

Dedication to Carol Kendall

This volume of *Aboriginal History* is dedicated to Carol Kendall, who died in January 2002.

Carol was an adopted child who was reunited with her Aboriginal mother Mary and her extended family when she was an adult. She was one of the minority who enjoyed a loving relationship with both her adopting and her Aboriginal families.

She learned of her Aboriginality only in her teens, when her parents, realising that she was bringing home a Koori boy to meet them, decided to tell her. Carol's life changed at that point. She later wrote:

When I was told I was Koori it confirmed some of my feelings that I had before and couldn't quite understand. Really I felt wonderful because this was the first information I had about who I was, me the real person, and I was Koori.

I met Carol first in the home that she shared with her husband Bruce and her children Belinda and Vanessa. It was about 1982, and she had asked Coral Edwards and me, representing Link-Up (NSW), to call on her to help her find her Aboriginal family and to reunite her with them. At that time she knew nothing of their identity.

Some unlucky people take ten years to find their families. Perhaps it was a sign of how much Carol was wanted in the cause that we were able to find her family in a day. Almost miraculously, we discovered that her mother Mary had been living in the same house in the Blue Mountains of NSW for many years, and was still there. Only three months later a joyful reunion took place.

Soon after meeting her mother, Carol joined the Link-Up management committee and, a few years later, became our president. As she represented the organisation in conferences all over the country she came to understand the breadth of the tragedy of separation in its many different histories and consequences. A decade later she was to put that understanding to a profound and different use.

Two years later Carol resigned the presidency in order to become a Link-Up case worker. This gave her the experience of working hand-in-hand with real clients in their long journey home. She brought to her fellow-sufferers her own fine and special qualities: the variety of historical experiences emanating from the life of her own family; her ability to listen and to empathise; her belief that it was possible for adoptive families, however wrongly they might have been put together, to form loving relationships with each other. Carol was a true reconciliator. Within year or two, on the retirement of Coral Edwards from Link-Up, Carol became the Co-ordinator of Link-Up.

It was in those middle years that Carol met her sister Jackie. Only Jackie and Carol knew the ecstasy of that meeting and what that late and unexpected association meant to each other.

With her new responsibilities came the third and most momentous phase of Carol's life as an Aboriginal person. Soon after the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families began work, Carol became one of the Commission's representatives on its Indigenous Advisory Council. She and Lola Edwards toured New South Wales for months, listening and responding to those who had endured the experience. Those close to Lola and Carol at the time well

Koories Come in All Colours

*I know I'm a Koorie
I've learned from my kin
But sometimes I'm questioned
On the colour of my skin*

*I'm questioned on this by both
Black and White
My culture and identity are my
legal right*

*My Aboriginality
I've searched for so long
But the doubts of others
Make it hard to belong*

*If you wouldn't make judgments
On just what you see
Then, maybe by chance
You'll see the real me.*

Carol Kendall

remember the fiery passion, compassion and stupendous energies they brought to those thousands of kilometres on the road; the exhausting, painful and tearful hearings; the strength of their reports. Part of the energy of the final report, *Bringing Them Home*, derived from Carol and Lola's commitment to its principles and the importance of its revelations.

Soon after the report was tabled the Sorry Day committee was formed, mostly in answer to the government's progressive distancing of itself from the report. Carol became its first Co-Chair, and when illness forced her to step back from that demanding role, she shared its Patronage with Malcolm Fraser.

She kept her illness at a distance. Friends learned that, when either visiting or telephoning, her physical condition would be last on the agenda, and usually not at all! Despite her worsening condition, the last few years and months before her death were full of joy and affection. Her fiftieth birthday celebrations provided an opportunity for so many of us to speak to her publicly of the love and respect which we felt for Carol. Her beloved family, not least the grandchildren, remained the base from which she sought to repair other families, and to help Australians to understand each other. Her largest project was that the rest of Australia should know and understand.

A booklet that she wrote for people using the Link-Up services contained a dedication written by Carol:

Special thanks to those people who had the courage and strength to share their stories, poems, joys and sorrows to give hope to those who may be wanting to find themselves.

No one gave more than Carol. The nation's Link-Up organisations owe her a huge debt. So does Australia.

Peter Read