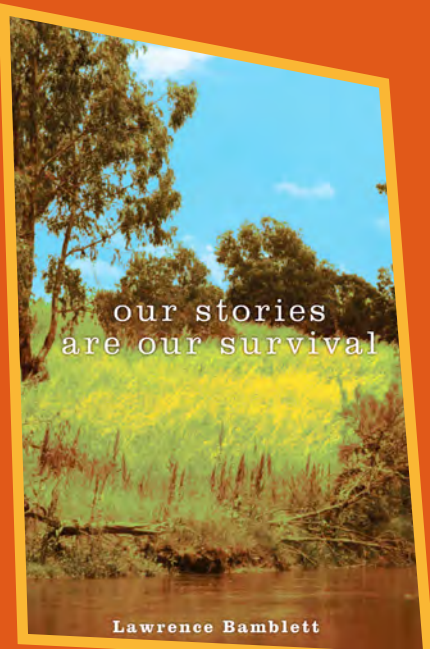
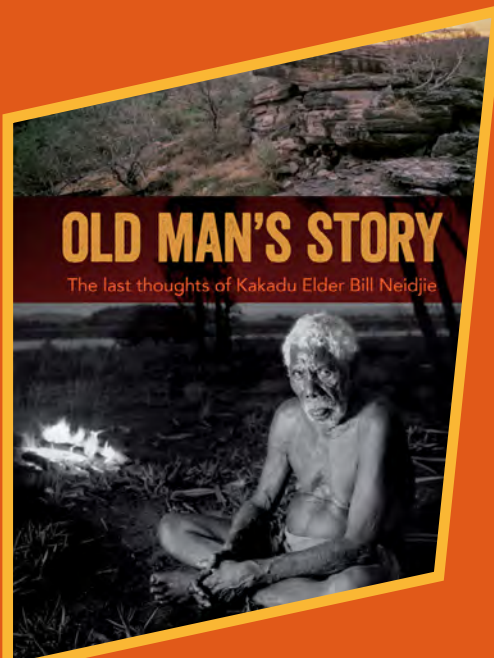
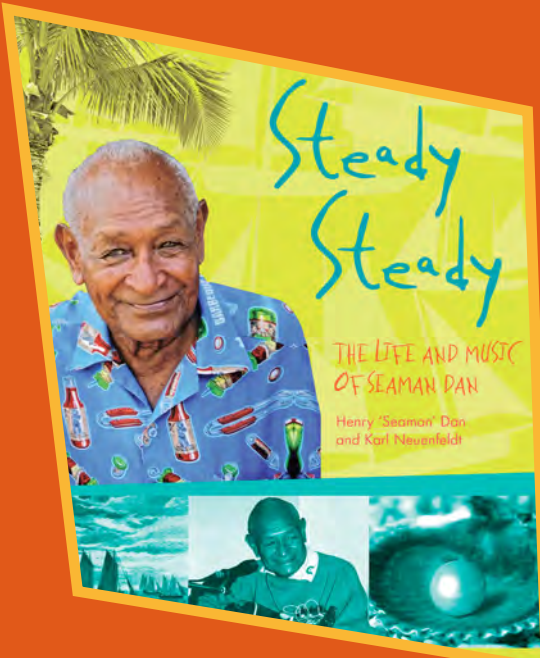




*Guidelines for the ethical publishing  
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
authors and research from those  
communities*



Aboriginal Studies Press  
The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies





First published in 2015  
by Aboriginal Studies Press

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Aboriginal Studies Press is the publishing arm of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

GPO Box 553, Canberra, ACT 2601  
Phone: (61 2) 6246 1183  
Fax: (61 2) 6261 4288  
Email: [asp@aiatsis.gov.au](mailto:asp@aiatsis.gov.au)  
Web: [www.aiatsis.gov.au/asp/about.html](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/asp/about.html)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this publication contains names and images of people who have passed away.

## *Welcome (from the AIATSIS Principal)*

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to welcome readers to these guidelines for ethical publishing. As the Principal of AIATSIS, of which Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP) is the publishing arm, I've long had oversight of ASP's publishing and I'm pleased to see these guidelines because they reflect ASP's lived experience in an area in which there have been no clear rules of engagement but many criticisms of the past practices of some researchers, writers, editors and publishers.

It is fitting that ASP take leadership in this role, because the work complements the AIATSIS [Guidelines for ethical research in Australian Indigenous studies](#), which have already set a high benchmark and are recognised as representing international best practice. In this way, AIATSIS is ably fulfilling its mandated role of encouraging an understanding in the general community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies.

In producing the guidelines, ASP has chosen not to be overly prescriptive; instead it is providing flexible practical guidance. A central tenet is that, whatever the cultural or professional knowledge you bring to publishing, in this area of research, writing or publishing you may be a novice. In the same way that there's no single Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity, there's no single approach to the many challenges and opportunities of producing material by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. But I would hope that, by following the philosophy that underpins these guidelines, writers and publishers can create new works in ways that are culturally respectful and appreciative of the diversity and richness of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their histories and cultures.

I thank the AIATSIS Deputy Principal, Michelle Patterson, for encouraging the Director of ASP and the ASP team to formalise their work practices into these guidelines.

Read on and enjoy.

Russell Taylor  
Principal, AIATSIS

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### PRACTICAL TIPS

Valuable resource for finding material by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors (p. 9).

Consider using local facilitators if your authors live remotely and an 'intermediary' might be useful (p. 15).

Ensure you are clearing the content with (or through) the right people, bearing in mind the cultural protocols about gender and respect for older generations (p. 16).

Consider using Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people as manuscript reviewers or as an advisory committee. (p. 17)

Consider employing the services of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander copyeditor (p. 18).

Obtain written sign-off for publication from families and communities if the work derives from research with them (p. 19).

Remember to ensure that the people who have been involved in the writing or compiling are appropriately named if any financial benefits beyond royalties (for example, prize money) should flow to them (p. 20)

Read Lawrence Bamblett's chapter in *Calling the shots* (Lydon 2014, pp. 76-100) to better understand the importance of photographs to individuals, families and communities (p. 24)

Be adaptable, and use what you know about applying – and creating – new editorial styles (p. 25).

Read Diana Eades' book *Aboriginal ways of using English*, especially Part 1, to better understand Aboriginal (and non-Aboriginal) communication styles (p. 26).

Be alert to, and enjoy, some of the meanings of Aboriginal English and loan words into Standard Australian English (p. 27).

If possible, choose a back-up person who could help with the promotional campaign in the case of ill-health or community business (p. 35).

Adequately brief your public relations people, whether staff or contractors, so they can, in turn, brief the media (p. 36).

Consider supporting a community to create its own launch (p. 37).



## CASE STUDIES

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## *Preface*

If you're reading these guidelines you presumably want to publish Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander authors or material written about their histories and cultures – and to do it well. So do we. It's our ongoing goal, and these guidelines are a way of distilling and sharing what we've learnt. We see them as neither definitive nor final. They're a living document to which we expect to add ideas over time.

The guidelines arise from the same philosophical space as the AIATSIS [Guidelines for ethical research in Australian Indigenous studies](#) (GERAIS). They embody the key idea that the publishing of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander authors, and research or stories about them, needs to be done ethically. To us that means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors have been encouraged to tell their stories in their own way, without the restrictions of the 'western literary canon' being arbitrarily imposed on them; that research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people has been undertaken with their prior and informed consent and will benefit them in ways they value; and that the subsequent publishing practices share those philosophical underpinnings.

The guidelines also have a more direct evolution. In 2009 ASP ran a cross-cultural training workshop for its staff and freelance editors. Following the success of that, in 2012 the Australian Publishing Association ran two workshops at the recommendation of its then training manager, Dee Read. The 'Fixed up proper way' workshops were convened by writer and freelance editor Janet Hutchinson. Earlier, in 2006, we had published our [Information kit for Indigenous authors](#), directed mainly at people hoping to publish their stories with us.

We also want to acknowledge the value of Indigenous lawyer Terri Janke's wide-ranging and accessible *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian writing* (2007), which include comprehensive information on the legal framework relevant to Indigenous publishing, and which we highly recommend.

We pay our respects to the authors of these earlier documents and note that our aim here is not to supersede earlier work but to provide advice from our experience, which is illuminated by practical tips and case studies.

Our warm thanks to the people who kindly read drafts and provided comments; the published result has been improved with your input.

## Introduction

In 2000, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), created *GERAIS*, the [Guidelines for ethical research in Australian Indigenous studies](#) (AIATSIS 2012). Highly influential since their first publication, the guidelines have become the benchmark for ethical research about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Many other organisations now use *GERAIS* in their own work, or have adapted the guidelines.

Aboriginal Studies Press is the publishing arm of AIATSIS and operates with its own set of principles, which derive from the philosophy that underpins *GERAIS*. The advice offered here reflects ASP's experience of publishing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors or material about those individuals and communities. Those published books may have been written by Indigenous authors, or by Indigenous authors in collaboration with non-Indigenous authors, or by non-Indigenous authors.

The guidelines are informed by our lived experience of working with and publishing many authors; people who represent a range of publishing situations: from non-English speaking Aboriginal people working through translators, to non-Indigenous researchers undertaking ethnographic work within communities, to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander academics or writers. They are based on publishing non-fiction but there are parallels to be drawn to other writing genres. For example, for anyone writing fiction but wanting to include events from the past it's worth remembering that the official histories (and anthropological research) were written by non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It may be difficult to judge from the texts how much those writings reflect their authors' subjective experience of being non-Indigenous. Quite often there is a complete absence of First Nations Australians in historical documents. It's not that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people weren't present; it's that they were seemingly invisible to non-Indigenous authors. So, even if writing fiction, go back and read the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories and histories that exist or find the relevant people to talk to today.

The guidelines may also be a valuable reference point for anyone working in educational publishing, given the renewed focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures in areas of the curriculum such as history, geography and English. Authors of textbooks are charged with presenting the cultural experience, past and present, of Indigenous Australians and may not be working directly with

Note: In these guidelines the terms 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' (or Koori, Murri etc. or a language name) are used about each individual or group, when known. The term 'Indigenous' Australians will be used only when describing both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people/s or if it's not clear.



**PRACTICAL TIP**

A valuable resource for finding material by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors is the AustLit subscription database [BlackWords: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Writers and Storytellers](#) (AustLit n.d.).

those people to do so. This work will be guided by publishers, mediated by editors and contributed to by picture researchers. For anyone working in these roles, the guidelines can provide an insight into how to treat Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories with awareness and respect.

We don't believe it's possible to say some people can't write about another group of people as a fixed rule, but we would urge extreme caution, particularly if you plan to include in your work Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander characters and their imagined worldview, which has the potential to be seriously inaccurate and culturally offensive. Some insensitive and hurtful things have happened when non-Indigenous people have delved into publishing Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander authors or content about Australian Indigenous peoples. We would urge authors to read the *GERAIS* and to let the philosophy expressed there and in these guidelines inform their activities. At core, if you don't know the people you're writing about then take the time to find out. Ask yourself why you want to write about them and reflect on your own cultural and personal perspective before deciding whether it's appropriate for you to be doing the work. For example, should you be the one writing the story, or would your efforts be better put into helping an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person to write their own story? If you decide to proceed, seek out an adviser or mentor, or possibly a co-writer. Then clear the copy with the appropriate people, remembering that there is no such thing as pan-Aboriginality; every nation, mob or community has its own distinct culture and identity. You need to consult with people from the area you're talking about. Australia will not be a better place if non-Indigenous people continue to write in an uninformed way about Indigenous Australians and their cultures.

These guidelines have evolved over time, and you will see from the case studies that we've learnt from some mistakes along the way. However, some things have always been central to us and, on occasions, we've had to push back against authors; for example, to ensure that the subject of a co-written autobiography featured more prominently on the book's cover than their co-author. In another instance we encouraged an Aboriginal author to agree to the inclusion of an Aboriginal artist's work on the cover of a book, not the work of a non-Aboriginal person which wasn't suitable to the style of book but which the author had supplied. In both instances explanation and discussion was required, but we achieved agreement and what we believe to have been the right result.



We didn't set out to create a book of rules. Instead, we see these guidelines more as signposts for our publishing that reflect what we've experienced as best-practice. We wanted to create a living document, and in providing a set of guidelines animated by practical tips and real case studies we hope those who are new to the area will find a valuable starting place as well as somewhere to explore the challenges and pleasures of this kind of publishing.

We used the usual planning and chronology of the tasks of publishing as the structure for these guidelines. The key take-home message is that the kind of consultation required with the people whose stories are being told is sometimes different to that required with non-Indigenous people. It's not just a case of being ethical (or being seen to be ethical); there are real quality and financial advantages. While time is required for consultation, the end result can be enjoyable shared relationships and a vastly improved product, because as the people involved develop trust in you as publishers they'll provide more and nuanced information.

### *What people prefer to be called*

Australia is home to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with some people, especially in the northern Cape York area, identifying as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

An Aboriginal person is defined legally as someone who is a descendant of an Aboriginal inhabitant of Australia, sees himself or herself as an Aboriginal person and is recognised as Aboriginal by members of the community in which he or she lives or has lived (ALRC 2003). The same definition applies to Torres Strait Islander people.

Torres Strait Islander people have different cultural origins in nearby Melanesia. Their home is the islands in the Torres Strait and the Northern Peninsula Area (Cape York), though many also live throughout mainland Australia.

For AIATSIS, the term 'Indigenous Australians' can be used to encompass both Aboriginal people *and* Torres Strait Islander people, though preferably not for one or the other when it is known which group is being spoken about. The word is not without its detractors. 'Indigenous' is being used increasingly, particularly by bureaucrats, even some newspapers, where 'Aboriginal' or 'Torres Strait Islander' would have been more appropriate. Some people even seem to think that 'Indigenous' is more polite; that somehow Aboriginal people don't want to identify as 'Aboriginal'. Language constantly evolves, but many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people would prefer not to be called 'Indigenous', which they see as a generic term that has been forced on them.

Aboriginal leader Lowitja O'Donoghue AC, CBE, DSG says this: 'I really can't tell you of a time when "indigenous" became current, but I personally have an objection to it, and so do many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people...This has just really crept up on us...like thieves in the night...We are very happy with our involvement with indigenous people around the world, on the international forum...because they're our brothers and sisters. But we do object to it being used here in Australia' (Age 2008).

As Lowitja O'Donoghue points out, the word has international meaning and value, too; for example, in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. For this reason, if 'Indigenous' is going to be used then 'Indigenous Australian' is more appropriate, as 'indigenous' can be applied to many people the world over. ASP uses 'Indigenous people' when it's clear who we mean.

When used to refer to the peoples of Australia, 'Aboriginal', 'Torres Strait Islander' and 'Indigenous' should be capitalised, as would be the name of any other group of people. ASP uses an initial 'I' for Indigenous when talking about Indigenous Australians but not for other indigenous peoples. Do not use the acronym ATSI or TSI.

It's preferable to talk about 'Aboriginal people' rather than 'Aborigines' and avoid 'the Aborigines' – which is as inappropriate as 'the feminists' or 'the' any group of people – as well as 'our Aborigines', or 'our Islanders', which is patronising.

The terms 'First Nations' and 'First Australians' are growing in acceptance and use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as they are overseas; for instance, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples or the First Nations Australia Writers' Network. As with 'Indigenous', when using these terms make them 'First Nations Australians' and 'First Peoples of Australia' because these too can be used in international settings.

The words 'tribe', 'clan' or 'moiety' derive from anthropology, and some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aren't comfortable with their use. For example, 'tribe' tends to have a negative connotation in Australia, although some First Nations people in the United States embrace the term and it has been used by some Aboriginal groups in arguing their land claims (Rumsey 1993, p. 197). Likewise, some groups – for instance, the Gumatj people in the Northern Territory – talk about 'clans' in relationship to themselves.

Use words like 'contemporary', 'urban' and 'traditional' carefully. Depending on their use they can cause hurt to some Aboriginal people. For example, using the word 'traditional' for someone living on a remote outstation in the Kimberley or in the Northern Territory can allow the interpretation that such people are 'real' Aboriginal people compared with those (sometimes with lighter skin) who live in or nearer the larger population centres.

Aboriginal people themselves use a range of labels to describe themselves – words like 'mob', 'community' and 'nation' – and they may talk about their country as their 'homelands'. Generally a word like 'mob' would only be used by non-Indigenous Australians if they knew and lived or worked among Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Indigenous people might talk about their 'community' and 'nation', and it's usually fine for anyone to use those terms. Sometimes non-Indigenous people, in error, call an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or people by a name they don't choose for themselves or don't identify as. If you make this mistake, apologise and ask what people do want to be called. It's not always possible to have unanimity; not everyone thinks the same way. First Nations Australians are culturally vast and varied and everyone's an individual, so if in doubt, ask.

Aboriginal people also have labels for groups from various geographic places; for instance, Kooris in New South Wales, Koories in Victoria (note the different spelling),

Murrin in Queensland and northern New South Wales, and Bama in northern Queensland. Tasmanian Aboriginal people might use Palawa, those from southern South Australia might call themselves Nungas, and those from the south-west of Western Australia might say Nyoongar (also Nyungar or Noongar). This list isn't comprehensive by any means and not all the terms are equivalent. It's not appropriate to assume that the word Koori/e, widely accepted in the south-east of the country, can be used to describe someone in Broome or Darwin. And you wouldn't automatically call an Aboriginal person living in Queensland a 'Murri' if the community they relate to comes from elsewhere.

People might also call themselves 'saltwater people' if they live on the coast, or 'freshwater', 'desert' or 'spinifex' people if they live on that country.

Many people identify themselves by their language group; for instance, 'Gurindji man' or 'Gubbi Gubbi woman'. The [AIATSIS map of Aboriginal Australia](#) is a good place to learn about the diversity of Aboriginal language and social groups. Although now dated, [Language and culture in Aboriginal Australia](#), edited by Michael Walsh and Colin Yallop, has some valuable information. In particular it describes the intrinsic connection between language and country (Rumsey 1993), which accounts for the overlap of language group and territorial names in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia – sometimes a difficult concept for people used to Western notions of language and land boundaries.

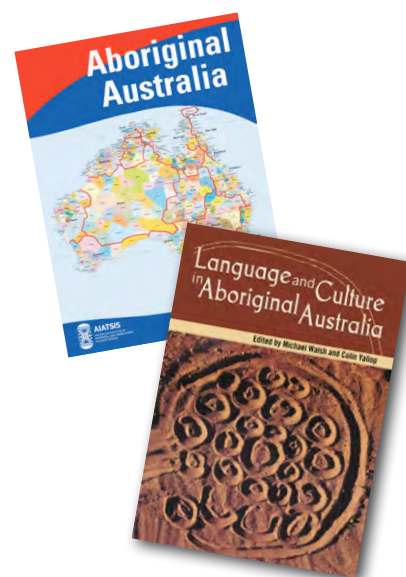
Torres Strait Islander people prefer to use the name of their island to identify themselves to outsiders; for example, a Saibai man or a Meriam (Murray Islander).

Some Indigenous people describe themselves with pride as 'black', a term that was especially prevalent in the 1970s black rights movement, but it can be understood as a term of abuse when used by non-Aboriginal people (see also pp. 30-31).

Terms like 'primitive', 'native' or 'prehistoric', labels used by some academic disciplines (though perhaps more so in other countries), are pejorative when used in Australia (see also [Word choices and spellings](#), pp. 29-31. They are very often words used 'about' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by outsiders.

Note that one effect of the Stolen Generations is that people have been wrenched from their families and country and denied the opportunity of speaking their language. Some Aboriginal people might talk about speaking Aboriginal languages as 'speaking lingo'; however this wording might be considered pejorative if used by a non-Aboriginal person.

Best practice is to find out what individuals prefer to be called, rather than making assumptions. Take guidance from the relevant groups – community people and elders – about when to use initial capital letters (see p. 30).



## *Planning for publication*

### *Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP) rights*

Two key precepts that should be embedded in the planning for publishing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander authors, or work that derives from their histories and cultures, are:

- ensuring Indigenous rights remain central
- recognising diversity.

In taking account of these principles, one of the first differences publishers might become aware of is the way Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP) rights aren't well covered by Australia's copyright law.

Indigenous IP expert Terri Janke has written widely on this subject and she explains it well in her article 'Who owns story?' (2010).

She points to several main ways in which Australian copyright law doesn't properly deal with Indigenous storytelling; for instance:

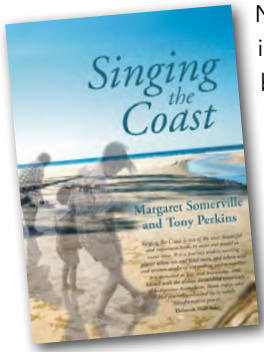
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories derive from an oral culture, meaning they weren't written down but were shared in a spoken form. In contrast, Australian copyright law covers ideas in the written form.
- The period of copyright in Australian law is the life of the author plus 70 years, whereas traditional stories have existed for many, many years.
- Copyright law doesn't protect 'sacred' stories which might not be able to be shared with uninitiated people, or even people of different genders or ages.
- Copyright focuses on individuals' rights rather than communal rights such as those that apply to traditional stories, the rights in which are held jointly and for future generations.

Including ICIP rights in your author-publisher contract, and seeking the appropriate clearances prior to publication, are better ways to give life to ICIP rights. Territory Natural Resources Management also has an excellent fact sheet on ICIP rights (TNRM n.d.).

Another factor in giving pre-eminence to Indigenous rights is to properly appreciate diversity and recognise that no single individual or group necessarily speaks for another. Linguists believe there were approximately 250 Aboriginal languages and many more dialects spoken at first European contact in the late 18th century (Walsh & Yallop 1993, p. 1). Of these, about 120 languages are still spoken (Marmion, Obata & Troy 2014), though Aboriginal English is what's most commonly spoken throughout Australia (see pp. 28-29).



Appreciating diversity is also about avoiding stereotypes based on gender, age, religious beliefs, family groupings or community interests. It may require a little extra work – and time – on the part of a publisher to find the right person to speak to in a community, so advance planning is vital.



Note how Margaret Somerville acknowledges the role of Dee Murphy in helping to clear the cultural knowledge with the community for the book *Singing the coast* (Somerville & Perkins 2010):

A very special thanks to Dee Murphy who has unfailingly sustained the challenging role of broker between the Aboriginal community at Corindi Beach and the research project in all of its stages. She has undertaken a cultural edit of the book, working with Gumbaynggirr oral storytellers to ensure that their language, stories and cultural meanings are appropriately represented. (Somerville & Perkins 2010, p. viii)

In this case, the complexity of the research and communication between all the parties had been articulated up front and all those who had helped facilitate the publication were acknowledged in the book.

### Cultural clearances

ASP follows a policy of clearing material for publication, even if the original research received ethical clearance from a university (see p. 20). It's important that the people whose lives are being discussed, or whose stories are being told, are clear about the kinds of publications that will evolve or that they are consulted about publications that weren't discussed as part of the original research project.

ASP has been in situations where the author has passed away prior to publication or within a year of publication and launch. In those circumstances, because ASP had been very clear about its publication processes, the families were able to determine what, if any, strictures might be put in place about using the person's name without it impacting on the way the book was sold. (This was not something the publishing contract itself captured.) Only once when the author passed away did the family make a request, which was that the author's name not be spoken in the hearing of the family; something that didn't impact on our capacity to promote and sell the book.

For ASP, there are two concerns for all publications: defamation and cultural hurt. While the former exercises the minds of all publishers, the latter is more complex than obtaining a legal reading. For ASP, 'cultural hurt' means injuring an individual or community through inappropriate representation of them and/or their culture. Often this occurs out of ignorance when people fail to take into account cultural differences and make assumptions based solely on their own experiences. Some examples are:

### PRACTICAL TIP

Depending on the way your publication is being brought together, you might have someone (or some people) act as 'facilitators' on your behalf. This might avoid your having to personally make an interstate trip, perhaps to a remote community, to sit down with the relevant elders to negotiate a publishing contract or clear copy for publication. Unless the boundaries of the relationship are very clearly laid out in advance, don't expect someone acting as a facilitator to clear the cultural issues themselves; normally they would be acting only as an intermediary. As will become clear from the case studies that follow, sometimes ASP has published books where one or more of the authors have acted as the publisher's facilitator with the family or community. In those cases ASP had to be sure of the facilitator's bona fides and that they would properly represent the publisher's viewpoint. On other occasions, ASP has undertaken cultural clearances itself.

**PRACTICAL TIP**

Publishers need to ensure that the person or people clearing their content is or are appropriate for the task; for example, don't ask men to speak for what is women's business or women's knowledge, or vice versa. Remember, too, that there are protocols in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies about respectful dealings with older generations by younger generations: something that might be relevant if a younger family member helps a publisher with an elder's story, or even when an older person's story is edited by a younger freelance (or staff) copyeditor. In ASP's experience, if we ask authors to clear content with their community, they know who they have to speak to; often it's an elder either in their family or community, or sometimes a representative body like a land council (although these are built around community elders).

- the inclusion of secret/sacred materials
- the inclusion of materials without appropriate approvals being sought
- the representation of historical events based solely on non-Indigenous materials
- the discounting or devaluing of oral history traditions by the misuse of so-called 'facts' found in archival research
- writing as though there is a single Aboriginal culture.

The deep and ongoing impact of cultural hurt on individuals and communities cannot be understated. With autobiographies, ASP encourages authors to check the content with family members. Whether they need to check the whole manuscript or just sections of it will depend on the work itself, the people cited and the cultural knowledge involved.

In thinking about cultural hurt, the author has to walk a line between conferring with family about the way they might be represented in the book, or even the way that key events in lives might be told, and not allowing family members or others to unnecessarily censor their stories. The mixed feelings that can arise in families (in this case, non-Indigenous) are well-illuminated by Hannie Rayson's play, and the subsequent film, *Hotel Sorrento*.

One effect of the Stolen Generations is that many people don't know who their family members are. Doreen Kartinyeri, who worked on many family genealogies, was aware of the value of her work but also the potential pain of exposing what might be family secrets – or spoiling relationships, as happened to her:

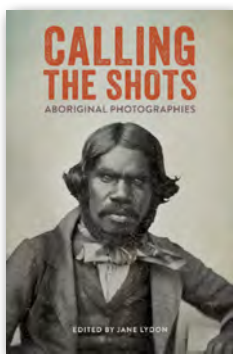
When I was sixteen, Jack Sumner became my first boyfriend. I adored him and he adored me. Then Dad told me that we were related (our mothers were first cousins) and forbade me to see Jack. I was heartbroken, but my interest in kinship and genealogies blossomed after that. I was intrigued with who could see who, and hungry to find out as much about family trees as I could. I didn't write anything down; I just kept it all in my head. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 2008, p. 4)

One of the values of Doreen's work on genealogies was later recognised in her capacity to help with native title work. Here Doreen describes how people would approach her for help, although some were unhappy about family secrets being exposed:

For all the criticism I might have got, the good side of my work made up for it many times over. So many people were so excited by what I could tell them, it was a joy. I never threw out TAB tickets [betting slips] because I would often meet people in the TAB and we'd get talking about their genealogies and they might fill in a couple of little gaps for me. So I'd write it down on the TAB ticket and take it back with me.

I did a lot of work in the TAB. I also missed many buses. I would be standing at the bus-stop and someone would stop to talk to me about their family line and two hours later we'd still be there talking! (Kartinyeri & Anderson 2008, p. 138)

Some non-Indigenous publishers and editors are uncertain about the inclusion of images of Aboriginal people within a book. They're concerned specifically about whether images can remain in circulation after the person in the image has passed away. That's one of the subjects that should be raised with Aboriginal authors or communities in advance of publication. ASP hasn't encountered examples where people refuse to use an image based on that possibility, but if the discussion is held early people can think about how they'd feel as they're choosing what images they'd like reproduced. Generally, nowadays, people understand the value of having images available for future generations, but the choice about publication should be theirs. The Jane Lydon-edited collection *Calling the shots* (Lydon 2014) is an especially useful book to read on this subject.



Some families put in place proscriptions about naming a person who has passed away. The way that needs to be acted upon, and the length of time it is in force, is decided by the family (see p. 15).

To ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the chance to decide whether to read a book that contains the names and/or images of people who have passed away, ASP includes the following note in the preliminary pages: 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this publication contains names and images of people who have passed away.'

At least once, ASP has been reminded that it is important to seriously consider the content of images, not just where the image was obtained. Following the publication of a book by a renowned academic, an anthropologist pointed out that the content of one image shouldn't have been published. The common expression for this kind of issue is taking care around stories/images that are secret-sacred. In this case ASP removed the book from sale temporarily and replaced the image. The image wasn't entirely germane to the book but had been provided by the author, who was from another academic discipline. ASP acted swiftly, rectified the problem and subsequently changed its publishing procedures. If text and images go through the appropriate checks for direct relevance to the subject and are checked with the relevant community there ought to be no problems, but care is required.

#### PRACTICAL TIP

One way to assure yourself early on that what you're envisaging is culturally appropriate is to use Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander reviewers for the manuscripts that have been submitted. Of course, you couldn't assume that, say, a Noongar person from WA would be able to talk about the appropriateness of a work centring on Murri people in south-east Queensland or northern New South Wales, but they could certainly point out some general issues and let you know where they think you might need to seek further information.

If you intend publishing more than one book, you could even formalise that kind of support by creating an advisory body for your publishing decisions. If the people on that body came from different communities it would add depth to your own knowledge base. It could be a formal structure or ad hoc advisers, depending on your needs. ASP has a Publishing Advisory Committee.

**PRACTICAL TIP**

Another support for your publication, but further along the production chain, would be to use an Aboriginal copyeditor. Currently no comprehensive list of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander editors exists; however, you could contact one of the three Indigenous publishing houses in the country (of which ASP is one), or your state's editing or writing organisations, for help. The black&write! editing internships have been run since 2010, and are specifically designed to train Indigenous Australian editors. The Black Book website's directory of First Nations Australians and organisations can be searched for editors (note that the list is updated only when individuals change their details). Though freelance Aboriginal copyeditors are few in number, they can be invaluable. Again the same issues arise if they are from a different 'mob' than the people being written about, but they could certainly give good general advice to people with little knowledge. And they might be able to introduce you to other Aboriginal people or organisations who could help put you in touch with the people you need.

Making the right connections yourself, even if it means travelling interstate, can be the most valuable time you take – and money you spend – even though that can seem counterintuitive to commercial publishers, whose costing sheets may not have a budget line to cover such outlays. **Read more in Case study 1: Travelling interstate to check content with community elders.**

*Who to seek information from*

If research about a particular community or family has been undertaken ethically then discussions about what kind of publication might ensue will already have been held. This should make more detailed discussions about the book much easier, as well as decisions about format (what the book might look like; whether to print and/or publish an ebook), copyright ownership and illustrations. In those cases it will be easy enough to know who to talk through any issues with.

If in doubt, though, you might need to approach the local land council for advice about who to speak to. Bodies dealing with native title may also be a good source of information. Where a native title claim has been lodged, this will be the native title representative body or native title service provider (also known as NTRBs and NTSPs). Where native title has been granted, the local prescribed body corporate (PBC) may have that information.

**Research that has been conducted ethically also makes it much easier to secure clearance to publish from the appropriate cultural custodians. Read more in Case study 3: Working with an author to clear content with cultural custodians.**

*Scheduling*

Begin your planning early with an individual or their community by changing your usual scheduling parameters. It's preferable to build in sufficient time for securing clearances throughout the creation of the publication because it's quite difficult to retrofit cultural clearances to the normal trade or academic publishing model, especially schedules and budgets.

It's also useful to remember that the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander peoples whose stories are being told might have more pressing priorities (for example, looking after family or country). They may not place the same value on the actual publication as you, the publisher, do, which may cause problems with securing clearances or



approvals. You're more likely to create a schedule that works for all parties, with the least stress, if you begin discussions early and are prepared to adjust things along the way if necessary; for example, you may need to allow a few weeks for checking content. As with ASP's publication of *Aboriginal Darwin* (see Case Study 1 on p. 46), it might be preferable to make a trip to the relevant community and check it yourself, or, as with *Very big journey* (see Case Study 5 on p. 48 and below), have someone trusted by the author, and on the ground, read the content aloud.

**Depending on the challenges you face, you may choose to seek help from others who are well connected and readily available. Maintaining genuine and strong relationships is vital. Read more in Case study 4: Using an intermediary to help with logistical challenges.**

### Checking material

As described previously, you might send proofs for checking and/or meet with elders face-to-face, but for some manuscripts, particularly biographies or autobiographies where there's a level of co-writing, another approach may be to have the manuscript read aloud to the author. This could be the best choice if your author is elderly or isn't used to undertaking sustained reading. If you follow this process, try to find a reader whom the author is completely comfortable with. And allow time for that reading to be done in batches and for notes to be taken, or taped, about the kinds of changes the author wants.

**Friends and family can be encouraged to help you check material with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander authors, especially if it means their stories are being published in a way that's positive for them. In general, the right time to do this check would be after copyediting. If, however, you felt the author or their family might not be happy with all of the content, sending them or talking them through an early draft of the manuscript might be more appropriate. Read more in Case study 5: Finding suitable ways to allow authors to check material.**

In the case of his autobiography, *Back on The Block: Bill Simon's story* (Simon, Montgomerie & Tuscano 2009), ASP asked Bill Simon to clear his manuscript with some central family members. In the case of *Kurlumarniny* (Hale 2012), however, the book centres on Nyangumarta language and culture, and the key community spokesperson was the author himself, Monty Hale (Minyjun). In that instance we didn't ask for a formal sign-off because he'd worked with his daughter on the language

### PRACTICAL TIP

ASP believes it's important to ensure that authors, families and communities understand what publishing will entail. This doesn't mean they would necessarily be signatories to the author-publisher contract or need to know all the details. At its most basic, though, it means they understand that a story they may have told to just one or two people will become a published document, available to a national or even international audience. Sometimes that's a concern; in other cases, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want to get their stories published, for their own mob as well as for non-Indigenous people. Situations differ. You may have a single author with a few family members with whom they need to clear content. Or it could be a manuscript containing cultural knowledge that comes from one part of a larger community group. In that case you would need to clear the content for publication with the right people.



part of the story and the matching English language script. Everything else about the publication was covered by the author-publisher agreement.

ASP still undertake a cultural check for material that's written by Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous researchers when it's based on research with a family or community. To undertake the research in the first place, the researcher will have had to secure an appropriate ethical clearance from their university (though we believe they should be following the AIATSIS *GERAIS* (see p. 8), but ASP believe that is not sufficient. ASP ensure the researcher/author secures a letter from the appropriate person or people in the family or community that shows they understand that the material will now form part of a book published to a wide audience.

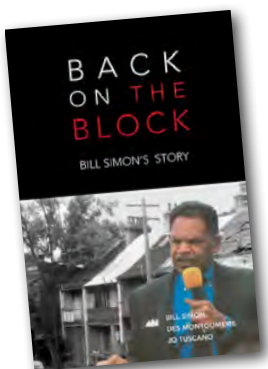
A community person might agree to work with a researcher because it means their life will be captured on tape or on paper, something they might not manage themselves. Or it might involve the researcher finding otherwise unknown photographs of family members unearthed during the research. It's worth non-Indigenous publishing people remembering that for some Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people having a camera in the home wasn't the norm. For some of the Stolen Generations and those who were kept on missions and reserves, the only existing photos of them (or their mob) might be those taken by the authorities. Those images, some with poor provenance, may reside only in archives.

**Whatever the circumstance existing at the point of research being undertaken, this can change over time. Research which is dated, even if it was undertaken ethically, should be checked prior to publishing. Peoples' lives change and the printed word can have powerful repercussions that may not have been anticipated, or intended. Read more in Case study 6: Clearing content when publication follows years after the initial research.**

ASP's style guide for authors now states:

AIATSIS and ASP take Indigenous intellectual property and cultural rights seriously. Intellectual property here means copyright. Cultural rights mean Indigenous peoples' rights to their heritage. Heritage includes objects, sites and knowledge. Knowledge includes languages, spiritual knowledge, myths, legends or other similar material, illustrations, music, song, poetry and the like.

The contract you signed with ASP included a set of warranties or promises. One of these is that you have the right to tell a story (and that someone else doesn't have the rights which prevent that) and that you have gained the express permission of any relevant owner or custodian of traditional material and that you supply that permission, prior to publication. This means you take responsibility for checking with relevant communities and individuals that you have permission to use the material from those who are entitled to give that permission. If your work derives from a PhD



thesis (or any postgraduate degree) for which you sought the appropriate cultural approvals, ASP will still require an up-to-date written document from the relevant people or communities, approving publication in book form. (Aboriginal Studies Press 2013, p. 12)

Note here that our definition of Indigenous knowledge includes ‘myths’ and ‘legends’. This is because they are, even today, words used in court cases; however, to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people they are not acceptable terms for describing Indigenous belief systems (see p. 41).

## Authorship

### *Why Indigenous authors may be mistrustful of publishers*

Over time many Indigenous Australians have worked in good faith with researchers and writers who were keen to know more about their communities and lives; some linguists even created dictionaries of Aboriginal languages which were beneficial to the community but may have been even more beneficial to others. Some of those researchers have gone on to publish the material in their own name, because they wrote the text and so asserted copyright over the material. Sometimes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were called ‘informants’, an expression that doesn’t capture anything like the full weight of the intellectual property that belongs to them. Many times the relevant people were not provided with sufficient information in advance (or at all) to provide prior and informed consent to the use of their knowledge.

One of the first acts of plagiarism or appropriation was the publication of David Unaipon’s work by anthropologist William Ramsey Smith, who purchased the work from Unaipon, changed it slightly and published it in his own name. Many see David Unaipon as the first published Aboriginal writer – though some would give that title to Bennelong – but the Ngarrindjeri preacher, inventor, lecturer and writer was not acknowledged as the author until his work was republished as *Legendary tales of the Australian Aborigines* (2001) seventy or so years after it first appeared. His original manuscript is in the Mitchell Library collection.

Publishers should be mindful of this history of unethical behaviour and think carefully about creating relationships that are fair to all parties.

### *Contractual issues*

It’s preferable for contracts to be discussed and signed early in the piece so that money is not expended on a book where the governing conditions haven’t been agreed. At that point it should be decided whether the author, or authors, might need support in reading and understanding the contract itself. Anyone unfamiliar

**PRACTICAL TIP**

Author–publisher contracts spell out the names of authors, copyright holders and the recipients of fees and/or royalties, but sometimes books that are created collaboratively can cause problems later if collaborators aren't named as co-authors; for example if there is prize money to be earned. If someone who has helped produce the book is listed as an 'editor' instead of being called a co-author, they won't be eligible for any prize money if the book does win awards because usually prize monies are paid only to authors. Because publishers can't change the rules of awards, it's worth thinking through all the possibilities in advance.

with contracts should have lawyers explain the detail of them to ensure they're in a position to sign with prior and informed consent. Such documents can be difficult for most readers, even if they're written in plain English, but are more challenging still for people who aren't familiar with legal language and the expressions commonly used in agreements.

For mainstream publishers, determining who the contracting parties are is generally straightforward. When publishing Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander authors, or material about those people, it might be less clear. Australia's *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) acknowledges authorship only in a particular fashion, whereas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people it might be different, and not to acknowledge that diversity and breadth of ownership could be offensive.

Some of Australia's criteria for funding and awards are shaped by the notion of single authorship, or up to only three co-authors. This means that some books written by Indigenous people, or about Indigenous communities (say where there might be a handful of authors whose story is being told), are excluded from possible funding or from being entered into awards.

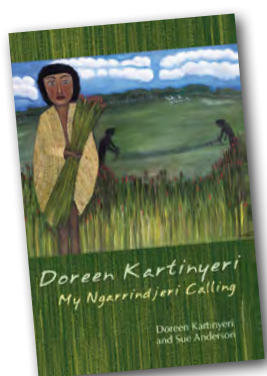
The rules may have been established to exclude collected works (a book with an editor and a number of contributors), but that's different from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander multi-authorship.

*Rendering the story on the page*

Some ASP titles have been jointly authored, including some autobiographies where an Aboriginal person has chosen to work with a non-Aboriginal oral historian. This reflects the many demands on the subject's time and the special skills required to write an autobiography.

Three examples follow. As will be evident from the quotations, these autobiographies were written over a lengthy period, involved strongly personal collegial friendships and, above all, trust on both sides. Ngarrindjeri woman Doreen Kartinyeri was one author, and her collaborator, Sue Anderson, is speaking here:

When Doreen and I began this project in the second half of 2001, we wrote and signed a contract of mutual respect and understanding that we hoped would take this journey forward comfortably for both of us. I needed to 'get it right' for this much maligned and misrepresented woman. I could not have begun to imagine how long and difficult a journey it would become. We agreed that the underlying theme would be social justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We agreed that it would be written for her people in particular and that it had to be as close a representation as possible of her own voice. No more whitefellas



interpreting, changing or twisting her words. This is, of course, easier said than done, even with the best of intentions.

I have heard, recorded and transcribed Doreen's words, mixed them around and let them sit there. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 2008, p. 206)

It's also clear from Sue Anderson's words in her Acknowledgments that she was introduced and recommended to Doreen Kartinyeri by a family member and developed a strong relationship with Doreen's family. This was central to the success of the project:

There are many people who have helped with the compilation of this book. Sandra Saunders was by Doreen's side from the tabling of the envelopes, and then stood alongside both Doreen and me to help get her story right. Sandy also became a friend of mine, and I am grateful for her valuable commentary on early and later drafts of this book. Her input was invaluable and her friendship immeasurable.

Doreen's sister Doris recommended me to Doreen in the first instance, and remains a dear friend since I interviewed her for the Bringing Them Home Oral History Project in 2000. Doreen's family, particularly Lydia and Willie, put up with my many intrusions into their space, and Klynton read and commented on the draft manuscript and helped make some changes. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 2008, p. vi).

Sadly, Doreen Kartinyeri passed away before the book was published; too late to hear the 2010 acknowledgment from the state government that what she and the other women had been saying about the secret-sacred knowledge associated with Hindmarsh Island was true. Evidence that supported the women's claims had been found near the foundations of the Hindmarsh Island bridge.

In the second example, Bruce Shaw spells out his approach to working in the oral form with his co-author, Widi woman Joan Martin, having been encouraged by ASP to include the information (Martin & Shaw 2011). These comments also reveal some of the challenges in publishing the lives of Aboriginal people:

Our conversations began on 12 April 2006. By January 2008 there were twenty-seven 60-minute audiocassette tapes representing about the same number of hours. The work stalled during 2008 due to deaths in Joan's family, her attendance at court hearings to support grandchildren and other relatives in legal proceedings, her successful application for a Homeswest house in Geraldton and subsequent move to that town, and increasing ill-health. Nevertheless, by the time we got back together in August 2008 all but the last two chapters had been proofread.

Twenty-seven hours of recorded time may sound a lot, but the discussions were at Joan's pace and the questioning open-ended, with a minimum of interruptions except to clarify an indistinct word or a misunderstood point. One of the most important research strategies established from 1973, and to which I adhere still, is to take back the manuscript drafts and proofread them line-by-line with the storytellers.



**PRACTICAL TIP**

To better understand the importance of photographs to individuals, families and communities, read Lawrence Bamblett's chapter 'Read who we are: representations of identity and appropriation of photographs into a Wiradjuri oral history tradition' in Jane Lydon's *Calling the shots* (2014, p. 76).



My East Kimberley projects (1970s to 1980s) involved reading back the stories to the tellers, crosschecking events, clearing up misunderstandings, and gaining new information. As Joan was a fluent reader, she did the proofreading herself. At different points in her narrative, Joan was at pains to correct the written record in the genealogies and in the identification of her people, the Widi, and their traditional country. She supplemented her narrative by drawing upon and critiquing written sources such as Norman Tindale's mapping and Lois Tilbrook's genealogies. (Martin & Shaw 2011, p. xii)

Bill Simon is a Biripi man and his story was published by ASP as *Back on The Block* (Simon, Montgomerie & Tuscano 2009). This manuscript began life as taped stories told by Bill to Des Montgomerie. It was only when they met up with writer Jo Tuscano that the script they'd created together was shaped into a publishable book.

As is clear from the Doreen Kartinyeri, Joan Martin and Bill Simon stories, the relationships between the authors took time to evolve. The authors either were introduced to each other by family or friends or met serendipitously and the relationship developed from there. At no point did the non-Indigenous writer foist themselves on the Aboriginal author.

With Joan Martin's book the two authors determined that the authorship should be listed as Joan Martin with the words 'as told to Bruce Shaw' listed below Joan's name, whereas Bill Simon wanted all three people listed as authors, and they jointly own the copyright. It was up to the individuals then to decide whether the proportion of royalties that flowed from sales of the book were to go to themselves, to their co-author/s, or to some other person or organisation.

**Collaborations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors, whether you are the co-author or editor or whether you contribute in some other way, offer opportunities to learn about a profoundly different and unique cultural perspective. **Read more** in the Case study 7: Mapping country as a place in the heart.**

### Remuneration

It's worth remembering that the ownership of copyright and the payment of royalties or fees don't have to be inseparable. There should be a discussion with authors about where they want their royalties or fees to be paid. Some of ASP's non-Indigenous authors retain copyright but direct all their royalties and/or fees to an Aboriginal organisation or an organisation that works to advantage Aboriginal people, like the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.



ASP have learnt to be adaptable in understanding that, in agreeing remuneration, what's of value to one author (or authors) may well not have the same value to another. We had to put our big-city thinking aside when negotiating a film deal for *Cleared out*. The book had won awards (and the film went on to win the Prime Minister's Award), so we'd already consulted with the copyright owners about those earnings, but their response when we talked to them about money from the film agreement still came as a surprise.

**Read more** in Case study 8: Thinking flexibly when working out what's valuable.

### *Returning and/or archiving material*

Another consideration for some kinds of publications, especially if they derive from communities or from taped conversations or they have photos or videos, is what happens to the materials that are created and used in the book. Again, if the research for the book was undertaken ethically, those discussions will have been had up-front. People may be happy that the materials are stored in an archive but will want some control over the conditions of access provided to others, or they may want the materials provided to them. Commonly, one of the key requests from the people being researched and written about is that copies of stories and photos are sent back to relatives. Unfortunately, there are still too many reports from people in communities about how they gave a researcher a lot of their time, shared their stories and knowledge, and got nothing back. Perhaps the researcher used that information in a PhD (or other) thesis which may have been published or may have been influential in their securing a teaching position. The common theme is that, despite the community person's original request for copies of stories or photos to be sent to them, nothing transpired.

As there has been discussion over time about the appropriateness (or not) of reproducing images of Aboriginal people. Jane Lydon's *Calling the shots* is a valuable reference for anyone wanting to understand the complexities. Wiradjuri artist Brook Andrew says this of it:

Energised by Lydon's book, we should come together and speak about our histories through photographs, no matter how far and wide we are from our families today, no matter how difficult; it reminds us that we can keep alive important histories – and make action for healing, inspiration and cultural worth.

This book allows us to unpack, re-piece and juxtapose divergent photographic stories about how and why photographs of Aboriginal people were made and kept.

Read on and see, feel and share the unravelling...there has been change in the air, and it just got crisper.

There are some valuable insights to be gained from listening to the book's contributors talk about how they came to the writing, especially Shauna Bostock-Smith. The interviews with the authors are available on the AIATSIS website ([aiatsis.gov.au/gallery/video/video-calling-shots](http://aiatsis.gov.au/gallery/video/video-calling-shots)).

Whatever the art form there will always be ancillary material left over from the research undertaken. It's important for people working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's stories to consider where the materials produced might be archived for safety if they are not returned to communities. Sometimes communities request both: that material be safely archived by an institution but also that copies be sent back to the community. Talking to individuals or communities about where that related material might reside, and who might have access to it, is essential. **Read more in Case study 9: Helping communities to make more informed decisions about archives.**

## Editing

Lawrence Bamblett is a Wiradjuri researcher and community worker. His thesis was highly commended in the 2011 Stanner Award and ASP chose to publish it.

Here Lawrence talks about the importance to him of having others evaluate his work:

It was important because it had started as a PhD and had been read in the community, by over 100 people in the writing stage, and now it was read by independent assessors who read it and liked it. Three more people read it and liked it. They didn't have to say they liked it; they could have ignored it. But it showed it had a bit more value than just a community history.



Lawrence engaged willingly and fully with ASP in discussions about restructuring his PhD thesis to book form. Normally a literature review chapter or methodology is deleted, highly abbreviated or interpolated into other parts of the text when undertaking such a conversion. His methodology was very detailed and provided a wonderful template for other researchers; however, instead of taking up ASP's suggestion of abbreviating it and including it as an appendix, Lawrence decided to work on the text and incorporate it into one of the early chapters. It was a pleasant surprise for ASP to receive such a thoughtful response to their suggestion, even though it didn't accord with their idea, and thankfully Lawrence was able to do exactly as he'd promised. As he noted to ASP, anyone wanting to read the detail of the methodology could read his thesis on the university repository.

Lawrence, along with other Indigenous PhD candidates, has spoken about the kinds of pressure to write in a particular way for their PhD. That happens to non-Indigenous authors, too, but is exacerbated in a book such as *Our stories are our survival* (Bamblett 2013), which centres on Aboriginal storytelling. In that instance, the form and choice of language are vital components of the work, and non-Indigenous people need to be respectful and not presume there's only one way of writing – as they would be when editing the work of a migrant writer.

‘So I had to make choices about what stayed in. People repeat a lot and that doesn't go well in the written format and I think that's a really important part of telling stories; they repeat the part that's important.’

In rewriting the PhD for a more general audience, one of the first changes was to cut the extent:

We spend a lot of time together physically. When I was growing up there wasn't a lot of television but everyone had a lounge suite and you'd have a lounge in the front yard or there was somewhere we could sit in the front yard and everyone would always be there together. You've got all that needing to be condensed into 80,000 words. So the big thing was repetition. You had to cut out repetition because people repeat stories a lot. Stories can continue over weeks, days...So that was the big thing: to condense it. But people who come in and write about us, they don't see that; they don't have that background that I have. I watch elders talking to a reporter or people who are doing their PhD. They go back and start writing but that elder is still speaking and no one listens to that. So I had to make choices about what stayed in. People repeat a lot and that doesn't go well in the written format and I think that's a really important part of telling stories; they repeat the part that's important.

Lawrence's experience of being assessed and edited was generally a positive one:

As I said, it had been read over a hundred times and writing wasn't really my strong suit. I dropped out of high school and I didn't really have those skills but I worked a lot on it when I was doing my degree and afterwards. To me it was interesting to learn how to write. In the end I wanted something that was good so I don't mind that criticism. You want it to be good. You want people to pick it up. But the people I've worked with all along have been good. I've been lucky and I think that helps – constructive criticism and not just 'yeah, yeah, this is good'. That always makes me suspicious.

As with other kinds of writing, there is no one right or wrong way to structure a work, to embody the writer's storytelling style or include their choice of language. As English readers have adapted to the colourful and vibrant English writing styles from the Indian and Asian diasporas (to name just two), so they should have confidence that

**PRACTICAL TIP**

Editors often insist that maintaining consistency of style is the most important part of their job. ASP would recommend that editors hang on to everything they've learnt about applying styles to a work (spelling, capitalisation, use of italics etc.) but be prepared to be much more flexible in following the various manuals of style. Editors need to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors as equals and listen to their rationale for why they've written in a particular style. It could relate to structure – for instance, circling back or repetition in oral histories – capitalisation, or what content has been included and what has been excluded. The examples cited in these guidelines show how ASP has used the principle of consistency of style but has sometimes made choices that differ from an official style manual. In these cases the editor's style sheet is an invaluable tool for the others who follow in the production chain, especially designers and proofreaders, to ensure they don't undo what's been discussed and agreed. It's especially helpful if the editors articulate the rationale for their decision so others can make reasoned choices.

readers will understand and enjoy Aboriginal English. Writers like Marie Munkara are experts at drawing readers into a sometimes unruly world they might not have experienced previously, though it might be situated just down the road from home.

Non-Indigenous editors working with Indigenous authors or material about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people might find themselves, skilled professionals, suddenly having to accept that they have much to learn when it comes to culture and writing choices. As with other projects in a new area, it's advisable to do some preliminary reading of related material, not just the manuscript supplied for editing. There are now books by Aboriginal writers in many genres.

It's preferable to have face-to-face meetings, rather than email, or at least to begin the relationship that way. Obviously email remains a good tool for ensuring a written record of what's discussed and agreed. Alternatively, the phone is a more personable medium. Editors might also want to consider how well suited their own communication style will be for the task at hand.

## Language

### *Aboriginal English*

Many people believe that the majority of Aboriginal people in Australia live in the Top End. It's not true; the majority live in New South Wales, although the state or territory with the highest proportion per total population is the Northern Territory. Many Aboriginal Australians speak Aboriginal English as their first language; however, in more remote areas like the Top End or the Kimberley (where Aboriginal languages and Kriol might be widely spoken) English may be a second, third or fourth language:

Aboriginal English is now used in some published writing, and some state education departments now accept that Aboriginal English is the first language for some students, which they need to consider when teaching literacy for those students. (Eades in Pascoe & AIATSIS 2012, p. 26)

Aboriginal English is just one way in which different aspects of Aboriginal identity are expressed (see the quote from Margaret Somerville on p. 35). It has various forms and they are all dialects of English. The differences are expressed in accent, grammar, words, meaning and language use. There is no one dialect of Aboriginal English; it can range from a similarity to Standard Australian English to being strongly influenced by Kriol. ASP author Diana Eades is one linguist who has written about the way Aboriginal English is spoken:

In some parts of Australia, Aboriginal English has developed as an Aboriginalisation of English, while in other areas it has developed from earlier forms of Aboriginal

Pidgin or Kriol. To facilitate communication between the colonisers and settlers (who were very slow to learn Aboriginal languages), Aboriginal people brought some of their ways of speaking traditional languages into the speaking of English. (Eades in Pascoe & AIATSIS 2012, p. 26)

### *Kriol/creoles*

Kriol is a language that has evolved across the top of Australia. It has its detractors because if children are taught and speak Kriol it might be at the expense of learning their own language, but it has served to unify many Aboriginal people by allowing them to speak together. It has also allowed English-speakers to communicate with Aboriginal people.

There are two major creoles: one spoken in Queensland, the Northern Territory and the Western Australian cattle-station belt (Kriol); and one spoken in the Torres Strait and Cape York (Torres Strait Creole). (Pascoe & AIATSIS 2012, p. 26)

Torres Strait Creole (also commonly known as Yumplatok or Brokan) has developed over time. Its original is Pacific Island 'pidgin'.

As with Kriol it served as a lingua franca, and became the language spoken between Eastern and Western Islanders, and Torres Strait Islanders and other Pacific islanders and non-Indigenous people. On some islands it is now the vernacular.

### *Word choices and spellings*

Words like 'myth', 'folklore' and 'legend' should be avoided. 'Dreaming stories' or 'Creation stories' (some people like to capitalise 'stories' in this instance) better impart the significance of the information. As well as providing Creation stories, the Dreaming provides Aboriginal people with the laws to live by, whereas words like 'myths' or 'lore' imply that the information is insignificant or untrue. Gagadju Elder Big Bill Neidjie expressed it thus:

Our story is in the land...it is written in those sacred places. That's the law. Dreaming place...you can't change it, no matter who you are.

– Big Bill Neidjie, Gagadju Elder, Kakadu (Australian Museum n.d)

Another view comes from Christine Nicholls of Flinders University:

Dreaming Narratives act as vehicles for identifying both appropriate and inappropriate human behaviours. In practice, that means illicit or forbidden activities, base deeds and other forms of destructive human conduct are identified, condemned and proscribed as existing outside of the boundaries of Indigenous law. (Nicholls 2014)

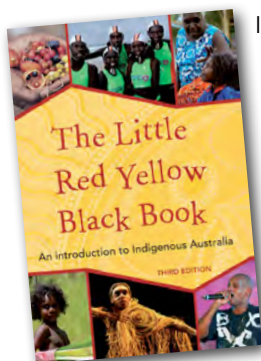
### **PRACTICAL TIP**

Sociolinguist Diana Eades explores international and Australian ideas about information exchange, and the kinds of assumptions non-Indigenous Australians might make, in her book *Aboriginal ways of using English* (2013) and especially in Chapter 2, 'You gotta know how to talk...'. It derives from research undertaken in south-east Queensland, but we believe there are valuable insights in it for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike. This is especially true about the ways people might ask questions and the kinds of responses that Aboriginal people might make, including what's called 'gratuitous concurrence'. For editors who haven't had much opportunity to spend time talking with Aboriginal people, this is a valuable tool; not just for understanding how Aboriginal people might respond to questions, but for its insights into the cultural assumptions a non-Indigenous editor might make.



**PRACTICAL TIP**

Be alert to, and enjoy, some of the borrowings from Aboriginal English into Standard Australian English. Most people know place names that are Aboriginal and some of the 'loan' words for Australian wildlife, but there are many others, such as 'yakka', for work; 'yabber', for talk; 'bombora', for an offshore reef break; and 'bogey', for bath (some readers will know Bronte Beach's 'bogey hole'). Some words in Aboriginal English might sound familiar but can trap the unwary: 'grannies' are grandchildren, not grandparents – tricky if you are working on a family history. The expressions 'to be jealous' (when someone is jealous of a person) or 'to be growled' (to have someone growl at or tell someone off) haven't yet made the transition, but they're very evocative.



It's worth making yourself familiar with some of the complexity and nuance of the expression 'the Dreaming', which is so vital to an understanding of Aboriginal culture and ways of being in the world. ASP's *The Little red yellow black book* and its companion website (<http://lryb.aiatsis.gov.au/>), are valuable sources of information.

You might choose to capitalise 'elder' when speaking about an individual, to appropriately acknowledge their standing and their knowledge within their community, but use 'elders' when speaking more generically. The same goes for 'traditional owner'. You need to balance usual editorial practice (and the principles upon which those decisions are taken) with respect for the cultural practices of others.

The era of native title provides sociopolitical groupings, too, where people are bound by their traditional laws and customs. This can be reflected in the use of the words 'nations' or 'peoples'. Cite 'nations' with a capital 'N' if that's the name of a group, especially one whose native title has been granted.

Some Aboriginal people talk about the 'invasion' of Australia (in fact, some people call Australia Day 'Invasion Day' rather than 'settlement' when describing the actions undertaken as part of the act of colonisation). Others, like the Yabun Festival in Sydney, celebrate it as 'Survival Day'.

More difficult choices occur around the inclusion of words from earlier periods; terms that are offensive nowadays. ASP usually chooses to leave the words as they appear but sometimes, depending on the context, places the word within single quotation marks to show it's not directly part of the author's narrative. In addition, ASP puts a note in the preliminary pages to indicate that the word is being used in its historical context, is not acceptable nowadays and is not terminology approved by ASP or AIATSIS.

The word 'half-caste' is one such word, which derives from the Protection Act period when Aboriginal people were segregated under government legislation and policy. Such language, and the actions that accompanied it, had hugely detrimental effects on people's lives. Families could be split up according to parentage or just by the colour of their skin, on the assumption that fairer skinned people could be separated out, educated for manual or domestic labour and become an assimilated, compliant workforce for mainstream Australia.

Terms like 'Abo', 'nigger' or 'boong' have always been, and remain, highly derogatory. As with other peoples who have suffered discrimination, some Aboriginal people might want to take back the power of certain words by using them themselves in a

different context. Although some Top End people might self-identify (though perhaps as a form of self-parody) as 'yellafella', the term should not be used by others. The terms 'blackfellas' and 'whitefellas' are used commonly by Aboriginal people to describe themselves and others; non-Aboriginal people should use them only when they're confident their audience won't be offended.

Over time, different orthographies have evolved for some languages. The safest thing is to check with the local land council, or with a language centre if there is one. Alternatively there are centres like the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL) or, on the other side of the country in the Pilbara, the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre. As well, the AIATSIS online database AUSTLANG (<http://austlang.aiatsis.gov.au/main.php>) provides valuable information about languages, including alternative and variant names and spellings, the history of the number of speakers, geographic distribution, and classifications from various sources.

### *Aboriginal language in book titles*

It's almost a received truth that book titles should be as easy to pronounce as possible. Generally ASP doesn't use Aboriginal language words in titles. We're aware of the difficulties we have within the team working with a book title that we have difficulty pronouncing and imagine that's even more the case with people walking into a bookshop and having to ask for a book. Of course, online shopping takes the difficulty out of that.

ASP has a couple of books with language words in the title and will continue to seek ways to succeed in publishing while being respectful and encouraging non-Indigenous Australians to try to pronounce, or get used to pronouncing, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander words.

### *Choosing the 'right' form of English*

In ASP's backlist are autobiographies of people who spoke Aboriginal English but asked their co-authors to cast their words in Standard Australian English. They were fearful that otherwise a non-Indigenous audience would infer that they were ignorant; that speaking Aboriginal English just meant speaking English badly. Under the politics of the time, some may have been provided only a few years of schooling in which they might have had the chance to learn Standard Australian English, and they were probably right in their assessments of mainstream views of Aboriginal English at the time.

In these cases it was the Aboriginal author's choice; however, there is plenty of evidence that non-Aboriginal Australians have, over time, simply overridden the authenticity – and value – of Aboriginal forms of written and spoken expression. This includes oral historians and editors.

At ASP we don't consider there is any one 'right' form of English. ASP has published bilingually; in Aboriginal English or a mixture of Aboriginal English and standard Australian English in the case of books written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and in Standard Australian English alone. It's no more difficult to understand someone writing in Aboriginal English than it is to understand an African-American, a Scot or an Indian; in fact this difference is what provides us all with such vibrant contributions to the rich stew of written and spoken English. Lauded writers Kim Scott, Alexis Wright and Melissa Lucashenko, to name but a few, have proved (as if it needed to be) that different forms of storytelling and English are not only understood by a large audience but widely enjoyed.

### *Aboriginal language on the page*

Editors and publishers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content will have to choose how to deal with language words on the page. ASP's publishing staff and freelance editors haven't always chosen the same system; it has depended on the manuscript. Mostly the decision was shaped by the way the author presented the material, and the thinking implicit in that, but sometimes the choices were more complex.

ASP hasn't published many bilingual books, but *Kurlumarniny* (Hale 2012), which went on to win the WA Premier's Literary Award for WA history, is one. ASP chose to present the language first, to honour the knowledge and language skills of Monty Hale (Minyjun) in telling his story and to emphasise the point that he spoke both languages but chose to present his culture in his own language. Another decision was to typeset it so that the language and the English were positioned on facing pages line-for-line, as far as possible, to aid intelligibility for those who could read the language, or some of the words, and for the interest of non-language speakers.

With the second edition of the book *Melbourne Dreaming*, author Meyer Eidelson chose (and ASP agreed) to use the spelling variants used by the people who were being spoken about. Non-Indigenous editors should be briefed to remember that they're the newcomers culturally and to ask questions if they're not sure – just as they would when editing anyone from another culture – rather than automatically changing something to what they think it ought to be.

**Finding a way to express an author's words on the page when they're translated from another language is not always straightforward; however, with *Cleared out* we believe we found a good solution. **Read more in Case study 10: Respecting an author's literacy when translating from languages.****

With some books ASP has decided to include some language words throughout, having explained them once, but to give less commonly used language words parenthetical translations on each appearance. ASP doesn't believe there is an absolutely right or wrong approach to this but that the decision should be made



carefully and with proper respect for the author, even if it means pushing readers to deal with bits of a language they don't understand. There are many comparable examples in famous literature where words from French, Spanish, German, et cetera are interpolated into English without apparent loss of comprehension from readers who don't speak or read those languages.

Doreen Kartinyeri was a very strong proponent of her Ngarrindjeri culture, and Sue Anderson and she decided on the following formula, perfectly understandable to non-Ngarrindjeri readers but also offering them the chance to learn something about Ngarrindjeri culture:

Ngarrindjeri words are often used alongside English ones, and these have been retained in the text. Where a word only occurs once or twice, an English translation has been added in square brackets. Some Ngarrindjeri words, however, are used throughout.

Family relationships are often referred to in Ngarrindjeri terms. *Mainu* is grandfather, *Mutha* is grandmother, and *Pike* is great-uncle. The word *Kabbarli*, which refers to an older female relative, came from a language of the west coast of South Australia, and is a specific kin term.

The English words Aunt and Uncle are used both to refer to relatives and as respectful titles for older community members. Grannies are grandchildren, not grandparents.

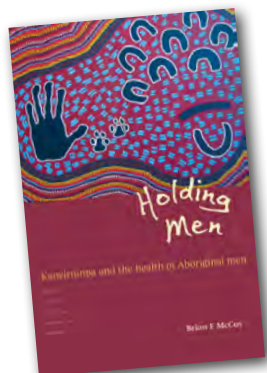
*Mi:mini* is the word for woman. *Puthari* is the Ngarrindjeri word for a traditional midwife. *Kunamara* is the generic term for a deceased person, sometimes followed by their surname; it is traditionally forbidden to mention the name or show the picture of a deceased person. *Nunga* is the generic word for Aboriginal people from southern South Australia, while *Anangu* refers to Aboriginal people from northern South Australia. *Boandik* is an Aboriginal group from the south-east of South Australia.

*Gunya* is the word for white people. *Krinkri*, which means ghost, also refers to the Ngarrindjeri people's first sighting of white men, who looked to them like ghosts because of the colour of their skin.

Aboriginal place names are frequently used. Kurangk is the Coorong. Kumarangk is Hindmarsh Island. Raukkan is Point McLeay Aboriginal Mission, established in 1959 alongside Lake Alexandrina. Point Pearce is an Aboriginal mission on Yorke Peninsula, established 1867. Three Miles is a name given to an Aboriginal fringe camp three miles out of town. Both Tailem Bend and Murray Bridge had Three Miles camps.

A *wurley* is a windbreak or tent-like structure for living in. The word comes from *wodli*, in the Kurna language of the people of the Adelaide plains, and is now widely used across Australia. *Waddy* is now an English term for a fighting/hunting club. The Ngarrindjeri word is *plonggi*. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 2008, pp. x-xi)





The word 'kanyirninpa' is the central motif of the ASP title by Brian McCoy, *Holding men* (2006). The word has a range of meanings but the one used in the book is about 'holding' a younger generation safe in 'growing them up'. Professor Ian Anderson describes it well in an endorsement for the book: 'Kanyirninpa is a concept that encapsulates both cultural authority and nurturing. It provides an insight into the ways in which Aboriginal men can be "held" and strengthened through their journey to adulthood.'

When the ASP Director first read the manuscript she noted that the word was italicised, as is usual for 'foreign' or language words. As it was a longish word she hadn't seen before she found it kept registering in her head as 'foreign' or 'other', which was a problem given the idea was so central to the book.

She raised the issue with the copyeditor who, in consultation with the author, decided to include a 'Note on orthography and word usage' about 'kanyirninpa' and other language words in the preliminary pages (pp. x-xi):

There are some terms that are used in this book that may be spelt or understood differently in other sources or places. They will be explained in greater detail in the following chapters. At this point, however, some initial explanation of the terms used throughout this work is necessary...I have sought advice from people within the region regarding the most appropriate spellings and will follow the orthography used for the Kukatja language. I refer to Wirrimanu, Malarn, Kururrungku and Yaka Yaka.

When I am using Kukatja words, or words from another Aboriginal language, for the first time in each chapter I will place a brief English translation in brackets (see glossary for further information)...

Due to the importance of the Kukatja word and concept *kanyirninpa* within this book, I will provide the appropriate English words when they are being used to translate this particular meaning of *kanyirninpa*, such as 'hold', 'held' and 'holding'.

There are some words I will use that can possess several meanings, depending on their context, such as the English words 'family', 'community' and 'law'.

Margaret Somerville, who worked closely with Tony Perkins and the Aboriginal community at Corindi Beach community (mid-north coast of New South Wales) to produce *Singing the coast* (Somerville & Perkins 2010), provides a thoughtful explanation of the collaboration about language, and honouring the spoken word (pp. ix-x):

This book is constructed from the space between oral stories and written text. The writing itself follows the process of creating knowledge from oral stories. It derives from research undertaken over a ten-year period where the stories of many Gumbaynggirr people were recorded. We hope to make evident the processes of



cultural translation by including these stories as they were transcribed from their oral form...

Over her time in recording conversations with Tony and other Garby Elders, Margaret developed techniques for recording stories and simultaneously clarifying meanings. While Tony can read and write, he has never wanted to become a writer or a reader of written words, so in seeking feedback on what she'd heard in conversations, Margaret read his words back to him and recorded his responses. Still, the English language had to be bent to hold traces of Gumbaynggirr meanings.

Reading these stories requires that readers enter the process of translation, and listen carefully to the traces of the voice that remain in the written text. It is slow learning that requires slow and careful reading.

The transcription and presentation of Tony's stories provided the template for the way the voices of others were generated as written text. Tony was keen that the written form of his voice should be as close as possible to the way he speaks so that his words as they appear on the page reflect the meanings of the stories and places that he wanted to convey. There are variations between the way that some words are spelt within a single story, for example 'fella/fellows', depending on the emphases in the conversation. Apostrophes are used to represent letters not sounded out at the beginning of words, like 'cause (because), 'em (them) and at the end of words, like *thinkin'* or *runnin'*. On occasions, words are elided, like *m'Grandmother*. There are similar differences across other speakers. In some quotations, the voices represent more than one individual, in the hope that the reader gains a sense of the multiple individual voices telling their stories, as well as the collective story of a people.

The spelling of local place names, colloquial language and Gumbaynggirr language words also hover in that imprecise world where words are not fixed in written form. Local place names change over the years as the politics and practices of naming change.

Words and language have power. Northern Gumbaynggirr language speakers who can still speak language, for example, developed their own spelling, which is different from the conventional orthography developed within the language work in southern Gumbaynggirr country. Where Gumbaynggirr language words are used, we have followed the 2008 edition of the *Gumbaynggirr Dictionary & Learner's Grammar*. The dictionary enables us to create a written text that is readable and accessible, but this also, in some senses, elides the complexities of language and place. We hope the shifting and complex nuances of place and identity are available to readers throughout the book.

Joan Martin worked with experienced oral historian Bruce Shaw for years to create what would become her published book. It was published posthumously, as per her clear instructions, meaning there was no author to go back to and check things with.

This proved challenging but not insurmountable for our Aboriginal copyeditor, who was two generations younger than Joan.

Shaw's comments on the decisions about how to retain the vitality of Joan's oral storytelling on the page follow. Note also the other decisions, like the one to include a glossary and chronology (Martin & Shaw, p. xiii) to better allow less-familiar readers to follow the story and to dip into more detailed information when they chose:

As with other storytellers, Joan repeats information for emphasis, and sometimes circles back to earlier points: 'When I get talking about things I get wrapped in them. Sounds really dramatic. I like pushing a point across' (p. 131). In presenting Joan's speech in type we have tried to maintain her desire for her story to be in 'good English' while allowing her conversational style to shine through.

We have used italics to represent Aboriginal language words (*bungarras*) and have used spellings like *cos* for 'because', *round* for 'around' and *till* for 'until' to reflect Joan's speech. We have also retained her spellings for people's names and place names.

Words within the text that are included in the Glossary are followed by an asterisk (\*) at their first appearance. The Glossary (pp. 158-65) provides information about language words that readers might find useful, while the Chronology (pp. 149-57) provides a concise summary about Joan's busy life and the historical and family context. Some chapters are longer than others, but they reflect Joan's desire to tell her story in her way. More information is provided in the Appendix (pp. 145-8) on the Homeswest incident which was an important event in Joan's life, and to people living in Western Australia, in particular.

Not all publishers of Indigenous authors or content will be able to use the services of an Aboriginal editor, but slowly their numbers are increasing. Some, like Sandra Phillips, have now moved on to academia; others work in Indigenous publishing organisations; others still might be employed in publishing-related industries.

**Having an Aboriginal editor work on a text, whether it's written by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or a non-Indigenous writer, can be influential for all parties and for the outcome of the editing process. The two-way learning we have had at ASP with our in-house editor Lisa Fuller has been invaluable. **Read more in Case study 11: Murri editor, Lisa Fuller, on copyediting.****

Yet another perspective exists when the author is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and they're edited, perhaps for the first time in book form, often by a non-Indigenous editor. When asked about his response to being edited, AIATSIS researcher and community worker Lawrence Bamblett noted that his community had read the manuscript more than a hundred times. He had struggled with writing in school but he

‘As with other storytellers, Joan repeats information for emphasis, and sometimes circles back to earlier points.’

worked on that as he did his degree. He wanted the story to be good, so the comment 'Yes it's good, but here's how it could be better' was preferable to just being told 'this is good' (see p. 27): 'The people that I've worked with all along have been good. I think that helps – constructive criticism.'

## *Marketing and publicity*

As ever, publishers can't control what happens to their books once they're published. It's well worth talking through these processes carefully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors. While they may not be as aware about what will happen in mainstream Australia in response to their work, they will have clear ideas about what will happen within their own communities.

It's also worth remembering that an Aboriginal author writing about his or her community will have responsibilities to that community, and an ongoing relationship, that the publisher won't. As ASP author and AIATSIS researcher Lawrence Bamblett says: 'I represent both the community and ASP, and also AIATSIS. To them I represent Aboriginal Studies Press. I often have to explain the process of distribution, so I have to find out about that so I can explain it, and to justify why things are done in a certain way...'

In listening to Lawrence talk, ASP staff were reminded that his Erambie community members might bring any questions and concerns direct to him, the author, rather than to ASP, the publisher. It was clear that on occasions Lawrence had to represent ASP's interests and processes to his community.

**Publishers have it within their reach to create wonderful cultural events, ones in which there's a real exchange of knowledge and experience and lots of enjoyment for all. And it can happen in what people think of as 'just' a literary space. All that's needed is some flexible thinking. Read more in Case study 12: The value of bringing the mob to the big city.**

When involving people in launches, try to ensure that all the people who want to speak get the chance to do so. Let the family or community make that decision. Let them determine, too, whether an interpreter is required, but be confident that an audience will understand an Aboriginal person speaking Aboriginal English. And accept that the decision about who will speak might not be known till the event is about to start. Every person's response will be different, but some Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people might be reticent about speaking at an event where most people attending are non-Indigenous people and it's a very 'white' space, like a museum or art gallery. If possible, ensure that your speakers get the chance to visit in advance of the launch.

### PRACTICAL TIP

When undertaking a promotional campaign, see if a back-up person can be deputised in case the author isn't available to speak (though in practice such a substitution is not always possible). An ASP author was once called away by a death in community on the morning he was to take part in a promotion. It wasn't possible to provide a substitute at short notice because everyone in the community was involved in the sorry business, and the non-Indigenous co-author handled the promotional activity alone. Everyone involved understood the issues, and it was fine, but publishers need to be as flexible and as culturally competent as possible in such circumstances.

### PRACTICAL TIP

If using non-Indigenous freelance staff, copyeditors or publicists, ensure they're well briefed about the cultural issues that might arise. Not just for their own behaviour but so that, for example, publicists can brief the media appropriately. One example might be what they should call an author who's called Aunty or Uncle by their own community, or other Aboriginal people.

And always ensure there's sufficient seating in a spot with good sightlines, especially for elderly and/or even frail people. Allow the family or community to decide who sits in the front rows.

An alternative is to work with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community centre. ASP chose to launch Seaman Dan's autobiography, *Steady steady* (2013), at the reopening of Gab Titui, the Torres Strait Regional Authority's cultural centre. This was a wonderful opportunity to share in the community's festivities, to ensure a large audience of people keen to read the book, and, perhaps mostly importantly, to allow the author to be honoured by his own community.

There was also a launch in Cairns, where a large number of Torres Strait Islander people live, and Seaman Dan took part in AIATSIS's NAIDOC week activities where, in addition to performing, he was introduced to Canberra's Torres Strait Islander community and taken home for some home cooking.

As well, landmark outcomes can be achieved if publishers think laterally about the kinds of exchanges that might be valuable and enjoyable for both the author and, perhaps, their community as well as the audience for a book launch. **Read more** in Case study 13: **Enlarging on what a launch event can be.**



Seaman Dan talking with a fan at the Cairns launch of *Steady Steady*. Photo © Karl Neuenfeldt.



Tying a launch to another event, especially one where a key audience for a book might be attending, can result in a strong audience and a powerful cultural exchange – and good book sales. **Read more in Case study 14: Collaborating with cultural organisations to maximise an audience.**

Getting Aboriginal people from where they live to major population centres can be a big impost on people’s time and resources, and in some circumstances the best way for a publisher to create a successful launch is to be involved only minimally; instead, allowing the family or community to manage the event, and expectations. **Read more in Case study 15: Supporting a community to run an event in a way that works for them.**

ASP’s Editorial and Production Officer was able to attend a launch in remote Western Australia because she was on her way to Magabala Books in Broome for a staff exchange. Her tip for attending community launches is to wear the appropriate clothes for the community and the venue, both to fit in and for practicality.

If holding a launch in a community it’s a good idea to allow the community to organise the launch themselves, but for you as publisher to pay for the catering (it might be a barbecue, which won’t be hugely expensive) and negotiate what other costs might be involved. You probably won’t know how many people will attend, so make sure there’s plenty of food at the launch with enough for people to share later with family.

#### PRACTICAL TIP

Consider supporting a community to create its own launch.



Monty Hale signs a copy of his book at the community launch in Warralong, WA. Photo © AIATSIS.



For most launches, however, the publisher will organise the catering. It's obvious that the catering should be appropriate for the audience, but ASP failed to get it right with one launch. The launch was at one of the Territory's parliament houses, and at the end of nine months' negotiations on the details, ASP organised the catering. Insufficient thought was given to it, other than noting that it was a late morning launch. What was supplied included sugar-rich foods and little that was suitable for diabetics – a real health concern for some Aboriginal people. That mistake hasn't been made again!

Also at the launch there were Aboriginal dancers who were given a private room for body painting and changing clothes. However, the relevant facilities people had to be called to help put down a tarp on the floor where the dancers were performing to avoid damage to the carpet from the dancing and the body paint. (That was after ensuring that the security people understood that the ASP banner was just that, not some dangerous weapon; it was put through the x-ray machine several times.)

The author–publisher contract will determine the number of free copies to be given away on publication, but if you have the book for sale at the launch make sure that the family or community have decided who will be given free copies and that they organise those themselves. As a publisher you won't be able to judge familial and community responsibilities.

## *Conclusion*

Across Australia there are hundreds of stories about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures, historical and contemporary, waiting to be told. Editorial rigour should apply to these works just as it would in to any publishing project, but we hope that in these guidelines we have outlined an approach that appreciates cultural sensitivities, recognises the diversity of Indigenous cultures and ensures Indigenous rights remain central.

Our reference list comprises mainly Aboriginal Studies Press titles that are the products of the processes we've outlined here. A wide range of material on dealing with Indigenous cultural and intellectual property is available on the internet. In particular, we refer you to the many publications and presentations by Indigenous lawyer and writer Terri Janke, available at [terrijanke.com.au/publications](http://terrijanke.com.au/publications).

### **Feedback**

We welcome feedback and contributions from others with experiences and information to share. For instance:

- Are there are other topics you would like to see included?
- Would you like more information on a particular area of the guidelines?
- Have you examples where you have done things differently?

To give us a sense of the audience for these guidelines and their relevance to different areas of publishing, we would be interested to hear about your particular situation and needs; for example, are you an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander writer, editor or designer? Are you working in government or private enterprise? Are you using the guidelines as part of your work or for a private project?

Please email all comments and questions to [asp@aiatsis.gov.au](mailto:asp@aiatsis.gov.au). We look forward to hearing from you.

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# Case studies



## Case studies 1 and 2

### Travelling interstate to check content with community elders

When clearing *Aboriginal Darwin* for publication, author Toni Bauman and the ASP Director set up a meeting with the Larrakia Nation, the traditional owners of Darwin. A copy of the first page proofs was sent to Darwin a couple of weeks in advance, then the author and publisher flew to Darwin for a meeting. The Larrakia Nation coordinator, who had many responsibilities, including working on their forthcoming native title claim, brought together a group of elders. Those parts of the copy that they thought might be sensitive were discussed. At that all-day meeting issues around language, mapping of groups and the inclusion (or not) of information about some sites, depending on whether they were considered men's-only or women's-only business, were discussed and changes were made to the proofs. Neither the author nor the publisher could have determined these things themselves. (Bauman 2006)



Launch of *Aboriginal Darwin* with (from left) the then Administrator of the Northern Territory, Ted Egan; the AIATSIS Chair, Mick Dodson; author Toni Bauman; the then NT Chief Minister, Clare Martin; and the AIATSIS Principal, Steve Larkin. Photo © AIATSIS.

On another occasion, when ASP was to publish the biography of a senior Aboriginal activist who had passed away, the ASP Director travelled interstate to visit the activist's family. There they talked about what the publication meant to the family, which helped ASP understand the importance of the book to them in the telling of their loved one's story – a story that had been written by someone outside the family and cleared with them. The conversation also clarified for the family the kinds of things over which publishers have control; for example, the way the book is produced, marketed and sold. ASP was able to help the family understand that, once published, the book would have a life of its own and, though ASP would be thoughtful about where they sent the book for review, the publisher, author and family members couldn't control the possibility of a negative review – something which might be painful. Ongoing good relations have continued and a family member was later able to help ASP secure a venue for a launch in their state, something that was proving difficult to organise from afar. Listening to the family was a moving and valuable lesson for ASP staff.

### Case study 3

#### Working with an author to clear content with cultural custodians

When ASP produced the second edition of *Melbourne Dreaming*, written by Meyer Eidelson, they knew he had worked closely with Aboriginal communities when creating the first edition and that there'd be a real benefit from that early ethical collaboration and good relations. Renewing these contacts, Meyer sought clearance for the text and relevant images for the second edition from the Wurundjeri Council and Boon Wurrung representatives, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council and other key Melbourne Aboriginal organisations who were appropriate decision-makers for a book centering on sites of importance in Melbourne. These clearances also enabled the production of the subsequent phone app.



### Case study 4

#### Using an intermediary to help with logistical challenges

For a current project ASP has relied on the help of the CEO of an Aboriginal organisation in the Top End to get an author-publisher contract signed by the relevant traditional owner (the son, and now the literary heir, of the book's author, who has passed away). This may save ASP making a trip to a remote community, but the negotiations are happening in the middle of the wet season and there is still an impassable river between the Aboriginal organisation and the traditional owner. As a back-up, ASP has asked the help of a former intern who now lives in Darwin and has connections with Aboriginal people there. At the point of publication the dry season is about to begin.

### Case study 5

#### Finding suitable ways to allow authors to check material

Hilda Jarman Muir's *Very big journey* (2004) took some ten years to come to fruition, and several people were involved in helping her get her story told. Once the first copyedit had been done, something which raised lots of questions and suggestions, ASP brought Aunty Hilda to Canberra with one of her family for support. They then read through the manuscript with her. Later, when more editing had been done, ASP paid for someone else to read through the work with her in her home in the Northern Territory over a period of days.



### Case study 6

#### Clearing content when publication follows years after the initial research

ASP was publishing an Aboriginal researcher's work on the difficult social and familial issues in some communities, and the manuscript contained direct quotations from interviews undertaken by the researcher.

At the point of editing, ASP wanted to check that all the interviewees were still happy with their words being quoted, especially now that they were going to be read by a wider audience.

For a couple of interviewees it proved difficult. Their relationships with the people they had been talking about had changed and they wanted to delete some of the content. ASP and the author made changes to the material in production.

It wasn't that the interviewees were unhappy with the way the interviews had been conducted; they were very appreciative of the researcher's work. It was simply that their circumstances had changed and the book needed to reflect that.

### Case study 7

#### Mapping country as a place in the heart

ASP asked artist and map-maker Jane Moore to create a map for their publication *Old Man's story*. Unfortunately the wet season disrupted her work on a new map. In addition to dealing with cyclones and floods, the damp can affect the properties of inks and paper. Luckily for ASP, Jane had worked with the book's author, Bill Neidjie, to produce a map for an earlier publication of his – one we could re-use. Here she explains different ways of thinking about mapping and representations:

Bill Neidjie was traditional owner of the Bunitj clan lands, north of Ubirr, Kakadu National Park. We knew him as friend and neighbour since my family had lived on the Bunitj land, where my partner, Greg Miles, was a wildlife ranger.





Map of Bill Neidjie's country.  
© Jane Moore.

Neidjie's advocacy for the wellbeing of his land and people was at that time supported by anthropologist, Steven Davis, and Neidjie had asked me to collaborate with Davis to produce a map that would offer visual support.

The first version of this map related to the journey of Indjuwanydjuwa, a journey that formed the Bunitj clan lands. In profound contrast to western definitions of land tenure, this journey was the direct link to inherited cultural responsibilities and the way people related to country.

The map was a visual reinforcement of information Neidjie knew he needed to convey, and in a way that was unprecedented: he was speaking for a land with occupation sites as old as 60,000 years.

Now he was asking an artist to 'make the country look good'. He uttered these words as we stood on the vast flood plains, wondrous sandstone outcrops in the distance, amid the drift of the gentle dry season breezes. Make this magnificent country look good; share it with a world in which Bunitj was little known for this intensely personal, timeless history: for now it was the 'uranium province', a component of Kakadu National Park.

I needed to understand what his words actually meant because I was acutely aware that I saw his lands very differently from him. We had lived on Bunitj for three years,

we had our two children there, but I had no skills to read and understand the land for our survival.

I worked from aerial photos of places I knew and loved, not just lines on a piece of paper. It was natural to interpret the land as non-Indigenous Australians would see it. But because Neidjie hoped that the physical beauty and power of place would evoke feelings of respect and care in decision makers, I integrated on-site sketches with the map. Neidjie's annotations were handwritten to reinforce the sense of the work being carried out in the field.

### Case study 8

#### Thinking flexibly when working out what's valuable

ASP's title *Cleared out* (Davenport, Johnson & Yuwali 2005), which won the WA Premier's Literary Award (overall) and the award for WA history the year following publication, earned nearly \$30,000 for the authors from those awards. The Martu community had already determined who the royalty recipients for monies from the book would be, so it was clear to whom the money would be paid.

Yuwali and her daughter Sandra looking at the book at the launch in Newman. Photo © Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa.





When the documentary film *Contact* was made from *Cleared out*, ASP had to negotiate a film agreement. They checked with the Martu as to what kind of revenues they were expecting, all the while knowing that documentary films don't always make a lot of money. The Martu community had already discussed who the negotiations had to include: the person whose story was transcribed, translated and edited into the book; the other community members who were with her in the story; and those Martu on whose country they travelled, and whose Dreaming ancestor was included.

The answer came back: 'the value of two second-hand Toyotas' – not necessarily what a city-dweller might choose, but very, very valuable commodities in remote communities.

### Case study 9

#### Helping communities to make informed decisions about archives

In producing *Cleared out*, ASP used some of the images that were held by AIATSIS in its archives. Elders in the Martu community were brought to Canberra to visit the archives and see the kinds of material and the conditions in which they're held. Some materials in the collection are kept in temperature-controlled vaults with strict control over access protocols. In certain cases we have to put up signs in doorways and send messages to everyone in the building that a community member is looking at material with restricted access.

Maintaining secure and safe storage can be difficult for community-based archives. Based on their visit, members of the Martu community decided to deposit more materials with AIATSIS. They also chose for themselves the conditions of access.

### Case study 10

#### Respecting an author's literacy when translating from languages

Some thought had to be given to how to render the words of Yuwali, the central character in ASP's award-winning *Cleared out* (Davenport, Johnson & Yuwali 2005). Yuwali doesn't speak or read English but is highly literate in her own language. When the tapes of her speaking were transcribed by translators in the community her words appeared as Aboriginal English. However, it was thought that Aboriginal English (still thought by some – very wrongly – to be an inferior form of English) wouldn't properly reflect the fact that Yuwali was a perfect speaker of her own language. Thus, the decision was taken to provide her text in Standard Australian English.



Murri editor Lisa Fuller.

## Case study 11

### Murri editor Lisa Fuller on copyediting

I have found editing to be highly rewarding, if at times a challenging space to work in. I haven't yet had the privilege of working directly with a First Nations Australian author but I have dealt with co-authored works that required family input on behalf of the deceased Aboriginal author. It was a carefully negotiated process made easier through the non-Indigenous author's good working relationship with the Aboriginal author and her mob. There were times when I worried about making changes to what was an oral story but the author's son helped navigate that path and provided the cultural checking needed to move forward.

Editing a work when you have a different cultural background to the author's can be a minefield, particularly if the editor feels they have some understanding of the writer's culture. In truth they may not know as much as they think and, in my experience, assumptions can lead to misunderstandings. Just as there is potential for tension between an author and an editor, there is potential for tension between a dominant culture and a minority, particularly given the inherent power relations involved. I believe all editors need to be aware of their cultural background when working with someone from a different background to avoid accidentally offending or hurting an author. This might mean asking more questions at first rather than going straight in with changes. For example, a lot of people know that for First Nations Australians 'deadly' has a very positive meaning; however, I still hear people mistake it for meaning 'fatal', even when it's used with verbal and facial cues. If there is confusion around something as simple as word use, you can see why much larger misunderstandings can occur when dealing with larger concepts.

As the most junior editor in my team I'm fortunate to be able to learn from my colleagues, but about some things I can speak with more authority, and my team respects that. In that same vein, I have to be aware of my own relationship with non-Indigenous authors who are writing First Nations content. I had the pleasure of working with linguist Diana Eades on her book *Aboriginal ways of using English*. It was only my second edit, so I was very nervous. We were both delighted to learn that her work was based in a community very close to my own (one that I have family ties to). Not only did I learn things about my own community's speech patterns, but I think Diana felt particularly safe working with someone of my background. I understood her experiences and could provide an extra check that the work was culturally appropriate. But I also knew that, because she had gifted me a level of trust, Diana was more open to my edits. I had to be careful not to accidentally impose interpretations that might be appropriate with my mob but not another. It was a true two-way learning experience.

It's not always an easy space to walk in. There are times when I'm not comfortable with passing judgment on content. With submissions to ASP from elders, for example, I have to balance my need to respect them against my editorial role in being impartial in critiquing their submissions and evaluating peer assessments. In these instances I know that my team members will understand my concerns and the cultural sensitivities involved. I know my team will help me navigate these issues as I continue to grow as an editor. One way we manage this is for me to occasionally check some elements of a manuscript with my own mob if I feel I need to (in a very general sense only). This is rare, and usually when I'm not confident speaking to something and I need that little bit of fact checking and back-up in regard to my own understanding of an issue to help me speak up.

At other times a piece of text has seemed okay to my team mates and a non-Indigenous author but to me has read quite offensively. In those instances I've found the author has been horrified at the implication I've read into it and quickly changed it. In these ways I'm able to help protect them from unintentionally causing offense, ASP from publishing that type of work, and my own mob from being exposed to it.

Recently I've been asked about non-Indigenous authors using Aboriginal content in fiction, by writers as well as editors and publishers. Most of the ASP ethical guidelines can be useful here, too; for example, with language choices (don't use 'myths', 'they', etc.), checking content with the right people, and so on. What a lot of people don't realise is that the use of Aboriginal characters and/or culture in fiction requires just as much work as it does in non-fiction if you want to create something that is culturally appropriate, reflects reality and doesn't perpetuate the (ignorant) stereotypes that still prevail in today's society.

## Case study 12

### The value of bringing the mob to the big city

ASP secured a session at the Perth Writers Festival some years ago while promoting the book *Cleared out*. Yuwali, whose story is central to the book, travelled down from her remote community with Thelma Judson, her sister, and both took part on stage, mostly through translation. As well, they brought with them Martu paintings and other artwork.

Yuwali's co-authors, who have very close connections to the Martu community, also secured the attendance of one of the patrol officers who had been charged with 'bringing in' Yuwali's mob from the Western Desert where Blue Streak rockets were going to be tested. Although elderly, Terry Long was a lively panel member. In addition to co-authors Sue Davenport and Peter Johnson, the other person on

the panel was AIATSIS Council member Professor Bob Tonkinson, who as a young anthropologist had been on one of the trips to find Yuwali and her family group in the desert and help bring them in to Jigalong.

For Yuwali and Thelma it meant many, many hours travelling by car from their outstation to get to other transport, then travelling thousands of kilometres from the Pilbara to the festival. It was worth their making the trip as it provided a unique opportunity for the non-Aboriginal audience to hear firsthand from the people who had been involved in such a momentous event: first contact in the Western Desert in 1964.

As Yuwali was part of a group of people alone in the desert, there are other people, including now senior men who were then younger children, who also remember the event and have talked about it at a public event in Canberra. The decision about who was to speak was taken by the Martu people themselves.

### Case study 13

#### Enlarging on what a launch event can be

ASP and AIATSIS colleagues worked with the National Museum of Australia (NMA) to organise a launch for *Remembering the future* (2014) and an exhibition of Warlpiri drawings at the NMA. Author Melinda Hinkson was the mediating point between the NMA, AIATSIS and the relevant Warlpiri community people. She ensured that people were brought in to the discussions about the launch well in advance, allowing them to help shape the event, as well as who would speak. AIATSIS built on the idea of the launch to hold an art market where the works from Warlukurlangu and Warnayaka art centres (Yuendumu and Lajamanu) were available for sale to the Canberra community. It was a very successful event, providing an extra reason for the Warlpiri community people to come to the Canberra launch and providing the art centres with a forum in which to promote and sell their art as well as a unique opportunity for a Canberra audience to talk to the artists.

Hundreds of people visited the art market day at AIATSIS. Photo © AIATSIS.



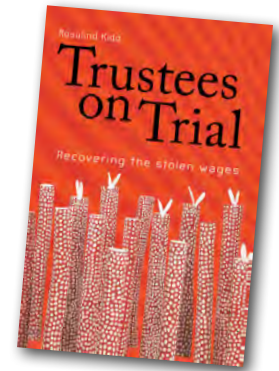


## Case study 14

### Collaborating with cultural organisations to maximise an audience

ASP launched *Trustees on trial* (2006) at the Brisbane Writers Festival in the days when the festival was held on the river's edge at Southbank. The author, Ros Kidd, was involved in a meeting with legal advisers and community people who were lobbying for an improved offer from the government on the stolen wages case in Queensland. That meeting occurred the day before the launch. Often writers festivals are very 'white' spaces, but on this occasion, with the community people in town and the launch taking place in one of the open-sided tents, many people attended, some choosing to sit towards the back of the tent, and even spilling beyond its confines.

While ASP was allocated only 30 minutes for the launch, we managed to have a successful launch with five speakers plus an MC. We don't recommend such a tight timeframe for any launch but the festival provided too good an opportunity not to take it up. Book sales were strong.



## Case study 15

### Supporting a community to run an event in a way that works for them

ASP launched Monty Hale's book, *Kurlumarniny*, on country in the Pilbara at the Strelley Community School. Negotiations were done with the community. ASP made suggestions for the order of events and provided an invitation and a financial contribution, but the speakers, catering and bus transport for people coming in for the launch were arranged by the community themselves. In ASP's experience community events are often small but very important. *Kurlumarniny* was a standout example; there was a real buzz in that part of WA that such an important book was being launched on country. As well as the schoolchildren and the members of the local community, other children were bussed in and community people drove in from all over. ASP's Lisa Fuller was lucky enough to be there to see a 'simple barbecue' become an afternoon filled with pride and celebration: 'People were everywhere, books sold out, and everyone kept talking about how much Monty, and by extension his book, meant to them. It was very special; I was blown away.'



The launch of Monty Hale's book on country. As well as the school children and members of the local community, other children were bussed in and community people drove in from all over. Photos © AIATSIS.