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PREFACE

In January 2014 one of the showcase performances at the Sydney Festival was the Queensland Theatre Company's production of the new play *Black Diggers*. Written by Tom Wright, directed by Wesley Enoch and co-produced by the Queensland Theatre Company, the 105-minute play depicted the First World War experience of Aboriginal soldiers, drawing on key themes including long histories of colonialism, reasons to enlist, egalitarianism on the front, discrimination upon return, denial of veterans' benefits and the forgotten contributions of Aboriginal servicemen. The play successfully portrayed the diversity of experiences through clever use of the cast of nine actors across 60 scenes.

Black Diggers received rave reviews at the Sydney Festival and has contributed to a gradual awakening among non-Indigenous Australians about the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in defending Australia. After the play's successful run in Sydney and Brisbane, the Queensland Theatre Company received a grant from the Commonwealth arts minister to tour to Perth, Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide in 2015. *Black Diggers* was not the first play to commemorate Indigenous service, though it was the first to focus on the First World War. Earlier productions addressing Indigenous Second World War

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service included *In Our Town* (1992) and *The Sunshine Club* (1999), and Aboriginal Vietnam War service was the subject of *Seems Like Yesterday* (2000). What sets *Black Diggers* apart, though, is the national tour, high-profile venues such as the Sydney Opera House, and the national press.

The positive audience and public reception of *Black Diggers* has highlighted not only the need for more histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service, but also the great interest among all Australians in this important topic. As Australia commemorates the centenary of the First World War, many commentators are also looking back over the last century of Australian military service, and this book tells one piece of that story. Whereas *Black Diggers* portrays the First World War experience of Aboriginal servicemen and their families, this book looks at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service since the end of the Second World War.

This project began in December 2009 when Noah conducted his first interview in Canberra with Neil Macdonald, Gulf War veteran. Very quickly it became clear that this was going to be intensive, thought-provoking and exciting research. As we conducted more interviews, we were amazed at the diversity of experiences that came across in the stories. Every ex-serviceman and woman – whether they had experienced the trauma of Vietnam, been forcibly removed from their parents as children, used the Australian Defence Force to escape domestic service or felt pride in helping rebuild East Timor – had their own story to tell. Working in the archives was also interesting, as we uncovered stories of Aboriginal men prosecuted for not registering for national service, and RSL minutes indicating support for Indigenous veterans and the White Australia Policy at the same time.

Throughout this book, one guiding principle is Aboriginal historian Gordon Briscoe's statement: 'Historians are builders of narratives in that their work is always a work in progress.'¹ Oral historian Heather Goodall further argues that 'there is now a great need to be alert to the processes of history making in order to conceive projects which allow shared work

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in the early stages of these processes, not only at the end. These will be projects ... which take the risk of not knowing the answers to all the questions at the outset.² This book does not pretend to represent the complete history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander post–Second World War military service. Rather, aligning with Briscoe’s and Goodall’s sentiments, it contributes to commemorating the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service. The authors hope this book will facilitate further conversations about Indigenous contributions to their country’s defence, past and present.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this book contains images and names of persons who are deceased.

INTRODUCTION

Lance Corporal David Cook is an Aboriginal man of mixed descent born in Ebor in the New England region of New South Wales on 16 May 1945. This is the borderland of the Djungutti and Gumbaynggirr peoples, but David Cook does not self-identify with any specific Aboriginal mob. Around the time of David's tenth birthday, he and his four siblings were forcibly removed from their parents. David was placed in the notorious Kinchela Boys Home for three years before being fostered out with three of his sisters. At the age of 17 David enlisted in the army; he served two tours of duty in Vietnam before being discharged in 1968. In Vietnam, like so many other soldiers, David witnessed the horrors of war and lost close friends. Though he was a successful soldier liked by his peers, David's life spiralled out of control in the 1970s. He returned to Australia disillusioned by the unpopular war and suffered post-traumatic stress disorder as a consequence of both his troubled upbringing and his experiences in Vietnam. Cycles of violence, imprisonment and encounters with racism threatened to turn David into another Aboriginal statistic, until he got his life back on track through reconnecting with his siblings.¹

David Cook is one of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have served in the Australian armed

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forces. Despite Australia's history of persecution and injustice perpetrated against Indigenous Australians, they have regularly come forward to defend their country in times of war and peace. Every Australian Indigenous serviceman or woman has a distinct story of their childhood, reasons for enlisting, time spent in military service and the opportunities and obstacles encountered post-service. These individual life stories include themes of hardship, determination, discipline and hope. Taken collectively, the histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen and women indicate that for them the military historically represented an employment opportunity and a social paradigm quite different to civilian Australia. Military discipline, sentiments of mateship and the chance to acquire new skills opened previously locked doors for them, both within the armed forces and in their post-service civilian lives. This is not to say that the military experience was always smooth or free of racism; rather, military participation represented one particular route to Indigenous empowerment. Military service had ripple effects beyond just the individuals who served; it impacted on servicemen and women's families, their communities and the non-Indigenous men and women who served alongside them.

Since the turn of the new millennium, there has been growing interest within Australia – especially within Australian Indigenous communities – to commemorate the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service. Such commemorations have taken the form of Reconciliation services, ceremonies at deceased veterans' graves, Australian Indigenous marches on Anzac Day, the production of documentaries, the construction of memorials, and museum exhibitions. The bulk of these commemorations has focused on the two world wars – especially the Second World War – because those conflicts have more records relating to Indigenous military service and larger numbers of veterans. What has received less attention, though, is the history of military service in the post-Second World War era. This includes service in conflicts such as Korea, Malaya, Vietnam, East Timor, Iraq and

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Afghanistan, as well as women and men who served in non-combat roles in the regular, reserve and auxiliary services. This book fills some gaps in this recent history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service. Using both historical records and the life stories of Indigenous servicemen and women, it reconstructs the post-Second World War history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service and also examines the links between military service, civilian life and Australian Indigenous rights. Expanding the historical record beyond the two world wars allows Australians to reconceptualise the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service, including questioning some of the dominant narratives of Indigenous service extrapolated from the First and Second World War experiences.

Indigenous service to 1945

Beginning on the frontiers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have long fought to defend their country. After Federation, Aboriginal people also fought to defend the Australian nation and even the British Empire in the Boer War, and the First and Second World Wars. Often they were treated as equals within the armed forces but returned home to continuing discrimination – both in individual circumstances and institutionally.

Defending their country: Frontier wars

Some Australian Indigenous service personnel consider their work as continuing a long tradition of defence of country dating back to the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. For instance, Aboriginal ex-serviceman Jeff McCormack asserts of frontier resistance fighters: ‘But you know they’re the people that have got to be highlighted as Australian heroes. All you hear about is the Vietnam heroes, the Malayan heroes, the Afghani heroes and all that sort of stuff, you know. We don’t hear about the real heroes – that I’d class as the real heroes – that fought with boomerangs

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and spears against rifles and all sorts of stuff, you know they'd be the heroes to try and keep their own country. To me they are the real heroes.'²

The topic of frontier conflict is contentious, particularly when determining whether or not Aboriginal resistance to colonialism constitutes 'military service'. Technically Aboriginal people defending their lands were not enlisted in a military, just as many of the white men and women in frontier conflicts were not members of police, army or militias (though some, of course, were). Moreover, there were also Aboriginal men who served in native police forces that were sent to hunt down and kill other Aboriginal people on the frontiers. Frontiers were fluid, and it is difficult to point to particular battles, let alone front lines. There was never any official declaration of war, although there are colonial documents that refer to the situation as being in a state of war; the fact that the frontier conflicts in Tasmania are collectively known as the Black War is particularly telling. Prominent Australian military historians such as Jeffrey Grey and John Connor describe the frontier conflicts as wars that form part of Australia's military history; Henry Reynolds recently dubbed the frontier wars as Australia's 'forgotten war'.³

The Australian War Memorial itself has grappled with the difficult question of whether or not to commemorate Indigenous resistance to colonialism as a 'war'.⁴ Though there are passionate opinions across the issue, what is clear is that many Aboriginal people and military historians have argued that frontier conflicts should be recognised as wars and the sacrifices Aboriginal people made should be commemorated in the Australian War Memorial and other sites. Since 2011, Aboriginal Tent Embassy members have even marched behind the official Canberra Anzac Day parade carrying banners reading 'Lest we forget the frontier wars'.⁵

The frontier wars began shortly after the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 and followed similar patterns – albeit manifested differently – wherever and whenever British settlement spread. Frontier war tactics included Aboriginal people preparing revenge parties, embarking on long-term surveillance of settlers, sabotaging European goods and, of course,

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spearing settlers. Europeans, for their part, shot Aboriginal people, perpetrated massacres, committed acts of sexual violence and were even known to poison flour.⁶ Among the more high-profile Aboriginal resistance fighters were Pemulwuy in Sydney and Jandamarra in the Kimberley of Western Australia. Pemulwuy was a Bidjigal man responsible for several raids on settlers beginning in 1792 before ultimately being shot dead in 1802. Jandamarra was a Bunuba warrior who waged a guerrilla war against pastoralists and police in the Kimberley from 1894 to 1897. His rebellion, too, came to an end when he was gunned down. These men only graze the surface of Indigenous resistance fighters, but they have been recognised in literature and documentaries, and have become prominent symbols of Aboriginal defence against invasion.⁷

Abandoned overseas? The Boer War, 1899–1902

By the turn of the twentieth century, while frontier wars were still raging in the northern and central regions of Australia, in other parts of the continent Aboriginal people had been marginalised and forced to live on reserves and missions. Meanwhile, from 1899 to 1902, the British Empire waged war against Afrikaner Boer settlers for control of South Africa. The Australian colonies – federated as the Commonwealth of Australia from 1901 – sent about 16,000 troops to the Boer War. Among these soldiers were at least ten Aboriginal men who managed to sign up and serve as regular soldiers. A small number of other Aboriginal men were employed as trackers. The records about these trackers are sparse. They came from multiple Australian states; some were not formally enlisted in the armed forces because the British War Office opposed the enlistment of ‘coloureds’; their employment as bush trackers in the Boer War was not dissimilar to work with police in Australian states at that time. Because these men were not formally enlisted, most names are unknown and there are no service records. More troubling, though, are suggestions that some of these Aboriginal men may have been left behind in South Africa. A 1907 report from the Commonwealth Agent in South Africa

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suggests that immigration restrictions indicative of the White Australia Policy may have barred the repatriation of these men.⁸ The stories of the Aboriginal men who fought in the Boer War disappeared from the historical record, and the fate of those men and their descendants remains a mystery. Currently other historians are conducting research on Aboriginal Australians in the Boer War and the fate of the trackers, which will fill this significant gap in the historical record.

Defending empire or country? The First World War, 1914–18

Shortly after the Boer War and Federation, the Commonwealth parliament passed the *Defence Act* in 1903. In 1909, amendments to the *Defence Act* established a system of compulsory military training for Australian males but exempted from this training and wartime service ‘Persons who are not substantially of European origin or descent, of which the medical authorities appointed under the regulations shall be the judges’.⁹ While this released Aboriginal people from *compulsory* military service, whether or not they could still *voluntarily* enlist in the armed forces during a time of war was an ambiguous matter not addressed in the legislation.

The question of Aboriginal enlistment not surprisingly arose at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. In the early years of the war, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) interpreted the *Defence Act* to preclude Aboriginal enlistment. The military recruiters’ handbook explicitly stated, ‘Aborigines and halfcastes are not to be enlisted. This restriction is to be interpreted as applying to all coloured men.’¹⁰ During the period 1914–16, those Aboriginal men who managed to enlist were exceptions to the rule. They circumvented regulations through a variety of means, such as pretending to be Māori, Italian or Indian, using white connections in influential positions or merely by oversight on the part of medical officers. By late 1916, with mounting Australian casualties after the Battle of Pozières, the demands for service personnel exerted pressure on the AIF and the Commonwealth government. The failure of the first conscription plebiscite in December 1916 meant that the

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AIF needed more flexible recruiting strategies if it were to maintain an independent status within the British forces. Consequently, from March 1917, a change of regulations permitted the enlistment of Aboriginal men of mixed descent, provided that one parent was white. The number of Aboriginal recruits jumped, especially in Queensland due to the encouragement of Chief Protector of Aborigines JW Bleakley. Western Australia, incidentally, continued to exclude Aboriginal recruits and consequently had the lowest proportion of Aboriginal servicemen in the AIF. By the end of the First World War, approximately 1000 Aboriginal men had served in the AIF. Of 545 Aboriginal soldiers identified by historian Timothy Winegard, 83 were killed in action, 123 were wounded and another 17 had been prisoners of war.¹¹

Why 1000 Aboriginal men signed up to serve a country that had regularly discriminated against them and their kin is a difficult question to answer. Though each man had his own rationales to sign up for the war effort, some common reasons include: to seek adventure, the opportunity for better wages and hopes for equal rights during and after the war. Loyalty also appears in several Aboriginal servicemen's records as a motivating factor; letters from Aboriginal families, especially after the war, describe their men fighting 'for King and country'.

Service records, newspaper articles, photographs and family testimonies suggest that, with some exceptions, the First World War soldier experience tended to be egalitarian for Aboriginal men. There is evidence of mateship with non-Indigenous compatriots; wounded Aboriginal men were treated in the same hospitals as whites; those who died on the battlefields were buried in the same cemeteries. Scarring, shell shock, homesickness and mischief off the battlefield were all as common for Aboriginal servicemen as for non-Indigenous soldiers. Three identified Aboriginal Australians were awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, nine the Military Medal, three were Mentioned in Despatches and one received the Military Cross. Winegard argues that had Aboriginal men been allowed to enlist earlier in the war – when Australian combat was

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not primarily on the Western Front – there probably would have been even more Aboriginal servicemen with distinctions.¹²

Unfortunately for Aboriginal veterans, the return to Australia meant a return to discrimination under the law and prejudice in society. Restrictions in each state on Aboriginal people handling money made it difficult for Aboriginal men to access war gratuities. In Queensland part of Aboriginal soldiers' pay had been set aside in accounts under the administration of the Department of Native Affairs; this money would form part of unpaid wage or government entitlements collectively known as Stolen Wages. Across the country, widows or dependants of deceased Aboriginal servicemen were not allowed access to pensions, which were under control of state Native Welfare authorities. Aboriginal men were denied access to soldier settlement schemes, and in some states authorities closed Aboriginal reserves and sold the land off for soldier settlement. The only Aboriginal men known to have been granted a soldier settlement allotment – such as New South Welshman George Kennedy of the 6th Light Horse Regiment and Victorian Percy Pepper of the 21st Infantry Battalion – were successful because the authorities did not realise they were Aboriginal.

Aboriginal veterans continued to be denied rights afforded to non-Indigenous Australians, such as the right to drink, freedom of movement and even custody of their own children. Child-removal practices in every state affected the families of Aboriginal veterans, and chief protectors even threatened Aboriginal men who 'agitated' for rights with the possibility of removing their children or banishing the veterans to faraway reserves.¹³ A memo from the Department of Repatriation summarised the unchanged status of Aboriginal veterans thus: 'The fact of an aboriginal having served with the A.I.F. does not remove him from the care or supervision exercisable by the Board appointed for the protection of Aborigines under the Aborigines Act [NSW, 1909]. neither [sic] does it relieve that Board of its duties towards the aboriginal.'¹⁴

Continuing discrimination engendered disenchantment among

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many Aboriginal veterans of the First World War, and they received only limited support at best from the non-Indigenous veterans' community. Aboriginal veterans and the families of those deceased wrote letters to newspapers, chief protectors and politicians, arguing that the sacrifices they made should afford them equal rights within Australia. They took pride in their war service and wanted it recognised by the wider Australian community. Yet still many Aboriginal men were often not allowed to march in Anzac Day parades and white Australians ignored Aboriginal families at Anzac Day commemorations.

The Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (currently the Returned and Services League or RSL)¹⁵ varied in its treatment of Aboriginal veterans because the local branches had much autonomy. There is some evidence of individual non-Indigenous RSL members speaking out in favour of Aboriginal citizenship rights. There is also correspondence in some veterans' service records showing the RSL actively advocating on behalf of Aboriginal veterans in requests for replacement discharges, repatriation benefits or even to secure replacement medals. In 1931–32 the New South Wales RSL branch sought to compile a list of Aboriginal veterans of the AIF and sent circulars to Aboriginal protectors throughout Australia. The RSL published the lists in issues of its magazine *Reveille*. Notwithstanding these examples of support for Aboriginal veterans, there is more evidence of RSL branches not admitting Aboriginal veterans except on Anzac Day or of RSLs actively lobbying in favour of segregation ordinances.¹⁶ Overall, the RSL's occasional interest in Aboriginal veterans' welfare reflected wider trends in Australian society. Very quickly, Aboriginal service in the First World War became relegated to a forgotten memory, retained principally in the families and communities of Aboriginal veterans.

Fighting at home and abroad: The Second World War, 1939–45

When Australia went to war against Germany in 1939, the expansion of the Second AIF, Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and Royal Australian

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Air Force (RAAF) went along similar lines to the First World War. Once again, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men – and this time women as well – were excluded under regulations stating ‘that the admission of aliens or of British subjects of non-European origin or descent to the Australian Defence Forces is undesirable in principle, but that a departure from this principle is justified in order to provide for the special needs of any of the Services during the war’.¹⁷ Even so, like in the First World War, a number of Aboriginal men and women managed to enlist despite the prejudicial regulations. Medical officers either overlooked the regulations or sometimes interpreted discriminatory state definitions of Aboriginality not to include so-called half-castes and quadroons. Consequently, approximately 300–400 Aboriginal people enlisted during the period 1939–41.¹⁸

The threat of Japanese invasion changed Australia’s entire war situation, and it also impacted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. During 1941, as the Australian government feared Japan’s expansionist aspirations, the military drafted plans to form Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander units to protect the largely undefended north coast. Two all-Indigenous forces were formed: the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion (TSLI) and Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit (NTSRU). The TSLI was a group of approximately 440 Torres Strait Islander men who had regularly enlisted in the army. Their job was to patrol the Torres Strait and to provide mechanical and logistical support for ships passing through. This unit received significant praise from superiors and visiting officers, yet its Indigenous members received less pay than non-Indigenous men serving in the same unit. Moreover, like the experience of many First World War Aboriginal servicemen, part of their wages was quarantined by the Queensland chief protector of Aborigines and became part of the Stolen Wages. It would not be until 1982 that surviving members of the TSLI received back pay valued at over seven million dollars.¹⁹

The NTSRU was quite different from the TSLI. Planning for the

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force began in 1941 when Lieutenant Colonel WJR Scott approached anthropologist-turned-serviceman Dr Donald Thomson with the idea of forming a guerrilla unit of Yolngu men to patrol Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Thomson adopted the idea and on 15 February 1942 – four days before the bombing of Darwin – he set sail for Arnhem Land. From February 1942 to April 1943 Thomson organised and commanded a group of 51 Yolngu men, training them to use traditional bush tactics and weaponry to fight a guerrilla war against any Japanese invaders. The group operated within a traditional framework, using spears rather than guns. They embarked on patrols of Arnhem Land, constructed outposts and were prepared to launch assaults on potential Japanese invaders. They received no payment except for basic trade goods such as fish hooks, wire and tobacco. The force disbanded in April 1943 as war matters made it less necessary and other white units arose to patrol the sparsely defended north. It would not be until 1992 that surviving members of the NTSRU and deceased members' families were awarded back pay for their service.²⁰

Both the NTSRU and the TSLI formed out of anticipation of Japanese aggression, which did indeed come to fruition in December 1941. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the desperate need for more service personnel left recruiters essentially ignoring the regulations against enlistment of persons not substantially of European descent. Consequently, by the end of the Second World War, at least 3000 Aboriginal people and 850 Torres Strait Islanders served in the Australian armed forces. With the exception of those in the specialised Indigenous units outlined above, these men and women were integrated with non-Indigenous service personnel.

Similar to the First World War experiences of their fathers and uncles, Indigenous servicewomen and men overwhelmingly reported being treated as equals – often for the first time in their lives. Military service broke down racial barriers and provided opportunities for Indigenous people to learn skills often inaccessible in civilian life. The motivations to

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serve in the Second World War were also similar to the First World War: better wages, an opportunity to escape the mission or reserve, adventure, defending country and loyalty to Australia. An additional motivation for some Aboriginal people was to continue service traditions begun by their fathers and uncles in the First World War. For those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote regions, service in the war meant patrolling and defending their traditional lands from outside invasion.²¹

The demand for workers in remote regions also led the Australian Army to set up special labour camps to house and employ Aboriginal labourers throughout the Northern Territory. At these camps Aboriginal men and women from the surrounding areas were responsible for handling cargo, driving, construction and food preparation. In some ways conditions in these camps represented progress over their prewar situations because of improved housing, sanitation and respect afforded by non-Indigenous soldiers. Yet still their wages were unequal despite often performing the same tasks as formally enlisted soldiers, and pressure from local pastoralists ensured that Aboriginal people did not receive significant wage increases for fear of disrupting the civilian status quo. Besides the labour camps, Aboriginal people on the north coast worked with local RAAF and army patrols as trackers, to construct airfields, to guard bases and to carry out general labour tasks. Aboriginal residents worked with white missionaries as coastwatchers, and Aboriginal people were victims of Japanese bombings in places such as Milingimbi, Katherine, Darwin, Broome, Derby and Kalumburu. Most of these Aboriginal men and women never received adequate compensation for their war efforts or for their losses.²²

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans of the Second World War returned to a changed Australia, yet one that continued to discriminate against them. The Commonwealth and state governments recognised their valiant war service with only minor reforms. Most prominent among these reforms was an amendment to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act* in 1949 granting Indigenous veterans the vote. Western Australia

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passed legislation allowing Aboriginal veterans and others to apply for special ‘certificates of citizenship’ that would exempt them from restrictions imposed by the *Aborigines Act*. The cost of such certificates was the requirement that bearers sever ties with Aboriginal kin and communities.²³ What successful Second World War service did overall was ‘confirm’ among Commonwealth and state authorities that Aboriginal people were clearly ‘ready’ to assimilate into mainstream Australia. Assimilation policies would dominate Australian Indigenous affairs until the early 1970s, and as such they would also have a significant impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen and women in the post–Second World War era.

Indigenous service after 1945

Amid the assimilation policies and Aboriginal activism of the 1950s to 1970s, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women continued to serve in the Australian armed forces. Indigenous men fought in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam; Indigenous women served in Australia in the reconstituted women’s services. During the self-determination era of the 1970s to 1990s, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women continued to serve in peacekeeping missions, the Gulf War and East Timor. These men and women’s life stories both intersected with the dominant narrative of Indigenous affairs during the post–Second World War era and carved their own trajectories. As this book highlights, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the armed forces since 1945 has represented an opportunity for personal advancement, learning skills and often escaping the limitations imposed by assimilation policies in civilian Australia. Many Indigenous ex-servicemen and women later returned to their communities as fighters for Indigenous advancement at the grassroots. They were not activists per se; rather, they were advocates for Indigenous empowerment and sought opportunities to succeed in mainstream Australia on their own terms. This book charts

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the history of those individuals who served, and also how Australian Indigenous experiences in the armed forces since 1945 reflected the continuing changes in civilian Australia.

Chapter 1 begins with the end of the Second World War and the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan. The chapter also examines Indigenous service in the Korean War and Malayan Emergency, and the quiet changes to military policy in the 1950s regarding Indigenous service. The topic of chapter 2 is the RSL, Australia's most significant services organisation, and its evolving relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans, particularly during the period 1945–72. Chapter 3 examines the role of the at least 300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who served during the Vietnam War, including their experiences confronting the difficulties of guerrilla war, the conditions in Nui Dat, their return to a disillusioned Australia, and their experiences of readjustment difficulties and post-traumatic stress disorder. Chapter 4 examines how and why Indigenous women participated in the women's services in 1951–85. Chapter 5 analyses the complexities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences and perceptions of racial discrimination in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and its predecessors. Chapter 6 looks at the experiences of Indigenous service personnel during the self-determination and Reconciliation eras, and the ways in which the Department of Defence and ADF have responded to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen and women. The epilogue reflects on commemorations of Indigenous military service and the lessons that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military experience can teach about Australia's past and its future directions.