did not happen.

The Lake Tyers Council continued to meet until the Trust was established but it did not develop group behaviour characteristics other than those of a stage two ‘Primary Group’. The proposed Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust however fitted Brager and Specht’s fourth stage of development - an ‘Institutional Relations Organisation’, a formal body or secondary group ‘whose function was to advance the interests of their constituency and provide a link between constituents and institutions’ (Brager and Specht 1973:165). Thus, the Trust began operation with the residents depending on the knowledge and skills of
the Trust appointed Accountant and Ministry staff to perform the ‘institutional relations’ functions outlined by Brager and Specht (1973:78) as:

...to change organizations in the interests of the constituents of community efforts. This change may range on a continuum from a concern with institutional attitudes and behaviour, to institutional systems of service delivery, the redistribution of institutional resources, and the reorganisation of authority and control within the institutional system.

The model of Brager and Specht was devised from a socio-cultural and political context that did not easily suit the situation of Lake Tyers.

The scope of social change and the process of community development

The social and power structures of the surrounding environment were not identified as a target of the planned process of social change at Lake Tyers. The Director depicted the scope of the change as the condition of the residents of Lake Tyers:

...to work with the people to help them change their attitude to themselves, to the immediate community around Lake Tyers, and to the community at large (Worthy 1973b:3).

I have argued that the existence of the residential Aboriginal population living at Lake Tyers was a product of the race-structured society of East Gippsland and Australia. The life experiences of the residents of Lake Tyers were shaped by their Aboriginality, heritage, social organisation and the dominant position of the colonisers who had established and maintained a Church Mission and then a Government Station on reserved Crown land. The Ministry’s planned process of social change at Lake Tyers did not take into account the situation of the residents as a microcosm of the larger race structure of the environment and to therefore, deliberately target the regional disadvantage of Aboriginal people. Seeking to significantly alter the horizontal community relationships between the Aboriginal people and regional municipal governments (the Shire of Tambo, the Shire of Orbost, the Shire of Bairnsdale and the Town of Bairnsdale) was not a part of the Ministry’s plan. Neither was the plan of social change for Lake Tyers planned with specific reference to improving education, employment, health, and accommodation
services to Aboriginal residents of East Gippsland. It is suggested that achieving social change at Lake Tyers would have been enhanced if specific attention was directed at improving the vertical or extra-community connections of the residents and their environment. Instead the Ministry sponsored improvements in services in East Gippsland as a part of the Ministry’s State-wide ‘broad spectrum social intervention programme’ (Boas 1973:10).

Mowbray (1985:41) questioned the efficacy of a process of local community development that did not aim to confront the causes of the problems encountered by the disadvantaged constituency. He suggested change confined to the horizontal dimension of a local community superficially dealt with disadvantage. He insisted that the target of effective community development should be the causative factors of inequality emanated from outside the local environment, those related to structures shaped by the political economy. Mowbray’s critique is apposite to what happened at Lake Tyers where change focused on the condition of the residents and not their environment. The achievement of a new social and economic status for the people of Lake Tyers - the overall goal of the social change – did demand the Ministry’s special attention to the external environment of both horizontal and vertical relationships. This structural focus was not prioritised.

The overall organisational goals of the Ministry were not ‘environmental change’ – ‘specific and concrete, focused on a substantive change in some problem area’ (Brager and Specht 1973:48), but were ‘integrative’ and ‘designed to enhance agency and community services’ (Brager and Specht 1973:47). The organisational goal of the Ministry was ‘socio-therapeutic’, one where ‘the primary aim was to change the participant’ (Brager and Specht 1973:47-48). Khinduka (1979) has commented that concentration on people’s psychological capacity has been a limitation of the efficacy of community development. He wrote:

..it is questionable if psychological repair of an individual can accomplish what requires a fundamental rearrangement of economic and social institutions (Khinduka 1979:362).
It is argued in the thesis that both 'socio-therapeutic' and 'environmental change' goals were required at Lake Tyers. A 'socio-therapeutic' goal was an appropriate change goal affecting self-perception, ambition to succeed at the work place, in family and communal functioning, and in interactions with the environment.

Khinduka (1979:358) has suggested an alternative process of social change to the one undertaken at Lake Tyers - the introduction of structural change that precedes and then instigates attitudinal and value modifications. This alternative process would have focused on the vertical and horizontal relationships of the Lake Tyers people and the Aboriginal people of East Gippsland, and involved governments, the market and civil society.

Today the proper starting point for community planning and implementing social change with Aboriginal populations is a social analysis that locates 'race' and 'inter-ethnic field' as the central analytical concepts. Necessary value assumptions underpinning the analysis include: recognition of the rights of Aboriginal people conveyed by their prior occupation of the nation state prior to settlement and colonisation, recognition of the people's experience of colonisation with its regional and local manifestations, and knowing how the people survived and retained their racial identity and unique culture in the face of fundamental attacks at their social structure and social organisation. In 1970, the Ministry did not conduct a structural analysis of the Lake Tyers situation and its location within the regional East Gippsland environment. The Ministry had a broad sense of the impact of past practices of colonisation, especially that of the former Station, but the technology of structural analysis of race-structured disadvantage had not been developed by the early seventies. While the Government's policy of integration did not sanction this approach, the Government and the Ministry were sensitive to the anxieties that social change was stirring in East Gippsland race politics evident in the part played by the local parliamentarian.

More recently Popple (1994:27 & 33) proposed 'a progressive community work process'. It emphasised a praxis — a process of critical reflection, action, further critical
reflection and further action - that works to deconstruct the oppression and unequal relations a community experiences with its environment while it actively reconstructs opportunities. Popple (1994) drew on the community education ideas of Freire (1972) and his central concept of conscientisation: ‘before people can engage in action for change they have first to reflect upon their present situation’, overcome false ideology so that they do not collude with the oppressor, and validate their experiences, culture, dreams, values and histories (Popple 1994:32). Popple’s ‘progressive approach’ also adopted Freire’s ‘problematising method’ where the community social worker immersed her/himself in the community’s situation and engaged ‘in the task of codifying total reality into symbols which can generate critical consciousness’. Thus the worker helped to construct a process that empowered the constituents (Popple 1994:33).

It is suggested that the Director of the Ministry in 1970-1971 would not have tolerated his staff using the Freire’s ‘education for liberation’ ideas at Lake Tyers (had they been known) because it was seen to jeopardise the Government’s political purpose and Mr Worthy’s preferred ‘dominant agency approach’. Nevertheless, the ‘progressive approach’ of Popple (1994) may have assisted the residents to focus on their situation and then led them onto community action. The appeal of this approach is its initial direct concentration on resident Aboriginal families striving to find a place in society. It is focused on their fragile social and economic situation.

Dixon (1992) has discerned a recent trend in how community work practice has been described, calling it ‘the praxis-oriented material’. She characterised this material as

...the social construction of practice: to acknowledge that while heavily circumscribed by structural arrangements the practitioner can have an impact by adopting certain strategies and avoiding others. The interplay between the individual and social relations is emphasised. Strategies which make the personal public, and thereby political, are favoured. Here practitioners, in the main, have described themselves as working alongside their constituents in a process of empowerment (Dixon 1992:9).

The ‘praxis-oriented’ approach to community social work practice, also represented in Popple’s (1994) ‘progressive approach’, was unavailable in 1970-1971. Today it can
be regarded as a promising ingredient of practice and viewed as an alternative to what happened at Lake Tyers. The 'praxis-oriented' approach can incorporate a lesson of this study: that the starting point of community development with the residential population of Lake Tyers was properly with their social organization based on primary groups.

**Implications for contemporary community social work practice with Aboriginal groups**

It was noted in Chapter Three that theory-building activity - 'ordering of the vast array of discrete data about community characteristics, community problems, and methods of intervention' (Brager and Specht 1973:67), had concentrated on developing 'practice models' (Rothman 1974; Morrissette, McKenzie and Morrissette 1993; Popple 1995; Checkaway 1995), and 'principles of practice' (Weeks 1994; Gutierrez and Lewis 1994). It was argued further that in the case of community practice with Aboriginal communities, theory building was at a very early stage of development. A systematic and comprehensive study of cases of community organising with Aborigines has still to be undertaken; community characteristics, social situations, and intervention approaches have still to be classified; and finally typologies or models of practice conceptualised.

Gluck (1985) presented the foundations of practice theory building as a values perspective when, drawing from practice experiences in Western Australia, he produced a manual titled 'A Community development approach to work with Aboriginal groups and communities'. Significantly, his approach identified the worker's entry point for community work was relating to the Aboriginal family network, after first obtaining the approval of the local Aboriginal organisation (Gluck 1985:7). He started with Aboriginal social organisation - knowing Aboriginal social structures and Aboriginal values; and he stressed a working-together process of human development.

Values are certainly a foundational unit of community social work practice, but knowledge must be added to the repertoire, especially knowledge about effective social change intervention methods and practitioner skills. By taking values, knowledge and
skills into the 'inter-cultural social field' (Martin 2005) I wish to offer some ideas about community social work practice with Aboriginal people.

The distinction Weeks (1994) made between 'feminist community work' and 'community work with women' has suggested a way to distinguish two categories of community organising involving Aboriginal people - 'community work with Aborigines' and 'Aboriginal community organising'. Weeks distinguished her two categories on the basis of differences in: (i) 'goals and social purposes' and (ii) the adoption of feminist process, but with 'the goals and purposes as primary' (Weeks 1994:27-28, 32).

A tentative construction of principles for practice of two types of community social work interventions with Aboriginal people is suggested by translating the notions of Weeks into the context of community work practice with Aboriginal people in a race structured colonised society. The construction may follow a similar pathway to that of 'feminist community work' and 'community work with women', with the discernment of two different approaches distinguished in terms of (i) goals/purposes, and (ii) processes. The purpose of 'Aboriginal community organising' is the intentional pursuit of structural social change in the present power relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and institutions, and where the analysis of the structure is undertaken by Aboriginal people. The goal of organising is decolonisation - to overcome the pervasive sub-ordination of Aborigines, so that they have position and authority to determine Aboriginal cultural autonomy and declared interests, and how those interests should be obtained.

The proposed process principles of 'Aboriginal community organising' concern the targeted Aboriginal population and include:

- a social analysis of the structure of those Aboriginal people's livelihood based on race and colonisation as the central analytical concepts, and where the analysis is conducted by Aborigines, or where the exercise is governed by Aboriginal people
- a knowledge of the Aboriginal people's cultural heritage, and past and current
psychological and social experience of subjugation arising from colonisation

- identification of the people's social organization as: Aboriginal family structure of geographically spread networks of extended kin; leadership patterns; and 'racial community' asserting common interests based on Aboriginal identity and need

- application of organising strategies to strengthen the kin networks and building linkages between the different family networks;

- integration of Aboriginal social values and methods of action into a planning process — for example, grass roots organising using non-hierarchical forms of organization that encourage broad participation.

- involvement of the formally incorporated Aboriginal agencies, and assisting them to develop governance, service delivery and capacities to extend and improve their inter-organisational relations.

- governance by Aboriginal executive management, and accountability of the intervention is to Aboriginal community control.

- employment of non-Aboriginal community social work staff would be subject to appointment by, and continuing satisfaction of, the Aboriginal management.

‘Community work with Aborigines’ has goals of improving the livelihood of Aboriginal people and contributing to the empowerment of Aboriginal people and their organizations. Here, however, Aboriginal people and Aboriginal community based organizations have not necessarily sponsored the community work, completed a social analysis based on race and colonisation, formulated the goals, controlled the change process and the purpose may or may not be directly political.

Relevant policy and program directions

Since 1972, national Aboriginal affairs policy has varied depending on the party holding government. Labour Governments have emphasised 'self-determination' while Liberal National Coalition Governments have proposed 'self-management' as the key policy approach. Rowse (2002) set the time of the Commonwealth Labour Government’s
recognition of the policy self-determination as:

"...some time (it is difficult to be precise) between Prime Minister McMahon’s Cairns Statement of April 1971 and the earliest decisions of the Whitlam government in December 1972. Its characteristic public policy moves have been two: affirming Indigenous land rights and publicly subsidising Indigenous organisations (Rowse 2002:1)."

According to Rowse (2002), the new Commonwealth policy direction allowed for choice of the direction of their adaptation and development by Indigenous individuals and groups (Rowse 2002:15). In 1988, the Labour Government’s self-determination policy was stated by the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs as:

...the recognition of the equal right of Aboriginal people along with other Australians to determine their own future within the Australian community.... acknowledges Aborigines are a distinct cultural group.... Recognises[s] the worth of Aboriginal culture and the rights of Aborigines to pursue a life style which are in accordance with that culture. Self-determination also seeks to improve the social and economic circumstances of Aborigines by encouraging them to take charge of their own affairs (Rowse 1992:1).

Since 1975, Liberal-National Coalition Governments have called their policy ‘self-management’ (Ministerial Statement 24 November 1978:5). In 1978, Aboriginal self-management was explained as:

...self-management requires that Aboriginals, as individuals and as communities, be in a position to make the same kinds of decisions about their future as other Australians customarily make, and to accept responsibility for the results flowing from those decisions. The issue is one of Aboriginals exercising authority with responsibility (Ministerial Statement 24 November 1978:5).

Grattan (2000) has commented about the different policy emphases:

The nation’s policy has swung between assimilation and brands of self-determination and self-management. Aboriginal leaders are divided among themselves about the way forward (Grattan 2000: 6).

Presently, the Coalition Government has focussed on a policy containing the
characteristics of the earlier policy of integration that it has termed ‘practical reconciliation’ - rejecting self-determination, instituting ‘mutual obligation’ arrangements, and arguing for the improvement of the situation of Indigenous people through the provision of mainstream services so that they become equal to other Australians (Martin 2005). Improvement has been defined as closing the measured gaps in employment, education, income, housing and health conditions (Martin 2005). Martin (2005:108-109) has warned that already this policy approach has been rejected by Aboriginal people because of its insensitivity to Aboriginal people’s enjoyment of their relatively independent domain, and because they want to negotiate the terms of their engagement with society.

It is suggested the following ideas can contribute to the development of a new policy approach of ‘Indigenous self-determination and self-government’ (Brennan 2003). First, the adoption of a ‘social development perspective’ (Midgley 1999), where economic progress serves social development goals, to replace the policy approach of welfare programs re-distributing economic resources to fund unproductive social programs. By allocating resources to social programs that are productive and investment oriented, peoples’ economic participation and capacity to make positive contributions to development is enhanced (Nanavatty 1993; Midgley 1999:3; Midgley & Shearaden 2000:435-436). This approach resonates with Pearson’s (1999) critique of the way welfare has been administered to Aboriginal people of Cape York, and with his argument to develop ‘a real economy’:

Government transfers are a valuable and necessary resource, but the welfare nature of these transfers has to be changed in order to make it a useful and productive resource (Pearson 1999:56-60).

The implication for Lake Tyers is the development at Lake Tyers of profitable business enterprises that provide employment and job skills training as a part of an overall long term social development strategy.

Second, the specification of explicit or implicit assumptions made about the place of
Aboriginal people in Australian society is fundamental to policy building. For Martin, (2005:112) to varying degrees Aboriginal people interact with non-Aboriginal people in what Merlan (1998) calls an ‘intercultural’ social field. The general Australian society is where Aboriginal groups have variously adopted non-Aboriginal values and practices, as well as diversely maintained an autonomous Aboriginal social, economic and political life nurtured by distinct Aboriginal worldviews. Earlier Barwick (1971) was cited making a similar point, that Aboriginal people, pursuing separate identity and resisting assimilation, were moulded by the worlds of both coloniser and traditional heritage. The current policy initiatives of social inclusion and dispersed local place management governance should not be construed as planks of an integration policy given the concept of ‘intercultural’ social field.

In the light of the above, a place management development of Lake Tyers should view residents of Lake Tyers as members of the wider social and economic world, as well as their own geographic and social community. The boundaries of Aboriginal social organization and those of the wider society reach beyond the residential area and the property owned by the Trust. They should set the social, economic and political arena of Lake Tyers life.

Third, the recognition of the unique role played by effectively governed Aboriginal organisations in representing Aboriginal interests and working towards overcoming disadvantage in the ‘intercultural’ context. Evidence from the *Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development* has suggested that competent governance by Aboriginal organisations is a key factor in achieving change in the living conditions of Aboriginal groups (Cornell and Begay 2003). Martin (2005:114-119) views the Aboriginal governance organisation operating in both spheres of Aboriginal life – the external relations of the group and its members with the environment, and the group’s internal social organisation. The Aboriginal organisation, although established in the past by governments for different reasons, has become a ‘site of the engagement and transformation of values and practices drawn from both Aboriginal worlds and the general Australian society’ (Martin 2005:117-118). They have a ‘dual incorporation’
— by statute and by their adoption into the Aboriginal world (Martin 2005:119). The dual nature of today’s Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust deserves recognition. Although implanted by government it now represents the vested interests of many Aboriginal people.

Fourth, overcoming disadvantage requires recognition of Aboriginal people, groups and organisations to be involved in ‘strategic engagement’ processes which:

...recognises that reducing disadvantage ultimately requires Aboriginal people to negotiate particular forms of engagement with the dominant society (Martin 2005:109).

and where Aboriginal people:

... interact with, contribute to, draw from, and of course potentially reject, values and practices of the dominant Australian society, in a considered and informed manner that provides them with real choices as to where to go and how to get there (Martin 2005:116).

The ‘strategic engagement’ is interactional, can be conflictual, and has outcomes with consequences that are the responsibility of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parties to the engagement. *The Harvard Project* has argued that an effectively governed Aboriginal organisation has leadership prepared to make decisions that challenge unproductive Aboriginal group values, and to introduce management processes and practices they believe better serve members’ interests. A ‘cultural match’ of values drawn from the Aboriginal world and the wider society, the product of ‘strategic engagement’, constitutes competent governance (Cornell and Begay 2003). The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust can play a crucial part in the process of ‘strategic engagement’ given it is capable of providing competent governance and willing to be accountable to its members and to its funders.

Finally, organisational competence in management, service delivery and ‘strategic engagement’ relies on staff with relevant knowledge and skills, people able to take direction from the executive of an Aboriginal controlled organisation who institute different values, priorities and processes, and capable of giving a quality of service that
satisfies management, Aboriginal clients and service users. It would seem wisely selected and well-supervised Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff can make contributions to the operations of Aboriginal organisations. The model developed by *Cape York Partnerships* has used *Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships* to supply a pool of experts to serve Aboriginal determined objectives. The personnel are drawn from a variety of sources including: universities, business corporations, philanthropic foundations and government administration. (Pearson 13 October 2003).

The formulation of a contemporary Aboriginal social development policy is long overdue, one that adopts the ‘cultural dimension of the Aboriginal people’ and is ‘aligned with internal Aboriginal governance’ (Dodson 2005), has regional and local relevance, and is based on evidence from Indigenous research (Smith 1999). Furthermore, finding such a policy approach is a pre-requisite for defining the role community social work may play in working towards Aboriginal social development.

The status and circumstances of Indigenous people have altered unevenly since 1970. Today Indigenous leaders hold professional, academic and institutional positions of relative power where they can influence economic and social policy outcomes affecting Aboriginal Australians. The number of enrolled Aboriginal medical students at Australian universities and graduates in training is one indication of an altered scene – no students or graduates in 1970 but about one hundred in 2005 (Sydney Morning Herald 21 May 2005:10). A general appraisal suggests however a grim situation requiring urgent action:

...after 30 years and 3 decades of considerable investment and commitment by the Australian people to the position of indigenous peoples, we have not really made much progress (Pearson 1999:2).

In 2005, the residents of Lake Tyers and the members of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust are engaged in the *Lake Tyers Community Renewal Community Project*, a ten year partnership exercise sponsored by the Victorian Government and organised by the Department of Justice in collaboration with other Commonwealth and State Departments,
Aboriginal controlled and community sector human service agencies (Lake Tyers Community Renewal Project 10 November 2004). Designated a spatially disadvantaged population, the Lake Tyers people have become party to a local place-based management, joined up government and community project.

A pertinent social policy is necessary to underpin either approach to community organising with Aboriginal groups and features common to both should include:

• a commitment to social change through decolonisation, self-determination, land ownership and self-management
• social development that addresses the economic objectives of self-reliance through employment and business enterprise, and the social objectives of opposition to welfare dependency and attention to personal, family and communal growth
• funding of Aboriginal community-based and managed organisations as functional service providers, as well as ensuring that main-stream services are accessible and attentive to Aboriginal needs and cultural interests
• Indigenous control of, or a negotiated partnership of Indigenous and non-Indigenous parties in planning, implementing and evaluating program activities
• employment of qualified Indigenous workers and Indigenous persons willing to be trained; and the employment of non-Indigenous workers on condition that they undertake an induction into an Indigenous cultural awareness and world-view.

Smith (1999) has indicated a way for the process of ‘Aboriginal community organising’ to proceed based on the philosophy of decolonisation. She has illustrated how Kaupapa Maori research has set Maori research goals according to principles that ensure the research: (i) is related to ‘being Maori’; (ii) is connected to Maori philosophy and principles; (iii) takes for granted the validity and legitimacy of Maori, the importance of Maori language and culture; and (iv) is concerned with ‘the struggle for autonomy over our own cultural well being’ (Smith 1999:185).

The thesis has argued that the Ministry did not appreciate that it constructed its
understanding of the social world of Lake Tyers from a Western coloniser world view. Today a foundational condition of planned social change with Aboriginal groups is a process that identifies dominant Western thought forms, facilitates the construction of Indigenous knowledge and expression of values, aspirations and priorities, and enables dialogue between the different cultural discourses. The thinking of Smith (1999) concerning Indigenous perspectives on research can be translated to the practice of social change in the field of Indigenous affairs:

While rhetorically the indigenous movement may be encapsulated within the politics of self-determination it is a much more dynamic and complex movement which incorporates many dimensions, some of which are still unfolding. It involves a revitalisation and reformulation of culture and tradition, an increased participation in and articulate rejection of Western institutions, a focus on strategic relations and alliances with non-Indigenous groups (Smith 1999:110).

Social change involving Aboriginal people operates in an ‘intercultural social field’ (Martin 2005). It is vital to recognise that two interdependent and also relatively independent cultural groups — Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people — transact in a field retaining structures of colonisation shaped by race. A meeting between the parties is the opportunity for a dialogue and ‘strategic engagement’ (Martin 2005); and it can be a contribution to the process of de-colonisation when both parties negotiate from strength and exchange something the other wants (Wolfe-Keddie 1996:163). A ‘strategic engagement’ does not automatically occur when the two parties meet. A responsibility of the planners of social change is to ensure that the balance of power between the parties is not so unequal that only one party obtains a benefit from the dialogue.

Wrestling with social change occurs on at least the following fronts — between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parties (as above); and between Aboriginal organizations, their constituent members, Aboriginal groups and family networks. The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development has developed another use of the concept of ‘cultural matching’ (Cornell 2003). It applies to the situation where leaders of Aboriginal organizations make decisions challenging the existing political cultural values of Aboriginal community members. The leaders need the support of their community for
the decisions to be effective and a negotiated resolution is required between the leaders with responsibility for governance and the community members. The outcome constitutes a ‘cultural matching’, and it has an internal impact - the adaptation introduces a new normative expectation into the community’s political culture and social organisation (Martin 2005).

The thesis has found that sociological concepts pertinent to the non-Aboriginal social world – often the thought forms used by government, bureaucracy, the market and civil society - require reconstruction to fit Aboriginal experience, cultural world view and social organization. Community social workers have an intellectual and professional responsibility to recognise that concepts such as ‘family’, ‘community’ and ‘leadership’ are culturally defined for specific situations, that there exists a plurality of meanings which must be clarified. Earlier it was argued that the secondary group Western sociologists call ‘community’ was not a feature of the social organisation of the residents of Lake Tyers. Consequently, the goal I assumed as the community social worker – assisting the residents to form a ‘geographical community’ and/or ‘community of interest’ - was alien to their social thinking. They did not hold a view of a corporate community and so they were unable to share a common objective with the Ministry, or know how to action corporately during the process of community development, and when the Trust was in operation after 1st July 1971.

Culturally sensitive practice must understand how Aboriginal people give those concepts meaning and how dominant Western definitions inscribed in policies and programs conflict with the meanings comprehended by the Aboriginal people's social world. Practitioners performing the roles of broker, educator and advocate must directly tackle the inappropriate expectations of departmental program administrators as well as that Aboriginal groups perceive assimilation forces are at play. Community social workers must discern which social programs and processes of community development retain Western thought forms, and recognise that they are not designed according to Aboriginal cultural thinking and behaviour; and therefore invite resistance and rejection by Aboriginal people. Today, programs and processes can too easily represent
compliance to values held by non-Aboriginal people and to institutions in powerful positions, and so become antagonistic to Aboriginal identity, cultural preservation and aspiration. Program objectives should facilitate a ‘cultural match’ (Cornell 2003) within the social organization of Aboriginal groups, so that the incorporated Aboriginal organizations established at law can authentically represent the Aboriginal interests of their membership because their Aboriginal leaders are empowered by their own constituents to represent them. Program objectives need to give attention to a process of ‘strategic engagement’ (Martin 2005) between those representing an Aboriginal perspective and the program managers representing Government policy or dominant non-Aboriginal pressure groups. If program and process outcomes are to advantage Aboriginal people, resolution of differences in interests and values involves dialogue and negotiation, and not conformity to government agency prescriptions that are seen as fostering or maintaining control by non-Aboriginal parties.

In the case of Lake Tyers, both the residents and the Ministry had a broad degree of mutuality of goals to engage strategically but there was an inequality in the parties’ respective negotiating skills and their organisational power. The residents had not formed a secondary group or community organisation with representative leadership from which to negotiate their interests. Their social organization was without resources — organisational strength, funds, knowledge and skills - to access the media and inform the public. The community social worker employed as a public servant and accountable to the Ministry’s executive to achieve its goals and objectives was in a situation of role conflict also having the task of overcoming this considerable imbalance. The task of building the capacity of the Lake Tyers Council so that the residents were in a position to negotiate from a position of strength was effectively impeded by the ‘agency control’ practice of the Ministry, and the Director's co-option of a leader. A ‘strategic engagement’ (Martin 2005) between the Ministry and the residents of Lake Tyers could not occur during the process of social change while the Ministry undervalued talking with the residents about their aspirations for the future and did not relate to the social organization of the residents.
The role of a non-Indigenous social community worker in a community development project with Indigenous people

At the time of the process of social change at Lake Tyers, Australia-wide there were very few experienced Aboriginal community workers, let alone Aboriginal social workers, available for employment there. The Ministry had employed female and male Aboriginal staff in a number of positions since its inception in 1968, relying on their knowledge and leadership skills acquired from experience as members of Aboriginal families, groups and organizations, viz. hostel parents, a nurse, a printer, unqualified welfare workers, liaison workers/advisers to Aboriginal people and to non-Aboriginal staff (Reports of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs 30 June 1969 and 30 June 1970).

In 1970, the role of being an Aboriginal community worker combined with being Officer-in-Charge of the Lake Tyers settlement was formidable. The position would test any person’s capacity. The Director sought a community worker at Lake Tyers with whom he reckoned he could work closely and who had community social work skills (Worthy 1973b). His criteria excluded the appointment of an Aboriginal person. Given he planned to transfer the land title, his awareness of the history of past mistrustful and abusive relationships of former Station non-Aboriginal staff with residents, and the difficulties the residents faced in conditions of social change, Mr Worthy believed a social worker had the repertoire to make the contribution he wanted.

There were alternative options, such as the Lake Tyers Council. It was not considered a viable enough body to employ a community social worker and it had no experience of working closely with the Ministry as a sponsor of a process of change. The Tatz Committee in late 1966 had envisaged a form of collaborative sponsorship and implementation between the Board, the League and community groups, but the Government’s integration policy, the working style of the Director and the Ministry’s ‘dominant agency approach’ meant such an arrangement was out of the question when during 1969 the League’s membership asserted its preference for an Aboriginal executive leadership based on the principle of self-determination. The highly political nature of the social change involved both the component of enactment of legislation and the
component of the process of community development, suited the single overall sponsorship by the Ministry, and the deployment of a community social worker directly accountable to the Director and his Executive staff.

With reference to the issue of whether today a non-Indigenous person should be employed on an 'Aboriginal community organising' project, I am guided by the paradoxical response of Smith (1999:184) to the question: 'Can a non-indigenous researcher carry out Kaupapa Maori research?' She replied in two ways - 'yes', 'but not on their own'; and 'no' as by definition it is Maori business. Smith indicated that ultimately the deployment of a non-Indigenous person rests with Indigenous decision makers. I affirm this is the position taken in the model of 'Aboriginal community organising'.

It is my view that, whether the employer is an Aboriginal community controlled agency, or a government body or a mainstream community service organisation, the employment of a relevantly qualified and experienced Indigenous worker is preferred; and the appointment of an Indigenous person applicant who is willing to be trained should be prioritised. The employment of a non-Indigenous community social worker should be conditional on them being selected by Aboriginal people – the same people who have detailed the job description. The non-Aboriginal community social worker must be willing to be accountable to the executive of an Aboriginal organization and supervised by Aboriginal management. A range of alternative models of appointment, accountability and supervision are available (Stewart and Pyett 2005: 15-26), for instance, a community service organization should appoint an Aboriginal Committee or Aboriginal Reference Group to formally have oversight of the community change project. Regardless of type of employing body the person should initially undertake an induction course provided by Aboriginal people. The principles include: being Aboriginal, the validity of Aboriginal history, culture and social organisation and the struggle against colonisation, and the Aboriginal philosophy and world-view.
On these terms, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous community social workers may make a contribution to Aboriginal social development and to decolonisation.

**Further research**

Aboriginal disadvantage is embedded in the structure of Australian society and its causation is racial and its resolution complex. Yet the social work profession continues to have limited experience working for Indigenous justice. Community social work practice research activities concerned with the planned social change of the status of Aboriginal residential populations deserves high priority so that knowledge of 'what has been tried' and 'what works' can be promoted. Currently both Commonwealth and State Governments are sponsoring a number of community work interventions with Aboriginal people in settled rural and urban Australia. These sites of planned social change offer opportunities for practice research. Practitioners employed by these programs have a slim body of theoretical practice knowledge to draw upon, and there are few reference points to guide the deployment of their analytical and interactional skills in a process of social development. It is recommended that an emphasis be placed on practice research regarding planned community development of local Aboriginal residential populations – on practice at the 'grass roots' level and how change is effected from a 'bottom-up' perspective. There is also an urgent need to evaluate how current policy and social and economic programs impact at the local Aboriginal residential population level.

The thesis has suggested practice principles for two community social work approaches. The efficacy of these principles needs to be tested by practice experience, and their utility explored by the sponsorship of practice research by Governments, universities, philanthropic foundations and socially responsible corporations, in collaboration with Aboriginal leaders, their community organizations and Aboriginal residential populations. In all cases a fundamental condition applies - that Aboriginal organizations and people determine the ethics of any research endeavour.
Conclusion

The research task has traversed a period from the late 1960s-early 1970s to the present day and contrasted the political, policy and community social work practice values, attitudes, knowledge, theories and social relations during the occasion of an episode of planned change, and compared them with those of today when the research was written. The two worlds of Aboriginal affairs were very different for me as the non-Indigenous community social worker and then later as a researcher.

As researcher, I have undergone an education that has led to an appreciation of the pervasiveness of colonisation within my thinking, community social work practice and social research. It has kindled a motivation to view situations from the perspective of the colonised (without neglecting that of the coloniser) and to prize an Indigenous epistemology. It has nurtured a commitment to realise the principle of Indigenous people being assigned powerful positions in order to secure their interests. Smith’s (1999) ‘decolonising methodology’, has been a valued learning tool facilitating personal transformation and underpinning the research endeavour.

This thesis has found that an outcome mutually desired by Government, Aboriginal groups and their supporters was achieved in 1971. The necessary conditions for ownership and self-management were established by legislation despite the protested limitation placed on the eligibility for membership by a group of Aboriginal people. Emphasis has been given to identifying the nature of the structure of the Ministry’s process of social change and to describing the content of that process. It is argued that this arrangement limited the realisation of the sufficient conditions of social change and the objectives of the process of community development.

There were a number of reasons for this:
(i) the time available for social development was determined primarily by a political objective, a political imperative that became pre-eminent and non-negotiable for the Government.

(ii) the residents' continued to confront a race structured environment that was not undergoing fundamental change and providing opportunities to the Lake Tyers people and other Aboriginal people of Gippsland who faced marginal economic and social relationships.

(iii) the pressures of transition were exacting on the personal, family and social stability and development of the residents.

(iv) the restricted investment of time by the executive in the process of community development meant crucial opportunities for social development were not made available to the residents. With no blueprint to follow the executive had an opportunity to innovate by undertaking a social analysis of the structure of the Lake Tyers people's livelihood, and concentrate on exploring how to integrate the process of community development with the residents' aspiration, social strengths, extended family networks and leadership.

(v) the executive gave priority to a social planning model of community organising that improved State wide housing and education programs rather than attending closely to the needs of the process of community development at Lake Tyers (Boas 1974:255; Lyons 1983:74). The tension between the executive's approach and the community social worker's locality community development method of approach was significant but not understood.

(vi) the model of locality community development practiced at Lake Tyers was less effective in directing the social development processes because it did not relate appropriately to Aboriginal social structure and social organisation. The strength of the extended kin networks was not utilised. The leadership selected to be the
Cornerstone of the community development process did not relate to the residents' leadership structure and thus was unable to represent the collective voice of the residents and express their common interests.

(vii) the reliance on Western cultural knowledge meant there was inadequate understanding of Aboriginal social organization, the Aboriginal family and community structure and the process of community development suffered, and

(viii) a complete reliance on the internal resources of the Ministry to undertake the community development planning and implementation of the process despite the complexity of the process of social change at Lake Tyers, the Ministry's inexperience in directing, co-ordinating and monitoring a process of locality development of this scale, and the little experience the Ministry had had of undertaking a process of community development with a residential Aboriginal population.

The condition of the people of Lake Tyers and their preparation for ownership and self-management were the issues of concern of the process of community development. From the announcement of land transfer and at the handover ceremony, the Minister and the Director promised technical and financial support into the future. Unfortunately, after the establishment of the Trust no 'Agreement' was struck between the Trust and the Ministry with a guaranteed time period of planned assistance and a specification of the nature of the assistance. A strategic plan outlining a clear process of social development for the short, medium and long term future was required.

Postscript

The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust is operational today, more than thirty years after the title to the property was transferred by the Government. The resident population has increased to about one hundred and fifty adults and children. The farm is no longer a significant income earning asset, and the cleared pasture is leased on agistment. In November 2004 by amending legislation, (Aboriginal Lands (Amendment) Act 2004
Number 58), the Victorian Parliament empowered the Government to replace the shareholder elected Committee of Management by the appointment of a temporary Administrator to legally represent the Trust and conduct its affairs. Governance of the Trust was judged to be incapable of performing the required statutory and administrative responsibilities, especially accountability for Government grants. Law and order within the residential community had declined to an unsatisfactory level. Currently the State has organised an Administrator assisted by the resources of a renewal project to restore the Trust members' and the residents' capacity for governance, self-management, social control and social cohesion.
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APPENDIX 7.1: The sufficient conditions

Achievement of the sufficient conditions involved:

A. the residents

(i) realising that the Government’s promise of land ownership and self-management was conditional on them improving existing, and learning new, social and technical skills, acquiring knowledge about the new functions of land ownership, business management and administration of a residential community, and becoming familiar with the norms desired by the Government and the general society — that is, realising that accepting the promise meant they re-shaped their vision of a future Lake Tyers;

(ii) adapting their existing social organization to meet the proposed changes;

(iii) re-defining their needs to suit different internal and external environments, and learning new skills and acquiring knowledge to meet those needs;

(iv) increasing their participation in the external world and willing to revise their negative attitudes towards non-Aboriginal society; and

(v) sustaining personal, family and group resources of wisdom, humour, care of each other, determination and resilience as they face the new demands.

B. the Ministry

(i) providing the residents with a process of adequate resources of finance, relevant training, and skilled staff so that the residents are informed, skilled and supported as they revise their aspirations and adapt their social organisation;

(ii) demonstrating a cultural sensitivity to the residents and inviting them to participate in decision making activities that incorporated their aspirations, values and social organization into the processes of community planning and community building; and
(iii) advocating for the human rights and entitlements of the Lake Tyers and other Aboriginal people of Gippsland; and challenging the non-Aboriginal institutions and people of East Gippsland to alter their attitudes and behaviour so that the residents had access to, and use of services, resources and opportunities.

C. the non-Aboriginal environment, especially East Gippsland

(i) practicing racial equality by respecting and accepting Aboriginal people into their social and economic world; and

(ii) sharing with the people of Lake Tyers the publicly provided resources and opportunities they already enjoyed.
Appendix 7.2 distinguishes key 'Phases' in the process of community development, where a 'Phase' denotes the initial setting of the goals of social development and then the subsequent key occasions when the goals were revised. The initial and subsequent management arrangements involving Ministry staff and resident leadership also are detailed. 'Phase 1' from January to April 1970 for example, notes when I commenced working as the community social worker, the general social development goals of the Ministry, and that the Ministry organised all aspects of change at Lake Tyers. During 'Phase 1' the Ministry gave no indication of how the residents might participate in administration functions or play a leadership role.

'Phase 2' from April 1970 to June 1971, begins with the announcement by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs of the Government's plan for Lake Tyers - the transfer of title and self-management; and 'Phase 2' indicates the time span of the 'planned social change' (Dixon 1989). Political and parliamentary demands set the time available to operate the local community development intervention - the time to consult interested parties, required to draft the legislation, and available to debate and ensure the Bill was passed in both Houses. In April 1970, the Director expected to have about twelve months available to prepare the residents for self-management and land ownership (Personal Papers 1970). Phase 2 (starting in April 1970) includes two types of resident leadership - individual and group. The Lake Tyers Council was invited by the Director to elect a leader and a Chairman was appointed. This leadership arrangement remained until December 1970, when a 'leadership group' was elected, with the previously elected Chairman remaining as a member of the group. The 'leadership group' remained in position until July 1971 when the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust was instituted. 'Phase 3' covers the first six months of the life of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust - from July to December 1971 - when the Trust operated via an elected Committee of Management and began to perform governance and ownership responsibilities. This 'Phase' represents the change to a supported Aboriginal command with the Ministry relinquishing its direct statutory
responsibility for Lake Tyers, and Ministry staff acting as agents of the Trust, managing
the farm and residential services, and administrating the business of the Trust.

**First Phase – January to April 1970 – general social development goals – Ministry staff in command and chair the Lake Tyers Council**

**January 1970**

- community social worker (worker) arrives at Lake Tyers
- worker begins to provide an advisory and assistance service available to all residents, assumes management of the social development program of the Ministry and bases the approach on principles of community development
- for two weeks an Adventure camp for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teenage boys is held at Lake Tyers
- three days per week throughout the year in the late afternoon the proprietor of the Nowa Nowa General Store operates a shop at Lake Tyers
- worker begins home visiting all households and meets with the members of the various work gangs
- worker undertakes a Household Survey
- worker calls and chairs the Lake Tyers Council meetings – the first meeting is held in mid-January is also attended by the Director; [the Council met a further thirty two times until the end of June 1970 when the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust was established; Council normally met on a fortnightly basis; during this period the Director attended on another seven occasions]
- worker visits all Aboriginal households in Nowa Nowa
- worker notes the need of school age students and school leavers for space and equipment for recreation and leisure facilities

**February 1970**

- secondary students start school year at Orbost High School and the primary students attend Lake Tyers Primary School; two secondary students leave to board at two Melbourne private schools, and another two sisters board with a non-Aboriginal family in Melbourne and attend the local high school
- commencement of the Commonwealth Aboriginal Education Grants program for fourteen years and over secondary students
- the Lake Tyers Primary School Committee holds a euchre night; and organises occasional evening social events (eg. picture show) throughout the year
- the Lake Tyers Red Cross Branch organises a stall at Nowa Nowa
- adult men and young boys enter basketball teams in the Lakes Entrance competition
- the presence of cultural ways is noticeable - Gunnai words and phrases are used, artefacts are made, some families have many dogs
- male pensioners are employed on an hourly rate to upgrade the cemetery and place grave stones according to the records

March 1970

- secondary students attend a careers night at Bairnsdale High School
- pre-school age children start at the Save the Children Fund (SCF) Child Care Centre, Nowa Nowa
- the Anglican vicar of Nowa Nowa-Lake Tyers parish - an Aboriginal man from Queensland - joins the farm work gang for two weeks
- worker begins the Creative Leisure Centre for young people at the Primary School, meeting four nights a week from 7.00 pm to 8.30 pm
- worker begins planning discussion with the resident couple nominated to establish a shop by the Lake Tyers Council
- Community Notice Board mounted outside shop area and office
- farmer and farm workers attend cattle sales at Benambra

Second Phase — April 1970- June 1971 — community development goals of preparation for ownership and self-management — residents elect a Chairman of the Lake Tyers Council

April 1970

- announcement by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Victoria
- of his intention to draft legislation granting land title and self-management powers to the residents of Lake Tyers
- opening of the Lionel Rose Aboriginal Student Hostel and
• Community Centre, Morwell; one male teenager moves to live at the hostel and attend a local high school

• meeting of the Lake Tyers Council elects a Chairman and Deputy

• Chairman; Director attends the meeting and outlines the details of the Minister’s land grant announcement; the residents make decisions about the content they want in the legislation regarding communal title and who should become a member

May 1970

• Flower Arrangement and Garden Competition held

• the Aboriginal Education and Incentive Student Fund (AEISF) starts with

• educational grants for primary and junior secondary school students

• Visiting Nurse starts a Women’s Health Group

• mothers begin to attend the Lakes Entrance Infant Welfare Centre

June 1970

• Lake Tyers women organise a Saturday evening Dance held in the

• Lake Tyers community hall for Koorie of the district; and they provide refreshments

• the Lake Tyers Red Cross Branch gives a donation to the East

• Gippsland Ambulance Service based at Lakes Entrance – a photo with written article is in the Bairnsdale Advertiser

July 1970

• a Young Men’s Sport Club is formed on the initiative of the Deputy Chairman

• worker meets with Bairnsdale medical practitioners of a practice to

• discuss resident health, their practice relationship with Aboriginal people, respective responsibilities, including the role of Ministry staff and especially the Visiting Nurse

• car driving lessons commence – three men pass the test and receive their Driver’s Licence - an additional six men and women take lessons

• farmer and farm workers attend Sale Sheep Breeders Show a Commonwealth Employment Service, Sale officer visits Lake Tyers and meets with unemployed young adult men and women a wattle Bark stripping work gang formed – stripped bark sold
**August 1970**

- farmer and farm workers go to Melbourne to attend the sale of Lake Tyers fleeces
- an Apprenticeship Commission officer visits Lake Tyers to meet with secondary school and young adult youth
- a local Lake Tyers Newsletter is written, published and circulated
- the Post Office agency operated by the Ministry at Lake Tyers is closed
- worker visits the officers of the Lakes Entrance Police Station to discuss their role in relation to the residents; and the role of Ministry staff
- the Residential Services work gang with the Community Secretary prepares and submits a tender to paint the Nowa Nowa community Hall

**September 1970**

- a delegation of the Chairman and three senior men meets with the Director in Melbourne to discuss the current situation and the future of Lake Tyers
- Lake Tyers wins the painting contract at Nowa Nowa
- the Chairman decides on behalf of the residents that the Lake Tyers Special Primary School should close; and the Education Department is advised
- a group of Grades 5 and 6 Primary School students with parents go to Melbourne to attend the Royal Melbourne Show
- a Melbourne newspaper reporter and the Director attend the Lake Tyers Council meeting to enable residents to represent their attitudes about the promised changes
- the farm workers construct the new cattle yards using locally felled timber

**October 1970**

- a Senior officer from the Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs Canberra, visits Lake Tyers
- worker speaks at a Orbost High School Staff training session
- staff of the Commonwealth Department of Labour & National Service, Aboriginal Employment Section and the Commonwealth Employment Service visit Lake Tyers over three days to discuss with secondary students and their parents interest in occupations and work places; and then plan a visit to Melbourne
- the Chairman meets with the Nowa Nowa Primary School Committee
preparing for the closure of the Primary School, Lake Tyers at the end of the year and the transition to Nowa Nowa the following year; worker accompanies Chairman

**November 1970**

- farmer and farm workers host the Veterinary and the various Advisers of the Regional Office of the State Department of Agriculture at Lake Tyers
- Mr Bruce Evans, State Member for Gippsland East and Mr David Bornstein, Australian Labor Party Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs visit Lake Tyers and meet with the Chairman and Director concerning the draft legislation
- worker visits the Shire Secretary of the Shire of Tambo at Bruthen to discuss details of the draft legislation and the implications for the Shire
- the Chairman, a senior man and the worker meet with the Director in Melbourne
- sports day organised by Aboriginal men and held at Lake Tyers with Aboriginal basketball and cricket teams from the La Trobe valley
- a Basic Education course for adults begins on a weekly basis; and held in the Primary School in evenings
- a Commonwealth Employment Service officer meets with the secondary students and their parents
- a 'Family Week' is held in Melbourne for secondary students and their parents; visits are made to work places and to observe occupations. An opportunity is provided to learn about entry standards and training requirements for different occupations. The program includes a visit to the Victorian Parliament and a meeting with the State Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The parents of four families attend but the parents of three families opt to stay at Lake Tyers, although their student children attend. The Chairman and the deputy Chairman remain at home.
- a petition, signed by a majority of the adult residents of Lake Tyers is presented to the Director during the 'Family Week' expressing strong dissatisfaction with the Chairman’s performance and seeking changes to the structure of leadership
- the position of a Ministry staff member (Clerical Assistant) is transferred to the Ministry’s Bairnsdale office – the first withdrawal of staff from Lake Tyers as a part of the process of community development
- Mr Bill Wentworth, Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Mr Peter Nixon, the local Commonwealth Member for Gippsland [and a Cabinet Minister] visit Lake TyersSecond Phase – December 1970 to June 1971- community development goals of preparation for ownership and self-management – residents elect a Leadership Group including the Chairman
December 1970

- the Lake Tyers Council meets, and with the Director present elects a ‘Leadership Group’ of five men including the Chairman

- *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970* is passed by the Victorian Parliament

- the farmer and his family move from Lake Tyers to reside in Bairnsdale with the farmer driving to work at Lake Tyers on a daily basis

- the Director meets with the Leadership Group after *Act* is passed

January 1971

- an Adventure Camp for teenage Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal boys is held at Lake Tyers

- a number of children attend YWCA, YMCA, Somers Camps during the school vacation

- the Primary School Head teacher and family leave Lake Tyers

- worker meets with various regional institutional heads such as: the Governor, Sale Gaol; the State Social Welfare Regional Officer, Bairnsdale; the Principals of schools at Nowa Nowa and Orbost; the Regional Officer, Commonwealth Department of Social Security, Sale; the Shire Secretary, Shire of Tambo; the General Manager Bairnsdale hospital – to explain the pending changes affecting the Lake Tyers residents following the passage of the *Aboriginal Lands Act*

February 1971

- visit of Commonwealth News and Information journalist

March 1971

- worker extends the advisory and support service to all Aboriginal households at Nowa Nowa, Bruthen, Lakes Entrance, Orbost and Bairnsdale

- a Free Mail Service from Nowa Nowa starts with a Lake Tyers resident as a paid driver

- worker speaks at meetings of churches and Service Clubs at Bairnsdale and Orbost

- a Student Home Work Room is established at the school and open two nights a week for an hour from 5.00 pm
April 1971

- worker meets with the Regional Head, Country Roads Board to finalise the arrangements for the construction of a road from the Princes Highway to the residential area
- worker prepares for the transfer of title to the residents, the Handover Ceremony and future planning with Director in Melbourne

May 1971

- worker liaises with Bairnsdale church clergy, school Principals, the Editor of the Bairnsdale Advertiser and Hospital staff
- worker interviews solicitors, accountants and auditors who have expressed interest in fulfilling official positions for the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust
- a spot mill begins operation with a work gang
- boys of Lake Tyers attend meetings of Nowa Nowa scouts

June 1971

- Television crews from ABV2 and HSV7 and a Melbourne newspaper reporter visit Lake Tyers to prepare media stories
- Anglican Bishop of Gippsland meets with the Lake Tyers Council to prepare the worship service at the Handover Ceremony
- the Lake Tyers Council approaches the State Health Department and selects a new cemetery site at Lake Tyers

Third Phase – July to December 1971 – Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust owns and manages Lake Tyers with an elected Committee of Management

July 1971

- 1st July – the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust under the conditions of the Aboriginal Lands Act 1970 becomes a legal entity
- 2nd July – the first General Meeting of members of the Trust is held at Lake Tyers; Committee of Management of Trust is elected; Trust’s Solicitor, Accountant and Auditor are appointed
• 9th July - Committee of Management begins to meet on a weekly basis; Committee elects its first Chairman; Lake Tyers Council no longer meets reporters from national and local newspapers visit men hold a weekend working bee to ensure grounds are ready for ceremony

• 24th July – the Governor of the State of Victoria hands over the land title deed to the Chairman of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust at a Handover Ceremony held at Lake Tyers

**August 1971**

• farmer and farm workers attend wool sales in Melbourne

• worker consults Lake Tyers parents of secondary school age students

• about their interest in the Ministry establishing a Student Hostel for Aboriginal students in Bairnsdale. A positive response from the parents, Bairnsdale secondary schools and from Aboriginal parents of Orbost and Cann River leads the worker to prepare and submit a proposal to the Director

• visit from a Melbourne newspaper reporter

**September 1971**

• visit to Lake Tyers from a number of Aboriginal residents of the district opposing the restricted membership of the Trust to speak to the Lake Tyers residents, accompanied by Mr Bruce Evans MLA and a few non-Aboriginal supporters

• the Trust began to hold regular General Meetings of shareholders to advise its decisions and listen to comments

• Visiting Nurse speaks at various meetings of Pre-school Committees and Red Cross Branches; and worker speaks at Rotary Clubs and church meetings, and to school staff at schools in Orbost, to Orbost Shire Secretary, and Orbost police

• visits to farm workers and farmer by State Department of Agriculture Advisers

• Visiting Nurse holds Women’s Health Group meetings and teenage girls attend as well as adults

• the Committee of Management of the Trust decides to recruit a Farm Manager

• the Trust serves a writ for damages on Mr Bruce Evans

• re-visit of Melbourne newspaper reporter to investigate the situation since the Trust has been in operation
October 1971

• worker speaks at Bruthen Young Farmers meeting

November 1971

• the Trust’s Committee of Management interviews a short-list of applicants for the Farm Manager position

• young adult Aboriginal woman of Lakes Entrance calls a meeting at her sister’s home in Bairnsdale to form a Bairnsdale Young Adult Women’s group and seeking Aboriginal members from the district

• Student Hostel site purchased in Bairnsdale by the Ministry and recruitment of Committee of Management begins

• Community Secretary and family leave Lake Tyers after working and living there since November 1967 [appointed by the Board as the Farm Manager]

• two young adult men attend an Aboriginal conference in Sydney

December 1971

• Lake Tyers parents attend Nowa Nowa Primary School parent-teacher interviews

• Bairnsdale Student Hostel’s Committee of Management holds its first meeting chaired by the Anglican Bishop of Gippsland

• worker and family ceases residing at Lake Tyers, moves to reside in Bairnsdale, and makes daily visits to Lake Tyers. No Ministry staff resides at Lake Tyers.

Postscript

• February 1972 — Bairnsdale Student Hostel opens with six Lake Tyers secondary students as residents and attending Bairnsdale High School

• February 1972 Community social worker concludes role as community social worker at Lake Tyers and East Gippsland.
APPENDIX 7.3  Lake Tyers - Social development strategy January 1970

Goal (1) promoting the economic and social development of the residents, their families and the people as a whole:

- to maximise the income earning of each individual and household by:
  - assisting individuals, couples and parents - including grandparents with custody or guardianship responsibilities - to obtain all income assistance services for which they were entitled – claiming and maintaining Commonwealth and State income security benefits, pensions and parent assistance and health benefits
  - offering permanent employment to resident adult male household heads and, depending on the availability of funds from the Ministry, also to single adult males and females prepared to work on a casual, part or full-time basis

- to inform individuals and family members of the availability of services provided by municipal, State and Commonwealth Governments and voluntary agencies and encourage use of these services (e.g. child care, infant welfare, vaccinations, TB Xray, medical, dental, hospital, secondary schooling, legal aid, access to children in State care institutions, employment advice, and transport on the school bus).

- to employ workers on Award industrial conditions and expect normal work-place practice standards viz. maintaining work attendance hours, applying consequences for absenteeism without reasonable excuse, reporting illness and applying for sick leave

- to provide job skills training opportunities, to foster worker responsibility for work efficiency and output; and to promote the idea of workers adopting the objective of developing an economically self-sufficient property, and especially a viable farm

- to organise the work force into work groups, each with a foreman, so that work groups set objectives, leadership is rewarded and self-direction encouraged

- to provide and maintain accommodation at standards equal to that enjoyed by other citizens; and to expect households to pay rent and those causing wilful damage to meet the cost of repair

- to provide the residential area with services normally available in a small rural township (e.g. rubbish removal, road maintenance, street lighting, water supply, grass mowing)
• to encourage individuals and couples to independently manage their own financial matters and to accept responsibility for household affairs; and assist by providing support and encouragement, practical advice and information, and skills training (e.g., start and maintain a bank account, budget household income/expenditure, women's health care, diet and nutrition, child health care)

• to promote and facilitate the holding of regular meetings of the Lake Tyers Council (membership available to all interested resident adults and youth), and encourage their participation as office-bearers, so that residents experience working together, perform functions, own the Council as their decision-making organization and learn how it can represent their interests and views with the Ministry and external bodies

• to encourage parents to relate to their child's interests, encourage school attendance, make contact with teachers, and follow the progress of sons/daughters at school

• to support young people with their schooling, employment, family and peer relationships, and establish a Youth Resource Centre

• to promote pride in Aboriginal identity, achievements and heritage to work with and respect leaders, support their efforts and offer leadership training

• to normalise interactions between residents and Ministry staff viz. respect privacy, expect self-reliance and avoid dependency creating or maintenance, patiently and fully inform and explain, consistently maintain standards, act as a neighbour out-of-work-hours

• to encourage economic and social interactions with the external world, including supporting resident participation in outside sporting competitions (e.g., adult men’s and youth basketball), church and social group activities (e.g., women with Red Cross and youth with guides/scouts)

Goal (2) informing the regional environment about developments at Lake Tyers:

• to advise staff of organisations providing services to Lake Tyers residents (e.g., police, doctors, lawyers, Commonwealth, State and municipal public administrators, staff of welfare agencies, schools, courts, media, banks and hospitals, shopkeepers and ambulance officers) of the Ministry's service expectations viz. serve/treat/relate/charge prices as they do any other consumers and interact with residents respectfully (not patronising, paternalistic or negatively discriminatory)

• to outline the goals of development at Lake Tyers so that positive attitudes are promoted (adapted from Personal Papers January 1970).
APPENDIX 7.4 Demographic data collected in January 1970

Table 7.1. Lake Tyers - Population – showing age and gender at January 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in Years</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.4 (17.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28.6 (45.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.7 (61.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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<td>55-59</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Papers, January 1970

The survey data in Table 7.1 details characteristics of the Lake Tyers population. Some comparisons with other Aboriginal populations have been added for the study:

- the age and gender composition of the total Lake Tyers Aboriginal residential population was seventy persons - thirty five males and thirty five females

- the Lake Tyers resident population was an extremely youthful population with more than sixty one percent under twenty one years of age and a high proportion of the population attending primary and secondary schools. Infants and pre-school aged children (four children) amounted to nearly six percent of the total population, and this figure was much lower than the same age-cohort of the East Gippsland Aboriginal population of twenty percent (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Census 30...
June 1970). Forty per cent of the Lake Tyers population (twenty eight students) was within the legal age of primary and secondary school attendance (five to fourteen years). The ten to fourteen age-cohort formed the largest of all the age-cohorts of the Lake Tyers population with twenty persons (28.6 percent). The same age-cohort for the East Gippsland Aboriginal population was considerably smaller at nearly sixteen per cent (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Census 30 June 1970). This picture of a predominantly youthful population at Lake Tyers and in East Gippsland coincided with that of the general southeast Australian Aboriginal population (Australia Census 30 June 1970)

- the Lake Tyers resident population had proportionally few older people. Five persons were sixty years and over, amounting to just over seven percent of the total population. A much smaller proportion of elderly persons lived at Lake Tyers compared with the total Australian population, an outcome attributed to the shorter life expectancy of Aboriginal persons (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation 2004:8)

- at Lake Tyers there was a smaller proportion (34%) of females of child bearing-age (fifteen to forty nine years) than found amongst the Victorian Aboriginal population (48%) (Australia Census 30 June 1971:1)

- the Lake Tyers residents were a highly dependent population reliant upon relatively few income earners (the wages of working members or social security pensions and benefits) and a very low labour force participation rate of thirty six percent. The dependency rate – the ratio of numbers of dependent children (from birth and up to fourteen years with school leaving age at fifteen years) and dependent adults (those sixty years and over) to numbers of people of working age (fifteen to fifty nine years) - was very high. There were thirty seven dependents and thirty three persons of work force age, a ratio of 1.12 (37:33).

- at least four persons in the working age group were not regularly employed, and another twelve persons of working age were not employed. Of these, six were unpaid mothers/housewives and six were students attending secondary school, while another
five persons in the working age group were pensioners or beneficiaries. Thus, there were only twelve persons of working age participating in permanently employed work at Lake Tyers, a participation rate in the workforce of a little over thirty six percent. This was a very low participation rate compared with the Victorian Aboriginal labour force participation rate in June 1976 of nearly sixty percent (Renkin 1983:44). Seventy four percent of the total population of Lake Tyers in January 1970 was not in the work force.

**The households in January – PHASE 1**

The survey in January 1970 recorded who was a resident member of each household, noted their age, gender, relationships and whether each person present was a regular resident of that household. The results are summarised in Table 7.2.

- household membership spanned three generations. Five older persons formed the first generation with the oldest born in 1899. The second generation – the offspring of the first - was born between 1913 and 1946 and numbered twenty persons. The third and youngest generation (forty five persons) was born after 1946.

- six households consisted of nuclear family members only (families of procreation) of one or both birth parent(s) and their dependent children - pre-school, primary and secondary students

- three households included three generations of ‘close relatives’ as members – an older parent(s), adult offspring and grand child(ren). The living arrangements of the five older persons of the first generation varied – one widower lived with his son and his family; a widow lived with her adult sons and grand sons; a second widower lived alone; while a couple shared their house with an adult daughter and grand children.
Table 7.2. Lake Tyers - Size and composition of households January 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Children Under 15 years</th>
<th>Youth 15-20 years</th>
<th>Adults 21 years and over</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male s</td>
<td>Female s</td>
<td>Male s</td>
<td>Female s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Papers, January 1970

- nine households had one or both parents as principals or household heads, two of whom were widows; a widower was the sole occupant of one house

- twelve persons - parents and their children – was the largest number of persons in a household

- the occupancy rate – the average number of persons per household - was seven. This figure was higher than the Victorian Aboriginal occupancy rate of 5.2 persons; and slightly exceeded the East Gippsland Aboriginal occupancy rate of 6.3 persons (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Census 30 June 1970).

- five household heads received social security income (widow, age, or invalid pensions). Each of the remaining five households had a male head who was a full-time employed wage earner. The presence of a resident wage earner in fifty per cent of the households at Lake Tyers had turned residence there into a distinct economic advantage.

During the first months I learned that residents frequently moved between Lake Tyers and external locations. Two secondary-school aged young people attended private boarding schools in suburban Melbourne while another two teenage sisters boarded with a non-Aboriginal family whilst attending a suburban high school. These students returned to their family homes each school vacation. At the time of the survey in 1970, five teenage boys were placed at a State Youth Training Centre located in Melbourne. They were home released for Christmas and Easter holidays to live with parents or grand
parents. An adult young woman was a permanent resident of a State home for intellectually disabled people located in a provincial town other than during the Christmas and Easter vacations when she stayed with her family. At the time of the survey, two young adult women had returned home on holiday leave from employment in Melbourne.

At one household, a pregnant young adult woman had returned to live with her parents as she prepared for her confinement. At another house an adult son had returned to live with his parents after separating from his partner and children. One fifteen-year old teenager lived with her family having left school, but she was not seeking work.

Particular Lake Tyers households were connected to specific extended kinship and friendship networks extending from the south coast of New South Wales to all districts of Gippsland, and to suburbs of Melbourne. At Lake Tyers, an individual household or a group of kin-related households had a ‘beat’ or ‘beats’ (Beckett 1988:131) embracing outside relatives and friends. Some kin networks were based on the regional origins of forbears still the habitat of a parent, adult siblings, their partners and offspring, such as Wallaga Lake Aboriginal reserve, south coast New South Wales. Former residents of Lake Tyers, whose parents were from different regional origins, such as Ebenezer and Lake Condah Missions, and who now lived in the La Trobe Valley, were regular visitors of some Lake Tyers families.

There were occasions when homeless families of parent(s) and infant children, or individual adult siblings chose to stay for longer periods with Lake Tyers households and often the host family approached me seeking permanent accommodation at Lake Tyers. The adaptation made by host families to include visitors into their households was remarkable. There were occasions when the impact of visitors seriously disturbed the host family’s income and functioning, school and work attendance, especially when there was high consumption of alcohol. Families usually handled situations independently, as they were expected to do, but occasionally household heads requested Ministry staff advice.
Exclusion of visitors from the 1970 survey omitted an important aspect of household social life. One weekend in May 1970, an additional thirty-seven people spread between seven households visited Lake Tyers. These visitors included a family of six (parents and four children) from suburban Melbourne; two pregnant daughters with partners and offspring who began a period of staying with their respective parents; an older couple (who stayed permanently); seven young individuals; and a family of parents and five children, whose housing arrangement had collapsed in Melbourne (Personal Papers May 1970). Similarly on another weekend in June 1970, twenty six people visited each of the ten households (Personal Papers June 1970), and during the weekend of the 7th July 1970 there was a total of ninety seven Aboriginal people living at Lake Tyers. The population consisted of a relatively stable base of seventy persons - plus the number of visitors at any time (Personal Papers, July 1970).
APPENDIX 7.5

Chart 7.3 Lake Tyers – Strategic plan of the process of community development
April 1970 to June 1971

The Government's overall outcome goals are:

(i) transferring the ownership of the land, its fixtures, equipment, housing and animal stock to an incorporated organisation legally representing the interests of the resident shareholders; and

(ii) preparing the resident shareholders to a capacity where they can responsibly act as independent managers of the property, especially the farm, and residential area.

The Government's two overall process goals are:

(i) the process of preparation and enactment of legislation – following consultation between the residents and the Ministry, the Government drafts legislation that satisfies the people’s aspirations, and the statutory conditions required of a Crown land title transfer. The Government creates an existing legal entity that organisationally represented the people's range of interests and has powers enabling it to operate as a commercial business. The Minister, the Director and the community social worker at Lake Tyers will conduct a promotional campaign enabling the public to positively gauge the residents' views of the planned change, and arrange interviews with local residents. The campaign also has to address the concerns of the local Gippsland Aborigines and general public;

(ii) The process of community development - the preparation of the people, as individuals, families, workers, young people, and as a community to perform ownership and management responsibilities – (a) the residents, with the assistance of staff of the Ministry, identify their individual and communal strengths and name gaps in their skills and knowledge capacity, so that they identify what resources are needed to learn to operate commercial enterprises, such as the farm, maintain town facilities, and provide residential services; (b) the residents, with the assistance of staff of the Ministry, plan how they can acquire capabilities through appropriate on-job instruction and experiences, external training courses
and visits of observation; and (c) the Ministry staff and the residents together identify what responsibilities and tasks currently performed by the Ministry staff will be transferred to the Lake Tyers Council before the official handover of the property title; and plan how administrative, civic and business tasks will be transferred to the residents in readiness for their assumption of self-management.
## APPENDIX 7.6 Lake Tyers – Revised social development strategy – May 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Outcome Goal</th>
<th>Overall Process Goals</th>
<th>Process Objectives</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within about a year, the Government transfers the ownership of the Crown reserve land, fixtures to the land, vehicles, equipment, housing and animal stock to specified residents of Lake Tyers, so that they become the managers of the farm, forest, and residential and public utilities and facilities</td>
<td>(i) The process of preparation and enactment of legislation</td>
<td>(i) To provide opportunities for the residents of Lake Tyers to consult with the Director to prepare the content of the legislation</td>
<td>(i) To select the Lake Tyers as the body to represent the voice of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) The process of informing Victorian Aborigines, especially those in Gippsland, and the general public, the reasons for the planned change, the content of the legislation, and to elicit electoral support</td>
<td>(ii) To provide the property, especially the farm, as an economically self-supporting venture and develop a range of other businesses</td>
<td>(ii) To arrange regular meetings of the Lake Tyers Council so that residents discuss with the Director and/or community worker what they want included as the content of legislation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) To arrange regular meetings of the Lake Tyers Council to discuss with the Director and/or community worker what they want included as the content of legislation</td>
<td>(iii) To request the Lake Tyers Council to elect office bearers who will lead and represent the Council in negotiations with the Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) To arrange training to the farm and town service worker teams so that they are sufficiently self-reliant, knowledgeable and skilled to run the farm as a commercial operation and the residential and public services effectively</td>
<td>(iv) To appoint foremen capable of supervising each work team, and then to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) To encourage the Chairman of the Lake Tyers Council and leaders of the community to participate independently or in partnership in media contacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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(appendix content continues)
management responsibilities — commercial, civic, and residential

- Introduce them to the tasks of daily work planning and supervision through to performing those functions over a year.
- To introduce the workforce to operate additional suitable economic enterprises such as spot milling, wattle bark stripping, bean pea and passion fruit growing, a shop and a bus service.

(ii) (b) To offer the Lake Tyers Council officer bearers and members opportunities to learn how to perform executive, management and administrative functions in relation to commercial, civic and residential affairs.

(i) To train Council officer bearers to prepare, operate and action the decisions made at meetings of the Council.

(ii) To provide formal and informal opportunities for the Lake Tyers Council and residents to identify their strengths and to identify the information and skills they want to learn.

(iii) To plan with the Lake Tyers Council a timetable that provides for the training learning of the identified skills needed.

(iii) (e) To resource the development of neighborhood by improving the functioning capacity of individuals and families, youth and older people to use community services and facilities and to be proud of their Aboriginality.

(i) To assist individuals, parents and families discover ways to get greater satisfaction from their management of home living, money, nurturing and caring for children, health, and relationships with each other and extended kin and kin networks.

(ii) To ensure individuals, couples and family members with custodial and guardianship responsibilities receive statutory social security entitlements, education and health financial assistance, and then use those services.
(iii) To provide learning opportunities and information so that adults confidently use public facilities and socially mix in the external world shopping, attend parent-teacher interviews etc;

(iv) to encourage all people to participate in Lake Tyers Council meetings and discuss matters concerning the life of the community

(v) To contact young people of primary and secondary school age and other teenagers and with them develop a recreational centre for their use and social and educational benefit

(vi) To encourage the residents at every opportunity (at meetings, during personal exchanges, via written material placed on the notice board and in newsletters) to appreciate their strengths and achievements in order to build self-esteem and to sustain contributions

(vii) To listen to expressions of doubt and anxiety and to encourage persistence and effort despite difficulties
APPENDIX 7.7 Expert Advice Available to the Ministry

In March 1966, Mr I. Morton, Chairman, Rural Finance and Settlement Commission, Victoria, had met with Board members to discuss the farming potential of the Lake Tyers property. Mr Morton assumed the Board would be managing the property while providing farm work training for Aboriginal men when he stated:

- 360 acres is an average farmed area supporting a family in the Tyers district (the cultivated Lake Tyers farm area then consisted of about 800 acres)

- the idea of Tyers as a purely dairying proposition should be abandoned for a far better proposition is the running of fat cattle and sheep

- if the Government is prepared to write off the capital costs of putting the present 800 acres into shape and of clearing the land gradually, a competent farm manager could, within a fairly short period, run the entire scheme on a break-even basis

- vegetables and other crops could not be grown on a competitive economic basis, but on a subsistence basis and as a medium of training

- a high degree of skill and local knowledge was needed

(Report of the Lake Tyers Planning and Action Committee November 1966:30).
APPENDIX 7.8 Student education grants and additional family disposable income

Promoting educational opportunity by the payment of grants to students to contribute towards the cost of schooling was not a new program in 1970, as the League had begun financially assisting selected secondary students in 1961; and from 1964 the Board assisted selected Aboriginal secondary students by meeting costs of uniforms, textbooks and fees. At least two Lake Tyers youths had received this assistance in the sixties while they attended Bairnsdale Technical School and boarded during the week at an Anglican Church hostel in Bairnsdale. The Save the Children Fund also provided grants to selected primary and secondary students, including the cost of boarding at private schools. Two Lake Tyers students attended private boarding schools in Melbourne in 1970 under the scheme.

In 1970, two additional financial sources boosted the disposable income of families with primary and secondary school students. The scheme sponsored by the Commonwealth Government started in February, and the other sponsored by a Victorian voluntary group Aboriginal Education Incentive Fund (AEISF), commenced in May. The schemes were not a part of the process of community development at Lake Tyers, but their positive impact on the size of family income was significant. Seven of the ten households at Lake Tyers were beneficiaries of one or both schemes.

The Commonwealth Department of Education and Science commenced a nation wide ‘study grant scheme’ for all Aboriginal secondary students aged fourteen years and over from 1st January 1970 and five Lake Tyers students were entitled to receive the grant. Grant details were:

- $100 paid at the start of Term 1, and a further $100 paid at the end of Term 1, to cover expenses of uniforms and books
- $16 per week living allowance when the student was in private board or a hostel; or $240 per annum for a student living at home if the student was in Year 10 or below, or $300 per annum when a student was in Years 11 or 12
- fees covering approved tutorial and coaching classes
• term vacation fares home
• approved additional expenses.

Parents (usually the mother) were paid the above amounts, but pocket money of $1.50 per week was paid to each student in Year 10 or below and $2 per week to a student in Years 11 or 12 (Commonwealth Department of Education and Science 1970).

In 1970, the Victorian program was integrated into the Ministry’s ‘Broad spectrum intervention programmes’, with the Ministry as its major funding source. It targeted all of the State’s Aboriginal primary and secondary school students under fourteen years and their families. Monthly amounts were paid — one to the parent and one to the student — with the amount increasing with the student’s grade/form level as follows:

• Grades 1 and 2 – Parent = $3.50; Student = $0.50
• Grades 3 and 4 – Parent = $4.00; Student = $0.50
• Grades 5 and 6 – Parent = $4.50; Student = $1.00
• Forms 7 and 8 – Parent = $7.00; Student = $2.50

(Cresap McCormick and Paget 1975:8)

Payments were conditional on the school’s confirmation that the student had regularly attended and performed satisfactorily. A parent had to personally collect the payment at the student’s school each month.
I did not explore whether family income levels were adequate in 1970-1971. I was aware that the families had been living in conditions of destitution. I was curious about the number of people depending on the wage or income security payment in relation to a poverty benchmark.

After February and again in May 1970, Lake Tyers households with students enjoyed an increase in disposable income. Recently I assessed the effect on the level of family income using the ‘Henderson poverty line’ as a benchmark. Table 7.3 illustrates the range and multiple income sources received by each household of Lake Tyers by May 1970 and thereafter. Three households (G, I and J) were unaffected but seven households (A, B, C, D, E, F and H) had school age students and were recipients of the new educational grants.

For this study I have applied Henderson’s ‘poverty line’ formula (Henderson, Harcourt and Harper 1970:28-30) to three income situations of households (B, F and H) at Lake Tyers. While the Henderson study did not have direct applicability to rurally located people living at a situation like Lake Tyers, Henderson’s establishment of a poverty line provided a benchmark for assessing the income adequacy of the people of Lake Tyers in May 1970. In 1966, Henderson (1970) defined a state of poverty as:

...the situation of a man with a wife (not working) and two children whose total weekly income at that time was less than the basic wage plus child endowment. We set our poverty line at $33 for such a standard family. The incomes of different sized family units have been standardized to make them comparable with a unit of the basic size. This poverty line became associated with a set percentage – 56.5 percent – of Average Weekly Earnings following the Commonwealth Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (Social Welfare Policy Secretariat 1981:13).
The Henderson project calculated standard costs for each income unit including: food, clothing, education, recreation, transport, housing, power, light, furniture, furnishings and equipment – and allowed for the age, sex, and work status of the bread winner and the size of the income unit. A statistical adjustment was made for those income units that were not identical to the standard income unit of man, wife and two children.

Table 7.3 Lake Tyers - Sources of household income May 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Wage Earners</th>
<th>Pensioners or Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Child Endowment</th>
<th>Commonwealth Secondary Grant</th>
<th>AEISF Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Age, Invalid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Widow Unemp.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Widow Invalid</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Invalid Unemp.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Age with Spouse</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Widow Invalid</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Papers January 1970

After accounting for all residents receiving a rental subsidy, I concluded that household incomes at Lake Tyers ranged from 'below the poverty line', 'marginally poor', to 'low' income levels

- households relying on income security pensions and benefits only, lived on an income about the Henderson poverty line
- households with a sole wage earner and many dependent children, lived below the poverty line
- households with many dependents but more than one wage earner, lived marginally above the poverty line
- households receiving primary and secondary student payments experienced a positive improvement in income in relation to the poverty line

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Families B, F and H

I have chosen Household F (see Table 7.3) as the first example because of the presence of a single wage earner, the high number of dependent children and the availability of 1966 data to compare with the 1970 situation:

On the 5th October 1966 this was the sole Aboriginal family with an Award wage earner employed by the Board and receiving $30.50 per week. There were eight children under sixteen years and Child Endowment received amounted to $10.50 per week. Total weekly income amounted to $41.00. Using Henderson’s formula, in October 1966 this family’s weekly income was below the poverty line by $8.11 per week (Poverty line at $33.00 per week – Household adjusted weekly income at $24.89). Even allowing for no rent payment required by the Board the family income was below the poverty line (adjusted weekly income at $22.76 compared with the poverty line at $27.00 per week).

By May 1970, Household F’s size and composition was unchanged with a man, woman and eight children under sixteen years.

Weekly income consisted of: wages $45.00, Child Endowment of $14.25 – a total weekly income of $59.75. After adjustments for family size and subsidized rent, the household’s weekly income was $30.87 compared with the poverty line income of $34.50. The family’s income remained below the poverty line. But when Household F received AEISF payment of $8.25 per week, the household’s income moved marginally above the poverty line to $35.13 per week.

For this family, education assistance had become an important contribution to the household’s economy given the large number of dependent children and a non-paid wife-mother relying on an unskilled labourer’s low Award wage.

Household B (see Table 7.3) has been chosen as a second example, as it contained a widow with five dependent children. Henderson and his colleagues (1970:89) had identified families without fathers as the group at greatest risk of being in poverty.

In 1970 household weekly income included: Widow’s Pension of $15.00, Child Endowment of $6.75, and Family Assistance of $26.50 – a total of $48.25 per week. After using the poverty line formula, household income was marginally above the poverty line of $42.50 at $42.85 per week. When subsidized rent and an AEISF payment of $6.35 were included the household income situation moved further above the poverty line.
The household with most members — Household II (see Table 7.3) — had an income above the poverty line due to contributions from one full-time wage earner and two casual workers, a rental subsidy and receipt of both types of educational grant.

Total weekly family income was $159.62 including wages, Child Endowment and educational grants. When rental subsidy was noted the standardized family income was $66.70 with the poverty line at $34.50. On the occasions when there were no casual work wages to contribute, this family's income situation was similar to that of Household F and marginally above the poverty line.
ATTACHMENTS
ATTACHMENT A

EXPLANATION of RESEARCH

Research Title.
From segregated institution to self-managed community: community work towards Indigenous self-management at Lake Tyers/Bung Yarnda.

About the Research.
I, (Peter Renkin) invite you, and members of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, to agree to support the research study I wish to complete. The study is about the Lake Tyers people, community and property when the land title was given to your community in 1971. You will note it is not a study of Lake Tyers today.

As most of you know, in 1970 I (Peter Renkin) lived at Lake Tyers whilst working for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs as a community worker. I was the staff member in-charge too. During this time the State Government decided to grant the property at Lake Tyers to the Aboriginal residents. An Act was passed creating the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust and residents became owners of shares. A short time was given for everyone to prepare for self-management and responsibility for the property and community life.

The research project I want to write will be about the people who lived at Lake Tyers in 1970 and who were involved in the preparation for self-government. I will be writing from my viewpoint as a community worker working with the Lake Tyers people during this time. I want to write a brief background history of the mission and station; where the people came from to Lake Tyers, and why the decision was made to make the grant of land. Finally I want to outline what happened immediately after the Trust was set-up until the end of 1972.

Guiding Principles
- Recognition of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, individual persons and families of the Lake Tyers community, members of the Gunnai Nation and other Aboriginal people.
- Mutual respect for the goals of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust; and Peter Renkin as the only researcher directly involved.
• Peter Renkin recognises the social and cultural expertise of the Gunnai Nation, the Lake Tyers people and the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust.

• *Involvement in the research project by individual members of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your involvement in the project at any time.*

• *A member of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust or other Aboriginal person whose information has been recorded during the course of the project may request withdrawal of that information at any time.*

• *The usual legal limitations to data confidentiality apply.*

• *The data collected for the study is confidential and is available only to the named researchers, Wendy Weeks and Peter Renkin.*

Your Interests

I *(Peter Renkin)* will be writing about issues of deep concern to you, your family, friends and Aboriginal people. Records I collected when I lived and worked at Lake Tyers will be used in the study.

I will respect your comments about matters such as:

• the purpose of the research study.
• what the study is about.
• the information I hold.
• the benefits of the study for you, other Aboriginal people and others.
• what happens to the study and information held when the study is completed.
• confidentiality and privacy of personal references made in the study.
• extracts of the *written* study will be made available to individuals, families and the Trust on request.
• painful memories raised; I will arrange counselling support should it be requested.

*Ms Kate Murphy, the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, of the University of Melbourne can be contacted if you have concerns about the conduct of the project. You can contact Kate on Telephone: 3 8344 7507 or Fax: 3 9347 6739 or Email: http://www.unimelb.edu.au/research/ethics/human/*
Reference Group

I will form a Reference Group of Aboriginal people with whom I intend sharing the research task and process to ensure your and other Aboriginal people’s interests are promoted and protected.

I want to invite Trust members to join the Group - especially some who lived at Lake Tyers during 1970-1972. Lake Tyers people I will invite include: Mr Wayne Hood (Chair), Ms Rita Hood, Mr Michael Edwards, Mrs Pauline Edwards, Mrs Rita Hood Snr., Mr Murray Bull, Mrs Elvie Bull and Ms Ivy Marks. Other Aboriginal people to be consulted include: Dr Wayne Atkinson, Ms Marjorie Thorpe and Ms Muriel Cadd. I expect the Reference Group to meet three times.

Research Study Period
October 2002 to December 2004.

University of Melbourne Involvement
I hope to gain a Doctorate of Philosophy degree when the study is completed. I am supervised by a Principal Investigator, Wendy Weeks (Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Melbourne).

Queries, Concerns or Complaints.
If you have any queries, concerns or complaints about the research please contact Wendy Weeks on phone: (3) 8344 9422. Any query, concern or complaint will be treated in confidence, investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.
I can be contacted on phone: (3) 9836 2237.
Thank You for Your Time.

Peter Renkin
Researcher

Wendy Weeks
Associate Professor

Principal Investigator
ATTACHMENT B.

CONSENT FORM

NAMES of RESEARCHERS:
Wendy Weeks, Principal Investigator and Peter Renkin, Researcher

STUDY NAME:
From segregated institution to self-managed community: community work towards Indigenous self-management at Lake Tyers/Bung Yarnda.

CONSENT,
As a member of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust –

- I have read and understand the 'Explanation of Research' sheet informing about the research study – its purpose, content and how it may affect my interests.
- I understand that this research study is for the purpose of research only.
- I understand the study data will be kept confidential and only the researchers, Wendy Weeks and Peter Renkin, have access to it.
- I understand that the overall result of the study will contribute towards a Master of Social Work.
- I have been advised that a Reference Group of Aboriginal persons including members of this Trust will be formed by the researcher Peter Renkin.
- I have received a copy of the 'Explanation of Research' sheet and this 'Consent Form'.
- I realize my involvement is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any time.

I, .................................................., voluntarily consent to the research study undertaking.

SIGNED: .................................................. DATE: ..............
RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE: ........................................ DATE: ..............
ATTACHMENT C

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
P.O. BOX 34
DICKSON, A.C.T. 2602

Mr Peter Rankin
Dept. of Social Studies
University of Melbourne
33 Royal Parade
PARKVILLE VIC 3052

Dear Mr Rankin,

I am happy to be able to let you know that your request for special access to records of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs has now been approved, subject to your acceptance of certain conditions. The conditions, which must be strictly adhered to, are as follows:

(a) that no use whatsoever be made of information acquired during research work other than that necessary to the production of the final text;

(b) that before the work is made public in any way, it be submitted to the Australian Archives and subsequently referred to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and to the office of the Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs in Victoria;

(c) that any portion of the work based on records to which special access has been granted and deemed unsuitable for public release, be deleted.

As soon as I receive your formal acceptance of these conditions, I will notify the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

I have forwarded a copy of this letter to the Archives' Victorian Branch.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Professor J.C. Neale
Director-General
CONSENT FORM

NAMES OF RESEARCHERS:
Wendy Weeks, Principal Investigator and Peter Renkin, Researcher

STUDY NAME:
From segregated institution to self-managed community: community work towards Indigenous self-management at Lake Tyers/Bung Yamda.

CONSENT.
As a member of the Reference Group:

• I have read and understood the 'Explanation of Research' sheet informing about the research study – its purpose, content and how it affects the interests of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, individuals and families of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal community, members of the Kurnai Nation and other Aboriginal people.
• I understand that this research study is for the purpose of research only.
• I understand the study material is kept confidential and only the researchers, Wendy Weeks and Peter Renkin, have access to the data.
• I understand that the overall result of the study will contribute towards a Doctorate of Philosophy that is expected to conclude by March 2005.
• I recognise the Reference Group is organised by Peter Renkin, (researcher), to monitor the research process and to advise Peter; and that the Reference Group is expecting to meet three times. I realize I can withdraw from the Reference Group at any time.
• I have received a copy of 'Explanation of Research' sheet and this 'Consent Form'.

I, ............................................., voluntarily consent to join the Reference Group for the purpose outlined in relation to the research study of Lake Tyers.

SIGNED: ............................................. DATE: ............... 
RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE: ............................................. DATE: ..................
Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:
Renkin, Peter F. B.

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