

MS 350/119/52

108 Quarry Road,
RYDE,
N.S.W.

4th December, 1961.

Dr W.E.H. Stanner,
Executive Officer,
Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies,
Box 4, G.P.O.
CANBERRA A.C.T.

Dear Dr Stanner,

I wish to make application to the Institute for a research grant to allow me to continue my work on aboriginal music. In the information attached you will find details of research work carried out for a number of years in the Department of Music at Sydney, also the names of three referees to whom such matters may be referred.

My proposal is to continue work already commenced on aboriginal song-rhythms and to include definitive material from wetherly and coastal areas, especially the collections made by Spencer in 1912 at Cenpelli, Katherine River and on Bathurst Island.

No attempt has been made yet to examine word/music relationships in song collections from Arnhem Land and -as the studies by Professor Elkin and Trevor Jones have shown- this region is melodically diverse.

Moreover, present-day standards in ethnomusicology are such that transcriptions of songs are considered incomplete until the words or syllables can be written in with the music notation.

Apart from linguistic difficulties involved in obtaining accurate song-texts- and these are appreciated- one of the chief obstacles to complete word/music transcription has been the musician's need to recognise for himself each syllable in its connection with each sung tone. For a number of reasons these syllables may be distorted during singing and the problem of their true identity one which only expert linguists can hope to solve. Nevertheless, with a reasonably clear tape-recording, results are often surprising. After some practice in syllable recognition many of the subjective hazards which beset the transcriber of musical rhythms may be to a large extent overcome and a firmer basis for comparative work established.

It will be seen from this that any work devoted to an analysis of aboriginal song-rhythms must be undertaken with help from experienced linguists. For my investigations so far I have been fortunate in receiving the kind co-operation of Mr W.H. Douglas and Mr T.G.H. Strehlow.

At this stage of my work it would be an advantage to have some knowledge of the formal aspects of Australian languages and with this in mind I should like to apply, in the first place, for a grant to take a year's special training in Anthropology and Linguistics.

Subsequently, with the object of obtaining experience in ethnomusicological field work, a further grant would be needed to cover the expense of an excursion through some of the Spencer areas and later on to Groote and Elcho Islands. Costs would be difficult to estimate, as the trip will not take place until about May 1963; but for a period of 3 or 4 months in these places, and including the price of a tape recorder and supply of tapes, they may amount to something in the vicinity of £850.

In the enclosed copy of a letter received last June from the publishing department of F.W.Cheshire Pty Ltd., you will notice a reference to the high cost of publishing my manuscript. In reference to this matter I should be glad to know what funds, if any, the Institute would be prepared to advance to Cheshire's. It seems to me imperative that before embarking on any further training this earlier project should be brought to completion.

Finally, I should be interested to hear from you whether the work for the Institute, as outlined above, would count ultimately towards a Ph.D in Anthropology (Ethnomusicology) at the Australian National University.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs Alice M. Moyle)