

**Decolonizing Music:**  
**A History of Australia's Rock Against Racism Movement**

William Phillip Bracks  
Master of Research

Institute for Sustainable Industries & Liveable Cities, Victoria  
University

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree  
of Master of Research

May 2022

## **Abstract**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s Aboriginal communities in major Australian cities and their/our supporters put on a series of RAR concerts with the aim of promoting new Aboriginal talent in music, combatting racism, raising awareness, and raising funds for Aboriginal community organisations, bands and protests. Though there was no explicit mention to the original RAR movement in the United Kingdom, this movement came off the back of the hugely successful RAR movement in the UK between 1976 and 1982 which saw the near eradication of the influence of the National Front political party and a unification of high-profile musicians against racism. This thesis aims to tell a history of the RAR concerts in Australia for two key reasons. Firstly, for the reason that it is a largely undocumented part of Australia's history of music and Aboriginal activism, and secondly because the period in which RAR took place saw an explosion of contemporary Aboriginal bands and musicians forming a significant musical tradition that hadn't been seen before in Australia.

This thesis draws on the decolonial theories of Tracy Banivanua Mar, Crystal McKinnon, Clare Land and Jarrett Martineau to understand the RAR concerts as forming decolonial spaces in the Australian music scene as part of the Aboriginal land rights and self-determination movement. Using an oral history approach interviews were conducted with Gary Foley and Kelli McGuinness to understand the history of Aboriginal activism surrounding the RAR movement and the ways in which RAR was organised as well as its key objectives. Additionally extensive use of archival sources from the Aboriginal History Archive have been used, without which this thesis would not be possible.

This thesis argues that RAR was a critical site of activism in music that advocated for the exposure of new Aboriginal bands and created a decolonial space that promoted pride in Aboriginality, raised awareness for the key issues in the Aboriginal struggle at the time and provided a gathering space for the Aboriginal community and its supporters.

## **Master by Research Student Declaration**

I, William Phillip Bracks, declare that the Master of Research thesis entitled *Decolonizing Music: A History of Australia's Rock Against Racism Movement* is no more than 50,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work. I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the VU Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC), ethics approval number: HRE21-061

Signature



Date

2<sup>nd</sup> May 2022

This research is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which this research has taken place, the Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung peoples of the Kulin nation.

I would like to thank my supervisors Dianne Hall and Clare Land for their endless expertise, guidance and encouragement throughout the course of this thesis.

My gratitude to professor Gary Foley whose Aboriginal History Archive has made this work possible, Rochelle Le Pere for her encouragement, Kelli McGuinness for giving his time to be interviewed and Alan Brown for yarning with me about Rock Against Racism.

I would also like to thank Michael Klugman, Chris Sonn and Amy Quayle for their helpful feedback during confirmation of candidature and towards submission process.

Many thanks to Jack Boffa for transcribing the audio of the interviews.

This research has been made possible by an Australian Government Research Training Program scholarship.

## **Foreword**

Back in 2014 in my first year of a Bachelor of Arts at Melbourne University I undertook a foundation subject titled ‘Aboriginalities’ on Aboriginal culture, history, and politics because I was painfully aware of the fact that I was studying at a university level, but my schooling up to this point had taught me only scant images of Aboriginal Australia. It’s eight years later and I am still following this path. As I have been involved in the Melbourne music industry for the majority of my adult life, the topic of Rock Against Racism immediately caught my attention and I was disappointed to find that not much had been written about these concerts or the explosion of exciting music coming from new Aboriginal bands and artists in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I see this thesis as addressing my own lack of understanding in this area as well as being a contribution to knowledge that will benefit all interested in the underwritten history of Aboriginal Australia. Particularly the history of Aboriginal music, community organisation and activism. I came to be inspired to do this research through my work at the Aboriginal History Archive, documenting the self-determination, Black Power and land rights struggles in Australia amongst many other things. This project displays a tiny portion of the rich history documented in this archive and I hope it will spark interest in the Aboriginal History Archive and Aboriginal history and politics in general, for those who aren’t already interested.

# **Table of Contents**

List of Abbreviations.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Description of methods.....	5
Chapter One: The History of Rock Against Racism.....	9
1.1 The beginning of Rock Against Racism in the UK.....	9
1.2 Australia's Rock Against Racism.....	12
1.3 Aboriginal Activism.....	14
1.4 Beginning of RAR in Australia.....	15
1.5 The Bands.....	18
1.6 How the Concerts Helped the Community.....	19
1.7 Gary Foley's Tour with The Clash.....	21
1.8 Building Bridges.....	23
1.9 Connections at Swinburne & Koori Kollij.....	25
Chapter Two: RAR is a nexus of self-determination Organisations.....	27
2.1 Introduction.....	27
2.2 VAHS, SCOC and Koori Kollij.....	28
2.3 Campaign Against Racial Exploitation and Lyn McLeavy.....	33
2.4 Tjungaringanyi: The Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music.....	36
Chapter Three: The Music Scene is a Space of Resistance.....	40
3.1 Introduction.....	40
3.2 Decolonial Spaces and Rock Against Racism .....	40
3.3 Criticisms off RAR.....	41
3.4 Rock Against Racism as a Space of Resistance .....	43
3.5 The Media Strategies of RAR.....	47
3.6 Midnight Oil.....	49
3.7 Barriers Faced and the Way Forward.....	51
Conclusion.....	55
References.....	58
Appendix.....	64

## **List of Abbreviations**

- AAB Aboriginal Arts Board
- AAL Aborigines Advancement League
- ALS Aboriginal Legal Service
- AMS Aboriginal Medical Service
- APA Aboriginal Progressives Association
- CASM Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music
- NAIHO National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation
- RAR Rock Against Racism
- SAD Students Against Discrimination
- SAR Students Against Racism
- SCOC Swinburne Community Organisations Course
- VACCHO Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc.
- VAHS Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- WCC World Council of Churches

## Introduction

Rock Against Racism (RAR) was a series of concerts organised largely by Aboriginal activists and supporters through the 1980s in Australia's major capital cities. The concerts usually had three major aims: to generate pride in Aboriginal music and community by displaying new Aboriginal artists and bands at the concerts, to generate systemic change to the challenges facing Aboriginal people in Australia through awareness raising and connection with activism projects, and to raise money for various causes ranging from immediate community needs to paying to send protesters to actions such as the protest against the Joh-Bjelke Peterson government during the 1982 Commonwealth Games in Brisbane. During the 1980s, self-determination, health and land rights were the primary focus for Aboriginal people in trying to bring about better outcomes for the Aboriginal community. RAR often connected these aims with a focus on offering something that would benefit Aboriginal musicians and the Aboriginal community. The earliest recording of a RAR concert in Australia was in 1979 in Adelaide.<sup>1</sup> This was three years after the initial RAR movement began in the UK. It is still unclear how much other than the title of the concert was taken from the UK campaign, however a comparison of the UK and the Australian RAR concerts is made in this thesis to display the unique way Aboriginal activists and supporters used RAR as part of the growing Aboriginal music and self-determination struggles of the 1980s.

Before discussing the RAR concerts in Australia it is necessary to mention the original RAR movement in the United Kingdom, the legacy of which is likely to have had an influence on RAR in Australia. The RAR political and musical campaign in the UK from 1976 – 1982 represented a hugely effective use of music and popular culture to combat right wing racism, Neo Nazism and the racism experienced on the street level by non-white citizens of the UK. This background is discussed in detail in chapter 1 of this thesis. The success of this campaign had many ripple effects and influenced radicals and musicians the world over. One such ripple saw Aboriginal activists forming their/our own version of RAR within Australia, with a key difference. Australia's version of RAR was run largely by Aboriginal people and aimed to connect to the direct needs and aims of the Aboriginal community. This thesis

---

<sup>1</sup> *Identity*, Vol. 4, No. 5, 1981, in: 'Newsletters including Nunga News, Aboriginal Treaty, Black Protest Committee, Koori Times News, Aborigines Advancement League -1980- 1998', Series 51, Box 102, A00001473, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

outlines the ways that Aboriginal community activists and allies took the original idea from the UK and made it their own through a focus on new Aboriginal musicians, community organisations, awareness raising and protest actions. As stated in the *Black Nation* publication, RAR was ‘committed to raising the political awareness of blacks and whites in this country through dances and concerts with an Aboriginal message’.<sup>2</sup> The organisational form of RAR in Australia took cues from the UK movement in that branches were set up in major cities, with key Aboriginal activists and allies organising the benefit concerts for their respective cities. While the scale of these events and the wider movement was far smaller than the festival-like events that the UK RAR managed to put together, these concerts formed a significant melting pot of Aboriginal activists and allies. In a 1985 funding submission for RAR from Aboriginal health workers Kelli McGuinness and Brad Brown, the importance of music as corroboree is conveyed as a potential benefit of putting on the RAR concerts.<sup>3</sup> The idea of RAR as a way of gathering Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people was focused on building connections and support for the Aboriginal struggle in Australia. This can be seen in footage of a RAR concert at Northcote Town Hall Melbourne when Gary Foley informed the audience that there was to be an exhibition on the 1982 Commonwealth Games protests as an opportunity to learn about what was happening with the Aboriginal struggle in Australia.<sup>4</sup> The aims of RAR seemed to be far ranging, as can be seen in the 1989 funding document ‘Feasibility of establishing a music recording studio for Aboriginal Contemporary music’, the RAR group is mentioned as a group of Aboriginal musicians who were involved in RAR gigs.<sup>5</sup> The studio aimed to address the problem of underrepresentation of Aboriginal musicians in the Australian music scene and address the lack of access Aboriginal musicians had to studios and sound engineers for music production. Unfortunately, this was something that never got off the ground. Kelli McGuinness organised a 1985 RAR concert in Melbourne. In an interview he laments that, though the Aboriginal community did an amazing job of putting on concerts and gaining radio programs for Aboriginal musicians, the

---

<sup>2</sup> ‘Commonwealth Games protest material, photos, newsclippings, press release, 1982’, Series 32, Box 33, A00000555, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Documents belonging to Bruce McGuinness including correspondence, press releases and articles, including National Aboriginal Congress submission to a joint committee 1974 & NAIHO draft motion ‘Replacement of the National Aboriginal Conference’, 1974-1990’, Series 50, Box 243, A00002771, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>4</sup> ‘Rock Against Racism: Northcote Town Hall. 19-12-82. Tape 2’, Series 3, Box 137, A00000134, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Various music and radio project documentation including Radio Redfern, recording studio feasibility study, music industry course, SEIMA/3CR Aboriginal radio training proposal, 1987-1993’, Series 41, Box 25, A00000451, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

lack of an Aboriginal controlled music studio or funding for Aboriginal bands to record meant that many of these artists are still not recorded or under-recorded.<sup>6</sup>

RAR related to many key people and organisations associated with the Aboriginal struggle. Included among these are the Victorian Aboriginal Health service, Koori Kollij, the Campaign Against Racial Exploitation and the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music. Each of these organisations are discussed in chapter two with reference to their support of RAR and support of Aboriginal contemporary music furthering the aims of Aboriginal self-determination. These organisations showed the fluid connections between the aims of RAR and the aims of the organisations supporting it. The struggle for self-determination was being fought through many different mediums, of which music was a key part, these organisations and the people involved showed a broad understanding of the impact of representation in music and the messages that could be conveyed through music, media and performance.

At the time that RAR was formed in Australia Terra Nullius was still the basis on which the Australian government had established its authority. Terra Nullius meaning ‘Nobody’s Land’ was an erasure of the sovereignty of Aboriginal Australians.<sup>7</sup> In this thesis I will make the argument that RAR formed what Crystal McKinnon calls an ‘Aboriginal Autonomous Space’ in which the erasure of Aboriginal sovereignty inherent in most urban spaces in Australian cities is subverted.<sup>8</sup> This was due to Aboriginal control and of the RAR organisation, the overtly political nature of the events displaying pride in Aboriginal culture, and the funding of protests and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations that benefitted the community. These spaces resist colonisation and are important for community survival and wellbeing.

---

<sup>6</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism, VAHS and Australia's music scene in the 1980s and 1990s' [interviewed by Will Bracks], 24 February 2022, Recorded Zoom interview, Melbourne, VIC.

<sup>7</sup> The history of the formation of Australia was built on the idea of Terra Nullius which was later discredited as a legal fiction during the landmark Mabo decision in 1992 in which the legal classification of Native Title was introduced as a way of creating a process of Aboriginal groups to claim legal ownership of their land, albeit a watered down version of Land ownership that was extremely difficult to obtain and once obtained was often able to be extinguished in favour of mining or governmental interests:

'Recording of Foley lecture on Reconciliation policy, circa 2000', Series 1, Box 153, A00000984, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>8</sup> C. McKinnon, 'Indigenous Music as a Space of Resistance', in *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity*, ed. T. Banivanua Mar and P. Edmonds, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 255 – 272.

Through this work I will generate an understanding of this period of music in Australia through the case study of RAR. Like Greil Marcus' historicising of American culture through Rock music in *Mystery Train*<sup>9</sup> and Simon Reynolds' of post punk and the United Kingdom in *Rip it up and Start Again*,<sup>10</sup> I will add something to the understanding of Australian popular music, adding to a part of music history about in the beginnings of what many call *contemporary* Aboriginal music.<sup>11</sup> This music is unique because many of the artists were singing starkly political lyrics in a way that hadn't previously been done in popular Aboriginal music,<sup>12</sup> this music was part of a process in which Aboriginal musicians were being overt about their Aboriginality through music and singing in support of land rights , self-determination and Black Power.

---

<sup>9</sup> G. Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock n Roll Music*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn., Harmondsworth, Penguin, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> S. Reynolds, *Rip it up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978-1984*, London, Faber & Faber, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> While I acknowledge that contemporary and traditional are often too limiting when talking about Aboriginal music and can allow for an essentialised view of the cultural productions, it is useful here to distinguish between the band-driven era of the 1980s in which Aboriginal artists were singing with political intentions as opposed to the previous gospel/country influenced era. Dunbar-Hall and Gibson explain the distinction between the use of contemporary as a practical term rather than a 'Universal or comprehensive' definition of this music: P. Dunbar-Hall and C. Gibson, *Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places: Contemporary Aboriginal Music in Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales, 2004, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> P. Dunbar-Hall and C. Gibson, *Deadly Sounds*, p. 47.

## Description of Methods

Using decolonial theory this thesis analyses how Aboriginal activists and allies worked together to raise awareness among the community through the medium of popular music as part of the Aboriginal Land rights and self-determination movement, and how the space of RAR formed a decolonial space in the music scene. This analysis is grounded in the collection and analysis of contemporary newspaper reports, analysis of contemporary recordings of events and original interviews with Gary Foley, Kelli McGuinness and others involved in the RAR movement in Australia.<sup>13</sup> This thesis understands the world through a social constructivist lens. Working from this social constructivist viewpoint this thesis uses decolonial theories to understand RAR as a *decolonial* space in the Australian music scene. *Decolonizing Methodologies* by Linda Tuhiwai Smith has been an influence on the approach taken to writing this thesis, particularly chapter twelve on research and activism.<sup>14</sup>

Jarrett Martineau's unpublished PhD thesis 'Creative Combat: Indigenous ART, Resurgence and Decolonization' conceives of Indigenous art practices as having the power to disrupt colonialism through 'performing Indigeneity'.<sup>15</sup> Writing from an Indigenous Canadian standpoint, Martineau's thesis seeks to develop a 'better understanding of the ways in which Indigenous peoples can mobilize art-making and creativity to build resurgent and decolonizing movements'. This thesis draws on the understanding Martineau generates of Indigenous art making as having the potential to resist colonialism by becoming part of a '*decolonizing media*' through the concept of 'performing Indigeneity'. *Performing Indigeneity* in the context of music illustrates the assertion of Indigenous identity through musical expression as a decolonial act, this then becomes part of a *decolonising media* that can be distributed, performed or taken part in, and that resists colonialism by creating a pocket of resistance that is outside of the norms of the settler colony. Using these concepts, I will take as a starting point the conviction that there is power in Indigenous art making practices - specifically music - as a method of *performing decolonisation*. Working from this

---

<sup>13</sup> Ethical approval to conduct interviews has been obtained through a 'Human Ethics Application' approved on 11/08/2021 approval number: HRE21-061

<sup>14</sup> L. Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., London, Zed Books, 2012, p. 217-227.

<sup>15</sup> J. Martineau, 'Creative Combat: Indigenous Art, Resurgence and Decolonization', Ph.D. diss., Canada, University of Victoria, 2015.

position, this thesis aims to understand RAR in Australia as a critical method of decolonising music spaces.

A case study approach will be employed to frame the research topic. Influenced through the work of Clare Land, this thesis will draw on her use of case studies to draw out themes of analysis to form an argument.<sup>16</sup> The case study approach aims to draw focus on the one particular context of Rock Against Racism in Australia, however in doing so, draw out themes relevant to the Australian music scene today. As this topic has scarcely been written about, using interviews is essential to generating a comprehensive view of the events in question. In her work *Decolonizing Solidarity*, Clare Land uses interviews extensively to bring in the voice of Aboriginal activists and non-Indigenous allies to unpack their view of the histories being discussed. This adds a perspective that is not possible from merely an outsider analysis, contributing to a more wholistic representation. This is used to great effect in Land's work. As Land's work focuses on understanding the challenges facing supporters of Indigenous struggles, her embedding of commentary from Indigenous and non-indigenous voices taken from interviews lends an authenticity to the claims she is making about the relationship between these two groups that is essential to the work.<sup>17</sup> This project also uses interviews in a similar fashion. Interviews were thus conducted with participants and organisers involved in the Rock Against Racism concerts. In this thesis I use these perspectives to aid in the process of understanding how events like RAR can contribute to creating a decolonial space. This thesis deploys an Oral History approach to interviews, with a focus on long form interview with individual subjects rather than a group.<sup>18</sup> This has allowed for information to come out in a way that is more natural. With influence from *The Oral History Reader*, an approach of open-ended questioning with a view to taking the lead of the interviewee at appropriate times allowed for information that may not have been anticipated from the pre-written questions to be drawn out. Additionally, a 'snowballing' technique to attaining new interviewees was used to allow for the most appropriate interviewees to be found.<sup>19</sup> The 'snowballing' technique aims to gain new interviewees through the contacts given by previous interviewees and was how contact was made with

---

<sup>16</sup> C. Land, *Decolonizing solidarity: Dilemmas and directions for supporters of indigenous struggles*, London, Zed Books Ltd., 2015.

<sup>17</sup> C. Land, *Decolonizing solidarity*.

<sup>18</sup> A. Thomson & R. Perks, *The Oral History Reader*, London, Taylor & Francis, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> R. Streeton, M. Cooke & J. Campbell, 'Researching the Researchers: Using a Snowballing Technique', *Nurse Researcher*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2004.

Kelli McGuinness. Often the previous interviewee will contact a person they know to be interested and involved in the topic. This familiarity is greatly beneficial for the prospective interviewee and the researcher.

The Aboriginal History Archive housed in Victoria University's *Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit* contains audio and video recordings of certain RAR events. These recordings capture some of the performances of artists and speakers at the events.

Opportunities to learn about the Aboriginal struggle were presented at the events. In one case this was through a video and photographic exhibition on the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games protests.<sup>20</sup> The recordings contain speeches from Gary Foley talking about the Aboriginal protest at the 1982 Commonwealth Games and Dennis Walker talking about supporting the National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation (NAIHO). These recordings capture some of the range of activity that occurred at the RAR concerts in Australia and will be useful in generating a picture of what went on at the concerts.<sup>21</sup> In conjunction with these materials, interviews with Gary Foley and Kelli McGuinness have been conducted to interrogate how RAR was initiated in Australia, the challenges faced through the relationship between Aboriginal activists and allies and what connections RAR had to the broader struggle for self-determination and Land rights.<sup>22</sup> These interviews form an important part of the research as there is not enough content available on RAR in Australia to gain such information from reading and analysing currently available materials alone. A human research ethics application was approved in August 2021 allowing for these interviews to be conducted within the university protocols.<sup>23</sup>

An analysis of newspaper reporting on RAR in Australia has generated an understanding of the locations and dates of specific RAR concerts held in Australia as well as displaying the ways in which newspapers portrayed the events. One such report tells us that the first RAR concert held in Melbourne was in March 1980 and that it raised nearly three thousand dollars 'for the struggle against racism in Australia' also stating that another concert was to be held on July 13<sup>th</sup> of that year at the Northcote town hall and it was planned to would include 'food,

---

<sup>20</sup> 'Rock Against Racism: Northcote Town Hall. 19-12-82. Tape 2', Series 3, Box 137, A00000134, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>21</sup> 'Rock Against Racism: Northcote Town Hall. 19-12-82. Tape 2', A00000134.

<sup>22</sup> Initially it was desired to conduct four to six interviews with people involved in RAR. However, due to the limitations of the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and the time constraints of a Masters by Research thesis this was not in the end possible.

<sup>23</sup> Ethics application ID: HRE21-061

films and displays on Land rights'.<sup>24</sup> Reporting on the RAR concerts comes largely from the *Tribune* communist newspaper of Australia, the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*. Analysis of this type of reporting helps put into context the media reach of the RAR movement in Australia as well as the demographic of people that RAR was reaching and appealing to.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> 'Rock Against Racism', *Sydney Tribune*, July 9 1980, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Some student newspapers have been accessed, however I would have liked to access Adelaide University student newspaper *On Dit*, but it was not possible to gain access within the timeframe of the thesis.

## **Chapter 1: The History and Historical Context of Rock Against Racism**

RAR began in the United Kingdom in 1976 as a direct reaction to the influence of the fascist politics of the National Front and the resulting violence and racism experienced by non-white people in the UK. In contrast to the UK movement, RAR was used in Australia by groups of Aboriginal activists and supporters as part of the general movement for land rights and self-determination, to advocate awareness for Aboriginal issues, to gain new supporters and to create concerts that would give Aboriginal musicians a platform for their music and politics. Rather than being a movement that had a solid organising nucleus from which smaller chapters emerged, RAR in Australia was organised more disparately. Events in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane were organised by largely different groups of people, however there were similarities in the bands that performed, the messages being conveyed and the political orientation of those involved in organising RAR such as involvement in the Black Power and Health movements. This chapter discusses the historical context and chronology of the respective RAR movements in the UK and in Australia. This is important in understanding the difference between the two movements and how the Australian context formed a unique and integral part of the Aboriginal struggle of the 1980s.

### **1.1 The beginning of Rock Against Racism in the UK**

Rock Against Racism began in the UK in 1976. It was founded by photographer Red Saunders and his colleagues following a build-up of political tension in the British popular music scene. The right wing National Front, which was the fourth largest political party in mid 1970s Britain, had become increasingly popular with young people over the years.<sup>26</sup> In the music scene, many young punks were beginning to use swastikas and Nazi imagery in their outfits, spurred on by bands such as 'The Dentists' who spouted white supremacist ideology through their music in songs such as 'Kill the Reds', 'Master Race' and 'White Power'.<sup>27</sup> There was widespread concern amongst many in the popular music community that the punk movement was being taken over by fascist and racist ideology through the influence of the National Front. When an intoxicated Eric Clapton made a 'notorious outburst' at one of his performances, praising extremist MP Enoch Powell's white nationalism and claiming

---

<sup>26</sup> D. Renton, *Never Again: Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League 1976-1982*, London, Routledge, 2018, p.50-65

<sup>27</sup> S. Reynolds, *Rip it up and start again*, p. 123.

England was in danger of being ‘colonised by blacks’ Red Saunders and his peers were spurred into action, publicly urging support for their Rock Against Racism movement in the *New Musical Express*, as a reaction against Clapton’s high-profile racism.<sup>28</sup> This constituted the beginning of what became a string of ‘benefit concerts’ between 1976 and 1982, spawning branches of RAR across Britain and involving big-name bands such as ‘The Clash’, ‘The Slits’, ‘The Specials’, ‘Madness’ and ‘The Tom Robinson Band’.<sup>29</sup> By 1981 the effectiveness of the RAR movement in combining ‘anti-racism politics with popular culture’ was such that the influence of the National Front, particularly on young people, was all but completely extinguished.<sup>30</sup>

There has been extensive scholarship on RAR in Britain, especially in the last ten years. In particular, *Crisis Music: The Cultural Politics of Rock Against Racism* by Ian Goodyer provides a good account of the cultural impact of RAR through the use of interviews and archival research.<sup>31</sup> David Renton’s *Never Again: Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League* historicises the political struggle between the National Front, RAR and The Anti-Nazi League.<sup>32</sup> Renton shows how the RAR campaign was successful in quelling the influence of the National Front. Renton’s analysis of the techniques used by RAR activists has proved useful in understanding that, like the UK RAR, the Australian RAR is a product of sophisticated political action enacted by seasoned activists. Other notable works on the British RAR include the recent documentary *White Riot* fittingly taking its name from The Clash’s song about their involvement in the 1976 Notting Hill riots against police brutality towards people of colour.<sup>33</sup> The documentary also sparked an essay titled *White Riot: The Music Activists Who Took on Racism* by Arwa Haider, both of which give insight into what the RAR engagement in political action meant for British popular culture, particularly connecting the struggle to modern cultural movements such as Black Lives Matter.<sup>34</sup> Ian Goodyer also analyses the link between the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and RAR in his

---

<sup>28</sup> A. Haider, 2020, ‘White Riot: The Music Activists That Took on Racism’, *BBC*, 20 August 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200819-white-riot-the-music-activists-who-took-on-racism>

<sup>29</sup> *White Riot*, Director R. Shah, United Kingdom, Modern Films, 2019.

<sup>30</sup> I. Goodyer, *Crisis Music: the cultural politics of rock against racism*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013, p.59.

<sup>31</sup> Goodyer, *Crisis Music*, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> D. Renton, *Never Again: Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League*, London, Routledge, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> *White Riot*, 2019.

<sup>34</sup> Haider, ‘White Riot: The music Activists That Took on Racism’.

2003 work *Rock Against Racism: Multiculturalism and Political Mobilisation, 1976-1981*.<sup>35</sup> Goodyer claims the influence of the SWP was key to the wide reach RAR initially had within youth culture, arguing that the relationship between the SWP and RAR was mutually beneficial. According to Goodyer, the influence of the SWP was most evident in the critique of capitalism inherent in RAR's politics. Although in Australia the impetus for adopting RAR came from Aboriginal activists seizing the notoriety of the existing UK movement to raise awareness for Aboriginal issues and protests, there remained connections to anti-capitalism and socialist politics through the influence and support of *The Tribune* newspaper.<sup>36</sup>

It is clear the UK RAR movement was unprecedented in scale. Ashley Dawson states that 'In 1978 alone, for instance, RAR organized 300 local gigs and five carnivals in Britain, including two enormous London events that each drew audiences of nearly 100,000'.<sup>37</sup> RAR at its core represented musicians and artists positioning themselves against the kind of racism espoused by the followers of the National Front and echoed by artists such as Eric Clapton and The Dentists. Perhaps more significantly, RAR was also about reclaiming space. Non-white citizens of the UK, particularly people of Asian and African descent, were often made to feel extremely unsafe in public during this period.<sup>38</sup> Due to the huge numbers of supporters at RAR rallies, their direct confrontations with NF supporters and the widespread nature of RAR throughout not just London, but most major cities in the UK, RAR became a successful campaign in reclaiming public spaces for people of colour, or at least in reducing the constant threat of violence endured by many.<sup>39</sup> It is in this context that I wish to characterize the uptake of RAR in Australia. While the theme of racism was the same, the nature of racism in Australia was different. Instead of the National Front's argument that those who have immigrated to Britain should be deported, the racism faced by Aboriginal people in Australia is one rooted in colonisation. The issue of space is one not just of having space that is safe for Aboriginal Australians, but also an issue of land rights in the face of dispossession and self-determination in the face of paternalist government intervention. The theme of reclaiming spaces is similar, however. RAR in Australia, like the original UK movement constituted a

---

<sup>35</sup> I. Goodyer, 'Rock against racism: Multiculturalism and political mobilization 1976-81', *Immigrants & Minorities*, Vol 22, No.1, 2003, p.44-62.

<sup>36</sup> *The Tribune* was the newspaper of the communist party and its supporters in Australia. 'Rock Against Racism', *Tribune*, 9 July 1980, p. 3

<sup>37</sup> Dawson, "'Love music hate racism": The Cultural Politics of the Rock Against Racism Campaigns', p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Renton, *Never Again: Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League*, p. 62.

<sup>39</sup> Dawson, "'Love music hate racism": The Cultural Politics of the Rock Against Racism Campaigns', p. 2.

space that celebrated non-white culture and facilitated a space where people of colour felt safe to gather and enjoy themselves. Distinctly from the UK movement, RAR in Australia sought to raise awareness, gain new support and raise money for Aboriginal activism happening throughout the late 1970s through to the late 1980s. This was most prominent with regards to health and Land rights.

## **1.2 Australia's Rock Against Racism**

The title of Rock Against Racism was first used in Australia three years after the initial movement began in the United Kingdom. The key message of anti-racism was kept and the movement was adapted to first and foremost be an exercise in awareness raising for the issues faced by Aboriginal Australians and to secondly recruit new supporters of Aboriginal rights in Australia. Whether this was the intention or not, RAR in Australia also represented a unique space of Aboriginal resistance and political expression, the likes of which did not exist in Australia prior to this period. In contrast to the massive scale of RAR in the UK, my data shows that there were 41 RAR concerts held in Australia from 1979 until now, however this is still a significant number considering that the concerts focused on new Aboriginal bands, many of which were unrecorded and had only existed for a few years.<sup>40</sup> The movement began in Australia during a dynamic time for Aboriginal activism, specifically activism for land rights and self-determination. There had been a rich history of activism for Aboriginal rights in Australia such as the 1965 Freedom Ride, 1967 Referendum campaign and 1972 Aboriginal tent embassy. The legacy of these campaigns continued through the land rights and self-determination movement with which RAR was a part. This section will look at how RAR began in Australia, who was involved, what the political aims were and what the scope of RAR was in Australia. While it was nowhere near the scale of the original UK RAR movement, RAR in Australia was still an influential part of Australia's history of Aboriginal music and protest. The story these people and their/our supporters is a key part of the Aboriginal struggle.

This thesis draws on a large range of existing sources to piece together a history of RAR in Australia. These have ranged from newspapers, periodicals, magazine articles, audio/video

---

<sup>40</sup> Data collected from newspaper and archival sources, Appendix 1

recordings, photographs, posters, correspondence, funding submissions and proposals. The Aboriginal History Archive housed at Victoria University has been a key resource for accessing many of these items, some of which are not available anywhere else. Resources that have been particularly informative include a newsletter from the group ‘Campaign Against Racial Exploitation’ (CARE),<sup>41</sup> correspondence between a member of Rock Against Racism and the police<sup>42</sup>, and audio and video recordings of concerts held in Melbourne and Sydney as well as a transcript of these proceedings.<sup>43</sup> As well as this, contemporary funding submissions give context about the aims of RAR. These include a submission from Aboriginal Health Workers Kelli McGuinness and Bradley Brown providing a breakdown of the aims of RAR and the costs associated with the entire production of a concert.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, a submission titled ‘Feasibility of establishing a music recording studio for Aboriginal contemporary music’<sup>45</sup>, and ‘A Proposal for Black Australians Who Wish to Work in the Contemporary Music Industry’<sup>46</sup> make mention of RAR in their reports and give an insight into some of the plans for RAR in Australia after the initial string of concerts. Newspaper articles, largely from *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *Tribune* have been collected to generate a timeline of RAR in Australia. These sources mean that some of the people involved, and locations of the concerts can be analysed. Some key articles are a 1980 article in the *Age* about police seeking to ban liquor at Melbourne’s first RAR concert<sup>47</sup>, and a *Sydney Morning Herald* piece on Tiga Bayles, an Aboriginal music promoter who managed Us Mob and organised two RAR concerts in Sydney.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> CARE Newsletter, No. 18 March 1980, in: ‘Original correspondence and newspaper clippings relating to Gary Foley’s work with VAHS and NAIIO, 1980’, Series 18, Box 173, A00002434, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Original correspondence and newspaper clippings relating to Gary Foley’s work with VAHS and NAIIO, 1980’, Aboriginal History Archive.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Assorted published and unpublished material collected during Edwina Howell’s doctoral research, mostly transcripts of Gary Foley’s interviews, speeches and lectures, c2009-2012’, Series 60, Box 141, A00002384, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Documents belonging to Bruce McGuinness including correspondence, press releases and articles, including National Aboriginal Congress submission to a joint committee 1974 & NAIHO draft motion ‘Replacement of the National Aboriginal Conference’, 1974-1990’, Series 50, Box 243, A00002771, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>45</sup> ‘Various music and radio project documentation including Radio Redfern, recording studio feasibility study, music industry course, SEIMA/3CR Aboriginal radio training proposal, 1987-1993’, Series 41, Box 25, A00000451, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Correspondence and other documents (including faxes, memos and photocopies) relating to Music in Australia, correspondence, 1984 – 1996’, Series 41, Box 226, A00002716, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Police Sought Liquor Ban at Concert’, *The Age*, 11 July 1980, p.5.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Tiga Bayles Music Promoter’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 January 1983, p.16.

### **1.3 Aboriginal Activism**

In the period between the mid 1960s and early 1980s there were major developments and progression in the political activism of Aboriginal Australians, starting out with the Freedom ride in 1965 and leading towards the development of community-controlled organisations and a national campaign for Land rights and self-determination. It is difficult to draw a line at which to stop looking back further and further to give a greater historical background when dealing with writing a history.<sup>49</sup> Though it was by no means the first example of Aboriginal activism, I believe the 1965 Freedom Ride is a good place to start as the chain of events following the Freedom Ride show a clear political trajectory of activism leading into the period in which RAR took place in Australia.<sup>50</sup> The Freedom Ride began out of The University of Sydney when Charles Perkins, one of the first Aboriginal Australians to attend university along with some of his colleagues from Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA), (including Ann Curthoys, author of *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers*) decided to drive through rural towns to draw media attention to the poor living conditions and racism experienced by Aboriginal people in rural New South Wales.<sup>51</sup> This act inspired many young people in Australia, one of whom was Gary Foley who then went on to become an integral part of the 1972 Aboriginal Tent Embassy. In 1967 there was a referendum held in Australia on Aboriginal rights. The over ninety percent yes vote meant that Aboriginal Australians would be included in the census and the commonwealth government would be allowed to make laws for Aboriginal people, bypassing some of the racist state laws.<sup>52</sup> Many Aboriginal organisations such as the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), the Australian Aborigines League (AAL)<sup>53</sup> and the Aborigines Progressive Association (AAP) were heavily involved in campaigning to make this yes vote possible.<sup>54</sup> Though the referendum was a monumental success, the general improvement to the lives of Aboriginal people that was expected by many was largely intangible and there was no headway on gaining national land rights legislation from any of the string of prime

---

<sup>49</sup> *A Fight for Liberty and Freedom* by John Maynard is a good source for further reading on the earlier history of Aboriginal activism in Australia: J. Maynard, *A Fight for Liberty and Freedom*, Australia, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> G. Foley, 'Black Power in Redfern 1968–1972', Victoria University, 2001.

<sup>51</sup> A. Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2002.

<sup>52</sup> 'The 1967 Referendum', *AIATSIS*, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/1967-referendum#:~:text=On%2027%20May%201967%2C%20Australians,to%20make%20laws%20for%20them>, (accessed 20 September 2020).

<sup>53</sup> Later called the 'Aboriginal Advancement League'

<sup>54</sup> 'The 1967 Referendum', *AIATSIS*

ministers in this period: Harold Holt, John McEwan, John Gorton and William McMahon. It was during the early 1970s that William McMahon claimed - on January 26 of all days - that his government would never grant Land rights to Aboriginal people in this country. This triggered a protest on the lawns of old parliament house that called themselves the 'Aboriginal Tent Embassy'. This Embassy is still here to this day, the idea being that if McMahon was to treat Aboriginal people like aliens in their/our own country, then it makes sense for Aboriginal people to have an embassy. The radical political action demonstrating through the Tent Embassy was a result of Black Power mindset that had been adopted by many young Aboriginal activists during the early 1970s. Influenced by African American civil rights activists and Black Panthers, Aboriginal activists set up community-controlled organisations such as the Aboriginal Legal Service and Aboriginal Health Service in Redfern, Sydney and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service and Legal Service in Fitzroy, Melbourne. These organisations provided services for Aboriginal communities that were controlled by Aboriginal people. Following on from community-controlled organisations, the period in which RAR sits, the late 1970s and early 1980s, was a dynamic time for Aboriginal media. There was a lot of new contemporary Aboriginal music coming to the fore and films like *Backroads* and *Wrong Side of the Road* were weaving the politics of the Aboriginal Struggle into art. It is in this context that RAR operated. Much like the concerts shown on screen in *Wrong Side of the Road*, RAR hosted bands that sung about the racism and injustice felt by Aboriginal Australians. This will be explored further in chapter two.

#### **1.4 Beginning of RAR in Australia**

RAR concerts had been held in Australia from as early as 1979 and as late as 2012, and spanned across Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane, however most of them were in Sydney and Melbourne.<sup>55</sup> Data collected from newspapers and archives shows that there were at least 40 significant RAR concerts held in Australia from 1979 until now, more than half of which were held between 1979 to the end of 1982.<sup>56</sup> Information on the first RAR concert is difficult to find. The first mention of RAR concerts comes from an article in the magazine *Identity* a publication focusing on Aboriginal political issues and edited by Aboriginal

---

<sup>55</sup> Data collected from newspaper and archival sources, Appendix 1

<sup>56</sup> Data collected from newspaper and archival sources, Appendix 1

journalist John Newfong.<sup>57</sup> In a 1981 issue *Identity* describes that ‘Rock Against Racism began in Australia in 1979 when concerts were held in Adelaide with bands like Us Mob, No Fixed Address and Redgum’.<sup>58</sup> Though there is no further information about this initial concert, what I do know is that these bands were all based in Adelaide and it is likely that they had a close relationship due to their shared political outlook against racism. It is also possible that they were influenced by the RAR movement in the UK and decided to put on their own RAR shows in their hometown. From the film *Wrong Side of the Road* it is evident that No Fixed Address and Us Mob faced considerable racism from hotel managers and gig promoters, often being denied gigs at many venues, particularly in rural Australia, because of their race.<sup>59</sup> This kind of experience was also happening in Melbourne during the same time period. Through Crystal McKinnon’s account of Tony Lovett and Alf Bamblett’s response to their marginalisation at the hands of Melbourne’s bars and pubs she puts forward the idea that providing an ‘Indigenous controlled space’ where Aboriginal people can safely gather in itself constituted an act of resistance to colonial power.<sup>60</sup> In a similar fashion to the way the 1965 Freedom Ride aimed to expose and extinguish segregation and discrimination in rural Australia, it is likely that RAR concerts were a way of responding to this problem being faced by bands such as No Fixed Address and Us Mob. Holding concerts that were controlled by Aboriginal Australians and their/our supporters ensured a more welcoming space and at the very least, that these bands would not be discriminated against in the venues because of their race. Indeed, Kelli McGuinness states that often cabarets and concerts were put on by the Melbourne Aboriginal community to give bands a space to play to a supportive Aboriginal audience and for the community to have a welcoming creative outlet.<sup>61</sup> Kelli also recounts that in his view RAR concerts were about getting new Aboriginal musicians exposure and a place to perform as well as putting on an event that the Aboriginal community could enjoy. Kelli states that these concerts were attended mostly by Aboriginal people and that any non-

---

<sup>57</sup> The Koori History Website, *The 1970s* (website), <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/images/history/1970s/identity71/identitydx.html>, (accessed 20 January 2022).

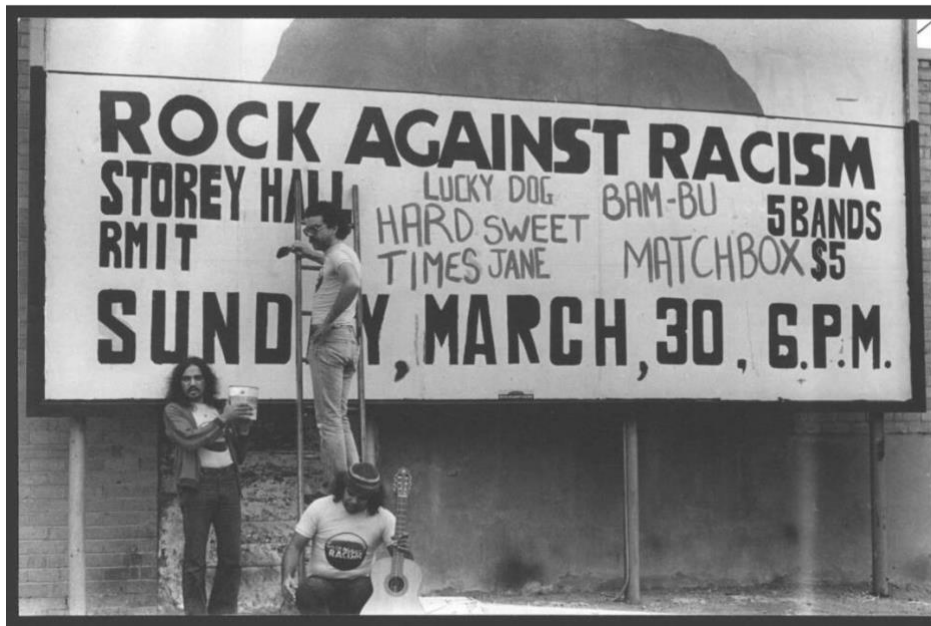
<sup>58</sup> *Identity*, Vol. 4, No. 5, 1981, Aboriginal History Archive.

<sup>59</sup> ‘*Wrong Side of the Road*’ returns to cinemas [HD] ABC RN Breakfast [Online Video], Sydney, Australia, Radio National, ABC Indigenous, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHwby2dl7GY&ab\\_channel=ABCIndigenous](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHwby2dl7GY&ab_channel=ABCIndigenous), (Accessed 2 June 2021).

<sup>60</sup> C. McKinnon, ‘Indigenous Music as a Space of Resistance’, From *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity*, ed. T. Banivanua Mar & P. Edmonds London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 265.

<sup>61</sup> K. McGuinness, ‘Recollections of Rock Against Racism, VAHS and Australia’s music scene in the 1980s and 1990s’ [interviewed by Will Bracks], 24 February 2022, Recorded Zoom interview, Melbourne, VIC.

Aboriginal people in attendance would have been very supportive of the Aboriginal rights and self-determination.



L. McLeavy, 'Rock Against Racism', Melbourne, March 1980.

This photograph displays artist Robin Bailey with Henry Thorpe and Peter Rotumah, members of the band Hard Times, putting up a poster for the first RAR concert in Melbourne in March 1980.<sup>62</sup> The first RAR concert in Melbourne is a good example of what the RAR movement in Australia was about. Though there were some non-Aboriginal artists, the majority of the acts were Aboriginal bands and performers. The concert raised money for local causes while also raising awareness of local issues through talks and exhibitions at the concerts. On the morning of this first RAR Melbourne concert on March 30, 1980, there was a press conference to promote it.<sup>63</sup> Media personality and commissioner for community relations, Al Grassby, was invited to talk about the concert and Bruce McGuinness, director of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) was there to promote the concert to the press. Joining them were members of the band Hard Times.<sup>64</sup> This press coverage appeared on 'all four t.v. channels' on the evening news with information about the concert and footage of Hard Times performing one of their songs.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> L. McLeavy, 'Rock Against Racism' [Photograph], Melbourne, 1980.

<sup>63</sup> 'CARE Newsletter', No. 18 March 1980, Aboriginal History Archive.

<sup>64</sup> 'CARE Newsletter', No. 18 March 1980, Aboriginal History Archive.

<sup>65</sup> 'CARE Newsletter', No. 18 March 1980, Aboriginal History Archive.

## 1.5 The Bands

During the early 1980s, advocating for Aboriginal rights and causes through music was a prevalent theme in a lot of contemporary Australian music. Two bands leading the charge were No Fixed Address and Us Mob, both of which had all Aboriginal members, hailed from Adelaide and had a close relationship. Being among the first bands to form through the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM) they often appeared on the same bill as they toured around South Australia.<sup>66</sup> Aboriginal bands had only recently been recording contemporary music that wasn't country and western,<sup>67</sup> yet it was still difficult for artists such as Us Mob and No Fixed Address to reach a non-Aboriginal audience.<sup>68</sup> Despite their growing popularity, record labels were reluctant to give these bands the funding for a full album citing the difficulties of selling this music to a white audience.<sup>69</sup> The 1981 film *Wrong Side of the Road* aimed to bring these issues of racism faced by bands Us Mob and No Fixed Address to light.<sup>70</sup> This was done in the form of a 'fictionalised documentary' in which the bands collaborated on the script with director and writers Ned Lander and Graeme Isaac who said the film 'aimed to bring modern Aboriginal music to a non-Aboriginal audience'.<sup>71</sup> Isaac and Lander have both worked on numerous films and documentaries featuring Australian Aboriginal stories such as *Bran Nue Dae*, *In my Father's Country* and *Radiance*. *Wrong Side of the Road* was an entertaining fictionalised story inspired by real experiences faced by these bands, such as police brutality and racism from hotel managers. The film opens with No Fixed Address performing their song 'Fight for your rights', which is peppered throughout the film. The theme of having to fight for your rights and to be recognised - exemplified by the song's lyrics 'I am a black, black man, trying to be recognised in this wretched world' - is displayed through the struggle Us Mob and No Fixed Address face through police brutality and discrimination. The film also explores the long-term consequences for members of stolen

---

<sup>66</sup> 'Us Mob, No Fixed Address, Wrong Side of the Road', ABC, 31 May 2021, <https://www.abc.net.au/doublej/programs/classic-albums/no-fixed-address-us-mob-wrong-side-of-the-road/13359592>, (accessed 20 May 2020).

<sup>67</sup> Jimmy Little was an Aboriginal artist that had achieved great success in Australia during the 1960s onward, however his early music was not overtly political in the way that these new Aboriginal bands' music was 'About Jimmy Little', Jimmy Little Foundation, 2022, <https://www.jlf.org.au/jimmy-little>, (Viewed 2 November 2021).

<sup>68</sup> 'Wrong Side of the Road' returns to cinemas [HD] ABC RN Breakfast [Online Video], [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHwby2dl7GY&ab\\_channel=ABCIndigenous](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHwby2dl7GY&ab_channel=ABCIndigenous), (Accessed 2 June 2021).

<sup>69</sup> 'Wrong Side of the Road' returns to cinemas [HD] ABC RN Breakfast [Online Video]

<sup>70</sup> *Wrong side of the Road*, Director N. Lander, South Australia, Ronin Films, 1981.

<sup>71</sup> 'Wrong Side of the Road' returns to cinemas [HD] ABC RN Breakfast [Online Video]

generations when one of the road crew is trying to find out who his family is, and a truant officer is disapproving of the way Aunty Veronica lives. *Wrong Side of the Road* shows non-Aboriginal audiences what it was like to be in an Aboriginal band in the early 1980s and the struggles faced by these musicians and the wider Aboriginal community. It does this while also celebrating the music of these artists and the community created around their music. Filmed around the same time as RAR concerts were prevalent in Australia, the film makes subtle reference to the movement when a member of the bands' road crew wears a RAR T-shirt for a large portion of the film. The themes and storytelling aims of *Wrong Side of the Road* bear a strong resemblance to those of RAR. Both aimed to bring an awareness of issues faced by Aboriginal Australians to audiences through a celebration of Aboriginal music and culture. The fact that *Wrong Side of the Road* was filmed at a time when RAR was extremely active and contemporary Aboriginal recording artists were only just beginning to break into the mainstream shows what a dynamic time this was for Aboriginal music and protest. Importantly, No Fixed Address and Us Mob were able to release a joint album of the music they performed for *Wrong Side of the Road*. Some of the key tracks, *We Have Survived* ('we have survived the white man's world') and *Genocide* ('They promised us this and they promised us that, but all we ever get is a stab in the back') are indicative of the political content of these artists songs.<sup>72</sup> These are the kind of politically charged lyrics that were on display at the RAR concerts.

## **1.6 How the Concerts Helped the Community**

In addition to raising awareness for causes, protest actions and community organisations RAR also raised funds. The first RAR concert in Melbourne raised 3000 dollars which was distributed between the local Aboriginal emergency fund, the CARE organisation, and an operating fund to keep RAR going.<sup>73</sup> The idea of using rock music as a medium to reach people and raise awareness for new participants in the Aboriginal struggle was a theme throughout RAR in Australia. In a similar fashion to this first concert, later concerts would also include talks in addition to the music. One example of this was Gary Foley speaking on Land rights and Denis Walker speaking about the National Aboriginal and Islander Health

---

<sup>72</sup> *Wrong Side of the Road (Songs from the Motion Picture) No Fixed Address & Us Mob*, Produced by Philip Roberts and Graeme Isaac, Black Australia Records, 1981.

<sup>73</sup> 'CARE Newsletter', No. 18 March 1980, 'Original correspondence and newspaper clippings...', Aboriginal History Archive.

Organisation (NAIHO) at a concert in Northcote in 1982.<sup>74</sup> RAR took the opportunity to connect with movements and organisations happening within Aboriginal Australia, such as at the 1982 Commonwealth Games protests in Brisbane: A RAR gig was held at Davies Park in Brisbane to connect with the ongoing protests occurring nearby at Musgrave park, a site near the Commonwealth Games venue at Southbank and also a space well used by both Aboriginal community members and local non Aboriginal activists.<sup>75</sup> This showed another aspect to RAR, in which it would provide a safe space of celebration for Aboriginal people and supporters as well as awareness raising.

Rather than there being one main organising group, it appears that just about each RAR gig was organised by a different mix of community activists and musicians. While there is crossover in the people involved there is also a lot of difference between the names associated with each RAR gig. Archives consulted to date indicate that ‘Campaign Against Racial Exploitation’ (CARE) was involved in the early RAR concerts in Australia. CARE formed in 1973 and by 1980 they reported to have a branch in ‘most major centres’ in Australia.<sup>76</sup> Their aims were to campaign in support of southern African liberation struggles and to support land rights and self-determination for ‘Black Australians all over the country’.<sup>77</sup> According to the CARE newsletter, RAR in Australia was formed jointly by CARE and the Fitzroy Aboriginal community, however it is unclear if this takes into account a 1979 RAR concert held in Adelaide mentioned in *Identity* magazine.<sup>78</sup> Likely taking influence from the campaigns for land rights and self-determination and from the activists of the 60s and 70s, this *Identity* publication quotes the aims of RAR: ‘to create, through the medium of the rock music industry, an awareness of the terrible plight suffered by Aboriginal people in this country’.<sup>79</sup> One of the key figures in establishing RAR was Lyn McLeavy. Cited in the *Age* as being the ‘secretary of Rock Against Racism’,<sup>80</sup> McLeavy was also part

---

<sup>74</sup> ‘Audio recording of Rock Against Racism live concert held in Albert Park Melbourne’, Series 1, Box 153, A00000973, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>75</sup> ‘Commonwealth Games protest material, photos, newsclippings, press release, 1982’, Series 32, Box 33, A00000555, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>76</sup> CARE Newsletter, No. 18 March 1980, ‘Original correspondence and newspaper clippings...’, A00002434

<sup>77</sup> ‘Original correspondence and newspaper clippings relating to Gary Foley’s work with VAHS and NAIO, 1980’, Series 18, Box 173, A00002434, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>78</sup> *Identity*, Vol. 4, No. 5, 1981, in: ‘Newsletters including Nunga News...’, A0001473.

<sup>79</sup> *Identity*, Vol. 4, No. 5, 1981, in: ‘Newsletters including Nunga News...’, A0001473.

<sup>80</sup> K. Kizilos, ‘Harmony For Races’, *The Age*, 9 April 1980, p.17

of the national CARE coordinating collective in Fitzroy.<sup>81</sup> A non-Aboriginal woman, McLeavy was heavily involved in activism in Australia such as the 1982 Commonwealth Games protests, 'Women for Nuclear Disarmament' and she was part of the 'Aboriginal Land rights Support Group'.<sup>82</sup> McLeavy's involvement across a range of organisations is typical of many young urban activists at the time. Organisers of RAR concerts appear to have used their range of organisational connections to build a broad support base. Rather than having one major concert, RAR aimed to spread awareness about the Aboriginal Struggle in Australia through a multitude of concerts across the country. Bands such as No Fixed Address, and Us Mob were already singing about land rights and self-determination,<sup>83</sup> and RAR aimed to bring these people together under the one roof to generate an awareness of issues faced in Aboriginal Australia.

### **1.7 Gary Foley's Tour with The Clash**

Prior to the first press conference kicking off The Clash's tour of Australia and New Zealand, three Aboriginal activists including Gary Foley approached the band to request that they come on stage to 'speak about their situation'.<sup>84</sup> Gary Foley's tour with The Clash in 1982 was another example of the use of rock music to reach a non-Aboriginal audience with the aim of educating about Australia's history and recruiting people for protests.<sup>85</sup> Foley's speech at one of these concerts echoes the themes of his speech at a RAR concert in Sydney in November 1981.<sup>86</sup> In both speeches he gives the audience a lesson on Australia's history of oppressing Aboriginal Australians, and he tells the audience that if they can take the time to go to rock concerts then they can come along and support Aboriginal people at protests and marches.<sup>87</sup> The Clash, having participated in the UK RAR movement and holding radically left-wing ideals realised the opportunity they had to give a platform to activists such as Gary Foley to speak to a new audience who 'wouldn't normally pay any attention to them' and

---

<sup>81</sup> 'CARE Newsletter', No. 18 March 1980, 'Original correspondence and newspaper clippings', Aboriginal History Archive.

<sup>82</sup> D. Broadbent, 'Aborigines urged not to boycott games', *The Age*, 18 May 1982, p.3

<sup>83</sup> *Identity*, Vol. 4, No. 5, 1981, in: 'Newsletters including Nunga News...', A0001473

<sup>84</sup> A. Moliterno, 'The One Struggle: The Clash, Gary Foley, punk politics and Indigenous Australian activism', in, *Working for the Clampdown*, ed. Colin Coulter, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019, p. 200.

<sup>85</sup> 'Recording of from ABC radio about Gary Foley & The Clash, Audio Cassette Tape, 1982', A00000626, Aboriginal History Archive, Series 32, Box 146, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>86</sup> 'Three transcripts of Gary Foley speaking including interview and speeches, 1982-1993', Series 32, Box 37, A00001070, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>87</sup> 'Three transcripts of Gary Foley speaking including interview and speeches, 1982-1993', Aboriginal History Archive.

took them up on it.<sup>88</sup> Gary Foley spoke at most of the dates of The Clash's Australian tour, giving variations of a speech halfway through the show with the same core message. Foley's speech gave a short-hand version of the history of Australia and the Aboriginal struggle. Foley connected the British Ruling class oppression of woman, working classes and Aboriginal people at the time of invasion and claimed the same three groups are still being oppressed stating; 'the struggle against racism, sexism and exploitation is the *one struggle*'.<sup>89</sup> This connection is important to note given the audience Foley was speaking to. At The Clash concert Foley was speaking to a majority white audience, therefore connecting the Aboriginal struggle to other popular struggles that many young people at the concerts would likely have been involved in – feminism and class struggles – and identifying them as the same struggle was a way of trying to generate an ownership of the Aboriginal struggle in Australia for people who otherwise may have been indifferent. Foley's unifying approach had the intention of bringing in a new group of supporters of Aboriginal struggles, many of whom would be largely ignorant of Aboriginal history and politics. In contrast, during Foley's speech at the 1982 RAR concert at Northcote town hall, there is much less of a focus on the history of Australia's oppression of Aboriginal people and there is no need to draw comparisons of this struggle to other struggles of oppressed groups. This is because the RAR concerts were attended mostly by Aboriginal people with a majority of performers being Aboriginal. The focus of Foley's speech here was more on convincing people to take action, to go to protests and get fired up.

The audio of Gary Foley's speech during the 1982 Clash concert in Sydney was used in the short film *Green Bush* to display the continuing influence of Foley's collaboration with The Clash.<sup>90</sup> In the film, Aboriginal radio broadcaster DJ Kenny, plays Foley's monologue on his Green Bush community radio program for Aboriginal communities. This displays the importance of such moments of Aboriginal activism not just for gaining support from non-Aboriginal supporters, but also for the Aboriginal community. Affording space to Aboriginal voices in this way contributes to creating *decolonial spaces* that will be discussed in a later section of this thesis. Alessandro Moliterno's summary of these events displays the power of what Foley calls 'the one struggle' to speak to young Australians who otherwise may have no

---

<sup>88</sup> A. Moliterno, 'The One Struggle: The Clash, Gary Foley, punk politics and Indigenous Australian activism', p. 200.

<sup>89</sup> A. Moliterno, 'The One Struggle: The Clash, Gary Foley, punk politics and Indigenous Australian activism', p. 194.

<sup>90</sup> *Green Bush* [film], Director W. Thornton, Australia, Ronin Films, 2005.

interest in Aboriginal struggles. What Moliterno leaves out of this work is a discussion of similar actions to that of the Foley's collaboration with The Clash. RAR was happening in the same period as this Clash tour and was part of the same push to bring in and educate 'ordinary Australians' about the Aboriginal struggle. This collaboration with the Clash is also recounted in a book by Gregor Gall, although Gary Foley has disputed some of the information in this account.<sup>91</sup>

### **1.8 Building Bridges**

A lot of the activity of Aboriginal protest in music during the 1980s was leading up to the 1988 bicentenary of Australia in which some of the largest numbers of protesters ever recorded in Australia turned up for a march and music concert. The Building Bridges concert was held at Bondi Pavilion on January 26, 1988, in support of the 'Long March for Justice Freedom and Hope', often cited as the largest Aboriginal protest held in Australia at the time.<sup>92</sup> As Kelli McGuinness states, a lot of the political activity in the Aboriginal music scene was leading up to the 1988 bicentenary of Australia's colonisation.<sup>93</sup> It was the intention of Aboriginal activists to disrupt what Gary Foley calls 'the great masturbation of the nation'<sup>94</sup> during 1988 and generate a large scale protest against the invasion and colonisation that January 26 represents for Aboriginal people. It was also the intention to create a separate event celebrating Aboriginal culture which was to be the Building Bridges concert. Building Bridges formed a celebration of Aboriginal music and culture that was also a key part of the protest against the celebration of Australia's bicentenary in the face of continuing dispossession and oppression felt by Aboriginal Australians. In particular, the issue of Aboriginal deaths in custody was a major part of these protests, as can be seen in this quote from a member of the band Do Re Mi:

...1988 celebrated 200 years of white rule in Australia, but 1988 did not acknowledge 200 years of black repression. A sad by-product is the many young Aboriginal deaths in jail even in the midst of a royal commission into their deaths. Awareness is half the

---

<sup>91</sup> There is some dispute in the comments section of this webpage between Gary Foley, Gregor Gall and David Langsam about the true version of events: G. Gall, 'Getting the Young Punks to Join in', *Overland*, 2020, <https://overland.org.au/2020/07/getting-the-young-punks-to-join-in-gary-foley-and-the-clash/>, (accessed 20 September 2020).

<sup>92</sup> B. Atwood & A. Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, Crows Nest, Allen & Unwin, 1999, p.279.

<sup>93</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism....', [interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>94</sup> G. Foley, from Liner notes of *Building Bridges Australia Has a Black History* [Record], Published by ABC, 1990.

battle and we must act now. Our donation to this record is a belief that projects like these prompt people to ask the pertinent questions.<sup>95</sup>

It's clear that in 1988 awareness raising was still the key aim of these kinds of Aboriginal protests. In his statement on the liner notes of the Building Bridges record Gary Foley expresses the hope that the Building Bridges concert would be an 'expression of solidarity and support for Black Australia in our struggle for recognition during White Australia's bicentenary', indeed Foley here conveys a more hopeful message than usual, focusing on the feeling of unity that the concert created stating that the performers who appeared at Building Bridges 'all expressed the hope that one day all of Australia would be like that magical moment at Bondi.' This feeling Foley says 'echoed two days later' when the bicentenary protests forming the largest ever rally for Aboriginal rights in Australia at the time.<sup>96</sup> While there were still some concerts bearing the name 'Rock Against Racism' after 1988, these were much more infrequent. It is evident that the RAR concerts were part of a history of activism in the music scene led by Aboriginal bands and activists that was building towards the large-scale protests against the 1988 bicentenary of Australia. As Kelli McGuinness remembers:

we [Aboriginal people] were consciously aware of the fact that '88 was coming up as well, but also, we had the backdrop of, the only time musicians could get any sort of, airplay, was their local, if a local band got a, a gig at a local pub or they were discovered on the street, or at home, that sort of thing. There wasn't, and still isn't to a large degree, like an easy sort of pathway for, for someone who's, you know, never done anything other than busk... or, just play in front of friends, or you know to get discovered.<sup>97</sup>

It's thus evident that the concerts were as much about getting exposure for new Aboriginal performers as they were about activism, the second aspect of this will be discussed in chapters two and three of this thesis.

---

<sup>95</sup> Quote from the 'Do Re Mi' band, from Liner notes of *Building Bridges Australia Has a Black History* [Record], Published by ABC, 1990.

<sup>96</sup> G. Foley, from Liner notes of *Building Bridges Australia Has a Black History* [Record], Published by ABC, 1990.

<sup>97</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...', [interviewed by Will Bracks].

## **1.9 Connections to the SCOC & Koori Kollij**

The Swinburne Community Organisations Course (SCOC) and Koori Kollij had a strong influence on young Aboriginal students in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Learning about health, education, politics, and arts, students completing these courses were well versed in the importance of community-controlled organisations for Aboriginal self-determination. Originally set up in 1975 and inspired by the Barefoot Doctor programs in China,<sup>98</sup> the Community Organisations Course at Swinburne University was established as a way of training community health workers who would then go and work in their direct communities.<sup>99</sup> With the western medical system being unwelcoming to many Aboriginal people and some remote communities inadequately serviced by doctors, the program was a way of giving communities a trained health worker who was selected as a trusted member of the community. The program only ran from 1975 until 1978 and was replaced by Koori Kollij which ran from 1982 until 1990.<sup>100</sup> In addition to learning to be health workers the program was innately political. With a mix of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers, students learnt about Aboriginal politics and Australian history in much more depth than what was being taught at high schools. This political education led a lot of students of Koori Kollij to become a part of the Brisbane 1982 Commonwealth Games protests against the draconian government of Joh Bjelke-Peterson.<sup>101</sup> At least two of these health workers, Kelli McGuinness and Brad Brown, were also involved in RAR. A 1985 report from Kelli McGuinness and Brad Brown advocates for the benefits of RAR concerts and includes a budget breakdown and funding application for their RAR concert at RMIT's Storey Hall in 1985.<sup>102</sup> The context and aims of the 1985 RAR concert as well as the broader Aboriginal music scene was discussed in depth, this will be looked at in chapters two and three.

---

<sup>98</sup> The Barefoot doctors program was observed by Alma Thorpe, Gary Foley and Bruce McGuinness among others during their respective trips to china. The program taught healthcare work to representatives from various small communities in in China who then took this knowledge back to their community. This formed the basis for the Swinburne Community organisations course and Koori Kollij. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

<sup>99</sup> 'A History of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service', *Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc.*, <https://www.vaccho.org.au/assets/01-RESOURCES/TOPIC-AREA/CORPORATE/A-HISTORY-OF-THE-VICTORIAN-ABORIGINAL-HEALTH-SERVICE.pdf>, (accessed September 30 2021).

<sup>100</sup> 'A History of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service'.

<sup>101</sup> 'A History of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service'.

<sup>102</sup> 'A History of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service'.

RAR took place in Australia as part of the ongoing struggle for land rights and self-determination that followed the era of an explosion of community-controlled organisations coming from the black power movement of young Aboriginal activists in Australia. With a focus on gaining support for these ongoing struggles and a focus on giving airtime to new Aboriginal bands RAR was successful in combining politics and music in a way that was enjoyable for the community. While it never attained the scale of the UK RAR movement, it may never have aimed to, as the focus was more geared towards new up and coming bands rather than huge stadium-fillers like The Clash.

## **Chapter 2:** **RAR is a nexus of self-determination Organisations**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter argues that RAR formed a critical site of networking, activism and expression for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people interested in land rights and self-determination as well as anti-racism. The key organisations such as the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS), Koori Kollij, Campaign Against Racial Exploitation (CARE) and the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM) display a utilisation of grassroots community organising that helped implement the RAR concerts and causes. Student organisations such as Students Against Discrimination (SAD) were also involved in putting on some RAR concerts. What this speaks of is the mindset of community ownership and control deemed necessary in a political landscape in which governments had continually failed to deliver significant progress on land rights, health and self-determination following the 1967 referendum for Aboriginal rights.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will outline the structures and people involved in these organisations that contributed to and hosted RAR concerts. These organisations show the links RAR had to community organisations and the health, self-determination, and land rights movements in Australia. RAR was therefore not just about music, but also forming connections in the community of Aboriginal activism to further the aims of the Aboriginal struggle.

When talking about this period it was necessary to consult various histories of Aboriginal protest and activism to gain an understanding of the politics, aims and people of the movement for the Aboriginal struggle during the late 1970s and early 1980s. These were then used, in addition to archival materials and interviews, to generate a more cohesive picture of the nature of the people and organisations involved in RAR Australia, which has led me to the conclusion that the people and organisations involved in RAR represented a microcosm of the Aboriginal struggle of the late 70s and early 80s. *A History of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service* published by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health

---

<sup>1</sup> This context is spoken about in more detail in Chapter 1

Organisation Inc. (VACCHO)<sup>2</sup> has been invaluable in gaining an understanding of the beginning of VAHS, SCOC and Koori Kollij, as well as complementing other sources pertaining to the organisational aims of these bodies. *Tjungaringanyi/Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music*,<sup>3</sup> published by the University of Adelaide has also been an invaluable resource, not only in finding out about CASM, but also for exploring the links between CASM and RAR, the development of contemporary Aboriginal Music and the legacy of the bands No Fixed Address and Us Mob. Additionally, *Our Place Our Music*, edited by Marcus Breen<sup>4</sup> has generated a great bedrock of context and scholarship on Aboriginal music, how it has developed, been received and the challenges it has faced. Sources from the Aboriginal History archive have been very useful in finding out about the CARE organisation, these include CARE newsletters,<sup>5</sup> and the constitution of the CARE organisation.<sup>6</sup> The organisations mentioned in this chapter worked from a self-determination mindset which was heavily influenced by Aboriginal politics.

## **2.2 VAHS, SCOC and Koori Kollij**

Established in Fitzroy in 1973, the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) was influential in setting up RAR concerts in Melbourne as part of extending its programme of community engagement in order to contribute towards community health. VAHS and RAR in Melbourne largely shared similar aims. This is well demonstrated in the funding application document from Aboriginal Health Workers<sup>7</sup> Kelli McGuinness and Bradley Brown, both of whom were employees of VAHS and organised a 1985 RAR concert at RMIT's Storey Hall.<sup>8</sup> The document includes this statement from the National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation (NAIHO):

---

<sup>2</sup> 'Aboriginal Health Worker' was at the time a new term developed through the VAHS Community Organisations course and Koori Kollij health worker training program: 'A History of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service'.

<sup>3</sup> Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music, *Tjungaringanyi/Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music*, vol. 1, no. 1, Adelaide, 1975.

<sup>4</sup> M. Breen (ed.), *Our Place Our Music*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> 'Documents related to NAIHO and health services (collected by Foley as Public Relations Officer for NAIHO). Including memos, submissions, minutes, correspondence, 1982-83', Series 18, Box 88, A00001962, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne Australia.

<sup>6</sup> 'Collection of Newspapers including Aboriginal Human Relations, Aboriginal Newsletter, Care Newsletter, Kulinma-Kodomokai, Aboriginal News, 1970-1995', Series 53, Box 98, A00002081, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>7</sup> 'Aboriginal Health Worker' was at the time a new term developed through the VAHS Community Organisations course and Koori Kollij health worker training program: 'A History of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service'.

<sup>8</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...' [interviewed by Will Bracks].

Health does not mean the physical wellbeing of an individual but refers to the social emotional and cultural wellbeing of the entire community. For Aboriginal people this is seen in terms of the whole of life view, incorporating the cyclical concept of life-death-life. Health care services should strive to achieve the state where every individual is able to achieve their full potential as human beings and thus bring about the total well-being of their community.

This is an evolving definition

- N.A.I.H.O circa, 1979<sup>9</sup>

In an interview conducted with Kelli McGuinness, he states that the aims of the 1985 concert were for the well-being of the Aboriginal community in Melbourne, to have an opportunity to let off steam and enjoy gathering around something that wasn't all 'doom and gloom'.<sup>10</sup> Kelli McGuinness and Brad Brown became Aboriginal Health Workers for VAHS through the Koori Kollij health worker education program, which provided a wholistic approach to health that included community, care of land and emotional wellbeing as well as physical health. They also learned about the politics of health and became involved in music through Koori Kollij in the band Dr. Koori. Kelli McGuinness and Brad Brown were integral in obtaining funding through grant applications for several bands to put on a RAR performance at RMIT's Storey Hall and a later tour in New South Wales and were heavily politicised through Swinburne and Koori Kollij.<sup>11</sup> In a recent email exchange, Alan Brown, the current director of VAHS, commented that the type of activity that Kelli McGuinness and Brad Brown organised with the RAR concert was as much part of the Koori Kollij training program as the clinical training.<sup>12</sup> McGuinness also mentions that there was no shortage of talented of Aboriginal musicians, but lack of access to recording facilities and therefore radio airtime meant that these musicians were often not as well-known as they should have been. Through

---

<sup>9</sup> 'Documents belonging to Bruce McGuinness including correspondence, press releases and articles, including National Aboriginal Congress submission to a joint committee 1974 & NAIHO draft motion 'Replacement of the National Aboriginal Conference', Series 50, Box 243, A00002771, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>10</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...', [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>11</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...', [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>12</sup> A. Brown, 'Historic RR Submission', [email to W. Bracks, C. Land, J. Katona and G. Foley], 15 December 2021, [alan.brown@vahs.org.au](mailto:alan.brown@vahs.org.au), personal communication used with permission, (accessed 15 December 2021).

his work at 3CR radio McGuinness strove to generate Aboriginal music programs. After playing the same two or three recorded albums ‘ad nauseum’ McGuinness decided to bring in unrecorded Aboriginal musicians to perform live, addressing this problem of lack of exposure. One of these musicians was Archie Roach as McGuinness explains:

by and large, there wasn’t a lot of music um, apart from what local people could produce on their own, either with a handheld recorder at a party, getting uncle to sing, which is how we actually got Archie Roach up and going...through that process you know, like catching him in the park and getting him into the, dragging him into the radio studio and getting him to perform live... Yeah, so it was those sorts of mechanisms that sort of bought about, let’s get our own mob on radio you know, this is, this is how the rest of the world gets exposure musically, we’ve got talent in our community, let’s expose it, let’s do what we have to do to you know, shake rattle and roll and get things sort of moving in that space.

The RAR concerts were also very much a part of this vision of showcasing new Aboriginal bands that hadn’t yet had studio time. McGuinness states that the RAR concerts were another part of many different concerts and ‘cabarets’ held for Aboriginal musicians by the Fitzroy Aboriginal community to give these performers exposure and the community an outlet. The title of ‘Rock Against Racism’ was a way to unambiguously state what these concerts were about, making them an accepting space for the Aboriginal community.<sup>13</sup>

VAHS was established in Victoria in 1973 out of the same political organising structure of the Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS), which was set up in the period following the 1967 referendum for Aboriginal rights that saw an explosion of the Aboriginal population in Redfern due to a mass-exodus of Aboriginal Australians from reserves closed overnight due to the repealed ‘Aborigines Protection Act’.<sup>14</sup> As Gary Foley describes, the corrupt and racist 21 division of police targeted Aboriginal people and were extremely violent and discriminatory. He and other Aboriginal activists in Redfern such as Paul Coe and Bruce McGuinness were influenced by the Black Power movement in the United States and decided

---

<sup>13</sup> K. McGuinness, ‘Recollections of Rock Against Racism...’, [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>14</sup> ‘Interviewing Gary Foley at Koori Kollij with Wayne Thorpe and Lesley Briggs - 4th April 1984; 2. NAIHO Executive Meeting 23 April 1983 Tape No. 5 & 6” U-matic Video Cassette Tape, 1983-1984’, Series 3, Box 137, A00000133, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

to start up a police patrol, involving lawyers to hold the police accountable and give free legal services to Aboriginal people in Redfern.<sup>15</sup> During this time a number of grassroots community organisations were set up to address the needs of the massive Aboriginal population in Redfern that were not being supported by the government. Included were the Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS), a free breakfast program for malnourished children and the AMS that not only provided for physical wellbeing but wholistic community health as well. VAHS was officially opened on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1973, in Fitzroy, a suburb that, like Redfern, had become a hub for Aboriginal people since the 1930s depression had ushered people out of the regions and into central hubs.<sup>16</sup> Archie Roach has written about the network of the Fitzroy Aboriginal community in his autobiography *Tell Me Why* in which he recounts how he found long lost family members by asking around in Fitzroy after arriving in Melbourne.<sup>17</sup> During his visit to Melbourne Muhammad Ali decided to go to Fitzroy to VAHS and talk to Aboriginal people. His well-publicised actions highlighted the importance of VAHS to Melbourne's Aboriginal community. It was not just about health, but about being a hub for the Aboriginal community. Kelli McGuinness recalls that almost all the services appealing to Aboriginal people in Melbourne in the late 70s and early 80s were centred around Fitzroy.<sup>18</sup> RAR served as a hub in a similar way, but instead of just being for Aboriginal people RAR sought to also involve supporters of Aboriginal rights of any background through learning opportunities such as information about the Noonkanbah drilling dispute in the Northern Territory.<sup>19</sup> This was achieved through using a popular music approach that had broad public appeal.

The wholistic approach to health taken up by VAHS led to the establishment of a Swinburne Community Organisations Course (SCOC) and later Koori Kollij. Both were organisations that sought to train 'Aboriginal Health Workers' with medical and political skills that they would take back to their respective communities. The idea came through trips to China observing the Barefoot Doctors program. Bruce McGuinness and Gary Foley had travelled to

---

<sup>15</sup> P. Adams, 'The Story Behind the Aboriginal Tent Embassy' [Radio Broadcast], *ABC*, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/the-story-behind-aboriginal-tent-embassy/13727824>, (accessed 20 February 2022).

<sup>16</sup> *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, p. 59.

<sup>17</sup> A. Roach, *Tell Me why: The Story of My Life and My Music*, Sydney, Simon & Schuster, 2019, p.

<sup>18</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...', [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>19</sup> 'Rock Against Racism: Northcote Town Hall. 19-12-82. Tape 2', Series 3, Box 137, A00000134, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

China in 1974, and Alma Thorpe in late 1976. The basic premise of Barefoot Doctors was that representatives from various small communities were able to go and learn about health and wellbeing and take that knowledge back to their respective communities. This program aimed to establish a level of self-determination and community control in its approach to health and wellbeing. Healthcare can often be fraught in small communities when practiced by western medical practitioners due to lack of cultural knowledge so the Koori Kollij course aimed to address this problem.<sup>20</sup> Kelli McGuinness remarks on the fact that many Aboriginal people in Victoria saw the western health care system as a ‘place of death’ and that many would rather die of a preventable illness than have to go through the humiliation of being in that space.<sup>21</sup> In 1975 Bruce McGuinness along with other members of the Fitzroy Aboriginal community setup a Community Organisations course at Swinburne University of Technology that ran until defunded by the government in 1978. Koori Kollij was the immediate successor to this course and used private investment to stay running to eliminate reliance on government funding.<sup>22</sup> At the Koori Kollij Health Worker Training Program students learnt from their peers about community health and care in a holistic way. Students also learnt about the politics of the Aboriginal struggle. The importance of self-determination was a focal point and students were taught the skills to navigate the difficulties of governmental departments and bureaucracy in Australia. The ‘Health Worker Education Program’ ran as a twelve-month full-time program that included many different subjects. Health covered fifty-percent of the course timetable, however politics, Aboriginal History, Community Organisations (in which students learnt how to organise within their own communities including establishing an Aboriginal community organisation), Book Keeping, Media and Art were also part of the course.<sup>23</sup> Additionally the course offered periodic fieldwork placements in which students were given the opportunity to go on placement at an Aboriginal organisation or major hospital.<sup>24</sup> Taking the skills learnt in community health and wellbeing from the Koori Kollij course, Brad Brown and Kelli McGuinness submitted funding applications to fund RAR concerts in Melbourne. In one such application they refer to the

---

<sup>20</sup> ‘Koori Kollij course outlines; Senate Select Committee on Volatile Substance Fumes report, chapter ten and related correspondence, 1986 and undated’, Series 23, Box 4, A00000225, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>21</sup> K. McGuinness, ‘Recollections of Rock Against Racism...’, [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>22</sup> ‘A History of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service’.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Koori Kollij course outlines...’, A00000225, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Koori Kollij course outlines...’, A00000225, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

benefit of RAR to community health and wellbeing. This highlights a mindset that came from the ethos of VAHS and Koori Kollij.<sup>25</sup>

### **2.3 Campaign Against Racial Exploitation and Lyn McLeavy**

The Campaign Against Racial Exploitation (CARE) was a national anti-racist organisation that formed in 1973 in Australia and focused on anti-apartheid and Aboriginal Australian issues.<sup>26</sup> CARE involved themselves with the Fitzroy Aboriginal community to help organise the first RAR concerts held in Melbourne. Lyn McLeavy was part of the national CARE coordinating committee, a lifelong activist and academic as well as a photographer.<sup>27</sup> CARE described itself as a ‘national organisation to fight racism both in Australia and South Africa’,<sup>28</sup> thus their actions and newsletters focused mostly on Land rights and self-determination in Australia and Apartheid in South Africa.<sup>29</sup> It is likely that those who were a part of the formation of CARE were also part of the late 1960s and early 1970s anti-apartheid movement in Australia. This group was challenged by Paul Coe during the 1971 Springbok tour to get as involved in the Aboriginal struggle in their ‘own backyard’ as they were in with the anti-apartheid movement.<sup>30</sup> In the CARE constitution it is stated that their aims were to ‘combat the causes and effects of racism’, to eliminate racial exploitation in Australia and overseas and to ‘promote and arrange functions’ that would ‘further any of these aims’.<sup>31</sup> In a 1981 press release from CARE, the organisation puts out an open call for Australian governments to implement recommendations made in the World Council of Churches (WCC)

---

<sup>25</sup> ‘A History of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service’.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Campaign Against Racial Exploitation: Part 1’ [Collection], National Library of Australia Archives, <https://archive.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/au-nla-mr-aa0-mr-aa0-090>, (accessed 4 May 2021).

<sup>27</sup> ‘Lynnette Mcleavy Obituary’, *The Age*, 13 February 2020.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Collection of Newspapers including Aboriginal Human Relations, Aboriginal Newsletter, Care Newsletter, Kulinma-Kodomokai, Aboriginal News, 1970-1995’, Series 53, Box 98, A00002081, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>29</sup> Multiple CARE newsletters have been accessed through the Aboriginal History Archive, this one shows the aims of focus of the organisation: ‘Collection of Newspapers including Aboriginal Human Relations, Aboriginal Newsletter, Care Newsletter, Kulinma-Kodomokai, Aboriginal News, 1970-1995’, Series 53, Box 98, A00002081, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>30</sup> P. Adams, ‘The Story Behind the Aboriginal Tent Embassy’ [Radio Broadcast], *ABC*, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/the-story-behind-aboriginal-tent-embassy/13727824>, (accessed 20 February 2022).

<sup>31</sup> ‘Documents related to NAIHO and health services (collected by Foley as Public Relations Officer for NAIHO). Including memos, submissions, minutes, correspondence, 1982-83’, Series 18, Box 88, A00001962, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne Australia.

report into racism and inequality in Australia.<sup>32</sup> This report was published as a book titled *Justice For Aboriginal Australians* following a visit to Australia by the WCC team from June 15 to July 3, 1981.<sup>33</sup> Aboriginal activists took advantage of the media attention gained from this visit. Aboriginal activist and historian Gary Foley, someone who has no affiliation with western religion, saw this opportunity and took to the media on several occasions to put pressure on the Australian government to answer the recommendations made in this report and add to the awareness being raised about challenges facing Aboriginal Australians.<sup>34</sup> The use of this report in the CARE organisation is indicative of CARE being aligned with the political approach of Aboriginal activists such as Foley. CARE's support and coverage of RAR therefore adds to this feeling of solidarity. The CARE newsletter reported on a vast range of issues in Aboriginal Australia and now provides one of few opportunities to read in depth about RAR concerts in Australia. By providing regular updates on the Aboriginal land rights and Self-Determination movements through reporting on protest actions and political developments that affected Aboriginal people, the CARE newsletter also provided reports on Aboriginal arts, radio and an in-depth report on the first RAR concert in Melbourne, in which they were involved.<sup>35</sup>

Lyn McLeavy, was an activist who was part of the national CARE coordinating collective and was involved, along with the Fitzroy Aboriginal community through VAHS, in helping organise the first RAR concerts in Melbourne.<sup>36</sup> *The Age* in 1980 named Lyn McLeavy as the 'Secretary of Rock Against Racism', though Kelli McGuinness states that this role was undertaken by many.<sup>37</sup> It is unclear how the *Age* drew the conclusion that McLeavy was the

---

<sup>32</sup> 'Roles and relationships in Aboriginal Health Service', handwritten document describing the organisation of VAHS, undated; loose correspondence, conference report, press releases, 1976 – 1982', Series 21, Box 32, A00000538, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne Australia.

<sup>33</sup> E. Adler, *Justice for Aboriginal Australians: Report of the World Council of Churches Team Visit to the Aborigines June 15 to July 3, 1981*, Michigan, Programme to Combat Racism, World Council of Churches, 1981.

<sup>34</sup> Documents, correspondence and news clippings relating to this WCC visit collected by Gary Foley show the interest Foley had in the visit. Additionally in this archival item is a transcript of a 3CR radio show in which Foley talks about the WCC: 'Documents (papers) relating to Aboriginal Advisory Group from the Australian Council of Churches and to World Council of Churches, 1980-1995', Series 43, Box 91, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>35</sup> *Identity*, Vol. 4, No. 5, 1981, in: 'Newsletters including Nunga News, Aboriginal Treaty, Black Protest Committee, Koori Times News, Aborigines Advancement League -1980- 1998', Series 51, Box 102, A00001473, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>36</sup> 'CARE Newsletter 1980' in: 'Newsletters including Nunga News, Aboriginal Treaty, Black Protest Committee, Koori Times News, Aborigines Advancement League -1980- 1998', Series 51, Box 102, A00001473, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>37</sup> K. Kizilos, 'Harmony for Races', *The Age*, 9 April 1980, p.17

*Secretary* of RAR. It is interesting though, to note that the *Age* describes McLeavy this way, as RAR was an organisation generally run by separate community activists and organisations at separate events. The idea that McLeavy was the secretary of all of RAR gives the reader the wrong impression and is indicative of a bias towards white people as spokespeople in roles of power. Lyn McLeavy's political activism extended to many events and causes. She was involved with Aboriginal Land Rights Support group based in Victoria. As a spokesperson for this group, she said about the 1982 Commonwealth Games protests: 'The Aboriginal people want this to be a peaceful protest. Whether or not there is any violence will depend on the Queensland police'.<sup>38</sup> In that same year she was also involved with Women for Nuclear Disarmament and in 1987 she worked as an electorate officer for would-be minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gerry Hand. As previously mentioned, McLeavy was a photographer and took the photograph in chapter one of a group of Aboriginal musicians and activists putting up a poster for the first Melbourne RAR concert in 1980.<sup>39</sup> McLeavy's photography also shows she was involved in protests actions against the Jabiluka Uranium mine.<sup>40</sup> This breadth of involvement in activist movements was common for activists of this time and is likely that McLeavy found inspiration for this from working at the CARE organisation, particular with Aboriginal rights protests. McLeavy's involvement in the 1982 Commonwealth Games protests against the Joh Bjelke-Peterson government shows an alignment with the aims of the broader Aboriginal self-determination and Land rights movement of the time as this was a key issue during the early 1980s. Of those involved in the CARE national coordinating collective Lyn McLeavy seems to have had the most involvement in RAR. McLeavy's activism portrays an organised and effective show of solidarity with the aims and objectives of the Aboriginal struggle in a way that was clearly informed by the key aims of this struggle. CARE, being an organisation made up mostly of non-Aboriginal people, also showed an effective use of community organising techniques to support the Aboriginal struggle since its inception in 1973 and during the key period of the 1980s.

---

<sup>38</sup> D. Broadbent, 'Aborigines urged not to boycott games', *Age*, 18 May 1982, p.3

<sup>39</sup> This photo is in section 1.4 of this thesis: McLeavy, L., 'Rock Against Racism' [Photograph], Melbourne, 1980, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/33197452?keyword=rock%20against%20racism>, (accessed, 20 February 2021).

<sup>40</sup> L. McLeavy, 'Aboriginal rights movement collection, 1978-1980' [photograph collection], 1978-1980, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/32913619?keyword=lyn%20mcleavy>, (accessed 20 September 2021).

## **2.4 Tjungaringanyi (Coming together as one): The Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music**

The Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM) was significant in that was the hub that saw the beginning of Aboriginal bands No Fixed Address, Us Mob, Kuckles and Hard Times. All these bands were later involved in RAR. No Fixed address and Us Mob went on to create the film *Wrong Side of the Road* with Ned Lander and Graeme Isaac which details the kind of racism experienced by these bands through their touring. During the period in which CASM was first set up in 1972 it was clear there were still many barriers that kept Aboriginal people locked out of higher education, even though Charles Perkins was the first Aboriginal man to graduate from a university in Australia in 1966. Issues of access to education were exacerbated by the fact that the schooling system focused solely on a western style of education and there were no programs that specifically catered for Aboriginal students to learn about music in the way that CASM operated.<sup>41</sup> For this reason alone CASM was a significant organisation for Aboriginal Australia. CASM initially focused on connecting urban Aboriginal musicians with traditional Aboriginal music, however it later took a more collaborative approach, blending contemporary and traditional music styles to promote the creation of a new Aboriginal contemporary music that was the great success of this organisation. This section will discuss the impact CASM had on the development of contemporary Aboriginal music and therefore, RAR in Australia.

Ethnomusicologist, Catherine Ellis, and Ngarrindjeri poet, Leila Rankine founded CASM in 1972 at Adelaide University. Early on CASM worked with the Anangu community at Iwantja, which led to the employment of a Pitjantjatjara songman, M. Baker, as a Senior Lecturer at CASM in 1975, thus in this early period the focus of CASM was more on the education of Aboriginal students in traditional styles of Aboriginal music.<sup>42</sup> After many Aboriginal students found it difficult to connect with traditional music, CASM as an organisation decided to take Aboriginal music as ‘self- defining’, meaning whatever music Aboriginal people were playing was Aboriginal, even if this music was adapted from another

---

<sup>41</sup> National Museum of Australia, *Charles Perkins* [website], <https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/features/indigenous-rights/people/charles-perkins>, (accessed 15 January 2022).

<sup>42</sup> Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM), *The University of Adelaide* [website], <https://arts.adelaide.edu.au/music/study/national-centre-for-aboriginal-language-and-music-studies-ncalms/centre-for-aboriginal#:~:text=CASM%20is%20located%20in%20the,learning%20and%20sound%20recording%20facilities>, (accessed 20 September 2021).

culture, such as reggae music.<sup>43</sup> In the late 1970s and the 1980s this led to CASM students merging contemporary western music and traditional Aboriginal music, creating original compositions, spawning the formation of the ‘ground-breaking bands’, No Fixed Address, Us Mob, Coloured Stone, and Kuckles.<sup>44</sup> Thus ‘contemporary’ Aboriginal music very quickly became the focus of CASM’s music program.<sup>45</sup> In *An Overview of the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music*, Guy Tunstill states; ‘CASM’s policy has always been, in line with the sharing and communicative nature of music, to share and consult in decision-making processes as much as possible.’<sup>46</sup> Through a collaborative approach to learning, urban Aboriginal music students had a chance to learn from tribal musicians ‘from whom they had been separated by genocide and assimilation’.<sup>47</sup> The creation of a ‘new tradition’ meant that while previously feeling ‘ashamed’ to hear traditional Aboriginal music,<sup>48</sup> new Aboriginal musicians began merging the traditional and the modern to create a new contemporary Aboriginal musical expression. CASM teacher Doug Petherick praised the band Coloured Stone for their ‘Musical Aboriginality’ claiming that even when they played covers of popular western songs, or ‘white music’, they would often break accepted white rules such as ‘square phrasing’ and ‘constant rhythms’.<sup>49</sup>

In 1994 Arthur Lampton and Guy Tunstill interviewed 26 students from CASM and published a report. Amongst the findings of the study they argued that the problems CASM sought to address when it was founded were largely still the same and urged better government funding for CASM and the establishment of similar organisations, stating that CASM has shown music is an effective way to express grievances and build cultural identity

---

<sup>43</sup> A. Lampton and G. Tunstill, ‘Aboriginal Music Students’ Views on Aboriginal Music Research’, *The World of Music*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 1994, p. 22.

<sup>44</sup> Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM), *The University of Adelaide* [website], <https://arts.adelaide.edu.au/music/study/national-centre-for-aboriginal-language-and-music-studies-ncalms/centre-for-aboriginal#:~:text=CASM%20is%20located%20in%20the,learning%20and%20sound%20recording%20facilities>, (accessed 20 September 2021).

<sup>45</sup> Lampton and Tunstill, ‘Aboriginal Music Students’ Views on Aboriginal Music Research’, p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> G. Tunstill, ‘An overview of the Centre for aboriginal studies in music, 1988’, *Australian Aboriginal Studies* (Canberra), Vol. 1, No. 1, 1989, p. 29-30.

<sup>47</sup> J. Castles, ‘Tjungaringanyi: Aboriginal Rock (1971-91)’, in *Sound Alliances: Indigenous Peoples, Cultural Politics and Popular Music in the Pacific*, ed. P. Hayward London, Bloomsbury, 1998, p.15.

<sup>48</sup> Catherine Ellis claims that many young Aboriginal kids were brought up to despise traditional Aboriginal music as a result of the assimilation project. In a 1958 report on traditional music in Wilcannia had the children distancing themselves from tribal music as much as possible ‘the younger generation don’t like to hear these songs. They giggle and say it makes them feel “shamed”. “We’re like white folks now,” they say’: M. Breen (ed.), *Our Place Our Music*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 1989, p. 106.

<sup>49</sup> J. Castles, ‘Tjungaringanyi: Aboriginal Rock (1971-91)’, p.15.

and calling for development of a research centre to come out of CASM as they believed the educational outcomes of CASM would benefit ‘the entire western community’.<sup>50</sup> A 2010 audit of support infrastructure for Indigenous music in Australia shows that not too much has improved for Aboriginal musicians since the early 1980s. For example, Dr Mark Bin Bakar, Chair of the Australia Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board laments that Aboriginal musicians still faced racism from venue managers, recounting a story in which a band was turned away by a booker who said ‘if I knew you were Aboriginal I wouldn’t have booked you!’.<sup>51</sup> This shows that even now there is still a great need for programs like CASM that promote new Aboriginal talent and create a space that is welcoming for Aboriginal people.

CASM is still running and offering multiple courses including a foundation year, one-year advanced certificate and a two-year associate diploma for Aboriginal students in which they can learn traditional as well as contemporary music styles. Hip-hop artist Baker Boy is an example of a commercially successful Aboriginal artist to come out of another contemporary Aboriginal music school, the Aboriginal Centre for Performing Arts in Brisbane (ACPA) formed in 1997.<sup>52</sup> Baker Boy successfully merges contemporary hip-hop and traditional Yolngu Matha language and dance styles. While there are still multiple barriers, the report shows significant improvement in access to education, funding, broadcasting and performance outlets since the early 1980s period. While RAR made sense as a location for new contemporary Aboriginal artists to get a gig, it is arguably no longer necessary for this purpose due to the increased access to the tools of music production, promotion and distribution through access to new technology and the internet. Alongside this increased interest in Aboriginal artists by broadcasters such as JJJ, RRR and PBS and music festivals such as Meredith/Golden Plains, Falls Festival, the yearly Share the Spirit festival held alongside Melbourne’s Invasion day/Survival Day protests and events such as the weekly open mic night for Aboriginal performers at the Retreat Hotel in Brunswick. More recent artists that have come out of CASM include Zaachariaha Fielding of the band Electric Fields, Ellie Lovegrove and Simi Vuata, who have all become greatly successful musicians in

---

<sup>50</sup> ‘Aboriginal Music Students’ Views on Aboriginal Music Research’, p. 37.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Song Cycles Show Indigenous Musicians Have a Tough Gig’ [Media Release], *Australia Council for the Arts*, 28 May 2010, <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/news/media-releases/song-cycles-shows-indigenous-musicians-have-a-tough-gig/>, (accessed 20 June 2020).

<sup>52</sup> Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts, *About Us* [Website], <https://acpa.edu.au/about/>, (accessed 20 January 2022).

Australia.<sup>53</sup> The continuing breadth of talent coming out of CASM shows the value of this organisation for Aboriginal musicians. Electric Fields, for example, have performed at numerous festivals across Australia including Meredith music festival and were in contention to represent Australia at Eurovision in 2019.<sup>54</sup>

Some student organisations against racism also played a part in organising RAR concerts in the 1980s. Students against Discrimination (SAD) organised the first Sydney RAR concert in 1980, Students Against Racism (SAR) held another concert in Sydney in 1984 organised by member Helen Musung. In 1986 Students Against Apartheid in Canberra put on a RAR concert to ‘highlight Aboriginals plight’ and in 1988 an ANU chapter of Students against racism put on RAR gig as part of their orientation week.<sup>55</sup> This displays the broad reach RAR had in the music community. In a 1980 *Tharunka* student magazine article, SAD described the influence of RAR Melbourne on their uptake of RAR at Sydney University.<sup>56</sup>

Through the heavy involvement of the Fitzroy Aboriginal community, RAR involved organisations that were forming the Aboriginal resistance in the late 1970s and early 1980s period. Viewed in this way RAR is at the very least an interesting historical site for the Aboriginal struggle and at best a key meeting place of ideas and influential people. Through discussion of CASM and Koori Kollij it is clear that access to education through these programmes was an important contributing factor in the rise of contemporary Aboriginal music in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These programmes focused on empowering Aboriginal people through education that promoted and fostered self-determination and as a result spawned Aboriginal artists that echoed the ethos of self-determination through their lyrics, performances, and political affiliations. Without institutions like CASM and Koori Kollij it may have taken a lot longer for contemporary Aboriginal music to explode in the way it did in the 70s and 80s, and RAR certainly would have been a less politically charged set of concerts.

---

<sup>53</sup> Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM), *The University of Adelaide* [website], <https://arts.adelaide.edu.au/music/study/national-centre-for-aboriginal-language-and-music-studies-ncalms/centre-for-aboriginal#:~:text=CASM%20is%20located%20in%20the,learning%20and%20sound%20recording%20facilities>, (accessed 20 September 2021).

<sup>54</sup> The Adelaide Review, *In Losing a Spot at Eurovision, Electric Fields May Emerge the Real Winners* [website], <https://www.adelaidereview.com.au/arts/music/2019/02/11/electric-fields-eurovision/>, (accessed 15 January 2022).

<sup>55</sup> Data collected from newspaper and archival sources, Appendix 1

<sup>56</sup> ‘Rock Against Racism’, *Tharunka*, 29 October 1980, p. 2.

## **Chapter 3: The Music Scene is a Space of Resistance**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In chapters one and two I have established the political context of Aboriginal activism in Australia in which RAR operated, including the political aims of the Aboriginal self-determination movements during this time through Black Power, Land rights and Community controlled health organisations. In this chapter I will analyse the ways in which the growing presence of new Aboriginal bands and performing artists in the music scene grew alongside the political aims of self-determination for Aboriginal people. The political nature of what is called ‘contemporary Aboriginal music’ will be explored. This will include what is displayed through the political nature of the lyrics of artists, the political aims of Aboriginal people in the music industry and radio and the political activity of those involved in RAR and other similar concerts. The RAR concerts are a great case study to analyse these aspects of the music scene.

### **3.2 Decolonial Spaces and Rock Against Racism**

Tracy Banivanua Mar in her work *Decolonization and the Pacific* talked about the ‘practical skills of decolonisation’ and she drew a comparison to the police patrols and breakfast club programs in Redfern as an example of this kind of action that can ‘break the bonds of dependency’ through a concept she talks about as performing independence.<sup>1</sup> Numerous writers have tapped into similar concepts when talking about decolonization. If decolonization in the purest sense of the word – restoring Aboriginal sovereignty to pre-European invasion – is something that cannot be achieved, at least in the immediate sense, then what other ways can Australia be decolonized? In his thesis Jarrett Martineau talks about the power of Indigenous art making practices to disrupt settler-colonial power and to assert Indigenous sovereignty as a process of what I call *doing decolonization*.<sup>2</sup> Even more relevant to RAR is Crystal McKinnon’s essay ‘Indigenous Music as a Space of Resistance’, in which she describes the creation of an Aboriginal controlled space in the music scene as a space of resistance in a similar way to Banivanua Mar’s concept of performing independence. In each

---

<sup>1</sup> T. Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific*, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> J. Martineau, *Creative Combat: Indigenous Art, Resurgence and Decolonization*, Ph.D. diss., Canada, University of Victoria, 2015.

of these instances the focus is on the assertion of agency and cultural pride in spaces where colonial powers are totally dominant. This way of creating what Martineau calls ‘pockets of resistance’ is a method that has proven to be effective not just for the agency of Indigenous peoples but also for non-Indigenous peoples to learn and understand the importance of self-determination for Aboriginal peoples and hopefully help in the process decolonization (examples of this are VAHS, ALS and Koori Kollij discussed in chapters one and two). This is the context in which I am situating RAR. In a period where contemporary Aboriginal music was booming, non-Aboriginal Australia failed to notice and give credit and coverage to this phenomenon. RAR was not just an effective way of showcasing these musicians, but also effective in *doing decolonization*. Much like their UK counterparts, organizers of RAR took matters into their own hands by creating concerts for majority Aboriginal performers and audiences. These were done with the aim of educating, inspiring and importantly raising funds for the needs of the Aboriginal community (such as funeral funds, travel costs, Aboriginal emergency fund). This concept is very similar to that being taught at the Koori Kollij Health Worker Training Program discussed in chapter two. I argue that RAR concerts were an effective example of this concept of doing decolonization due to the benefit to the Aboriginal community in spaces in which the Aboriginal community had been often excluded by settler-colonialism.

### **3.3 Criticisms of RAR**

It is worth discussing some of the criticisms of the RAR movement in the UK and whether there were similar criticisms in the Australian context. Some in the UK were sceptical of the lack of agency of non-white people within the organising structure of RAR. Linton Kwesi Johnson is quoted in David Renton’s work saying; ‘we didn’t subscribe to their position on Blacks and Asians who they saw as victims... victims are people who don’t fight back’, however Johnson concedes ‘That [viewpoint] was soon dispelled when we saw the effectiveness of what they were doing’.<sup>3</sup> This problem of representation faced by the RAR movement in the UK was somewhat flipped in Australia’s RAR movement. The UK movement was in some ways a movement run for and by white people. The problem of racism in the UK, intensified by the National Front, was a white problem that non-white

---

<sup>3</sup> D. Renton, *Never Again: Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League 1976-1982*, London, Routledge, 2018, p. 55.

citizens were suffering from. In this way it was appropriate for organisers to try and solve these problems in their own community. It is not surprising then, however disappointing, that some cultures and groups felt left out of the RAR movement in the UK. Ashley Dawson sums up the legacy of the RAR movement in the UK concisely;

Supporters of RAR claim that the movement played a pivotal role in defeating the neo-fascist threat in Britain during the late 1970s by quashing the electoral and political appeal of the National Front. Although there has been debate about the ethics and efficacy of the campaign, there can be little doubt that RAR provoked a rich and unprecedented fusion of aesthetics and politics.<sup>4</sup>

While it is clear from Dawson that RAR was thought to have a direct influence in diminishing the influence of the National Front, the question of ethics that Dawson raises is intriguing. Ian Goodyer elaborates on this, stating that the most serious criticism of RAR was that the organisation itself was implicitly racist as it reproduced a dynamic prevalent in British popular music and culture where British Asian culture was ‘conspicuously excluded’.<sup>5</sup> This was possibly due to internalised racism of the majority white organisers of RAR. Being founded and run mostly by Aboriginal activists and steadfast allies, the organisation in the Australian RAR provides an interesting comparison with this ethical viewpoint. As RAR concerts in Australia were organised by a majority of Aboriginal activists and for Aboriginal people and performers it did not face the same kind of representational pitfalls. The Australian RAR concerts were also much smaller in scale so they did not draw out the same level of criticisms from reporters and academics. However, the organisational aims of RAR in Australia were also a factor in this. The fact that these concerts were largely run by and for the Aboriginal community left little ambiguity in the representations on stage at the concerts. Aboriginal artists and speakers had a space to voice their opinions on racism and the Aboriginal struggle in Australia that was not afforded in other spaces that were part of settler colonial Australia. There is a lack of criticism of RAR Australia, largely because there is a lack of writing on these concerts in general. As Australia’s RAR did not reach the heights of the UK movement it did not generate the same level of notoriety and in turn criticisms. However, it is likely that it was never the intention of the organisers of RAR Australia for the

---

<sup>4</sup> A. Dawson, “‘Love music hate racism’: The Cultural Politics of the Rock Against Racism Campaigns’, *Postmodern Culture*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Rock Against Racism: Multiculturalism and political mobilization’, p.47.

concerts to become as big as in the UK. The movement focused on the development of new Aboriginal talent, community organisations and awareness raising. These goals aimed towards the bigger picture of the Aboriginal self-determination movement and fed into the 1988 bicentenary of Australia.

### **3.4 Rock Against Racism as a Space of Resistance**

During the early 1980s the phenomenon of Aboriginal bands singing with overtly political lyrics was still a very new thing. It is in this context that RAR is situated. Likely because of this widespread politicisation of Aboriginal music, the concerts became a political expression in opposition to colonial culture and a significant space of Aboriginal cultural expression. In the early 1980s Aboriginal artists and bands were breaking from the traditional gospel/country musical traditions and gravitating towards reggae as a musical form of expression. Possibly one of the first recordings to do so, 'we have survived' by No Fixed Address is in stark contrast to the previous musical expressions themed around the common country topics of love and loss. Peter Dunbar-Hall and Chris Gibson have this to say about 'we have survived':

If it was not the first, it was certainly the most overt *politicisation* of Aboriginal music at the time, recorded for the soundtrack of the 1981 film *Wrong Side of the Road*, a film that follows two Aboriginal rock/reggae bands on a tour of remote areas and country towns, and exposes the racism and discrimination they face...Their songs connected narratives of pan-Aboriginal survival with reggae's global diasporic tones, to call for greater black political action and communication with other oppressed peoples around the globe.<sup>6</sup>

This new trend of heavily politicised lyrics in contemporary Aboriginal music bled heavily into the RAR concerts as they became a representation of a newfound expression of Aboriginal cultural identity formed in opposition to colonial culture. The lyrics of 'we have survived', 'you can't change the rhythm of my soul, you can't tell me what to do, you can't

---

<sup>6</sup> P. Dunbar-Hall and C. Gibson, *Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places: Contemporary Aboriginal Music in Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2004, p. 47.

break my bones by putting me down'<sup>7</sup> represent an opposition to oppression. The lyric 'We have survived the white man's world' then shows pride in coming out of this struggle and thriving. The resistance shown in these lyrics is indicative of the kind of pride in Aboriginality that was on display through the RAR performances and contributes to these spaces being *decolonial spaces* in the sense that they offered a platform for this kind of expression that was not available at concerts with majority white attendees and performers.

Talking about his own experiences playing music, Kelli McGuinness discusses the importance of being able to have original songs to develop a sense of identity.

...if you're a musician and you're a Koori, you know like, you shouldn't have to do cover songs to get noticed. You should be getting noticed now on your own, off your own stuff... to develop that sense of identity as well through music, it's like, 'hey we've got our own thing, got our own sound, we've got our own audience, yeah, our own language'.<sup>8</sup>

This sense of identity McGuinness talks about is important in the representation and pride in Aboriginal culture that was encouraged at RAR concerts. Crystal McKinnon talks about the importance of this in her work, that within spaces of marginality '...Indigenous people escape the pervasiveness of settler colonialism, to create revolutionary new approaches that maintain Indigenous cultures and lives, and perhaps ultimately, freedom'.<sup>9</sup> Viewing RAR as a space within settler colonial Australia that resists the oppression felt by Aboriginal Australians is to understand RAR as a space that resists, that is decolonial. Kelli McGuinness states that at the RAR concert he organised in 1985, the majority of attendees were Aboriginal people. When asked about the political intentions of the concert Kelli remarks that the title of 'Rock Against Racism' was largely chosen due to its unambiguous message, '...if it's rock against racism, it's really simple and it, it's very hard to get a mixed message about what the message is... so if you go, you're a supporter, so it's great for the artist because they know they're being supported, both politically, creatively, you know'.<sup>10</sup> One of the ways in which RAR can be viewed as a decolonial space is in the way it was effective in 'claiming

---

<sup>7</sup> No Fixed Address, Us Mob, *We Have Survived. Wrong Side of the Road (Songs from the Motion Picture)*.

<https://open.spotify.com/track/7CEZHdsnC7ZITUU9Oh2TgX?si=36f90162b5434639>.

<sup>8</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...', [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>9</sup> C. McKinnon, 'Indigenous Music as a Space of Resistance', p. 261.

<sup>10</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...', [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

space' for Aboriginal musicians and community in the cities in which the concerts were held. RAR in the UK was first and foremost about reclaiming spaces for people of colour and was incredibly effective due to its massive scale. RAR in Australia aimed to do a similar thing however on a smaller scale involving mostly just the Aboriginal community and some supporters. In doing so, it thus avoided some of the pitfalls of the UK movement. Because RAR gigs in Australia were mostly run by and for the Aboriginal community, the issue of lack of cultural inclusion was non-existent, however it was never able to reach the scale of the UK movement due to many factors. Most prominent among these was that Aboriginal contemporary music and the bands that performed were facing a huge disadvantage. Lack of notoriety and exposure due to limited access to recording, training and performance opportunities were some of the main examples of this. In many ways the RAR gigs in Australia were as much about giving these bands gigs as they were about anti-racism and self-determination. As Kelli McGuinness remarks:

the only time musicians could get any sort of um, airplay, was their local, if a local band got a, a gig at a local pub or they were discovered on the street, or at home, that sort of thing. There wasn't, and still isn't to a large degree, like an easy sort of pathway for, for someone who's, you know, never done anything other than busk... or, just play in front of friends, or you know to get discovered.<sup>11</sup>

Putting on a gig with mostly Aboriginal performers could often be hard due to the racism of publicans, venue bookers and publicists. Kelli McGuinness remarks on this:

a lot of publicans despite the fact they could earn heaps by supporting and promoting Aboriginal talent, um, would see it as a negative to have, you know, a blackout, a full venue full of Aboriginal people, all drinking and partying at the one time.

Within this context of racism, it makes sense that a night like the 1985 RAR concert would be of great benefit to the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal performers. The fact that this concert was a safe and supportive space for Aboriginal people shows that it was a space that was decolonial in practice, it was a 'pocket of resistance' to the general colonial oppression and white-washing of the Melbourne music industry at the time.

---

<sup>11</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...', [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

During the period in which RAR took place in Australia, Land rights and Self-determination were the foremost agendas of Aboriginal rights activists. Following the development of a new blend of contemporary Aboriginal music coming through CASM, the ethos taken by bands to the RAR concerts was one of pride. Pride in the musical content, overt pride in being Aboriginal and an opposition to government oppression and control as a result. Kelli McGuinness calls this a 'warm fuzzy feeling' for the Aboriginal community.<sup>12</sup> RAR concerts were among some of the first major concerts with such a concerted effort to put Aboriginal bands singing about oppression, Aboriginal culture, self-determination, and Land rights on stages over a long period of time. They were very much like the cabarets put on by the Aboriginal community in Fitzroy to give new Aboriginal bands a musical outlet and for the community to enjoy themselves. In this way RAR parallels the burgeoning development of Aboriginal contemporary music and the blend of traditional and modern, or taking a traditional approach with significant cultural continuity to the music as Catherine Ellis states.<sup>13</sup> It is important to understand RAR in this context when talking about the concerts forming what Crystal McKinnon calls 'music as a space of resistance'.<sup>14</sup> McKinnon portrays the resistance of Uncle Alf Bamblett and Tony Lovett to the oppression they felt at the hands of venue managers and bar owners. She described how they formed their own music night, so that they not only ensured they could have a place to play but created a space that was not controlled by settler ways of being but instead Aboriginal ways of being. This was therefore a space that was comfortable and welcoming to Aboriginal musicians and concert goers. This kind of idea is also talked about in the work of Tracey Banivanua Mar as she describes decolonisation as something that can exist in a space and by action, not necessarily something that has to be as far ranging as a total revolution.<sup>15</sup> In 'Steam Down or How Things Begin', Emma Warren talks about the importance of these kinds of spaces in the context of the cultural pocket of Deptford Docks, invoking the historical context of immigration and exploitation in London and how the weekly jam in Deptford called 'Steam Down' makes acknowledgement of this history while generating pride in the diaspora that has resulted in London.<sup>16</sup> Warren demonstrates how this space is effective at bringing about community pride through inclusion and, due to its inherently non-white nature, poses an opposition to the

---

<sup>12</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...', [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>13</sup> M. Breen (ed.), *Our Place Our Music*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 1989, p. 106.

<sup>14</sup> C. McKinnon, 'Indigenous Music as a Space of Resistance', p. 255.

<sup>15</sup> T. Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific.*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> E. Warren, *Steam down or How Things Begin*, London, Rough Trade Books, 2019.

mainstream western culture in London.<sup>17</sup> Jarrett Martineau, in his thesis ‘Creative Combat: Indigenous Art, Resurgence and Decolonization’, describes these as ‘Indigenous Autonomous Spaces’ and discusses their importance as acts of resistance to colonisation as well as maintaining cultural wellbeing.<sup>18</sup> This kind of approach to health and wellbeing is the backbone of VAHS and Koori Kollij. The emphasis on the importance of cultural wellbeing through creative expression is displayed through Brad Brown and Kelli McGuinness’ submission to fund a RAR concert.<sup>19</sup> RAR concerts were different spaces from the average concert in a major Australia city due to the majority Aboriginal artists and attendees.

### **3.5 The media Strategies of RAR**

It is worth noting the media strategy of the Black Power movement during the late 1970s and early 1980s as this was influential in the way RAR operated. In their article, on media strategy of the Aboriginal Land Rights movement, Gary Foley and Edwina Howell explain that, due to the relatively small size of the Aboriginal population compared to settler Australians, militant action was dismissed by most Aboriginal activists as not a viable option.<sup>20</sup> Instead a three pronged approach was taken of raising the ‘political consciousness and self-confidence’ of black people in Australia, changing the opinions of Settler-Australians about ‘the history of colonial oppression and solutions for change’ and putting pressure on the federal government to ‘force political change’.<sup>21</sup> Community organisations run by and for Aboriginal people such as the Aboriginal Legal and Health Services in Redfern and Fitzroy were a part of this strategy, offering services that empowered and politically engaged Aboriginal people as well as gaining media attention that educated the uninitiated about the Aboriginal struggle and raised questions about lack of government action. A focus on the arts was also integral in this approach, with the National Black Theatre forming in 1972 and offering a political brand of theatre that was equal parts politically

---

<sup>17</sup> E. Warren, *Steam down or How Things Begin*.

<sup>18</sup> J. Martineau, “Creative Combat: Indigenous Art, Resurgence and Decolonization”.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Documents belonging to Bruce McGuinness including correspondence, press releases and articles, including National Aboriginal Congress submission to a joint committee 1974 & NAIHO draft motion ‘Replacement of the National Aboriginal Conference’, 1974-1990’, Series 50, Box 243, A00002771, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>20</sup> G. Foley and E. Howell, ‘The Media Strategy of the Aboriginal Black Power, Land rights and Self-Determination Movement’, in, *The Routledge Companion to Media and Activism*, New York, Routledge, 2018, p. 308.

<sup>21</sup> ‘The Media Strategy of the Aboriginal Black Power, Land rights and Self-Determination Movement’, p. 308.

engaging for Aboriginal participants and educational for a non-Aboriginal audience.<sup>22</sup> The theatre held performances linked with causes such as the Aboriginal Tent Embassy and the land rights claim against Nabalco.<sup>23</sup> Its headquarters in Redfern became a ‘creative hub for artists... where the public congregated socially to see plays that were written by Aboriginal playwrights and produced by Aboriginal people.’<sup>24</sup> In Melbourne’s first RAR concert there is a clear link to the media strategy of Aboriginal Land rights, self-determination and Black Power. Opportunities to learn about the Aboriginal struggle were available through ‘displays on land rights, Aboriginal Culture and Racism in Australia’.<sup>25</sup> The CARE newsletter reports that Joanna Bradford spoke about the Aboriginal women’s centre during a break between performers. Held in a separate room there were also videos of films, TV and news broadcasts relating the Noonkanbah mining dispute, an ongoing protest against drilling of traditional Aboriginal land happening at the time.<sup>26</sup> This portrays the kind of actions RAR staged which were aimed at raising concert goers’ political awareness. In 1982 RAR concerts were held at the RMIT Storey Hall and Sydney Town Hall, raising funds to send activists to Brisbane to protest the Queensland governments oppression of Aboriginal people. Gary Foley’s tour with the Clash discussed in chapter one also raised awareness for this cause and aimed to bring people to the protests. The protests against the Brisbane Commonwealth Games were used as a platform with which Aboriginal people could try and create an ‘international embarrassment’ in a push to pressure the government into taking action to overturn police-state laws that limited the ability of Aboriginal people to gather in public, fuelling police discrimination and brutality.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> W. Bracks, ‘Series 39: Politics of Representation, Media and Performance - ‘National Black Theatre’ and other stage productions’, *Aboriginal History Archive*, Melbourne, 2019, <http://aboriginalhistoryarchive.net/s/aha/item-set/39>, (accessed 20 February 2021).

<sup>23</sup> This was a land rights claim made by the people of Yirrkala on the Gove peninsula against bauxite mining on their land. It was initially ruled against the Yirrkala people in 1971. In 1978 the Yirrkala people did receive Native Title rights to their land, however the mining leases that they had objected to ‘were specifically excluded from the provisions of this Act’: National Museum of Australia, ‘A Legal Challenge’, *National Museum of Australia*, <https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/features/indigenous-rights/land-rights/yirrkala/expansion-folder/a-legal-challenge>, (accessed 30 June 2021).

<sup>24</sup> Redfern Oral History, *Black Theatre* [website], <http://redfernoralhistory.org/enterprises/blacktheatre/tabid/204/default.aspx>, (accessed 12 May 2021).

<sup>25</sup> *Sydney Tribune*, July 9 1980, p.3

<sup>26</sup> ‘CARE Newsletter’, No. 18 March 1980, Aboriginal History Archive.

<sup>27</sup> Museums Victoria, *Commonwealth Games Brisbane & Aboriginal Protest, 1982* [website], <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/2766#:~:text=On%2029%20September%201%2C000%20people,in%20Brisbane%20during%20the%20Games>, (Accessed 04 May 2021).

### **3.6 Midnight Oil**

Following their appointments as director and chair of the AAB respectively, Gary Foley and Chicka Dixon introduced a new rule as part of their black power approach to running the organisation; ‘no funding for non-Aboriginal people’.<sup>28</sup> This was not just seen as a necessary move in the context of the black power movement, but also as a reaction to what some call the ‘Aboriginal Industry’. This term refers to organisations, bodies or funds created to benefit Aboriginal peoples, but through which the majority of government funding ends up siphoned off into paying for non-Aboriginal staff implementing these programs.<sup>29</sup> Prior to Foley and Dixon’s appointment, the AAB had been known to fund many programs that were adjacently connected to Aboriginal people. The feeling from Foley and Dixon was that too much of this money was not going to the right place and was benefitting non-Aboriginal people more than Aboriginal artists and projects the funding reportedly was intended for. Foley explains that he received a request for funding for the Warumpi band to tour with Midnight Oil, from the Midnight Oil manager Gary Morris, stating that Morris called him and asked if the AAB would fund the Warumpi Band to tour supporting Midnight Oil. Foley’s response to Morris was that, because it was Midnight Oil’s tour, the AAB did not want to provide funding as Midnight Oil would be gaining from money supposed to be only for Aboriginal artists, and that they were big enough at that stage to fund the tour themselves.<sup>30</sup> Foley, however notes that Morris ended up going over their heads, asking then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Clyde Holding, to force the AAB to fund the tour, which showed a clear lack of solidarity and understanding of the Aboriginal black power, land rights and self-determination struggle.<sup>31</sup> This act from Gary Morris to go against the wishes of Foley and Dixon and force them to fund the tour,<sup>32</sup> is in stark contrast to the kind of solidarity shown by someone like Lyn McLeavy and the CARE organisation. McLeavy and CARE, as stated in chapter 2.2, showed a concise understanding and support of the aims of the Aboriginal struggle. This is

---

<sup>28</sup> G. Foley, ‘Foley on RAR 1’ [Interviewed by Will Bracks], 19 November 2021, Carlton, Melbourne, VIC.

<sup>29</sup> An example of this is the criticisms of Native Title claims process as something that ends up benefitting lawyers more than Aboriginal peoples: J. Altman, ‘What Future for Remote Indigenous Australia? Economic Hybridity and the Neoliberal Turn’, *Cultural Crisis: Anthropology and politics in Aboriginal Australia*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010, p. 273.

<sup>30</sup> G. Foley, ‘Foley on RAR 1’ [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>31</sup> G. Foley, ‘Foley on RAR 1’ [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>32</sup> The funding submission for this is found at the Aboriginal History Archive: ‘Various music and radio project documentation including Radio Redfern, recording studio feasibility study, music industry course, SEIMA/3CR Aboriginal radio training proposal, 1987-1993’, Series 41, Box 25, A00000451, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

not necessarily a stab at the band Midnight Oil but rather at their manager's insistence on going over the heads of Foley and Dixon, to force Clyde Holding's intervention in the matter. This example is representative of the need for grass roots action for Aboriginal rights in Australia. Activists such as Gary Foley were very familiar with these kinds of paternalist interventions by the Australian government. Being an Aboriginal controlled, grassroots movement, RAR benefitted from not having such interventions take place. This meant that the messaging and politics and political structure of RAR could be not interfered with by people with ulterior motives and vested interests outside of the movement for Aboriginal rights in Australia. The downside of this is that RAR struggled to move to a larger scale to match the attendances of 100,000 at some concerts across the 300 concerts the UK RAR movement held.<sup>33</sup>

Laetitia Vellutini has demonstrated that this was not an isolated incident for Midnight Oil. Vellutini describes what she calls Midnight Oil's 'inappropriate appropriations' citing their depiction of Truganini – in their song of the same name - as the last Aboriginal Tasmanian, perpetuating a myth that Tasmania's traditional owners were completely wiped out.<sup>34</sup> This myth was particularly damaging to Tasmanian Aboriginal people fighting for recognition. Due the high-profile nature of Midnight Oil, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre took the opportunity to draw attention to the proliferation of this myth, 'calling for a boycott of the single, highlighting the fact that 7000 contemporary Tasmanians consider themselves to be Aboriginal'.<sup>35</sup> This became a battleground of ideas that Midnight Oil had essentially brought to the surface, highlighting the inaccurate and racist depictions of history that exist in Australia. However, it was their actions after this were more problematic. Trying to suppress a dialogue with Aboriginal people was an unproductive and aggressive action that did not help the situation. In suppressing this dialogue and professing to speak for Aboriginal people through their music, Vellutini also argues Midnight Oil contributed to the erasure of Aboriginal voices.<sup>36</sup> Vellutini argues that Midnight Oil were a voice trying to speak for rather than with Aboriginal people. A lack of consultation with Aboriginal people during the

---

<sup>33</sup> Dawson, "'Love music hate racism": The Cultural Politics of the Rock Against Racism Campaigns', p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> This myth was seen as a potential hinderance to Native Title claims made by Tasmanian Aboriginal Peoples: L. Vellutini, 'Finding a voice on indigenous issues: Midnight oil's inappropriate appropriations', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 27, no. 1, 2003, p. 130.

<sup>35</sup> 'Finding a voice on indigenous issues: Midnight oil's inappropriate appropriations', p. 130.

<sup>36</sup> 'Finding a voice on indigenous issues: Midnight oil's inappropriate appropriations', p. 131.

process of creating the song and a lack of discourse after the controversy was sparked makes Midnight Oil's activism feel populist and lacking substance.

Midnight Oil's actions is part of a trend of not understanding the political or cultural sensitivities of a situation and of putting the lucratively marketable approach of championing the causes of Aboriginal Australians before any real substance. The interaction between the manager of Midnight Oil and the Aboriginal Arts Board displays a total disregard for the Aboriginal only approach the AAB was trying to implement. Similarly, Midnight Oil's song Truganini shows their eagerness to put out a work that showed them to be on the side of Aboriginal people preceded their will to engage in a process of learning about these issues. This trend also perhaps explains Midnight Oil's conspicuous absence from RAR in Australia. Of course, RAR was most often organized by Aboriginal people and communities featuring mostly Aboriginal bands, however there were non-Aboriginal artists such as Scarlet, Men At Work – and possibly INXS – that did perform at RAR concerts.<sup>37</sup> It is possible that Midnight Oil were not even aware of the existence of the RAR concerts, and it is also possible that they were never called on to perform at these concerts because many Aboriginal people were not impressed with the way they masqueraded as a voice for Aboriginal people. The Clash, possibly due to not being Australian, educated themselves and their audience through the use of an actual Aboriginal activist who knew what they were talking about in Gary Foley. It is surprising to think that this kind of thing had not happened prior to the Clash's tour in 1982.

### **3.7 Barriers Faced and the Way Forward**

Access to professional recording opportunities, radio airplay and the opportunity to play in front of large and diverse audiences were some of the barriers that challenged the ability of Aboriginal bands from the 1980s to enjoy mainstream success. Some of these problems were addressed through RAR and through radio initiatives run by people such as Kelli McGuinness. Others such as the lack of recording opportunities were not. Peter Dunbar-Hall and Chris Gibson argue that Aboriginal musicians faced a serious barrier to gaining airplay and favourable reviews due to a 'patron discourse' in Australia: 'a set of normative expectations and ways of listening in non-Aboriginal society, within which minority voices

---

<sup>37</sup> INXS were cited to be playing at this concert organised by students against discrimination, however it was noted that this was not confirmed: 'Rock Against Racism', *Tharunka*, 29 October 1980, p. 2.

must struggle for audience.’<sup>38</sup> In addition to the previously mentioned racism experienced by musicians from the police, venue bookers and owners I would argue that concerts such as RAR run by the Aboriginal community and allies were necessary in giving burgeoning Aboriginal artists a larger platform to perform. Kelli McGuinness touches on this, talking about the ways in which he would try and get as many new Aboriginal artists to come and perform live on the radio as possible.<sup>39</sup> When McGuinness and Bradley Brown were organising their RAR concert at RMIT’s Storey Hall, they aimed to get across performers from interstate to give them that experience of playing to a new audience as well as for the audience to hear this new music. Kelli McGuinness laments that there was never an Aboriginal owned recording space:

we don’t have or haven’t seen the rise of like a Motown bit in America, you know, where, where we have our own sort of self-sufficient, you know, um, studio where if you’re inclined and you’re talented you can go in there and, you know, we don’t really have our own studio facilities in the community, like to do that. We’ve got a radio station and, and that sort of thing but there’s nothing really that’s community based. And, and I’ve always thought that that would have been the natural conclusion to what we were doing, like, sure you can get people into the radio station and live on air, but wouldn’t it be better and wouldn’t it, um, you’d be able to get that out to more people if you could record them professionally as well? Yeah? And it seemed to me like we’d sort of missed the boat on that somehow.<sup>40</sup>

What McGuinness describes here is a huge missed opportunity for the Aboriginal bands of this era, as many went on to have little to no studio recordings and thus faded from public memory. It is apt that McGuinness describes that they ‘missed the boat’ on gaining a recording facility as a 1989 funding application for an Aboriginal recording studio states that:

Time is a very critical success factor. Australia is currently attracting significant interest overseas. Interest in Aboriginal issues overseas as well as within Australia has been boosted over the past year. The Federal and Victorian Government have recently devoted some attention to the contemporary music industry. It would be erroneous to

---

<sup>38</sup> P. Dunbar-Hall and C. Gibson, *Deadly Sounds*, p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...', [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>40</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...', [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

expect that this favourable situation will continue for years. It is therefore critical that the proposed venture gets started while the window of opportunity still exists, i.e. as a matter of urgency.<sup>41</sup>

Clearly there was a feeling during this time that all of the energy coming through Aboriginal contemporary music would inevitably have to drop off. As stated previously McGuinness remarks that all of this energy in the Aboriginal music scene was leading up to the bicentenary of Australia and the protests the Aboriginal community were putting on alongside the celebration.<sup>42</sup> The need for this kind of studio was not just about creating a subsidised recording studio for Aboriginal people but also a matter of addressing the barriers that pushed many Aboriginal people out of colonial dominant spaces in Australia such as the music industry. Researchers who wrote the feasibility report for Aboriginal Australians in the music industry noted the factors keeping Aboriginal people out of mainstream recording facilities:

Because of past experiences with non-Aboriginal institutions, many Aborigines find it extremely difficult to use facilities provided outside Aboriginal communities. Such inhibitions may deter many musicians from using commercial studios. A more familiar environment would thus enable more artists to give expression to their talents and widen the involvement of Aborigines in contemporary music.<sup>43</sup>

In the end it seems to have been true that the enthusiasm towards contemporary Aboriginal music subsided after 1988, and it is a great shame that this recording studio was not able to be made a reality.

In a late 1980s interview with Archie Roach on the *Koori Music History Program*, Archie commented on why he hadn't yet recorded his own music, saying that the resources weren't there. Archie also stated that producers had knocked him back citing that they thought

---

<sup>41</sup> 'Various music and radio project documentation including Radio Redfern, recording studio feasibility study...', A00000451, Aboriginal History Archive.

<sup>42</sup> K. McGuinness, 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism...', [Interviewed by Will Bracks].

<sup>43</sup> 'Various music and radio project documentation including Radio Redfern, recording studio feasibility study, music industry course, SEIMA/3CR Aboriginal radio training proposal, 1987-1993', Series 41, Box 25, A00000451, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

Aboriginal music is too political.<sup>44</sup> It is interesting looking back on this quote now as Archie Roach has become such a renowned Australian musician with numerous recorded albums made in the time since this interview. However, for many this barrier was too significant and numerous great bands from the 1980s have not received the credit they deserve through recorded studio albums. Archie also stated in this interview that he'd like to see more opportunities for Aboriginal musicians, that 'Black music is conveying a message as a form of protest' and that white people are starting to notice and learn about the struggle through Aboriginal music.

No Fixed Address and Us Mob were able to gain a professional recorded album out of the *Wrong Side of the Road* film, others however were not as lucky. Without opportunities such as those, it is clear the lack of an Aboriginal controlled recording studio, or government funded program for contemporary Aboriginal musicians to gain access to professional recording, was a serious hinderance to many from this era. While the aforementioned report on the feasibility of an Aboriginal recording studio shows the promise of this time, it lamentably never went further than a report. Lessons can be learned from this period and taken into the music industry today. Indeed, the pathway to getting your music heard is much easier for new Aboriginal musicians today, largely because of the accessibility to high end recording at a much lower cost that modern technology has produced.

---

<sup>44</sup> 'Recording of 'Koori Tracks' and 'Black Magic Radio' programs with the latter focusing on Aboriginal storytelling, Audio Cassette Tape, undated', Series 1, Box 208, A00001234, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this thesis was to shed light on the history of Australia's RAR concerts as a critical part of the Aboriginal self-determination, land rights movement and development of Aboriginal contemporary music and musicians. Although Australia's RAR never achieved the scale and notoriety of the UK movement, it achieved its goals of creating awareness for the Aboriginal struggle, staging concerts for Aboriginal performers and concertgoers in an Aboriginal controlled space and raising funds for community organisations.

Chapter one showed the historical context and significance of RAR in Australia. The UK RAR movement from 1976-1982 was discussed in brief to display the global context in which RAR Australia took place. This movement no doubt had influence on activists and musicians in Australia due to its size, however no reference was made to this movement in Australia's RAR concerts. This was due to a strong sense of history of Aboriginal activism that gave RAR in Australia its own unique identity. Situated in a period in which Aboriginal community organisations such as VAHS were a significant hub for the Aboriginal community, RAR displayed a keen focus on supporting community organisation and self-determination. The self-determination approach was evident in RAR's support of contemporary Aboriginal music. Chapter one revealed the extent of the RAR concerts in Australia in the late 1970s and the 1980s. The range of bands involved and the causes RAR was connected to was investigated and display the aims and impact of RAR as it led towards the Building Bridges concert in 1988.

Chapter two analysed the connections between key people and organisations in the movement for Aboriginal self-determination and RAR. Through interview, archival analysis, and newspaper data this chapter found that the key organisations involved in RAR were VAHS (and its subsidiary Koori Kollij), CASM and CARE. The impact of CASM for the development of Aboriginal contemporary music was shown to be influential in key bands involved in the development RAR, No Fixed Address and Us Mob. Similarly with the Koori Kollij Health Worker training program coming out of VAHS, it was shown that Aboriginal Health Workers, Alan Brown and Kelli McGuinness took the VAHS approach to community health into the space of music and saw the RAR concerts as a site of community pride in Aboriginality. The CARE organisation was impactful with its work with the Fitzroy Aboriginal community, helping to stage RAR concerts in Melbourne and advertising RAR as

well as national Aboriginal issues through its newsletter. Lyn McLeavy of the CARE organisation provides an example of an effective ally to Aboriginal causes. Her understanding of what the key issues were in the Aboriginal struggle displayed a genuine effort to generate positive change for Aboriginal peoples. Lyn McLeavy and CARE were effective supporters of RAR and the Aboriginal community because they amplified the voices of Aboriginal people rather than speaking for them/us.

Chapter three displayed how RAR can be viewed as a decolonial space in music as well as highlighting the barriers facing the development of Aboriginal contemporary music in Australia during the 1980s. Theories on decolonization overlaid onto the case study of RAR show how RAR can be viewed to be a decolonial space in music. This is through the self-determination approach taken by RAR, the nature of RAR as an Aboriginal controlled space and therefore its representation of pride in Aboriginality. In this way RAR is shown to be a space that was in opposition to the status quo of a dominant majority of white-settler performers in the music industry. As stated in chapter three it is clear RAR and Aboriginal music faced many barriers including a lack of funding. This was partly due to a lack of awareness of new Aboriginal bands and 'contemporary' Aboriginal music. Part of this was due to racist attitudes in the music scene at the time, lack of resources and training opportunities for young Aboriginal musicians (CASM was still new, Swinburne Community Organisations course ran from 1975-78 and Koori Kollij only ran from 1982 through to 1990 when it was defunded) as well as limited opportunities for Aboriginal students in general. A lack of learning spaces that catered to Aboriginal people was a serious barrier to Aboriginal musicians and CASM and Koori Kollij showed how beneficial learning that was aimed towards Aboriginal people could be. The lack of resources given to the RAR movement is lamentable but what the organisers of RAR were able to do with very limited resources is an amazing achievement. A lesson that can be taken from this history is that there is always immense value in funding artistic projects like RAR.

Through this thesis additional subjects of interest have emerged. Most prominently further investigation into the Adelaide music scene of the late 1970s and 1980s is warranted. As stated in chapter one, the first RAR concert in Australia occurred in Adelaide in 1979, however no records of who performed, how many attended or what the location of the concert have been found. It is clear from the research that CASM played an important role in the development of contemporary Aboriginal music. A future project focusing on CASM,

Adelaide University and the music scene in Adelaide of the late 1970s and early 1980s would be an interesting companion to add to this thesis on RAR. Additionally, this research has highlighted the importance of the Koori Kollij health worker training program. Further research into this organisation would help to further the understanding of its impact on RAR and the Aboriginal music and musicians in Victoria. The Aboriginal History Archive is in the process of acquiring the VAHS collections and there will no doubt be a large amount of material on Koori Kollij that will aid in this research.

In summary this research sheds light on the history of RAR in Australia as this is a history that has barely been documented. This thesis situates the RAR movement in the context of the Aboriginal self-determination and land rights movement, displaying the connections RAR had between people and organisations that were key to these struggles. RAR is viewed as a space that contributed to de-colonization in music due to its portrayal of Aboriginal musicians and its community-controlled nature. Through CASM, Koori Kollij and RAR a pride in Aboriginal music generated a positive outlet for urban Aboriginal communities. However, though Aboriginal music in Australia is now more diversely represented than it ever has been, it still lacks the representation and funding it deserves. Hopefully in the future this will be changed.

## References

### Archives

'A History of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service', *Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc.*, <https://www.vaccho.org.au/assets/01-RESOURCES/TOPIC-AREA/CORPORATE/A-HISTORY-OF-THE-VICTORIAN-ABORIGINAL-HEALTH-SERVICE.pdf>, (accessed September 30 2021).

'Assorted published and unpublished material collected during Edwina Howell's doctoral research, mostly transcripts of Gary Foley's interviews, speeches and lectures, c2009-2012', Series 60, Box 141, A00002384, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Audio recording of Rock Against Racism live concert held in Albert Park Melbourne', Series 1, Box 153, A00000973, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Campaign Against Racial Exploitation: Part 1' [Collection], National Library of Australia Archives, <https://archive.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/au-nla-mr-aa0-mr-aa0-090>, (accessed 4 May 2021).

'Commonwealth Games protest material, photos, newsclippings, press release, 1982', Series 32, Box 33, A00000555, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Correspondence and other documents (including faxes, memos and photocopies) relating to Music in Australia, correspondence, 1984 – 1996', Series 41, Box 226, A00002716, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Collection of Newspapers including Aboriginal Human Relations, Aboriginal Newsletter, Care Newsletter, Kulinma-Kodomokai, Aboriginal News, 1970-1995', Series 53, Box 98, A00002081, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Documents belonging to Bruce McGuinness including correspondence, press releases and articles, including National Aboriginal Congress submission to a joint committee 1974 & NAIHO draft motion 'Replacement of the National Aboriginal Conference', 1974-1990', Series 50, Box 243, A00002771, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Documents (papers) relating to Aboriginal Advisory Group from the Australian Council of Churches and to World Council of Churches, 1980-1995', Series 43, Box 91, A00001448, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Documents related to NAIHO and health services (collected by Foley as Public Relations Officer for NAIHO). Including memos, submissions, minutes, correspondence, 1982-83', Series 18, Box 88, A00001962, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne Australia.

Identity, Vol. 4, No. 5, 1981, in: 'Newsletters including Nunga News, Aboriginal Treaty, Black Protest Committee, Koori Times News, Aborigines Advancement League -1980- 1998', Series 51, Box 102, A00001473, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Interviewing Gary Foley at Koori Kollij with Wayne Thorpe and Lesley Briggs - 4th April 1984; 2. NAIHO Executive Meeting 23 April 1983 Tape No. 5 & 6" U-matic Video Cassette Tape, 1983-1984', Series 3, Box 137, A00000133, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Koori Kollij course outlines; Senate Select Committee on Volatile Substance Fumes report, chapter ten and related correspondence, 1986 and undated', Series 23, Box 4, A00000225, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Original correspondence and newspaper clippings relating to Gary Foley's work with VAHS and NAIIO, 1980', Series 18, Box 173, A00002434, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Recording of Foley lecture on Reconciliation policy, circa 2000', Series 1, Box 153, A00000984, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

Recording of 'Koori Tracks' and 'Black Magic Radio' programs with the latter focusing on Aboriginal storytelling, Audio Cassette Tape, undated', Series 1, Box 208, A00001234, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Recording of from ABC radio about Gary Foley & The Clash, Audio Cassette Tape, 1982', A00000626, Aboriginal History Archive, Series 32, Box 146, Melbourne, Australia.

'Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service 1971-1991: Twenty Years of Community Service, printed booklet, 1991', Series 19, Box 2, A00000193, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Roles and relationships in Aboriginal Health Service', handwritten document describing the organisation of VAHS, undated; loose correspondence, conference report, press releases, 1976 – 1982', Series 21, Box 32, A00000538, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne Australia.

'Rock Against Racism: Northcote Town Hall. 19-12-82. Tape 2', Series 3, Box 137, A00000134, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Three transcripts of Gary Foley speaking including interview and speeches, 1982-1993', Series 32, Box 37, A00001070, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

'Various music and radio project documentation including Radio Redfern, recording studio feasibility study, music industry course, SEIMA/3CR Aboriginal radio training proposal, 1987-1993', Series 41, Box 25, A00000451, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.

## **Audio Visual**

Adams, P., 'The Story Behind the Aboriginal Tent Embassy' [Radio Broadcast], ABC, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/the-story-behind-aboriginal-tent-embassy/13727824>, (accessed 20 February 2022).

*Building Bridges Australia Has a Black History* [Record], Published by ABC, 1990.

*Green Bush* [film], Director W. Thornton, Australia, Ronin Films, 2005.

McLeavy, L., 'Rock Against Racism' [Photograph], Melbourne, 1980, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/33197452?keyword=rock%20against%20racism>, (accessed, 20 February 2021).

McLeavy, L., 'Aboriginal rights movement collection, 1978-1980' [photograph collection], 1978-1980, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/32913619?keyword=lyn%20mcleavy>, (accessed 20 September 2021).

No Fixed Address, Us Mob, *We Have Survived. Wrong Side of the Road (Songs from the Motion Picture)*. <https://open.spotify.com/track/7CEZHdsnC7ZITUU9Oh2TgX?si=36f90162b5434639>.

*White Riot*, Director R. Shah, United Kingdom, Modern Films, 2019.

*Wrong Side of the Road (Songs from the Motion Picture) No Fixed Address & Us Mob*, Produced by Philip Roberts and Graeme Isaac, Black Australia Records, 1981.

*Wrong side of the Road*, Director N. Lander, South Australia, Ronin Films, 1981.

'*Wrong Side of the Road*' returns to cinemas [HD] ABC RN Breakfast [Online Video], Sydney, Australia, Radio National, ABC Indigenous, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHwby2dl7GY&ab\\_channel=ABCIndigenous](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHwby2dl7GY&ab_channel=ABCIndigenous), (Accessed 2 June 2021).

## **Published Primary Sources**

Adler, E., *Justice for Aboriginal Australians: Report of the World Council of Churches Team Visit to the Aborigines June 15 to July 3, 1981*, Michigan, Programme to Combat Racism, World Council of Churches, 1981.

Roach, A., *Tell Me why: The Story of My Life and My Music*, Australia, Simon & Schuster, 2019.

'Rock Against Racism', *Tharunka*, 29 October 1980, p. 2.

Curthoys, A., *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2002.

Foley, G., 'Whiteness and Blackness in the Koori Struggle for Self-Determination', Vol. 1, No. 1, *Winter School on Advocacy and Social Action*, 1999.

Foley, G., 'Black Power in Redfern 1968 – 1972', *Victoria University*, Pd.D. diss., Melbourne, The University of Melbourne, 2001.

'Song Cycles Show Indigenous Musicians Have a Tough Gig' [Media Release], *Australia Council for the Arts*, 28 May 2010, <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/news/media-releases/song-cycles-shows-indigenous-musicians-have-a-tough-gig/>, (accessed 20 June 2020).

## **Published Secondary Sources**

Altman, J., 'What Future for Remote Indigenous Australia? Economic Hybridity and the Neoliberal Turn', *Cultural Crisis: Anthropology and politics in Aboriginal Australia*, 2010, p. 259-280.

Atwood, B., & Markus, A., *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, Crows Nest, Allen & Unwin, 1999.

Banivanua Mar, T., *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the ends of Empire*, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Breen, M. (ed.), *Our Place Our Music*, Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Aboriginal Studies Press, 1989.

Broadbent, D., 'Aborigines urged not to boycott games', *The Age*, 18 May 1982, p.3

Campbell, J., Cooke, M., & Streeton, R., 'Researching the Researchers: Using a Snowballing Technique', *Nurse Researcher*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2004.

Castles, J., 'Tjungaringanyi: Aboriginal Rock (1971-91)', in P. Hayward (ed.), *Sound Alliances: Indigenous Peoples, Cultural Politics and Popular Music in the Pacific*, London, United Kingdom, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1998.

Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music, 'Tjungaringanyi/Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music', vol. 1, no. 1, Adelaide, 1975.

Dawson, A., "'Love music hate racism": The Cultural Politics of the Rock Against Racism Campaigns', *Postmodern Culture*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2005.

Diangelo, R., *What does it mean to be white?: Developing White Racial Literacy*, New York, Peter Land, 2012.

Dunbar-Hall, P. and Gibson, C., *Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places: Contemporary Aboriginal Music in Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales, 2004.

Foley, G. and Howell, E., 'The Media Strategy of the Aboriginal Black Power, Land rights and Self-Determination Movement', in: *The Routledge Companion to Media and Activism*, New York, Routledge, 2018, p. 307-316.

Gall, G., 'Getting the Young Punks to Join in', *Overland*, 2020, <https://overland.org.au/2020/07/getting-the-young-punks-to-join-in-gary-foley-and-the-clash/>, (accessed 20 September 2020).

Goodyer, I., 'Rock against racism: Multiculturalism and political mobilization 1976–81', *Immigrants & Minorities*, Vol 22, No.1, 2003, p.44-62.

Goodyer, I., *Crisis Music: the cultural politics of rock against racism*, United Kingdom, Manchester University Press, 2013.

Haider, A., 2020, 'White Riot: The Music Activists That Took on Racism', *BBC*, 20 August 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200819-white-riot-the-music-activists-who-took-on-racism>

hooks, b., *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, United States, Taylor & Francis, 2014. <https://www.abc.net.au/doublej/programs/classic-albums/no-fixed-address-us-mob-wrong-side-of-the-road/13359592>, (accessed 20 May 2020).

Kizilos, K., 'Harmony For Races', *The Age*, 9 April 1980, p.17

Lampton, A. and Tunstill, G., 'Aboriginal Music Students' Views on Aboriginal Music Research', *The World of Music*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 1994.

Land, C., *Decolonizing solidarity: Dilemmas and directions for supporters of indigenous struggles*, United Kingdom, Zed Books Ltd., 2015.

'Lynnette Mcleavy Obituary', *The Age*, 13 February 2020.

Marcus, G., *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock n Roll Music*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn., United Kingdom, Penguin, 2015.

Martineau, J., *Creative Combat: Indigenous Art, Resurgence and Decolonization*, Ph.D. diss., Canada, University of Victoria, 2015.

McKinnon, C., 'Indigenous Music as a Space of Resistance', in *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity*, T. Banivanua Mar and P. Edmonds, London, United Kingdom, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 255 – 272.

Moliterno, A., 'The One Struggle: The Clash, Gary Foley, punk politics and Indigenous Australian activism', in, *Working for the Clampdown*, Ed. Colin Coulter, United Kingdom, Manchester University Press, 2019.

Perks, R. & Thomson, A., *The Oral History Reader*, London, United Kingdom, Taylor & Francis, 2015.

Renton, D., *Never Again: Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League 1976-1982*, Routledge, 2018.

Reynolds, S., *Rip it up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978-1984*, United Kingdom, Faber & Faber, 2009.

'Rock Against Racism', *Sydney Tribune*, July 9 1980, p. 3.

'Tiga Bayles Music Promoter', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 January 1983, p.16.

Tuhiwai Smith, L., *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., London, Zed Books, 2012, p. 217-227.

Tunstill, G., 'An overview of the Centre for aboriginal studies in music, 1988', *Australian Aboriginal Studies (Canberra)*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1989.

'Us Mob, No Fixed Address, Wrong Side of the Road', *ABC*, 31 May 2021.

Vellutini, L., 'Finding a voice on indigenous issues: Midnight oil's inappropriate appropriations', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 27, no. 1, 2003, p. 127-133.

Warren, E., *Steam down or How Things Begin*, United Kingdom, Rough Trade Books, 2019.

## **Interview**

Foley, G., 'Foley on RAR 1' [Interviewed by Will Bracks], 19 November 2021, Carlton, Melbourne, VIC.

McGuinness, K., 'Recollections of Rock Against Racism, VAHS and Australia's music scene in the 1980s and 1990s' [interviewed by Will Bracks], 24 February 2022, Recorded Zoom interview, Melbourne, VIC.

## **Websites**

Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts, *About Us* [Website], <https://acpa.edu.au/about/>, (accessed 20 January 2022).

Bracks, W., 'Series 39: Politics of Representation, Media and Performance - 'National Black Theatre' and other stage productions', *Aboriginal History Archive*, Melbourne, 2019, <http://aboriginalhistoryarchive.net/s/aha/item-set/39>, (accessed 20 February 2021).

Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM), *The University of Adelaide* [website], <https://arts.adelaide.edu.au/music/study/national-centre-for-aboriginal-language-and-music-studies-ncalms/centre-for-aboriginal#:~:text=CASM%20is%20located%20in%20the,learning%20and%20sound%20recording%20facilities>, (accessed 20 September 2021).

Museums Victoria, *Commonwealth Games Brisbane & Aboriginal Protest, 1982* [website], <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/2766#:~:text=On%2029%20September%201%2C000%20people,in%20Brisbane%20during%20the%20Games>, (Accessed 04 May 2021).

National Museum of Australia, 'A Legal Challenge', *National Museum of Australia*, <https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/features/indigenous-rights/land-rights/yirrkala/expansion-folder/a-legal-challenge>, (accessed 30 June 2021).

National Museum of Australia, *Charles Perkins* [website], <https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/features/indigenous-rights/people/charles-perkins>, (accessed 15 January 2022).

Redfern Oral History, *Black Theatre* [website],  
<http://redfernoralhistory.org/enterprises/blacktheatre/tabid/204/default.aspx>, (accessed 12 May 2021).

The Adelaide Review, *In Losing a Spot at Eurovision, Electric Fields May Emerge the Real Winners* [website],  
<https://www.adelaidereview.com.au/arts/music/2019/02/11/electric-fields-eurovision/>, (accessed 15 January 2022).

'The 1967 Referendum', AIATSIS, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/1967-referendum#:~:text=On%2027%20May%201967%2C%20Australians,to%20make%20laws%20for%20them>, (accessed 20 September 2020).

The Koori History Website, *The 1970s* (website),  
<http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/images/history/1970s/identity71/identitydx.html>, (accessed 20 January 2022).

# Appendix 1

Date	Location	AHA No.	Event/Resource	Notes	Keywords	Reference	Additional Reference
1979	Adelaide		First RAR Concert Held in Aus. In Adelaide with Us Mob, No Fixed Address & Redgum		RAR Origin	A00001473 AHA.	
1979	USA (Chicago)		"The campaign has had numerous events across the globe, including the United States. On June 9, 1979 a Rock Against Racism concert was held in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago, IL."		USA	<a href="https://www.buttonmuseum.org/buttons/rock-against-racism-chicago">https://www.buttonmuseum.org/buttons/rock-against-racism-chicago</a>	
1980	Melbourne		30/03/1980 RAR Launched in Melbourne by Al. Grassby and Bruce McGuinness March 1980 at RMIT Storey Hall, second concert held in July at Northcote Town hall			A00001473 AHA. & Tribune (Sydney), 19/03/80	
1980	Melbourne	A00002434	Correspondence with Commissioner of Police Fairfield from Peter Kanoa "Organiser, Rock Against Racism" about Liquor Licensing at RAR		Police, discrimination, racist stereotyping		
1980	Melbourne		"Police Sought Liquor Ban at Black Concert", about first RAR Melb. Concert, Northcote Town Hall.	2nd Melb RAR Concert	Police, discrimination, racist stereotyping	<i>The Age</i> - July 11 1980, p.g. 5.	
1980	Melbourne	A00002434	Article in CARE Newsletter about RAR. Mentions Peter Kanoa, organiser and member of "Hard Times". Covers press conf. from first concert in Melbourne	"CARE" no. 18 March 1980	CARE		
1980	Melbourne		Article in "The Star" about Fund raising concert held in Melbourne, 30 Mar. 1980 for Campaign Against Racial Exploitation	Found in Informit AIATSIS archive through VU Library	CARE	The Star ; Vol. 1, no. 3 (1980)	

# Appendix 1

1980	Melbourne		Second Melbourne RAR Concert held at Northcote Town Hall, 13/07/80.	Bands Inc. Cassava, Lucky Dog, Men at Work, No Fixed Address, Wimmins Circus (performing troupe)		<i>The Age</i> - 11/07/80, p.g. 40 & 42 & Sydney Tribune, 09/07/80	
1980	Sydney		First Sydney RAR concert, organised by Students Against Discrimination (SAD), Decmeber 13th.	"Article states INXS and the Hitmen have agreed to play" but unconfirmed. Includes info and context about RAR		<a href="#">Tharunka, NSW - 29 October 1980</a>	
1981	Sydney	A00001473	RAR Concert at Sydney Town hall on Jan. 26.	Bands inc. No Fixed Address, Us Mob, Teenie Weenies, Street Level and Motor co.		A00001473 AHA.	
1981	Sydney		RAR Concert held at Sydney Town Hall, 30th May, 1700 in attendance.	Bands Inc. Un Tabu, Rock From the Magnetics, King Cobra & Black Lace. 1700 attend. Barbara Flick from Land Rights movement speaks		<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 29/05/81 p.g. 17 & "Identity" Vol 4. No. 5	<i>Tribune</i> (Sydney), 3rd June 1981 p.7
1981	Sydney		RAR at Sydney Town Hall, 22nd November	Bands inc. King Cobra, No Fixed Address, Us Mob, Aboriginal & Islander Dance Company		<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 22 November 1981, p.94	
1981		A00001473	"Identity" Vol. 4 No. 5, contains article on RAR. Reports on concerts to date held in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne	Includes info about bands: Un Tabu, Us Mob, No Fixed Address & King Cobra		Newsletters...Nunga News, Aboriginal Treaty, Black Protest Committee, Koori Times News, Aborigines Advancement League -1980-1998', Series 51, Box 102, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia	
1981	Sydney	A00002384	Transcript of Gary Foley's speech at RAR concert in Sydney, November 22. Foley Speaks on Racism in Australia, why those that come to RAR should support other Aboriginal Protests and support all anti-racism and anti-sexism.	Recruitment of young people for protest actions is key in Foley's speech. Same as with Clash speech.	Gary Foley; Edwina Howell; Speech; Rock Against Racism	...transcripts of Gary Foley's interviews, speeches and lectures, c2009-2012', Series 60, Box 141, A00002384, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia	
1982	Brisbane		RAR Gig at 'Souths Clubhouse' Jane St. West end in Brisbane. 25th September	Many Photos on Trove as well as a poster on the NFSA		< <a href="https://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/curated/rock-against-racism-flyer">https://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/curated/rock-against-racism-flyer</a> >	<a href="https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/category/images?keyword=rock-against-racism-flyer">https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/category/images?keyword=rock-against-racism-flyer</a>
1982	Brisbane		"Black Film Unit at the Rock Against Racism concert in Brisbane, in October"	Connected to Comm. Games protests		<a href="#">The Tribune (Sydney) – 1<sup>st</sup> December 1982</a>	
1982	Sydney	A00000262	Interview about RAR with unknown person, sounds like someone from No Fixed Address or Us Mob. Adv. For RAR gig at Sydney Town Hall	Audio Recording from a radio program. Un Tabu, King Cobra, Us Mob, No Fixed Address		A000000262 AHA.	

# Appendix 1

1982	Sydney	A00000626	Gary Foley appears at The Clash's concert at Capitol Theatre Sydney. Speaks about Aboriginal Struggle and advertises protests at the Bris. Comm. Games.	14th February 1982	Transcript of Interview in Edwina Howell's thesis work A00001070	Recording from the Radio about Foley tour with the Clash. ABC. A00000626 AHA.	A00001070: Transcript of Foley Speaking at Clash Concert. A00001132: Review of the Clash tour recordings
1982	Melbourne		Melbourne's third RAR concert at Storey Hall RMIT, 17/09/82	Bands inc. Ebony Profile, Scarlet, Strange Tenents & The Eskalators		<i>The Age</i> - 17 September 1982, p.g. 36. Margot O'Neil	
1982	Brisbane		RAR concert held in Musgrave Park Brisbane. I think to protest 1982 comm games	Bands inc. No Fixed, Bapu Mamoos, Knuckles, Mantaka, Denis Conlon Maggies	Brisbane Games 1982, RAR Aims	"Black Nation" A00000555 AHA.	
1982	Brisbane	A00000555	Article from 'Black Nation' about RAR concerts in Musgrave park and protest camp in Davies park. Comm. Games protests.	Inc. interview with Woman who attended concert and camp			
1982	Melbourne	A00000134	19/12/1982: Video Footage of RAR Northcote Town Hall, Gary Foley and Denis Walker (Secretary of NAIHO) speak. Artists?			A000000193,	'Rhythms', <i>The Age</i> , 17 December 1982, p.39
1982	Brisbane		RAR concert in Brisbane, September 25 or 26th.			<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 22/09/82, p.g. 8	
1983	Melbourne		Gary Foley Introduces Goanna at the Sydney Myer Music Bowl	Goanna, Gary Foley's involvement in Music and Political influence of Aboriginal Struggle in Music		<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIQqXzrrbU8&amp;channel=roori2">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIQqXzrrbU8&amp;channel=roori2</a>	
1984	N.T.	A00002716	Aboriginal Arts Board funding for Warumpi Band tour signed by Gary Foley	Ask Foley about this item in the interview	Warumpi Band	A00002716	
1984	Sydney		University of Sydney Students Against Racism put on RAR gig at Union Club, 25th March (Helen Musung an organiser)	Bands inc. Cut Lunch, Grooveyard, The Particles, Big 5 and The Benders (Page 20 info about Sydney Students)		"Causes", <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 23/03/84, p.g. 20, 43, 51 & 53	
1985	Melbourne	A00000973	1985: RAR at Powerhouse Theatre, Albert Park, Melbourne. 3 Audio recordings.				

# Appendix 1

1985		A00002771	Submission from Kelli McGuinness and Brad Brown (Aboriginal Health Workers) about the importance of music as Corroboree for Health, the importance of supporting the continuation of this. Includes aims and objectives of RAR and concert costs breakdown		Includes budget, RAR aims			
1985	Melbourne		RAR Concert held at Story Hall RMIT Melbourne, organised by Brad Brown, Kelli McGuinness and Ron Briggs from VAHS	Bands Inc. Black Lace, Hard Times, Rough n Ready, Il Karasmaru, Mop & The Dropouts, Samantha Doolan, Peter Rotumah				
1986	Canberra		Students Against Apartheid put on RAR concert in Canberra to "Highlight Aboriginals Plight", September 25th 1986			<u>The Canberra Times - 25<sup>th</sup> September 1986.</u>		
1986	Melbourne		RAR Concert as part of NAIDOC week, ("Aborigines Week" in The Age paper)	Bands inc. Coloured Stone, Catch n Kill, Hard Times, Koori Youth Band, Black Opal		"Aborigines Week", <i>The Age</i> , 05/09/86 p.g. 37		
1987			RAR Committee, VAHS and the Koori Information Centre hold "Celebration of Survival", Jan 26			"Pride and Protests Mark Australia Day", <i>The Age</i> , 27/01/87 p.g. 3		
1987		A00000451	"Feasibility of establishing a music recording studio for Aboriginal contemporary music" - Submission to Public Broadcasting Foundation	Pages 9, 11, 19, 36, 38 & 58. References a RAR "umbrella group" that Aboriginal musicians in this feasibility report fall under.		Also inc. in A00002716		
1987	Melbourne		RAR Concert held at the Aboriginal Advancement League Northcote, 12th Septemeber			"That's Entertainment", <i>The Age</i> , 21/08/87, p.g. 47		
1988	Melbourne		RAR Concert at Aboriginal Advancement League as part of NAIDOC week, 3rd September			<i>The Age</i> , 02/09/88 p.g. 41 & 52		
1988	Canberra		RAR Concert put on by ANU Students Against Racism (SAR) as part of "O week", 3rd March.			<u>The Canberra Times – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1988</u>		
1988C	Melbourne	A00001234	Interview with Archie Roach about Koori Music for a radio program on Koori Music History		Archie Roach, Koori Music, Discrimination, Recording, 1988 Bicentenary.	Recording of "Koori Tracks" and "Black Magic Radio" programs with the latter focusing on Aboriginal storytelling, Audio Cassette Tape, undated', Series 1, Box 208, A00001234, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne, Australia.		

# Appendix 1

1989	USA (New York)		"Ward vs. Rock Against Racism" Legal case about noise restrictions. RAR in the US claim restrictions were in breach first amendment	References several RAR concerts held in New York City, an upstart likely similar to the ones in Chicago, with the same aims of the Original UK movement.	USA, Legal	<a href="https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/370/ward-v-rock-against-racism">https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/370/ward-v-rock-against-racism</a>		
1989		A00002716	"A Proposal for Black Australians Who Wish to Work in the Contemporary Music Industry"	Ask Foley about this item in the interview. Looking at funding courses to promote self determination in music. Tiga Bayles?		<a href="#">A00002716</a>		
1997	Sydney		Advertisement for RAR gig at the "Harbourside Brasserie" Sydney, 28th August feat. Tim Finn, Cactus Child, Abby & Dean					
1998	Melbourne		RAR at Trades Hall, Carlton. 13th September	Bands inc. Even, Brolga Boys, Mach Pelican, Hoodangas		<i>The Age</i> , 11/09/98 p.g. 53		
2000	Sydney		RAR gig at Harbourside Brasserie Sydney, 10th August			<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 27/07/00, p.g. 18		
2012	Darwin		Article from Darwin Palmerston Sun about RAR Gig held at "Doctor's Gully"	Bands include Mills Collective, Reggae Dave, the Bagot Choir, One Mob and Dave Spry.		<i>Darwin Palmerston Sun</i> , Darwin, N.T. [Darwin, N.T.]04 Apr 2012: 10		
2017	USA (Chicago)					<a href="https://www.hottimeinoldtown.com/2017/8/26/16207072/section-8-fans-pear-up-to-host-rock-against-racism">https://www.hottimeinoldtown.com/2017/8/26/16207072/section-8-fans-pear-up-to-host-rock-against-racism</a>		
Undated		A00001000	Recorded RAR concert featuring Koorie Youths, Herbie Pattion with Hard Times, Johnny Day and Friends.	Bands Include , Koorie Youths, Herbie Patton with Hard Times, Johnny Day and Friends (Selwyn Burns, Dave Arden, Brad Brown, Jimmy Rees)	RAR Concert	Rock Against Racism Concert featuring "Johnny Day and Friends", "Herbie Patton" backed by "Hard Times", "Koorie Youths", "Black Lace" audio cassette tape, undated", Series 1, Box 154, Aboriginal History Archive, Melbourne,		