

# ABORIGINAL VIOLENCE AGAINST AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS

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***“He who controls the past controls the future, and he who controls the present controls the past.”***

This quote from George Orwell’s “1984” succinctly explains the motivation behind the falsification of Australian history and prehistory, as well as art censorship and the vilification of anyone who expresses a politically incorrect opinion in relation to Aboriginal policy.

In fact, “1984” well illustrates the reality in Australia in 2013. Since the early 1980s, there have been orchestrated efforts to reinvent Australian history and prehistory, to silence all dissent, to persecute and often legally prosecute anyone who “offends” Aborigines. This includes artists and researchers who attempt to publish politically incorrect research findings or theories which do not support Aboriginal political goals.

We now have a new jargon which mirrors Orwellian Newspeak. Tendentious terms such as “cultural sensitivity”, “spiritual ownership”, “intangible heritage”, “sacred law”, “traditional owners”, and “the first people”, have become so established that few dare to question their validity or, indeed, their meaning or lack thereof.

The Australian public has been force-fed misconceptions that are now embedded in the Australian psyche. One of these is the claim by Aborigines that they hold copyright over any image, pattern or design, even over prehistoric and pre-Aboriginal cave art, as well as the claim that intellectual property law applies to universal ideas. Both claims are contrary to current Australian law but are supported by bureaucrats and taxpayer-funded lawyers<sup>1</sup>. As a consequence, Australian artists and researchers are being terrorised on the basis of false premises.

So our Australian “newspeak” has become a weapon in the war on “politically incorrect” art. “Politically correct” art, science and literature can be defined as work with “permission” by Aborigines and “approval” by their representatives and lawyers. This notion is supported, controlled and dictated by taxpayer funded organisations that protect Aboriginal political interests<sup>2</sup>.

Australian artists who upset Aborigines are attacked in a knee-jerk fashion, usually starting with vilification and false accusations. A few slanderous remarks serve to incite anger and hatred, with the next step being physical violence and vandalism.

The victims of Aboriginal violence often say that the worst and most acrimonious attacks come not from Aboriginal people, but from self-appointed “protectors” of the Aboriginal industry. This kind of people was accurately described by “former professional Aborigine” Kerry Pholi<sup>3</sup>. Add the army of lawyers, who are happy to spend their careers concocting ludicrous theories about Aboriginal past and present, even trying to include “Aboriginal law” with its brutal traditions into Australian legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> See links to “Request for defunding of the Arts Law Centre of Australia” and “Forbidden Art, Politicised Archaeology and Orwellian Politics in Australia” at [www.modrogorje.com](http://www.modrogorje.com)

<sup>2</sup> These include the Arts Law Centre, the Australian Council for the Arts, as well as several hundred Aboriginal Land Councils all over Australia – with 120 of such taxpayer-funded unmonitored organisations in NSW alone.

<sup>3</sup> Quadrant, December 2012, <http://www.quadrant.org.au/magazine/issue/2012/12>

## Inventing a culture that does not exist

Emeritus Professor Dr John Mulvaney, a prehistorian, has been fighting for the right to conduct free intellectual enquiry and scientific research into pre-Aboriginal archaeology since the early 1980s. In 2012 he summed up the sorry state of Australian archaeology: ***“It is all now being made up; they are inventing a culture that does not exist.”*** Keith Windschuttle also addressed this practice of making things up, in his insightful article ***“Sacred tradition invented yesterday”***<sup>4</sup>.

Anyone conducting even cursory research would quickly establish that dot-style painting was introduced by a non-aboriginal art teacher – Geoffrey Bardon – who in 1971 went to Papunya and taught Aboriginal children to paint.

Another “sacred tradition”, the “welcome-to-country” ceremony, is another one of those practices which are “unauthentic but embraced by the sanctimonious who feel the need to publicly display some tokenistic relationship with people they may never see, let alone meet and converse with” so we now have to cope with “the appalling paternalistic sanctimony of the welcome-to-country ceremonies that every kumbayah coffee klatch has now embraced”. One of the reasons being that it provides an “income stream” for mostly white “professional Aborigines” who extract \$250 to \$350 in Sydney and Canberra to perform this “politically-correct humbug”<sup>5</sup>.

In fact, the pious ritual of a “traditional” welcome-to-country was made up in Perth in 1976 by entertainers Ernie Dingo and Richard Walley.

In art and archaeology we also find people and organisations that keep insisting on ludicrous claims, and deliberately lie in order to enforce art censorship and destroy free scientific enquiry<sup>6</sup>.

Australian democracy is turning into tyranny as far as art and archaeology are concerned.

In art, Aboriginal interests are enforced through violence, vandalism and bullying of artists by legal practitioners, while in archaeology it has become a case of legally-sanctioned fraud. As is done in the establishment of every dictatorial regime, the “programmers of the future” and social engineers have to change history first.

Australians, especially those unfamiliar with totalitarian regimes, are unaware that the recent proposal by the Labor government and the Nicola Roxon idea of introducing the notion of “offence” into Australian law is a direct parallel to communist tactics in European countries. In order to terrorise artists, writers, poets, priests and any intellectual who refused to walk the party line, the communists introduced an offence called “verbal delict” into their Penal Code.

The Labor intention to legally sanction “disobedient” artists and free-thinkers and prosecute them for painting, saying or thinking anything that “offends” Aborigines parallels the cruel regimes which have since crumbled in Europe. Roxon even adopted the communist line when saying that the intention is to “make sure that people are educated in what is proper behaviour” – echoing slogans from Stalin’s or Mao’s “cultural revolution” and practice as was enforced through their “re-education camps”, where the disobedient were taken for brainwashing.

One of the first steps in communism was to falsify history. Adjusting history to suit a predetermined goal, lays the foundation for shaping the present and ultimately to define the future. Our Australian reality, or our perception of the reality of today, is being built on lies.

In the Machiavellian manner, art, archaeology and politics have all become instruments in the creation of a society in which ignorance replaces knowledge and the un-culture dominates culture.

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<sup>4</sup> Quadrant, December 2012

<sup>5</sup> Piers Akerman, Daily Telegraph, March 2010

<sup>6</sup> “*Forbidden Art, Politicised Archaeology and Orwellian Politics in Australia*”, October 2012

The social degradation and breakdown of democracy is apparent. Our Australian culture, based on the values of Western civilisation, with its work ethic, appreciation of critical thinking, and recognition of the importance of personal responsibility, is in decline. This decline is mostly the consequence of the naïve glorification of some imaginary past culture.

However, we also see encouraging signs that the Australian public is waking up and starting to realise something is very wrong with this ideology. People are now questioning why we should adopt naïve idealism, emotionalism, cheap sentiment and lack of critical thinking by those benefiting from the Aboriginal industry. They increasingly reject the idealised image of Aboriginal culture of which we find no evidence in reality.

And what happened to all the values that we as Australians hold sacred? We no longer seem to have the right to think, to have an opinion, to formulate our own theories, and to create art, without fear of Aboriginal violence.

***“In Australia today, our mind is not allowed to process what our eyes can see.”*** Even people who do not like Andrew Bolt had to agree with this definition of what we have to cope with today.

One of the unintended consequences of ill-conceived government policy towards Aborigines is the escalation of Aboriginal violence in all its forms.

After the riots and clashes between Aborigines and Pacific Islanders in Logan in January 2013, minister Andrew Laming was forced to apologise for his rhetorical question whether the rioters are “working or are they all on welfare?” Do we not have the right to know?

However, his remark was called “inflammatory” and “disrespectful”. Why would anyone be forced to show respect for a rioting mob?

Another logical question that any casual observer would ask is “Why did the police not charge the rioters?” According to the ABC news, the police did not press charges because they feared that such action would enrage the mob even further.

This has become the standard response. The police are not allowed to act, and if they do – even mildly, trying to restore the order – they are questioned and vilified for “provoking” the mob. At the same time, Aboriginal representatives who constantly make offensive comments, incite hatred and encourage violence, are never asked to justify or expected to apologise.

There are three main forms of Aboriginal violence:

1. intra-racial, among themselves in their own communities or in their “tribal lands”;
2. inter-racial, towards mainstream society; and
3. self-violence, as evidenced by soaring suicide rates in Aboriginal communities, and other forms of self-harm.

Violence in the second category, towards mainstream society, can be divided into several subclasses. These include non-physical forms of violence, such as verbal violence – with public humiliation, slander and vilification of anyone who upsets them.

There is also psychological violence – with stalking, bullying, including internet bullying and obscene and threatening phone calls.

Finally, there is violence-by-proxy, as evidenced in legally unfounded accusations and threats of court action by legal firms and harassment by local bureaucrats, as another form of pressure that has emerged in relation to art.

## Aboriginal violence against artists – too low a priority to tackle?

Because of the severity of the problem, with such extreme physical violence within Aboriginal communities, as well as soaring suicide rates, violence against artists is still considered to be a low priority. However, this is just an aspect of the culture of violence that has become acceptable, even condoned by some segments of our society.

One of the most significant examples of Aboriginal violence against contemporary Australian artists was a case of the *Wanjina Watchers in the Whispering Stone* sculpture by Sydney artist Benedikt Osváth, created in Katoomba in 2010 in collaboration with the ModroGorje Gallery owner Vesna Tenodi. Aboriginal campaign of inciting hatred and violence started a year previously, when in 2009 Ms Tenodi published a book *Dreamtime Set in Stone*, including a series of conversations with Aboriginal elder Goomblar Wylo and illustrated with *Wanjina Watchers* paintings by Sydney painter Gina Sinozich.

It escalated when the *Wanjina Watchers in the Whispering Stone* sculpture was displayed in front of the gallery. What started with false accusations of the artist being in breach of copyright, quickly escalated into vandalism and death threats.

As the first step, Aboriginal objectors applied insults, verbal abuse and threats, knowing from experience that a few threats of violence are usually sufficient to intimidate any artist into compliance. That quickly progressed to repeated vandalism of the artwork and the gallery, as well as death threats. Finally, there was violence-by-proxy, including a malicious hate campaign by internet trolls.

In the *Wanjina Watchers* case, the cycle of violence was completed when local bureaucrats and the Arts Law Centre stepped in, decided to manipulate planning law and enforce art censorship to pacify the objectors.

The vandalised *Wanjina Watchers in the Whispering Stone* sculpture was removed, relocated to Sydney and repaired. But the violence goes on – in a form of vilification of the DreamRaiser artists, open threats on the internet by trolls who keep inciting hate and encouraging more violence. A post by a Katoomba Aborigine on his website includes a threat to the artist, which reads:

*“I am coming to your house you white cunt not tonite but i’ll be there waiting for you in the dark”*

Too vulgar for print? Well, that is exactly the way they talk and the type of threats that makes people cringe and run for cover. Nobody wants to see an Aborigine loitering around their home, stalking them, or waiting for them in the dark. Many of the local residents in the Blue Mountains, who supported the DreamRaiser Project artists, were quickly silenced with such threats, while Katoomba police openly admitted they were powerless. Instead, the police advice to the ModroGorje gallery owners was:

*“Cut your losses and run away while you can, these people will never stop, they’ll keep it up until they completely trash your house, destroy your art and run you out of town... or worse... And we cannot stop them, these people cannot change...”*

The bureaucrats and lawyers seem unconcerned with Aboriginal violence against artists. With their blind support for their Aboriginal clients, they keep condoning unlawful behaviour and encouraging more violence. Most of them don’t know much about art, and are oblivious to the double standard applied to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists. Aboriginal artists can help themselves to any imagery, patterns and designs, and use modern materials they had never known until the arrival of Western civilisation. At the same time, they can attack and vilify any artist who draws on any motif which they claim “belongs to them”. Today, they even claim “ownership” of the dot style which they learned from non-Aboriginal Australian teacher Geoffrey Bardon.

**The truth is simple: there is no copyright on any “sacred image”, from any tradition – be it a major religion or a stone-age animistic cult – and every artist is free to use such imagery. There is no copyright or ownership of patterns and styles, and there is no ownership of ideas.**

If Aboriginal artists want to forbid anyone to draw inspiration from any ancient motifs without their “permission”, they must in turn drop everything that does not belong to their “tradition”.

Some of Australian artists terrorised by Aborigines:

**Margaret Preston** (1875 – 1963) was the first artist to adopt and incorporate Aboriginal motifs into her artwork. She was vilified for her Aboriginal-inspired paintings and use of cross-hatch pattern. She was accused of “appropriating Aboriginal motifs”. In her fascination with primitive art she could have said that she was drawing on any prehistoric culture in the world – as there are the same basic motives and patterns found in Palaeolithic and Neolithic cultures all over the world – and would have escaped the grief given to her by angry objectors. But, as any rational person, she could not have expected her use of decorative, ethnographic patterns would attract such fury. Unlike those who had gone before her, and deemed Aboriginal patterns as unworthy of attention, she was the first artist to actually elevate primitive art. What was until then perceived as ethnographic material was redefined as having a potential to be incorporated in modern art, and she helped in opening the door to move it from the ethnographic museums into art galleries.

**Elizabeth Durack** (1915 – 2000) was another artist who adapted “Aboriginal” motifs. But she did so by using an alter ego, a penname of Eddie Burrup. “Eddie’s” art was admired and glorified. What happened when it became known the artist behind those paintings was in fact Elizabeth Durack? There was outrage, attacks and vilification.

Which shows that Durack’s objectors had little understanding of what art is. They seem to believe that what matters is the artist, not the art. How can a work of art be glorified if told it was made by an Aborigine, and demonised if made by a non-Aborigine? Most art historians agree that the ‘real’ identity of the artist is completely irrelevant when assessing the ‘truth’ and the underlying significance to be found in any painting. The same as with *Guernica*, its significance is quite independent of the fact that it was painted by Pablo Picasso.

However, today we are finding new appreciation for this vilified artist. Over Durack’s paintings as Eddie Burrup, the critics were raving, saying that “the work of her last creative phase – *The Art of Eddie Burrup* – transcends all that went before. But the sanctimonious gate-keepers of “Aboriginal art” dubbed Elizabeth Durack a “colonialist” and proceeded to impute base motives to her adoption of the Eddie Burrup name.

Her art, displayed as the work of Eddie Burrup, moved people to tears; it was applauded and hailed as that of a genius. The irony is that, for the very same work, Elizabeth Durack was vilified, ridiculed and defamed.

A number of contemporary artists share the same fate.

**Imants Tillers** was viciously attacked in mid 1980’s, for his “appropriation” of Aboriginal motifs in creating a government-funded mural. In a conciliatory mode, he offered to collaborate with an Aboriginal artist, Jagamara, to pacify the objectors. But then, Jagamara was also attacked, for being of the “wrong tribe” and of the “wrong age”. The project was dropped, as Tillers realised there will be no end to Aboriginal harassment.

Imputation of base motives is another standard accusation. Among other usual mantras such as “you are stealing our culture”, “you must have our permission”, the most significant one is “you must pay”. Yes, it is all about the money. Pay for it and you are no longer stealing. And it is “very sacred” only until you offer enough money.

This was well illustrated in the “*Art from the Heart*” documentary released in 1998. Some of Aboriginal artists themselves said they are painting only for the money. At the suggestive questions and leading commentaries such as, “But you also paint because it is part of your spirituality, right?”, “there are important cultural reasons as well” some artists did not get the hint but just laughed, and kept repeating “No, mate, I do it for money.” “No other reason?” “No, no. Just for the money, mate.”

**Cameron Hayes**, a Melbourne artist, was recently attacked for his paintings depicting what he saw around himself. His motives were questioned – but he refused to play that explain-yourself game. He dismissed his objectors by saying, “My personal motives are nobody’s business.” Which is true enough, and is a good response. Artists should not be forced to explain themselves. What they think and why they paint what they paint is indeed nobody’s business. They do not have to explain their art. They should be free to create without aggressive pretenders insulting them. They should be free to display and sell their own work without fear of violence.

**Lucas Grogan**, another Melbourne artist, also has had enough of this nonsense. To his critics, who objected to his use of cross-hatch pattern, in an echo of the Durack case, he responds in messages incorporated into his art. One of them depicts an Aborigine with multiple arms, with fingers pointing in all direction, surrounded with a text: “*Laying the Blame*”. The message is clear: Look at yourself! Stop blaming everyone else for your own misery. Snap out of that nonsense!

It does indicate that Australian artists have had enough, were pushed too far, and are now pushing back. They are no longer willing to be passive victims of political correctness. They now refuse to keep explaining themselves and to be dragged into protracted “negotiations” with Aborigines, and to yield to unlawful demands to pay for a “permission” to create art.

**Michael Galovich**, a Sydney artist who creates sacral art deriving from Eastern European religious icons, also incorporated Aboriginal patterns and motifs into his art. For his paintings of the Ayers Rock, created in his Sydney studio, he was forced to pay \$250 for a “permit” by the Aranda tribe, which allowed him to paint the Ayers Rock for a year. He had to fill in a 30-page application form. And he did. Why? Did he not know that no one needs a “permit” to paint a landscape feature? “What good does it do me, knowing that it is my right, if they’ll keep harassing me?” he said. “It’s easier to just pay, to get them off my back.”

But every time an artist yields to some ludicrous demand, it further encourages the aggressive ones and makes it more difficult for other artists to assert their rights.

**Gina Sinozich**, a Sydney painter, was viciously abused and humiliated by a group of violent Aborigines in 2009 for her *Wanjina Watchers* series of paintings, created for Vesna Tenodi’s book “*Dreamtime Set in Stone*”. A highly acclaimed artist, Gina created what art experts hailed as her best work ever; but her admirers soon fell silent and started running for cover in the face of pressure and threats by the objectors.

**Benedikt Osváth** in 2010 collaborated with **Vesna Tenodi** and created the *Wanjina Watchers in the Whispering Stone* sculpture. This is probably the worst case of injustice against artists in Australian history, for the sheer intensity of unrelenting violence stretching over two years.

The objectors expected that a quick fix would be achieved with insults, threats and vandalism. They did not expect that Tenodi and Osváth would dig their heels in, and decide to fight for their rights. Instead of yielding to bullies and cowering in the face of violence, including the violence-by-proxy, they become galvanised and even more determined to fight for artistic freedom.

These days, we see a shift in the paradigm. We see that Aboriginal representatives with integrity and courage have started calling for a different approach. People like Bess Price, Alison Anderson and Kerryn Pholi, are now pointing out the false perceptions.

They are speaking out against the dangerous attitude that violence is somehow acceptable because it is a part of Aboriginal pre-colonial tradition, and are now discussing the elephant in the room we were not allowed to mention for so long.

The policy of further indulging the people who are already, as Kerryn Pholi well defined it, “*the most pampered and the most privileged people on earth*”, can only create more misery for everyone.

These brave Aboriginal representatives are concentrating on extreme forms of Aboriginal violence within Aboriginal communities, and increasing rates of suicide and self-harm, showing that the current policy of indulgence is not bringing any positive results.

Violence against artists and intellectuals should be added to these efforts to change attitudes. All forms of violence have the same root causes<sup>7</sup>. Attacks on artistic freedom are as deplorable and soul-destroying as any other form of violence. And now is the right time to adequately address this issue, while the National Cultural Policy and Indigenous Art Code are being discussed in Parliament.

The Arts Minister Simon Crean showed good sense and rejected calls to make the voluntary Indigenous Art Code obligatory, refusing to commit Labor to a mandatory code of conduct for the industry, saying “There is a whole range of issues” to be looked at and “What we have got to do [first] is address the issues of quality control and what is being held up as legitimate”.<sup>8</sup>

Until this issue is properly addressed and solved, artists should protect themselves. Until we see the paradigm change, and until non-Aboriginal artists are treated in an equitable manner, any Australian non-Indigenous artist in danger of becoming a possible target would be wise, for obvious reasons, to create art under the safety of anonymity, using an alias or assuming a nickname.

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**Note:** For Australians who want to defend our sacred right to think, speak and create art without fear of violence: <http://freespeechaustralia.com/>

Freedom of speech in Australia is under attack by the Gillard-Roxon-Conroy Troika.

Proposed changes to the anti-discrimination act will destroy religious liberties, persecute the innocent, and make a mockery of free-thought.

But that’s just the start of it: The Gillard Government has just announced the creation of a new media censorship and licensing scheme: the start of “government sanctioned journalism”.

**We are on the verge of having the Federal Government dictating what we can and cannot read, and what we can and cannot think.**

For more go to: <http://freespeechaustralia.com/2013/02/26/the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/>

The way that art, science and politics were used to create our present, dominated by Aboriginal political goals was explored in “*Forbidden Art, Politicised Archaeology and Orwellian Politics in Australia – about Aboriginal violence, art censorship, and legally-sanctioned scientific fraud in Australia*”, available for free download:

[https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B6a\\_Uxy44-BwSUVmQUhPZGFYms/edit?pli=1](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B6a_Uxy44-BwSUVmQUhPZGFYms/edit?pli=1)

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<sup>7</sup> James Franklin, “*The Cultural Roots of Aboriginal Violence*”, Quadrant 2008

<sup>8</sup> Simon Crean, “*Minister says no to binding code*”, the Australian 14 March 2013