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Children of Coranderrk, 1870–86

Uncle Roy Patterson's Dja Dja Wurrung grandfather, John Patterson, and Taungurung grandmother, Lizzie Edmonds, entered the Coranderrk dormitory at the end of a 'golden era' of growth when, between 1863 and 1874, the station had become a 'self-sufficient and self-determinant Aboriginal community'.¹ However, as these children grew up, they experienced the impact of tumultuous change in the management of the station, as the policies of the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines shifted from protection to assimilation, and the collaborative and caring John Green was replaced by a series of authoritarian and punitive managers. The Aboriginal Natives Protection Bill of 1869, which created the new board, also included a provision to allow the 'governor from time to time to make regulations'. Jane Miller noted that this capacity was 'in many ways more chilling than the Acts', as it 'provided the prescriptive details that shaped so many lives'.² Powers to control Aboriginal residence, work, wages and children were enshrined in the 1869 Act, and consolidated by subsequent amendments. These changes undermined Aboriginal independence and divided Aboriginal families according to imposed categorisations of racial heritage or 'caste'. Because John Patterson and Lizzie Edmonds were labelled, in the offensive lexicon of the time, as 'half-castes', their right to refuge at Coranderrk came under challenge.

1 Nanni and James, *Coranderrk*, 16.

2 Miller, 'A Guide to Government Acts', 176–77.

Records suggest that John Patterson, Uncle Roy's grandfather, was born at Mount Hope Station in c. 1869, 15 miles (24 km) south of the Murray River on Barababaraba Country in the northern central plains of Victoria. His mother, Emma Kerr, lived on Mount Hope Station and received rations once a week from pastoralist and local Guardian of Aborigines Molesworth Greene, who also owned neighbouring Pyramid Hill stations from 1857 to 1883.³ According to Greene, seven Aboriginal people were permanently resident on the station, four men and three women and their children lived and worked on the station, 'go[ing] away perhaps for a few days' fishing, but they were, to all intents and purposes, resident; and other members of their tribe used to come occasionally'.⁴ Rev. John Green visited Mount Hope Station in July 1870 and, seeing three 'half-caste women, 1 half-caste lad, and 5 children', tried to convince them to move to Coranderk:

They all seemed willing to come when I spoke to them about going the night I arrived, but next morning they were all gone (hid) ... I found them during the day among the rocks ... now they were not willing to go without one man (Sam), who was not there. I stayed all night again, hoping to induce them to go with me, but in the morning they were not to be found. I think some of the white men who cohabit with them assisted them to get away. I left notice with Mr. Greene to write to the Central Board when they came back with Sam, and that I would return and take them.⁵

Molesworth Greene also held the view that the young women were in moral danger on the station, so the group were eventually 'sent off to Coranderk'. The pastoralist noted that the families left reluctantly, refusing to be separated:

I should have liked to have kept the men, but they would all go together. I had a great difficulty in getting them to go at all. I know that some of the half-caste women were living with some of the stockmen, and I had a great difficulty to get them away. Mr Green, of the mission station, came and helped me.⁶

3 Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers*, 61.

4 Molesworth Greene, minutes of evidence 1531, 25 May 1877, in Victoria, *Report of the Commissioners*, 56.

5 John Green, report, 16 July 1870, in Victoria, Parliament, *Seventh Report of the Board*, Appendix 1, 5.

6 Molesworth Greene, minutes of evidence 1531, 25 May 1877, in Victoria, *Report of the Commissioners*, 56.

Rev. Green admitted to the 1877 inquiry that the Aboriginal women did not leave Mount Hope voluntarily. Asked whether coercion had been used in any case, he replied:

Two or three women at Mount Hope; a little was used there. Mr Greene, a settler, wanted them taken away, because they were living as common prostitutes amongst his men.⁷

Molesworth Greene's assessment of the situation on Mount Hope included an observation that sexual propriety was culturally contingent:

I do not think that the natives themselves feel the immorality as European women feel it. It does not degrade them as it does Europeans ... they do not lose their self-respect.⁸

Yet, Greene took steps to bring an end to cross-racial cohabitation, claiming that it was debasing and 'a bad thing for the station'.⁹ This may have been in response to external pressures, including from Christian circles, where information about settler Australia had long focused on the abuse of Aboriginal women and children. Stations like Mount Hope were represented as 'sites of peculiarly unchecked white male sin ... as men indulged in unrestrained appetites to have sex, to exploit resources and to kill'.¹⁰ As Elizabeth Elbourne has argued, only 'Christian men' like pastoralist Molesworth Greene and Rev. John Green 'stood between such undomesticated men and their female victim'.¹¹

When this pastoralist and Aboriginal protector conspired to remove Emma Kerr and her children from Mount Hope, Emma was in a relationship with Alick Campbell (1851–c. 1933), a young Barababaraba man who was reared on nearby Gannawarra Station.¹² Although Alick Campbell was content working on Gannawarra for pastoralist Charles Brown Fisher, he 'came in' to Coranderrk 'of his own accord', because he wanted to marry Emma Kerr. Campbell testified in 1877 that he had wished to return to Gannawarra after his marriage, arguing: 'I was fourteen or fifteen years with him [Fisher]—brought up with him ... [but Rev. Green] would

7 John Green, minutes of evidence 2143, in Victoria, *Report of the Commissioners*, 83.

8 Elbourne, 'The Sin of the Settler', n.p.

9 Molesworth Greene, minutes of evidence 1533, 25 May 1877, in Victoria, *Report of the Commissioners*, 56.

10 Elbourne, 'The Sin of the Settler', n.p.

11 Elbourne, 'The Sin of the Settler', n.p.

12 Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 154.

not let me go'.¹³ Emma Kerr married Alick Campbell on 15 April 1873, the union witnessed by John Green and his wife Mary, some 16 months before John Green's forced resignation from his post as manager.¹⁴ Alick Campbell, his new wife Emma Kerr and her children John and Jane Patterson remained at Coranderrk, and the dormitory became their home for the next 16 years.

John Patterson appears in the records again in 1877, when his stepfather, Alick Campbell, reported to a government inquiry into the Aborigines of Victoria that eight-year-old John attended school at Coranderrk. This inquiry marks the culmination of protests by Aboriginal residents, including the Campbells, who played 'a shrewd political game' using petitions, letters and deputations to force a review of deteriorating conditions on the station.¹⁵ The settlement had been described as 'virtually self-supporting' by 1875, with over 1,200 hectares cleared for vegetables and grain crops, over 4 miles (7 km) of land fenced, and 32 cottages and outbuildings constructed. Aboriginal farmers also produced award-winning hops that attracted high market prices, yet the future of the settlement was very unsure. There was no security of title and neighbouring farmers clamoured to close the station.¹⁶

Uncle Roy's grandmother, Lizzie Edmonds (also spelt Edmunds), entered the Coranderrk records in 1876, during this period of conflict and instability. Lizzie was six years old and resident in the dormitory with three siblings: Lilly (nine), Willie (seven) and Lucy (three). Lizzie's mother and father, William and Lydia Edmonds, also gain mention in the board's report of 1876, as does six-day-old baby Murdock Edmonds, who died of a chest cold in July. Lizzie Edmonds was born in 1869, near Wangaratta (probably at Wahgunyah), before the family moved to Coranderrk.¹⁷ Northern Taungurung clans had alliances with Bangerang and Kwatkwat clans on the Murray River, links that enabled kin to take refuge at Lake Moodemere, an Aboriginal reserve near Wahgunyah.¹⁸ The relocation of the Edmonds family to Coranderrk perhaps reflects the influence of

13 Alexander Campbell, minutes of evidence 728–36, in Victoria, *Report of the Commissioners*, 28.

14 See Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, Ch. 6.

15 Furphy, *Edward M. Curr*, 134.

16 Balint et al., 'The "Minutes of Evidence" Project', 209.

17 Records detail Elizabeth Edmonds birth place as 'Nagunyah', this is likely a misspelling of 'Wahgunyah'. Family history places her birth as 'near Wangaratta'. The Lake Moodemere Aboriginal reserve, near Wahgunyah, was situated 25 miles (40 km) from Wangaratta near the Murray River.

18 Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 263.

Thomas Bamfield, clan head of the Yeeun-illam-balluk (the northernmost Taungurung clan) after the closure of Mohican Station. Bamfield gathered the ‘survivors of his clan’ to Coranderrk Station and then played a key leadership role in political efforts to prevent closure of the new settlement.¹⁹ For example, Bamfield wrote to the board in July 1881, seeking the transfer of ‘children in Wangaratta belonging to my people’.²⁰ He gained the attention of the board by renewing allegations that local publicans kept Aboriginal children for immoral purposes:

Please I trouble you about them children in Wangaratta near Benalla belonging to my people belonging to my brother children and they starving ... and they got no place to stop in and I like to bring them over into this school half a [dozen] children in Wangaratta ... if you can oblige a pass for us three to fetch them all in Coranderrk I will be very thankful. I had a letter from them some weeks ago and I give the letter to Mr [Strickland] I don't think he give it to you ... they get no clothes and nobody to look after them. My brother sold one of the girls to the publican for five bottles of grog if you give me authority to take that girl away from the publican to put it in the police hand to fetch them up here if you can oblige me so much money for my letter if you please.²¹

Bamfield's appeal was quickly dismissed by the local guardian of Aborigines at Wangaratta, Alexander Tone, who retorted:

There is not one particle of truth in his statement that any children are starving here neither are there any girls sold to a publican. The Aborigines here have been contented and when I ask them if any desired to go and live at Coranderrk they exclaimed ‘No fear that place too cold’. In fact, the two who knew [Coranderrk] told me some time ago that they would not go back, they like Wangaratta which they call their own country ... it strikes me Mr Bamfield wants a trip on the cheap.²²

Tone positioned Bamfield as a lying opportunist. This slander is unsurprising, given that Bamfield was a key Aboriginal activist on Coranderrk. His actions had embarrassed the board, which targeted him

19 Barwick, ‘Mapping the Past’, 128; Nanni and James, *Coranderrk*, 73.

20 Thomas Bamfield to Captain Page, n.d, Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Correspondence Files 1869–1957, NAA, B313, Item 42, Folio 19.

21 Thomas Bamfield to Captain Page, n.d, Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Correspondence Files 1869–1957, NAA, B313, Item 42, Folio 19.

22 Alexander Tone, Wangaratta, to Captain Page, 30 July 1881, Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Correspondence Files 1869–1957, NAA, B313, Item 42, Folio 20.

with increasing and punitive vilification.²³ Tone also revealed that he had consulted Yorta Yorta people for their views on Coranderrk: people who naturally favoured continuing on ‘their own country’ at Wangaratta over residence on Kulin land.

‘A most astonishing thing on the part of the manager’: Suppression on Coranderrk

Another outcome for the children of Coranderrk during these tumultuous years, particularly after the resignation of John Green, was the suppression of cultural activities under the authority of the four ‘uncaring managers’ who replaced him.²⁴ Uncle Roy recalls the management of Rev. Frederick Strickland (1878–82) as particularly oppressive:

What happened was the Church of England Minister stopped them from teaching their culture, their Dreamtime, their spirit world, their language, and destroyed their being. If they were caught teaching it, they were bullwhipped or gaoled or both, so it wasn’t a very good life for the Aboriginal people in them days. It might have been because of that we lost our language and our way of life. In my opinion, they took our being away from us.²⁵

Managers usurped the authority of Aboriginal Elders in religious matters and suppressed cultural activity because they believed it undermined the Christian civilising agenda of the station. Aboriginal Elders took extreme care to disguise their efforts to teach traditional knowledge to younger generations, as ‘it was against the law’ of the station.²⁶ Uncle Roy recalls that his grandparents remained cautious long after the closure of Coranderrk:

When I grew up, I wanted to learn about culture from my grandmother and grandfather. So, me grandmother’d be walking around the flats down there in Healesville, grandfather had a big long tea-tree pole that had a string on it, makin’ out that we were fishing. If anyone came along, he put out the pole and made out

23 Nanni and James, *Coranderrk*, 203, 73.

24 Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, 169.

25 Roy Patterson, in conversation with Jennifer Jones, 3 March 2016, DS3001137.

26 Roy Patterson, in conversation with Jennifer Jones, 3 March 2016, DS3001137.

that we were fishing. You can pick up some dry cow manure and get the worms from under it and put them in a tin. That was our bait. So, while I was down there, and we were makin' out that we were fishing, my grandmother was telling culture and Dreamtime.²⁷

Aboriginal residents learnt the value of discretion under the punitive managers of Coranderrk and ensured that their children and grandchildren observed the same caution. Rev. John Green showed a degree of respect and understanding for Aboriginal culture, but Rev. Strickland was perceived to be disdainful of Aboriginal tradition and 'cold and distant' with residents. John Green also offered much appreciated medical expertise to the sick, as well as spiritual succour via his Presbyterian rituals.²⁸ An inquiry into Coranderrk Aboriginal Station in 1881 heard complaints that Rev. Strickland was both self-interested and neglectful of Aboriginal health. When Emma Campbell, Uncle Roy's great-grandmother, was ill and in need of hospitalisation, Strickland refused assistance. On 30 September 1881, Alick Campbell told the inquiry that:

When I asked him for the buggy to take my wife to Melbourne—she was sick with rheumatic fever—he said no, I could not have the buggy because he wanted it for his own use, to drive the family to the Black Spur; and when I was going away I asked him for money. I said, 'Will you give me some money to go down to town?' He said 'No, I have got no money.' I said, 'have you not got any Government money?' He said, 'No, I have not.' I said, 'How am I to do?' He said, 'I do not know.' So I borrowed some money from the people round about here, and took my wife down [to hospital, where Emma was admitted for three weeks].²⁹

Grievances against Strickland led five members of the Campbell family—Alick, Emma, their daughter Jane and son John Patterson, and Emma's younger brother Phinimore Jackson—to sign a community petition on 16 November 1881, demanding Strickland's resignation.³⁰ A total of 46 Aboriginal signatories called for increased independence:

27 Roy Patterson, in conversation with Jennifer Jones, 3 March 2016, DS3001137.

28 Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 116; Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, 172.

29 Victoria, Parliament, *Report of the Board*, 19.

30 Petition, 16 November 1881, in Victoria, Parliament, *Report of the Board*, 98.

We want the Board and the Inspector, Captain Page, to be no longer over us. We want only one man here, and that is Mr. John Green, and the station to be under the Chief Secretary [equivalent to today's State Premier]; then we will show the country that the station could self-support itself.³¹

Uncle Roy's great-uncle William Edmond was also a signatory.

William Edmond and Phinnimore Jackson were both aged just 13, yet both had personal motivation to seek Strickland's removal. The boys, along with fellow dormitory inmate Tommy Dick, were beaten by Strickland for attending the horse races at Yarra Flat without his permission on 22 May 1880. Phinnimore Jackson received particularly brutal treatment, because he resisted the thrashing and complained to his sister Emma Campbell about his treatment. He testified at the 1881 inquiry that Strickland:

Gave me a good thrashing with his hands. He told me he was going for a riding whip so I told him I was going to my sister, to show the bruises that were on my back. So he came over and looked for me, and could not find me. He came to my sister's and asked where I was, and she spoke to him about the whipping I got ... He locked the store-room and kept me in there, and put my head between his legs and gave me a thrashing with the bridle reins.³²

Corporal punishment was accepted as a form of paternal discipline in this period, and Strickland defended his action by arguing that: 'It has been my habit since I have been here of associating myself with [the Aboriginal inmates at Coranderrk] as a brother or a father'. According to Strickland, Phinnimore was disciplined as if 'he had been my own child'.³³

Yet, Aboriginal adults, including Phinnimore's sister Emma and his brother-in-law Alick Campbell, did not share this interpretation of the beating. When relatives heard about the harsh treatment and incarceration of the children, Jack Briggs, Alick Campbell and Alfred Davis 'demanded to see the boys', and 'each took away a boy in defiance of Mr Strickland', despite his threats to summons them for 'interfering with me in the exercise of my duty'.³⁴ Strickland persisted in charging five Aboriginal

31 Petition, 16 November 1881, in Victoria, Parliament, *Report of the Board*, 98.

32 Minute of evidence 2576, in Victoria, Parliament, *Report of the Board*, 61.

33 Minute of evidence 2589, in Victoria, Parliament, *Report of the Board*, 61.

34 Minute of evidence 2589, in Victoria, Parliament, *Report of the Board*, 61; Minute, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, 27 May 1880, NAA, B314, Roll 1.

men ‘for insubordination’, as they had threatened that ‘they would take away all the children as they were being knocked about and half killed by Mr Strickland’.³⁵ Unable to find the police constable in Healesville, the Aboriginal men took Phinnimore Jackson to Rev. Green, who lived nearby, showing him injuries including a deep cut to the head. Green noted his disapproval of Strickland’s actions, telling the Coranderrk inquiry that he thought it was:

Very wrong to prosecute the men for taking the part of the boy who had been so severely chastised ... a most astonishing thing on the part of the manager, and a clergyman, to prosecute them for doing a friendly part towards their own children.³⁶

Diane Barwick observed that Strickland’s control of the children at Coranderrk was then under challenge. Strickland feared that a display of defiance by the men, one of whom angrily ‘shook his fist in his face’, would foster wider insurrection.³⁷ He argued in his report to the board that ‘the punishment occurred because the dormitory girls were on strike, demanding wages, and had encouraged the boys to rebel’.³⁸ The board supported Strickland by authorising him, in October 1880, to ‘prosecute three parents who refused to let their children go to the Boarding House when so requested by him’.³⁹ In this way, by resorting to the courts to assert his authority, it is evident that Strickland’s management relied upon ‘coercion rather than collaboration and consent’.⁴⁰

Training Aboriginal children for ‘self-dependence’

Controlling Aboriginal children in the Coranderrk dormitory enabled managers and matrons to exploit their labour and to illustrate the type of social change the government envisaged for Aboriginal society. Much effort was turned towards training children in practical skills, which were

35 John Green, minutes of evidence 5084, in Victoria, Parliament, *Report of the Board*, 129; minute, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, 27 May 1880, NAA, B314, Roll 1.

36 John Green, minutes of evidence 5084, in Victoria, Parliament, *Report of the Board*, 129.

37 Minute, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, 27 May 1880, NAA, B314, Roll 1.

38 Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 171.

39 Minute, 6 October 1880, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, NAA, B314, Roll 1.

40 Nanni and James, *Coranderrk*, 138.

thought to show evidence of ‘community reform and progress’ and ‘visible indices of good management’.⁴¹ Academic education was not a priority, as the capability of Aboriginal children was then understood to be limited by their ‘race’ and ‘class’. Only basic religious and practical education was deemed necessary, as this would allay the risk of further moral degeneration.⁴² As Amanda Barry has explained, the 1866 commission into compulsory schooling in Victoria determined that there was ‘no reason why [the Education Department] should charge ourselves with [Aborigines’] education’. The Board for the Protection of Aborigines was left to supervise the provision of education on Aboriginal stations as they saw fit.⁴³ This meant that manual work on the station competed with academic lessons. In 1881, for example, it was noted by the Coranderrk teacher that Phinnimore Jackson did not attend school very often because Strickland ‘thought he had enough education’ and preferred to employ him as a gardener, mailboy and groom, and to chop wood.⁴⁴ Mrs Laura Deans attested that Phinnimore:

Says himself he is over-worked. He is thirteen. Phinnimore goes for the mail, and carts the wood, and chops it for Mr. Strickland; and he gets in the cows of a night, and milks them in the morning—seven or eight cows. He does a great deal of work on the station. He works in the garden besides.⁴⁵

The management of children at Coranderrk, which already focused more heavily upon training than education, was subject to the discretion of the manager. This had been the case since the inception of the dormitory system. As the manager of Coranderrk in 1877, Hugh Halliday, explained, youth on the station had:

Every opportunity at present of learning everything requisite for employment on a station or a farm, as well as on a hop plantation, which I think is all that is necessary for them to be learned on the station. The school girls are taught to sew and make their own clothes.⁴⁶

41 Barwick, ‘And the Lubras’, 56.

42 Barry, ‘Equal to Children of European Origin’, 41.4.

43 Barry, ‘A Matter of Primary Importance’, 172.

44 Minutes of evidence 2540–2547, 17 November 1881, in Victoria, Parliament, *Report of the Board*, 60.

45 Mrs L. Deans, minutes of evidence 3031–3036, 17 November 1881, in Victoria, Parliament, *Report of the Board*, 70.

46 Correspondence no. 35, in Victoria, *Report of the Commissioners*, Appendix C. 112–13.

This skills training prepared the children for ‘self-dependence’, as the board’s General Inspector Christian Ogilvie explained to the 1877 royal commission. Ogilvie sought the gradual introduction of what he described as a system of ‘de-centralisation’, which would train and then remove Aboriginal youth from the stations of Victoria. In his proposed scheme:

Adults should be encouraged to ... leave the stations in search of work. And that it should be compulsory on the youth of both sexes that they should be apprenticed to responsible masters and mistresses immediately after their education was completed.⁴⁷

By making Aboriginal people labour ‘for themselves’, Ogilvie sought to disperse troublemakers and to achieve assimilation through ‘eventually absorb[ing] [them] into the general population’.⁴⁸

For the dormitory girls, activities deemed necessary for assimilation included sewing, cooking and housekeeping, along with menial farm work that supported the economic program of the station. Aboriginal women and girls used their skills in gardening and fishing to enable subsistence. They were also active in the harvest of cash crops, including hops, which were under ‘extensive and profitable production ... at Coranderrk’, thus providing additional sources of income for the station.⁴⁹ In January–March 1885, Lizzie Edmonds, aged around 16 years, was undertaking ‘housework’ and ‘kitchen duties’ in the dormitory—traditional roles assigned to women and signifiers of gender appropriate behaviour. Lizzie Edmonds’ disappointing performance of womanly tasks was noted. Lizzie’s bad behaviour disrupted the matron’s overbearing control and caused much trouble and anxiety. Lizzie was twice noted as ‘working well’, but was also observed as being ‘bad tempered’, ‘very troublesome’ and causing ‘much anxiety’. Her behaviour improved in February 1885 and was deemed ‘more satisfactory’ until the week of 28 February when she was again working in the kitchen. Lizzie was ‘disappointed at not receiving wages promised’ and, after this breach of trust, seemed ‘very troublesome’ when expected to work for free.

47 Minutes of evidence in Victoria, *Report of the Commissioners*, 1.

48 Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, 180.

49 Victoria, *Report of the Commissioners*, x; Barwick, ‘And the Lubras’, 54–55.

The final note on Lizzie Edmonds' life on Coranderrk, in the week ending 15 March 1885, was that she was engaged out of doors, hop picking, and was 'working well' with the other girls.⁵⁰ Each week the 'Returns of Children in Dormitory Coranderrk' noted the name, date, age, colour and employment of the children in the dormitory, along with the remarks of the matron. Under the category 'colour', Lizzie Edmonds was repeatedly described as being a 'half-caste', a designation that would soon result in her expulsion from the station.

'Hiring out half castes': The Board seeks reprisal

Since the establishment of Coranderrk, Aboriginal men, women and children had undertaken a decades-long campaign of protest in the form of strikes, petitions, deputations and testimony, asserting their independence and to claim permanent tenure of the station. Alick Campbell had testified in September 1881 that he and his family wanted to remain at Coranderrk, but that grievances against Strickland's management, as evidenced by the neglect of his wife Emma and harsh treatment of his brother-in-law Phinnimore Jackson, had prompted family protests.⁵¹ Testimonies given by the Aboriginal complainants caused 'deep embarrassment' to the board and its managers. Such evidence also made the brave witnesses vulnerable to retaliatory action.

One avenue available to the board to punish refractory individuals was to banish them from the station.⁵² Some months prior to the 1881 inquiry, the board investigated the possible systematisation of expulsion, based on caste. Aboriginal people of mixed descent would be required to 'labor for themselves' in the general community, rather than working for their Aboriginal community on a station.⁵³ The board identified 'several half castes' living on Coranderrk who 'were quite capable of earning a living outside and recommended that they should be sent away from the

50 'Return of Children in Dormitory Coranderrk 1885', Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Correspondence Files 1869–1957, NAA, B313, Folios 34–40.

51 Alick Campbell, minutes of evidence 934–49, 30 September 1881, in Victoria, Parliament, *Report of the Board*, 19–20.

52 Regarding the banishment of Thomas Bamfield, see Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 263.

53 Minutes of evidence, 24 April 1877, in Victoria, *Report of the Commissioners*, 1.

station'.⁵⁴ In July 1881, after consulting Chief Secretary Berry, the board 'decided to carry out their proposals and remove three men and their wives without delay. The children would be allowed to remain if the parents wished'.⁵⁵ Certificates were issued to enable these men to work outside the Aboriginal station, and the board's decision was communicated to the manager, Strickland. The three couples targeted for eviction, all viewed as troublemakers, included Alick Campbell and his wife Emma.⁵⁶

The board's sensitivity to criticism, and its capacity for retaliation, was also illustrated by a response to disparaging statements made about the board in 1881. A white employee at the station, farm overseer William Harris, had questioned managerial oversight and farm viability at the 1881 inquiry. His views were subsequently published in *The Argus*.⁵⁷ 'As these statements were quite untrue' in the opinion of the secretary of the board, a special meeting was called on 20 October 1881 and Harris was required 'to give an explanation'.⁵⁸ In defending his statements, which centred upon inadequate fencing, Harris also attributed the numbers of trespassing stock to the failure of Aboriginal stockmen, including Alick Campbell. He argued that one former stockman 'would spend a good deal of his time when supposed to be at work at Mrs Malloy's', and that 'Alick Campbell had also been stockman and found unsatisfactory'.⁵⁹ Despite these slurs, both Campbell and his workmate were identified as capable of independence and exiled into the white community. Alick Campbell gained work on a pastoral station but was 'barely making a living' in late 1884 when the family requested permission to return to Coranderrk to 'give the children schooling'.⁶⁰ The family's reprieve from the board's new dispersal policy was, however, short lived.

54 Minute, 1 June 1881, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, NAA, B314, Roll 1, 386–87.

55 The reply received from Berry was determined to be 'not so satisfactory as the Board could desire', but they 'decided to carry out their proposals and remove three men and their wives without delay'. Minute, 6 July 1881, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, NAA, B314, Roll 1, 387–88.

56 Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 287. These removals presumably took place after Campbell's testimony at the inquiry in September 1881 and before Strickland resigned in February 1882. Minute, 1 February 1882, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, NAA, B314, Roll 1, 375.

57 'The Coranderrk Inquiry', *The Argus*, 19 October 1881, 6.

58 Minute, 20 October 1881, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, NAA, B314, Roll 1, 390.

59 Minute, 15 November 1881, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, NAA, B314, Roll 1, 392.

60 Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 287.

While the Campbell family were struggling in exile, the board designed legislation to evict all individuals and families of mixed racial descent from government stations. Not all officials supported the scheme. In March 1883, the board received a letter from the chief secretary asking the board to ‘reconsider its decision’:

On the matter of hiring out half castes and quadroons. Some discussion took place but the meeting did not alter its previous opinion. The secretary was to reply to the effect that the meeting was of the opinion that half caste married couples should be encouraged to go to service and also half caste youths.⁶¹

Subsequent correspondence and discussion in April 1883 centred upon the moral dangers such placements might pose. Some members of the board were strongly opposed to ‘hiring out’ girls, but preparations to enact the amendments continued regardless. In March 1884, the managers of Aboriginal stations in Victoria were questioned regarding the number and ages of youths capable of being apprenticed out, and the financial and ‘practical effect of withdrawing such labour from the stations’.⁶² In May 1884, the board had revised their draft regulations ‘for merging half castes’ and resolved to lay the resolutions before the chief secretary. The amendments to the Act, which were to take effect on 1 January 1885, set out a detailed seven-year timetable for the assimilation of Aboriginal people of mixed descent over the age of 13 years. Assistance and amelioration would be gradually withdrawn as ‘the process of merging should be complete as soon as possible, after which all responsibility of the Government as regards them would cease—*finality* being thus attained’.⁶³

‘Finality’, according to the board, meant that the impacted Aboriginal adults would ‘be accounted in all respects free and equal citizens of the colony’ and Aboriginal children would:

From the earliest period of their recollection ... be accustomed to regard themselves as members of the community at large, and may not be constrained to carry with them through life the impressions of the indolent habits and manners of their original black friends.⁶⁴

61 Minute, 7 March 1883, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, NAA, B314, Roll 1, 422.

62 Minute, 5 March 1884, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, NAA, B314, Roll 1, 439.

63 Minute, 1 May 1884, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, NAA, B314, Roll 1, 445.

64 Minute, 1 May 1884, Meeting of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, NAA, B314, Roll 1, 445.

The board thus sought an end to financial impost on government, and to ensure the generational loss of Aboriginal culture and identity via assimilation into the ‘community at large’. As Uncle Roy observes:

Every tribe that went on Coranderrk, they tried to take their laws off them, their culture off them, their Dreamtime off them, everything. They had to learn the white people’s way and when the kids grew up, they never had their language or nothin’.⁶⁵

The Aborigines Protection Act, passed on 16 December 1886, led to the exile of 50 Aboriginal people of mixed descent from Coranderrk. Diane Barwick recorded that the majority went to Maloga Mission, receiving welcome in New South Wales thanks to clan ties in the Murray district. When Maloga Mission closed, these people relocated to a new government station, Cummeragunja. John Patterson and Lizzie Edmonds, the young couple who had grown up together at Coranderrk, were among these refugees. They married at Cummeragunja on New Year’s Day in 1891, both aged 22. Witnesses to the marriage, Willie Edmonds and Jane Patterson, were siblings of the bride and groom, suggesting that both extended families had joined the ‘influx of Coranderrk people’ that ‘began in 1884 after the new Act for “dispersing” half-castes and merging them with the general population was mooted, and became law in 1886’.⁶⁶ Forced from their home and into exile in New South Wales, the Coranderrk refugees were perceived by Maloga missionary Daniel Matthews as ‘sometimes insolent’ and willing to ‘defy any authority’.⁶⁷ Nancy Cato characterised the migrants as ‘the strongest willed, most vocal and disaffected’ of Aboriginal people, who ‘hated coercion’.⁶⁸ This independent spirit, combined with obligations back in Victoria, saw many Coranderrk families choose to return to the Healesville district. John and Lizzie Patterson, for example, had their first two children, Alexander and Lilian, at Cummeragunja in 1893. However, their third child, Thelma, was born at Coranderrk in 1895. The family returned to live near the old station, despite being ‘ineligible for aid or residence’, and ‘descendants of the pioneers—the Davis, Franklin, Harris, Hunter, Manton, Patterson, Rowan, Russell, Terrick and Wandin families ... camped in huts and tents to be near their “old people”’.⁶⁹

65 Roy Patterson, in conversation with Jennifer Jones, 3 March 2016, DS3001137.

66 Cato, *Mr Maloga*, 207.

67 Cato, *Mr Maloga*, 235.

68 Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 207.

69 Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 304.

This return to the Healesville district coincided with the development of a large-scale sawmilling industry in the eastern forests. The extension of the Victorian railways system to Healesville in 1889 saw the town develop as a railhead for a relatively stable local timber industry.⁷⁰ Healesville businessman and local identity Thomas Crowley opened a number of sawmills in the surrounding district after 1891, building a tramway to his Myers Creek mill and branch lines through the bush to reach remote timber.⁷¹ These timber enterprises and associated developments brought employment to the district. John Patterson gained reliable work in the timber industry, and the Patterson family made a permanent home at the Coranderrk Village Settlement, an '80 acre block of land outside the reserve fence'.⁷² Here they celebrated the births of Henry in 1898, Lydia in 1900 and Doris in 1902. John and Lizzie Patterson's youngest child, Frank Patterson (Uncle Roy's father), was born in Healesville in 1911. Family stability was made possible by local work opportunities and John Patterson's work ethic. As Uncle Roy recalled:

Me grandfather, he was a worker ... He was working hard fellin' the trees and bring the logs up with the draught horses. Me grandfather cut a lot of timber for the railway line between Healesville and Yarra Glen; with an axe and the old crosscut saw, a six-foot crosscut saw, five-pound plumb axe, hammer and big steel tree wedge. They brought the timber out by horse and dray, took it down to Healesville and then put it on the railway line. Me grandfather taught dad how to work timber, that was our way of life. The work was there, so they wouldn't go any further; that is why I grew up in Healesville.⁷³

Uncle Roy's family chose to remain at Healesville after Coranderrk closed as an Aboriginal reserve in February 1924 and remaining residents were transferred to Lake Tyres, Gippsland.⁷⁴ He explained:

My grandfather and father, uncles and aunties wouldn't go down there because their work was in Healesville. My grandfather said, 'I'm workin' here, my life is here ... I am not going down

70 Lennon, 'Wrecks and Ruins'.

71 Symonds, *Healesville*, 86.

72 Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 310.

73 Roy Patterson, in conversation with Jennifer Jones, 3 March 2016, DS3001137.

74 Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 310.

there'. My grandmother said, 'I'm not going down when my family is here, my husband is here, and the children are here. We stay here.'⁷⁵

Uncle Roy joined his father, uncles and brothers in the timber industry after completing his primary education:

One day my father said, 'How old are you Roy?' I said, 'I'm 14, why dad?' He said, 'Bring your schoolbooks home, you start work Monday'. So, I bought me schoolbooks home and Saturday he gave me an axe and he showed me how to sharpen it; it took me two days and I still couldn't do it properly; me father had to finish it off. My Uncle Henry, he taught me how to sharpen saws; taught me to use the circular saw, crosscut saw, hand saw. I used to be one of the best chainsaw operators around. I started working up the forest with my father, me eldest brother worked with dad and me. My other brothers worked in the timber mill. Dad used to drive us out; leave home at five o'clock in the morning and get back at half past six/seven at night, six days a week. I got 4/10- a week (\$9). Dad kept the £4 and give me 10 bob pocket money. In 1957, my father was killed. A tree come over the back of the dozer and hit him on the head and killed him. I was only 16. I was one of 10 children, born in the middle. When he was killed, I went into the sawmill and started as a rouseabout; pickin' up all the rubbish timber that was cut and throwin' it on the fire. Then I went what they call 'tailing out', at the back of the saw. I went to number one benchman, cutting the timber, running it through the saw.⁷⁶

This generational teamwork in the forests and mills not only supported the family financially, but also provided opportunity for Elders to pass down traditional knowledge and bush skills. As Uncle Roy recalls:

My grandfather taught me how to track; taught me what the animal was, to only hunt food enough to take home. When you go out to hunt you have to remember what the Elders taught ya; how to camouflage yourself by putting mud over ya to keep your odour away from the animal. When the kangaroos and emus can't smell ya, it's because of the mud. He taught me how to make

75 Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, 310.

76 Roy Patterson, in conversation with Jennifer Jones, 3 March 2016, DS3001137.

a weapon; that craft has gone now because me hands are no good.
The vibration of chainsaws, hammers, axes and the hard work
I done all me life buggered that hand up and the shoulder.⁷⁷

The physical demands of forest and mill work punished Uncle Roy's body, but such labour also gave him access to the bush and opportunity to learn from his Elders. This knowledge informs the next two chapters and motivated the writing of this book.

77 Roy Patterson, in conversation with Jennifer Jones, 3 March 2016, DS3001137.

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